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The effect of perceived service quality, satisfaction and loyalty on perceived job performance: perceptions of university graduates

Lovemore Chikazhe^a, Charles Makanyeza ^b and Nicholas Z. Kakava^c

^aDepartment of Marketing, Chinhoyi University of Technology, Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe; ^bGraduate Business School, Chinhoyi University of Technology, Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe; ^cDepartment of Consumer Sciences, Chinhoyi University of Technology, Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe

ABSTRACT

Studies focusing on the effect of graduates' perceived service quality, graduates' satisfaction and loyalty on graduates' perceived job performance are scarce. Therefore, this study was conducted to narrow this knowledge gap. A cross-sectional survey of 430 university graduates was carried out in Harare, Zimbabwe. Structural equation modelling was used to test the research hypotheses. Results show that graduates' perceived service quality and loyalty each positively influences graduates' perceived job performance. It was found that graduates' satisfaction does not significantly influence graduates' perceived job performance.

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KEYWORDS

Graduate loyalty; graduate satisfaction; higher education; perceived job performance; perceived service quality; Zimbabwe

Introduction

Service quality remains the only differentiator to products and services offered within the service industry (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Gronroos, 2007; Kim, Jeong, et al., 2015). Furthermore, the survival of service industry hinges on the provision of superior service quality (Abas & Imam, 2016; Ariani, 2015; El Alfy & Abukari, 2019; Herrera, 2016; Maringe & Mourad, 2012; Saif, 2014). As part of survival strategies within the service industry, management has an important role to continuously monitor service quality levels (Cabellero & Walker, 2010; Rezaei et al., 2017). It is against this backdrop that service organisations are expected to understand procedures, processes and essential resources necessary for service quality improvement. It is through superior service quality offering that organisations are able to maintain satisfied and loyal customers (Herrera, 2016; Kim, Vogt, et al., 2015). In the case of the higher education sector, observing the service quality calls leads to the production of competent and highly performing graduates. Thus, universities should listen to graduates and employers for the feedback as regards to how well they are meeting customer expectations (Hayward, 2016). Moreover, employers expect to engage well-trained university graduates who are equipped with necessary and modern skills (Abas & Imam, 2016; Borgogni et al., 2017; Cihat, 2015; Guibault, 2016).

The Zimbabwean industry is also concerned with the quality of graduates coming out from universities (Garwe, 2014). Unsatisfactory job performance and incompetence are

some of the challenges being faced by employers as they engage university graduates (Majoni, 2014). Employers claim that there is a skills gap between expected and actual performance by university graduates (Muchemwa, 2017). It is alleged that massive enrolment of students is compromising service delivery within the higher education sector and leading to the production of graduates with employability and performance challenges (Garwe, 2014; Majoni, 2014).

Several studies have been conducted in an attempt to fully understand job performance (Belwal et al., 2017; Dauda et al., 2013; Jankingthong & Rurkkhum, 2012; Lowden et al., 2011; Luca et al., 2016; Mafumbate et al., 2014; Nazeer et al., 2016; Plantilla, 2017). However, earlier studies have not paid attention to the effect of graduates' perceived service quality, satisfaction and loyalty on graduates' perceived job performance. Moreover, university graduates' perceptions have not been accorded notable attention in previous studies. This study is unique in that it focuses on graduates' perceived job performance as an outcome of graduates' perceived service quality, satisfaction and loyalty, an area whose research attention is hardly visible in the public domain. This study was, therefore conducted in order to narrow this knowledge gap; thereby expanding the frontiers of higher education marketing literature.

The purpose of the study was to test factors influencing graduates' perceived job performance. The specific objectives of the study were to establish the effect of graduates' perceived service quality on graduates' perceived job performance, to determine the effect of graduates' satisfaction on graduates' perceived job performance, and to establish the effect of graduates' loyalty on graduates' perceived job performance.

Theoretical framework

Graduates' perceived job performance

Farh et al. (2012) described perceived job performance as the assessment of how one is able to achieve delegated tasks. Perceived job performance entails the employee to assess his/her own work performance (Plantilla, 2017). Previous researchers defined job performance as the evaluation of the ability of an employee to perform assigned task as expected by the employer (Ojo, 2014; Tarus & Rabach, 2013). Additionally, job performance comprises behaviour or activities carried out by workers with the aim of achieving organisational goals (Christian et al., 2011; Kahya, 2007; Wang et al., 2010).

