

WORK ENGAGEMENT AND ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT AT A PRIVATE  
DISTANCE LEARNING INSTITUTION IN SOUTH AFRICA

by

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I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.



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## **ABSTRACT**

Organisations are increasingly concerned about employees' work engagement and organisational commitment due to the influence of the two constructs on important organisational outcomes. A question that is also pertinent is "is it possible to have engaged but uncommitted employees?" This study explores work engagement's relationship with organisational commitment within the private distance learning context. Schufeli and Bakker's (2004) 17-item work engagement scale and Allen and Meyer's (1990) organisational commitment questionnaire were utilised to collect data from a sample comprising 110 staff members from a private distance education institution. It emerged from the study that a moderate positive significant relationship exists between work engagement and organisational commitment. A further moderate positive significant association was cited between organisational commitment and each of the work engagement constructs. The data demonstrated that work engagement predicts organisational commitment. The results also indicated differences in both work engagement and organisational commitment according to biographical details, with males exhibiting more elevated levels in both constructs than female participants, and those with qualifications above grade 12 showing more elevated levels of work engagement than those with grade 12 or less. The results of the study could benefit organisations to better comprehend work engagement and organisational commitment, and to assist in recommending strategies to improve both engagement and commitment.

### **KEY TERMS:**

Work engagement; Organisational commitment; Job demands; Job resources; Personal resources; Affective commitment; Normative commitment; Continual commitment; Absorption; Vigour; Dedication.

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **SCIENTIFIC ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This research study focuses on the relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment with specific reference to a private open distance learning institution in South Africa. In this chapter, the background and motivation of the research are discussed. The problem statement, research questions and the aims of the research are also discussed in this chapter. The research paradigm on which this study is based and the theoretical models on which the two concepts are based are also discussed. Finally, this chapter gives a chapter layout or structure for this study.

### **1.2 Background**

Human resources are an important element of any organisation, and their performance determines whether an organisation achieves its objectives successfully. The performance of any employee is influenced by their attitude towards the job. Sarath and Manikandan (2015) state that the job attitude of the employee influences the employee and organisation's performance. Because of the role that job attitudes have on performance, organisations need to have an appreciation of the relationship between various job attitudes. Work engagement and organisational commitment are among the variables of job attitudes (Sarath & Manikandan, 2015). This research study focuses on work engagement and organisational commitment with a focus on the private open distance learning context. The private education landscape is unique when compared to the public education landscape. Private distance learning institutions are not funded by the government in any way; they thus rely on sound strategic planning to remain competitive (Bezuidenhout et al., 2013). Private distance learning institutions use the business model in their operations in which profit is the main motive. Some of the major challenges of the sector are the lack of adequate financial resources (Stander & Herman, 2017) and the high staff turnover as both faculty and administrative personnel seek greener pastures. In recent years the sector has also been faced with increased competition (Schalkwyk, Davis & Pellissier, 2013).

These institutions must operate, remain sustainable, and compete, among themselves and among public tertiary education providers (Schalkwyk et al, 2013).

The challenges that private higher education institutions face call for strategies to ensure that the institutions remain competitive, profitable, and sustainable. The contributions of human resources to the competitiveness of the private learning context cannot be underestimated. The personnel within private distance learning institutions play a pivotal role in ensuring that the institutions remain competitive and achieve their strategic goals. It is therefore important to study work engagement and organisational commitment as this influences the attainment of an organisation's strategic goals. The need for work engagement and organisational commitment constitutes critical factors for high organisational performance (Cesario & Chambel, 2017).

Work engagement is defined as a "positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption" (Sarath & Manikandan, 2014, p.93). Engaged workers are excited about the work that they do, are focused, and concentrate when doing their work tasks. The competitive nature of today's economy requires an engaged workforce to give organisations a competitive advantage. Disengaged employees negatively influence organisations' productivity. Disengaged workers productivity losses translate to billions of dollars a year according to global reports (Gallup Consulting, 2013). Brim and Asplund (2023) report that engaged teams experience 81% lower absenteeism, 41% less quality problems, and 43% lower turnover. Bezuidenhout and Bezuidenhout (2014) state that engaged workers' personal goals are normally in alignment with the organisation's goals. It can therefore be assumed that any employee whose personal goals are in alignment with the organisation he/she works for is less likely to think about leaving the organisation. Workplaces must provide work environments that promote work engagement as engaged workers are more productive, better satisfied with their jobs and exhibit minimum intention to leave. This is in line with the Job Demands Resources model which stipulates that as employees are provided with resources that enable them to meet their job demands, the level of the employees' engagement also increases (Janse van Rensburg et al., 2013).

