

The Influence of Downsizing Organisational Strategies on Survivor Qualities in an Economically Volatile Environment

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ABSTRACT Research evidence has tended to trivialise the influence of downsizing strategy variables on survivor qualities after downsizing (Rinkwest 2003). This study examined the influence of communication, victim and survivor support on survivor quality components (attitude, commitment and motivation) after downsizing in selected manufacturing organisations in an economically unstable environment. One hundred and fifty survivors ($n = 150$) participated in the study. Using the no intercept multivariate multiple regression analysis, results showed that communication alone had a significant influence on survivor attitude, while communication and victim support had significant influence on survivor motivation and commitment. Suggestions for the effective management of survivors after downsizing are provided.

I. INTRODUCTION

Business challenges caused by increased oil prices, political and economic instabilities and HIV/AIDs necessitate organisations to look for strategies intended to reduce expenses, enhance performance, and maximise productivity in order to remain competitive (Taylor 2008). The most cost saving strategy adopted by organisations in response to these challenges is to reduce expenditure on manpower through downsizing. Downsizing is a deliberate organisational decision to reduce the workforce in order to increase organisational performance (Noer 2001). Its adoption as a business strategy is based on the notion that 'lean means better'. The result is an organisation with a small group of workers known as survivors who are expected to increase the organisation's productivity and competitive advantage (Noer 2001). While this approach has been applauded as the best, a grave problem of survivor quality arises. Survivor quality is defined as the survivors' attitude, commitment

and motivation in the new work situation after down-sizing (Vinten and Lane 2002). It is viewed as a critical component in guaranteeing increased productivity and long-term growth and productivity after downsizing (Littler et al. 2003). More often than not, before, during or after downsizing, management overlooks the psychological effect of downsizing strategies on survivor quality, yet, research (Dolan et al. 2000) has shown that downsizing leaves the survivors frustrated, anxious, resistant and with the "wait and see" attitude, a scenario also known as 'survivor syndrome' (Vinten and Lane 2002; Kusum 2004).

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The country in which the study took place was experiencing violent land reform programme, recurrent interference with, and intimidation of the judiciary, as well as maintenance of unrealistic price controls and exchange rates, leading to a sharp drop in investor confidence. There was virtually no direct foreign investment resulting in 94% unemployment and spiraling hyperinflation (Mail and Guardian 30 January 2009). The inflationary figure stood at 230 million percent, a figure that surpassed the inflation of all other nations. The country had the lowest Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and economic growth rate of any post-independent African state. Country's

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decision to compulsorily acquire white-owned farms led to a massive reduction in farm production, which in turn affected the availability of inputs to the key manufacturing sector. For example, overall agricultural production in the 2006/07 season was less than 30% compared to the previous seven years (Zimbabwe Business Watch 11 March 2008). A report by the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industry (CZI) showed that manufacturing continued to under-perform. The sector was estimated to have declined by 7% in 2007 compared to 3.2% in 2005. Thus, a decline in agricultural production had a significant effect on productivity in the manufacturing sector.

Within such context, organisations in the country of study were supposed to remain globally competitive and maintain global standards in order to remain viable. In order to do this, organisations had to find ways of reducing costs and the target was labour costs, through downsizing. Research indicates that, while it is crucial for organisations to adapt to challenging environmental changes through downsizing, the use of appropriate strategies for the process is critical in order to avoid 'survivor syndrome' (Appelbaum et al. 1999; Dolan et al. 2000). Documented evidence shows that certain pre and post organisational down-sizing strategies and how well they are implemented have the potential to affect survivor quality (Fisher and White 2000; Carbery and Garavan 2004; Kase and Zupan 2005). Examples of documented strategies include, among others, communication style, victim and survivor support strategies (Kusum 2004). Evidence of the effectiveness of such strategies is, however, from samples in American and European contexts which are often regarded as stable, politically and economically yet, today, especially in Africa, organisations are operating in contexts of social, political and economic turmoil, characterised by high levels of poverty, inflation, low productivity and high unemployment.

