



Afrocentric Attitudinal Reciprocity and Social Expectations of Employees: The Role of Employee-Centred CSR in Africa

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Received: 31 August 2018 / Accepted: 30 October 2019 / Published online: 14 November 2019
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Abstract

In view of the limited consideration for Afrocentric perspectives in organisational ethics literature, we examine Employee-Centred Corporate Social Responsibility (EC-CSR) from the perspective of Afrocentric employees' social expectations. We posit that Afrocentric employees' social expectations and the organisational practices for addressing these expectations differ from conventional conceptualisation. By focusing specifically upon the psychological attributes evolving from the fulfilment of employees' social expectations, we argue that Afrocentric socio-cultural factors could influence perceived organisational support and perceived employee cynicism. We further draw upon social exchange theory to explore rational reciprocity (i.e. attitude and behaviour) evolving from the fulfilment and breach of employees' social expectations at work. Contrary to the rational norm of reciprocity, we identify a reciprocity norm within which the breach of employees' social expectations could in fact engender positive reciprocity rooted in *esan* reciprocity ideology—an ideology that emerged from the ethical tradition of the *Yoruba* people from Nigeria, West Africa. Overall, our paper elucidates the implications of Afrocentric peculiarities for employees' social exchange within the African workplace, thus extending the present understanding in this regard.

Keywords Employees' social expectations · Employee-centred corporate social responsibility · Social exchange · *esan* reciprocity ideology

Introduction

African cultures are considerably similar, mainly in terms of the pervasive preference of the African people for community life (Agulanna 2010; Mbigi 2005; Menkiti 1984). In effect, the African way of life suggest that 'people are not individuals, living in a state of independence, but part of a community, living in interdependent relationships' (Turaki 2006, p. 36). Indicatively, an African is less resilient as a lone individual, but may be greatly resilient as a community member. The sense of community amongst Africans further resonates with the ubuntu philosophical aphorism: '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*' which is translated as 'I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am' (Mbiti 1969, p. 106). The penchant for community life is so pervasive in

Africa such that the emphasis on 'humanity and relationships' exceed the emphasis on 'material wealth' (Shonhiwa 2006, p. 6). Besides, African communal instinct as encapsulated in *ubuntu* philosophy (and other Afrocentric ethics) have positive implications for 'compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony and humanity in the interests of building and maintaining community' (Nussbaum 2009, p. 100).

Thus, a pervasive expectation that certain institutions (for example, family, government, educational and corporate institutions) are in effect responsible for meeting the communal needs of the people is ingrained within African societies (Agulanna 2010). For example, an individual carrying out his social and economic obligations within the *Igbo* society of south-eastern Nigeria expects his/her community to positively reciprocate by providing him/her with the required social support (Agulanna 2010). In the pre-colonial *Igbo* society, community members shared both joy and sorrow together with the entire village, leading to a more fulfilled life, even if it was lacking in material comforts (Udeze 2009). These deep-rooted prosocial behaviours in African communities may have fundamental influences on the expectations of indigenous African employees.

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Nevertheless, there are significant problems associated with the organisational support provided for the indigenous African worker, with ubiquitous social deprivation prevalent in the African workplace.¹ For example, sub-Saharan Africa has constantly recorded higher rates of working poverty, with 33.6% of all employed people living in extreme poverty in 2016—i.e. on less than US\$1.90 per day—and an additional 30.1% in moderate poverty—i.e. between US\$1.90 and US\$3.10 per day (International Labour Organisation-ILO 2017). Besides, there are concerns as to the ability of political institutions to uphold employees' rights in the workplace (Graham et al. 2016). As of 2017, the Nigerian parliament, for instance had not ratified 58 ILO's conventions on labour market governance, with further drawbacks in legislating labour laws supportive of workers (ILO 2017a). This governance gap has provided employers with ample opportunity to compromise employees' rights even in sectors that are critical to national survival.

Indigenous African workers have been driven to engage in persistent labour strikes across Africa (Aye 2017; Chinguno 2013), with employees trying to reaffirm their power and claim their due benefits from employers. For example, many strike actions have been undertaken in the Nigerian oil industry, where the two labour unions: Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGAS-SAN) and the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) have over the years resorted to strike actions to protest poor working conditions (see Aye 2017). Similar labour conflicts have been prevalent in the South-African mining industry. For instance, on 16 August 2012, the South-African Police Service (SAPS) opened fire on a crowd of striking mineworkers at Marikana. The open fire assault led to the death of 34 mineworkers, while 78 workers were severely injured, with 250 of the miners arrested (Alexander 2016; Marikana Commission Inquiry Report 2015).

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has recognised the presence of a cycle of neglect of employee rights, recommending the need to strengthen the capacity of labour governance throughout the African region through the adoption of the 'Decent Work Agenda' (see ILO 1999). The Decent Work Agenda promotes 'jobs [that are] decent, workplaces that are inclusive and where workers have a voice to

stand up for their rights' (Ryder 2015, p. 4). In this regard, Employee-Centred CSR (EC-CSR), aligns with the Decent Work Agenda of the ILO, as it comprises of 'organisational practices aimed at fulfilling employees' social expectations with the purpose of creating quality of working life and workplace harmony'.

Accordingly, given the ingrained socio-cultural roots in the African workplace, and the prevalent deficiencies in worker's rights and social welfare, one has to understand *what* the indigenous African worker *expects* from his/her employer in order to understand *how* EC-CSR can be effectively fulfilled. Nevertheless, employees' social expectations, i.e. how employees perceive their work environment and their future development within the company (Aguilera et al. 2007, p. 6), have thus far been neglected by EC-CSR scholars (e.g. Barrena-Martínez et al. 2017; Mory et al. 2016, Peterson 2004; Shen and Zhu 2011). More remarkably, the infiltration of African cultural values into the dynamics of employment relationships within the African workplace, has been unacknowledged in extant debates.

In view of the above, our aim in this paper is to discern the reciprocal relationship that might occur if employees' social expectations are fulfilled and breached, specifically within the African workplace. To achieve this aim, we integrated conventional literature on the themes of EC-CSR, psychological contract and social exchange, with fragmented Afrocentric literature to explain conventional and Afrocentric expectations of employees regarding EC-CSR and the conventional and Afrocentric reciprocities that might evolve when these expectations are fulfilled and breached. Accordingly, the objectives of this paper are fourfold:

- (a) To explore the dynamics of employees' social expectations from the perspective of the psychological contract, and the perceived EC-CSR practices for addressing these expectations in the Afrocentric workplace;
- (b) To juxtapose conventional conceptualisations of perceived organisational support and perceived employee cynicism with Afrocentric conceptualisations of the same subject matter;
- (c) To explore the conventional/rational reciprocity evolving from the fulfilment and breach of employees' social expectations in the Afrocentric workplace.
- (d) To explore Afrocentric reciprocity that might evolve from the breach of employees' social expectations in view of *esan* reciprocity ideology—an ideology that emerged from the ethical tradition of the *Yoruba* people from Nigeria, West Africa.

We aim to contribute to extant literature on the Afrocentric employee-organisation relationship in the following ways. First, by identifying the contrast between Afrocentric employees' social expectations (perceived psychological

¹ The cause of social deprivation in the African workplace despite the prosocial behaviour of early Africans remains unfounded. There is an allegation that colonialism distorted communal values in Africa (Murithi 2006), with a form of 'jettisoning' of African indigenous traditions (Akinola and Uzodike 2017, p. 93). Similarly, Udeze (2009) suggests that 'colonisation introduced a different class of people or social status based on wealth, education, politics to name a few. Africans failed to manage the sudden change of societal values by foreign culture to their advantage' (p. 53).

contract) and the conventional organisational practices for addressing these expectations (i.e. EC-CSR), we demonstrate the implications of socio-cultural exigencies for employees' social expectations at the workplace. From the policy perspective, the paper highlights the need for EC-CSR policy makers to acknowledge and integrate socio-cultural requirements to their policy development process. Second, we extend the present understanding of employee psychology, by integrating conventional and Afrocentric literature to explain the influence of the fulfilment and breach of employees' social expectations on perceived organisation support and perceived employee cynicism respectively. This integrative dimension to theorisation stimulates our understanding of the dynamics of positive and negative reciprocity from the conventional and Afrocentric perspectives. Finally, and most importantly, we explicate the implications of the Afrocentric ethical ideology for social exchange in the workplace.