Empirical evidence points to a positive relationship between work engagement and various work outcomes and job attitudes; psychological capital and organisational commitment (Simons & Buitendach, 2013); employee productivity (Hanaysha, 2015); job insecurity (Moshoeu & Geldenhuys, 2015) and organisational citizenship behaviour (Rekha & Sasmita, 2019). Engaged personnel work optimally whilst experiencing positive emotions. Sarath and Manikandan (2014) found that there is a strong relationship between overall work engagement and well-being. Engaged employees have low work stress levels (Sarath & Manikandan, 2015). Work engagement positively impacts the success of an organisation due to employees who are driven and loyal to their organisation (Geldenhuys et al., 2014). Employees perceive engagement as a way of repaying the organisation for what it has done for them.

Simons and Buitendach (2013), state that work engagement is the only predictor of organisational commitment. Organisations with an engaged workforce can therefore be expected to also have a committed workforce. Organisational commitment is a construct that has been widely studied by industrial psychologists and human resource professionals because of its effect on organisational success in attaining its objectives. Today's business environment is competitive to the point that no organisation can perform optimally unless its employees are committed to its strategic goals and objectives. Employees entering and remaining with the organisation is one of the key behaviours that are essential for organisational effectiveness (Lesabe & Nkosi, 2007). Mkulu (2018) reports that employee attrition rates in private education institutions (both distance and contact) are quite high with a 15% turnover rate in Malawi and 14% in Zambia, and that in South Africa employees in these institutions leave due to poor leadership and low salaries. Erasmus et al. (2015) report that educational institutions in South Africa lose competent human capital to other institutions that can provide more lucrative compensation.

Attrition is a symptom of a lack of commitment to one's organisation. Organisational commitment is defined as the magnitude at which one recognises themselves as being part of a particular organisation and their involvement with the organisation (Albdour & Altarawneh, 2014). It can also be described as a mental condition that ties a person to an entity (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Organisational commitment has been treated as a



multi-dimensional construct (Lesabe & Nkosi, 2007). Allen and Meyer (1990) categorised organisational commitment into affective commitment, normative commitment, and continuance commitment. Affective commitment explains the emotional bond an employee has with the organisation and how they recognise themselves as part of the organisation, which may be demonstrated by active participation in organisational activities. Continuance commitment refers to what one will lose because of detaching oneself from the organisation and finally normative commitment refers to one's perceived responsibility towards an organisation (Abdour & Altarawneh, 2014; Mitonga-Monga et al., 2018). An employee feels that they must remain with the organisation because of what the organisation has done for them. It could be that the organisation has paid for the employee's studies and hence the employee feels obligated to stay (Pieter & Auanga, 2019).

These three components of organisational commitment determine whether an employee stays within an organisation. A committed worker willingly involves themselves in the organisational tasks and is with the organisation for the long haul (Mitonga-Monga, 2019; Flotman & Cilliers, 2018). Committed individuals will therefore stay with their organisation and contribute happily to the attainment of the organisation's mission and objectives. People who display exceptional organisational commitment are said to display positive workplace behaviour such as high job performance and have no intention to leave. Organisational commitment is crucial for both the public and private education environment, however, if studied in isolation, it will not enhance the job environment.

Work engagement has been identified as a strong predictor of organisational commitment (Simons & Buitendach, 2013). Studies on work engagement and organisational commitment have been carried out within public institutions of higher learning in South Africa. A study carried out by Field and Buitendach (2011) revealed that there was a positive relationship between affective organisational commitment and work engagement among support staff at the University of KwaZulu Natal. This is endorsed by findings in a South African study where a significant relationship was identified between these two constructs among a sample of educators at public distance institutions of higher learning (Robyn & Mitonga-Monga, 2017). Findings from international learning institutions also confirm the relationship between work

engagement and organisational commitment. A study by Ahuja and Gupta (2019) found that there is a significant relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment among higher education professionals in India.

### **1.3 Problem statement**

From the above background work engagement can be postulated as an enabler of organisational commitment. One of the consequences of work engagement and organisational commitment is employee turnover or intention to leave the organisation (Takawira et al., 2014; Satardian et al., 2017). Staff turnover in institutions of higher learning in South Africa is significant and high, in the African context (Snyman et al., 2022). Turnover rates are however higher in private learning institutions. Interviews conducted with heads of human capital at various private institutions of higher learning indicate that staff turnover in these institutions stands at 18% (Ramasay & Abdullah, 2017). An organisation's ability to retain staff has an overall consequence on organisational performance. Work environments that foster work engagement and organisational commitment can ensure improved retention.

Studies on work engagement and organisational commitment have been conducted in various professions including the insurance sector (Sehuno et al., 2015), the service industry (Coetzee et al., 2014), the manufacturing sector (Robyn & Mitonga-Monga, 2017), and public institutions of higher learning (Robyn & Mitonga Monga, 2017). While previous studies have focused on each of these concepts, both individually and in relation to each other and other variables, there was a need to study a possible relationship that could exist between the two variables within a private open distance learning context. An extensive literature search did not yield any results on the relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment in the private higher education sector, let alone private distance learning institutions. This may be because of private institution's focus mainly on teaching activities, whilst public institutions also have a research mandate (Tamrat, 2020). Private distance learning institutions have great potential to contribute towards research as supported by this statement, "the sheer size and diversity of Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEI's), the variety of levels and programmes offered, and the millions of students and faculty involved, offer a huge research field that waits to be properly mined"

(Tamrat, 2020, p.2). To date there is scarce evidence of research conducted within private distance learning institutions (Deacon et al., 2014). This research study therefore contributes to the knowledge of a sector that is currently under-researched.

