

JOB EMBEDDEDNESS AND ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT AS PREDICTORS OF
VOLUNTARY TURNOVER AT A SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

by

CEBILE TEBELE

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SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR M. COETZEE

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DECLARATION

I, CEBILE TEBELE, student number 32469268, declare that this dissertation, entitled “**Job embeddedness and organisational commitment as predictors of voluntary turnover at a South African higher education institution**”, is my own work. All the sources that I used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. Ethical clearance to conduct the research was obtained from the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology and the University of South Africa.

I further declare that this dissertation has not been presented at any other institution in and outside South Africa for the same qualification.



CEBILE TEBELE

32469268

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SUMMARY
**JOB EMBEDDEDNESS AND ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT AS PREDICTORS OF
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SUPERVISOR : Professor M. Coetzee

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The objectives of this study were to determine whether job embeddedness and organisational commitment significantly predict voluntary turnover, and whether people from different gender, race and age groups differ significantly in their job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover. The Job Embeddedness Scale (JES), Organisational Commitment Scale (OCS) and Voluntary Turnover Scale (VTS) were used as measuring instruments. A stratified random sample of 102 full-time employed higher education academics participated in the study.

Multiple regression analyses showed that organisation fit and community links and normative commitment significantly and positively predicted the participants' intentions to stay at the institution. Significant differences were observed between the job embeddedness and intention to stay of the gender and race groups. The findings of the current study add to the knowledge base on the turnover intentions of academic staff, contributing to the field of career psychology. In conclusion, the study makes recommendations for retention practices and future research.

KEY TERMS

Job embeddedness; organisational commitment; voluntary turnover; higher education; staff retention

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CHAPTER 1: SCIENTIFIC ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

This dissertation focuses on investigating whether job embeddedness and organisational commitment influence voluntary turnover, with specific reference to academic staff in a tertiary institution. In this chapter, the background to and motivation for the research are discussed. This discussion requires formulation of the problem statement, research questions and research aims. The paradigms underpinning and models forming the definitive boundary of the research are mentioned. This is followed by a discussion of the research design, which details the methodology, choice of psychometric instruments, data analysis techniques and ethical considerations with reference to the various steps in the research process. Finally, the chapter layout of the dissertation is provided.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO AND MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

The context of this research is staff retention in the South African higher education environment. More specially, the research focuses on the job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover of academic staff. The increasingly volatile economy, persistent employee withdrawal to other organisations and the cost involved in voluntary turnover are important concerns for managers (Heymann, 2010; Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006; Mitchell, Holtom, & Lee, 2001b; Pillay, 2009; Weibo, Kaur, & Zhi, 2010). Voluntary turnover relates to a form of turnover where competent and capable employees voluntarily terminate their employment with the organisation to work for another establishment (Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, & Eberly, 2008; March & Simmons, 1958; Porter & Steers, 1973). Institutions of higher education have faced numerous changes over the last two decades, with these changes posing various challenges for an already strained higher education system (Rothman & Jordaan, 2006). Tettey (2010) highlights the challenges faced by academic staff in universities. Student staff ratios have doubled and are now at 39:1, while academic staff recruitment and retention remain a challenge in South Africa and across the globe (Pienaar & Bester, 2006; Tettey, 2010). Tettey (2010) and Sutherland and Jordaan (2004) assert that the majority of lecturing staff in South African universities are ageing, with fewer younger people joining academia. As noted by Martin and Roodt (2008), there is a need for further studies in other higher education institutions to establish the turnover behaviour of academic staff.

Recruitment to replace employees who have left the organisation is possible but costly to the organisation. In the light of the cost involved in people leaving their jobs, employee retention has become a focal area of attention for modern organisations (Pillay, 2009). The cost of turnover is twofold as it is experienced by both the organisation and individual. Organisations invest a lot of money training and developing its employees. When these employees leave the organisation is at a loss as these employees take with them the expert knowledge of the organisation they would have acquired during their tenure in the organisation. In view of this, the cost of turnover at organisational level involves the loss of expert knowledge and expertise and administrative time spent on conducting exit interviews and replacing the employees who would have left organisation. At the individual level, these costs are more psychological than monetary. Transition to a new job has uncertainties and ambiguities: family members must make adjustments associated with relocation, spousal re-employment and finding appropriate schools for children (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski, & Erez, 2001a).

Employee voluntary turnover has become a concern for managers, researchers and practitioners, resulting in extensive research to understand why people leave organisations (Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006; Lim & Wong, 2009; Mitchell, *et al.*, 2001b; Ramesh & Gelfand, 2010). Turnover, defined broadly, refers to the voluntary or involuntary permanent withdrawal of an employee from the organisation (Robbins & Judge, 2011). Coetzee and Schreuder (2010) differentiate between two forms of turnover. *Involuntary turnover* refers to the employee being fired or retrenched. *Functional turnover* refers to resignations welcomed by the employer from employees as a result of poor performance, failure to fit into the organisation or departmental culture. Voluntary turnover occurs when a “competent and capable” employee terminates his or her employment with the organisation to work for another establishment.

Empirical studies investigating employee turnover have focused on attitudes or components of turnover and include organisational commitment and lower levels of job satisfaction (Harman, Lee, Mitchell, Felps, & Owen, 2007; Mitchell, *et al.*, 2001a). According to Meyer and Allen (1991), Robbins, Odendaal, and Roodt, (2004) and Slocum and Hellriegel (2007), organisational commitment is a work-related attitude that refers to a state where an employee identifies with the organisation and its goals and intends to maintain membership in the organisation. Slocum and Hellriegel (2007) describe the following factors as being characteristic of strong organisational commitment, namely support of and acceptance of the organisation’s goals and values, a

willingness to go beyond the call of duty on behalf of the organisation and the wish to remain in the organisation.

Organisational commitment is a broad construct and is concerned with many different organisational issues. As a work attitude, the construct comprises three dimensions, namely (1) *affective* (showing one's liking for a job, involvement in and emotional attachment to the organisation); (2) *normative* (referring to a sense of obligation or that staying is the right thing to do); and (3) *continuance* (which similarly to the job embeddedness construct "sacrifice-organisation", recognises the costs involved with leaving the organisation) (Crossely, Bennet, Jex, & Burnfield, 2007; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Mitchell, *et al.*, 2001a).

Mitchell *et al.*, (2001a, 2001b) posit that employees may also leave because of either personal or organisational reasons, or even both. Changes in the family situation, a desire to up- skill or unsolicited job offers are some of the personal reasons, described by Mitchell *et al.* (2001a, 2001b), that could lead to an employee leaving the organisation. Organisational reasons that could result in an employee voluntarily leaving may be unfair treatment of other employees, being passed over for promotion or being asked to do something that is in contradiction with one's values or beliefs.

Firth, Mellor, Moore, and Loquet (2004) criticise traditional studies of turnover in that they have yielded little consistency in investigating intention to leave, possibly because of the diversity of constructs included and the lack of consistency in the measurements used. Mitchell *et al.*, (2001a) argue that studies have indicated attitudinal variables as controlling only about 4 to 5% of the variance in turnover – hence the need to consider the reasons why people stay and how organisations can retain their staff. The issue of the diverse composition of the workforce has been proposed as a possible reason as to why studies have yielded such low consistencies (Harman *et al.*, 2007).

In view of the concerns for establishing why employees retain their citizenship in the organisation instead of leaving, the variable job embeddedness was coined (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a, 2001b). Mitchell *et al.*, (2001a, 2001b) emphasise that most people who leave are relatively satisfied with their jobs, do not search for other jobs before leaving and their leaving the organisation is more inclined to be an unplanned event rather than a negative attitude towards their job or the organisation. Job embeddedness therefore emphasises that not only

job-related factors influence an individual's decision to stay with the organisation but the community also plays a role. Essentially, job embeddedness is the force that binds employees to their current jobs and organisations as a result of the relationships with people and activities in "the web" (Lim & Wong, 2009; Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a).

Job embeddedness is like a web in which the employee develops links and becomes attached to his or her environment, job or community. This construct comprises three elements (link, fit and sacrifice) against two dimensions (organisation and community). The links refer to the (1) *links* an employee has with other people and/or their activities, (2) *fit*, or the extent to which the employee finds congruence between his or her job and the community in relation to other aspects of his or her life and, finally, (3) *sacrifice*, or the ease with which links/relations can be broken should he or she relocate or leave. The three elements (links, fit and sacrifice) are coupled with the two dimensions, namely the organisation and the community (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a).

Research has changed its foci from investigating why people leave organisations to pay more attention to why people remain in their present employment. In relating job embeddedness to voluntary turnover, Mitchell *et al.*, (2001a) emphasise that people who leave are relatively satisfied with their jobs, usually do not search for other jobs before leaving and their leaving the organisation is more inclined to be an unplanned event than a negative attitude towards their job or the organisation. Job embeddedness therefore emphasises that not only job-related factors may influence an individual's decision to stay with the organisation but the community also plays a role. In this regard, the job embeddedness model complements previous research on voluntary turnover and extends researchers' understanding of the circumstances leading to employees leaving/staying in the organisation (Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006).

In support of incorporating job embeddedness in studies of voluntary turnover and intention to leave, Donnelly and Quirin (2006) posit that there are significant differences between work and non-work obligations of males and females. Females, as explained by the role conflict theory, experience greater occupational stress levels than males as they have greater responsibility for family and household tasks than their male counterparts. The authors further conclude that studies conducted to validate the Lee and Mitchell (1994) model have overlooked the difference between males and females. According to Collins (1993) and Donnelly and Quirin (2006), previous research on turnover suggests that differences in gender are significant. Studies have

focused on specialised professions, multicultural contexts and differences between specific organisational cultures (Lim & Wong, 2009; Mallol, Holtom, & Lee, 2007; Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a; Ramesh & Gelfand, 2010; Versfeld, 2009), with a few studies investigating the influence of biographical factors on job embeddedness and voluntary turnover (Donnelly & Quirin, 2006).

In South Africa, there is a paucity of studies investigating job embeddedness in relation to voluntary turnover. Pillay (2009) conducts research investigating mission attachment as a component of organisational embeddedness in the trade union sector. This research draws conclusions, amongst other things, leaning towards the fact that age influences the level of attachment, and hence the organisational/job embeddedness of employees. Heymann (2010) found that demographic factors such as age, gender and race influence job embeddedness and voluntary turnover of employees with specialised knowledge and skills.

In conclusion, as much as organisational commitment is, in some instances, similar to job embeddedness, there are notable differences between the two variables. Organisational commitment is affective driven and assesses on-the-job dimensions, whereas job embeddedness incorporates factors both on and off the job and its dimensions are non-affective (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a). According to Harman *et al.* (2007), traditional research on turnover has maintained that employees leave organisations as a result of negative job attitudes and stay because of positive job attitudes. Job embeddedness attempts to firstly expand the scope of variables that may be used to understand why employees stay by including factors that are non-affective (structural links to other people), and secondly, considers off-the-job factors like fit in the community as contributory factors to employees staying. As developed from the retention and turnover literature, it is expected that job embeddedness and organisational commitment have a strong relationship with intention to leave and voluntary turnover (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008).

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

From the discussion above it is evident that studies have been conducted globally to ascertain the relationship between job embeddedness and organisational commitment in predicting voluntary turnover and turnover intentions. Common findings have been noted in that people who are embedded in their jobs have less intent to leave as compared to those who are not embedded in their jobs. Notably, studies also conclude that off-the job embeddedness with

regard to *links* and *fit* with the community play a role in influencing turnover of staff. Essentially the higher the fit and link, the lower the intention to leave (Crossley *et al.*, 2007; Feldman & Ng, 2007; Harman *et al.*, 2007; Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006; Lim *et al.*, 2009; Mallol *et al.*, 2007; Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a, 2001b; Ramesh & Gelfand, 2010). Studies conducted in South Africa have found that job embeddedness and organisational commitment influence an employee's decision to voluntarily leave the organisation or to stay (Heymann, 2010; Pillay, 2009). These studies have also highlighted the influence of biographical factors like age, gender and race in the decision to voluntarily leave or stay in the organisation by highly skilled or knowledge employees.

Essentially, there is a paucity of research studies conducted in the South African context on the relationship between these variables, more specifically among tertiary institutions. According to the Council for Higher Education (CHE, 2004) there has been a 6% decrease in young academic staff, resulting in the increase of an ageing workforce. Studies conducted in different contexts have found that biographical factors do in fact influence whether employees will voluntarily leave the organisation or will remain loyal to it (Heymann, 2010; Pillay, 2009; Versfeld, 2009). In this regard, research on these variables could make a valuable contribution to organisations in understanding voluntary turnover of staff and informing retention strategies for academic staff in the higher education sector.

In view of the above-mentioned background and problem, the general research question and several research questions of relevance for the literature review and empirical research are set out below.

1.2.1 General research question of relevance to study

The general research question that requires further research is: What is the relationship between job embeddedness and organisational commitment in predicting voluntary turnover (intention to stay) of staff at a South African higher education institution, and do people from different gender, race and age groups differ significantly with regard to these variables?

1.2.2 Research questions of relevance to the literature review

The research questions of relevance to the literature study are set out below.

- Research question 1: How is job embeddedness conceptualised in the literature?
- Research question 2: How is organisational commitment conceptualised in the literature?
- Research question 3: How is voluntary turnover conceptualised in the literature?
- Research question 4: Is there a theoretical relationship between organisational commitment, job embeddedness and voluntary turnover?
- Research question 5: Do biographical factors such as gender, race and age influence employees' decisions to voluntarily leave or stay at the organisation?
- Research question 6: What are the implications for staff retention practices in higher education?

1.2.3 Research questions of relevance to the empirical research.

The list of research questions relevant to the empirical research appears below.

- Research question 1: What is the nature of the statistical relationship between job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (intention to stay) as manifested in a sample of respondents in a South African higher education institution?
- Research question 2: Do job embeddedness and organisational commitment positively predict voluntary turnover (intention to stay)?
- Research question 3: Do people from different gender, race, and age groups differ significantly with regard to their job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (intention to stay) in a South African higher education institution?
- Research question 4: What recommendations and areas for future research based on the research findings, can be proposed for the field of Industrial and Organisational psychology with regard to staff retention in the higher education context?

Research question 5: What recommendations can be made to the organisation with regard to informing employee retention practices?

1.3 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

In relation to the above problem the general and specific aims as set out below have been formulated.

1.3.1 General aim of the research

The general aim of the research is to determine whether job embeddedness and organisational commitment predict voluntary turnover (intention to stay), and whether people from different gender, race and age groups differ significantly regarding these three variables.

1.3.2 Specific aims of the research

In terms of the literature review, the specific aims of this research are as follows:

Specific aim 1: To conceptualise job embeddedness from a theoretical perspective

Specific aim 2: To conceptualise organisational commitment from a theoretical perspective

Specific aim 3: To conceptualise voluntary turnover from a theoretical perspective

Specific aim 4: To explain the theoretical relationship between job embeddedness and organisational commitment and voluntary turnover

Specific aim 5: To explain, from a theoretical perspective, whether biographical factors such as gender, race and age influence employees' decisions to voluntarily leave or stay at the organisation

Specific aim 6: To critically evaluate the implications for staff retention practices in higher education

In terms of the empirical research, the specific aims of this research are as follows:

- Specific aim 1: To explore the statistical relationship between job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover as manifested in a sample of respondents in a South African higher education institution
- Specific aim 2: To determine whether job embeddedness and organisational commitment positively predict voluntary turnover (intention to stay) in a South African higher education institution
- Specific aim 3: Ascertain whether people from different gender, race, and age groups differ significantly with the regard to their job embeddedness and organisational commitment in predicting their voluntary turnover (intention to stay)
- Specific aim 4: To formulate recommendations and possible areas for future research based on the findings of this research, with regard to staff retention in higher education contexts
- Specific aim 5: To formulate recommendations for the organisation with regard to informing employee retention practices

1.4 PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE

A paradigm is a lens through which the researcher views the obvious and not so obvious principles of reality (Maree, 2009). For the purpose of this research, the term “paradigm” is used to refer to the intellectual climate and its meta-theoretical values and beliefs underpinning the theories and models that inform the research (Mouton & Marais, 1996).

1.4.1 Intellectual climate

The literature review of organisational commitment, voluntary turnover and job embeddedness will be presented from the humanistic and open-system paradigms. The empirical study will be presented from the positivist paradigm.

1.4.1.1 Literature review

The humanistic paradigm advocates the idea that humans have free will and may be described as the “pathology of consciousness” (Morgan, 1980; Sdorow & Rickabaugh, 2002). Essentially, people have the freedom and autonomy to make significant personal choices and they have the potential for creativity and growth (Hiemstra & Brockett, 1994). The humanistic paradigm is relevant for this research as the assumption is that individuals have the capacity and autonomy to decide whether they wish to leave the organisation or remain citizens of it.

The systems theory approach focuses on the parts and processes that interact in a dynamic way. Because individuals co-exist in relation to an environment, overt behaviour is the result of the whole organism as there is a flow of energy and information between the individual and the environment (Flood, 2010). This paradigmatic perspective will be relevant in unpacking the influences the organisational and social environment have on the individual in determining job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover.

1.4.1.2 Empirical study

The empirical study will be presented from the positivist research paradigm. Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006) posit that the positivist approach is more objective and aims to describe the laws that govern society. The approach involves empirically testing and verifying hypotheses and theories by using instruments that have been validated and are reliable. The ontological assumption of this paradigm is that the physical and social worlds exist independently – hence the researcher discovers this world through measurement. Generalisations of facts and laws are common and are justifiable in the paradigm because the hypotheses and theories are empirically tested and verified. This paradigmatic perspective impresses on the validity, reliability and replication of the research before generalisations can be made (Oates, Griffiths, Lockyer, & Hebbron, 2004). The research will be grounded in the preceding assumptions to ensure an objective and scientific analysis of the empirical evidence.

1.4.2 Meta-theoretical statements

Meta-theoretical statements are philosophies or schools of thought that reflect the nature of the discipline and formulate the research questions in a framework (Babbie & Mouton, 2009). These statements encourage the integration of theory and set parameters for prediction by specific theories and in certain contexts (Abrams & Hogg, 2004). In the empirical context, the research will be based on models and theory in relation to the variables identified. In the disciplinary context, the research focuses on industrial and organisational psychology as a field of application with specific reference to Career psychology and Personnel psychology.

Industrial and Organisational (IO) psychology applies various psychological principles, concepts and methods to research and influences human behaviour in the workplace, with the main aim of maintaining and improving organisational functioning through understanding the interaction between humans and their work environment (Bergh & Theron, 2009; Sdorow *et al.*, 2002). Organisational commitment is one of the work-related attitudes which IO psychology assesses, and by establishing its predictive properties for voluntary turnover, this may contribute to existing and new knowledge that could improve the retention of employees. Career psychology is concerned with the career development of individuals, the nature of employment (and unemployment), career-related matters in the organisation and non-work influencing factors. It describes the patterns of positions held and resultant experiences during one's lifespan (Arnold & Randall, 2010 as cited in Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011). Job embeddedness describes how one is enmeshed in the networks that one has established in the workplace and how there is a congruence between the work and non-work environment. Hence research into its predictive properties of voluntary turnover will contribute to existing and new knowledge in the field of career psychology. The research will also consider differences in gender, race and age in relation to job embeddedness, organisational commitment and resultant voluntary turnover. This research is underpinned by Personnel psychology, as this discipline focuses on using the individual differences in and between employees in predicting the optimal fit between the organisation and the employee (Bergh & Theron, 2009).

1.4.2.1 Theoretical models

The literature review of organisational commitment will be presented on the basis of Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model. Job embeddedness will be discussed from the perspective of Lee and Mitchell's (1994) job embeddedness model. Voluntary turnover will be presented using the unfolding model of voluntary turnover conceptualised by Lee and Mitchell (1994).

1.4.2.2 *Conceptual descriptions*

A brief description of the core constructs of relevance to the present study is provided below.

- Voluntary turnover is a form of turnover where a “competent and capable” employee terminates his or her employ with the organisation to work for another establishment (Holtom *et al.*, 2008; March & Simmons, 1958; Porter & Steers, 1973).
- Job embeddedness is the force/web that binds employees to their current jobs and organisations as a result of the relationships with people and activities in the web (Lim & Wong, 2009). Employees become stuck in this web and hence decisions made about turnover of staff are more of a process than an unprecedented event (Lee & Mitchell, 1994; Lim & Wong, 2009 Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a).
- Organisational commitment is a work-related attitude that refers to a state in which an employee identifies with the organisation and its goals and intends maintaining membership with the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979).
- Retention relates to the organisation's efforts to keep employees who would normally leave the organisation via voluntary resignation (Van Dyk, 2011). Employers need to retain their high performers who have knowledge and skills and are well integrated into the organisation and are critical for the organisation to maintain a competitive advantage (Du Plessis, Paine, & Botha, 2012).

1.4.3 **Central hypothesis**

The central hypothesis of the research is formulated as follows:

Job embeddedness and organisational commitment positively predict voluntary turnover (intention to stay). Moreover, individuals from different gender, race and age groups differ

significantly in terms of job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (intention to stay).

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

A cross-sectional quantitative survey design targeting permanently employed lecturing staff from two colleges will be used, with the main aim of describing the empirical relationship between the variables (Babbie & Mouton, 2009). The research is considered descriptive because a description of the empirical relationship between the variables will be provided, with specific reference to the predictive influence of job embeddedness and organisational commitment on voluntary turnover. Web-based surveys will be used to collect data from a sample of permanently employed lecturing staff in the population. Stratified random sampling, along with guidelines as stipulated by Cohen (1992), will be used to determine the sample size. The defining characteristics of the sample size will be that the subjects are permanent staff members and they are academics. Survey research allows for the collection of information from the respondents about their beliefs, opinions, characteristics and past or present behaviour (Maree, 2009; Neuman, 2006; Oates *et al.*, 2004). The findings will be generalised to the population and recommendations will be made with regard to employee retention practices.