Specifically, we argue that there exists peculiar instances where breach of employees' social expectations could in effect engender positive reciprocity within the Afrocentric workplace. This peculiar reciprocity stance is ascribed to *esan* reciprocity ideology, which emerged from *Odu Ifa*; the ethical corpus of the *Yoruba* people from Nigeria, West Africa (see Balogun 2013; Elebuibon 2004; Fasola 2015). For clarity, the *Yoruba* people, consist of about 30 million people of whom live in south-western Nigeria today, with enclaves and diasporas in other African countries and beyond (Akintoye 2010). According to Apter (2018 as cited in Matory 2019):

Yoruba culture overwhelms the other African-diaspora cultures it encounters in the Americas, and both the Haitian state and the gender relations of the Brazilian plantation have assumed its shape. [...]. Several other aspects of Yoruba culture also endure in the Americas. One is syncretism, or the Afro-Latin American practice of correlating African gods with Roman Catholic saints, and the use of the latter in rites for the benefit of the former (p. 111).

Apter's narrative above suggests that although *esan* originated from the *Yoruba* ethical tradition, its ideological overtones may reverberate in other parts of Africa and Africa-diaspora culture. Furthermore, *Odu Ifa* is referred to as the sacred text of the spiritual and ethical tradition of the *Yoruba* people (Karenga 1999). The divinity of *Odu Ifa* was captured in the account of Karenga (2012) thus:

Nowhere is the profundity and beauty of African spirituality more apparent than in the *Odu Ifa*, the sacred text of the spiritual and ethical tradition of *Ifa*, which is one of the greatest sacred texts of the world and a classic of African and world literature. Its central message

revolves around the teachings of the goodness of and in the world; the chosen status of humans in the world; the criteria of a good world; and the requirements for a good world'. (Karenga 2012, p. A-7)

We are not unconscious of the fact that Africa is a large continent with several nations who have diverse cultures, languages and dialects. Notwithstanding the diverse background of Africa, 'there are many basic similarities in the religious systems-everywhere there is the concept of God (called by different names); there is also the concept of divinities and/or spirits as well as beliefs in the ancestral cult. Every locality may and does have its own local deities, its own festivals, its own name or names for the Supreme Being, but in essence the pattern is the same. There is that noticeable "Africanness" in the whole pattern' (Awolalu 1976, p. 2).

Prior to contextualising the propositions underpinning the above-mentioned contributions, we provide insights into EC-CSR below.

Employee-Centred Corporate Social Responsibility

Employee-Centred CSR (EC-CSR) have in recent times been conceptualised from different but related perspectives. For instance, it has been referred to as socially responsible human resource management (SR-HRM) comprising of three components of 'labour law-related legal compliance HRM; employee-oriented HRM and general CSR facilitation HRM' (Shen and Zhu 2011, p. 3022). While the legal compliance HRM requires firms to propagate action with regard to issues of health and safety, equal opportunity, working hours, minimum wage and the use of child or forced labour, the employee-oriented HRM focuses on providing for employees' social needs such as training and professional development, mentoring, employee participation and involvement (ibid.). The general CSR facilitation HRM are operational HRM functions aimed at facilitating both internal and external CSR programs. In contrast to Shen and Zhu's (2011) interpretation, Mory et al. (2016), defines EC-CSR more narrowly, as comprising of 'socially responsible behaviour by a company towards its employees' (p. 1394), encompassing activities such as; employee development, diversity, employee empowerment and creating a positive working environment.

Hence, while both definitions perceive EC-CSR as an organisational practice aimed at fulfilling employee needs beyond those dictated by legal requirements, Mory et al. (2016), firmly disassociates EC-CSR from organisational concerns for employees' economic expectations, as delineated through the employment contract to those concerns

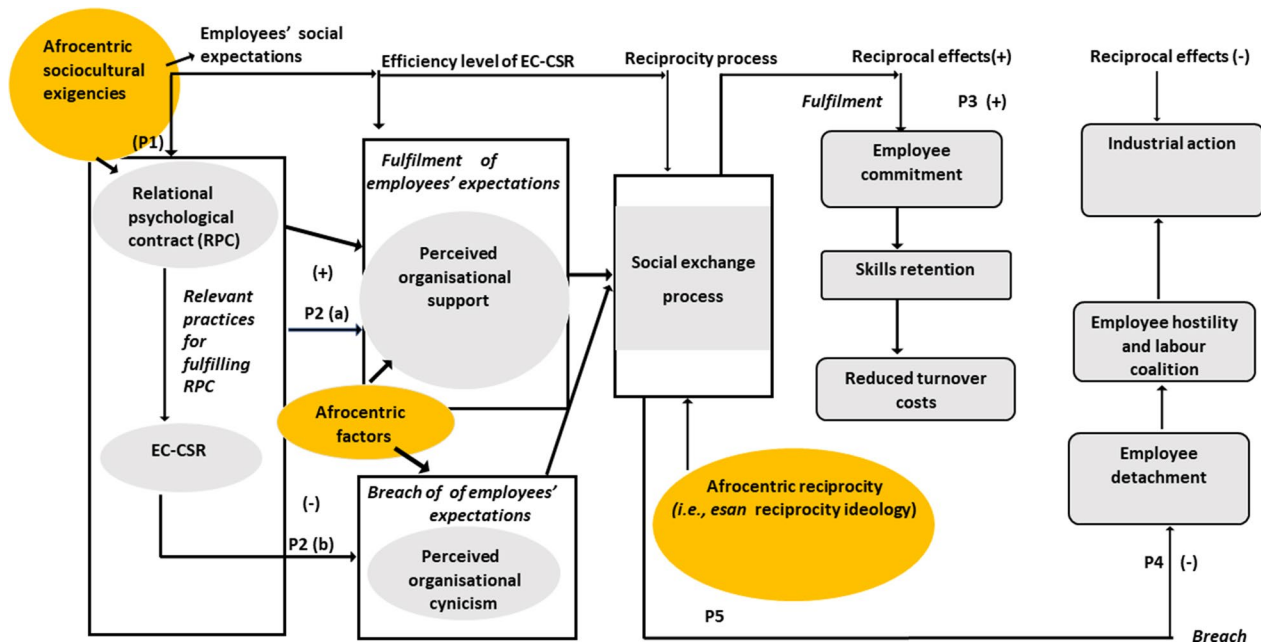


Fig. 1 Afrocentric EC-CSR model

related to employees' social expectations, thereby, aligning well with our own conceptualisation of EC-CSR (see Fig. 1).

In another view, Turker (2009) incorporated physical factors into the conceptualisation of EC-CSR defining it as 'activities which are directly related with the physical and psychological working environment of employees' (p. 192). While the definition, does focus upon the specific types of internal CSR activities which could engender a positive physical and psychological working environment for employees, it is nevertheless, implied that a quality work environment devoid of workplace hazards could provide for employees' physical needs (Csiernik, 2014). Moreover, employees' psychological needs could be addressed through practices such as work–life balance, job security, and empowerment, amongst others. In relation to the latter, Bauman and Skitka (2012) draw from micro-level psychological perspective to define EC-CSR as 'a means through which companies can address several of employees' needs, enhance their overall well-being, and strengthen their relationship with their organisation' (p. 75). They further posited that an employee relationship with the organisation, can be influenced by adopting internal CSR practices which could fulfil four basic psychological needs (i.e., security, self-esteem, sense of belongingness, and work meaningfulness), thereby, enabling organisations to have a positive complement to formal employment contracts.

Drawing on extant definitions evidenced above, we define EC-CSR as 'organisational practices aimed at providing for

employees' social expectations with the purpose of creating quality of working life and workplace harmony'.

Having defined EC-CSR, we now focus upon examining the contextual implications for EC-CSR.

EC-CSR and Context Specificity

EC-CSR reiterates the need for organisations to make strategic allocations aimed at fulfilling employment-focused (e.g. workplace wellbeing) or extraneous (e.g. family and personal wellbeing) expectations of their workforce. In doing so, it is also imperative that organisations acknowledge the potential influences of context-specific factors upon employees' expectations. For instance, the African community life could have implications for employees' social expectations, permeating those expectations which are both formal and informal in nature.