To our knowledge, empirical evidence on how organisations operating in unstable environments go about in doing their downsizing activities, which approaches or strategies they use and how such strategies affect survivor qualities is not yet documented. The likelihood of a strong link between downsizing strategies and survivor qualities after downsizing in an unstable economic environment can contribute to knowledge

of how certain downsizing strategies impact on the attitude towards work, commitment to the organisation and motivation to exert effort among survivors of a downsizing process. Therefore, the study serves both an exploratory and explanatory purposes by exploring the predictive influence of specific organisational strategies on survivor qualities – attitudes, commitment and motivation.

Theoretical Framework

How organisational strategies influence survivor qualities can be explained using the Organisational Justice Theory (Greenberg 1987) and The Attribution Theory (Weiner 1995). These theories explain peoples' behavior as influenced by their perceptions of how events have happened. Organisational justice is defined as employees' perceptions of the fairness with which they have been treated by an organisation (Campbell and Finch 2004). The theory focuses on perceptions of fairness in organisations, by categorising employees' views and feelings about their treatment and that of others within an organisation (Saunders and Thornhill 2003). Three types of organisation justice theory have been identified in literature. Perceptions about outcomes of decisions taken form the basis of distributive justice (Campbell and Finch 2004), perceptions about the process used to arrive at decisions to downsize form the basis of procedural justice (Cropanzano and Greenberg 2001) while perceptions about the quality of the interpersonal treatment that an individual receives during the enactment of organisational procedures form the basis of interactional justice (Campbell and Finch 2004).

Within the downsizing context, organisational justice perceptions might be influenced by strategies used by an organisation before or after downsizing which in turn might influence survivor qualities. Attribution theory provides another framework for analysing potential influence of downsizing strategies on survivor quality. Attribution theory focuses on causal attributions – subjective thoughts about the causes of a given outcome and their link to affective and behavioural reactions. Downsizing involves major changes for the individual and the organisation as a whole. Such a situation is likely to lead to emotional reactions on the part of the individual at the nexus of the event (Mossholder

et al. 2000). Emotions arise from the way a person appraises a given situation. One type of appraisal known to contribute to an emotional reaction and, which may play an important role in the context of downsizing is attribution information, that is, information concerning the reasons underlying the given outcomes (Mossholder et al. 2000). Within the downsizing context, such appraisals might vary depending on how the organisation has handled the whole downsizing process within a particular context.

Downsizing Strategies

Downsizing relies on careful planning effort. Before it takes place, an organisation needs to have developed a long-term strategic plan which takes into account how departments and processes can be realigned while retaining high performers who are crucial to the organisation (Appelbaum et al. 1999). Typical top-down approaches are most likely the least effective plans of action in downsizing. Thus, all members of the organisation should be involved in the planning stages, well before the actual downsizing begins. By having every organizational member participate in the process, employees are more likely to accept and feel responsible for the changes, and this increases the probability of successful downsizing; the planning and the implementation (Appelbaum et al. 1999). Member participation also increases employees' trust (Lazurus and Folkman 1984), perceptions of justice (Bies 1987), and the easy acceptance of the belief of market competition as an acceptable rationale for downsizing (Fourcade-Gourinchas and Babb 2002). Dolan et al. (2000) found that, if there is a clear strategy to implement the downsizing, which includes scheduling and a well-specified operational plan, the impact on those dismissed as well as the survivors is buffered. The use of a downsizing plan therefore mitigates the negative responses from the remaining employees. Dolan et al. (2000) concluded that when an organisation adopts a reactive approach towards the downsizing process, numerous problems associated with the survivors can result.

How an organisation communicates with its employees before or during the downsizing process is crucial to the success of the process and the quality of survivors thereof. The aspect of open and honest communication is crucial to the acceptance of the encouragement by ma-

agement for employees to participate in the downsizing process. Thus, all employees must feel they are being informed accurately and in a timely fashion of the downsizing efforts (Appelbaum et al. 1999). Employees often feel disrespected and undervalued when management announces downsizing immaturely and in an unconvincing manner. Studies by Appelbaum et al. (1999) have shown that by sharing confidential financial and competitive information with survivors and by showing a willingness to communicate everything all the time, management establishes a greater sense of trust and honesty. In the downsizing context, this in turn encourages those who remain to cooperate and to help the organisation survive temporary and unhealthy situations that have the potential to compromise the achievement of the new organisational goals.

