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Employee Perceptions Of Job Evaluation Effectiveness: A Study Of NGOs In Midlands Province, Zimbabwe

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Abstract:
Background*: This study examines employee perceptions of the effectiveness of job evaluation systems within non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Zimbabwe. Despite the critical role of job evaluation in ensuring equitable compensation and organizational fairness, little is known about how employees within the NGO sector—particularly in development contexts—perceive its effectiveness.*
Materials and Methods*: Using a cross-sectional survey design, data were collected via an online questionnaire from a convenience sample of 250 employees of NGOs operating in the Midlands Province. Data analysis employed descriptive statistics (percentages, means, and standard deviations) and inferential techniques, including multiple regression, analysis of variance, and correlation analysis.*
Results*: The results indicate a significant positive relationship between perceived job evaluation effectiveness and several factors: employee knowledge of the evaluation process, degree of staff involvement, organizational commitment, trust in the employer, and organizational position. Regression analysis revealed that a substantial proportion of the variance in perceived effectiveness is explained by four key independent variables. The findings contribute to the literature on human resource management in non-profit settings by highlighting the perceptual and procedural determinants that influence the success of job evaluation systems. Practical implications are discussed for NGO managers seeking to enhance the credibility, fairness, and effectiveness of their compensation practices*
Conclusion: *The findings contribute to the literature on human resource management in non-profit settings by highlighting the perceptual and procedural determinants that influence the success of job evaluation systems. Practical implications are discussed for NGO managers seeking to enhance the credibility, fairness, and effectiveness of their compensation practices.*
Key Words: *Job evaluation; Employee perceptions; Non-governmental organizations (NGOs); Organizational justice; Zimbabwe; Human resource management; Developing economies.*

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I. Introduction

Job evaluation is a foundational HRM practice designed to establish internal pay equity and organizational justice, with its perceived effectiveness being critical to employee trust, commitment, and retention (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023; Cropanzano & Ambrose, 2015). While its benefits in standardising pay structures and reducing disputes are well-documented in corporate settings, its success hinges on employee perception (Gerhart & Newman, 2020). Emerging evidence suggests perceptions are shaped by factors such as procedural knowledge, staff involvement, trust in management, and organizational commitment (Shore et al., 2021; Krot & Lewicka, 2012).

The NGO sector presents a distinct and under-researched context for this dynamic. Operating under mission-driven and resource-constrained conditions, NGOs face unique challenges in implementing formal HR systems, often creating a gap between policy and practice (Lewis, 2023; Ridder & McCandless, 2023). This is particularly acute in Sub-Saharan Africa, where studies on employee perceptions of HR systems like job evaluation are scarce (Kamoche et al., 2022). In Zimbabwe, the NGO sector is vital for development but is plagued by staff retention and funding volatility (Makombe, 2021). Here, job evaluation becomes a potential tool for stability, yet its implementation is fraught with challenges. Local studies indicate job evaluation is often a source of dispute, driven by perceptions of bias, lack of transparency, and political interference, leading to widespread employee skepticism and non-implementation of results (Chanetsa, 2014; Kwaramba, 2015; Nguwi, 2010).

This confluence of factors reveals a significant empirical gap: while the theoretical importance of job evaluation is clear, and its problematic implementation in Zimbabwean contexts is noted, there is a paucity of research investigating the employee perspective within the nation's critical NGO sector. This study directly addresses this gap by investigating the factors that influence employee perceptions of job evaluation effectiveness in NGOs in Midlands Province, Zimbabwe. By doing so, it moves beyond technical system design to uncover the human and perceptual determinants of HRM success in a complex, understudied environment.

II. Material And Methods

Study Design: A descriptive, cross-sectional survey design was employed. This quantitative, non-experimental approach was appropriate for collecting data at a single point in time to examine the relationships between employee perceptions (the outcome) and several predictor variables, and to describe the current state of these perceptions within the study population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Study Location: The study was conducted within the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe. This province hosts a significant number of local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating in diverse sectors, including health, agriculture, and community development, providing a relevant context for investigating HR practices within the NGO sector (Chikwanha & Dube, 2022).

Study Duration: Data collection took place over an eight-week period from 15 September 2024 to 15 November 2024.

Sample size: 250 Participants.

Sample size calculation: The target of 250 was determined based on methodological guidelines for survey research and regression analysis. Stevens (2009) recommends a minimum of 15 participants per predictor variable for multiple regression. With five primary predictor constructs in the proposed model, a minimum sample of 75 was indicated. The target of 250 was set to provide robust statistical power, enhance the stability of the results, and allow for meaningful subgroup analyses while remaining logistically feasible within the study's scope and resources.

Subjects & selection method: The target population comprised all employees working for NGOs operating in the Midlands Province. A non-probability, convenience sampling method was used for participant recruitment. This method was necessary due to the absence of a definitive sampling frame listing all NGO employees in the province.