Nevertheless, these informal employees' social expectations are largely underemphasised in western contexts (Matten and Moon 2008). For example, even though western-oriented EC-CSR practices, such as work–life balance does enable employees to achieve a balanced work and personal life (Delecta 2011), there are no indications that these practices acknowledges the socio-cultural priorities of non-westerners, such as indigenous African workers. Thus, we surmise that the socio-cultural priorities of western organisations with regard to EC-CSR, might be different from those of their African contemporaries in view of the specificities of the African context.

African specificities are not confined to socio-economic dimensions such as, poverty and informality, but as examined at the outset of this paper, they also include, the historico-political contextual dimensions, such as tribal identity and colonisation (Rivera-Santos et al. 2015). These dimensions are likely to influence employment relationships in Africa, thus offering opportunities for the advancement of Afrocentric factors within the EC-CSR discourse. Poverty for instance could influence the kind of social support employees expect from their employer and would in turn, determine the nature of their reciprocal behaviour within the employment relationship. Informality could affect employees' dress sense (e.g., preference for native clothing as official dresscode rather than the formal western dresscode). Informality could also affect employees' perception of the employment contract as they might overlook critical elements of the contract given that they are accustomed to communal informalities. Furthermore, tribal exigencies and differing worldviews, such as *ubuntu* could enlighten our understanding of how informal institutions influence individual decisions within the employment relationship.

Thus, while it could be argued that certain fundamentals of EC-CSR remain the same, the associated issues vary in nature and importance across industries and geographical locations (Atuguba and Dowuona-Hammond 2006). Hence, it is reasonable to surmise that organisations stand a better chance of fulfilling their employees' social expectations and potentially engendering workplace harmony *if* they are cognisant of prevalent religious, historical and cultural contexts of work while formulating their EC-CSR policies. Clearly, EC-CSR is a localised and socially embedded concept and as such the prevailing ideas, perceptions, and issues together with the modes of practicing it should conform to the dictates of the socio-economic [or socio-cultural] environment (Amaeshi et al. 2006).

Based upon the preceding arguments, and acknowledging the dominance of conventional (western) literature in EC-CSR, we argue for the 'need to better understand the opportunities of Africa as a context for Africa-bound, Africa-specific, and universal research not only in areas related to business and society issues but also for the broader management literature' (Kolk and Rivera-Santos 2018, p. 428).

In the subsequent sections of this paper, we offer relevant propositions to justify the four aims of this paper. Figure 1 provides a graphic representation of the Afrocentric EC-CSR and social exchange model proposed in this regard.

Proposition 1 *Afrocentric exigencies play a critical role in shaping employees' psychological contract (i.e. employees' expectations) and organisational EC-CSR practices for fulfilling them.*

Collectively, the psychological contract and EC-CSR revolve around employees' expectations of the organisation and the organisational practices aimed at fulfilling employees' expectations (see Luu 2016; O'Donohue and Nelson 2009). Thus, a deeper understanding of the psychological contract could help organisations in developing suitable EC-CSR strategies for fulfilling employees' social expectations. In this regard, the psychological contract is a prominent framework for understanding the perceived nature of employee-organisational relationship and its resultant implications upon employee attitudes and behaviours such as affective commitment and employee turnover intentions (Coyle-Shapiro and Conway 2005a; Coyle-Shapiro et al. 2019; Giannikis and Nikandrou 2013).

A psychological contract reflects 'an individual's beliefs regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between that focal person and another party' (Rousseau 1989, p. 123). For instance, employees could perceive that it is their employer's responsibility to proactively address their concerns regarding employment stability, training, compensation, skills development (Bauman and Skitka 2012), and working conditions (Aguilera et al. 2007). These beliefs then, inform employees' social expectations of the organisation (e.g. EC-CSR) and their reciprocal obligations (e.g. commitment) to the organisation. While employees might be keen about gaining fulfilment for their expectations, conversely, organisations might be ignorant of them (Lucero and Allen 1994; Rousseau 1989; Shore and Tetrick 1994) as these expectations could be supplementary to their formal employment contract (Rousseau 2000).

Typologically, psychological contracts are transactional and relational in nature (Rousseau 1995). Transactional contracts are short-term economic exchanges characterised by explicit terms and conditions (Conway and Briner 2005; Morrison and Robinson 1997; Taylor et al. 2006), reflective of Behrend's (1957) bargain principle, 'a fair day's work for a fair day's pay!' (Rousseau and Wade-Benzoni 1994). In contrast, relational contracts permeate the personal and work life of employees (Coyle-Shapiro and Parzefall 2008), involving an emotional investment nurtured by promises, agreement trust, respect, and loyalty (Conway and Briner 2005) and a high level of tolerance (Morrison and Robinson 1997). The impact of relational contracts on employees exceed that of transactional contracts, in that employees with fulfilled relational contracts are more satisfied with their job and are unlikely to think about leaving their jobs (Raja and Johns 2010). However, employees who experience a breach of a transactional contract tend to exhibit lower job satisfaction, eventually reducing their affective organisational commitment (Raja et al. 2004).

While literature does not suggest that one type of psychological contract is superior to the other, it is fair to say that the nature of the contract depends on the employees'

disposition, and the kind of resources that the employee and the organisation are willing to exchange. That said, effective management of relational contracts could be a corporate risk reduction strategy, especially in labour restive sectors in Africa such as the Nigerian oil industry (Fabamise 2018), and the South-African mining industry (Smith 2013), in that such an act could lessen employees' adverse reactions in the event of a formal breach of contract by the organisation (Dulac et al. 2008). In other words, instead of reacting negatively to a formal breach of contract, employees whose relational contracts are being fulfilled could give the organisation the benefit of the doubt (Rousseau 2000). Thus, given its dynamic nature, relational contracts tend to serve as a *substitute* for formal contracts that specify the traditional obligations of employees and employers engaging in fixed long-term employment (Voegtlin and Greenwood 2016).

Furthermore, the relational psychological contract interrelates closely with EC-CSR because both constructs subscribe to the notion that employees will positively reciprocate organisational practices such as, training and career development (Al-bdour et al. 2010; Barrena-Martínez et al. 2017; Brammer et al. 2007; Lee and Bruvold 2003; Mory et al. 2016), favourable working conditions (Conway and Briner 2005), management of employment relations (Hofman and Newman 2014; Mory et al. 2016), communication, transparency and social dialogue (Thang and Fassin 2017), diversity and equal opportunities (Al-bdour et al. 2010; Mory et al. 2016), fair remuneration and social benefits (Hofman and Newman 2014), prevention of health and safety at work (Al-bdour et al. 2010; Thang and Fassin 2017), and work-family balance (Al-bdour et al. 2010; Hofman and Newman 2014).

Nevertheless, while the psychological contract is a universal construct, the socio-cultural context of employees could influence what they expect of the organisation (Linde 2015). However, there are indications that African-based organisations accord little regard for indigenous influences on psychological contract, as they have mostly conformed to practices that emerged from Western organisational theories. For instance, *individualism* is emphasised in the western conceptions of the psychological contract—i.e. it is assumed that the individual can be understood as a separate being from others (Akbar 1984). This conception of individuality deemphasises other parties (e.g. family members, community members, and friends). Furthermore, the individualistic conception of a human's personality contradicts, the *ubuntu* Afrocentric philosophy which emphasises the need to cater for employees' personal wellbeing *as well as* those of their extended families (Mangaliso 2001; Khomba 2011). The *ubuntu* essence suggests that the social expectations of Afrocentric employees may include several non-contractual elements such as family and personal needs. While it can be argued that conventional (western) work-life balance

practices provide for family needs (see Houston 2005), it places little emphasis on how the organisation could accommodate employees' family needs (e.g. healthcare, workplace childcare requirements) within their EC-CSR policy.