Other studies (Fisher and White 2000) have noted that the manner in which management communicates to employees the organisation's commitment to retaining some high performers (survivors) who are likely to succeed in the downsized organisation impacts on the quality of these high performers thereafter. Depending on the manner in which management decides to announce this information, grapevine and rumours must be avoided at all costs. Thus, having open communication and participatory systems enables survivors to both understand the organisation's competitive position and be able to participate in the processes to improve it. The result is the creation of a positive environment where employees feel they are listened to and respected (Wright et al. 2003). Indeed, findings by Amundson et al. (2004) indicate that sufficient and timely communication could allay fears and convey respect for employees. Inadequate, contradictory, and vague communication increases confusion, anxiety and mistrust among both the victims and survivors. Failure to communicate plans creates an impression that management does not know what they are doing or does not respect employees.

A central work place strategy that is important during or after organisational downsizing is employee training. The skills and learning that management considers very important and of value after the time of downsizing are important. These skills are the ones needed to operate effectively in the new environment. They might include acquired technical skills (for example,

production process knowledge), prior experience and endemic knowledge (of organisational processes and procedures); and self-development skills (Carbery and Garavan 2004). The ability to adapt and learn, show initiative, creativity and problem solving skills are considered more important in determining the effort and motivation of survivors (Rayburn and Rayburn 1999). Fisher and White (2000) contend that survivor quality is influenced by whether specific training initiatives are provided by the organisation after downsizing. The authors found that organisations that had an over reliance on individual's accumulated skills and experience to survive and develop during downsizing had survivors with low levels of motivation and high intentions to leave.

On the contrary, organisations that had made employees (survivors) work closely with people with years of experience and those who were identified as having the ability to transfer knowledge effectively had survivor levels of high motivation and low intention to leave (Carbery and Garavan 2004). The important points to note here are that the newly created organisation and environment require management to impart new skills to the survivors in line with the new strategy and demands of the organisation. In addition, management should also receive training in order to support the surviving employees. The intention to train should also be clear to all survivors and they should be given the assurance that they will receive training to cope with the new tasks.

An important strategy that has been cited in the literature as also important for survivor quality is the provision of victim and survivor support (Carberry and Garavan 2004). Victim support entails provision of counseling services, training for job search skills, use of referral services, provision of job search support services and redundancy payment (Ascugil 2003). For survivors, empowerment has been used as a supporting strategy. Empowerment is not a personality disposition; rather, it is a dynamic construct that reflects individual beliefs about person-environment relationships (Marchington and Wilkinson 2007). In the context of downsizing, it would refer to part of the secondary appraisal done by survivors when they engage in the process of evaluating what, if anything can be done to overcome or prevent the harm brought about by downsizing. According to Sutton (1990:

231), 'empowerment is a form or part of beliefs about personal control in a specific encounter'. Empowerment therefore reflects a personal sense of control in the workplace as manifested in the following beliefs about person-work environment relationship: (1) meaning, (2) competence, (3) self-determination, and (4) impact (Chen and Chen 2008).

Meaning reflects a sense of purpose or personal connection about work. Competence indicates that individuals believe that they have the skills and abilities to perform their work well (Chen and Chen 2008). This sense of competence is consistent with Bandura's (1989) notion of efficacy expectancy (that is, the conviction that people can successfully execute behaviours and therefore need to produce outcomes). Self-determination reflects a sense of freedom about how individuals do their work, while impact describes a belief that individuals can influence a system in which they are embedded, which is consistent with Bandura's (1989) notion of outcome expectancy (Savery and Luks 2004).