In this study, the independent variables are organisational commitment and job embeddedness and the dependent variable will be voluntary turnover. The study will focus on establishing whether there is a statistically significant relationship between these variables. The data will be processed and analysed by means of descriptive (Cronbach alpha coefficients, means and standard deviations), correlational and inferential statistics using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (Version 20) (SPSS, 2011).

Specific measures will be applied to ensure and enhance the reliability and internal validity of the research. This will be achieved by using measuring instruments which have been found to be valid and reliable to different groups under different sets of circumstances in previous studies. Instruments found to be valid and reliable are the Job Embeddedness Scale (JES) by Lee and Mitchell (1994); the Organisational Commitment Scale (OCS) by Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993); and the Voluntary Turnover Scale (VTS) adapted by Crossley *et al.*, (2007).

Furthermore, external validity will be achieved by selecting a representative sample in order to allow for the generalisability of findings (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006). A structured approach in the literature review will be used to achieve the validity of the research design. In the literature review, relevant theories and models will be consulted thereby identifying and eradicating possible rival hypotheses.

The unit of analysis refers to the objects or things that are researched in order to formulate generalisations of these objects and to further explain the differences among them (Babbie & Mouton, 2009). The unit of analysis for the primary aims (to explore the relationship between job embeddedness and organisational commitment with regard to voluntary turnover, and secondly, to determine whether job embeddedness and organisational commitment positively predict voluntary turnover) is the individual and group. In terms of biographical variables, the unit of analysis will be the sub-groups, focusing on job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover. The analysis of data will be generalised to the group participating in this study.

Ethical guidelines, as stipulated by the Health Professions Councils of South Africa (HPCSA) and the Department of Industrial and Organisational psychology, formed the basis of the study. Ethical clearance to conduct the study was granted by the Research Committee of the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology. Informed consent was obtained from the respondents and all data and results were handled confidentially. To ensure confidentiality, the respondents were asked not to indicate their names or write any information that may compromise their identity. The results obtained were communicated to only the organisation from which the data was collected and recommendations were made for the benefit of the organisation. No harm was done to the respondents during the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2009; Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006).

1.6 RESEARCH METHOD

As depicted in figure 1.1, the research method consists of two phases, namely a literature review (to conceptualise the variables) and an empirical study (to operationalise the variables).

1.6.1 Phase 1: literature review

The literature review will explore the constructs of job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover. The general aim of the literature review is to establish theoretical relationships between job embeddedness and organisational commitment with regard to voluntary turnover, and whether biographical factors such as gender, race and age influence employees' decisions to voluntarily leave or stay at the organisation.

1.6.2 Phase 2: empirical research

The empirical study will be presented in the form of a research article in chapter 3. The research article outlines the core focus of the study, the background to the study, trends from the research literature, the potential value added by the study, the research design (research approach and research method), the results, a discussion of the results, the conclusions, the limitations of the study and recommendations for practice and future research. Chapter 4 integrates the research study and discusses the conclusions, limitations and implications in more detail.

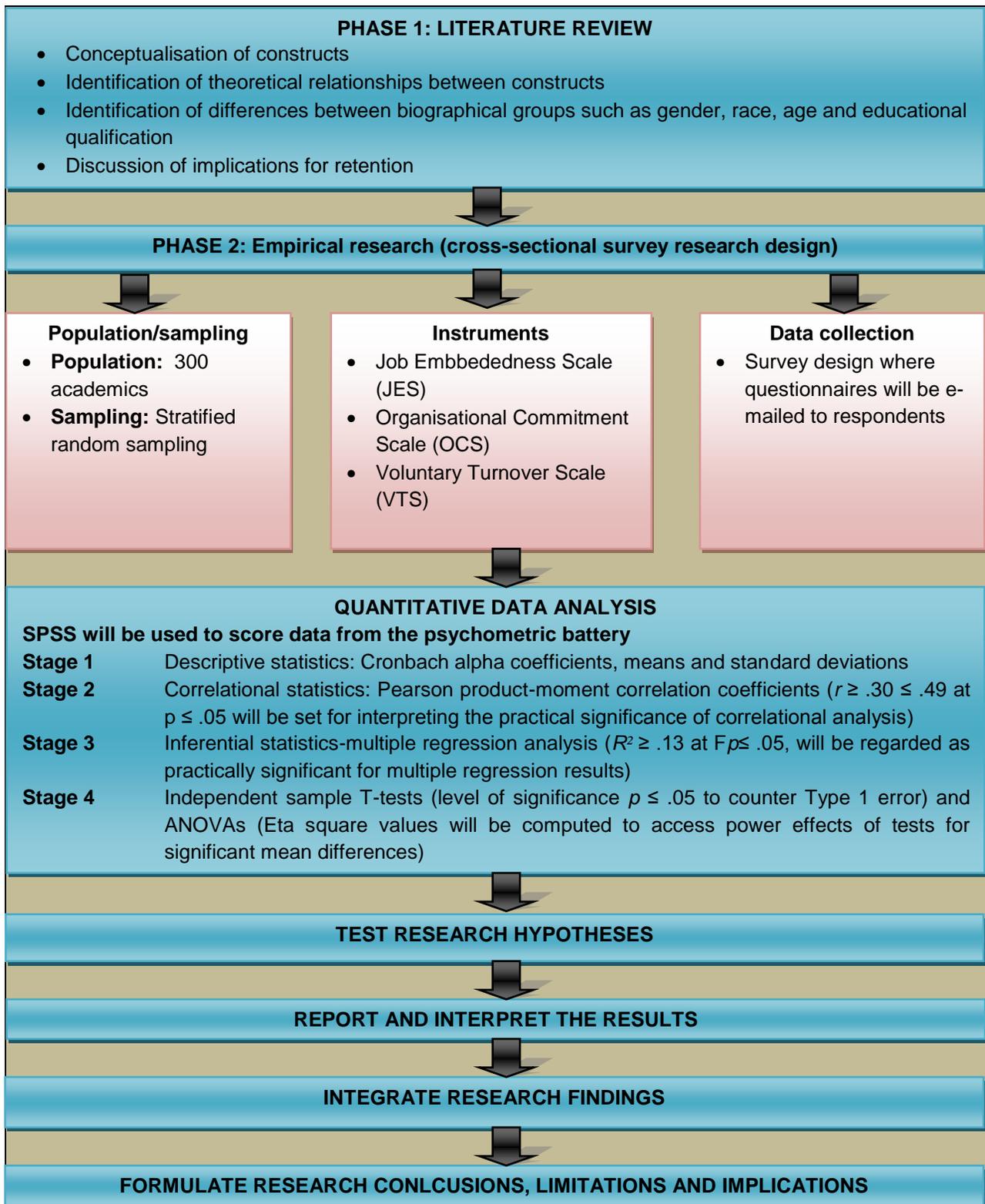


Figure 1.1. Flow chart of the research method (adapted from Babbie & Mouton, 2009).

1.7 CHAPTER LAYOUT

The structure of the dissertation, in terms of chapter layout, will be presented as follows:

Chapter 1: Scientific orientation to the research

The aim of this chapter was to introduce the topic and discuss the variables to be investigated. This chapter provided guidelines on what design the research will take and the methodology to be used in collecting and analysing data.

Chapter 2: Literature review

The aim of this chapter is to provide a conceptual analysis of the research variables, namely job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover. The practical implications of the relationship between organisational commitment and job embeddedness in predicting voluntary turnover will be discussed. Furthermore, the influence of biographical factors such as gender, race and age will be highlighted with regard to employees' decisions to voluntarily leave or stay at the organisation.

Chapter 3: Research article

The structure of this chapter will take the form of a research article. The core focus of the study, highlighting the background to the study, trends from the research literature, the potential value added by the study and the research design (research approach and research method) will be presented. This will be followed by a presentation of the results, a discussion of the results, the conclusions, the limitations of the study and recommendations for practice and future research.

Chapter 4: Conclusions, limitations and recommendations

This will be the final chapter containing an integrated discussion and conclusion of the results. Recommendations for the organisation will be presented in this chapter as well. Limitations experienced during the research will be noted and recommendations made for future research and for the field of Industrial and Organisational psychology.

1.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the background to and motivation for the research, aims of the research, paradigmatic perspectives and research design, the methodological approach and the chapter layout of the complete dissertation.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW OF JOB EMBEDDEDNESS, ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT AND VOLUNTARY TURNOVER

This chapter addresses the research aims of the literature review and presents a brief discussion of the constructs of job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover. Theoretical perspectives underpinning the constructs will be presented, followed by the variables influencing the constructs. In conclusion, an integration of the constructs highlighting similarities and differences will be presented.

2.1 JOB EMBEDDEDNESS

This section will discuss the model of job embeddedness as conceptualised by Mitchell *et al.*, (2001a; 2001b). The theoretical underpinning of the model will be presented, followed by variables influencing the construct.

2.1.1 Conceptualisation

Job embeddedness refers to a broad array of influences on employee retention, with specific reference to explaining why people choose to stay in their current employment. The construct of embeddedness views employees as embedded in a field of forces that influences turnover decisions, addresses a variety of forces such as affect, fit and structural ties, and stresses the importance of relationships (Allen, 2006). Compared to traditional attitudes of turnover, job embeddedness examines both on-the job and off-the job factors that influence a person's decision not to leave the organisation (Mallol, Holtom, & Lee, 2007).

Job embeddedness has theoretical underpinnings in decision sciences. The image theory is one of the theories used in the conceptualisation of job embeddedness. Image theory has built up a platform for job embeddedness and the unfolding model in order to facilitate the understanding of specific issues involved in employees' decisions to quit. The image theory differs from classical theories of choice in that it places the emphasis on initiative and automatic elements as well as the need for a decision to fit in with one's values, goals and strategies (Harman *et al.*, 2007; Morell, Loan-Clarke & Wilkinson, 2001; Yang, Ma & Hu, 2011). Classical choice theories emphasise decision making as a rational process, thereby failing to recognise the formulation

stages of a decision. Another drawback of classical choice theories is that they can only be applied to problems comprising two or more measurable alternatives (Beach & Mitchell, 1987).

According to Beach (1993), image theory assumes that people use three schematic knowledge structures to arrange their thoughts about decisions. The first of these structures is called *value images*, comprising the decision maker's principles. These are imperative in establishing the individual's behaviour with regard to the rightness or wrongness of any decision about a goal or plan. The second structure is called the *trajectory image* made up of previously adopted goals. This image represents the decision maker's hopes of what he or she will become and achieve in the organisation. The third and last structure is known as the *strategic image*, made up of various plans that have been adopted for achieving the goals in the trajectory image. Essentially, each plan is an abstract sequence of potential activities beginning with the goal adaptation to goal attainment (Beach, 1993; Harman *et al.*, 2007; Yang, *et al.*, 2011).

In view of these images, image theory was incorporated into job embeddedness in order to understand the process that individuals follow when making a decision to either stay or leave the organisation (Yang, *et al.*, 2011). A shock to the system is an event that jars an employee towards evaluating judgements about his or her job and the result may be that the employee voluntarily leaves the organisation (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). Essentially, a shock generates information or provides meaning about a person's job and is then interpreted and integrated into the person's system of beliefs and images. Shocks can be personal events or organisational events (Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006).

2.1.2 Theoretical model of job embeddedness

This construct, as conceptualised by Mitchell *et al.* (2001a), describes a connection or web in which individuals become enmeshed or stuck. Essentially, an individual can be enmeshed in many different ways, and these are described through three main dimensions, namely "links, fit and sacrifice". Critical aspects of job embeddedness and the dimensions as described by the authors are presented in table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1

Aspects of job embeddedness

Dimension	Description
Links	The extent to which one has links with other people or activities
Fit	The extent to which one's job and communities are similar to or fit with other aspects in one's life spaces
Sacrifice	The ease with which links can be broken if one had to physically move to another city or home

These dimensions have been used to describe both on-the job (organisation) and off-the job factors (community). Holtom and Inderrieden (2006) present a description of the dimensions fit, link and sacrifice, and how these can be related to the organisation and community, as depicted in table 2.2 below.

Table 2.2

Summary of job embeddedness dimensions (adapted from Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006)

Construct	Sub- measurement	Description
Fit-organisation	Organisation	Reflects an employee's perceived compatibility or comfort with the organisation. The person's values, career goals and plans for the future must fit in with the larger corporate culture as well as the demands of the immediate job (e.g. job knowledge, skills and abilities)
Fit-community	Community	Captures how well a person perceives he or she fits into the community and the surrounding environment. Includes the weather, amenities and general culture if the location in which one resides is relevant to perceptions of community fit
Links-organisation	Organisation	Considers the formal and informal connections that exist between an employee and other people, or groups in the organisation
Links-community	Community	Recognises the significant influence that family and other social institutions exerts on individuals and their decision making
Sacrifice-organisation	Organisation	Captures the perceived cost of material or psychological benefits that may be forfeited by leaving one's job (e.g. giving up colleagues, projects and perks). The more an employee gives up when leaving, the more difficult it is to sever employment with the organisation
Sacrifice-community	Community	This is mostly an issue if one has to relocate. Leaving a community that is attractive, safe and where one is liked or respected can be difficult. Even if one does not necessarily relocate, various conveniences like an easy commute or flexitime may be lost by changing jobs

2.1.2.1 Links

Links are described as formal or informal connections between a person, and institutions or other people. Numerous strands connect an employee and his or her family in a social, psychological and financial web that includes work and non-work friends, groups, the community, and the physical environment in which he or she lives. The higher the number of links between the person and the web, the more an employee is bound to the job and the organisation (Lim & Wong, 2009; Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a; Van Dyk, 2011).

Maertz, Stevens, Campion, and Fernandez (1996) and Prestholdt, Lane, and Mathews (1987) suggest that the decision to stay in a job derives from family, team members and other colleagues. People therefore have many links between the various aspects of their lives. Leaving their job and perhaps their home can sever or require the rearrangement of some of these links.

2.1.2.2. Fit

Fit is defined as an employee's perceived compatibility or comfort with an organisation and with his or her environment. The environment in this regard considers both on-the-job and off-the-job experiences (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Lee & Mitchell, 1994; Mallol *et al.*, 2007; Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a). With regard to the on-the-job environment, Mitchell *et al.*, (2001b) propose that an employee's personal values, career goals and plans for the future must "fit" with the larger corporate culture and the demands of his or her immediate job (e.g. job knowledge, skills and abilities). Regarding off-the-job environment, a person will consider how well he or she fits in with the community and surrounding environment. Essentially, the better the fit, the higher the likelihood that an employee will feel professionally and personally linked to the organisation (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a; Yang *et al.*, 2011).

Studies on voluntary turnover have shown that a lack of fit with the organisation results in people discontinuing their membership in the organisation (Chatman, 1991; O'Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell, 1991; Villanova, Bernardin, Johnson & Dahmus, 1994). Scholars agree that when a person's attributes are congruent with those of the job, turnover may be significantly decreased (Chan, 1996).

Hence a person's fit with the job and organisation relates to attachments to the organisation. Off-the-job environment entails the community in which the person lives. Dimensions of the community that may influence a person's decisions to stay include the weather, amenities and general culture of the location in which he or she resides. In addition to these, outdoor activities (e.g. fishing), political and religious climates and entertainment activities (college or professional sports, music and theatre) are considered by people when making the decision to stay or to leave (Hom & Xiao, 2011). Notably, the evaluations of fit are not necessarily based on the job or organisation. The model proposes that fit may be independent of the job or organisation, and includes a variety of factors outside the organisation (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Zhang, Fried & Griffeth, 2012).

2.1.2.3. *Sacrifice*

Sacrifice describes the perceived cost of material or psychological benefits that may be forfeited by leaving one's job. Leaving an organisation is more likely to result in personal losses, be they financial or psychological (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a; Holtom & O'Neill, 2004). Again, there are on-the-job losses experienced and off-the-job losses to be considered. On-the-job losses would include losing contact with colleagues, interesting projects or pleasant benefits.

Less visible, but equally important, potential sacrifices experienced when leaving an organisation include opportunities for job stability and advancement, sabbaticals or research and development leave in academic environments, which are usually granted after five to six years of employment at a university. Various conveniences like being able to be at home during certain times due to flexitime and day-care facilities may be lost. Taking a new job means giving up these accrued advantages (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a).

If upon leaving an organisation one is required to relocate, community sacrifice becomes another factor to consider. As indicated in the fit, there are certain amenities, facilities and services that make it comfortable for someone to stay in that community. Relocation means that the person would have to leave this community, a sacrifice that he or she may not be willing to make. Leaving a community that is attractive, safe and where one is liked or respected can be hard. The more an employee gives up when leaving, the more difficult it is to terminate employment with the organisation (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a).

2.1.3 Variables influencing job embeddedness

The following variables have been found to correlate significantly with job embeddedness:

2.1.3.1 Gender

According to Tanova and Holtom (2008), female workers have traditionally been seen as having lower job embeddedness compared to their male counterparts. Griffeth, Horn and Gaertner (2000) found a slight difference between men and women, but their findings support those of Tanova and Holtom (2008).

2.1.3.2 Race

Mallol *et al.*, (2007) found that job embeddedness statistically predicts voluntary turnover across all races.

2.1.3.3 Age

Griffeth *et al.*, (2000) found that the younger employees, the lower their job embeddedness. Younger employees are more likely to take risks at the beginning of their careers and are more likely to accept positions that are below their abilities and expectations at the beginning of their career and move on to better jobs when those jobs become available.

2.1.3.4 Marital status

Karatepe and Ngeche (2011) found that married people are more embedded compared with their single co-workers.

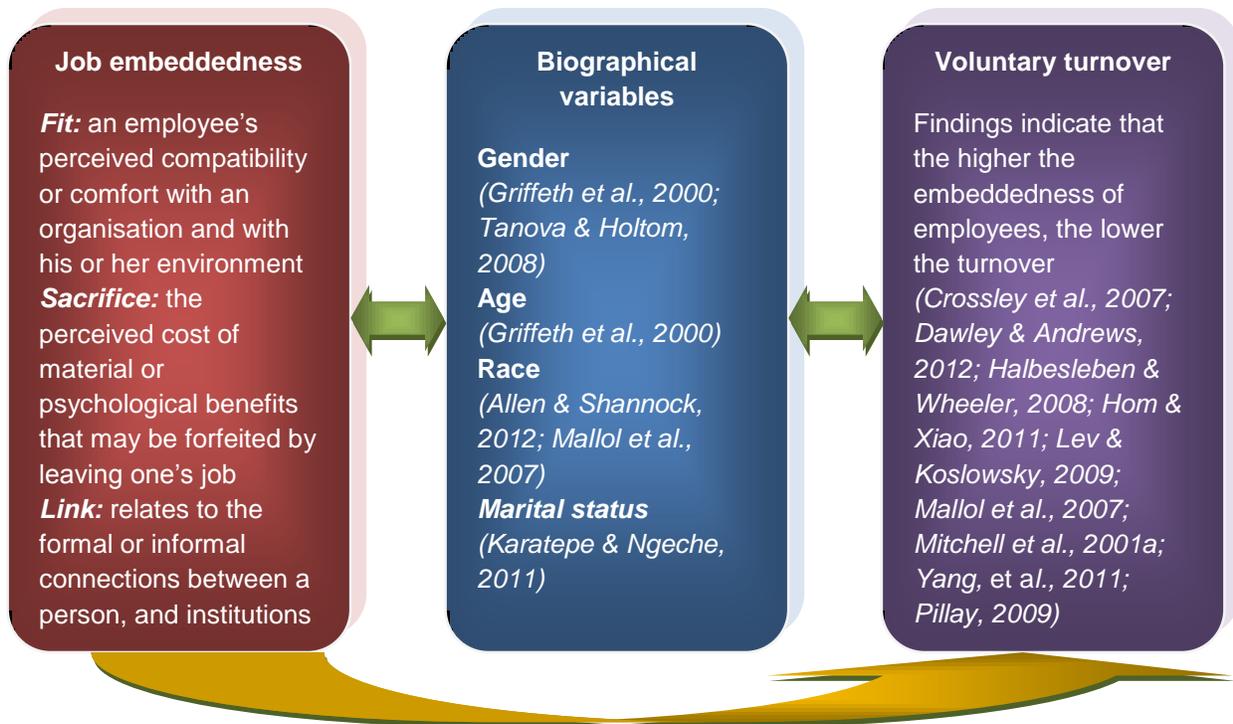


Figure 2.1. Theoretical relationship between job embeddedness and voluntary turnover

2.1.4 Implications for retention

Job embeddedness is an important construct in trying to understand why people stay in organisations. Job embeddedness attempts to explain the attachment behaviour of employees to the organisation. In an attempt to retain staff, organisations can integrate on and off- the-job activities so as to provide retention benefits for both organisations and communities (Crossley et al., 2007; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Lev & Koslowsky, 2009; Mallol et al., 2007; Pillay, 2009).

Studies have confirmed that an employee who is highly engaged may find it difficult to leave his or her job. The difficulty in leaving the job may be as a result of the employee investing so much time and energy in the job. Over and above this, if the organisation provides resources to enable the employee to perform his or her duties successfully, the employee may be hesitant to leave the organisation (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008).

Employee assistance programmes can be another mechanism that organisations can use in an attempt to retain their employees (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Wheeler, Gallagher, Brouer *et al.*, 2007). This will improve embeddedness and subsequently reduce turnover of staff. The idea behind this is that if employees can receive assistance for off-the-job issues, they are more likely to stay in the organisation.