In terms of healthcare for instance, Wike and Simmons (2015) suggests that healthcare is a key priority in Sub-Saharan Africa. Clearly, 85% of the employees in the region value healthcare benefits from their companies more than other benefits—such as bonuses and retirement benefits (Consultancy. Africa 2018). Within Nigeria, for instance, the Formal Sector Social Health Insurance Programme (FSSHIP) of the National Health Insurance Scheme provides a system in which the health costs of employees are transferred to designated Health Maintenance Organisations (HMOs). However, employees rarely have access to basic medical care due to the poor state of medical infrastructure across the country (Welcome 2011). As such, employees' psychological contract in the African context would potentially be positioned towards an expectation of organisational support in the areas of medical care, not only for their personal self but for their immediate family as well.

Further influences upon the psychological contract can be seen in relation to employee expectations with regard to leadership, teamwork and collegiality. In terms of leadership, African indigenous leadership, due to its *collective* norms, strives to elicit opinions across the board. If disagreement ensues on an issue, the leadership would listen to all arguments until a unanimous decision has been reached (Chazan 1993; Gyekye 1992). In consonance with this practice, An Afrocentric workforce may in certain instances aim to participate in organisational decision-making especially when there is a conflict to resolve. Unlike Western rationality, Afrocentric decision-making process strives to preserve harmony by ensuring that a consensus has been reached before a decision is made (Mangaliso 2001).

Acknowledging the potential for *ubuntu* philosophy to be leveraged to foster team work and collaboration (see Nelson and Lundin 2010), as well as employee learning (Mbigi and Maree 2005), and leadership development (Ngunjiri 2016), the African workforce might be desirous of nurturing a collegial relationship with work colleagues to actualise their developmental priorities. In other words, workplace collaborations and teamwork could help employees to acquire professional skills informally via collegiate knowledge exchange platforms (Barrena-Martínez et al. 2017). However, such collegiality requires effective interpersonal communication, specifically face-to-face communication; which can enhance harmony in the workplace (Schiele 2000; Warfield-Coppock 1995)

By and large, our discussion above corroborates the contention that socio-cultural attributes affect individual interpretations of the psychological contract at work (Rousseau 1995; Raja et al. 2004). We specifically elaborate on

how family considerations, national healthcare deficits and collective decision-making norms could influence psychological contracts or employees' expectations of EC-CSR. Even though the psychological contract has been studied across cultures, including collectivist and individualistic cultures (Schwartz and Sagiv 1995; Thomas et al. 2010), there is little reference on how it manifests in the African context. Going forward, we propose that Afrocentric factors play a crucial role in shaping the psychological contract and the reciprocal EC-CSR practices of organisations (see P1 above).

Proposition 2 (a) *Fulfilment of Afrocentric relational psychological contract (i.e. employees' expectations regarding EC-CSR) can engender perceived organisational support.*

Relational psychological contracts, EC-CSR and perceived organisational support (POS) are distinct constructs, yet they have functional interactions. While relational psychological contracts revolve around employees' schema about the obligations which exist between them and the organisation (Rousseau 1989, 1995), EC-CSR focuses on the practices aimed at fulfilling relational psychological contracts (Grimmer and Oddy 2007; Luu 2016; Mirvis 2012). The POS on the other hand reflects employees' perception of the extent to which the organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002). In other words, POS explains employees' perception of the fulfilment of their social expectations. Despite the distinctive nature of these three constructs, they are all entrenched in the social exchange tradition which suggests that the relationship between the employees and the organisation is pivoted by an exchange of employee commitment for benefits such as social support and work recognition (Blau 1964; Gouldner 1960; Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002).

Conventional literature also suggests that a range of EC-CSR practices can influence POS (Glavas and Kelley 2014). Beyond that however, POS is also influenced by the socio-cultural values prevalent in a particular country (Gyekye and Salminen 2009). Apparently, we have leveraged Proposition 1 to expound on how Afrocentric socio-cultural values could influence psychological contracts (e.g. Thomas et al. 2010), and associative EC-CSR practices of organisations. Along a similar vein, we propose that the fulfilment of the Afrocentric relational contract, specifically, 'a sense of community and respect for status, age and experience' could substantially influence perceived organisational support of employees in the African context. Justifiably, African values advocate the need for people to have a *sense of belonging* to a larger community or neighbourhood (Mangaliso 2001). Rather than conforming to the individualistic orientation of the

western world, Afrocentric employees might be more disposed to working in an environment that espouses a sense of community to the extent that the workplace will be like 'a home away from home'. Communitarity at work creates a sense of belongingness, and simultaneously encourages employees to establish non-task related relationships and hence improves employee effectiveness and decreases their hostility towards the organisation (ibid.). When communitarity is thus promoted at the workplace, it is anticipated that employees would naturally see their colleagues as members of their extended family with whom they collaborate to achieve organisational objectives. Indeed, the affective commitment of employees to the organisation is exhibited when employees attain a sense of belongingness; a feeling that they are part of a big family (Stephens 2016). In view of the above, we surmise that Afrocentric employees would develop a perception of organisational support (POS) *if* the organisation encourages them to see themselves as one side of a coin and their colleagues as the other side. In other words, promoting community values at work can engender POS in the African workplace.

Furthermore, African people treasure respect for status and experience (Mangaliso 2001). While those in superior positions are usually highly educated and entitled to privileges and amenities, the subordinate workforce has little or no access to workplace amenities (Ridgeway 2013; Sheets and Braver 1999). Seniority in terms of work experience, and academic achievement is thus acknowledged and highly respected in Africa (Mangaliso 2001). The relatively higher educated, top management exercise judicial influence and authority in both work and non-work contexts (ibid.) in Africa. The power differentials accompanying status and experience enables employees in this category to perceive that their job assignment is stress-free (Gyekye and Salminen 2009) as they have greater work autonomy and less exposure to hazards and risks (Gyekye 2006). In line with the above discussion, we further surmise that African employees in higher-level positions value respect for status, and in turn, organisational actions related to respect for this value would engender their perceived organisational support (Mangaliso 2001).

Coyle-Shapiro and Conway (2005b) focuses more specifically, on the interrelationship between the fulfilment of the 'conventional' psychological contract and POS. While this interrelationship is incontrovertible, we extend our 'psychological contract vis-à-vis the socio-cultural' thesis in Proposition 1 to surmise that the African people could be susceptible to socio-cultural influences while creating organisational support perceptions; lending credence to Yoon and Kim's (1999) findings within the Korean's context. Our argument is further consolidated by Gyekye and Salminen's (2009) contention that seniority in terms

of work experience and status could influence perceived organisational support.

Leveraging these thoughts, we propose (see P2-a) that the fulfilment of Afrocentric relational psychological contract can engender perceived organisational support.

Proposition 2 (b) *Breach of Afrocentric relational psychological contract can engender perceived employee cynicism.*

While we can acknowledge that POS explains employee perception as to the degree to which an organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al. 1986), POS itself could engender either positive or negative outcomes. Literature has mainly focused on how POS serves as a cognitive channel for *positive* employee reciprocity in employment relations (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002), neglecting the reality that employees could also reciprocate *negatively* where they perceive a dearth of organisational support. Hence, we are effectively constrained from having a grasp of the mental schema that employees typically develop when their expectations of EC-CSR are breached. As such, we posit that a deeper knowledge of employees' differential perceptions of organisational support is long-overdue as it could further enhance our understanding of the cognitive reasoning which evokes negative reciprocities in employment relationships.

In this regard, *employee cynicism* is defined as “a negative attitude towards one’s employing organisation, comprising of three dimensions: (a) a belief that the organisation lacks integrity; (b) negative affect towards the organisation; and (c) tendencies to disparaging and critical behaviours towards the organisation that are consistent with these beliefs and affect” (Dean et al. 1998, p. 345). Cynicism therefore revolves around beliefs, affective and behavioural traits which are all rooted in attitudinal theory (Hilgard 1980). Research suggests that a breach of the psychological contract can lead to employee cynicism (Andersson and Bateman 1997) which would subsequently influence regressive employee outcomes such as job dissatisfaction, organisational detachment (Abraham 2000), reduced in-role performance and increased absenteeism (Johnson and O’Leary-Kelly 2003).