Downsizing is likely to threaten survivors' sense of control; therefore, factors that affect a sense of control during downsizing are important in mitigating the helplessness experienced by survivors (Chen and Chen 2008). These four dimensions of empowerment help to understand why empowerment, as a management practice influences survivor quality. The more management makes survivors believe that they have a sense of meaning, the more they can rely on their own sense of purpose and direction in coping with the ambiguity inherent in the downsizing process. On the other hand, the more they are provided with the necessary competencies necessary to perform their duties well in the changing environment, the more they see themselves as having personal resources to cope with changes in work associated with downsizing. In the event that survivors have a sense of self-determination, they see themselves as having choices about how to cope with the downsizing. When survivors are made to feel that they can have an impact on the downsizing implementation, they are likely to believe that they have the personal power to cope with the outcomes associated with the downsizing.

A strategy linked to empowerment that is useful to provide support to both victims and survivors during or after downsizing is the cre-

ation of a participatory environment. Gilson et al. (2004) argue for the role of unions, by suggesting that, through a closer relationship between management and unions, unions bargain for the strategy (incrementalism, transformational, collaborative or coercive) which best suits their members. Research by Gilson et al. (2004) has found that downsizing is more likely in unionised workplaces. It may be that unions are one of the forms management uses to create a participatory environment, convey a rational justification to employees and present the new environment as one which is preferable for employees. In addition, if management incorporates union members in consultation procedures, it is most likely that employees will feel a key part of the decision-making process (Gilson et al. 2004). From the above discussion, one can conclude that organisational support for downsizing predicts levels of survivor qualities – attitudes, commitment and motivation. This suggests that downsized organisations have to develop ways to foster a sense among survivors that the organisation still cares about their well-being.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study were:

- To determine survivors' levels of attitudes, commitment and motivation after downsizing
- To determine the extent to which management used the identified downsizing strategies as perceived by survivors after downsizing
- To determine the influence of downsizing strategies on survivors' attitudes, commitment and motivation after downsizing, and
- To formulate recommendations to downsizing planners in terms of survivor quality management before and after downsizing.

Hypotheses of the Study

The main hypotheses of the study were:

- Planning or organisation does not have a significant influence on survivor qualities after downsizing;
- Communication does not have a significant influence on survivor qualities after downsizing; and
- Survivor and victim support do not have a

significant influence on survivor qualities after downsizing.

II. METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

Four months before the actual data collection, permission was sought from the 13 identified downsized organisations. The selected organisations had downsized in the previous year or two to ensure that survivors still had the memory of the downsizing event. Only downsized manufacturing organisations that employed 50 or more people and had clear organisational structures were selected. Data was collected using questionnaires administered by the Human Resource person from each organisation to ensure generalisability to the target population with a minimum margin of error. In each participating organisation, the instrument was administered on randomly selected survivors. Clear instructions were given to the human resources person from each organisation regarding how the respondents were to complete the questionnaire. Data was collected over a period of three months and the contact person in each organisation would make a follow up every other week.

Sample

Survey data was collected from survivors in the 13 identified manufacturing organisations that had downsized in the country where the study was done. An adjusted sample size of 226 was determined based on Saunders and Thornhill (2003) recommendation that where the population of the study is less than 10 000, a smaller sample size can be used without affecting accuracy. A total number of 500 questionnaires were distributed, 100 in each of the city or town where the identified organisation(s) were located. A follow up of the questionnaires showed a marked increase in the total response rate from all the towns and cities from the first month 42(18.6%) to the third month 64(28.3%). At the end of the data collection phase, the total number of the completed questionnaires was 150.

Given that the determined adjusted sample size of the study was 226, the final sample figure of 150 represented a response rate of 66.4%. In the sample used for the study, close to 95%

(140) of the respondents were black and 122 (82.4%) were males. About half of the respondents were in the 31-39 years age group followed by about 35% (53) being older than that. The respondents were not equally distributed according to educational level with 133 (91.7%) who had at most diploma level education. Five respondents did not provide their educational levels. The majority 93 (62.4%) of these respondents had at least 11 years experience with the organisation while 16 (10.7%) had less than three years and the rest had between 4 and 10 years experience.