The job performance construct has attracted much attention in marketing research (Luca et al., 2016; Mafumbate et al., 2014; Plantilla, 2017). Employers use job performance as a measure to evaluate if an individual is performing to expected level (Ojo, 2014). Kahya (2007) describes perceived job performance as behaviour by employees aimed at achieving the firm's goal. Furthermore, perceived job performance positively contributes to organisational effectiveness and profitability (Bevan, 2012). Plantilla (2017) further stressed that employees who perform well are those with the ability to carry out assigned duties independently or with minimum supervision. Similarly, workers' self-efficacy, effort and competitiveness are significant contributors to job performance (Annamdevula & Bellamkonda, 2016; Bevan, 2012; LeMahieu et al., 2017; Plantilla, 2017). Hodgman (2018) established that high job performance is made up of intercultural, interpersonal and ethical decision-making skills.

The major goal for universities is to produce high performing graduates equipped with modern and necessary skills (LeMahieu et al., 2017). Therefore, university graduates that fail to perform to employer's expectations are likely to face promotional challenges (Annamdevula & Bellamkonda, 2016; Leisink & Steijn, 2009). Employers assess performance of university graduates at the workplace and provide feedback to training institutions. In this regard, Wang et al. (2010) claim that job performance may be used as a tool to measure the level of service delivery within training institutions. Abas and Imam (2016) encouraged universities to listen to the industry's feedback on graduates' performance as this could help to improve service delivery.

Graduates' perceived job performance is thus understood in this study as the self-assessment of skills by university graduates with respect to fulfilment of their employers' expectations on accomplishment of job tasks and responsibilities. In this study, graduates' job assessment comprises factors such as quality, quantity and effectiveness of work as well as the behaviours in the workplace. Furthermore, graduates' job performance assessment takes into consideration the specific skills/competencies required for the job, ability to apply knowledge into practice and employer's satisfaction with knowledge in the appropriate field.

Graduates' perceived service quality

Out of the extensive debate on the definition of service quality since 1980, it is generally agreed that service quality has much to do with usefulness of the product or service, meeting customer needs and comparison between expectations and perceptions (Ali & Ahmed, 2018; Ali et al., 2016; Arambewela et al., 2006; Berry et al., 1988; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Khanchitpol, 2014; Parasuraman et al., 1988; Zeithaml, 1988). Parasuraman et al. (1988) stress that service quality is a function of five dimensions, namely assurance, tangibility, reliability, responsiveness and empathy. Service quality explains intangible products that can only be owned and stored after delivery for consumption (Cronin & Taylor, 1992). Lovelock and Wirtz (2011) further describe service quality as a modern concept used by the firm's customer to rank and compare service providers. Customers may also use the service quality concept to compare actual performance against perceived expectation (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Gronroos, 2007; Joseph & Joseph, 1997; Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011).

Sultan and Wong (2012) claim that, service quality is of major concern to organisations the world over. This has been necessitated by the fact that service quality is the only differentiator for services offered on the global market. Failure to improve service quality results in the loss of customers which leads to reduced business transactions (Ngo & Nguyen, 2016). However, organisations operating in the services industry face difficulties due to characteristics of services that include heterogeneity, perishability, inseparability and intangibility (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011).

Perceived service quality plays a significant role in guaranteeing the success of higher education institutions especially in the competitive environment (El Alfy & Abukari, 2019; Herrera, 2016; Khanchitpol, 2014; Mukhanji et al., 2016; Plantilla, 2017; Rezaei et al., 2017). Prasad and Jha (2013) suggest that the key to university graduates' performance is the improvement of service quality within the higher education sector, which eventually results in acceptable performance at work. Similarly, perceived service quality is

considered critical in that it influences perceived job performance (Headar et al., 2013; Plantilla, 2017).

Based on the foregoing discussion, in this study perceived service quality is construed as the evaluation of university's service provision system by graduates in relation to accomplishment of their educational expectations.

Graduates' satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is defined as conclusions made by a customer on the firm's ability to satisfy demands (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2013). Customer satisfaction is related to need contentment, desire, assessment of purchase experiences and evaluation of ultimate and actual result (Ali et al., 2016; Green, 2014; Kim, Vogt, et al., 2015). Several studies (e.g. Arambewela et al., 2006; Ariani, 2015; Khanchitpol, 2014) claim that customer satisfaction is meeting customer expectations. In the case of the higher education sector, customer satisfaction refers to meeting university graduates' expectations through the institution's ability to deliver the expected service (Mukhanji et al., 2016; Plantilla, 2017).