The cynical employee outcomes noted above can be induced by a number of factors which are also evident in the African work context. Firstly, employee cynicism could be caused by poor work environments and inequitable work practices (Boverie and Kroth 2001). Unsurprisingly, the oil sector’s labour union in Nigeria are renowned for highlighting poor working conditions (IndustriALL Global Union 2018), and other inequitable employment practices such as the preference for expatriate workers rather than qualified indigenous workers (Aye 2017; Fajana 2005). Similarly, South-African mining workers usually resort to violent

work disruptions due to their dissatisfaction with their pay and working conditions (Elbra 2017). Secondly, employee cynicism could also be a result of limitations imposed upon employee participation in decision-making processes (Cartwright and Holmes 2006), leading to a protracted failure of management resulting in employee mistrust (Fleming 2005; Andersson and Bateman 1997). The outcomes of such cynicism can again be seen in the Nigerian oil sector, where workers agitate to increase their participation in corporate decision-making processes (Fajana 2005), due to the pervasive adversarial employee-organisational relationship extant in the sector (Chidi et al. 2011).

Conclusively, despite the notion that ‘the underlying tenet of Afrocentric leadership is collectivism’ (Shonhiwa 2006, p. 41), employees are still prone to adopt *negative* outcomes resulting from employee cynicism towards their organisation. This is due to the widening gap between employees and their management in some Africa organisations, cognisant of power distance (e.g. Hofstede 2002). In effect, despite the collectivist inclinations of African cultures, power resides in the hands of management who sometimes create a relational distance between their subordinates and themselves, thus, breaching a subordinate’s relational psychological contract, resulting in cynical employee outcomes.

Proposition 3 *In line with the rational norm of reciprocity, the fulfilment of employees’ social expectations will positively influence employee-organisational commitment and other work-related outcomes.*

Although the psychological contract (as discussed in Propositions 1 and 2) explains what employees could typically expect of the organisation, it does not capture the norm of *reciprocity* embedded within employment relationships. In fact, reciprocity dynamics in employment relationships is explained through the social exchange theory (Blau 1964; Gouldner 1960). The social exchange theory posits that individuals give resources or help to others with the expectation that their actions will be duly rewarded in kind (Blau 1964; Homans 1974). In effect, an individual who had received support is likely to reciprocate the benefactor with high trust and emotional engagement (Blau 1964), in the form of loyalty and commitment. This form of exchange consolidates the employment relationship (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler 2002; Gouldner 1960). Social exchange could be shaped by promises made by the organisation to the employee or by what the employee expects of the organisation (Chaudhry and Song 2014). Irrespective of the direction within which social exchange takes place, the common assumption is that promises give rise to expectations (Ederer and Stremitzer 2017).

Social exchange is further driven by relational (socio-emotional) considerations (Shore et al. 2006), thus, resulting

in *implicit* obligations subject to the discretion of the parties involved (Molm 2010). Given its implicit nature, social exchange requires trust (Emerson 1981), which acts as an enabler of social exchange, inspiring the employee to enter into a relationship with the organisation (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005). The nexus between the fulfilment of employees' expectations regarding EC-CSR and the evolving attitudinal reciprocity is reinforced by the belief that employees would reciprocate organisational support through their continuous loyalty and commitment to the organisation (Coyle-Shapiro and Shore 2007; Eisenberger et al. 2016). Indeed, Perceived Organisational Support (POS) can potentially mediate the exchange relationship between EC-CSR and employees' attitudinal reciprocity (i.e. EOC) (Glavas and Kelley 2014). We acknowledge this nexus in our proposed model (see Fig. 1).

Arguably, employees would show more gratitude for discretionary organisational support than those necessitated by legal regulations or by labour pressure (Eisenberger et al. 2001). In this perspective, EC-CSR itself is perceived as a discretionary practice aimed at supporting employees with an inherent expectation that the beneficiaries (i.e. employees) would reciprocate the benefactor's (i.e. employer's) prosocial act. Founded upon this thought, EC-CSR scholars (e.g. Al-bdour et al. 2010; Mory et al. 2016) have adopted social exchange theory to explain employees' attitudinal reaction to EC-CSR.

In line with the above arguments, our third proposition (P3) suggests that the fulfilment of employees' social expectations (i.e., relational psychological contract) will influence employee-organisational commitment (EOC), which will subsequently influence other work-related outcomes such as skills retention and turnover costs in a positive manner.

Proposition 4 *In line with the rational norm of reciprocity, breach of employees' expectations regarding EC-CSR will negatively influence employee-organisational commitment and other work-related outcomes.*

Similar to our discussion for Proposition 3, the social exchange theory (Blau 1964) further provides the theoretical foundation for most of the studies on a breach of social expectations at work (Zhao et al. 2007). In effect, when employees feel that their organisations have breached an expectation, they are more likely to feel angered, betrayed and undervalued, and will possibly reciprocate by withdrawing their trust and commitment to the organisation (e.g. Ng et al. 2010). Empirically, it has been established that a breach of the psychological contract impacts negatively on affective organisational commitment (e.g. Arain et al. 2012), comprising of an individual's belief in their organisation's goals and their willingness to contribute consistently to the organisation (Allen and Meyer 1991).

In this regard, our fourth proposition (P4) argues that the breach of employees' social expectations will result in employee detachment, and subsequently engender labour coalitions, employee hostility and industrial actions (Blau 1964). Accordingly, empirical evidence suggests a negative link between the breach of employees' social expectations and work-related outcomes, particularly employee-organisational commitment (Raja et al. 2004; Restubog et al. 2006), job satisfaction (Orvis et al. 2008) employee turnover (Lum et al. 1998), and organisational citizenship behaviours (Robinson and Morrison 1995).

Nonetheless, employees' reaction to a breach of their social expectations' vary across countries. However, there is scarce literature in this area. In the section below, we expound on the nature of positive reciprocity that might evolve from an African context even in the face of a breach of expectations in the workplace.

Afrocentric Reciprocity: Does It Negate the Rational Norm of Social Exchange?

At the epistemological level, reciprocity exhibits some complexities with regard to its identification as an explanatory concept or a behavioural norm. Even if it is identified as an explanatory concept, uncertainties remain with regard to it being representative of employees' experiences (Lemarchand 1989). Nevertheless, as an explanatory concept, reciprocity may advance a view of social exchange which is *not* influenced by inducement by either of the parties involved in the exchange (ibid.). In effect, it may occur as a response to a fear of retaliation (e.g. disengagement or job loss) rather than as a response to actual organisational support (EC-CSR). For instance, everyone on the Zimbabwean *Gwenbe Tonga's* homestead had a premonition that since no one knows whether the person who asks for help has the power to cause harm, each request in the community should be treated as if it came from someone who might be dangerous (Colson 1974). As such, 'it seemed perfectly reasonable for them [i.e. the *Tonga* people] to accede to avoid possible retaliation' (ibid., p. 49). The *Tonga's* experience suggests that some Africans could exhibit *positive reciprocity* even when they are not accorded *positive inducements*, due to the fear of retaliation and obviously, indigenous influences. This argument is premised on the notion that some Africans reciprocate due to cultural or psychological mandates than self-interest. Hence, *Afrocentric reciprocity* is perceived as an organising force of society (Mauss 1969), motivated by an unconscious identification with indigenous norms and values as well as by the need to develop a conscious coping strategy in the form of adaptive behaviour by employees (Jameson 2010).

Another issue evolves from concerns regarding the level at which reciprocity unfolds. For instance, can reciprocity be treated as a ‘culturally-induced moral obligation’? (Blau 1964), or as a ‘rational calculus of costs and benefits’? (Lemarchand 1989; Mauss 1969). One can argue that the rational view of reciprocity may be disregarded in societies in which the culturally-induced moral obligations remain a crucial phenomenon (Hydén 1980). As such there are indications that the indigenous values of some Africans correspond with Malinowski’s (1922) thesis on folk beliefs where the people’s stances on reciprocity suggests the manifestation of irrationalities.

