
Preface

John Andrew van der Poll

Graduate School of Business Leadership (SBL)
Midrand,
University of South Africa (Unisa),
P.O. Box 392, Pretoria, 0003, South Africa
Email: vdpolja@unisa.ac.za

Biographical notes: John Andrew van der Poll (PhD, University of South Africa, SA) is a Research Professor in highly dependable business ICTs. He holds a doctorate in Computer Science from the University of South Africa and his research interests are in the feasible specification and reasoning of the properties of specifications for business software. To date he has delivered 14 full research Master's students and 10 Doctoral candidates. Currently, he supervises 16 Doctoral and 10 Master's students. He is the lead author or co-author of more than 86 journal articles and peer-reviewed conference papers. His research has been published in the *Journal of Universal Computer Science (J UCS)*, *Interdisciplinary Journal of Information, Knowledge and Management (IJKM)*, *Progressio – South African Journal for open and distance learning practice*, *African Journal of Information Systems (AJIS)*, *International Journal of Data Mining, Modelling and Management (IJDMMM)*, *Sustainability*, *Malaysian Journal of Computer Science (MJCS)*, *Communications in Computer and Information Science*, and *Energies*, among others. He is a South African National Research Foundation (NRF) rated researcher, category C2.

The six research papers that constitute this special edition, with the theme Connected and Sustainable African Development, focus on modern and sustainable development on the African continent. The authors of these papers address topical issues broadly regarding the sustainability of the mining industry; online business development; management of scarce water resources; retirement planning; foreign direct investment; and aspects around the relationship between organisational commitment and job performance of healthcare workers.

The first paper, entitled 'Linking sustainability reporting to sustainability performance through regulation', by Matakanye and van der Poll, both from the Graduate School of Business Leadership (SBL), University of South Africa, examines the extent to which sustainability reporting accurately reflects sustainability performance with respect to greenwashing in the South African mining industry. A quantitative research choice was followed through, amongst others, exploratory factor analysis, descriptive statistics, the pair-wise t-test and finally structured equation modelling to describe and measure the relationship between sustainability reporting and sustainability performance. While the overall results were inconclusive, the study found indications of greenwashing practices under the dimensions of employee welfare and environmental protection, yet the community dimension showed no evidence of greenwashing. The researchers further

concluded that regulation does not necessarily reduce greenwashing, rather it is more important for business leaders to proactively engage with stakeholders and leading role players to address greenwashing. Future work in this area could, therefore, investigate the effect of greenwashing from a multiple stakeholder perspective in other industries.

In the second paper, entitled 'Loyalty and word-of-mouth as outcomes of South African Airbnb customers' relationship quality', by Collins and Mostert from the University of Pretoria, South Africa, the authors investigate both composite and disaggregate approaches to consumer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth as outcomes of relationship quality between customers and an online firm, Airbnb. Eight hypotheses between relationship quality as an independent variable and loyalty and positive word-of-mouth as dependent variables were defined for the composite model, and similarly between trust, commitment and satisfaction as independent variables and loyalty and positive word-of-mouth as dependent variables for the disaggregate model. A quantitative survey was conducted among 250 South African respondents. For the composite model it was found that relationship quality is a positive predictor for both loyalty and word-of-mouth, and for the disaggregate model it was found that trust and satisfaction are positive predictors of loyalty and word-of-mouth. Commitment, however, turned out to be not a significant predictor of either loyalty or positive word-of-mouth. These results are significant for a firm aiming to improve on their customer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth. Future work in this area could investigate additional constructs, for example, value and benevolence.

The third paper, entitled 'An assessment of employees' intention to retire in Kenya' by Rono from the Moi University, Kenya, Agasha, from the Makerere University Business School (MUBS), Uganda and Lagat, Moi University, Kenya, investigates the factors influencing an employee's intention to retire. The research was guided by three theories, namely, the Theory of Planned Behaviour, Image Theory, and Work-role Attachment Theory. The research was undertaken among seven public Kenyan universities, and a sample of 384 employees were approached. A response rate of 87.1% was achieved. Relationships among financial factors, psychological factors, personal factors, entrepreneurial intensity and intention to retire were investigated. A conceptual framework was constructed, and the indicated relationships were quantitatively analysed through four hypotheses using various statistical measures applied to the outcome of a comprehensive Likert-scale questionnaire. On the strength of the results, a second, statistical model was derived. The model confirmed the hypotheses, namely that financial factors, psychological factors, personal factors and entrepreneurial intensity positively affect an individual's intention to retire. Implications for theory, practice and policy makers are proposed. Amongst others, it is suggested that government should develop policies that encourage employees to accumulate personal savings.