Measures

The measures for the study's variables, their sources, and the alpha coefficients are shown in Table 1. The questionnaire was divided into 13 sections; A to M. Section A dealt with the classification of respondents (biographical details) and contained a nominal scale of measurement, using eight categorical variables. Aspects covered included: position in the organisation, educational level, age, race, gender, language, and years of experience with the organisation. Sections B to I had variables measured on a numerically 5-point Likert scale. The verbal scale utilised in each section differed according to how the main instructions were worded.

As shown in Table 1, the within-section Cronbach's alpha coefficients were quite high with the lowest being 71% detected for the job involvement section. This is evidence that each section clearly dealt with a single issue/aspect. The variables were derived as the average of the

responses within a section or a combination of sections. Therefore, communication, planning, victim support, survivor support, survivor attitude, commitment and motivation were derived from the original variables generated from the sections of the questionnaire based on results of a reliability analysis of the instrument.

III. RESULTS

Measures of Central Tendency

All the derived variables were measured on a continuous scale within the interval [1; 5]. In order to determine the attitude, commitment and motivation levels of survivors after down-sizing and the extent to which management applied the identified strategies (objective 1), measures of central tendency and dispersion for the responses of each variable were computed. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 shows that the mean survivor motivation score of 3.4 was the highest, while survivor commitment and motivation were found to be average to satisfactory as reflected by 95% confidence intervals of the mean scores contained within [3.1,3.5]. Survivor attitude, on the other hand, was average as shown by a central 95% confidence interval of the mean score of [2.8, 3.0]. Higher mean scores reflected higher reported levels of the variable. Table 2 also shows that survivor support had the lowest mean score of 1.9 while the mean scores for communication, organisation/planning and victim support were 3, 2.5 and 2.3, respectively.

Table 1: Questionnaire measures (sources and coefficient alpha)

<i>Section</i>	<i>Study variables</i>	<i>No. of items</i>	<i>Source of scale</i>	<i>Cronbach's alpha</i>
B	Communication	3	Developed by researcher	0.83
C	Planning	8	Developed by researcher	0.87
D	Victim support	7	Developed by researcher	0.84
E	Survivor support	4	Developed by researcher	0.83
F and G	Job security	20	Ashford, Lee and Bobko (2000)	0.85
H	Control	3	Ashford, Lee and Bobko (2000)	0.75
I	Satisfaction	22	Smith, Kendal and Hulin (1965) cited in Schwepker(2001)	0.89
J	Involvement	11	Lodahl and Kejner (1965) cited in Reeve and Smith (2008)	0.71
K	Future plans	3	Bluedorn (1982), Lucas (1985)	0.89
L	Commitment	13	Bagraim (2004)	0.85
M	Motivation	10	Hackman and Oldham (1975) cited in Ryan (1989)	0.88
Total number of items		104		

Table 2: Means, standard deviations and confidence intervals

Variable	N	Mean	Std dev	Lower 95%CL for mean	Upper 95%CL for mean
Communication	148	2.9572	1.0791	2.7819	3.1325
Planning/Organisation	133	2.4877	0.8071	2.3493	2.6262
Victim support	142	2.2716	0.8789	2.1258	2.4174
Survivor support	147	1.9336	0.8577	1.7938	2.0735
Survivor attitude	103	2.8924	0.3935	2.8156	2.9694
Survivor commitment	128	3.3201	0.7189	3.1944	3.4458
Survivor motivation	139	3.4187	0.7976	3.2849	3.5525

Correlation Analysis

In order to test the hypotheses of the study, the derived measures of attitude, commitment and motivation were correlated with each of the variables of the downsizing strategy, namely, communication, organisation, victim support and survivor support. The results of the analyses are shown below.

Table 3 shows that survivor attitude was not correlated with all the downsizing strategy variables. However, as shown in Table 4, commitment was significantly correlated with all the downsizing strategy variables, that is, communication ($r=0.29$, $p<0.0011$), organisation ($r=0.28$, $p<0.0024$), victim support ($r=0.28$, $p<0.0018$) and survivor support ($r=0.22$, $p<0.0136$).