2.2 ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

Over the past few decades, organisational commitment has become a topic of interest to researchers and has been measured and defined in numerous ways. The approaches proposed in an attempt to define and describe organisational commitment have been from the attitudinal, behavioural, motivational and multidimensional perspectives (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Martin & Roodt, 2008; Mowday *et al.*, 1979; Suliman & Illes, 2000). For the purposes of this study, the conceptualisation of organisational commitment as presented by Allen and Meyer (1990) will be used.

2.2.1 Conceptualisation

Organisational commitment was first coined by Mowday *et al.*, (1979). After the conceptualisation of organisational commitment, scholars have proposed numerous definitions in an attempt to understand and explain this work attitude. Work done by Meyer and Allen (1991) has resulted in a widely acceptable definition of this work attitude. They suggested that organisational commitment refers to an inner condition connecting employees to the organisation. This connection typically refers to positive work attitudes or psychological connections shown by an employee towards the organisation. Essentially, the psychological connection is so strong that the individual has an unconditional desire and will to achieve organisational objectives (Meyer *et al.*, 1993; Miller & Lee, 2001).

A brief overview of the various perspective shows that attitudinal commitment refers to both a process and an approach whereby individuals consider their values and goals in relation to those of the organisation (Meyer *et al.*, 1993). The behavioural perspective defines organisational commitment as behaviour whereby individuals are committed to a particular course of action rather than an entity (Meyer *et al.*, 1993). This implies that employees who are committed to their organisation may develop a more positive view of the organisation and their

behaviour will be consistent with the expected behaviour in order to avoid cognitive dissonance or to maintain positive self-perceptions (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Moving away from behavioural and attitudinal elements is the motivational approach, where organisational commitment is related to an intrinsic motivational force (Mowday *et al.*, 1979).

The definition as proposed by Allen and Meyer (1990) will be of relevance to this study. This definition is in line with the instrument, as updated by Meyer *et al.*, (1993).

2.2.2 Theoretical models

To conceptualise and measure organisational commitment, Meyer and Allen (1991) developed a multidimensional model commonly referred to as the “three-component model” of organisational commitment (Meyer *et al.*, 1993). The model integrates the various aspects of organisational commitment as presented by previous perspectives. Meyer and Allen (1991) argue that by integrating the approaches to understanding organisational commitment, one can achieve a holistic understanding of an employee's attachment to the organisation. The three-component model conceptualises organisational commitment into three approaches, namely *affective*, *continuance* and *normative* commitment. Meyer and Allen (1991) further propose that each component develops as a result of different experiences and has different implications for on-the-job behaviour. The authors assert that the link to these three approaches is the view that commitment is a psychological state that characterises the employee's relationship with the organisation, and influences an employee's decision to continue or discontinue membership in the organisation.

2.2.2.1 Affective commitment

Affective commitment refers to the employee's emotional attachment, identification with and involvement in the organisation. Allen and Meyer (1990) posit that employees with strong affective commitment continue employment with the organisation because they want to (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001).

Lesabe and Nkosi (2007) assert that affective commitment together with normative commitment positively correlate with work behaviour. Essentially, individuals high on both affective and

normative commitment maintain good relationships with the organisation. This finding was confirmed by Martin (2008) and Van Dyk (2011).

Manetje and Martins (2009) found that employees are more affectively committed to the organisation when there is a dominant culture encouraging achievement, support and roles. Affectively committed employees are more willing to maintain their relationship with the organisation than those who are high on normative and continuance commitment. One would expect that these employees to exhibit feelings of identification with the organisation, and attachment to and involvement in the organisation.

Yang, Che, and Spector (2008) confirm that an employee's high personal desire (or value) for relationships at work and high-quality actual relationships contribute to his or her good psychological adjustment, high job satisfaction and low turnover intention via different types of support at work. Essentially, people are happy staying at a workplace where they are around people they like.

Lumley, Coetzee, Tladinyane and Ferreira (2011) confirm the assertions made by Yang *et al.*, (2008). Lumley *et al.*, (2011) found positive associations between job satisfaction variables and affective commitment, specifically pay, promotion (advancement), supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards (recognition and achievement), relationship with co-workers, nature of the work and communication (organisational and job-specific). Their conclusion is that employees seem to feel more emotionally attached to and involved with an organisation where they are happy with the job satisfaction variable mentioned above.

2.2.2.2 Continuance commitment

Continuance commitment describes an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organisation. This may be likened to the sub-dimension of sacrifice in job embeddedness. In this instance, the employees whose primary link to the organisation is based on continuance commitment remain because they need to do so (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). The cost implication of leaving the organisation is too high, therefore remaining in the organisation is more beneficial and has less cost implications. Manetje and Martins (2009) conclude that continuance commitment has the least impact on the culture of the organisation

Ferreira (2012) asserts that there is a significant relationship between the hardiness variable “challenge” and affective and continuance commitment. The implication here is that employees who face up to difficult experiences because they see them as opportunities for personal growth rather than as potential threats to security, are more likely to be committed to the organisation. The results further suggest that those employees who thrive on challenge are motivated to become change agents in their environment and are more likely to remain with their organisation because they regard the costs of leaving the organisation as too high.

Döckel, Basson and Coetzee (2006) and Lumley *et al.*, (2011) found strong, significant relationships between organisational commitment (affective and normative dimensions) with job satisfaction. The authors further confirm that there is an absence of a significant relationship between continuance commitment and job satisfaction variables. This implies that an employee’s decision to remain in the organisation is due to his or her feelings of attachment (affective commitment) and obligation (normative commitment), rather than the costs associated with leaving the company (continuance).

2.2.2.3 *Normative commitment*

Normative commitment reflects feelings of obligation by the employee to continue employment. Meyer and Allen (1991) assert that employees with high levels of normative commitment feel they have to remain with the organisation (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001).

Manetje and Martins (2009) found that employees tend to be more committed to their organisation in terms of the continuance and normative dimensions as compared to the affective dimension. Normative commitment was found to be predominant in organisational cultures in which importance is placed on power as compared to roles and support.

Lumley *et al.*, (2011) found that employees who were happy with the social norms of the organisation seem likely to remain in the organisation. Job satisfaction variables such as pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, co-workers, nature of the work and communication were reported to influence an employee’s decision to remain in the organisation. These findings confirm assertions made by Ferreira, Basson, and Coetzee (2010) in that an employee’s feelings of responsibility, as a result of having authority and influence over others tend to increase a sense of accountability to stay in the occupation and organisation

In conclusion, it can be argued that organisational commitment, namely affective and normative commitment, plays a significant role when an employee is faced with the decision to either stay or leave the organisation (Döckel *et al.*, 2006; Ferreira *et al.*, 2010; Lesabe & Nkosi, 2007; Lumley *et al.*, 2011; Martins, 2008; Van Dyk, 2011; Yang *et al.*, 2008).

2.2.3 Variables influencing organisational commitment

Variables found to influence organisational commitment include gender, race groups, age, marital status and tenure. The influence of these variables is discussed below.

2.2.3.1 Gender

Martin and Roodt (2008) and Lumley (2009) indicate that gender presents conflicting results. Some studies found women to be more committed than men while others found that men are more committed to the organisation than their female colleagues. Similarly, Savincki, Cooley, and Gjesvold (2003) affirm that men and women experience different socio-psychological realities in the workplace, and are likely to differ significantly with regard to their organisational commitment (Kanwar, Singh & Kodwani, 2012). This is confirmed by Coetzee and Roythorne-Jacobs (2012) who found that male respondents appear to be committed to an organisation that provides them with the autonomy to do their jobs in an independent fashion.

2.2.3.2 Race groups

According to Martin and Roodt (2008) and Lumley *et al.* (2011), there are significant differences regarding race and organisational commitment. White people reported higher levels of commitment than their black counterparts (Martin & Roodt, 2008).

2.2.3.3 Age

Martin and Roodt (2008) reported that there are contradictory findings regarding age and organisational commitment. Müller & Roodt (1998) found no relationship between age and commitment, while some studies have found that there is a positive correlation between age and organisational commitment (Lumley *et al.*, 2011; Martin & Roodt, 2008). The positive relationship

found here is that as employees aged in the organisation, they became more satisfied with their jobs (Haymann, 2010; Kotze & Roodt, 2005).

2.2.3.4 Marital status

Married people have greater financial responsibilities compared to single people. In this regard, marital status can be related to commitment as confirmed by the literature (Martin & Roodt, 2008).

2.2.3.5 Tenure

According to Martin and Roodt (2008), there is evidence of a positive relationship between tenure and affective and continuance commitment. The longer employees have worked in an organisation, the higher their levels of commitment seem to be.

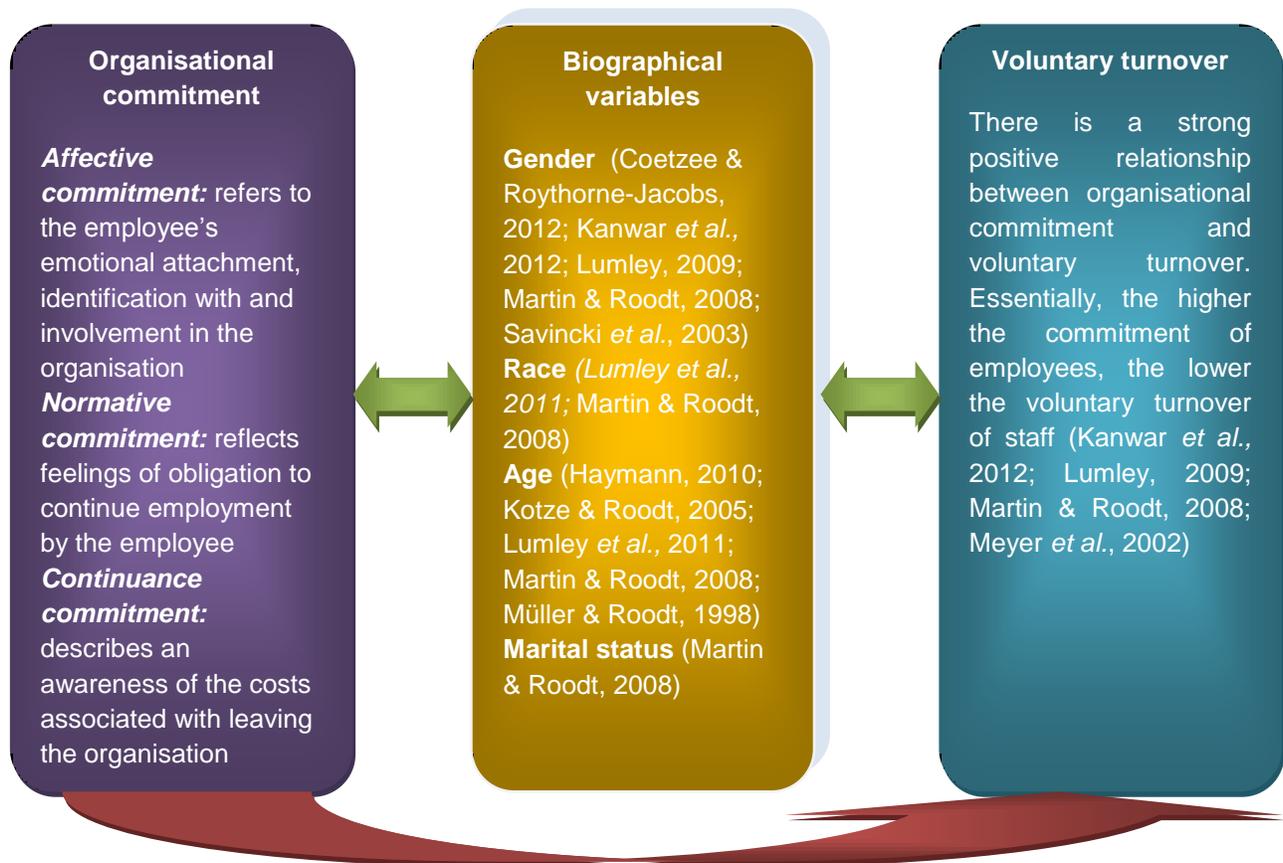


Figure 2.2. Theoretical relationship between organisational commitment and voluntary turnover

2.2.4 Implications for retention

Lesabe and Nkosi (2007) point out that employee retention, productivity, quality and financial success are characterised by high performance and high commitment strategies. They propose an integrated set of management strategies with the aim of increasing employee's commitment to the organisation. These include compensation, benefit packages, morale and motivation, career growth and development, leadership, nature of the job itself, training and development, performance management and work environment. According to Lesabe and Nkosi (2007), by implementing and/or improving on these strategies, affective commitment levels of employees and subsequent organisational performance may increase.

Paré and Tremblay (2007) posit that employees tend to develop a stronger affective attachment to the organisation if their experiences in the organisation are consistent with their expectations and their basic needs are satisfied, than employees whose experiences are less satisfying. Paré and Tremblay (2007) further confirm that continuance commitment may develop as employees recognise not only the cost of leaving but also how they have developed their competencies or skills through their membership in the organisation. This is supported by Foong-Ming (2008), who argues for organisational support as a means of retaining staff. The notion is that an organisation that provides a caring and supportive work environment may induce its employees into exhibiting attachment behaviours towards the organisation and resultant commitment to achieving organisational goals (João, 2010).

In conclusion, João (2010) found that the relationship between organisational commitment and turnover has been the focus of many studies, with the majority of the findings identifying a negative relationship between these constructs. A strong relationship between organisational commitment and employee retention has been identified in some studies (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). Differences between various age, gender, tenure, marital status and racial groups' job satisfaction and organisational commitment have also been studied (Kanwar *et al.*, 2012; Lumley *et al.*, 2011; Martin & Roodt, 2008).

2.3 VOLUNTARY TURNOVER

This section will present the definition of turnover and highlight various underpinnings of the conceptualisation of the construct. Variables influencing voluntary turnover will be discussed leading to the implications for retention factors to conclude the section.

2.3.1 Conceptualisation

Voluntary turnover is a form of turnover where a “competent and capable” employee terminates his or her employment with the organisation to work for another establishment (Crossley *et al.*, 2007; Holtom *et al.*, 2008; Porter & Steers, 1973; Versfeld, 2009). In order to understand the conceptualisation of voluntary turnover, a chronological history of research into voluntary turnover will be discussed.

The conceptualisation of turnover, based on the work of March and Simmons (1958), focuses on predicting the ease with which an employee leaves and his or her desire to leave an organisation. Mallo *et al.*, (2007) confirm this and highlight the stance which traditional models of turnover took in understating this construct. The traditional models followed two main paths, namely (1) studying turnover from an attitudinal perspective, considering job satisfaction and organisational commitment, and (2) the influence of the labour market with regard to the ease of movement and the availability of alternative employment. Essentially traditional models of voluntary turnover suggest that people become dissatisfied with their jobs, search for alternative jobs, compare their options with the current job, and leave if any of these alternatives are perceived to be better than their current situation (Holtom & O’Neil, 2004). According to Griffeth *et al.*, (2000), this approach, although successful in identifying turnover prediction, only explains a limited percentage of resignations.

2.3.1.1 Turnover research before 1985

Research into turnover started in 1958. Holtom *et al.*, (2008) highlight the contribution by scholars towards predicting turnover and the initiation of scientific turnover research from 1958 to 1985. From the conception of turnover in 1958 by March and Simon, researchers like Porter and Steers (1973), Mobley (1977), Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, and Meglino (1979), Price and

Mueller (1981), Steers and Mowday (1981) and Hom, Griffeth, and Sellaro (1984) all made contributions. Their work will be briefly discussed.

March and Simon (1958) introduced a general theory of organisational equilibrium, which emphasised the importance of balancing employee and organisation contributions. The two factors that determine an employee's balance are perceived desirability and perceived ease of leaving the organisation, commonly referred to as job satisfaction and perceived alternatives. Both factors were proposed to independently operate to influence an employee's motivation to leave the organisation. Individual differences in ability and biographical variables such as tenure, gender and age were identified as key determinants of perceived ease of movement, while organisational size and job satisfaction influenced the perceived desirability of movement.

Porter and Steers (1973) introduced a model which focused on the employees' "met" expectations as influential to turnover decisions. They proposed that when an employee's prior expectations are met on the job, he or she is less likely to quit. Although the theory of met expectations received empirical support, it was more psychological in nature, and did not consider structural and economic factors in employees' decisions to leave or remain with the organisation (Porters & Steers, 1973).

A more comprehensive model was proposed by Mobley in 1977 in the form of a multistage model detailing the withdrawal process and the sequence of steps employees go through before leaving the organisation. The intermediate linkages model proposed a set of withdrawal cognitions (e.g. thoughts of quitting, expected utility of withdrawal) and job-search behaviours (e.g. job search, evaluate alternatives) that link job dissatisfaction to actual turnover behaviour. Essentially the employee's values, job perceptions, and labour market perceptions were combined to influence withdrawal intentions via the linkages (Holtom *et al.*, 2008). Mobley (1977) improved on the model, highlighting potential moderating effects on the turnover decision. For example, the researchers hypothesised that the centrality of non-work values and the need for immediate gratification moderate the effects of job satisfaction and expected utilities on turnover. They also incorporated the impact of changes over time and suggested that employees may engage in alternative withdrawal behaviours such as increased absenteeism.

Price and Mueller (1981) developed a comprehensive structural model, identifying job satisfaction and intention to leave as pre-requisites for turnover, but a mediator factor, organisational commitment, was introduced. Possible reasons for turnover included the nature of the job (e.g. routine), participation, distributive justice and family ties (e.g. kinship responsibility).

Steers and Mowday (1981) attempted to incorporate previous turnover models into a comprehensive process model of voluntary employee turnover. Finally, Holtom *et al.*, (2008) drew from Mobley's process model to propose an alternative model that suggests two decision paths. Once employees think about leaving, intend to quit and evaluate the benefit of leaving, they either engage in a job search and compare their available alternatives to their current job or directly resign.

In conclusion, the early turnover models focused on the traditional attitudes of satisfaction and commitment and other factors such as individual differences and the nature of the job as the causes of turnover.

2.3.1.2 Turnover research from 1985 to 1995

According to Holtom *et al.* (2008), during the period 1985 to 1995, there was a significant increase in consideration of context-based variables and other negative, personal conditions such as exhaustion and stress. The context-based variables included (1) organisation/macro-level variables (e.g. organisational culture, reward systems, gender composition), and (2) person-context variables with an emphasis on employees' relations with their environment (e.g. perceived supervisor support). This focus on variables at other levels, or outside the individual, was a major contribution.

Another significant development was the conceptualisation of the three-component model of organisational commitment by Meyer and Allen (1991). Over and above the conceptualisation of turnover around the traditional job attitudes of satisfaction and commitment, researchers incorporated a new set of attitudes into turnover research. These attitudes included stress, well-being and uncertainty (Holtom *et al.*, 2008).

Towards the end of this time period a new theory regarding the turnover process was introduced. Lee and Mitchell (1994) proposed the unfolding model of turnover. Drawing from image theory, they proposed that turnover decisions are not always the result of accumulated job dissatisfaction and may sometimes occur without much consideration. They suggested five decision paths that employees may follow before they leave the organisation. *Path #1* commences with an environmental event (shock), rather than dissatisfaction, that causes the enactment of a quitting script with little rational deliberation. A shock is an uncomfortable event that triggers the psychological analysis involved in leaving a job. Two of the other paths are initiated by shocks, while two are more traditional paths driven by accumulated job dissatisfaction. In general, the model emphasises the complexity and dynamics of the turnover process and suggests that future turnover research needs to take into consideration how people leave their jobs.

2.3.1.3 Turnover research from 1995 until the present

The last decade (1995–2005) has seen turnover research adopting a new approach. Holtom *et al.*, (2008) posit the following major trends in turnover research:

- (1) a focus on individual differences and predictions of turnover (Lev & Koslowsky, 2009)
- (2) continued focus on stress- and change-related attitudes (*e.g.* change acceptance)
- (3) empirical research on the unfolding model
- (4) increased focus on context-based variables with an emphasis on interpersonal relationships (*e.g.* interpersonal citizenship behaviours)
- (5) a focus on retention factors (*e.g.* organisational commitment and job embeddedness)
- (6) dynamic modelling of turnover processes with the consideration of time (*e.g.* changes in job satisfaction)
- (7) expansion, generally of previously identified relationships

2.3.2 Theoretical model of voluntary turnover: the unfolding model

Niederman, Sumner and Maertz (2007) found that there have been many predictive models of voluntary turnover that strive to explain differences and uncover significant relationships. Developments from trying to find significant differences resulted in another category of models which attempted to go beyond prediction. These models attempted to explain the process by

which people decide to quit their jobs (Maertz & Campion, 1998). The models were refined from the intermediate linkage model (and its later variations) which proposed a linear, step-by-step decision process that employees follow between experiencing job dissatisfaction and actually leaving. However, it became apparent to some theorists that many people do not follow this type of rational, step-by-step decision process (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). This saw the introduction of the unfolding model by Mitchell *et al.*, (2001a).

The unfolding model expanded the scope and depth of theory on voluntary turnover in that the model proposed that all leavers use one of five distinct decision types, defined by the presence or absence of certain process characteristics like negative feelings or consideration of alternative jobs. The decision-making concepts were underpinned in the image theory which holds that employees conserve mental resources by using decision-making “shortcuts” (Harman *et al.*, 2007; Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a; 2001b).

Mitchell *et al.*, (2001a; 2001b) introduced the concept of a “shock,” which is an event that jars employees into think seriously about turnover. They proposed that after a shock, some employees automatically follow a “script” to leave their job. This script amounts to a planned series of behaviours reserved for a particular situation in the future. Employees may immediately cast out or “screen out” job alternatives without much thought, based on a mismatch between the individual’s values or goals (*i.e.* mental images) and those represented by the organisation in question. This mismatch is referred to in the theory as an “image violation.”