Yet these stances are *not* being captured in conventional studies. For instance, no efforts have been made to investigate the reason as to why Nigerian states’ civil servants continue to go to work despite not being paid for several months (see Akinpelu 2015). Is this ‘selfless’ commitment by employees? Or is it a form of employee commitment induced by the anticipated future benefits from remaining in the civil service? Or is employee commitment motivated by ‘Tonga’s fear of the unknown syndrome’—such as a fear of job termination? If the anticipated future benefits are not forthcoming, what is the theoretical or empirical basis for assuming that employees will not commit to the civil service in the future? In view of these prevailing complexities, it is pertinent to raise propositions that reflect the indigenous norms and values vis-a vis social exchange. While we are conscious that several possibilities are embedded in our preceding propositions (i.e., Propositions 1–4), we cannot uphold knowledge conservatism and *limit our subscription* to the rational exchange norm without acknowledging the influence of the indigenous mandate within reciprocity processes. Hence, we propose below that a breach of employees’ social expectations *can* be reciprocated with employee-organisational commitment in the African context. The ‘*esan* reciprocity ideology’ lends credence to this proposition.

Proposition 5 *In line with *esan* reciprocity ideology, breach of employees’ social expectations could be positively reciprocated.*

We begin by acknowledging De Roek and Maon’s (2018) thesis that individual contingencies such as socio-demographic characteristics and individuals’ attitude towards EC-CSR, reciprocity, and morality can play a crucial role in how employees perceive and react to EC-CSR initiatives. Beyond individual contingencies however, we hold that collective contingencies such as indigenous values or spirituality may influence how employees reciprocate the breach of their social expectations. Aptly, an Afrocentric ethical ideology referred to as *esan* can influence employees’ reciprocity orientation in the workplace. For clarity, the word *esan* evolved from the *Odu Ifa*, and is roughly referred to as ‘cosmic

justice’ (Balogun 2013, p. 114), whereby ‘justice [itself is perceived] as reciprocity’ (Buchanan 1990, p. 227; Lister 2011). Interestingly, ‘social cooperation based on reciprocity is the cornerstone of many theories of justice’ (Hartley 2014, p. 409). As narrated by Elebuibon (2004), the word *esan* denotes 9 (nine) in Yoruba numerology and it simply mean ‘it turns’ or to do something alternately or in succession. Thus, ‘to take turns’ is *lati sesan* (to reciprocate). Hence, [e]*san* basically represents the principle of reciprocity and it connotes turning over, results and exchange (Fasola 2015). In this way, ‘*esan* is that which a moral agent receives as a consequence of his/her moral deeds’ (Balogun 2013, p. 114). Just as *esan* may be pleasant or otherwise dependent upon the agent’s character (ibid.), rational reciprocity could take a positive path: you scratch my back, I’ll scratch yours, or a negative path: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth (Donlan 1998). The rational norm of reciprocity in a sense conforms with the parlance; whatever a man sows, he shall reap, as well as the Yoruba saying, *rere ati ika, ikan ko ni gbe* (good or bad, none shall be lost).

Despite the extant belief that neither ‘good nor bad shall be lost’, *Yoruba* ethics decries the intention to retaliate the bad inflicted upon a party by the other party (Balogun 2013). This is because negative reciprocity is detrimental and can lead to a downward spiral as each side punishes what it perceived to be negative acts by the other. In this regard the *Yoruba* ethical tradition suggests that it is of no use to reciprocate a bad deed with a bad deed. As noted in Oluwole (2017) ‘*se mi ki n se o, ki i jeki oran o tan*’, meaning, ‘what you do to me, I do to you does not allow for the problem to be resolved swiftly’ (p. 213). To avoid the detrimental consequences of negative reciprocity, *Yoruba* ethical tradition stresses the need to do good always: *rere lo pe; ika kosunwon*, meaning, moral goodness pays; wickedness is unpleasant (Balogun 2013).

So, rather than reciprocating bad deeds with bad deeds, *Yoruba* ideology prescribes that reciprocity should be left to Olodumare (God),² the fair judge (Dopamu and Alana 2004). The thrust of this belief is that the good or bad done to others has a way of returning to the doer or their family. Hence, social exchanges are not motivated by self-seeking interests but rather long-term profitable consequences that transcends rational reasoning (Oke 1988). Being conscious of these, *Yoruba* people strive to uphold the ethical prescription for *esan* which decries negative reciprocity (Dopamu and Alana 2004). Interestingly, *esan* reciprocity ideology correlates with the Christian tenet: ‘Do not take revenge, my

² The name Olodumare, a Yoruba name for God carries the idea of ‘One with whom man may enter into a covenant or communion in any place and at any time, one who is supreme, superlatively great, incomparable and unsurpassable in majesty, excellent in attributes, stable, unchanging, constant, reliable (Idowu 1962, p. 36).

dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: It is mine to avenge; I will repay, says the Lord' (Bible Hub 2004–2019; New International Version—Romans, 12:19), as well as the Islam tenet which suggests that reconciliation is always preferable to retaliation: 'And the retribution for an evil act is an evil one like it, but whoever pardons and makes reconciliation—his reward is [due] from Allah. Indeed, He does not like wrongdoers'. (Corpus Quran 2009–2017, 42: 40). By and large, *esan* reciprocity ideology as well as the denominational tenets of Christianity and Islam on negative reciprocity subscribes to a common belief that bad deeds should *not be* reciprocated with bad deeds.

As much as we seek to caution that the *esan* reciprocity ideology and its perceived religious connotations may *not* necessarily apply to all Africans, there are indications the African people have a reasonably similar environment, social [and religious] influences, and lifestyle, hence they tend to exhibit unique attributes which distinguishes them from people in other parts of the world who have different experiences and environments (Awolalu 1976). For instance, Africans collectively perceive that hospitality and warmth is a distinctive marker of their identity. Africans also still tend to instinctively believe in transcendental cultural commonalities, ways of seeing and being that establish their uniqueness and distinguish themselves from the rest of humanity (Adesanmi 2012).

Based upon the preceding discussion we argue that the *esan* reciprocity ideology may not be peculiar to the *Yoruba* society but to other Africans in that it aligns with the tenets of the two predominant religious denominations in Africa (i.e., Christianity and Islam). Notably, Africa's various populations and individuals are mostly adherents of Christianity, Islam, and to a lesser extent several traditional African religions. In Christian or Islamic communities, religious beliefs are also sometimes characterised with syncretism with the beliefs and practices of traditional religions (Awolalu 1976; Shahadah 2017). Indeed, Awolalu (1976) suggests that 'when we speak of African traditional religion, we mean the indigenous religious beliefs and practices of the Africans. It is the religion which resulted from the sustaining faith held by the forebears of the present Africans, and which is being practiced today in various forms and various shades and intensities by a very large number of Africans, including individuals who claim to be Muslims or Christians' (p. 1). Furthermore, religion exerts a significant influence upon the life of most Africans such that many colonialists referred to Africans as being: 'incurably religious' (Parrinder 1969, p. 235). This extreme religiosity of Africans has inspired some scholars to claim that there is a link between religion and morality in African ethics (Opoku 1978; Idowu 1962).

The question then is, should an employee whose rights have been breached by the employer reciprocate the employer in a negative manner? Just as the tenets of

Christianity and Islam decries negative reciprocity (see New International Version—Romans, 12:19; 1 Peter 3:9; and Quran 42:40), *esan* reciprocity ideology decries the same (Balogun 2013). This is because negative reciprocity is detrimental and can lead to a downward spiral as each side punishes what it perceives to be negative acts by the other (Elebuibon 2004). What this suggests is that an employee who subscribes to *esan* reciprocity ideology, and whose rights are being breached at work might choose to endure the breach rather than reciprocate in a negative manner. This form of 'tolerance in the workplace' could also be likened to the *Yoruba* ethical values that encourages womenfolk to endure the pains of 'men's misdemeanour' in the matrimonial home instead of resisting it (Ajibade 2014, p. 224). Rather than 'addressing the wrong attitudes and practices of wayward men, the women are admonished to employ patience and endurance to quench the flame of impending conflict' (ibid., p. 224). In line with this view, *Yoruba* ethical ideology advocates patience for all occasions, except when one is exposed to hazards (Ijatuyi-Morphé 2014). In furtherance of its ethical mandate, *Yoruba* also use synonyms such as calmness (*pele pele*), endurance (*ifarada*), inner strength or reflection (*ogbon inu*), contentment (*ifokanbale*) to describe the virtues of patience (ibid., p. 340). Nevertheless, patience in this context is never considered as a total resignation. As rightly noted in a *Yoruba* maxim: '*onisuru ni yi o j' ogun aye*, [meaning] the patient shall inherit the world' (Ijatuyi-Morphé 2014, p. 340). Those who subscribe to these ethical beliefs are thus prone to exhibit their convictions in their employment relationships.