Table 3: Correlation of survivor attitude and downsizing strategy

Survivor attitude vs	N	r	p-value
Communication	102	0.15	0.1322
Organisation	95	0.12	0.2490
Victim support	99	0.12	0.2513
Survivor support	101	0.08	0.4237

Table 4: Correlation of survivor commitment and downsizing strategy

Survivor attitude vs	N	r	p-value
Communication	127	0.29	0.0011
Organisation	117	0.28	0.0024
Victim support	122	0.28	0.0018
Survivor support	126	0.22	0.0136

As shown in Table 5, motivation was significantly positively correlated with all downsizing strategy variables, that is, communication ($r=0.26$, $p<0.0021$), organisation ($r=0.25$, $p<0.0054$), victim support ($r=0.34$, $p<0.0001$) and survivor support ($r=0.23$, $p<0.0069$). Further analysis was done to determine whether the

downsizing variables were correlated among themselves. The rational was to ensure that all these variables actually represented the concept of 'downsizing strategy'. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 6.

Table 5: Correlation of survivor motivation and downsizing strategy

Survivor attitude vs	N	r	p-value
Communication	139	0.26	0.0021
Organisation	126	0.25	0.0054
Victim support	134	0.34	0.0001
Survivor support	138	0.23	0.0069

Table 6 shows that downsizing strategy variables were highly significantly correlated among themselves; communication vs organisation ($r=0.6719$, $p<0.0001$); communication vs victim support ($r=0.3207$, $p<0.0001$); communication vs survivor support ($r=0.3037$, $p<0.0002$); organisation vs victim support ($r=0.5550$, $p<0.0001$); organisation vs survivor support ($r=0.5103$, $p<0.0001$), and victim support vs survivor support ($r=0.06315$, $p<0.0001$). These correlations suggest two major constructs, one that combines communication and organisation aspects of downsizing and the other combining victim support and survivor support aspects. That these variables could have had an effect on survivor qualities is tested using regression analysis.

Parameter Estimates for Survivor Attitude

As shown in Table 7, the regression of survivor attitude on downsizing strategy variables showed that only communication ($t=2.96$, $p<0.0040$) aspect of downsizing had a significant effect. The variations in downsizing alone explain about 92% of the variation in survivor attitude.

Table 6: Correlations of downsizing strategy variables

Variables	N	r	p-value
Communication vs Organisation	133	0.6719	<.0001
Communication vs Victim support	142	0.3207	<.0001
Communication vs Survivor support	147	0.3037	0.0002
Organisation vs Victim support	130	0.5550	<.0001
Organisation vs Survivor support	133	0.5103	<.0001
Victim support vs Survivor support	142	0.6315	<.0001

Table 7: Regression of survivor attitude on downsizing strategy

Predictor variable	DF	Coefficient	Standard error	t Value	Pr > t
Communication	1	0.34	0.11345	2.96	0.0040
Organisation	1	0.29	0.18944	1.52	0.1312
Victim support	1	0.28	0.14232	2.00	0.0490
Survivor support	1	0.17	0.16401	1.03	0.3050

F_{4, 84} = 238.85 (<0.0001) R² = 0.9192
 $\bar{R}^2$ = 0.9153 n = 88

Parameter Estimates for Survivor Motivation

The regression on downsizing strategy variables as indicated in Table 8 shows that communication (t=3.44, p<0.0009) and victim support (t=3.41, p<0.0010) aspects were the only ones with significant effects. Victim support had a higher effect than communication and the model on downsizing variables explains 92% of the survivor motivation.

Table 8: Regression of survivor motivation on downsizing strategy

Predictor variable	DF	Coefficient	Standard error	t Value	Pr > t
Communication	1	0.47	0.13695	3.44	0.0009
Organisation	1	0.17	0.22868	0.72	0.4718
Victim support	1	0.59	0.17181	3.41	0.0010
Survivor support	1	0.06	0.19798	0.28	0.7772

F_{4, 84} = 242.85 (0.0001) R² = 0.9204
 $\bar{R}^2$ = 0.9166 n = 88

Parameter Estimates for Survivor Commitment

Table 9 illustrates that all only communication (t=3.07, p<0.0029) and victim support

(t=2.40, p<0.0185) had significant effects on survivor commitment. In this model, the downsizing strategy explained 92% of survivor commitment.