Essentially “shocks”, “scripts”, and “image violations”, along with the presence/absence of alternative jobs or job search, and high/low job satisfaction are the defining characteristics that differentiate Lee and Mitchell’s five decision paths. Turnover decisions are not always the result of accumulated job dissatisfaction, and may sometimes occur without much deliberation (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). Certain events may cause some employees to consider leaving their organisations when the event matches some pre-existing plan for leaving, or violates employees’ values or interferes with their goal attainment (Lee & Mitchell, 1994).

The four possible decision paths that people may consider when leaving the organisation are detailed in table 2.3. Lee and Mitchell (1994) found that most people follow one of the four psychological and behavioural paths when leaving their organisation. Three of the four paths are initiated by shocks.

Table 2.3

Unfolding model of voluntary turnover decision path (adapted from Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006).

	Path					
	1	2	3	4A	4B	
	Following a plan	Leaving without a plan	Leaving for something better	Leaving without a plan	Leaving for something better	
Initiating event	Shock	Shock	Shock	Job dissatisfaction	Job dissatisfaction	
Example	Planned to go to attend university. Quit job when enough money saved	Individual experience unfair discriminati on from manager. Decided to quit	Received an unsolicited job offer that looks better than current situation. Decided to quit	As a result of increasing job dissatisfaction decides to quit current job without searching for another job	Accumulated dissatisfaction results in successful job search. Finds a new job then quits	

2.3.2.1 Shocks

Lee and Mitchell (1994) and Mitchell *et al.*, (2001a) argue that some sort of event, referred to as a shock to the system, causes the employee to pause and think about the meaning or implication of the event in relation to his or her job. Secondly, this process may (or may not) lead to the idea that leaving the job is an alternative to consider. If leaving becomes an alternative, there may (or may not) be other job alternatives to consider. Moreover, Lee and Mitchell (1994) suggest the following shock categories: personal events that are external to the job; personal events that are job or work role related; and organisational events. Furthermore, shocks can be positive, neutral or negative events which can be expected or unexpected, that prompt cognitive deliberations about a person's job (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001b).

2.3.2.2 Scripts

According to Lee and Mitchell (1994), individuals with a history of leaving many organisations voluntarily may be more likely to hold pre-existing scripts about when to leave than people with a

history of staying with organisations. Pre-existing scripts are pre-planned courses of actions (scripted behaviour). Holtom and Inderrieden (2006) found that employees may prepare a plan of action based on their own prior experiences, observation of the experiences of others or information obtained from relevant reading through social expectations.

2.3.2.3 *Image violations*

If an employee's values, goals and strategies for goal attainment do not fit with those of the employing organisation or those implied by the shock, an image violation occurs (Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006). According to Lee and Mitchell (1994) and Holtom *et al.* (2006), when an employee establishes that there is disagreement between their own values with those of the organisation, this is seen as a hindering goal attainment. The employee then begins the process of considering other job alternatives to establish where they will find fit between their existing goals and those of the organisation (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). Job alternatives include a variety of work and non-work options because not all employees leave their organisations to pursue other jobs (Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006).

Several studies have been conducted to validate the model (Lee, Mitchell, Holtom, McDaniel & Hill, 1999). In conclusion, the unfolding model specifies four different and distinct sequences that lead to employee turnover. Consequently, researchers are directed to think about employee turnover from at least four different angles, instead of testing for a single process (Lee & Mitchell, 1994).

2.3.3 Variables influencing voluntary turnover

The variables influencing voluntary turnover are discussed below.

2.3.3.1 *Gender*

Tanova and Holtom (2008) further posit that female workers traditionally show a lower attachment to the labour force than men. This was confirmed by Griffeth *et al.*, (2000) who found that women are slightly more likely to leave their jobs than men. According to Epstein, Saute, Oglenksy and Gever (1995), women seem to leave organisations more than men. The authors suggested that one of the many reasons behind such a trend would be lower job satisfaction of

women compared to that of men. The lower job satisfaction of women is attributed to differences between employment and promotion experience of men and women. In their research, Esptein *et al.*, (1995) found that being female strongly reduced the probability of partnership and increased the exit rates. It would appear that women are faced with the challenge of striking a balance between work and home life. They probably cannot devote extra time to work and as a result, they experience adverse treatment in the workplace (Kanwar *et al.*, 2012).

2.3.3.2 *Race*

Haymann (2010) refers to the Employment Equity Act (2004) and indicates that there is an increase in African and previously disadvantaged groups leaving organisations as compared to the white demographic. This may be attributed to favourable labour markets and legislation encouraging more equity representativeness in organisations.

2.3.3.3 *Age*

Age has been found to have a negative correlation with turnover, in that the younger the employee the more likely he or she is to change jobs. It is noted that younger people are at the stage where they are trying to solidify their careers (Blomme, Van Rheede & Tromp, 2010; Haymman, 2010; Tanova & Holtom, 2008).

2.3.3.4 *Education*

Haymann (2010) found that turnover patterns of highly educated females resembled those of men of equal or similar level of education. Haymann (2010) and Blomme *et al.*, (2010) also indicated that the “glass ceiling” in the promotion path for females plays a role in their turnover patterns.

2.3.3.5 *Tenure*

At the group level, heterogeneity in tenure is found to lead to lower levels of group social integration, which subsequently influences individual turnover (O’Reilly, Caldwell & Barnett, 1989).

2.3.4 Implications for retention

Skills shortage is a massive problem in South Africa (Muteswa & Ortlepp, 2011). The skills shortage is resulting in a “war for talent”, where highly skilled and educated employees are being sought out (Muteswa & Ortlepp, 2011).

In an attempt to retain staff, Muteswa and Ortlepp (2011) propose that organisations pursue attraction factors like branding and targeted recruitment and selection, creating an environment that supports work/life balance, offering highly competitive remuneration packages, and offering career development and training and development.

In support of Muteswa & Ortlepp (2011), Tetty (2010) and Bezuidenhout and Cilliers (2011) argue that there is a problem of scarce skills and high turnover among academic staff in institutions of higher education in South Africa. The Council for Higher Education (CHE, 2004, 2009) reports that South African universities are trying to cope with the problem of scarcity and lack of highly skilled academics, the possible reason for this scarcity being the rewarding of academic staff. Bezuidenhout and Cilliers (2011) further posit that the problem is more of an ageing staff complement at institutions of higher learning in South Africa. Stanz and Greyling (2010) further confirm that management could pursue retention strategies including staff involvement in decision making and introducing proactive structures in organisations to encourage participative management.

2.4 INTEGRATION

This section presents an integration of sections 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 respectively.

2.4.1 Theoretical definitions of constructs

The theoretical definitions of the constructs underpinning the study are summarised below.

2.4.1.1 *Job embeddedness*

Job embeddedness is the force/web that binds employees to their current jobs and organisations as a result of the relationships with people and activities in the web (Lim & Wong, 2009). Job embeddedness describes an individual being enmeshed in many different ways through the following three main dimensions, “links fit and sacrifice”. *Links* are described as formal or informal connections between a person, and institutions or other people. (Lim & Wong, 2009; Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a; Van Dyk, 2011). *Fit* describes an employee’s perceived compatibility or comfort with an organisation and with his or her environment (Lee & Mitchell, 1994; Mallol *et al.*, 2007; Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a), while *sacrifice* describes the perceived cost of material or psychological benefits that may be forfeited by leaving one’s job (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a; Holtom & O’Neill, 2004). Employees become stuck in this web and hence decisions made about turnover of staff are more of a process than an unprecedented event (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a; Lim & Wong, 2009).

2.4.1.2 *Organisational commitment*

Organisational commitment is a work-related attitude that refers to a state in which an employee identifies with the organisation and its goals and intends to maintain membership in the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Mowday, *et al.*, 1979).

2.4.1.3 *Voluntary turnover*

Voluntary turnover is a form of turnover where a “competent and capable” employee terminates his or her employ with the organisation to work for another establishment (Holtom *et al.*, 2008; March & Simmons, 1958; Porter & Steers, 1973).

2.4.2 Relationship between job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover

Job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover are all linked in that they seek to explain turnover of people in organisations. Research started off with turnover generally, focusing on work attitudes like job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Holtom *et al.*, 2008). Improvements to the research base of turnover resulted in a move to understand why

people stay – hence job embeddedness. Job embeddedness therefore relates independently to turnover and other traditional turnover models. Instead of describing an attitude that may cause people to leave the organisation, job embeddedness absorbs shocks, thereby influencing people’s decision to stay in the organisation (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001b).

Essentially these three constructs attempt to understand turnover of employees in organisations. Organisational commitment attempts to explain turnover of staff from a job attitude perspective, while job embeddedness attempts to explain why employees choose to stay in the organisation (Crossley *et al.*, 2007).

However, there are some differences between the constructs. Organisational commitment is different from job embeddedness in that it is a work attitude conceptualised to understand why people leave. Notably, research on turnover moved away from predicting why people leave to understanding why people stay, incorporating off-the-job factors in this decision to stay (Mallol *et al.*, 2007).

2.4.3 Variables influencing job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover

Gender, age, educational qualification, marital status and tenure in the organisation have been found to influence decisions by employees to remain in the organisation (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a). Race has also been found to influence turnover of employees. Haymann (2010) and Lesabe and Nkosi (2007) argue that favourable labour markets and legislations have encouraged the movement of non-white and previously disadvantaged groups across organisations and industries.

2.4.4 Integration of job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover

Job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover are similar in that they investigate turnover of staff. Job embeddedness, however, is different in that it further explores why people choose to remain in organisations. This construct is also different from the others because it incorporates off-the-job factors that may influence the decision to continue membership with the organisation (Mallol *et al.*, 2007).

2.4.5 Implications for retention

Essentially the higher the job embeddedness and organisational commitment levels of employees the more likely it is that the organisation can retain its key staff. Strategies for talent retention, if implemented, can result in higher productivity, low absenteeism, lower voluntary turnover, higher attachment to the organisation and higher identification with organisational goals (Lesabe & Nkosi, 2007; Van Dyk, 2011).

As highlighted by Lesabe and Nkosi (2007), South Africa is facing a problem of scarce skills. This problem has led to what we call the “war for talent”. Management need to take measures to ensure that they not only encourage commitment from their staff, but also that they are embedded in the organisation. Highly embedded employees are less likely to leave the organisation (Ng & Feldman, 2009).

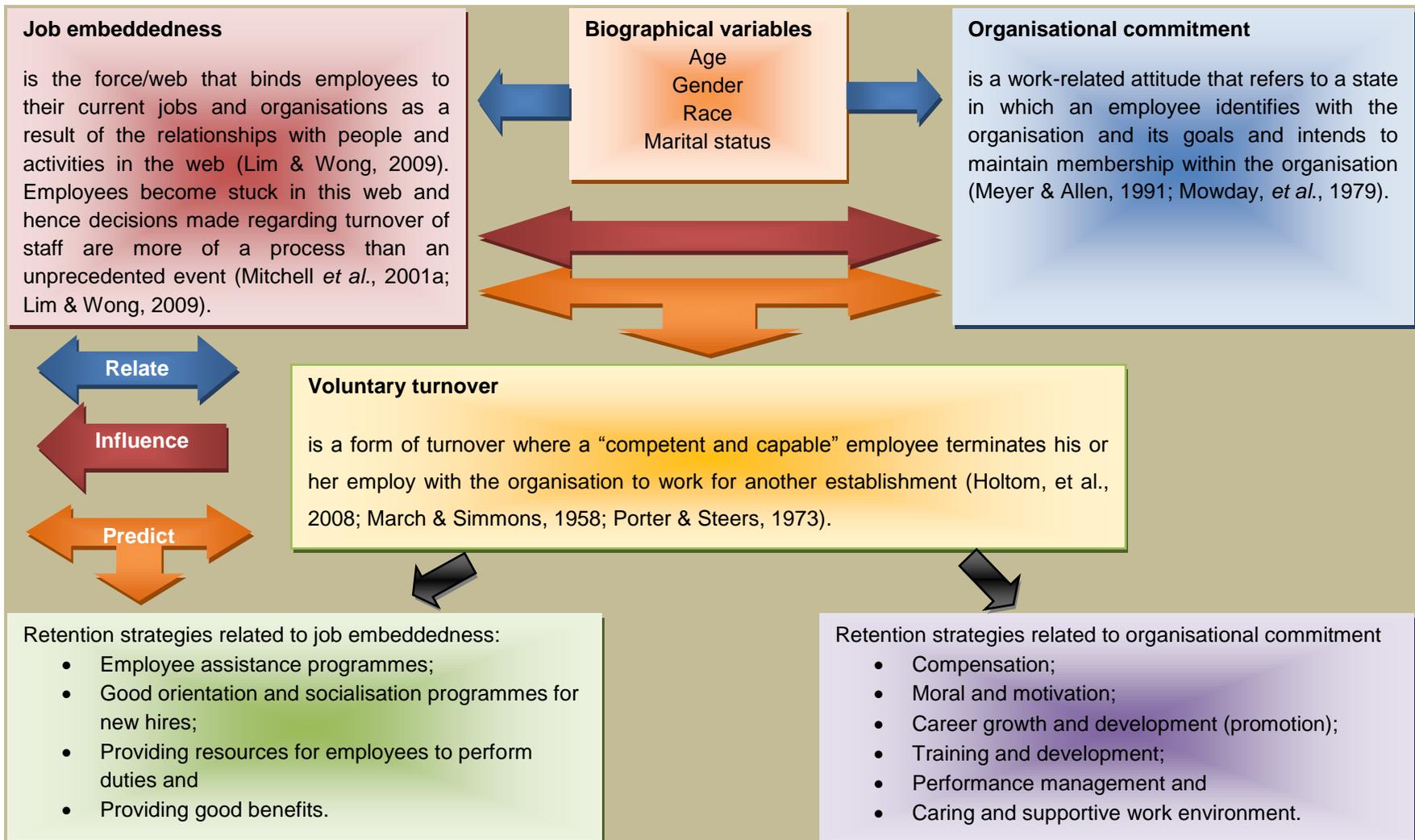


Figure 2.3. Integration of the variables, job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover, highlighting retention strategies

2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The constructs, job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover, were conceptualised in this chapter. Studies that were undertaken by other researchers and possible relationships between these constructs were explored. The aims of the literature review were to conceptualise job embeddedness from a theoretical perspective; conceptualise organisational commitment from a theoretical perspective; conceptualise voluntary turnover from a theoretical perspective; explain the theoretical relationship between job embeddedness and organisational commitment and voluntary turnover; and explain, from a theoretical perspective, whether biographical factors such as gender, race and age influence employees' decisions to voluntarily leave the organisation.

The following research aims of the literature review were achieved:

- Specific aim 1: To conceptualise job embeddedness from a theoretical perspective;
- Specific aim 2: To conceptualise organisational commitment from a theoretical perspective;
- Specific aim 3: To conceptualise voluntary turnover from a theoretical perspective;
- Specific aim 4: To explain the theoretical relationship between job embeddedness and organisational commitment and voluntary turnover;
- Specific aim 5: To explain, from a theoretical perspective, whether biographical factors such as gender, race, and age influence employees' decisions to voluntarily leave or stay at the organisation and
- Specific aim 6: To critically evaluate the implications for staff retention practices in higher education.

Chapter 3 will present and discuss the empirical findings of the research. This discussion will be presented in the form of a research article.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH ARTICLE¹

Job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover of academic staff at a higher education institution in South Africa

Abstract

Academic staff recruitment and retention remain a challenge in South Africa and across the globe, with specific reference to the retention of young academic staff. The majority of academic staff in South African universities is ageing, with fewer younger people joining academia. The objectives of this study were to empirically determine whether job embeddedness and organisational commitment significantly predict voluntary turnover (intention to stay) and whether people from different gender, race and age groups differ significantly in terms of their job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (intention to stay). The Job Embeddedness Scale (JES), Organisational Commitment Scale (OCS) and Voluntary Turnover Scale (VTS) were used as measuring instruments. A cross-sectional quantitative survey design was used to collect data from a sample of (N = 102) permanently employed academic staff. Multiple regression analysis showed that organisation fit, community links and normative commitment significantly and positively predicted the participants' intention to stay at the institution. Significant differences were observed between the job embeddedness and intention to stay of the gender and race groups. The findings of the current study add to the knowledge base on the turnover intentions of academic staff. In conclusion, the study makes recommendations for retention practices and possible future research.

Keywords: job embeddedness, organisational commitment, voluntary turnover, staff retention, gender, race, age

¹ The framework of the research article is underpinned by the guidelines of the *South African Journal of Labour Relations*. These guidelines have generally been adhered to in the structure and presentation of the research article.

1 INTRODUCTION

The increasingly volatile economy, persistent employee movement to other organisations and the cost involved in voluntary turnover are important concerns for managers (Heymann, 2010; Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006; Mitchell, *et al.*, 2001b; Pillay, 2009; Weibo *et al.*, 2010). Institutions of higher education have faced numerous changes in the last two decades, with these changes posing various challenges for an already strained higher education system (Rothman & Jordaan, 2006). Tettey (2010) highlights the challenges faced by academic staff at universities. Student staff ratios have doubled, with the ratio currently at 39:1, while academic staff recruitment and retention remain a challenge in South Africa and across the globe (Pienaar & Bester, 2006; Tettey, 2010). Tettey (2010) and Sutherland and Jordaan (2004) assert that the majority of lecturing staff in South African universities are ageing, with fewer younger people joining academia. Martin and Roodt (2008) posit that there is a need for further studies in higher education institutions to establish the turnover behaviour of academic staff.

Studies that have investigated employee turnover have focused on attitudes or components of turnover, including organisational commitment and lower levels of job satisfaction (Harman, *et al.*, 2007; Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a). According to Meyer and Allen (1991), Robbins, *et al.*, (2004) and Slocum and Hellriegel (2007), organisational commitment is a work-related attitude that refers to a state in which an employee identifies with the organisation and its goals, and intends remaining a member of the organisation. Individuals who are high on organisational commitment show support for and acceptance of the organisation's goals and values, a willingness to go beyond the call of duty and a wish to remain in the organisation (Slocum & Hellriegel, 2007).

According to Mitchell *et al.* (2001b), employees may also leave for personal or organisational reasons, or even both. These authors cite changes in the family situation, a desire to upskill or unsolicited job offers as some of the personal reasons that could lead to an employee leaving the organisation. Organisational reasons that may result in an employee voluntarily leaving may be the unfair treatment of other employees, being passed over for promotion or being asked to do something that contradicts the person's values or beliefs.

Firth *et al.*, (2004) criticise the traditional studies of turnover because they have yielded little consistency in investigating intentions to leave, possibly on account of the diversity of constructs included and the lack of consistency in the measurements used. Mitchell *et al.* (2001a) argue

that studies have indicated attitudinal variables as controlling only about 4 to 5% of the variance in turnover - hence the need to consider the reasons for people staying and how organisations can retain their staff.

In view of the concerns for establishing why employees retain their citizenship in the organisation instead of leaving, the variable “job embeddedness” was coined (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a, 2001b). Mitchell *et al.*, (2001b) emphasise that people who leave are relatively satisfied with their jobs, do not search for other jobs before leaving and their leaving the organisation is more inclined to be an unplanned event as opposed to a negative attitude towards their job or the organisation. Job embeddedness therefore emphasises that not only job-related factors may influence an individual’s decision to stay with the organisation, but the community may also play a role. Job embeddedness is essentially the force that binds employees to their current jobs and organisations as a result of the relationships with people and activities in the web (Lim & Wong, 2009; Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a).

In South Africa, there is a paucity of studies investigating job embeddedness in relation to voluntary turnover. Pillay (2009) conducted research investigating mission attachment as a component of organisational embeddedness in the trade union sector. This research drew conclusions, *inter alia*, leaning towards the fact that age influences the level of attachment - hence the employees’ organisational/job embeddedness. Heymann (2010) found that demographic factors such as age, gender and race influenced job embeddedness and voluntary turnover of employees with specialised knowledge and skills.

In the same way as organisational commitment is similar to job embeddedness in some instances, there are also notable differences between the two variables. Organisational commitment focuses on feelings that foster continued citizenship in the organisation and assess on-the-job dimensions, whereas job embeddedness incorporates factors both on and off the job and its dimensions are nonaffective (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a). According to Harman *et al.* (2007), traditional research on turnover has maintained that employees leave the organisation as a result of negative job attitudes and stay because of positive job attitudes. Job embeddedness attempts, firstly, to expand the scope of variables that may be used to understand why employees stay by including factors that are nonaffective (structural links to other people); and secondly, to consider off-the-job factors like fit in the community as contributory factors to employees staying in the organisation. Because the concept of job embeddedness was

developed in the literature on retention and turnover, one would expect the concept to have a strong relationship with the intention to leave and voluntary turnover (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008).

Against this background, it is evident that there is a need to explore the turnover behaviour of academic staff. More specifically, the influence of the job embeddedness and organisational commitment of academic staff in relation to whether they stay or leave the organisation will be beneficial. Studies have been conducted globally to determine the relationship between job embeddedness and organisational commitment in predicting voluntary turnover and turnover intentions (Crossley *et al.*, 2007; Feldman & Ng, 2007; Harman *et al.*, 2007; Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006; Lim *et al.*, 2009; Mallol *et al.*, 2007; Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a, 2001b; Ramesh & Gelfand, 2010), and a few have also be undertaken in South Africa (Heymann, 2010; Pillay, 2009; Versfeld, 2009). In the search to find strategies on how to retain young and skilled academic staff, it would be beneficial to gain insight into the relationship between employees' job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover, with a specific focus on the different gender, race and age groups.