The customer satisfaction construct has been extensively researched in services marketing (Annamdevula & Bellamkonda, 2016; Cheruiyot & Maru, 2013; Green, 2014; Koni et al., 2013; Makanyeza & Chikazhe, 2017; Zeithaml & Bitner, 2013). Signs of customer satisfaction include word of mouth recommendations, recurrent visitations and frequent business transactions (Munari et al., 2013). Organisational success hinges on customer satisfaction (Kim, Vogt, et al., 2015; Ngo & Nguyen, 2016). Therefore, modern businesses are encouraged to continuously analyse and evaluate customer satisfaction levels (Annamdevula & Bellamkonda, 2016). Successful organisations use customer satisfaction as the basis for market share improvement and protection (Annamdevula & Bellamkonda, 2016). More specifically, in services marketing, the huge part of customer satisfaction is the nature of the relationship existing between the firm and its customers (Bryk, 2015). Hence, the quality of service offered by a firm is perceived as the most valuable factor for determining customer satisfaction (Mukhanji et al., 2016).

Customer satisfaction is regarded as post-purchase evaluation of a product or service given the pre-purchase expectations (Kim, Vogt, et al., 2015). Leonnard (2018) proposed that evaluation of customer satisfaction should involve appraising perceived discrepancy between prior expectation and actual performance of the service after consumption. Fulfilment of expectation is referred to as disconfirmation and this can be positive or negative. If performance exceeds expectation, positive disconfirmation is experienced. Negative disconfirmation results from actual performance falling below expectation. Kim, Vogt, et al. (2015) asserts that there is a zero disconfirmation when expectation equals performance. Customer satisfaction is when actual performance matches expectations (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2013).

Increased worldwide competition has given birth to several ways by which firms pursue to uphold competitive advantage. Customer satisfaction is one of the strategies employed by organisations to achieve unmatched competition (Ariani, 2015; Cihat, 2015; Dauda et al., 2013; Peng & Moghavvemi, 2015). It is believed that high performing university graduates are satisfied with the quality of service exhibited by institutions from which they were trained (Clemes et al., 2008; Plantilla, 2017). Likewise, customer satisfaction can be used as a tool to gain competitive advantage (Kermani, 2013; Lowden et al.,

2011; Molefe, 2012; Saif, 2014). This study operationalises graduates' satisfaction as the graduates' contentment with the university's service performance in meeting graduates' expectations, the university's fulfilment of promises, providing adequate service and offering excellent programmes. If universities satisfy graduates by meeting their expectations, it is hoped that graduates become fully equipped with necessary skills and this positively impact on their performance at the workplace.

Graduates' loyalty

Loyalty is viewed as the commitment to rebuy and repatronise products and services frequently in the future notwithstanding marketing efforts and situational influences (Perin et al., 2012). Bevan (2012) added that loyalty is when customers stick to selected brands within the service industry. Makanyeza and Chikazhe (2017) emphasise the need for organisations to pay more attention to the effect of loyalty on business. Through customer loyalty, several organisations have enjoyed competitive advantage while those that have ignored it have struggled (Bevan, 2012). It is through loyal customers that most businesses grow their market share (Medha, 2015; Musaba et al., 2014; Tarus & Rabach, 2013). Rai and Srivastava (2013) confirm that customer loyalty is a sign of contentment and this increases repeated purchases, consistent relationship and patronage. Customer loyalty is directly related to organisational success, increased market share and return on investment (Kim, Jeong, et al., 2015).

Customer loyalty is determined by various factors that include customer satisfaction, service quality, commitment, trust, service recovery, emotions and corporate image (Cheruiyot & Maru, 2013; LeMahieu et al., 2017; Medha, 2015; Paswan & Ganesh, 2009; Tazreen, 2012). Ngo and Nguyen (2016) urged organisations to reduce costs by maintaining loyal customers since acquiring new customers is costly. In addition, maintaining loyal customers is beneficial since they recommend the firm's services to new customers (Makanyeza, 2015). In the case of higher education sector, loyalty is exhibited through university graduates referring other people to enrol with certain preferred institutions (Herrera, 2016; Khanchitpol, 2014). Salgado and Vela (2019) also added that students' loyalty may be improved through the use of the institution's platform page like the Brand Fan Page.

At the centre of marketing efforts is the attainment of customer loyalty (Nasiri et al., 2015; Perin et al., 2012). Customers are loyal to businesses that produce products that perform to their expectations (Gu & Chi, 2009; Jankingthong & Rurkkhum, 2012; Rishipal, 2013). Similarly, Guillon and Cezanne (2014) confirm that customer loyalty positively influences perceived job performance. The study describes graduates' loyalty as the continuous transacting or interaction between university graduates and institutions from which they were trained. The study considers graduates' loyalty through choosing the same university whenever faced with the same choice again, talking positive things about the university, encouraging others to enrol with the same university as well as patronising their universities.