Table 9: Regression of survivor commitment downsizing strategy

Variable	DF	Parameter estimate	Standard error	t Value	Pr > t
Communication	1	0.40	0.13072	3.07	0.0029
Organisation	1	0.28	0.21827	1.25	0.2147
Victim support	1	0.39	0.16398	2.40	0.0185
Survivor support	1	0.20	0.18897	1.03	0.3042

F_{4, 84} = 246.31 (<0.0001) R² = 0.9214
 $\bar{R}^2$ = 0.9177 n = 88

Based on the above results, hypotheses 1 was not rejected, hypothesis 2 was rejected and hypothesis 3 was partially accepted because survivor support was not a predictor of any of the survivor quality variables.

III. DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this study was three-fold: (1) to establish the attitudinal, commitment and motivational levels of survivors after downsizing, (2) to determine the extent to which management applied selected downsizing strategies before, during and after the downsizing process, and (3) to determine the influence of selected downsizing strategy variables of organisation or planning, communication, victim and survivor support on survivor qualities variables - attitudes, commitment and motivation after downsizing in an economically volatile environment. The influence of downsizing strategy on survivor qualities after downsizing in a developing and indeed volatile economic context does not have strong empirical support in literature.

Our results in this study indicate that survivor motivation was high and, survivor attitude and commitment were average to satisfactory. The high level of motivation shown by survivors in the present study is supported by motivational studies in the context of change (Brockner et al. 1992) which explain lay-off survivors' reactions to change as influenced by survivors' perception of the outcome-input ratio. Thus, the high levels of motivation reflected survivors' effort to reduce the feelings of inequity they had experienced when the process of downsizing was unfolding. However, Datta et al. (2010) did not concur with

this finding. Accordingly, Datta and colleagues argued that there is a general agreement that downsizing results in reduced organizational commitment among survivors. Therefore, commitment of employees after painful periods of downsizing is identified as one of the reasons why downsizing often does not show the intended long term effects (Cascio and Wynn 2004). The average to satisfactory levels of commitment observed among survivors is supported by previous studies which suggested a positive relationship between justice perceptions and continuance commitment (Cohen-Charash and Spector 2001), and affective commitment (van Dierendonck and Jacobs 2010) after downsizing. Based on these previous findings, the average levels of commitment could be attributed to survivors feeling that they had made investments in their organisations and, therefore, the organisation's decision to downsize was perceived as management's attempt to be fair. Survivors showed average to satisfactory levels of attitude, meaning that after downsizing, they were moderately satisfied with their jobs, moderately involved with their jobs, and felt moderately secure in their current positions. The literature (Kinicki et al. 2002) argues that down-sizing makes survivors develop affective and cognitive feelings about their organisations and jobs. The antecedents of such thoughts and feelings, such as fair interactions might have been addressed, but survivors had a lot of other reservations about the whole process.

The results presented by our study showed that survivor support had the lowest mean score of 1.9 which suggests that they received little or no post-down sizing support. These results are inconsistent with existing literature which indicates that the support of survivors in the form of increased participation after downsizing, provision of adequate training and regular feedback are vital for the post - downsizing success (Wyatt 2002; Buss 2003; Chalwa and Kelloway 2004). The mean scores for organisation and victim support variables suggest that the survivors were moderately satisfied with how the downsizing was planned as well as the support given to the laid-offs. The results support the notion that the use of a downsizing plan and the treatment given to victims of downsizing could mitigate negative responses on the remaining employees (Belout and Balkin 2000). Organisational justice theory further provides support

for the results of the present study to the extent that survivors regarded management's procedures in dealing with those laid off as fair.