2 AIMS OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to explore whether job embeddedness and organisational commitment predict voluntary turnover (intention to stay), and whether people from different gender, race and age groups differ significantly regarding these three variables. In the light of the shortage of young academic staff in higher education institutions in South Africa, this study is expected to contribute to the knowledge base on staff retention in the higher education context and to inform retention strategies for young academic staff in the 30 to 59 age group. This group comprises academics in the early life career stage (17-39 years) and middle life career stage (40-59 years). Dominant preoccupations in these groups include finding a place in and contributing to society; making an impact on one's environment; becoming established in an occupation; establishing work-life balance; and sustaining employability (Coetzee & Roythorne-Jacobs, 2012, p. 59).

3 JOB EMBEDDEDNESS

Job embeddedness refers to a broad array of influences on employee retention that help to explain why people choose to stay in their current employment (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a; 2001b).

The construct of embeddedness describes the forces that influence turnover decisions, focusing on the aspects of fit and structural ties and relationships (Allen, 2006). In contrast to the traditional approach to studying voluntary turnover, job embeddedness examines both on-the-job and off-the-job factors that influence a person's decision not to leave the organisation (Mallol *et al.*, 2007).

According to Mitchell *et al.* (2001a), an individual can be enmeshed in many different ways, and these are described by three main dimensions, namely links, fit and sacrifice. *Links* are described as formal or informal connections between a person and institutions or other people. Numerous strands connect an employee and his or her family in a social, psychological and financial web that includes work and nonwork friends, groups, the community and the physical environment in which he or she lives. The higher the number of links between the person and the web, the more an employee is bound to the job and the organisation (Lim & Wong, 2009; Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a; Van Dyk, 2011).

Fit is defined as an employee's perceived compatibility with or comfort in an organisation and his or her environment. The environment in this regard considers both on-the-job and off-the-job experiences (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Lee & Mitchell, 1994; Mallol *et al.*, 2007; Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a). With regard to on-the-job environment, Mitchell *et al.*, (2001a) propose that an employee's personal values, career goals and plans for the future must "fit" into the larger corporate culture and the demands of his or her immediate job (say, job knowledge, skills and abilities). Regarding the off-the-job environment, a person will consider how well he or she fits into the community and surrounding environment. Essentially, the better the fit, the higher the likelihood there is that an employee will feel professionally and personally linked to the organisation (Hom & Xiao, 2011; Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a; Yang, *et al.*, 2011). The evaluations of fit are not necessarily based on the job or organisation. The job embeddedness model proposes that fit may be independent of the job or organisation, and includes a variety of factors outside the organisation (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Zhang, *et al.*, 2012).

Sacrifice describes the perceived cost of material or psychological benefits that may be forfeited by leaving one's job. Leaving an organisation is more likely to result in personal losses, be it financial or psychological (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001b; Holtom & O'Neill, 2004). Again, there are on-the-job as well as off-the-job losses to be considered. On-the-job losses would include losing contact with colleagues, interesting projects or pleasant benefits (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001b).

Biographical variables found to significantly correlate with job embeddedness include gender, race, age and marital status. Differences in gender were noted by Griffeth *et al.*, (2000) and Tanova and Holtom (2008). Tanova and Holtom (2008) found that female workers were lower on job embeddedness compared with their male counterparts. Griffeth *et al.*, (2000) reported a slight difference between males and females, supporting the findings presented by Tanova and Holtom (2008). However, Allen and Shanock (2012) found contradicting results in that they reported no significant differences between gender groups.

With regard to difference in race groups, Mallol *et al.* (2007), found that job embeddedness statistically predicted voluntary turnover across all races. These findings contradict those reported by Allen and Shannock (2012), who could find no significant differences between race groups.

Griffeth *et al.* (2000), found differences in age in that the younger the employees were, the lower their job embeddedness. Younger employees are more likely to take risks at the beginning of their careers and to accept positions that are below their abilities and expectations at the beginning of their career and move to better jobs when they become available.

Job embeddedness is a vital construct in trying to understand why people stay in organisations. Job embeddedness attempts to explain employees' attachment behaviour to the organisation (Dawley & Andrews, 2012). In an attempt to retain staff, organisations can integrate on-the-job and off-the-job activities to provide retention benefits for both organisations and communities (Crossley *et al.*, 2007; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Lev & Koslowsky, 2009; Mallol *et al.*, 2007; Pillay, 2009).

Dawley and Andrews (2012) confirm that an employee who is highly engaged may find it difficult to leave his or her job. The difficulty leaving the job may be the result of the employee investing so much time and energy in the job. Over and above this, if the organisation provides resources to enable the employee to perform his or her duties successfully, the employee may be hesitant to leave the organisation (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008).

Employee assistance programmes can be another mechanism that organisations can use in an attempt to retain their employees (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Wheeler, *et al.*, 2007). Allen and Shanock (2012) argue that the positive socialisation of new hires leads to higher perceived organisational support and embeddedness, resulting in lower turnover of staff. It is therefore necessary to encourage socialisation of younger new hires with experienced members in the organisation. This will improve embeddedness and subsequently reduce staff turnover. The idea behind this is that if employees can obtain assistance for off-the-job issues, they are more likely to stay in the organisation.

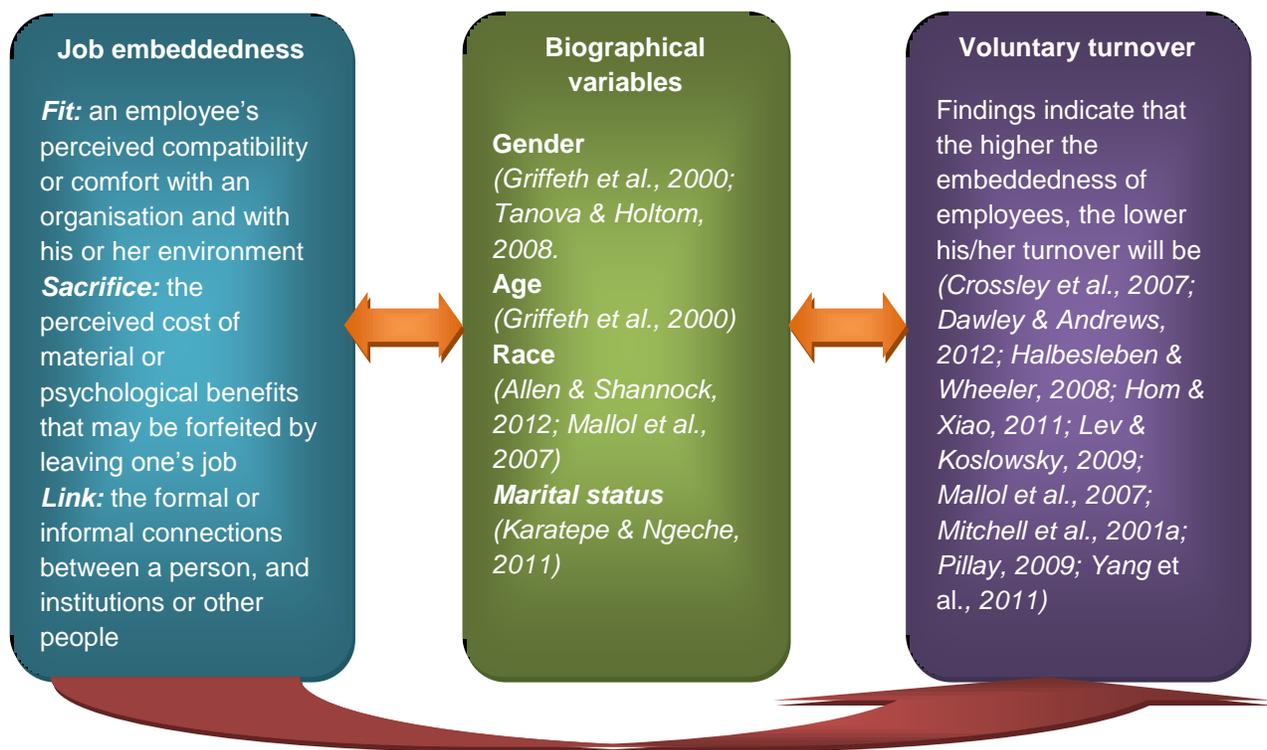


Figure 3.1. Theoretical relationship between job embeddedness and voluntary turnover

4 ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

The term “organisational commitment” was first coined by Mowday *et al.*, (1979). Since the conceptualisation of organisational commitment, scholars have proposed numerous definitions in an attempt to understand and explain this work attitude. Research by Meyer and Allen (1991) resulted in a widely accepted definition of this work attitude. They proposed that organisational commitment refers to an inner condition connecting employees to the organisation. This

connection typically refers to positive work attitudes or psychological connections shown by an employee towards the organisation. Employees who are committed to their organisation may develop a more positive view of the organisation, and their behaviour will be consistent with the expected behaviour in order to avoid cognitive dissonance or to maintain positive self-perceptions (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer *et al.*, 1993; Miller & Lee, 2001).

The Meyer and Allen (1991) three-component model is viewed as a multidimensional construct and measure associated with the conceptualisation of organisational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997). The three-component model conceptualises organisational commitment in terms of three approaches, namely *affective*, *continuance* and *normative* commitment. Meyer and Allen (1991) further propose that each component develops as a result of different experiences and has different implications for on-the-job behaviour. The authors assert that the link to these three approaches is the view that commitment is a psychological state that characterises the employee's relationship with the organisation and influences his or her decision to continue or discontinue membership of the organisation.

Affective commitment refers to the employee's emotional attachment, identification with and involvement in the organisation. Allen and Meyer (1991) posit that employees with a strong affective commitment continue employment with the organisation because they want to (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). Continuance commitment describes an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organisation. This may be likened to the sub-dimension of sacrifice in job embeddedness. In this instance, those employees whose primary link to the organisation is based on continuance commitment remain because they *need* to (Meyer & Allen, 1990; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). Normative commitment reflects an employee's feeling of being obliged to continue employment. According to Meyer and Allen (1991), employees with a high level of normative commitment feel they have to remain with the organisation (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001).

Research has found that the biographical variables of gender, race group, age, marital status and tenure influence the organisational commitment of employees (Coetzee & Roythorne-Jacobs, 2012; Lumley, 2009; Martin & Roodt, 2008; Savincki, *et al.*, 2003).

There are conflicting research results on gender. Some studies found women to be more committed than men, while others found that men are more committed to the organisation than their female colleagues (Lumley, 2009; Martin & Roodt, 2008). Similarly, Savincki *et al.*, (2003) affirmed that because men and women experience different sociopsychological realities in the workplace, they are likely to differ significantly in their organisational commitment (Kanwar, et al., 2012). These findings are confirmed by Coetzee and Roythorne-Jacobs (2012) who found that male respondents appear to be committed to an organisation that given them the autonomy to do their job independently.

Lumley *et al.*, (2011) and Martin and Roodt (2008), found significant differences between race groups with regard to organisational commitment. White people reported higher levels of commitment than their black counterparts (Martin & Roodt, 2008).

There are contradictory findings on age and organisational commitment. Müller and Roodt (1998) found no relationship between age and organisational commitment, while some studies have reported a positive correlation between the two constructs (Lumley *et al.*, 2011; Martin & Roodt, 2008). The positive correlation that was evident is that as people age in the organisation, the more satisfied they become with their jobs (Haymann, 2010; Kotze & Roodt, 2005).

Employee retention, productivity, quality and financial success are characterised by high performance and high commitment strategies. An integrated set of management strategies is essential to increase employee's commitment to the organisation (Lesabe & Nkosi, 2007). Management strategies that can be considered to increase organisational commitment and the retention strategies of organisations include compensation, benefit packages, morale and motivation, career growth and development, leadership, the nature of the job itself, training and development, performance management and work environment. Lesabe and Nkosi (2007) further posit that by implementing and/or improving these strategies, the affective commitment levels of employees and subsequent organisational performance may increase.

Paré and Tremblay (2007) highlight the importance of affective and continuance commitment in retaining key staff. Employees develop a stronger affective attachment to the organisation if their experiences in that organisation are consistent with their expectations and their basic needs are satisfied, compared with those employees whose experiences are less satisfying (Paré & Tremblay, 2007). Continuance commitment may develop as employees recognise not only the

cost of leaving, but also how they have developed their competencies or skills through their membership of the organisation. This assertion by Paré and Tremblay (2007) is supported by Foong-ming (2008), who argues that organisational support can be used as a management strategy to retain staff. The notion is that an organisation that provides a caring and supportive work environment will enjoy the benefit of its employees exhibiting attachment behaviours towards the organisation and the resultant commitment to achieve organisational goals (João, 2010).

In conclusion, João (2010) argues that the relationship between organisational commitment and turnover has been the focus of many studies, with the majority of the findings identifying a negative relationship between organisational commitment and turnover. A strong relationship between organisational commitment and employee retention has been identified in some studies (Meyer, *et al.*, 2002). The differences between various age, gender, tenure, marital status and racial groups' job satisfaction and organisational commitment have also been studied (Kanwar, *et al.*, 2012; Lumley, 2009; Lumley *et al.*, 2011; Martin & Roodt, 2008).

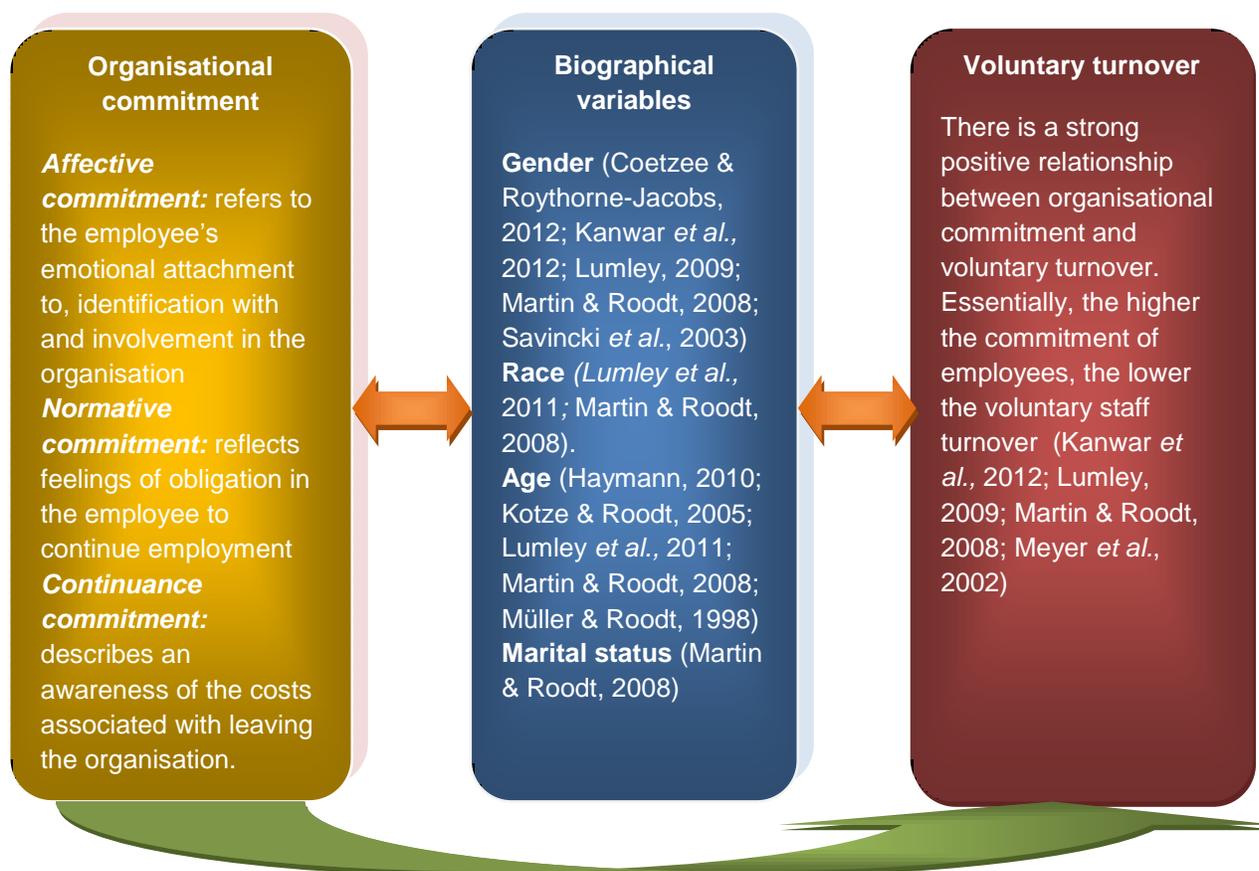


Figure 3.2. Theoretical relationship between organisational commitment and voluntary turnover

5 VOLUNTARY TURNOVER

Voluntary turnover is a form of turnover where a “competent and capable” employee terminates his or her employment with the organisation to work for another establishment (Crossley *et al.*, 2007; Holtom *et al.*, 2008; Porter & Steers, 1973; Versfeld, 2009). The conceptualisation of turnover, based on the work of March and Simmons (1958) focuses on predicting the ease and desire of an employee to leave an organisation. Mallol *et al.*, (2007) confirmed this and highlighted the stance of traditional models of turnover in understating this construct. The traditional models of voluntary turnover suggested that people become dissatisfied with their jobs, search for alternative jobs, compare their options with the current job and leave if any of these alternatives are perceived to be better than their current situation (Holtom & O’Neill, 2004). According to Griffeth, *et al.* (2000), this approach, although successful in identifying turnover prediction, only explains a limited percentage of resignations.

Developments in the traditional models resulted in a new theory on turnover process, namely the unfolding model of turnover (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). Drawing from image theory, Lee and Mitchell (1994) proposed that turnover decisions are not always the result of accumulated job dissatisfaction and may sometimes occur without much consideration. The unfolding model expanded the scope and depth of theory on voluntary turnover in that it proposed that all leavers use one of five distinct decision types, defined by the presence or absence of certain process characteristics like negative feelings or consideration of alternative jobs. The decision-making concepts were underpinned in the image theory which holds that employees conserve mental resources by using decision-making “shortcuts” (Harman *et al.*, 2007; Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a; 2001b).

Mitchell *et al.*, (2001a) introduced the concept of a “shock,” which is an event that jars employees to think seriously about turnover. They proposed that after a shock, some employees automatically follow a “script” to leave their job. This script amounts to a planned series of behaviours reserved for a particular situation in the future. Employees may immediately cast out or “screen out” job alternatives without much thought, based on a mismatch between the individual’s values or goals (*i.e.* mental images) and those represented by the organisation in question. This mismatch is referred to in the theory as an “image violation.”

The proposition is that turnover decisions are not always the result of accumulated job dissatisfaction and may sometimes occur without much deliberation (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). Certain events may cause some employees to consider leaving their organisations when the event matches some pre-existing plan for leaving, violates employees' values or interferes with their goal attainment (Lee & Mitchell, 1994).

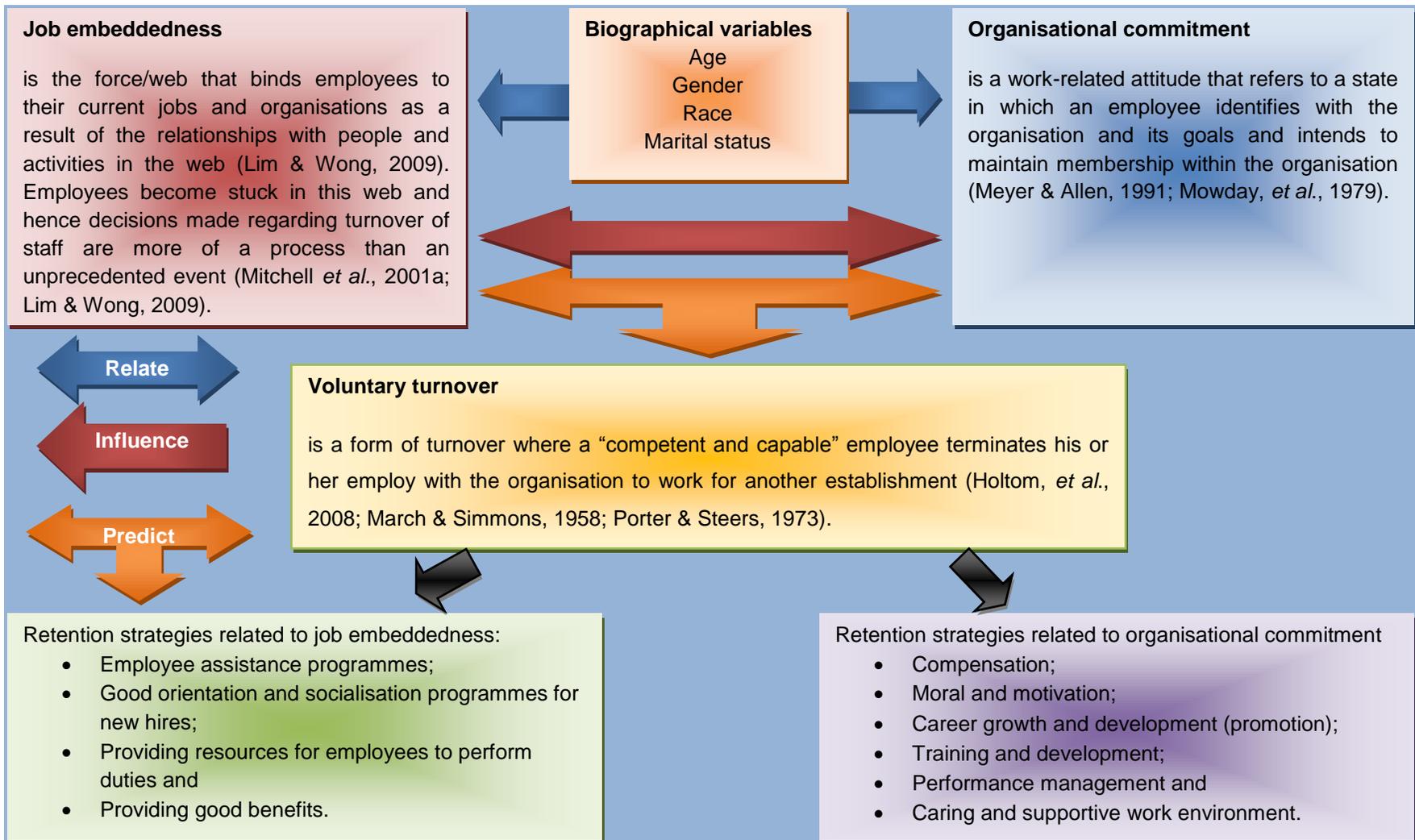


Figure 3.3. Integration of the variables, job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover, highlighting retention strategies

Based on the literature review, the following research hypotheses will be tested empirically:

H1: Job embeddedness and organisational commitment significantly and positively predict voluntary turnover (intention to stay).