Just like the exercise of patience does not connote total resignation (ibid.), subscription to *esan* reciprocity ideology does not imply that one should not expect payback, at least for a good deed. For instance, many social interactions in traditional African society were characterised by positive reciprocity. The blacksmith or ironsmith would exchange their products/tools with containers made by pottery workers (Shizha 2016). This form of social exchange is basically fundamental to the continuation of industrial skills that were developed amongst groups within communities (ibid.). Yet, African blacksmiths' kind of reciprocity is motivated primarily by social rather than economic rationality or self-centredness (Sundström 1974). In fact, 'in pre-colonial African society, reciprocity strengthened the norms that called for collective actions, and those that operated at the level of self-interest were ridiculed and severely sanctioned' (Shizha 2016, p. 56). This suggests that the Afrocentric social exchange orientation is inherently altruistic and relational.

Interestingly, Sahlins (2017) mirrors the exchange attributes of Africans by explicating how the exchange of objects between groups consolidates social relationships. It was also discovered that the Afrocentric social exchange revolves around affective obligations to give, to receive and

most importantly, to reciprocate within groups and not only amongst individuals as evident in the rational exchange orientation (ibid.). The Afrocentric social exchange landscape is also evident in the patron-client bond, rotating credit associations, self-help schemes, parochial corruption (Lemarchand 1989), and the African *Osusu* self-financing system (Lahai 2012). Consequently, we see the Afrocentric dimension to social exchange as a natural phenomenon that generates not just wealth, but social bonds between individuals and communities or organisations (Lemarchand 1989).

This form of kinship bond is also further corroborated by the overtones of Afrocentric ethical philosophy referred to as *ubuntu* (Nussbaum 2003; Metz 2007). The ethical profundity of *ubuntu* is largely ascribed to its theoretical vigour to foster harmonious, caring, humane and affirming relationships amongst individuals (ibid.), as well as its potency to make up for the limitations of ‘individual philosophical systems’ upon which most theories of management were established (Lutz 2009, p. 313). Further, perceived Afrocentric exchange tradition as exemplified in *esan* ethical ideology, the African Blacksmiths’ exchange tradition, African self-help financing such as *osusu* reinforces the *ubuntu* relational aphorism: ‘I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am’ (Mbiti 1989, p. 106). These Afrocentric exchange traditions are so unique for the fact that they revolve around the idea that ‘human beings are radically interdependent, and that this interdependence entails a morally normative pressure towards generosity, hospitality, friendliness, compassion, forgiveness, reconciliation, consensus, and positive group identification’ (Van Niekerk 2013, p. 5).

Aside from the aforementioned, the uniqueness of the Afrocentric exchange tradition is further strengthened by the assumption that the good of the community is seen as fundamental and recognising the role of community is essential in respecting individual persons (Shutte 2008). It is therefore not strange to see that the Afrocentric social exchange is driven by collective reciprocity (Shizha 2016). These virtues have significant relevance for sustaining a relationship such as those that develop between employees and their employers. Indeed, collectivism play a significant role in shaping employees’ commitment to the organisation (Hofman and Newman 2014). Similarly, it is assumed that [regardless of their unpleasant experiences at work] those who subscribe to collective values would treat employment relationships akin to a kinship relationship; which is characterised by loyalty and selfless care for one another (Hofstede 1984; Redpath and Nielsen 1997).

However, it is also quite likely that African employees accord positive reciprocity towards their organisations to avoid sanctions (see Irwin 2009), due to their collectivist orientation (Triandis 2001). The employer-employee interactions in collectivist societies consist of multiple relationships (i.e., family, work, friendship) (Irwin 2009). This

multiplicity of relations could potentially offer managers ample opportunities to monitor subordinates and sanction negative reciprocity, disregarding those organisational factors which could have induced such reciprocity. Hence, the monitoring and sanctioning systems characterising a collectivist society engenders localised institutional trust. Simply, ‘localised institutional trust refers to the belief that a system of monitoring and sanctioning existing within the local group induces trustworthy behaviour’ (Irwin 2009, p. 173). Due to localised institutional trust, employees are prone to exhibit trustworthiness and prosocial behaviours (positive reciprocity) despite the unpleasant experiences they are facing in employment relationship.

Nevertheless, we surmise that instead of subjecting employees to monitoring and sanctions to subjugate them, organisations should see employees as a ‘relation holder’ whose welfare should be adequately protected. The DeRoeck and Maon’s advancement of ‘relation holder theory’ as a heuristic for organisational decision-making further strengthens the relevance of African ethical ideologies, such as *ubuntu* and *esan* reciprocity ideology for shaping social harmony in workplace relationships.

We firmly believe that the African workplace governance model should substantially consolidate indigenous values as this could ultimately engender a win–win relationship for organisations and its ‘relation holders’ (specifically, employees). Besides, the consolidation of indigenous values at the African workplace would make both the employee and the employer appreciate the spiritual essence of work relationships rather than seeing such relationships as one that is bounded by rational self-interest. Unfortunately, such reasoning is rarely detected or apprehended in the conventional employee-organisation relationship literature.

Discussion

At the very outset of this paper, we stated our objectives. We now discuss how our conceptualisation of the interactions between and amongst the different conceptual dimensions depicted in our framework (see Fig. 1), enabled us to achieve these objectives.

In relation to our first objective, we argued through our first proposition, that both the relational psychological contract of employees and EC-CSR, are susceptible to socio-cultural exigencies such as the *ubuntu* Afrocentric philosophy, which for instance suggests that employees may expect the organisation to provide for family needs, including healthcare, and funeral arrangements (Khomba 2011). More compelling is the urgency of employees’ quest for healthcare in the African region to the extent that 85% of the employees in the region value healthcare benefits from their companies more than other benefits (Consultancy. Africa 2018).

The poor state of medical infrastructure in some African regions further accounts for this trend (Welcome 2011). We further demonstrated that the collective nature of Africans (Hofstede 2009) could also influence psychological contracts and associative EC-CSR in terms of employees' quest to participate in organisational decision-making, lending credence to the implications of *ubuntu* for team work and collaboration (Nelson and Lundin 2010), as well as employee learning (Mbigi and Maree 2005), and leadership development (Ngunjiri 2016).

Second, we juxtaposed conventional conceptualisations of perceived organisational support with Afrocentric intricacies. In addressing this objective, we explained how conventional literature tends to ignore the role of socio-cultural factors in this process of *fulfilment* of relational psychological contracts through EC-CSR practices. We thus extended our proposition that the fulfilment of Afrocentric relational psychological contract, specifically, by 'creating a sense of community and respect for status and experience' could substantially influence perceived organisational support in the African context. This argument is further consolidated by the contention that seniority in terms of experience and status (Gyekye and Salminen 2009) could influence perceived organisational support. The contention that perceived organisational support in the African context could be engendered by 'sense of community belonging' lends credence to some views suggesting that collectivism is fundamental to African cultures (Belgrave and Allison 2018; Hofstede 1994, 2002). Besides, the belief that 'respect for status and experience' could engender POS affirms the traditional values being accorded to seniority, as well as the prevalence of asymmetrical relationships, which are peculiar to Afrocentric collectivism and high power distance (Bochner and Hesketh 1994; Gyekye and Salminen 2005; Hofstede 1994, 2002). In the opposite vein, we juxtaposed conventional conceptualisations of perceived employee cynicism with Afrocentric intricacies to suggest that the *breach* of relational contracts can instigate employee cynicism (Andersson 1996), which subsequently result in a number of negative behaviour/attitudes (see Abraham 2000; Johnson and O'Leary-Kelly 2003). Yet there are peculiar triggers of employee cynicism, unique to the African context but are less visible in conventional literature. For instance, we affirmed that employee cynicism could be caused by poor work environments and inequitable work practices (Boverie and Kroth 2001) such as those seen in the Nigerian oil sector (Aye 2017, Fajana 2005), the South-African mining sector (Elbra 2017).