Inclusion criteria:
Participants were required to meet all of the following criteria to be eligible for the study:
1. **Employment Status:** Currently employed (full-time, part-time, or on a fixed-term contract) by a non-governmental organization (NGO).
2. **Organizational Location:** The employing NGO must have active operations and programs within the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe.
3. **Tenure:** Must have been employed by their current NGO for a minimum of **six (6) months** to ensure sufficient exposure to the organization's HR practices and systems.
4. **Capacity:** Must hold a formal staff position (i.e., volunteers, interns, and consultants without a formal employment contract were excluded).

Exclusion criteria:
The following individuals were **excluded** from participation:
1. **Non-Staff Personnel:** Volunteers, unpaid interns, external consultants, and board members not under a formal employment contract with the NGO.
2. **Insufficient Tenure:** Employees who had been with their current NGO for less than six (6) months at the time of data collection.
3. **Operational Scope:** Staff of NGOs whose programs and operations were based **exclusively outside** the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe.
4. **Incomplete Consent:** Any potential participant who did not complete or affirm the electronic informed consent statement prior to the survey.

Procedure methodology

Data were collected via a structured, self-administered online questionnaire hosted on Google Forms. To initiate the process, a digital cover letter was presented on the first page of the survey. This letter detailed the academic purpose of the study, assured participants of anonymity and confidentiality, and explained that participation was voluntary, constituting informed consent.

The questionnaire link was disseminated to the target population over a six-week period using a multi-channel approach to maximize reach. Primary distribution occurred through professional WhatsApp groups and networks specific to NGO staff in the Midlands Province. To broaden participation and mitigate sample bias, the link was also shared via relevant NGO consortium email lists and professional social media platforms (e.g., LinkedIn groups focused on Zimbabwean development work).

This remote, online procedure was selected to ensure efficiency, facilitate a wider geographical reach within the province, and adhere to ethical best practices by minimizing direct researcher-participant contact. Respondents accessed and completed the questionnaire at their convenience. Submitted responses were automatically and securely recorded in the Google Forms database, from which they were downloaded for analysis.

Statistical analysis

Data were prepared for analysis by coding responses and performing initial cleaning in Microsoft Excel. The processed dataset was then imported into IBM SPSS Statistics Version 28 for statistical analysis. A two-tiered analytical approach was adopted, beginning with descriptive statistics. Demographic characteristics—including gender, age, education level, and organizational tenure—were summarized using frequencies and percentages. For all psychometric scales, descriptive measures (means and standard deviations) were calculated to characterize the sample's central tendencies and variability on key constructs such as perceived job evaluation effectiveness, trust, and organizational commitment.

The analytical strategy proceeded to inferential statistics to test the hypothesized relationships between variables. Bivariate associations were first examined using Pearson's correlation coefficient to measure the strength and direction of the linear relationships between each of the continuous predictor variables (staff involvement, trust in employer, organizational commitment, and job evaluation knowledge) and the dependent variable of perceived job evaluation effectiveness. To assess whether perceptions of effectiveness differed significantly across employment levels, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed. Finally, the core objective of modelling the combined influence of predictor variables was addressed through multiple linear regression using the enter method. This analysis determined the proportion of variance in perceived effectiveness explained by the predictors collectively (R^2) and identified the unique, significant contribution of each while controlling for the others. All regression assumptions—including linearity, homoscedasticity, and normality of residuals—were evaluated and met prior to interpretation. The results of these analyses are presented in narrative form and supported by tables in the following section.

III. Result

Response Rate and Sample Characteristics

The questionnaire was distributed to a target sample of 250 individuals. A total of 205 completed responses were received, yielding an overall response rate of 82%. The distribution of respondents by organizational position is presented in Table 1. The final sample provided balanced representation across senior management (n=21, 10.2%), middle management (n=17, 8.3%), supervisory staff (n=44, 21.5%), and other employees (n=123, 60.0%).

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Organizational Position

Position	Target Sample	Actual Sample (n)	Actual Sample (%)	Response Rate
Senior Management	30	21	10.2%	70%
Middle Management	20	17	8.3%	85%
Supervisory Staff	50	44	21.5%	88%
Other Employees	150	123	60.0%	82%
Total	**250**	**205**	**100%**	**82%**

Demographic Profile: The sample was predominantly female (68.3%), reflecting a common gender distribution within the Zimbabwean NGO sector. Respondents were generally youthful, with 89.8% aged 50 years or younger, and highly educated, with 70.7% holding at least a bachelor's degree. Work experience was varied: 25.9% had less than 5 years of experience, 46.3% had 5–10 years, 26.3% had 10–20 years, and a small minority (1.5%) had over 20 years, indicative of the project-based and contract-heavy nature of NGO employment.