Development of research hypotheses and research model

Previous studies have examined the service quality-job performance relationship (Abas & Imam, 2016; Azevedo et al., 2012; Hodges & Burchell, 2003; Parvin & Kabir, 2011; Plantilla, 2017). However, studies that have specifically tested the effect of graduates'

perceived service quality on graduates' perceived job performance is absent from the existing body of literature. In their study of New Zealand employers' views of how well business graduates are prepared for the workplace, Hodges and Burchell (2003) concluded that there was a competency gap between employers' expectations and performance. A similar study by Azevedo et al. (2012) was conducted to measure the required competencies of business graduates. The results of the study established that employers were not very confident in the capability of business graduates in the competencies investigated in the study. The study by Azevedo et al. (2012) mainly used employers to assess job performance for employees. Likewise, Plantilla (2017) made a similar assessment of the employers' feedback on the performance of business graduates from the University of Rizal System Pililla in Philippines. The findings indicate that employers were satisfied with the performance of graduates in terms of general skills, knowledge and understanding of the job, specialised skills and personal qualities demonstrated at the workplace). Despite the scarcity of literature on the relationship between graduate's perceived service quality and graduates' perceived job performance, it is expected that when graduates' perceive that their university's service quality is high, they are likely to perform well at the workplace (Prasad & Jha, 2013). Therefore, it is posited that:

H1: Graduates' perceived service quality has a positive effect on graduates' perceived job performance.

Findings from previous studies show a general consensus that customer satisfaction has a positive relationship with job performance (Gu & Chi, 2009; Nasser & Abouchdid, 2005). Nasser and Abouchdid (2005) conducted a study to examine the level of satisfaction amongst Lebanese university graduates on their training/education in light of their current occupational level. Findings showed that graduates perceived university education as important in the performance of their occupation. Likewise, Kermani (2013) conducted a related study and examined the link between job satisfaction and customer satisfaction. Findings from the study indicate a positive relationship between job satisfaction and customer satisfaction. The study by Kermani (2013) focussed on the service industry and looked at the general relationship between job satisfaction and customer satisfaction. Similarly, Gu and Chi (2009) examined the relationship between work performance and job satisfaction in Macao's Casino Hotels and in an attempt to determine how job satisfaction enhances work performance. It was established that job satisfaction is significantly correlated with job performance. It can be observed that these studies have focused mainly on the relationship between customer satisfaction (i.e. customers of the organisation employing graduates) and job performance (the performance of graduates at the workplace as viewed by their employers). The effect of the graduates' satisfaction (satisfaction as a result of the services rendered by their universities) on perceived job performance (graduates' own assessment of how they perform at the workplace) is largely invisible in the extant literature. Nonetheless, it is expected that when they are satisfied with the service delivery from their universities, graduates are likely to be competent and the workplace. As such, it is hypothesised that:

H2: Graduates' satisfaction has a positive effect on graduates' perceived job performance.

Literature confirm a general relationship between customer loyalty and job performance (Guillon & Cezanne, 2014; Jankingthong & Rurkkhum, 2012; Nasiri et al., 2015; Rishipal, 2013) i.e. where employees are competent, there is likely to be loyal customers. The assumption that graduates' loyalty (loyalty to their universities) is positively related to graduates' perceived job performance is not present in the public domain. In a study conducted in Thailand to establish factors impacting on job performance, Jankingthong and Rurkkhum (2012) concluded that organisational justice, work engagement, and public service motivation directly affect job performance. The graduates' loyalty construct was not among the variables that influenced job satisfaction; hence this study proposes loyalty to be a driver for graduates' satisfaction. Also, Guillon and Cezanne (2014) investigated the relationship between employee loyalty and organisational performance. The study results indicate that the relationship between employee loyalty and job performance varies according to the type of indicators used. The study focused on the firm performance which makes it different from the current study that focuses on graduates' perceived job performance. A similar study was conducted by Nasiri et al. (2015) to establish the effect of loyal staff on organisational performance. The findings indicate that organisational success is influenced by the loyal employees. It is also expected that when graduates are loyal to their universities, they are likely to perform well at the workplace. The reasoning behind this is that, graduates may not pledge their commitment towards institutions that did not add value to their performance at the workplace. Therefore, it is posited that:

H3 Graduates' loyalty has a positive effect on graduates' perceived job performance.

Based on the foregoing hypotheses, the following research model is proposed in Figure 1 below.