H2: People from different biographical groups, namely gender, race and age, differ significantly with regard to their job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (intention to stay).

6 RESEARCH DESIGN

A cross-sectional quantitative research design was applied in this study.

6.1 Research participants

Stratified random sampling, based on Cohen's (1992) guidelines, was used to determine the sample size.

The population consisted of 1 018 academic staff from two colleges in a higher education institution, namely the College of Economic and Management Sciences and the College of Human Sciences in the institution. A stratified random sample of 300 (N = 300) academics was invited to participate in the study. A final sample of 102 respondents (N = 102) completed the surveys, yielding a response rate of 34%.

As shown in table 3.1, the final sample (N = 102) was represented by 53% female and 47% males. The majority of the sample were white (59%), followed by African (34%), Asian (4%) and coloured (3%) respectively. The majority of the respondents were between the ages of 40 and 59 years (58%) and 21% between the ages of 30 and 39. There were few respondents between the ages of 17 and 29 (18%), while only 3% were 60 years and older.

The majority of the respondents had a master's degree (40%), closely followed by 37% with doctoral degrees. Only 18% had an honours degree, while only 5% had a bachelor's degree.

Table 3.1

Biographical distribution of the sample

Variable		N	Percentage of sample
Gender			
Male		48	47%
Female		54	53%
Race			
White		60	59%
African		35	34%
Coloured		3	3%
Asian		4	4%
Age	Career/life stage		
17-29	Early career life stage	18	18%
30-39		22	21%
40-59	Middle career life stage	59	58%
60 or older	Late career life stage	3	3%
Highest educational qualification			
Bachelor's degree		5	5%
Honours degree		18	18%
Master's degree		41	40%
Doctoral degree		38	37%

6.2 Measuring instruments

The following instruments were used in this study:

The Job Embeddedness Scale (JES) (Lee & Mitchell, 1994) was used to measure the participants' level of job embeddedness. The JES consists of 32 items, measuring the dimensions fit, link and sacrifice against the elements of the organisation and the community (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). The core dimensions measured in this study were organisational fit (9 items); organisational sacrifice (10 items); community fit (5 items); community link (5 items); and community sacrifice (3 items). All these facets were measured on a six-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Questions include "My job utilizes my skills and talents well" and "The health-care benefits provided by this organisation are excellent". Mitchell *et al.*, (2001a) reported the following internal consistency reliabilities per subscale for the instrument; organisation fit (.75), organisational links (.65), organisation sacrifice (.82), community fit (.78), community links (.77) and community sacrifice (.61). In the current study, the Cronbach alpha coefficients varied from .60 to .87.

To measure the participants' level of organisational commitment, the Organisational Commitment Scale (OCS) (Meyer & Allen, 1993) was used. The OCS is a 22-item scale measuring the three main subscales, namely affective (8 items), continuance (8 items) and normative commitment (6 items). The subscales were measured on a six-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Questions include "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organisation"; "I do *not* feel emotionally attached to this organisation" and "This organisation deserves my loyalty". Van Dyk and Coetzee (2012) reported high internal consistency reliabilities for affective commitment (.90), continuance commitment (.84) and normative commitment (.70). The Cronbach alpha coefficients for the three subscales obtained from the sample in this study varied from .57 to .71. Although the person (.61) and item (.93) reliability were acceptable, the overall reliability of continuance commitment was low (.57). Continuance commitment was therefore excluded from all statistical analyses.

The Voluntary Turnover Scale (VTS) (Crossley *et al.*, 2007) was used to measure the participants' level of voluntary turnover (intention to stay). The VTS scale comprises four items measured on a six-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 6 (strongly disagree). Questions include "my co-workers make me feel welcome here"; and "my co-workers make me

feel wanted here". Higher scores indicated lower intention to leave and higher intention to stay. Crossley *et al.* (2007) found the instrument to be reliable (.69). The Cronbach alpha coefficient of the VTS, obtained from the sample in this study, was .76.

6.3 Research procedure

A cross-sectional quantitative survey research was used for this study. Survey research allows for the collection of information from the respondents about their beliefs, opinions, characteristics and past or present behaviour (Maree, 2009; Neuman, 2006; Oates *et al.*, 2004). Web-based surveys were used to collect data from a sample of permanently employed lecturing staff from the population.

The population consisted of the academic staff in the College of Economic and Management Sciences and the College of Human Sciences in the institution. The database containing the list of academic staff members in these colleges was obtained from the Organisation Development Department in the Human Resources Department. Only permanently employed academic staff were selected to form part of the sample for this study. An invitation to participate in the study was then sent out to these respondents. The sample of respondents was requested to voluntarily participate in the research by completing the questionnaires. The questionnaires were sent to the respondents via the LimeSurvey software designed to circulate electronic surveys. A message accompanying the e-mail was included to explain the purpose of the study and ethical concerns such as confidentiality, anonymity and freedom of choice to participate in the study were emphasised.

Ethical clearance to conduct the research was obtained from the higher education institution and the Department of Industrial and Organisational psychology at the University of South Africa. Confidentiality was ensured throughout the study and the responses received were dealt with anonymously. To ensure that the respondents consented to participating in the study, they were asked to click on a link to indicate this decision. The survey was then made available for them to record their responses electronically. The researcher was available to answer any questions and address any concerns. The completed questionnaires were kept in a secure place. Only the LimeSurvey administrator had the necessary access to send reminders and view the number of completed questionnaires.

6.4 Statistical analysis

The SPSS (Version 20) (2011) was used to analyse the data of the empirical study. Before any statistical analysis was conducted, the raw data were cleaned to establish whether there were any incomplete questionnaires. Of the 125 responses received, only 102 were complete and could be used to perform statistical analyses. Field (2005) discusses four assumptions that need to be considered in the use of parametric statistics, namely normality, homogeneity of variance, interval data and independence. For the purpose of this study, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov, Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney tests for the JES, OCS and VTS were conducted. Significant differences at a $p \leq .05$, between gender groups, were obtained using the Mann-Whitney test.

6.4.1 Reliability

To determine the internal consistency, reliability and construct validity of the measuring instruments, the Rasch model was used (Boone & Rogan, 2005). The software used to conduct the Rasch analysis was "Winstep", customised by Bond and FoxSteps (2006). Cronbach coefficient alphas, person and item reliability and construct validity (fit) were calculated using the Rasch model. Descriptive statistics involved calculating the means in order to identify the central tendency of the scores, and the standard deviations were then calculated in order to identify the dispersion of scores (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006).

According to Brand-Labuschagne, Mostert, Rothmann Jnr and Rothmann (2012), the reliability of the rating scale using the Rasch model, is determined by both the item (item separation index and item reliability index) and the person (person separation index and person reliability index). Person and item separations refer to the distribution of the items or people over the continuum of the measured latent trait. Both person and item separation indexes should be at least 2.00 for an instrument to be regarded as useful.

The person separation reliability is comparable with the Cronbach alpha coefficients, which estimate the true person variance. Rasch's reliability estimates have the advantage that neither the sample size nor sample specifics influence the reliability. This implies that these estimates measure a person's ability according to the responses on the specific test, regardless of the sample to which they belong (Boone & Rogan, 2005). Item reliability indicates how well the difficulty levels of the item are distributed along the measured latent variable. The higher the

item reliability index, the better the chance is of replicating the item placement in other samples (Boone & Rogan, 2005). For the purpose of this study, a reliability coefficient of .70 or higher was regarded as an acceptable score of internal consistency reliability.

The fit index is used to evaluate the construct validity of each dimension by identifying individuals and items that function differently (Boone & Rogan, 2005). Chi-square values are used to determine how well the data fit the prescribed model. These chi-square values are provided in infit and outfit mean square statistics. To evaluate the unidimensionality of the scale, the item fit mean-square statistics (MNSQ) are used. This indicates how well the item measures the intended underlying construct. The ideal value is 1 (Brand-Labuschagne *et al.*, 2012).

6.4.2 Correlations

To determine the measures of association and strength of the relationship between the variables, Pearson product-moment correlations were conducted. To counter the probability of a Type I error, it was decided to set the significance value at a 95% confidence interval level ($p \leq .05$) (Tredoux & Durrheim, 2006, p. 134). For the purposes of this study, $r \geq .30 \leq .49$ (medium effect) and $r \geq .50$ (large effect) (Cohen, 1992) were regarded as practically significant.

6.4.3 Standard multiple regression analysis

To determine whether job embeddedness and organisational commitment predict voluntary turnover, multiple regression analysis was conducted. The aim of this statistical analysis is to assess the proportion of variance in the dependent variable (voluntary turnover) that is explained by the independent variables (job embeddedness and organisational commitment). Since a number of independent variables had to be considered, the value of the adjusted R^2 was used to interpret the results. R^2 values larger than .13 (medium effect) (Cohen, 1992) were regarded as practically significant. The significance value for interpreting the results was set at $Fp \leq .05$.

6.4.4 Tests for significant mean differences

Independent T-tests and ANOVAs were performed to test for significant mean differences between the various biographical groups regarding the variables. T-tests were used to assess significant differences between the means of the gender groups. ANOVAs were used to assess

significant differences between the mean scores of race and age groups with regard to job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (intention to stay) scores. The significance value for interpreting the results was set at $p \leq .05$. Eta squared (η^2) values larger than .09 (medium effect) were regarded as practically significant.

7 RESULTS

7.1 Reliability statistics

7.1.1 Reliability: job embeddedness

Table 3.2 below presents the Rasch summary statistics for all the scales of the JES. The item separation reliability statistics for all the JES scales are within the guidelines, (≥ 2.00), as proposed by Brand-Labuschagne *et al.* (2012), except for the scale “community link” noted at 1.85. The person separation reliability for most of the scales was within the guidelines of (≥ 2.00), except for “community link” (.99). The low indices indicate that the respondents may have misunderstood the items, or that they were reluctant to give much thought to the answer they gave to the questions. With the exception of community link (.60), all the scales show acceptable Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients above .70.

The infit and outfit chi-square statistics for the scales are indicated in table 3.2 below. An item under fit (fit statistic ≥ 1.30) was noted for all the scales except for community sacrifice item infit 1.20 (.16); item outfit 1.10 (.16). This indicates that the individuals did not respond consistently to the items on these scales.

Table 3.2

Person and item summary statistics (JES) (N = 102)

Scale dimension	Average measure (SD)	Infit (SD)	Outfit (SD)	Separation	Reliability	Alpha
Organisational fit						
Person	.94 (.84)	1.50(.86)	1.50(.88)	2.08	.81	
Item	.31(.00)	1.40(.24)	1.40(.26)	2.84	.89	.82
Organisational sacrifice						
Person	.82(.34)	1.50(.65)	1.50(.68)	2.35	.85	
Item	.25(.00)	1.90(.27)	1.70(.27)	2.67	.88	.83
Community fit						
Person	1.37(.83)	1.60(1.09)	1.50(1.08)	2.04	.81	
Item	.46(.00)	1.30(.20)	1.30(.20)	3.48	.92	.87
Community link						
Person	.46 (.03)	1.1 (.57)	1.10(.66)	.99	.50	
Item	.13 (.00)	3.2 (.39)	2.30(.42)	1.85	.77	.60
Community sacrifice						
Person	1.30 (.16)	1.30(.88)	1.20(.87)	1.66	.73	
Item	.33 (.00)	1.20(.16)	1.10(.16)	3.05	.90	.72

7.1.2 Reliability: organisational commitment

Table 3.3 summarises the descriptive statistics, item and person separation for all the scales of the organisational commitment variable. The item separation reliability statistics for all the scales are within the guidelines (≥ 2.00), as proposed by Brand-Labuschagne *et al.* (2012). These findings indicate that the items in the various scales differentiated well between the measured variables. The person separation reliability values for all the scales (continuance, normative and affective) were below the guidelines (≥ 2.00). The low indices indicate that the respondents may have misunderstood the items, or that they were reluctant to give much thought to the answer they gave to the questions. With the exception of continuance commitment (.57), affective commitment (.71) and normative commitment (.71) showed an acceptable Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient above .70. Owing to a low internal consistency reliability coefficient, continuance commitment was omitted in all statistical analyses in this study.

The infit and outfit chi-square statistics for the scales are indicated in table 3.3 below. Most of the scales were equal to or close to 1.00. An item under fit (≥ 1.30) was detected for the scales, continuance commitment and normative commitment. The infit and outfit scores were all above 2.00 indicating that the same answers would probably not be obtained from respondents in another setting.

Table 3.3

Person and item summary statistics (OCS) (N = 102)

Scale dimension	Average measure (SD)	Infit (SD)	Outfit (SD)	Separation N	Reliability	Alpha
Continuance						
Person	.41 (.03)	1.70 (.71)	1.70 (1.01)	1.26	.61	
Item	.25 (.00)	3.10 (.41)	3.80 (.71)	3.52	.93	.57
Normative						
Person	.63 (.12)	1.50 (.97)	1.60 (1.49)	1.50	.69	
Item	.32 (.00)	4.70 (.79)	4.80 (1.34)	3.83	.94	.71
Affective						
Person	.63 (.12)	1.50 (.97)	1.60 (1.49)	1.50	.69	
Item	.32 (.00)	4.70 (.79)	4.80 (1.34)	3.83	.94	.71

7.1.3 Reliability: Voluntary Turnover Scale (VTS)

Table 3.4 below summarises the overall descriptive statistics, item and person separation for voluntary turnover. The item separation reliability statistics for the item separation for voluntary turnover was (.00), compared to the guidelines of (≥ 2.00) proposed by Brand-Labuschagne *et al.* (2012). This may be due to the fact that the instrument comprised only four items. The person separation reliability value was low for voluntary turnover (1.13). The low voluntary turnover index indicates that the respondents may have misunderstood the items, or that they were reluctant to give much thought to the answers they gave to the questions. Overall, the voluntary turnover scale showed an acceptable Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of .76.

Table 3.4

Person and item summary statistics (VTS) (N = 102)

Constructs	Average measure (SD)	Infit (SD)	Outfit (SD)	Separation	Reliability	Alpha
Person	.91 (.75)	1.40 (1.08)	1.40 (1.12)	1.13	.56	
Item	.05 (.00)	3.70 (.69)	3.10 (.60)	.00	.00	.76

7.2 Descriptive statistics

7.2.1 Descriptive statistics: means and standard deviations

Table 3.5 below indicates the descriptive statistics for the subscales of the measuring instruments.

Table 3.5

Descriptive statistics: means and standard deviations (N = 102)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. dev	Skewness	Kurtosis
JES							
Organisation fit	102	2.00	6.00	4.60	.82	-.92	1.08
Organisation sacrifice	102	1.60	6.00	4.10	.92	-.30	-.14
Community fit	102	1.00	6.00	4.50	1.10	-.95	1.32
Community link	102	1.00	6.00	3.74	1.29	-.25	-.61
Community sacrifice	102	1.00	6.00	3.78	1.31	-.14	-.88
Total job embeddedness	102	2.53	6.00	4.22	.73	.06	-.43
OCS							
Affective	102	2.00	6.00	3.82	.63	.66	1.80
Normative	102	1.00	6.00	3.68	1.05	-.34	-.24
Total organisational commitment	102	2.36	6.00	3.72	.57	.57	1.61
VTS							
Voluntary turnover	102	1.00	6.00	4.07	1.14	-1.21	1.25

7.2.1.1 Descriptive statistics: job embeddedness (JES)

In terms of means and standard deviations, table 3.5 shows that the total mean average score of the JES was ($M = 4.22$; $SD = .73$), indicating a relatively high level of job embeddedness. The sample of the participants obtained the highest score on the organisation fit subscale ($M = 4.60$; $SD = .82$), and the lowest on the community sacrifice subscale ($M = 3.78$; $SD = 1.31$). Overall, the JES indicated a right skewed distribution (.06). All the subscales of the JES also indicated a left skewed distribution (skewness < 0). The skewness values ranged from $-.14$ to $-.95$, thus falling within the normality range ($Z = \pm 1$) (Howell, 2010, p. 74). The kurtosis values ranged from $-.14$ to 1.08 , indicating that the probability for extreme values was less than for a normal distribution (Brown, 1997). It can therefore be concluded that the values were spread around the mean.

7.2.1.2 Descriptive statistics: organisational commitment (OCS)

In terms of means and standard deviations, table 3.5 shows that the total mean average score of the OCS was $M = 3.72$; $SD = .57$, indicating a relatively low level of organisational commitment. The sample of the participants obtained the highest mean score on the affective commitment subscale ($M = 3.82$; $SD = .63$), and the lowest on the normative commitment subscale ($M = 3.68$; $SD = 1.05$). Overall, the OCS indicated a left skewed distribution (.57). However, the skewness values of the affective and normative commitment subscales ranged from $-.34$ to $.66$, thus falling within the normality range ($Z = \pm 1$) (Howell, 2010, p. 74). The Kurtosis values ranged from $-.24$ to 1.80 , indicating that the probability for extreme values was less than for a normal distribution (Brown, 1997). It can therefore be concluded that the values were spread around the mean.

7.2.1.3 Descriptive statistics: voluntary turnover (VTS)

In terms of means and standard deviations, table 3.5 shows that the total average mean score of the VTS was ($M = 4.07$; $SD = .94$), indicating low voluntary turnover (high intention to stay). The VTS indicated a right skewed distribution (-1.08). This indicates that the distribution was flatter than a normal distribution ($Z = \pm 1$) (Howell, 2010, p. 74). The kurtosis value was 1.99 , indicating that the probability for extreme values was higher than for a normal distribution (Brown, 1997).

7.3 Correlational statistics

The following section reports on the Pearson product-moment correlations.

7.3.1 Significant Pearson product-moment correlations: JES, OCS and VTS

Table 3.6 below shows the Pearson product-moment correlations between job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (intention to stay). The correlations vary from $r = .27$ (medium practical effect size) to $r = .50$ (large practical effect size) at $p \leq .05$.

As indicated in table 3.6, job embeddedness showed a medium positive correlation with voluntary turnover ($r = .46$; $p = \leq .001$) and a large positive correlation with organisational commitment ($r = .50$; $p = \leq .01$). Organisational commitment showed a medium positive correlation with voluntary turnover ($r = .27$; $p = \leq .05$).

Table 3.6

Significant Pearson product-moment correlations for JES, OCS and VTS (N = 102)

		VTS	OCS
JES	<i>r</i>	.46***	.50**
		++	+++
OCS	<i>r</i>	.27*	
		++	

*** $p \leq .001$; ** $p \leq .01$; * $p \leq .05$ (two-tailed)

++ $r \geq .30 \leq .49$ (medium practical effect size); +++ $r \geq .50$ (large practical effect size)

7.3.2 Significant Pearson product-moment correlations: JES and OCS

Table 3.7 below shows the Pearson product-moment correlations between job embeddedness and organisational commitment. The correlations vary from $r = .30$ (medium practical effect size) to $r = .57$ (large practical effect size) at $p \leq .05$.

As indicated in table 3.7, normative commitment showed a strong positive correlation with organisation fit ($r = .57$; $p = \leq .01$) and a medium positive correlation with organisational sacrifice ($r = .49$; $p = \leq .01$) and community sacrifice ($r = .36$; $p = \leq .001$). Affective commitment did not show any significant correlation with job embeddedness at $p \leq .05$.

Table 3.7

Significant Pearson product-moment correlations for JES and OCS (N = 102)

		OCS	
Job embeddedness		Normative	Affective
Organisational fit	<i>r</i>	.57** +++	.04
Organisational sacrifice	<i>r</i>	.49** ++	.17
Community sacrifice	<i>r</i>	.36*** ++	.20

*** $p \leq .001$; ** $p \leq .01$; * $p \leq .05$ (two-tailed)

++ $r \geq .30 \leq .49$ (medium practical effect size); +++ $r \geq .50$ (large practical effect size)

7.4 Inferential statistics

The following section reports the multiple regression results in an attempt to determine whether job embeddedness and organisational commitment predict voluntary turnover (intention to stay).

7.4.1 Inferential statistics: multiple regression

Table 3.8 below summarises the regression model between the independent variables (job embeddedness and organisational commitment) and the dependent variable (voluntary turnover).

The regression of the JES variables on voluntary turnover produced a statistically significant model ($F = 12.54$; $p = .000$), accounting for 36% ($R^2 = .36$; medium practical size effect) of the variance in the voluntary turnover variable. Organisational fit ($\beta = .58$; $p = .000$) and community link ($\beta = .19$; $p = .04$) contributed significantly and positively to explaining the variance in voluntary turnover (intention to stay). Sacrifice (organisation and community) and community fit did not significantly predict voluntary turnover (intention to stay).

Similarly, the regression of the OCS variables on voluntary turnover produced a statistically significant model ($F = 7.51$; $p = .000$), accounting for 14% ($R^2 = .14$; medium practical size effect) of the variance. Normative commitment ($\beta = .36$; $p = .000$) contributed significantly and positively to explaining the variance in voluntary turnover (intention to stay). Affective commitment did not significantly predict voluntary turnover (intention to stay).