Instrument Reliability and Validity

The reliability of the multi-item scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. As shown in Table 2, all constructs demonstrated high internal consistency, with coefficients exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 (ranging from 0.766 to 0.908). The composite reliability for the entire instrument was 0.932, confirming the scales were valid and reliable for analysis.

Table 2. Reliability Statistics (Cronbach's Alpha)

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Staff Involvement	4	0.834
Job Evaluation Knowledge	5	0.766
Trust in Employer	7	0.908
Organizational Commitment	6	0.874
Job Evaluation Effectiveness	5	0.779
All Variables (Composite)	**27**	**0.932**

Descriptive Statistics for Key Variables

Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) for the primary study variables are presented in Table 3. The mean score for perceived Job Evaluation Effectiveness was 20.45 (SD=3.507) on a scale from 5 to 25, indicating a moderately positive overall perception. Among the predictors, Trust in Employer had the highest mean (23.59, SD=4.989), while Staff Involvement had the lowest (12.81, SD=3.981), suggesting that participatory processes in job evaluation were perceived as limited.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Key Variables (N=205)

Variable (Abbreviation)	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Staff Involvement (STIN)	4	20	12.81	3.981
Job Evaluation Knowledge (JEKN)	5	25	18.87	4.596
Trust in Employer (TREM)	15	35	23.59	4.989
Organizational Commitment (OGCO)	10	30	15.67	4.198
Job Evaluation Effectiveness (JEEF)	15	25	20.45	3.507

Correlation and Multi collinearity Assessment

A Pearson correlation matrix was generated to examine bivariate relationships and assess multi collinearity among the independent variables prior to regression modelling (Table 4). All correlations were positive and statistically significant ($p<.01$). The strongest correlation was between Staff Involvement and Trust in Employer ($r = .663$). Crucially, no correlation coefficient exceeded 0.70, indicating an absence of problematic multi collinearity and confirming that all predictors could be retained in the regression model.

Table 4. Inter correlations of Independent Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. STIN	1				
2. JEKN	.416**	1			
3. TREM	.663**	.413**	1		
4. OGCO	.415**	.284**	.415**	1	
5. POST	.446**	.291**	.385**	.377**	1
Note: **p < .01 (2-tailed). STIN=Staff Involvement; JEKN=Job Evaluation Knowledge; TREM=Trust in Employer; OGCO=Organizational Commitment; POST=Position (Management=1, Other=0).					

Multiple Regression Analysis

A multiple linear regression was performed to assess the combined influence of the five predictors on perceived Job Evaluation Effectiveness. The model was statistically significant, F (5, 199) = 260.24, *p* < .001, and explained a substantial proportion of the variance in the dependent variable (Adjusted R^2 = .864). This indicates that 86.4% of the variance in perceived effectiveness is attributable to the combined predictors.

The regression coefficients, standard errors, and significance levels for each predictor are presented in Table 5. All five variables emerged as significant positive predictors of job evaluation effectiveness.

Table 5. Multiple Regression Results Predicting Job Evaluation Effectiveness

Predictor	Unstandardized B	SE	Standardized Beta (β)	T	P
(Constant)	5.389	0.538	–	10.022	<.001
Staff Involvement (STIN)	0.382	0.032	.434	11.807	<.001
Job Evaluation Knowledge (JEKN)	0.138	0.022	.181	6.183	<.001
Trust in Employer (TREM)	0.248	0.025	.352	9.818	<.001
Organizational Commitment (OGCO)	0.088	0.025	.105	3.530	.001
Position in Organization (POST)	0.823	0.212	.116	3.885	<.001
Note. Dependent Variable: Job Evaluation Effectiveness (JEEF). Model R^2 = .867, Adjusted R^2 = .864.					

Interpretation of Significant Predictors:

1. **Staff Involvement (β = .434, *p* < .001):** This was the strongest unique predictor, indicating that greater employee participation in the job evaluation process is associated with significantly higher perceptions of its effectiveness.
2. **Trust in Employer (β = .352, *p* < .001):** Employee trust emerged as a strong, significant predictor, underscoring that perceptions of employer honesty and fairness are critical to the credibility of the evaluation system.
3. **Job Evaluation Knowledge (β = .181, *p* < .001):** Understanding of the job evaluation process was a significant, albeit relatively weaker, positive contributor to perceived effectiveness.
4. **Position in Organization (β = .116, *p* < .001):** Being in a management position (coded as 1) was associated with a significantly more positive perception of effectiveness compared to non-management staff.

5. **Organizational Commitment (β = .105, *p* = .001):** Affective commitment to the organization had a small but statistically significant positive relationship with perceived effectiveness.