The contribution of this research study is towards the assessment of the relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment in a private distance learning context. The private distance institution under study appreciates the long-term benefits of retaining employees and thus aims to enhance work engagement and organisational commitment. This study is aimed at benefiting three main stakeholders (industrial and organisational psychologists, human resource practitioners, and private open distance learning institutions) to understand work engagement and organisational commitment. The findings from the study determined the recommendations for both the industrial and organisational psychology field and the open distance learning context. With the above background and problem in mind, the general research question, the research questions regarding the literature review, and the research questions regarding the empirical study are stipulated below.

### **1.3.1 General research question**

The general research question of this study is:

“What is the relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment at a private distance learning institution in South Africa?”

### **1.3.2 Research questions regarding the literature review**

The following research questions were formulated to guide the literature review:

- How is work engagement conceptualised in the literature?
- How is organisational commitment conceptualised in the literature?
- Can a theoretical relationship be established between work engagement and organisational commitment?
- What is the influence of demographic factors on work engagement?
- What is the influence of demographic factors on organisational commitment?

### **1.3.4 Research questions regarding the empirical study**

The following research questions were formulated to guide the empirical study:

- What is the nature of the empirical relationship between respondents' work engagement and organisational commitment at a private open distance learning institution in South Africa?
- Does work engagement predict organisational commitment?
- Do gender, age, and educational qualification groups exhibit significant differences in work engagement and organisational commitment?
- Based on the research findings of this study, what recommendations and areas can be suggested for future research in the field of Industrial and organisational psychology?
- What recommendations can be proposed to the organisation regarding work engagement and organisational commitment?

### **1.3.5 Research hypothesis**

With the above background and research questions in mind, the following hypothesis was proposed and tested in this research study.

- H01: A significant relationship does not exist between work engagement and organisational commitment.
- H1: A significant relationship exists between work engagement and organisational commitment.
- H02: Work engagement does not significantly predict organisational commitment.
- H2: Work engagement significantly predicts organisational commitment.
- H03a: An employee's gender, age, and educational qualifications will not significantly influence work engagement.
- H03b: An employee's gender, age and educational qualifications will not significantly influence organisational commitment.
- H3a: An employee's gender, age, and educational qualifications will significantly influence work engagement.

- H3b: An employee's gender, age and educational qualifications will significantly influence organisational commitment.

## **1.4 Research aims**

The following research aims were constructed with the above research questions in mind.

### **1.4.1 General aims of the study**

The main intention of the study was to investigate work engagement and organisational commitment, specifically at a private distance learning institution in South Africa. The secondary aim of the study was to explore the primary aim in relation to the participants' demographic characteristics, these being gender, age, and educational qualification group.

### **1.4.2 Specific aims of the research**

To enable the carrying out of the literature review and empirical study, the following aims were constructed.

#### **1.4.2.1 Literature review**

- Conceptualise work engagement from a theoretical perspective.
- Conceptualise organisational commitment from a theoretical perspective.
- Integrate work engagement and organisational commitment's theoretical relationship concerning open distance learning institutions.

#### **1.4.2.2 Empirical study**

- Determine the relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment.
- Determine whether work engagement predicts organisational commitment within the private distance learning context.

- Determine whether people from different demographic groups exhibit significant differences in terms of work engagement and organisational commitment.
- Propose recommendations to the organisation regarding strategies to enhance work engagement and organisational commitment.
- Emphasise areas that may warrant further research on work engagement and organisational commitment for the field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology.

## **1.5 Paradigm perspective**

A paradigm refers to how the world can be comprehended and studied (Rehman & Alharthi, 2018). It can also be described as a worldview or fundamental beliefs. These beliefs affect the way one conducts research and the choice of research methodology (Wahyuni, 2012). As a framework of thought, a paradigm dictates the conduct of the researcher (Wahyuni, 2012). There are several research paradigms, however, the decision to use a paradigm is informed by the needs of the research study (Rehman & Alharthi, 2018).

### **1.5.1 Intellectual climate**

The humanistic paradigm and the systems theory paradigm have been used when presenting the literature review of work engagement and organisational commitment. The humanistic perspective emphasises the human potential for growth as critical in this paradigm. According to this paradigm, human beings oversee their own destiny; people are innately good and will pursue the achievement of a better world; people are unrestricted in the way they act and the way a person behaves is a result of the choices they make; and their potential for growth and development is unlimited (Rogers, 1983). The humanistic perspective, therefore, emphasises one's freedom and responsibility to become what one can become. This paradigm was appropriate for this study because of the presupposition that human beings have freedom of choice and therefore it is up to the individual to choose to either engage in their work or not

engage in their work. It is also an individual's decision to either commit or not commit to an organisation.