The multiple regression analysis provided supportive evidence for research hypothesis H1: Job embeddedness and organisational commitment significantly predict voluntary turnover (intention to stay).

Table 3.8

Multiple regression statistics summary: voluntary turnover as dependent variable and job embeddedness and organisational commitment as independent variables

Variable	Unstandardised coefficient	Standardised coefficient	t	p	F	Adjusted R ²	R	
	B	Std. error	Beta (β)					
JES	.82	.58		1.41	.000	12.54***	.36 +++	.63
(Constant)								
Organisation fit	.81	.15	.58	5.61	.000***			
Organisation sacrifice	.99	.13	.08	.78	.44			
Community fit	-.17	.11	-.17	-1.57	.12			
Community link	.19	.09	.22	2.14	.04*			
Community sacrifice	-.06	.09	-.07	-.59	.56			
OCS	3.74	.73		5.12	.000	7.51***	.11 +	.36
(Constant)								
Affective	-.13	.17	-.07	-.78	.44			
Normative	.39	.10	.36	3.85	.000***			

*** $p \leq .001$; ** $p \leq .01$; * $p \leq .05$

+ $R^2 \leq .12$ (small practical size effect); ++ $R^2 \geq .13 \leq .25$ (medium practical size effect); +++ $R^2 \geq .26$ (large practical size effect)

7.5 Tests for significant mean differences: JES and OCS

7.5.1 Significant mean differences: gender groups

As indicated in table 3.9, there were significant differences between gender groups at $p \leq .05$.

No significant differences were found between the gender groups regarding the JES community fit, links and sacrifice variables and the OCS affective and normative commitment variables. Significant differences were evident in the JES organisation fit and organisation sacrifice variables. Table 3.9 shows that the females obtained a significantly higher mean score ($M = 4.77$) for organisational fit compared with their male counterparts ($M = 4.40$). The females also obtained a higher mean score ($M = 4.30$) than the males ($M = 3.88$) for organisational sacrifice.

Table 3.9

Significant mean differences: independent T-tests for gender groups

Variable	Gender group	N	Mean	SD	Levene's test for equality of variance		T-test for equality of means		
					F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
(JES) Organisation fit	Male	48	4.40	.88	4.01	.05	-2.35	100	.02*
	Female	54	4.77	.73					
Organisation sacrifice	Male	48	3.88	.99	1.09	.30	-2.32	100	.02*
	Female	54	4.30	.81					
Community fit	Male	48	4.59	1.13	.22	.64	.79	100	.43
	Female	54	4.41	1.08					
Community link	Male	48	3.87	1.23	.29	.59	.95	100	.35
	Female	54	3.63	1.33					
Community sacrifice	Male	48	3.85	1.26	.52	.47	.55	100	.58
	Female	54	3.91	1.37					
(OCS) Affective commitment	Male	48	3.74	.59	.01	.94	1.29	100	.19
	Female	54	3.59	.91					
Normative commitment	Male	48	3.55	1.11	.25	.62	-1.21	100	.23
	Female	54	3.80	.98					

*** $p \leq .001$; ** $p \leq .01$; * $p \leq .05$

7.5.1.1 Significant mean differences: race groups

Overall, table 3.10 shows that the race groups did not differ significantly regarding the JES organisation fit and organisation sacrifice variables and the OCS affective commitment variable.

The white participants obtained a significantly higher mean score on community fit ($M = 4.75$; $\eta^2 = .08$; small practical effect) and community links ($M = 4.12$; $\eta^2 = .14$; moderate practical effect) respectively. As indicated in table 3.10, the African participants obtained a significantly higher mean score ($M = 4.16$; $\eta^2 = .14$; moderate practical effect) than the other race groups on normative commitment.

Table 3.10

Significant mean differences (ANOVAs): race groups

Variable	Race group	N	Mean	SD	F	df	Sig. level (2-tailed)	Eta	Eta ² η^2
(JES) Organisation fit	White	60	4.57	.83	1.36	101	.26	.20	.04
	African	35	4.73	.74					
	Coloured	3	3.78	1.54					
	Asian	4	4.53	.56					
Organisation sacrifice	White	60	4.13	.85	.73	101	.54	.15	.02
	African	35	4.11	1.01					
	Coloured	3	3.33	.31					
	Asian	4	4.23	1.45					
Community fit	White	60	4.75	.88	2.88	101	.04*	.29	.08+
	African	35	4.18	1.25					
	Coloured	3	3.80	.20					
	Asian	4	4.00	2.02					
Community	White	60	4.12	1.15	5.32	101	.002***	.37	.14++

link	African	35	3.10	1.33					
	Coloured	3	3.40	.53					
	Asian	4	3.95	1.42					
Community sacrifice	White	60	3.81	1.33	.54	101	.65	.13	.02
	African	35	3.73	1.24					
	Coloured	3	3.00	.33					
	Asian	4	4.25	2.22					
(OCS) Affective commitment	White	60	3.80	.61	1.60	101	.19	.22	.05
	African	35	3.76	.59					
	Coloured	3	4.42	1.05					
	Asian	4	4.22	.69					
Normative commitment	White	60	3.50	.92	5.32	101	.002***	.37	.14++
	African	35	4.16	.99					
	Coloured	3	2.83	1.00					
	Asian	4	2.75	1.76					

*** $p \leq .001$; ** $p \leq .01$; * $p \leq .05$

+ $\eta^2 \leq .08$ = small practical effect; ++ $\eta^2 \geq .09 \leq .24$ = moderate practical effect

7.5.1.2 Significant mean differences: age groups

As indicated in table 3.11 below, no significant differences were evident between the age groups at $p \leq .05$.

Table 3.11

Significant mean results (ANOVAs): age groups

	Years	N	Mean	SD	F	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Eta	Eta ² η^2
(JES)	17-29	18	4.96	.46	2.28	97	.07	.29	.09
Organisation fit	30-39	22	4.32	.94					
	40-49	25	4.78	.67					
	50-59	34	4.47	.89					
	60 and above	3	4.29	1.06					
Organisation sacrifice	17-29	18	4.52	.91	1.25	97	.30	.22	.05
	30-39	22	4.10	.86					
	40-49	25	3.94	1.01					
	50-59	34	4.01	.87					
	60 and above	3	3.90	1.01					
Community fit	17-29	18	4.63	1.16	.46	97	.77	.14	.02
	30-39	22	4.31	1.04					
	40-49	25	4.62	1.05					
	50-59	34	4.42	1.18					
	60 and above	3	4.93	.81					
Community link	17-29	18	4.03	1.15	.36	97	.84	.12	.02
	30-39	22	3.57	1.46					
	40-49	25	3.65	1.16					
	50-59	34	3.78	1.35					
	60 and above	3	3.67	1.60					
Community sacrifice	17-29	18	4.07	1.42	.46	97	.76	.14	.02
	30-39	22	3.62	1.48					
	40-49	25	3.91	1.32					
	50-59	34	3.65	1.19					
	60 and above	3	3.56	1.02					

(OCS)	17-29	18	3.84	.86	2.04	97	.09	.28	.08
Affective commitment									
	30-39	22	3.63	.47					
	40-49	25	3.73	.53					
	50-59	34	4.04	.62					
	60 and above	3	3.42	.38					
Normative commitment	17-29	18	4.02	.78	1.35	97	.26	.23	.05
	30-39	22	3.66	.99					
	40-49	25	3.86	1.17					
	50-59	34	3.39	1.08					
	60 and above	3	3.56	1.07					

*** $p \leq .001$; ** $p \leq .01$; * $p \leq .05$

+ $\eta^2 \leq .08$ = small practical effect; ++ $\eta^2 \geq .09 \leq .24$ = moderate practical effect

7.6 Significant mean differences: voluntary turnover

Nonparametric tests, namely the Kolmogorov-Smirnov, Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney U tests were conducted. As shown in table 3.12, the Mann-Whitney U test indicated there is a statistically significant difference in mean scores between the male and female participants regarding their intention to stay (voluntary turnover).

Significant differences were observed between the male ($M = 4.47$) and female ($M = 4.88$) participants at $p = .04$. The mean differences indicate that the female participants seem more likely to remain with the organisation than the male participants.

Table 3.12

Significant mean results (Mann-Whitney): VTS

Variable	N	Mean rank	Mean	z-value	p-value	Mann-Whitney
Males	48	45.23	4.47	-2.03*	.04	995.00
Females	54	57.07	4.88			

*** $p \leq .001$; ** $p \leq .01$; * $p \leq .05$

The tests for significant mean differences provided supportive evidence for the following research hypothesis:

H2: People from different biographical groups, namely gender, race and age differ, significantly with regard to their job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (intention to stay).

7.7 Decisions regarding the research hypotheses

Based on the results above and using the $p \leq .05$ (5% level) as a criterion for accepting or rejecting the null hypotheses, the decisions regarding the research hypotheses are indicated in table 3.13 below.

Table 3.13

Overview of the decisions regarding the research hypotheses

Research hypotheses	Supportive evidence provided
H1: Job embeddedness and organisational commitment significantly and positively predict voluntary turnover (intention to stay).	Yes
H2: People from different biographical groups, namely gender, race and age groups, differ significantly with regard to their job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (intention to stay).	Yes

8 DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to explore whether academic staff's job embeddedness and organisational commitment significantly and positively predict their voluntary turnover (intention to stay) at the higher education institution, and whether the gender, race and age groups differ significantly in terms of these three variables.

8.1 The biographical profile of the sample

The sample consisted of permanent full-time academic staff at a higher education institution in two colleges, the College of Economic and Management Sciences and the College of Human Sciences. The sample was predominantly represented by white females. The majority of respondents were in their early and mid-career phases (establishment) with a postgraduate qualification (at master's level). The biographical profile was considered in the interpretation of the results.

The sample showed high levels of job embeddedness, specifically with regard to organisational fit, community sacrifice and organisational sacrifice. Organisational fit describes an employee's perceived compatibility with the organisation. The person's values, career goals and plans for the future must fit in with the larger corporate culture as well as the demands of the immediate job. Community sacrifice refers to the perceived loss that will be suffered by an employee should he or she relocate. Leaving a community that is attractive and safe and where one is liked or respected can be difficult. Organisational sacrifice refers to the perceived cost of material or psychological benefits that may be forfeited by leaving one's job (Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006). The findings of this study indicate that the sample seemed to attach importance to their fit in the organisation and the perceived loss to the community and the organisation, when faced with the decision to leave the organisation

Overall, the sample for this study showed a relatively low level of organisational commitment. Affective commitment refers to an employee's emotional attachment, identification with and involvement in the organisation. Normative commitment reflects feelings pertaining to the employee's obligation to continue employment in the organisation. The findings of the study show that the sample generally had low levels of emotional attachment and obligation to the organisation.

Overall, the findings of the current study indicate that the sample showed low voluntary turnover (high intention to stay). The sample indicated that the respondents would find it difficult to leave their community because of feeling respected by people and that they live in a safe community.

8.2 Research aim 1: relationship between job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (intention to stay)

Overall, the results showed that the participants' job embeddedness and organisational commitment related significantly and positively to their intention to stay at the higher education institution. The findings confirm those of Dawley and Andrews (2012), Halbesleben and Wheeler (2008) and Ramesh and Gelfand (2010).

More specifically, the participants' job embeddedness (organisational fit, organisational sacrifice and community sacrifice) and their organisational commitment (normative commitment) were significantly and positively related. Organisational fit reflects an employee's perceived compatibility with or comfort in the organisation. This comfort and compatibility entail the person's values, career goals and plans for the future fitting in with the larger corporate culture as well as the demands of the immediate job (Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006). Organisational sacrifice refers to the perceived cost of material or psychological benefits that may be forfeited by leaving one's job. The more an employee gives up when leaving, the more difficult it is to sever employment with the organisation. Community sacrifice refers to the perceived cost of leaving a community that is attractive and safe and where one is liked or respected (Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006). It is evident that the sample in the current study would find it difficult to leave the organisation because of their strong feelings of fit with the organisation, and their perceptions that the cost of leaving both the organisation and community is high.

Lev and Koslowsky (2009) conducted a study among school teachers and found that the higher the teachers found the fit in the organisation and established more links in the organisation, the more likely they were to stay with the organisation. Lev and Koslowsky (2009) further posited that workers high on organisational fit and link seem to be more sensitive to the benefits associated with the job and perceive the cost of leaving (sacrifice) involved, should they leave the organisation. Allen and Shanock (2012), Halbesleben *et al.* (2008) and Holtom and Inderrieden (2006) supported the findings of Lev and Koslowsky (2009). A clearly formulated

orientation programme would result in more highly embedded newcomers, instil a high sense of loyalty to the organisation and indirectly result in lower turnover intention.

The majority of research participants, 79%, were between the ages of 30 and 59 (early and middle life and career stage). The participants in this study were at the stage in their career and lives where they had found a fit with the organisation and felt they were contributing to and making an impact on their society. This is supported by the high levels of job embeddedness, as discussed earlier, where the participants showed high levels of organisational fit, community fit and community sacrifice.

Regarding organisational commitment, normative commitment related significantly to the participants' job embeddedness and their intention to stay at the institution. According to Meyer and Herscovitch (2001), normative commitment reflects the employee feeling obliged to remain in the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991). The organisation in this study may consider providing support in the form of paying for tuition and training and development as reported by Meyer and Allen (1991). Research by Ferreira, *et al.* (2010), Lumley *et al.* (2011) and Manetje and Martins (2009) confirm and support the assertions made by Allen and Meyer (1990).

8.3 Research aim 2: job embeddedness and organisational commitment as predictors of voluntary turnover (intention to stay)

Overall, the results showed that the participants' job embeddedness (organisational fit and community link) and their organisational commitment (normative commitment) contributed significantly to explaining their decision to stay at the organisation. The findings indicated that the participants who had a high sense of compatibility with the organisation (fit) and who perceived their values, career goals and plans for the future to fit in with the larger corporate culture as well as the demands of the immediate job (community link), had significantly stronger intentions to stay with the higher education institution. Similarly, those participants who had strong community links and high levels of normative commitment also had significantly stronger intentions to stay. Allen and Shannock (2012) emphasise the orientation strategies used by the organisation to help new entrants to fit into the organisation. Successful orientation strategies result in subsequent longevity in the organisation (Allen & Shannock, 2012). Considering that the majority of participants were in the early and middle career phase of their lives, it is likely that these participants had found a fit between them and the organisation and would have

considered their family and other links in the community when faced with the decision to leave or stay in the organisation.

The results of the current study relating to organisational fit and community link can be explained in terms of the study conducted by Bezuidenhout and Cilliers (2011) who reported the increasing significance of alternative work arrangements for employees. Bezuidenhout and Cilliers (2011) found that older female academics preferred flexibility and autonomy. Flexibility involves alternative working arrangements, commonly referred to as “working from home”. Working from home allows academics to focus on research and other matters of interest (Bezuidenhout & Cilliers, 2011).

Ryan, Healy, and Sullivan (2012) conducted a study in a public research university in order to identify the turnover intentions of academic staff. The study focused on the intentions of academic staff to leave the institution and academia generally. Pertinent to the current study's findings was the emphasis on the factors outside the immediate work environment (Ryan *et al.*, 2012). These authors found that if there is an increase in the frustration associated with family life and raising a family as well as in dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the job (salary, autonomy, teaching load, opportunities for career advancement and developing new ideas and pursuing research), the greater the likelihood there is of an academic staff member leaving the institution.

Essentially, the more an organisation provides alternative work arrangements to encourage work-life balance, the more likely the employees will be to remain in the organisation. The findings of the current study seem to indicate that the greater the employees' fit with the organisation and the higher their links in the community, the less likely they would be to leave the organisation (Ryan *et al.*, 2012).

Normative commitment reflects an employee feeling obligated to remain in the organisation (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). According to Ferreira, *et al.*, (2010), Lumley *et al.*, (2011) and Manetje and Martins (2009), employees feel obliged to remain in the organisation when it supports them in the form of paying their tuition and training and development fees. In addition to these strategies, employees seem to remain loyal to an organisation that makes visible attempts to encourage their work-life balance (Muteswa & Ortlepp, 2011).

According to Bezuidenhout and Cilliers (2011), higher education institutions should develop academic leadership programmes and “research incubators”. The academic leadership programme is a strategy that can be used to encourage young female academics to work towards higher levels in academia, while research incubators help female academics to become productive researcher and publishers. Adopting such visible development programmes may instil feelings of loyalty and obligation to remain in the organisation (Bezuidenhout & Cilliers, 2011; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001).

Research has found that the more committed employees are to the organisational values and norms, the less likely they are to leave the organisation (Manetje & Martins, 2009). Ferreira *et al.* (2010) and Lumley *et al.* (2011), also found that employees who were satisfied with the social norms of the organisation seem likely to remain in the organisation. Essentially, employees’ feelings of responsibility, as a result of having authority and influence over others, tend to increase their sense of accountability in staying in the occupation and organisation (Ferreira *et al.*, 2010).

8.4 Research aim 3: significant differences between the biographical groups

Overall, the results showed that the female and male; and white and African participants differed significantly regarding their job embeddedness and voluntary turnover (intention to stay).

8.4.1 Gender groups

Notably, the female participants, compared with their male counterparts, had significant stronger perceptions of organisational fit and what they would sacrifice if they were to decide to leave the institution. The female participants also indicated stronger intentions to stay, compared with their male participants. Organisational fit refers to an employee’s perceived compatibility with or comfort in the organisation (Holtom *et al.*, 2008). Organisational sacrifice refers to the perceived cost of material or psychological benefits that may be forfeited by leaving one’s job. Holtom *et al.*, (2008) argue that the more an employee perceives he or she will have to give up should he or she decide to leave, the more difficult it is to terminate his or her employment in the organisation.

It would appear that the female participants like their group members, feel that their personal values, goals and aspirations agree with the organisational values and that there are opportunities for professional growth in the organisation. The findings of the current study contradict those reported by Epstein *et al.* (1995), Griffeth *et al.* (2000), Kanwar *et al.* (2012), Tanova and Holtom (2008), where female workers were found to show lower attachment behaviour and higher tendencies to leave the organisation compared with the male workers. The findings of the present study could be attributed to the employment equity policies of the institution which tend to favour the career and personal development of female academics.

Research conducted by Rabe and Rugunanan (2012) showed that young female academics in a higher education institution in South Africa joined academia because of the promise of bursaries and institutional and structural support for furthering their studies. The further realisation that furthering one's studies does not necessarily lead to a senior position in academia resulted in the female participants, especially the blacks, questioning the institution's commitment to empowering black female academics and offering them financial and institutional support.

Ngobeni and Bezuidenhout (2011) conducted a study in a higher education institution and found that for universities to retain talented staff, policies on succession planning, remuneration and benefits and training and development should be well formulated and communicated to all employees. Bezuidenhout and Cilliers (2011) argue that universities need to focus on creating development programmes to encourage younger female academics to strive towards higher levels in academia. In view of the demographic profile and findings of the current study, one could assume that the female participants in this study feel obliged to remain in the organisation because they seem to be satisfied with the organisation's succession planning, remuneration and benefits and training and development strategies.

8.4.2 Race groups

The white participants had significantly higher levels of community fit and community link compared with the other race groups. Community fit refers to how well a person perceives he or she fits into the community and the surrounding environment, while community link refers to the influence of family and other social institutions on an individual and his or her decision making generally (Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006). The findings of the current study indicate that the white

participants, who constituted the majority of the sample, love the place they live in; feel the community is a good match for them; and that they have family members nearby. This finding may be attributed to the fact that the higher education institution was historically a white majority institution and that the white participants could therefore still feel deeply embedded in the organisational and social culture and have formed close links with the social community.

Although the current study did not measure whether the institution promotes work-life balance, this may have influenced how the participants found fit, not only with the organisation, but also with the broader community. Donnelly and Quirin (2006) found that organisations can effectively alter the turnover decisions of staff by implementing initiatives pertaining to family and educational endeavours. Donnelly and Quirin (2006) further suggest that family initiatives may include flexible work environments (Bezuidenhout & Cilliers, 2011), while educational endeavours include educational incentive programmes (Ngobeni & Bezuidenhout, 2011).

The findings of the current study indicate that the African participants had higher levels of normative commitment compared with the other groups. Normative commitment reflects the employee feeling obligated to continue employment in the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). Hollins (2000) conducted a study in which the issue of organisational commitment in relation to blue- and white-collar workers was unpacked. Hollins (2000) suggests that factors such as promotion, communication, leadership satisfaction and job satisfaction are positively and significantly related to employee commitment. If employees are denied an opportunity for promotion, they will be low in their commitment to the organisation. In the current study, and in the light of the arguments of Hollins (2000), it may be assumed that the African academics are more committed to the organisation because they have equal opportunities for promotion.

The findings of the current study contradict those of Martin and Roodt (2008) and Lumley *et al.* (2011), who found that white participants showed a higher mean score compared with the other race groups. This implies that the African participants were satisfied with the social norms and were likely to remain in the organisation (Lumley *et al.*, 2011). The findings of the present study lean towards supporting the assertions of Döckel *et al.* (2006), Ferreira *et al.* (2010), Lesabe and Nkosi (2007), Lumley *et al.* (2011), Manetje and Martins (2009), Martins (2008), Van Dyk (2011) and Yang *et al.* (2008), in the sense that normative commitment plays a significant role when an employee is faced with the decision to either stay with or leave the organisation. In

light of the findings of the present study, it would be beneficial to conduct more studies in higher education institutions to confirm whether the African participants value social norms and power over support and roles (Manetje & Martins, 2009).

8.4.3 Age groups

There were no significant differences between the respondents from different age groups. This contradicts the findings of Griffeth *et al.*, (2000) who reported that the younger the employees, the lower their job embeddedness. The findings of the current study, however, confirm those of Müller and Roodt (1998) who found no relationship between age and organisational commitment. This finding merits further research.