In view of the argument that commitment of employees to the organisation is contingent upon the nature of social inducements that employees derive from the organisation (Wayne et al. 1997), and the arguments suggesting that social inducements (i.e. EC-CSR) can influence employee commitment (Mory et al. 2016), our third objective drew

upon the rational thesis of Blau's (1964) social exchange theory and the norm of reciprocity (Homans 1961) to suggest that fulfilling employees' expectations of EC-CSR will have a positive influence on employee-organisational commitment (i.e., proposition 3). We further drew on the social exchange theory and the norm of reciprocity to suggest that a 'breach' of employees' expectations of EC-CSR will negatively influence employee-organisational commitment (i.e., proposition 4). We however suggest that employees that subscribe to Afrocentric ethical ideology (i.e., *esan* reciprocity ideology) could commit to their employers even when they are not socially induced by the employer to do so. In line with this thought, we devoted to our final objective to examining how Blau's social exchange rationality contrasts with the *esan* reciprocity ideology (i.e., proposition 5). In proposition 5, we affirmed that collective contingencies such as indigenous values or spirituality may influence how employees reciprocate the breach of their social expectations. Hence, we proposed that an Afrocentric ethical ideology referred to as *esan* can influence employees' reciprocity orientation in the workplace. We argued that even though *esan* ethical ideology subscribes to the 'tit for tat' norm of reciprocity, it decries the intention to retaliate the bad inflicted upon a party by the other party (Balogun 2013) because negative reciprocity is detrimental and can lead to a downward spiral as each side punishes what it perceived to be negative acts by the other (see Oluwole 2017, p. 213).

Furthermore, in some instances when employees' expectations are breached by the organisation and labour disputes occur (as demonstrated in Proposition 4), employees that subscribe to Afrocentric ethics could refrain from participating in prolonged labour disputes due to their indigenous ethical stance which is imbued with reconciliatory spirit. As noted in a Yoruba proverb, '*kò seni tii rinu ti kii bi, bee ni omo ale eniyan ni a n be ti kii gba*' (there is no one that cannot be offended, but it is only a bastard person that doesn't agree to pleas) (Ajibade 2014, p. 229). In other words, African ethics suggests that a person whose rights have been breached should not dwell so much on the quest to claim those rights but should seek reconciliation and summon a forgiving spirit. This reconciliatory stance is also reinforced in the *ubuntu philosophy* which suggests that 'human beings are radically interdependent, and that this interdependence entails a morally normative pressure towards [...] forgiveness, [and] reconciliation (Van Niekerk 2013, p. 5). The efficacy of the *alajobi* (consanguinity or common progeny) conflict management mechanism of the Yoruba people in West Africa (see Ajibade 2014), and the *ubuntu* lessons in reconciliation (see Murithi 2009) further attest to the forgiving stance of Africans and the reconciliatory vigour of indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms.

In the above sense, our framework (see Fig. 1) suggests the need to *rethink* the rational thesis of the social exchange

by acknowledging that some employees, specifically native Africans, could exhibit peculiar or irrational stances while reciprocating organisational support or neglect. This peculiar strand of reciprocity referred to as *esan* reciprocity ideology, conditions employees to positively contribute to the organisation *despite* the breach of their expectations of the organisation. We firstly visualise *esan* ideology from the perspective of indigenous spirituality and subsequently expound on the implications of the ideology for the conventional employment relationship, specifically in terms of an organisation's disposition towards employees who might remain resolutely committed to the organisation despite a consistent breach of their expectations. Our caution here is that organisations should not always ascribe employee commitment to the organisation despite their unpleasant experiences therein to the normativity, continuity or affectivity thesis of the organisational commitment model (Allen and Meyer 1991; Meyer et al. 2002). Besides, employee commitment to the organisation should not also be ascribed solely to their docility, complacency, macro-economic misfortune and a lack of alternative job prospects.

Additionally, African management requires a management theory that conforms to its indigenous culture (Lutz 2009). In instances where such a theory is lacking, there will be either a disagreement between management theory and management practice or a disagreement between management practice and the manager's culture. Rather than resorting exclusively to Western models to resolve conflicts arising from the neglect of employees' expectations, there is a need to revisit indigenous mechanisms which was the bedrock of the harmonious relationship in Africa prior to Western colonisation. Although, we are not totally positive that an indigenous conflict resolution model alone will proffer solutions to workplace conflicts, it is still important to reflect on how some aspects of Africa's indigenous models can be integrated with Western models to effectively respond to workplace conflicts. This preference for restorative and reconciliatory conflict resolution mechanisms rather than the Western organisational justice model is similar to preference for harmony and participatory emphasis of *ubuntu* rather than a preference for 'rights, stakes, or freedom' emphasising a libertarian stakeholder theory (see Woermann and Engelbrecht 2019, p. 42). The promotion of indigenous ethics such as *esan* reciprocity ideology and the integration of indigenous traditions and western modernity to resolve conflicts in the African workplace can be achieved through interactive problem-solving workshops (e.g., Murithi 2008), and through brainstorming sessions between African scholars, corporate practitioners and custodians of indigenous values. Conclusively, we surmise that the adaptation of Western management theories to home-grown theories is exigent to engender social harmony in the Afrocentric workplace.

By and large, African ethical discourses are sparingly represented in the global ethical debate (Shutte 2008). Given the extent of this underrepresentation, African indigenous models on ethics may be constrained from being fully integrated with employment relation practices if context-specific models are not entrenched within the mainstream management literature. Additionally, we may not be able to avail ourselves of the ample benefits that African ethical models offer if corporate practitioners do not possess the native ingenuity to adapt and integrate these models into employment relations. Thus, there is an urgent need for managers in the Afrocentric work context (and beyond) to seek well-rounded indigenous knowledge and capacity development such that relevant managers can engender employment practices which integrate the indigenous norms of their employees.

Conclusion

In this paper, we drew upon the psychological contract and social exchange theories to suggest differing features surrounding employees' social expectations of the organisation as well as the reciprocities associated with the fulfilment and breach of these expectations. Accordingly, we suggested that employees' social expectations of the organisation are better addressed through EC-CSR, which has in recent times, become a recurrent topic of conversation in scholarly literature, the classroom, media, and the boardroom (De Roeck and Maon 2018). Based on an extant empirical review, four theoretical propositions (P1–P4) were initially advanced. Our subsequent proposition (P5) suggests that reciprocity in some African context could at times be spiritual and irrational due to the influence of indigenous norms and values. In our discussion, we suggest that relational crises that might arise from breach of social expectations, particularly in the African context, are better managed through indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms, which can be adapted to employee-organisational relationships. Specifically, reference was made to a *Yoruba* indigenous conflict resolution mechanism'' such as *alajobi* (i.e. consanguinity or common progeny). The argument in this paper is that these indigenous mechanisms have implications for the employment relationship, hence they should not be ignored or perceived as primitive. Rather, managers across the board should appreciate these values and aim to nurture a deeper knowledge of the intricacies embedded within them.

Apparently, actors in the African employment context require an in-depth understanding of indigenous values. To this extent, there exist opportunities to empirically investigate the nature of reciprocity evolving from fulfilment and breach of employees' social expectations in African work contexts. To validate the veracity of our proposition on perceived Afrocentric reciprocity (i.e. *esan* reciprocity

ideology), empirical studies could initiate scenarioized investigations to unravel how native Africans in the workplace (especially those currently working in organisations with robust EC-CSR practices) would reciprocate the neglect of their social expectations at the workplace. Additionally, empirical studies could also investigate the conciliation mechanisms that native Africans would prefer for resolving employment disputes. Ultimately, insights from these studies could contribute to the development of effective Afrocentric employment relations strategies.

Acknowledgements We are grateful for the critical comments of Prof. Jean-Pascal Gond and Dr. Ruth Yeoman on the preliminary version of this paper that was presented at the 3rd International Symposium on Meaningful Work at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam in June 2018. We are also grateful to the three anonymous reviewers and session 2090 participants who provided constructive comments on another version of this paper that was presented at the 78th Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management, Chicago, U.S.A. held in August 2018.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest We the authors, Oluseyi Aju and Eshani Beddewela declare that we have no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval This article does not contain any studies with human participants performed by any of the authors.

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