The second paradigm that was utilised for the presentation of the literature review is known as the systems theory. The systems theory views truth as a whole and claims that life is a system of which we are a part. Nothing can be properly understood unless its total system is considered (Higgs & Smith, 2006). Higgs and Smith (2006) state that systems theory encourages openness by breaking down artificial barriers, it encourages people who perform different functions to talk to one another and to understand one another better. Work engagement and organisational commitment could not be studied in isolation, as it is essential to appreciate the different parts of a system that contribute to the behaviour of an employee. Systems theory was therefore important in understanding the role of different subsystems (colleagues, management, internal processes, the external environment, etc.) in stimulating work engagement and organisational commitment.

The empirical review of the study was presented using a positivist paradigm also known as logical empiricism. The foundation of this paradigm is that a person's behaviour can be understood through observation and reason (Higgs & Smith, 2006). From an ontological perspective, positivism is viewed as external, objective, and independent of social actors whilst from an epistemological perspective, there is an emphasis on credible data, facts, causality, and lawlike generalisations (Wahyuni, 2012). Goduka (2012) states that positivism is related to the exploration of observable phenomena which is measured using quantitative methods. Truth is determined by sense experience and positivism is the only form of truth because only this form of truth can be tested and checked (Higgs & Smith, 2006). In this paradigm, evidence is collected to support or disprove theories and hypotheses, and there is objective interpretation of the data. This paradigm was therefore used in this study due to its potential to produce objective truth through the interpretation of quantitative data that can result in correct conclusions and appropriate suggestions for the Industrial and organisational psychology discipline. Positivism enables different researchers studying the same phenomena to come up with similar results by carefully using statistical tests (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This will enable generalisations of the results that can be applied across contexts (Wahyuni, 2012).

## 1.5.2 Metatheoretical statements

Metatheory refers to the ideas that support a theory, the core thoughts on how events of interest in the field should be explored (Wagner & Berger, 1985). For the purposes of this research, the following metatheoretical statements were presented:

### 1.5.2.1 Industrial and organisational psychology

Industrial psychology refers to the study of people within the framework of their work, including application of concepts to the working environment (Landy & Conte, 2004). The discipline has a two-pronged objective: first, to conduct research to improve knowledge and understanding of people's behaviour in the workplace, and second, to apply this knowledge to improve employees' behaviour, environment, and mental well-being (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2010). This study perfectly fits within the discipline as work engagement and organisational commitment are desirable manners of behaviour within a vocational setting, and it is essential for specialists in this field to continue increasing their knowledge of these concepts. This knowledge will allow organisations to come up with measures to improve engagement and commitment.

### 1.5.2.2 Career psychology

Career psychology seeks to understand the work roles that an individual has held in their lifetime and the experiences that have been gained from such roles (Arnold & Randall, 2010). An individual's career progression is important in career psychology. Individuals pass through different career stages in their careers and individual needs at each career stage are likely to change (Chourasiya & Agrawal, 2019). In studying work engagement and organisational commitment, it is important to take cognisance of the different career stages of each individual. Individuals who are in the establishment stages of their careers are likely to experience both work engagement and organisational commitment differently compared to those in the maintenance stage. Career psychology is important in understanding individuals' work engagement.

### 1.5.2.3 Theoretical model

The literature review on work engagement was presented using the 'Job Demand Resources' model of work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2003). The Job Demand Resources model is a theoretical framework of occupational well-being. The three-



components model of organisational commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1991) was used in the presentation of the literature review on organizational commitment. Affective, continuance, and normative commitment are the three components within the model.

#### 1.5.2.4 Conceptual descriptions

The following elements were the variables in this study:

1. Work engagement – This can be described as the level of an employee’s involvement in their work role, regarding the job as part of their being and exhibiting work-related thoughts even when outside the working environment (Cesario & Chambel, 2017).
2. Organisational commitment – This can be explained as a strong mental bond to the organisation (Cesario & Chambel, 2017). This is demonstrated by a willingness to stay in the organisation and behaving in a way that aligns with organisational expectations (Field & Buitendach, 2011).

### 1.5.3 Central hypothesis

The following formed the central hypothesis in this study:

- A significant relationship exists between work engagement and organisational commitment.
- Work engagement significantly predicts organisational commitment.