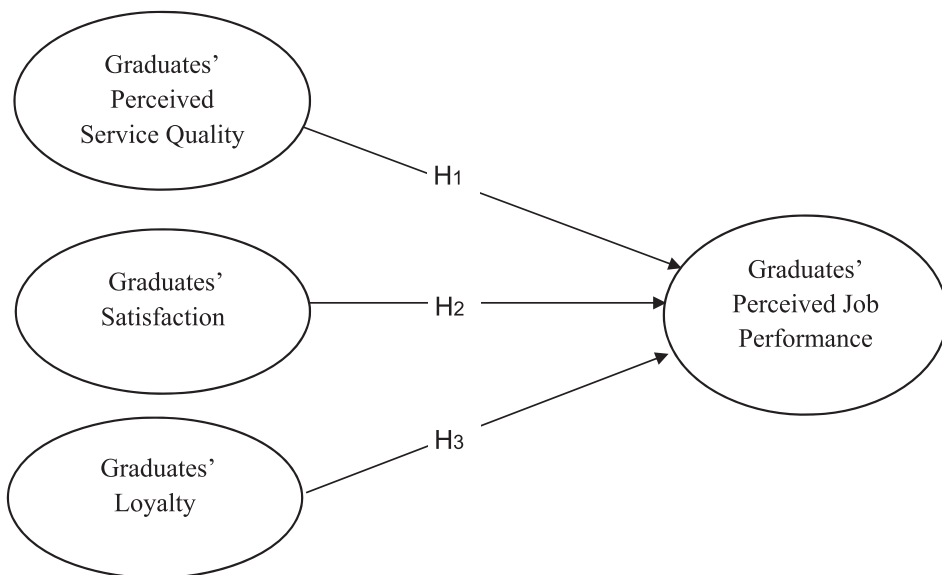


Figure 1. Research model.

Research methodology

The research methodology focuses on questionnaire design and measures, sampling and data collection methods.

Questionnaire design and measures

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised five sections namely, perceived service quality (PSQ), customer satisfaction (SAT), customer loyalty (LOY), perceived job performance (PJP) and demographics. All items under each construct were measured using a Likert scale that ranged from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). The items were adapted from various previous studies as indicated in [Table 1](#). The study borrowed items and modified them to suit the requirements of this study. The items for PSQ, SAT, LOY and PJP focused on perceptions of university graduates.

Sampling and data collection

The study's target population encompassed university graduates employed in Harare Metropolitan Province in Zimbabwe. Harare was selected because of a considerable number of companies employing university graduates (Zimstats, 2018). University graduates were selected as the target population of the study because of their experience of university's service quality as well as work performance experiences using skills acquired during university education. A cross-section of 500 university graduates was taken. The high number of university graduates was considered in an effort to accommodate graduates from all universities in Zimbabwe and to ensure that the sample was representative of the population. Questionnaires were distributed to university graduates from randomly selected companies with the assistance of firm managers and supervisors. Out of the 500 distributed questionnaires, 430 (86%) were returned and usable. The sample profile is presented in [Table 2](#).

The majority (74.2%) of university graduates who participated in the study were aged between 30 and 49 years. Male participants dominated the study (64%) as compared to females (36%). University graduates who studied as conventional students constituted the majority (56%) part of participants, followed by block release students (28%) and part time students (16%). In terms of period of completion by respondents, those who graduated between the period 2011 and 2018 dominated the study (81.1%). The bulk of the respondents (77%) were permanently employed. The majority (74.7%) of the respondents were employed for a period ranging between 5 and 10 years. University graduates with a Bachelor's degree dominated the sample of the study (62%).

Analysis and results

Scale validation

Data were validated through exploratory factor analysis (EFA), convergent validity and discriminant validity before performing structural equation modelling. SPSS® version 22 and AMOS® version 21 were used to analyse data. Sampling adequacy was determined using Kaiser-Meyer Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. The sample was sufficient enough to allow the exploratory factor analysis to be conducted (KMO= .935,

Table 1. Constructs, items, item codes and sources.