9 CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, it can be concluded that in order to retain staff in the higher education institution, management, industrial psychologists and human resource practitioners should pay attention to the way in which academics' job embeddedness and organisational commitment influence their intentions to stay with or leave the organisation. In the affirmative action and employment equity context, the institution should take note of how females and males and race groups differ in terms of their job embeddedness and intention to stay. It can be concluded that female academics tend to feel more embedded in the institution than their male counterparts. The white participants showed higher levels of community link and fit, while the African participants showed higher levels of normative commitment. Essentially, the white females seemed to be more inclined to remain with the organisation because they had found fit and links in the community. The African participants seemed to identify with the norms and values of the organisation - hence their continued citizenship in the organisation.

The findings of this study have contributed valuable information on the relationship between job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (intention to stay) in the context of a higher education institution. The conclusions drawn focus on the practical implications of retention strategies and will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 4.

10 LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This section discusses the limitations of the study and makes recommendations for possible future research.

10.1 Limitations

The main limitations of the study include the small sample size and the limited number of items in the Voluntary Turnover Scale (only 4). This posed a challenge, statistically, to ascertain whether the variable was accurately measured. The sample size was not representative in terms of the gender, age and race of the population, which means that the findings of this study cannot be generalised to a larger more heterogeneous sample. Low internal reliabilities for continuance commitment were recorded, resulting in continuance commitment being excluded from all the statistical analyses.

Despite the above-mentioned limitations, the results of this study do indicate a potential relationship between job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (intention to stay). Moreover, because the study was conducted in a different context from previous studies, it introduced a different perspective and areas for further research in respect of the variables investigated.

10.2 Recommendations for future research

Only the key recommendations will be dealt with in this section because the recommendations will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

Owing to the small sample size of the current study, it is recommended that further studies be conducted in the same context to address this limitation. It is further recommended that a more comprehensive version of the existing VTS should be developed to include more items in the instrument. This will enable future researchers to gain a more detailed understanding of the relationship between job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (intention to stay).

11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the literature underpinning this study was discussed with the emphasis on the core aspects of the variables, job embeddedness, organisational commitment and job embeddedness. The results were explained, recommendations made, the limitations of the study highlighted with suggestions made for areas for possible future research.

The following research aims of the empirical research were achieved:

- Specific aim 1: To explore the statistical relationship between job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (intention to stay) as manifested in a sample of respondents in a South African higher education institution;
- Specific aim 2: To determine whether job embeddedness and organisational commitment positively predict voluntary turnover (intention to stay) in a South African higher education institution;
- Specific aim 3: To ascertain whether people from different gender, race, and age groups differ significantly with the regard to their job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (intention to stay);
- Specific aim 4: To formulate recommendations and possible areas for future research based on the findings of this research with regard to staff retention in higher education contexts and
- Specific aim 5: To formulate recommendations for the organisation with regard to informing employee retention practices.

Chapter 4 will provide a more comprehensive discussion of the conclusions drawn and the limitations of the study. Recommendations will also be made for the practical application of the findings.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter focuses on the conclusions drawn from this research study. It will also highlight the limitations of the literature review and the empirical results of the study, and make recommendations for the practical application of the findings and for future research studies.

4.1 CONCLUSIONS

This section discusses the conclusions relating to the literature review and the empirical study.

4.1.1 Conclusions relating to the literature review

There were three main aims in the literature review, namely to (1) conceptualise job embeddedness and organisational commitment from a theoretical perspective; (2) conceptualise voluntary turnover from a theoretical perspective; and (3) explain the theoretical relationship between job embeddedness and organisational commitment in predicting voluntary turnover with specific reference to higher education institutions. To achieve these main aims, the following specific aims relating to the literature study were conceptualised and realised.

4.1.1.1 First aim: conceptualise job embeddedness and organisational commitment from a theoretical perspective

Based on the theoretical relationship between job embeddedness, organisational commitment, and voluntary turnover, the following conclusions were drawn:

The literature review indicated that despite the available research on job embeddedness, organisational commitment, retention factors and voluntary turnover, there is a need to refine the conceptualisation of these concepts, especially in the South African context.

For the purpose of this study, job embeddedness can be viewed as an employee's perception of the match (fit), connection (link) and cost of leaving (sacrifice) the relevant job and organisation (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001b). Mitchell *et al.*'s (2001b) unfolding model explains how and why people leave organisations. Turnover decisions do not always appear to be the result of accumulated job dissatisfaction and may sometimes occur without much deliberation (Lee & Mitchell, 1994).

Moreover, certain events may cause some employees to consider leaving their organisations when the event matches some pre-existing plan for leaving or violates the employees' values or interferes with their goal attainment (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). Research by Mitchell *et al.* (2001b) found that people who are embedded in their jobs have lower intent to quit and are less ready to quit than those who are not embedded. It may be concluded that person-organisation fit, links and sacrifice contribute to job embeddedness and that job embeddedness does not cause fit, links and sacrifice. These elements together exert a force on employees to stay with their current organisation (Ng & Feldman, 2009).

Allen and Meyer's (1990) multidimensional approach to organisational commitment was utilised. On the basis of the literature review, it may be concluded that organisational commitment is conceptualised according to several approaches (normative, affective, continuance, attitudinal, behavioural, multidimensional and motivational). Organisational commitment appears to be an inner condition that connects employees to a certain organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Meyer and Allen's (1991) multidimensional approach integrates attitudinal and behavioural approaches to commitment in order to create three distinct dimensions, namely affective, continuance and normative commitment. The antecedents of the three components differ.

Research has focused on each of the concepts of job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover separately or in relation to other variables. However, there appears to be a paucity of research in the South African higher education sector.

From the literature review it can be concluded that there does appear to be a relationship between job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover. Hence employee embeddedness and commitment can be influenced by retention factors such as training and development opportunities, supervisor support and career opportunities (Döckel *et al.*, 2006; João, 2010; Lumley, 2009).

4.1.1.2 Second aim: conceptualise voluntary turnover from a theoretical perspective.

For the purpose of this study, voluntary turnover was conceptualised from the work of March and Simmons (1958), focusing on predicting the ease and desire of an employee to leave an organisation. According to Mallol, *et al.* (2007), the traditional models followed two main paths, namely (1) studying turnover from an attitudinal perspective, considering job satisfaction and

organisational commitment, and (2) the influence of the labour market on ease of movement and the availability of alternative employment. The main argument underpinning the traditional models of voluntary turnover is that people become dissatisfied with their jobs, search for alternative jobs, compare their options with the current job and leave if any of these alternatives are perceived to be better than their current situation (Holtom & O'Neill, 2004). According to Griffeth *et al.* (2000), this approach, although successful in identifying turnover prediction, only explains a limited percentage of resignations.

This research found that the most consistent theoretical relationship was between job embeddedness and organisational commitment and that these two variables predict voluntary turnover or turnover in relation to the various gender and age groups.

4.1.1.3 Third aim: explain the theoretical relationship between job embeddedness and organisational commitment in predicting voluntary turnover with specific reference to higher education institutions

The literature review elaborated on the way voluntary turnover was influenced by job embeddedness and organisational commitment. It was evident from that individuals who are embedded in their jobs and community and are attached to their organisations are less likely to voluntarily leave the organisation. It is therefore vital to consider both organisational and employee perspectives when designing retention strategies for the contemporary (21st century) world of work.

4.1.2 Conclusions relating to the empirical study

There were five main aims relating to the empirical study of this research:

Research aim 1: Explore the statistical relationship between job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (intention to stay) as manifested in a sample of respondents in a South African higher education institution;

Research aim 2: Determine whether job embeddedness and organisational commitment positively predict voluntary turnover (intention to stay) in a South African higher education institution;

- Research aim 3:** Ascertain whether people from different gender, race, and age groups differ significantly with the regard to their job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (intention to stay);
- Research aim 4:** Formulate recommendations and pinpoint possible areas for future research based on the findings of this research regarding staff retention in higher education contexts; and
- Research aim 5:** Formulate recommendations for the organisation regarding informing employee retention practices.

The empirical results provided supportive evidence for the following two research hypotheses:

- H1: Job embeddedness and organisational commitment significantly predict voluntary turnover (intention to stay).
- H2: People from different biographical groups, namely gender, race and age, differ significantly with regard to their job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (intention to stay).

4.1.2.1 First aim: explore the statistical relationship between job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (intention to stay) as manifested in a sample of respondents in a South African higher education institution

As depicted in figure 4.1, the following conclusions were drawn:

- Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the participants who are highly job embedded are more likely to remain with the organisation. The results of the current study show that employees who find fit with the organisation find it difficult to leave the community and perceive the cost of leaving the organisation to be high, hence they tend to retain their citizenship in the organisation.
- From the findings it is evident that organisational commitment relates significantly to voluntary turnover (intention to stay). Individuals who feel obligated to continue employment because they identify with the norms and values of the organisation (normative commitment) tend not to consider leaving. It seems likely that individuals who prefer organisational

cultures that emphasise power compared with roles and support and are satisfied with the social norms of the organisation would probably remain in the organisation.

- Overall, the findings of the current study show that job embeddedness and organisational commitment have an empirical relationship in that job embeddedness and organisational commitment contribute significantly to an employee's decision to stay with the organisation.

4.1.2.2 Second aim: determine whether job embeddedness and organisational commitment positively predict voluntary turnover (intention to stay) in a South African higher education institution.

As depicted in figure 4.1 below, job embeddedness and organisational commitment significantly predict voluntary turnover (intention to stay). The findings of the current study further confirm the following:

- The higher the employee's fit in the organisation, the lower his or her intention to leave will be. The research participants in this study indicated that they like the members of their group; fit in with the organisation's culture and feel that the values of the organisation are compatible with their own personal values.
- The higher the community links an employee establishes, the more likely he or she is to remain with the organisation. The participants in the research sample indicated that they owned the house they live in; had family roots and family members nearby and had many close friends in their community.
- Based on the findings it can be concluded that employees who feel supported by the organisation seem to feel obligated to stay with the organisation. Employees seem to remain loyal to an organisation that makes visible attempts to encourage the work-life balance of its employees.

4.1.2.3 *Third aim: ascertain whether people from different gender, race and age groups differ significantly with the regard to their job embeddedness and organisational commitment in predicting their voluntary turnover (intention to stay).*

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

- It is concluded that people from different gender groups differ significantly in their levels of job embeddedness and organisational commitment. The female participants were more embedded in the organisation, compared with their male counterparts, with regard to how they fit into the organisation and the sacrifice involved should they be faced with the decision to leave.
- It is concluded that people from different race groups differ significantly regarding their levels of job embeddedness and organisational commitment. The white participants in this study were higher on job embeddedness with specific reference to how they fit in with the community and links they have created in the community. The African participants seemed to prefer an organisation if they can identify with its values and an organisation that emphasises power as opposed to roles.
- It can be concluded that people from different age groups do not differ significantly with regard to their levels of job embeddedness and organisational commitment.
- It is concluded that people from different gender groups differ significantly in their levels of voluntary turnover (intention to stay). The female participants in this study showed a higher intention to stay with the organisation than the male participants.

4.1.2.4 *Fourth aim: formulate recommendations and possible areas for future research based on the findings of this research with regard to staff retention in higher education contexts.*

- Based on the findings of this study, it would be beneficial to use a more heterogeneous sample from more than one higher education institution. This would allow for the results to be generalised to the broader population.

- Future studies could consider exploring other biographical variables to ascertain whether they influence an employee's job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (intention to stay).

4.1.2.5 Fifth aim: formulate recommendations for the organisation with regard to informing employee retention practices

- The present study makes recommendations pertaining to informing retention practices with specific reference to encouraging a highly embedded and committed academic staff complement. Employee retention practices are discussed in detail in section 4.3.1 and depicted in figure 4.1 below.

4.1.3 Conclusions relating to the central hypothesis

The central hypothesis of the research was formulated as follows:

Job embeddedness and organisational commitment significantly predict voluntary turnover (intention to stay). Moreover, individuals from different gender, race and age groups differ significantly in terms of their job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (intention to stay).

Regarding the central hypothesis, it can be concluded that job embeddedness and organisational commitment significantly predict voluntary turnover (intention to stay). Furthermore, people from different gender, race and age groups differ significantly in their levels of job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (intention to stay). The empirical study yielded statistically significant evidence to support the central hypothesis.

4.1.4 Conclusions relating to retention of staff

The present study provides an indication of which groups to target when considering retention strategies. Organisations should focus their interventions on employees in the 30 to 59 age group, with a focus on training and development, alternative working arrangements to

encourage work-life balance, satisfactory remuneration and retirement packages in an attempt to retain their female academics.

4.1.4.1 Conclusions relating to contributions to the field of Industrial and Organisational psychology.

The findings of the literature review and empirical study make a new and unique contribution to the field of industrial psychology, with specific reference to strategies that higher education institutions could consider in order to retain academic staff. The literature review provided an in-depth conceptualisation of the constructs pertinent to the study, namely job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover. The literature review further highlighted the possible relationships between these constructs with specific reference to the differences between biographical groups in relation to these constructs.

Conclusions drawn from the literature review indicate that Industrial and Organisational psychologists and human resource practitioners should consider the theoretical models of job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover when working in the fields of Career psychology and Personnel psychology. In addition, the theoretical relationship between these variables and the differences between the biographical groups need to be taken into consideration because the findings of this study provide new insight into the value of these variables in retention practices, with a specific focus on academic staff at a higher education institution. Previous research has yielded inconsistent results on the differences between biographical groups, specifically gender groups, in terms of the variables of relevance to this study. The findings of this study, however, provide more evidence to add to the existing findings that support these differences.

The instruments used in this study were assessed for reliability and validity, from two perspectives, namely the items and the respondents. In this study, the use of the Rasch model allowed this information to be collected to ensure item reliability and validity and person reliability and validity. The conclusions drawn in this study indicate that the instruments that were used generally displayed acceptable levels of internal consistency reliability, except for continuance commitment.

The results of the empirical study provide new information on the relationship between job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover. Furthermore, the results highlight the possibility that the more embedded employees are in their job and the more committed they are to the organisation, the less likely they are to voluntarily leave it. Conclusions drawn in the empirical study indicate that there is a relationship between the constructs in this study. Organisations can therefore formulate strategies that focus on encouraging an embedded and committed workforce.

The study highlights the possibility of differences between the biographical groups' job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover. This finding is of particular relevance in the multicultural context of South Africa.

4.2 LIMITATIONS

Several limitations were identified in the literature review and empirical study.

4.2.1 Limitations of the literature review

The following limitations were noted in the literature review:

- (1) There was a broad literature base on studies conducted on organisational commitment globally, with few studies conducted specifically in the South African Higher education context.
- (2) Job embeddedness seems to have been conceptualised and investigated in occupational contexts where employees were identified as having scarce or critical skills. There is a paucity of literature on studies conducted in other contexts, specifically the South African Higher education context.
- (3) There is a dearth of studies exploring the empirical relationship between the three variables in all occupational contexts.

4.2.2 Limitations of the empirical study

Some of the limitations of the empirical study were identified in previous chapters. What follows is a summary of the limitations that apply specifically to the empirical study. The limitations that were identified include, for example, the non-representativeness of the sample in terms of gender, race and age; the limited number of items in the VTS (only 4) and the low internal reliability consistency level of continuance commitment.

Given the exploratory nature of the research design, the researcher could not draw any conclusions about causation, since the associations between the variables were interpreted rather than established. It would be beneficial, in the future, to replicate this study with broader samples across various occupational, gender, race and age groups before drawing final conclusions about the relationship between individuals' job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (intention to stay).

Despite the above-mentioned limitations, the results of this study highlight the relationship between job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (intention to stay), as well as the differences between the biographical groups' experiences of these constructs. This study could be used as a basis for understanding the relationships between the variables measured and the differences between biographical groups to inform the formulation of retention strategies.

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made about retention strategies in organisations and possible future studies.

4.3.1 Practitioners working in the field of talent retention

The results of this study show that it is necessary to consider job embeddedness and organisational commitment in order to understand the voluntary turnover of academic staff. Practical recommendations are provided in figure 4.1. These recommendations are based on the argument that job-embedded and committed employees remain attached to the

organisation. The relationships observed between the three variables of relevance to this study could provide insight into the development of retention strategies in the following manner:

- To ensure organisation fit, organisations should consider implementing a clearly communicated socialisation/orientation programme for new hires. According to Allen and Shanock (2012), a well-timed orientation programme with the right information on expectations and activities is indirectly related to voluntary turnover, because such a programme would inculcate feelings of embeddedness and commitment.
- Owing to the fact that the majority of academic staff in this research comprised an ageing workforce, a possible retention strategy would be to consider well-designed retirement packages/benefits.
- Another strategy that could be considered to promote organisational fit would be to provide career mobility opportunities in the organisation. Such initiatives could include opportunities for promotion and training and development. It is therefore suggested that the provision of career opportunities could be used to increase overall job embeddedness and organisational commitment (normative and continuance) which could lead to a higher intention to remain with the organisation.
- Organisations should have clearly documented policies on promotion and training. This will ensure that the new hires and current employees are aware of career development opportunities and how they can achieve career growth in the organisation (Ngobeni & Bezuidenhout, 2011).
- Supervisors can provide a caring work environment by giving direction to employees, providing feedback on work done and also recognising work of a high standards. This will reassure employees that they are contributing something to the organisation and inculcate a sense of fit in the organisation (Bambacas & Kaluk, 2012; Ngobeni & Bezuidenhout, 2011).
- Organisations can provide support for their employees with regard to off-the-job embeddedness issues. Since the majority of employees in the institution in this study are

females, support could be provided by assisting these employees with their family responsibilities.

- Roles and levels of authority should be clearly designed and communicated to staff. Some of the participants indicated that they would prefer an organisation in which there is a clear power distance and the roles and levels of authority are clearly formulated.
- Providing generous total benefit packages, other than remuneration, is a strategy the organisation could apply in an attempt to lower the staff turnover levels. Mohlala, Goldman and Goosen (2012) argue that an improvement of certain organisational factors tends to be more beneficial than a larger salary. These could include employee assistance programmes, flexible work practices and family-friendly policies (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2012; Grobler & De Bruyn, 2011; Mohlala *et al.*, 2012; Ryan *et al.*, 2012).

4.3.2 Future research

In light of the conclusions and limitations of this study, the following recommendations are made for future research:

There is a need for further research on the relationship between job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (intention to stay) in higher education institutions in the South African context. It is recommended that future studies address the limitations identified in this study. Because this study was limited to a small sample of predominantly white females, it is recommended that future studies should include a larger, more representative sample.

Valuable insight could be obtained by analysing additional biographical variables such as marital status, tenure and number of co-workers. These variables were not measured in this study. In addition to the above recommendations, consideration could also be given to including different occupational groups and work contexts, as suggested by Clinton, Knight and Guest (2012).

4.4 INTEGRATION OF THE STUDY

This study investigated the relationship dynamics between job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (intention to stay). The results suggest that these three variables are related and that such relationships could provide insight to inform talent retention practices.

The literature review suggested that there is a relationship between job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover. The shortage of a younger workforce in higher education institutions has resulted in an ageing workforce. This has compelled higher education institutions to focus on informed retention strategies. Effective orientation programmes, training and development opportunities and career opportunities in organisations are all significant factors in employee retention. In addition, differences between biographical groups in terms of their attitudes to the organisation have to be considered.

The empirical study provided statistically significant support for the central hypothesis. The findings therefore suggest that there is a relationship between individuals' job embeddedness,

organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (intention to stay). In addition, different gender and race groups were shown to differ significantly in their levels of job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (intention to stay).

In conclusion, the findings of the study reveal that insight into the relationship between job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (intention to stay) may have practical significance in that knowledge of this relationship could inform retention strategies.

4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the conclusions drawn from this study and its possible limitations by focusing on the results of both the literature review and the empirical study. Practical recommendations were made for retention strategies and possible future research. Finally, the study was integrated by emphasising the positive findings relating to the relationship dynamics between job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (intention to stay).

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JOB EMBEDDEDNESS AND ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT AS PREDICTORS OF VOLUNTARY TURNOVER AT A SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

by

CEBILE TEBELE

SUPERVISOR : Professor M. Coetzee

DEPARTMENT : Industrial and Organisational Psychology

DEGREE : MCom (Industrial and Organisational Psychology)

The objectives of this study were to determine whether job embeddedness and organisational commitment significantly and positively predict voluntary turnover (intention to stay), and whether people from different gender, race and age groups differ significantly in their job embeddedness, organisational commitment and voluntary turnover. The measuring instruments included the Job Embeddedness Scale (JES), Organisational Commitment Scale (OCS) and Voluntary Turnover Scale (VTS). A cross-sectional quantitative survey design was used to collect data from a sample of 102 permanently employed academic staff. Multiple regression analyses showed that organisation fit and community links and normative commitment significantly and positively predicted the participants' intentions to stay at the institution. Significant differences were observed between the job embeddedness and intention to stay of the gender and race groups. The findings of the current study add to the knowledge base on turnover intentions of academic staff. The study concludes with recommendations for retention practices and research.

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PERSONAL DATA

1. Last Name TEBELE First Name CEBINE Middle Name —
2. Year of Birth (Optional) 16/11/1979 3. Country of Citizenship ZIMBABWE
4. Present Mailing Address
Street address: UNIT 715 WONDERPARK ESTATE, AKASIA
- City PRETORIA State/Province GAUTENG Postal code 0118 Country SOUTH AFRICA
- Future Mailing Address
Street address: DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL & ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCH, ASH 3-75, UNISA
- City PRETORIA State/Province GAUTENG Postal code 0003 Country SOUTH AFRICA
- Effective date for future mailing address (mm dd yy) 06/01/13
- E-mail address: Tebela@unisa.ac.za

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