## 1.6 Research design

Research design can be explained as a set of choices concerning the study at hand which include the topic of study, population, and the research methods (De Vos, Strydom, Fourche & Delpont, 2018). Most researchers choose a research design from the main research approaches which are quantitative, qualitative, or mixed paradigms. In using quantitative research, the aim is to interrogate the link among variables to determine reasons for the relationship, as well as envision and direct events (De Vos et al., 2018). On the other end of the continuum is qualitative research which makes use of participants’ perspectives to answer questions related to specific events (De

Vos et al., 2018). In the middle of the continuum is the mixed paradigm, which makes use of both quantitative and qualitative paradigms (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The quantitative paradigm was used in this study as the study involved exploring two variables that can be measured using established instruments that will enable statistical analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The whole population in the research setting was targeted using a cross-sectional survey. The type of research design employed was non-experimental research design as there was no manipulation of the variables and there was neither an experimental group nor a control group.

### **1.6.1 Research variables**

The study focused on two variables. The independent variable is the one that causes the outcome, also known as the antecedent or predictor variable, whilst the dependent variable are the outcomes or results of the dependent variable (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this study, work engagement was the independent variable and organisational commitment was the dependent variable. The study focused on establishing whether there was a significant statistical relationship between these variables.

### **1.6.2 Methods to ensure reliability and validity**

Throughout the administration of this study, certain measures were put in place to ensure that the process was valid and reliable.

#### **1.6.2.1 Validity**

Validity can be described as the degree of accuracy that is shown when measuring a concept using an objective and reliable method (Heale & Twycross, 2015), and the extent to which one can draw meaningful interpretations from scores obtained from a measuring instrument (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It can either be internal validity or external validity. Internal validity is the measure of the point at which transitions in the dependent variable are directly due to the independent variable, whilst external validity is the measure at which generalisation can be applied (Wagner, Kawulich & Garner, 2012). It is therefore important to ensure that the instrument designed to measure a

concept, measures exactly what it is intended to measure, to be considered valid. This is one way that internal validity can be established. To ensure validity for this study, it is essential to use tried and tested measuring instruments for the constructs under study. Work engagement and organisational commitment are concepts previously studied by other researchers who have proved the validity of the measuring instruments. Using proven instruments therefore ensured the validity of the measuring instruments. Using valid measuring instruments also ensured meaningful interpretations of the data. The sample selection method ensured external validity. The use of the total population sampling method ensured that everyone in the population took part in the study, therefore increasing the chances of generalising the results of the study.

#### 1.6.2.2 Reliability

Past studies that have the same measuring instruments as this study were reviewed to assess whether the instruments demonstrated reliability in previous studies. This has been done by establishing if previous authors have reported internal consistency in their studies. The research instruments in this study have only been used on a sample from the research context to ensure that the results are accurate and relevant to the research context. In administering the instruments, the researcher exercised caution to minimise carelessness from the participants.

#### 1.6.3 Unit of analysis

Unit of analysis can be described as unique features that embody characteristics that researchers desire to explore further and collect data on (De Vos et al., 2018). There are various units of analysis, and in this study, such included individuals, and the different subgroups under the demographic variables.

#### 1.6.4 Measures for ethical research

The research has not contravened Unisa's policy on research ethics. Before the research could be undertaken it had to be approved by an appropriate Unisa ethics review committee. An application was submitted to the committee responsible for ethical clearance within the department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology.

Once ethical clearance was given, work on the research commenced. It was also essential to obtain permission from the organisation in which the data was collected, to enable access to the research context. An application was submitted to the Chief Executive Officer of the institution requesting permission to access the context and was granted accordingly. An undertaking was made to use information provided by participants for the purpose of this research only. In carrying out the study and writing the dissertation, no reference was made to the actual name or location of the institution. The results of the study were provided to the organisation.

Human beings were the participants in this study and therefore this brought to the surface unique ethical problems. If this study was going to be successful, ethical considerations had to guide the undertaking of this research. The research environment was free of either physical or emotional harm. Participants took part in this study at their own will and their identities remained anonymous. Participants were asked to sign an informed consent form before taking part, assuring them of the safety of the information they provided (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A statistician who signed a non-disclosure agreement was contracted to analyse the data. The research context consisted of individuals from different demographic groups. Care was undertaken not to use language that was biased against persons because of the group they belonged to. This was done by using language that was sensitive to labels and acknowledging the word “participant’ instead of “subject”.

## **1.7 Research method**

In conducting this research, two stages were followed. The first stage focused on the review of literature whilst the second stage focused on the empirical study.

### Stage 1: Review of Literature

The following was carried out during this phase:

1. Conceptualised work engagement from a theoretical perspective.
2. Conceptualised organisational commitment from a theoretical perspective.
3. Established from literature the link between work engagement and organisational commitment.