Construct	Items and codes	Sources of items
Perceived Service Quality (PSQ)	REL1. The university provides service right the first time	Ng and Priyono (2018), Cronin and Taylor (1992), Green (2014), Krsmanovic et al. (2014), Parasuraman et al. (1985), Prasad and Jha (2013)
Reliability (REL)	REL2. The level of service is same at all times	
	REL3. The university provides error free statements	
	REL4. The university provides responses to clients as promised	
Assurance (ASS)	ASS1. Academic staff possess required knowledge	Chandra et al. (2018), Cronin and Taylor (1992), Green (2014), Krsmanovic et al. (2014)
	ASS2. Academic staff members are highly experienced	
	ASS3. The university provides up to date learning material	
	ASS4. University provides appropriate learning material	
Tangibles (TAN)	TAN1. The university has modern learning materials	Green (2014), Krsmanovic et al. (2014), Chandra et al. (2018), Cronin and Taylor (1992)
	TAN2. The university environment is clean	
	TAN3. Staff members dress smartly	
	TAN4. The university infrastructure (e.g. libraries, labs, sporting facilities, halls, canteen, classrooms, etc.) is attractive	
Empathy (EMP)	EMP1. Administration staff is courteous	Parasuraman et al. (1985), Prasad and Jha (2013), Chandra et al. (2018), Cronin and Taylor (1992), Green (2014), Krsmanovic et al. (2014)
	EMP2. The university understands customer needs	
	EMP3. The university's level of service is consistent with clients' requirements	
	EMP4. University staff listen to customer problems	
Responsiveness (RES)	RES1. The university responds to customer enquiries in the shortest period of time	Chandra et al. (2018), Cronin and Taylor (1992)
	RES2. It is easy to reach the appropriate staff in person	
	RES3. The university's service access points are conveniently located	
	RES4. The university staff help customers to ensure prompt service	
Customer Satisfaction (SAT)	SAT1. The university's service performance is above my expectations	Chandra et al. (2018), Onditi and Wechuli (2017)
	SAT2. The university fulfils promises	
	SAT3. Compared to other universities, I am satisfied	
	SAT4. The university provides adequate service	
Customer Loyalty (LOY)	SAT5. The university offers excellent programmes	Encinas Orozco and Cavazos Arroyo (2017); Chandra et al. (2018), Makanyeza and Chikazhe (2017)
	LOY1. If I were faced with the same choice again, I would still choose the same university	
	LOY2. I talk positive things about this university	
	LOY3. I prefer my university to any other university in Zimbabwe	
	LOY4. I encourage others to enrol with this university	
	LOY5. I am happy to be a patron of this university	Abas and Imam (2016), Cabellero and Walker (2010), Molefe (2012), Plantilla (2017)
Perceived Job Performance (PJP)	PJP1. My employer is happy about my performance with regards to the specific skills/competencies required for the job	
	PJP2. My employer is happy about my ability to apply knowledge into practice	
	PJP3. My employer allows me to work with minimum supervision	

(Continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Construct	Items and codes	Sources of items
	PJP4. My employer is satisfied with my knowledge in the appropriate field	
	PJP5. My employer relies on me as a source of knowledge within the organisation	

Table 2. Sample profile.

Characteristic		Frequency	Percent (%)
Age	Less than 30	24	5.5
	30–39	159	37.0
	40–49	203	47.2
	50–59	42	9.8
	60+	2	.5
Gender	Male	273	63.5
	Female	157	36.5
Type of enrolment at the university	Part Time	67	15.6
	Conventional	241	56.0
	Block release	122	28.4
Year of completion	2000–2005	24	5.6
	2006–2010	57	13.3
	2011–2015	214	49.8
	2016–2018	135	31.3
Employment type	Contract	90	20.9
	Casual	8	1.9
	Permanent	332	77.2
Length of employment	Less than 5 years	150	34.9
	5–10 years	171	39.8
	11–15 years	65	15.1
	16–20 years	33	7.7
	Over 21 years	11	2.6
Highest level of qualification from this university	Bachelor's	268	62.3
	Master's	137	31.9
	Doctoral	25	5.8

Approx. Chi-Square = 13,033.513, Degrees of Freedom = 595, $p < 0.001$). This follows recommendations by Field et al. (2012) that the KMO statistic should be at least 0.5 while the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity should be significant at $p < 0.05$. Factor analysis was conducted using Varimax Rotation. Rotation converged in 8 iterations and the total variance explained by the data was 74.248%.

The following items were deleted due to factor loadings less than 0.6 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988): REL3, RES3 and RES4. Therefore, the rotated component matrix solution gave 8 components namely reliability (REL), assurance (ASS), tangibility (TAN), empathy (EMP), responsiveness (RESP), satisfaction (SAT), loyalty (LOY) and perceived job performance (PJP).