The final regression equation is:
JEEF = 5.389 + 0.382(STIN) + 0.138(JEKN) + 0.248(TREM) + 0.088(OGCO) + 0.823(POST)

IV. Discussion

This study investigated the factors influencing employee perceptions of job evaluation effectiveness within NGOs in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe. The results of the regression analysis reveal a robust model, with five key predictors—staff involvement, job evaluation knowledge, trust in the employer, organizational commitment, and managerial position—collectively explaining 86.4% of the variance in perceived effectiveness. This underscores that job evaluation is not merely a technical HR exercise but a socio-perceptual process deeply embedded in organizational dynamics.

Interpretation of Key Findings

The Primacy of Participatory Processes

Staff involvement emerged as the strongest predictor (β = .434, *p* < .001) of perceived effectiveness. This finding significantly extends the conventional view, often limited to managerial committees (Spyridakos et al., 2001), by demonstrating that broader employee participation is critical. When staff are involved, the process gains legitimacy, reduces suspicion, and enhances perceived fairness (Figart, 2000, 2008). For Zimbabwean NGOs, this suggests that moving beyond token consultation to meaningful involvement can transform job evaluation from a top-down imposition into a shared organizational endeavour.

The Role of Knowledge and Transparency

A significant positive relationship was found between job evaluation knowledge and perceived effectiveness (β = .181, *p* < .001). This aligns with prior research emphasizing that understanding the "why" and "how" behind evaluation systems fosters acceptance and reduces anxiety (Armstrong et al., 2011; Chirchir, 2016). In a context where pay decisions are often opaque, knowledge demystifies the process, enabling employees to see the link between job design, evaluation, and equitable compensation, thereby enhancing the system's credibility.

Trust as a Foundational Pillar

Trust in the employer was a powerful predictor (β = .352, *p* < .001), reinforcing the centrality of relational trust in HR systems. This finding corroborates studies indicating that trust enhances perceptions of organizational justice (Krot & Lewicka, 2012). In the NGO sector, where resources are constrained and employment is often precarious, trust becomes a critical currency. An evaluation system, no matter how technically sound, will likely be viewed with skepticism if it operates within a climate of distrust. Thus, building trust is a prerequisite for any effective HR intervention.

The Dual Influence of Commitment and Position

Both organizational commitment (β = .105, *p* = .001) and holding a management position (β = .116, *p* < .001) were significant, though relatively smaller, predictors. The link with affective commitment suggests that employees who identify with their organization's mission are more inclined to view its processes positively (Azeem, 2010). The managerial effect highlights a potential perceptual gap: those who design or administer the system (management) perceive it as more effective than those subject to it. This underscores the challenge of achieving perceptual alignment across hierarchical levels and the need for inclusive communication.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretical Implications: This study contributes to HRM literature by validating a perception-based model of job evaluation effectiveness within an under-researched context—NGOs in a developing economy. It moves the discourse from a purely technical focus to a more holistic view that integrates procedural justice (staff involvement, knowledge), relational trust, and affective commitment as core determinants of system success.

Practical Implications for NGO Management:

- **Adopt Participatory Design:** Actively involve a cross-section of employees in reviewing and designing job evaluation criteria and processes.
- **Invest in Communication and Education:** Implement ongoing sensitization programs to explain the purpose, methodology, and outcomes of job evaluation, making the process transparent.

- **Cultivate Organizational Trust:** Leadership should foster trust through consistent, fair, and transparent communication, particularly regarding difficult decisions related to pay and grading.
- **Integrate Evaluation into Strategy:** Formalize job evaluation as a component of strategic HR planning, with scheduled reviews (e.g., every 3-5 years) to ensure alignment with evolving roles and market realities.
- **Seek Expert Facilitation:** Given the complexity of job evaluation, NGOs should consider engaging trained HR consultants to ensure methodological rigor and impartial facilitation, thereby enhancing credibility.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study has limitations. Its cross-sectional design precludes causal inferences, and the use of convenience sampling within one province may affect generalizability. Self-reported perceptions also carry the risk of common method bias.

Future research should:

- Employ longitudinal or experimental designs to establish causality among the studied variables.
- Investigate the impact of employment contract type (e.g., short-term vs. permanent) on perceptions of HR fairness and system effectiveness.
- Conduct comparative studies across sectors (public, private, NGO) and regions to identify context-specific moderators.
- Explore the potential mediating roles of variables like communication quality or perceived organizational support in the relationship between HR practices and employee perceptions.

V. Conclusion

In conclusion, the effectiveness of job evaluation in Zimbabwean NGOs is predominantly a function of participatory process, employee knowledge, and foundational trust, rather than technical design alone. For NGO managers, this study underscores that investing in these "soft" relational and communicative aspects is as crucial as implementing a robust evaluation methodology. By doing so, organizations can enhance not only the perceived fairness of their compensation systems but also foster greater employee commitment and organizational resilience in a challenging operational environment.

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