#### 4. Constructed relevant hypothesis for the purposes of this study.

##### Stage 2: Empirical study

The following was carried out during this phase:

##### 1. Choosing the sample

The sample studied consisted of a population of 110 employees at a private distance college in South Africa. The institution that the sample was drawn from comprises nine functional departments which are Human Resources, Academics, Student Administration, Student Services, Call Centre, Information Technology, Marketing, Finance and Registrar. The total sampling method was used for this study. This is a purposive sampling technique involving the examination of the entire population that has specific unique features (dissertation.laerd.com, 2020). This sampling method was chosen because it is suitable for a small population size (as was the population in this context) and all the employees within the institution were targeted for this study. The population sample also had the characteristics that the researcher was looking for as the entire population consisted of permanent employees at a private distance learning institution. To identify participants, a list of the entire population of the institution was obtained from the Human Resources Department. A survey that was created using Microsoft Forms was despatched to potential responders. Participants accessed the survey through a link that was emailed to them.

##### Step 2: The measuring instruments

- Demographic questionnaire

Information regarding participants' age, ethnicity, race, gender, and qualifications was obtained using the demographic questionnaire.

- Work engagement

Schaufeli et al. (2002) developed the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). The scale includes three dimensions Vi (vigour) (six items), De (dedication) (five items) and Ab (absorption) (six items). The scale consists of 17 items which are scored on a 7-point frequency scale ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (always).

- Organisational commitment

Allen and Meyer's instrument (1990) was used to measure the three components of organisational commitment (affective, continuance and normative commitment). The organisational commitment questionnaire was developed in 1990 for the North American context and reviewed in 1997 (Neves, Graveto, Rodriques, Maroco & Parreira, 2018). The organisational commitment scale consists of 24 items and uses a five-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree) (Mitonga-Monga & Flotman, 2018). Allen & Meyer's organisational commitment questionnaire is well established in the literature as reliable and valid. The table below shows the revised version of the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire's internal consistency (Cronbach Coefficient) on affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment.

Table 1.1

*Internal Consistency of the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire*

Affective Commitment (AOC)	0.85
Continuance Commitment (COC)	0.79
Normative Commitment (NOC)	0.73

*Source: Allen & Meyer (1997)*

Various Cronbach alpha coefficients clearly indicate reliability of the organisational commitment questionnaire in various contexts and cultures as reported by Mitonga-Monga (2019), Moshoeu and Geldenhuys (2015), and Alam (2011). The tool adheres to the recommended standard of 0.70. The instrument can therefore be used internationally.

### Step 3 Data administration

- Data collection

The researcher was responsible for data gathering. The survey questions were uploaded onto Microsoft forms and then a link was emailed to the participants. Participants were asked to voluntarily complete the surveys. The participants were permanent employees of the institution comprising all levels of employees. Participants were not allowed to take part in the study without providing written

consent. Since permission had been given by the institution's CEO to conduct the research, the institution's IT Technician was requested to distribute the survey to the respondents. The IT department is also the custodian of the institution's email addresses and hence were requested from that department.

- Data management and storage

Data management and storage is an area of concern in research. A few strategies can be implemented to ensure that data is safe, and these include redundant storage, selecting appropriate hardware and ensuring that the storage system is appropriate for the researcher's needs (Briney, 2015). The researcher created a One Drive cloud storage folder to store the data. Once the survey was completed the responses were downloaded and kept in the folder. The folder was password protected and only the researcher had access to the password.

- Data analysis

The first step in analysing the data was to look at the number of the population or sample who responded or did not respond to the survey (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This information was presented in a tabular format showing percentages of those who responded and those who did not respond. It was important to assess response bias, which can be described as the influence caused by those that did not respond to the survey expectations (Fowler (2014), cited in Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To check for response bias, wave analysis was used. This was done by examining selected items on the returned survey weekly to determine if the average responses changed. Response bias presupposes that late responders almost became non-responders and that if answers begin to change, then there is a possibility for response bias (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The study took a quantitative approach to analyse the data using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics summarise data whereas inferential statistics use techniques to draw conclusions from a sample of a population (Byrne, 2007). Descriptive data also assist in interpreting the data. Mean and standard deviation were the descriptive statistics that were utilised. In pursuance of verifying the internal accuracy of the tools' scales, the Cronbach alpha coefficient was utilised. The Cronbach alpha tested whether the measuring instruments truly assessed what they

intended to assess. To test the research hypothesis, the analysis of variance or ANOVA test was utilised. It was used to determine whether work engagement or organisational commitment would be different for the demographic variables. To evaluate the three dimensions of work engagement as predictors of organisational commitment, multiple linear regression was used. To assess how strong, the relationship was between work engagement and organisational commitment and the directionality of that relationship, the Pearson product moment coefficient was used.

The statistical package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse the data as it is suitable for both descriptive and inferential statistics. It was also important to conduct tests for statistical significance. Statistical significance looks at whether the results obtained are meaningful and not merely the results of chance (De Vos et al., 2018). To conduct tests for statistical significance chi-square tests and t-tests were used.

- Discussion

The research findings were discussed considering its hypothesis and the review of the literature. The findings were analysed and highlighted and recommendations for the sample institution were proposed, as well as recommendations for further research in the discipline.