The measurement model was estimated using Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE) (Field, 2009). Measurement model fit indices, reliability, standardised factor loadings, critical ratios and average variance extracted (AVE) were considered in evaluating convergent validity. Results suggest that convergent validity conditions were satisfied. Measurement model fit indices considered were CMIN/DF (χ^2/DF), Goodness of fit index (GFI), Adjusted GFI (AGFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Comparative fit index (CFI) and Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). The measurement model indicated a good fit (CMIN/DF 1.956; GFI .912; AGFI .907; NFI .949; TLI .963; CFI .971; RMSEA .047). An acceptable good model should exhibit a χ^2/DF that falls within the scale of 0–5 with lesser

values indicating a better fit (Field et al., 2012; Hooper et al., 2008). Furthermore, values of GFI, AGFI, NFI, TLI and CFI specify a good fit when nearer to 1, and RMSEA should range between 0.05 and 0.10 for it to be acceptable (Reisinger & Mavondo, 2007).

As indicated in Table 3, all constructs had Cronbach's alpha (α)'s and composite (CRel) reliabilities with a cut-off point of above 0.6 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). All items had standardised factor loadings (λ) above the cut-off point of 0.6 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Critical ratios (CRs) were suitably large and significant at $p < 0.001$. All individual item reliabilities (IIRs) were at least 0.5 (Kuo et al., 2009). All constructs had AVEs larger than 0.5 as shown in Table 4 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Discriminant validity

Discriminant validity was assessed by comparing AVEs against squared inter construct correlations (SICCs). Despite a weaker discriminant validity between satisfaction and loyalty, results in Table 4 indicate that conditions necessary for discriminant validity were fulfilled since all AVEs were bigger than their corresponding SICCs (Segars, 1997). Results also indicate that there were no correlations close to being perfect between the constructs as shown by estimates of less than 0.9. Relationships between constructs should be below the 0.9 threshold if they are distinct from each other (Edward, 2013).

Table 3. λ , IIR, CR, α and CRel.

Constructs	Items	λ	IIR	CR	α	CRel
Reliability	Rel1	.698	.508	–	.816	.819
	Rel2	.751	.563	16.350***		
	Rel4	.772	.595	13.301***		
Assurance	Ass1	.718	.516	–	.892	.896
	Ass2	.743	.551	15.270***		
	Ass3	.899	.809	13.172***		
	Ass4	.776	.602	12.364***		
Tangibility	Tan1	.790	.624	–	.862	.871
	Tan2	.836	.699	17.543***		
	Tan3	.831	.690	17.377***		
	Tan4	.708	.501	13.215***		
Empathy	Emp1	.688	.474	–	.870	.873
	Emp2	.790	.624	16.744***		
	Emp3	.861	.741	14.156***		
	Emp4	.781	.610	12.930***		
Responsiveness	Res1	.821	.674	–	.879	.885
	Res2	.956	.914	16.772***		
Customer satisfaction	Sat1	.812	.660	–	.916	.919
	Sat2	.839	.704	21.887***		
	Sat3	.884	.782	21.294***		
	Sat4	.909	.826	20.798***		
	Sat5	.716	.513	16.196***		
Customer loyalty	Loy1	.881	.776	–	.952	.954
	Loy2	.894	.799	27.139***		
	Loy3	.916	.840	28.783***		
	Loy4	.913	.834	28.322***		
	Loy5	.861	.742	24.728***		
Perceived job performance	PJP1	.869	.754	–	.948	.950
	PJP2	.904	.816	26.953***		
	PJP3	.851	.724	23.876***		
	PJP4	.921	.848	28.086***		
	PJP5	.901	.813	26.822***		

Note: –, CR is fixed; *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 4. Mean (M), standard deviation (SD), AVE and SICC.

Construct	M	SD	REL	ASS	TAN	EMP	RES	SAT	LOY	PJP
Reliability (REL)	3.624	1.011	.549							
Assurance (ASS)	4.076	.709	.458	.619						
Tangibility (TAN)	4.254	.744	.225	.286	.629					
Empathy (EMP)	3.788	.808	.561	.308	.269	.612				
Responsiveness (RES)	3.340	1.044	.321	.112	.057	.340	.794			
Customer Satisfaction (SAT)	3.910	.789	.445	.305	.200	.453	.274	.697		
Customer Loyalty (LOY)	3.977	.909	.420	.230	.132	.348	.244	.677	.798	
Perceived Job Performance (PJP)	4.241	.746	.378	.211	.092	.262	.146	.397	.487	.791

Note: Diagonal elements represent AVEs.

Testing research hypotheses

Structural equation modelling technique was applied in AMOS 21 to test the hypothesised relationships (H1, H2 and H3). Perceived service quality was treated as a second order construct. The structural model was estimated using MLE (Field, 2009). McQuitty and Wolf (2013) supported the adoption of structural equation modelling technique due to its ability to determine associations while at the same time signifying whether or not there is a general fit between the research model and observed data.