In the fourth paper, entitled 'A framework for agile project management for the water industry in developing economies', by Masia and van der Poll, both from the Graduate School of Business Leadership (SBL), University of South Africa, the authors develop a conceptual framework for embedding agile project management principles in the South African water industry. A set of qualitative propositions made up of content propositions, associations and general propositions was defined on the strength of a comprehensive literature review on agile principles from the software industry and challenges emanating from the South African water industry. Central to these observations are: the adoption of the updated Agile manifesto by instituting autonomous and self-organising teams; application of knowledge management principles; the establishment of a project

management office; and upper management support, all aimed at establishing a sustainable South African water management industry. Future work will include the validation of the framework through industry cases and surveys among stakeholders in the water industry.

The fifth paper, entitled ‘The nexus between FDI inflows and economic development in Ghana: empirical analysis from ARDL model’, by Olorogun, Department of Economics and Finance, Faculty of Economics, Administrative, and Social Sciences, Istanbul Gelisim University, Turkey, investigates the extent to which FDI influences financial development and economic growth in Ghana. The study was undertaken because previous studies reported inconclusive findings for other countries on the African continent. Southern African studies indicated FDI to be an impediment, while elsewhere in Africa positives of FDI have been reported, or no relationship between FDI and economic development was found. Using annual time series data from 1984 to 2018 obtained from the World Bank, an ARDL methodology was implemented and numerous statistical time series tests were conducted. Dynamic relationships among the FDI, GDP, FDPS, FDFINS, FDBS, inflation and population were investigated. While the results indicated a neutral relationship between GDP and FDI-led growth in Ghana, they do indicate a positive effect on economic expansion with reference to, for example, the population and financial development in the private sector in the long run. The researcher recommends that policy makers should reduce total control and involvement in the markets and promote private sector empowerment to facilitate sustained FDI-led economic growth. Authorities should furthermore find ways to stabilise the country’s currency.

The final paper, entitled ‘Organisational commitment, work engagement and job performance: empirical study on Nigeria’s public healthcare system’, by Raji, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria, Ladan, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria, Alam, Universiti Utara, Sintok, Kedah State, Malaysia and Idris, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria, investigates relationships among organisational commitment, work engagement and job performance related to the wellbeing and job performance of nurses in the Nigerian public health care industry, in the Kaduna State of Nigeria. Following a literature review, the authors divide organisational commitment into affective, continuance and normative commitment. Six hypotheses are defined, and primary data were collected through a Likert-scale instrument administered to 406 nurses in public hospitals in the Kaduna State, Nigeria. The data were analysed employing Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that affective commitment and normative commitment have a significant positive effect on nurses’ job performance and work engagement mediates affective commitment, normative commitment and nurses’ job performance relationships. A number of recommendations are put forward, amongst others that policy makers should strive to improve the commitment and work engagement levels of nurses to obtain improved job performance. Future work has been indicated as embarking on a longitudinal time horizon and applying the research in industries other than healthcare.

The six papers in this special issue provide insights to the challenges and opportunities on the African continent. These include opportunities to reduce greenwashing in the mining industry, sustain online business, facilitate employees’ retirement planning, manage scarce resources, facilitate FDI for African economies, and increase job performance of healthcare workers through improved organisational

commitment. Emphases have been placed on the needs of the individual and, at a higher level, that of firms, and ultimately developing nations.

Future research might test some of the frameworks and models proposed by these research works through industrial cases within firms in their home countries. The results of these validations and subsequent strengthening of the models may emerge over time only, thereby moving these studies into a longitudinal time horizon. Imperative to many of these studies is the use of innovative ICTs to promote sustainable growth for their developing economies. Further cognisance should be given to the upliftment of individuals through retirement planning and improved healthcare, and at a higher level that of nations aimed at regional and national sustainability. Plausibly, these may be achieved through international expansion of the local markets and industries on the continent. As indicated by some of the studies, national policies may have to be revised to address the challenges brought about by the resultant globalisation.