### STAGE 1: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- Interpretation of constructs
- Establish theoretical relationship of the variables
- Point out differences between gender, race, age and qualification groups
- Conclusions and recommendations that can be drawn from the study



### STAGE 2: EMPIRICAL STUDY

#### Sampling

Total Population  
sampling method

#### Instruments

UTRECHT Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli & Bakker 2003)  
Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (Allen & Meyer, 1990)

#### Data Collection

Microsoft forms



### STAGE 3: QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

- Step 1: Descriptive statistics (Cronbach alpha coefficient, means and standard deviation)  
Step 2: Correlation statistics (Spearman's coefficient)  
Step 3: Inferential statistics (Multiple linear regression)  
Step 4: Analysis of variance (Anova test)



Assess the plausibility of hypothesis



Table and construe findings



Assimilate results from the study



Construct Research Conclusions, Limitations and Implications

## **1.8 Chapter layout**

Below is the layout of the different chapters of the study:

### **Chapter 1: Scientific orientation of the study**

The objective of the chapter is to provide the scientific orientation of this study. The chapter focuses on the background of the study, the research context and the motivation of the research, including the problem statement, research questions and objectives. A framework of how the research design is undertaken, including the collection of data and data analysis, is provided.

### **Chapter 2: Work engagement**

The concept of work engagement is examined in detail exploring how the concept has been researched to date. The chapter also identifies any gaps that exist in how this concept has been researched.

### **Chapter 3: Organisational commitment**

In this chapter, the concept of work engagement is analysed in detail, exploring how the concept has been researched to date. Any gaps that exist in how the concept has been researched are also identified.

### **Chapter 4: Research design**

This chapter describes the research methods that are used in this study. The quantitative method is reviewed, analysing the quantitative research design method that is appropriate for this study. The measuring instruments used in carrying out this study are also identified and explained. The chapter also reveals relevant statistical information.

### **Chapter 5: Results**

The results of the study are shown here. A detailed analysis and discussion of the results are provided.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusions, limitations, and recommendations**

Conclusions are drawn in connection to the findings discussed in Chapter 5. The limitations encountered when conducting this study also outlined. These were limitations regarding but not limited to: the research question, literature review, research method, sample, and data analysis. Recommendations are provided, as a direct result of this research study. Recommendations relate to the context being studied, as well as recommendations for further research within the discipline.

### **1.9 Chapter summary**

In this chapter, an overview of the study and the study objectives have been provided. The paradigms that the study is based on have also been discussed. The chapter has examined how the research is designed and the research methods implemented. Finally, a structure of how the complete dissertation is constructed was detailed. The next chapter will focus on the first variable in this study - work engagement.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **WORK ENGAGEMENT**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter introduces and discusses work engagement. A definition of work engagement is given, emphasising the three characteristics of work engagement which are vigour, dedication, and absorption. The Job Demand Resources model is reviewed as the theoretical framework that explains work engagement. In summary, the job demands model postulates that if high job demands are paired with few job resources the result is stress and burnout in employees, which negatively impacts work engagement. Several approaches incorporated in previous studies on work engagement, such as job crafting and the conservation of resources theory, will be discussed. This chapter will also explore the current trends in work engagement as documented in current research.

#### **2.2 Definition of work engagement**

Schaufeli (2013) states that the advent of engagement is well publicised in the academic space. Kahn (1990) is credited as the father of work engagement as evidenced by his study titled “Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work”. It was however only at the turn of the century that other researchers became interested in work engagement as a result of the changes that were taking place in the workplace (Schufeli, 2013). The table below depicts some of the changes that were taking place in the workplace.

<b>How Organisations Change</b>	
<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>
Stability	Continuous change
Early retirement	Late retirement
Vertical hierarchy	Horizontal networks
<b>How Jobs Change</b>	
<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>
Physical Demands	Mental and emotional demands
Separation from work and home	Work interference
Individual work	Teamwork

Source: Schaufeli (2011)

Schaufeli (2011) refers to the above changes as the psychologisation of the workplace, whereby the mental resources of an employee play a significant part and this is the essence of engagement. Work engagement is a desirable job attitude. A review of scholarly articles points to the existence of many studies carried out on job attitudes. Employees exhibit different attitudes toward their jobs and such job attitudes have an impact on personal and business performance (Sarath & Manikandan, 2015). In this context, work engagement as a job attitude can be explained as the employee's approach toward his job. An employee can either be engaged or disengaged in their job. Work engagement is therefore a construct that looks at employee well-being reflected by the excitement and happiness of an employee within his job role. Work engagement is also positively correlated with positive health outcomes. Schaufeli (2011) states that engaged workers enjoy good health.