The structural model exhibited acceptable model fit indices (CMIN/DF 1.859; GFI .942; AGFI .915; NFI .967; TLI .979; CFI .984; RMSEA .045). Results of hypotheses testing are presented in Table 5.

Results shown in Table 5 indicate that perceived service quality positively influenced perceived job performance. Therefore, H1 was supported. Contrariwise, customer satisfaction did not significantly influence perceived job performance. Thus, H2 was not supported. Customer loyalty was found to positively influence perceived job performance. Therefore, H3 was supported.

Discussion and implications

The study's findings have implications on theory, practice and future research.

Theoretical implications

Studies focussing of factors influencing perceived job performance are scarce. The study was conducted to close this knowledge gap. Thus, this study sought to contribute to the current services marketing body of knowledge by examining the effect of perceived service quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty on perceived job performance of university graduates.

The study established that perceived service quality positively influences perceived job performance. Thus, university graduates perform better if training institutions offer

Table 5. Results of hypotheses testing.

Hypothesis	Hypothesised relationship	SRW	CR	Remark
H1	Perceived Service Quality → Perceived Job Performance	.281	3.696***	Supported
H2	Customer Satisfaction → Perceived Job Performance	.030	.303 ^{ns}	Not supported
H3	Customer Loyalty → Perceived Job Performance	.476	5.930***	Supported

Notes: SRW standardised regression weight, CR critical ratio, ***significant at $p < 0.001$, ^{ns} not significant.

superior service quality. This implies that if universities improve service delivery system, graduates are likely to be equipped with skills that improve job performance. Improved job performance is shown by exhibiting competencies required for the job, applying knowledge into practice and working with minimum supervision. Superior service quality calls for universities to improve service quality dimensions like reliability, assurance, empathy and responsiveness. The finding offers an important contribution to the services marketing body of knowledge because presently, there is a lack of evidence in the public domain as regards this phenomenon.

Customer loyalty was found to influence perceived job performance. Thus, university graduates who are loyal to their institutions perform well at the work place. Customer loyalty implies that graduates would still choose the same university if faced with similar opportunities. Loyal graduates talk positive things about their university, prefer their university to any other university, encourage others to enrol with their university and are also happy to be a patron of their universities. Findings contribute significantly to the services marketing body of knowledge in that the study is among the few to offer empirical evidence based on the relationship between customer loyalty and perceived job performance within the higher education sector. Findings of the study confirm existing understanding in literature that customer loyalty is positively correlated with perceived job performance (Abas & Imam, 2016; Nasiri et al., 2015; Plantilla, 2017; Rishipal, 2013).

The study established that customer satisfaction does not influence perceived job performance. Thus, the extent to which university graduates are satisfied does not influence perceived job performance. This contradicts the common understanding in literature that customer satisfaction has positive relationship with job performance (Dauda et al., 2013; Jankinthong & Rurkkhum, 2012; Kermani, 2013; Parvin & Kabir, 2011). The possible explanation to this can be derived from the fact that university graduates may be satisfied with the institution's service delivery, whilst skills they acquire from the same institution may not necessarily be contributing much to their work performance.

Practical implications

It is imperative for the higher education sector to understand factors that influence job performance. Universities are urged to address issues to do with service quality when dealing with matters pertaining to improvement of graduates' performance. Universities are recommended to pay much attention to service quality dimensions namely assurance, reliability, empathy, tangibility and responsiveness as they are the basis of superior service quality (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2013). Higher education institutions are advised to improve service quality through responding to customer enquiries in the shortest period of time, employing academic staff that possess required knowledge, having modern learning materials, providing level of service that is consistent with clients' requirements and by providing the right service at the right time.

Since it has been established that customer loyalty influences perceived job performance, it is recommended that universities should initiate loyalty programmes that include offering discounts on tuition fees to graduates who choose to further studies with the same university. In an effort to improve customer loyalty, exemptions on selected courses may also be allowed to graduates who intend to further studies with the same institutions. Universities may consider improving alumni associations as these encourage

graduates to remain a part of their institutions. Keeping databases for graduates assists universities to remain in contact with former students and customer loyalty is improved.

Further research implications

The sample was limited to Harare Metropolitan Province only. Thus, generalisation of findings may be difficult. Future researches could be improved by extending related studies to other cities within Zimbabwe and beyond. The current study only used graduates' perceptions to assess the university's service quality and graduates' job performance. Future studies may improve the study results by encompassing students' perceptions to assess the university's service quality. Employers' perceptions may also be incorporated in future studies when assessing the universities' service quality through graduates' performance.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

Charles Makanyeza  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1020-7665>

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