The perceived moderate support for victims by survivors in our study is also consistent with the organization justice theory in terms of distributive justice. This is indicated in the existence of moderate participation of employees or fair distribution of resources to victims in the whole downsizing process. Fairness, according to Cropanzano et al. (2007), is frequently positioned as a crucial factor influencing the commitment of employees towards their employers. Cropanzano and colleagues concluded that employees who are treated justly are more committed to the attainment of organizational goals. We also found a reasonable level of trust displayed by survivors to the management. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) argue that high levels of trust prior to downsizing are likely to lead to constructive survivor responses during and after the process. Little to moderate downsizing information was communicated to employees prior to commencement of the actual downsizing. This finding sharply contradicts existing literature (Appelbaum and Donia 2001) who posit that communication at every stage of the downsizing process is regarded as the most effective organizational strategy in the creation and maintenance of trust, commitment and motivation among survivors. At every stage in the downsizing process, it is the amount of downsizing information and its relevance that matter most. Failure to communicate downsizing plans to employees can create an impression that management does not take employees into confidence and this can further depict lack of respect and openness in the entire process.

Among the downsizing strategy variables, only communication had an effect on survivor attitude. This finding is supported by the notion that managers cannot assume that the good intentions that underlie any particular episode of downsizing will be enough to ensure widespread understanding, support and compliance by employees (Tourish et al. 2004). The implication of this finding is that the communication needs of survivors and victims should be factored into the entire downsizing programme right from inception. Studies by Appelbaum et al. (1999) have shown that, by sharing confidential financial and competitive information with survivors, as well as showing a willingness to communi-

cate everything at all times, managers establish a greater sense of trust, honesty and control. This, in turn, has the likelihood of influencing the reduction of perceived threat on survivors' jobs. Survivor motivation was significantly influenced by communication and victim support strategies. The findings on the effect of victim support are consistent with the findings of Mohyeldin and Suliman (2006) who found that survivors who perceived that victims were accorded greater dignity and respect had more positive outcomes such as increased motivation to expend energy in the new work environment. In tandem with the perceptions of the informational justice as explained by the organisational justice theory (Greenberg 1987), our findings relating to the effect of communication on motivation show that the amount of information provided to victims and survivors increases the perception of lay-off as just and fair. Perceptions of fairness in treating victims have been reported by Rayburn and Rayburn (1999) as a good predictor of motivation and work performance.

We found a significant effect of communication and victims support strategies on commitment levels of survivors. Consistent with these findings, a vast amount of literature on downsizing has stressed the importance of communication as a strategy in the creation of positive attitudes (Tourish et al. 2004), motivation (Appelbaum and Donia 2000) and commitment (van Dierendonck and Jacobs 2010). The effect of this is that keeping survivors informed of changes can reduce negative consequences of downsizing. Existing literature also concur with our findings to the extent that perceptions of organisational support and its availability and sufficiency, are critical for identification with an organisation, and consequently productive employees (Wiesenfeld et al. 2001). According to the organisation support theory, employees form perceptions concerning an organisation's appreciation of individual 'contributions to the organisation (Eisenberger et al. 2000). As a result, the individual reciprocates by showing high levels of commitment to the organisation.

IV. CONCLUSION

The uniqueness and strength of this study can be located in its ability to investigate multiple variables (that is, the influence of communication, victim and survivor support on survivor qualities) in a single study. Most downsizing

studies were conducted in economically stable environments such as Europe and the Western economies; our study was conducted in an economically unstable context. In summary, the paper has directed attention towards a relatively new concept in HRM and organisational behavior – that is, survivor quality. Results have identified communication and victim support as key predictors of survivor qualities. The results also indicate that when organisations downsize in an unstable economic environment, survivor and victim support do not have an influence on survivor attitude. Although, future research might attempt further clarification of our findings, this study has however drawn some managerial implications which may provide useful guide for downsizing strategists. This study also contributes significantly to downsizing literature which is presently in short supply especially in developing and underdeveloped economies.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has succeeded in presenting a number of managerial implications. Firstly, the results support the need for managerial knowledge of the environment/context in which downsizing takes place. This helps in the identification and decision on the best and most important downsizing strategy to adopt when downsizing. Secondly, it is critical for HR practitioners/managers to understand and distinguish the different effects of each of the selected downsizing strategy and variables on survivor qualities. Lastly, the results provide essential leads for differential and careful treatment of survivors during and after downsizing. Further research might direct attention in the area of strategies used by organisations in the same business or across different contexts and cultures, ensuring that survivor qualities before downsizing are measured.

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