Researchers define work engagement in a variety of ways. Harter et al. (2002, p.269) define work engagement as "an individual's involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work". Forbedring (2018, p.2) defines work engagement as "how satisfied employees are with tasks, teaching, guidance, and the workplace". The seemingly universally accepted definition is "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption" (Sarath & Manikandan, 2014, p.110). It is a satisfactory emotion triggered by one's attitude towards their job. Engaged employees get excited about their work, are energetic, and are engrossed in their work duties (Bakker & van Wingerden, 2020). The perception

is that work engagement is the inverse of burnout, whereby burnout symptoms include tiredness, pessimism and inefficacy (Ugwu, 2013). Ugwu (2013) also states that studies in burnout inspired engagement studies. A variety of factors can cause disengagement among workers. Such factors include issues close to employees' hearts such as job insecurity, and social and economic pressures (Ugwu, 2013).

Work engagement is built on two psychological components which are attention and absorption (Pieters & Auanga, 2018). Absorption is the feeling of complete submersion in one's work, whilst attention is the time span that one commits to their work tasks (Pieters & Auanga, 2018). Literature conceptualises work engagement as having three dimensions which are physical, emotional, and cognitive engagement (Havold, Havold & Glavee-Geo, 2020). This was first conceptualised by William Kahn, who was at the genesis of research on engagement. Kahn (1990, p.694) describes work engagement as "the harnessing of organisation members' selves to their work roles in which they employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performance". Physical engagement has been described as the application of effort to a job role; emotional engagement refers to employees' positive feelings towards their job role; and cognitive engagement refers to the attention that one gives to their role and the level of absorption (Ongore, 2014). Employees exhibit engagement by being active, alert, and passionately involved in their tasks (Moshoeu & Geldenhuys, 2015). These three levels of work engagement should work simultaneously to facilitate high levels of engagement (Ongore, 2014).

A number of academics have investigated the antecedents of work engagement. Sarath and Manikandan (2015) state that the causes of work engagement are both individual and organisational factors. Andrew and Sofian (2012) propose that individual factors include employee communication, employee development and co-employee support, all of which enhance engagement in the workplace. Employees have a need to feel heard, to be provided with opportunities for individual development, and to feel supported by their colleagues. Factors also include constructive feedback, social support, and coaching from supervisors, which impact work engagement positively. A positive environment positively influences work engagement and an absence of resources in the work environment negatively impacts work engagement (Sarath & Manikandan, 2015). Work engagement, or the absence thereof, results in

specific work outcomes. Kuijpers, Woerkom and Kooij (2019) state that the presence of work engagement results in reduced costs related to hiring and retention as engaged employees tend to stay in the organisation, whereas the absence of work engagement might result in increased absenteeism, presenteeism, and lower productivity.

## **2.3 The dimensions of work engagement**

The three primary dimensions of work engagement are vigor, dedication, and absorption. Each of these will be discussed below.

### **2.3.1 Vigour**

Vigour is illustrated by vitality and mental strengths whilst on the job, the commitment to apply effort to the job, and perseverance despite challenges (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2006). A person thus expresses vigour by completely focusing on their job role, showing unwavering commitment despite the challenges that might be presented by the job itself, the supervisor, and even the work context (Tomas et al., 2018). Shekari (2015) indicates that this specific area can be determined based on Atkinson's motivational theory, motivation being the force behind doing work or fighting against doing work. The force or drive to do work and fighting against doing work are addressed as aspects of work engagement. Vigour is the opposite of emotional exhaustion, partly explaining the opposite of burnout. Burnout has been described as "a state of mental and physical exhaustion characterised by feelings of emotional exhaustion"(Tomas et al.,2018, p.10). Research conducted by Faskhodi and Siyyari (2018) noted that vigour was the only component that predicted burnout. Vigour is known as the energy dimension and energy is a characteristic exhibited by engaged employees (Mitonga-Monga, 2019). Vigour relates to the physical facet (Contreras et al., 2020). Vigourness ensures focus which results in high levels of productivity. Vigourness may be increased in instances where employees are allowed to craft their jobs according to their strengths (Kuijpers et al., 2019). The environment that employees work in either promotes or discourages vigour. Vigour has been seen to be related to continuous learning opportunities. Malik and Garg (2017) state that the presence of continuous learning opportunities within a work environment results in

more energetic employees (vigour). Malik and Garg (2017) also state that when employees are given adequate information to enable them to achieve their goals, this is likely to result in vigour.

### **2.3.2 Dedication**

Dedication refers to one's devotion to his or her work expressed through the interest one shows in their work and the importance that one attaches to it (Simons & Buitendach, 2013). Dedicated employees experience pride in their work. Dedication could be described as the opposite of cynicism, which perceives any form of self-initiative as a waste of time as it does not yield any results (Tomas et al., 2018). Dedication is known as the identification dimension, an individual wants to contribute more because of their enthusiasm for the organisation, its mission, and the individual's capacity to add to the team and the organisational vision. Malik and Garg (2017) state that dedication represents a powerful link and rapport with work, devotion and a feeling of personal worth. Dedicated employees are highly engaged in their work as can be expressed by their enthusiasm, the sense of pride in their work, and their motivation (Mitonga-Monga, 2019). Schaufeli (2014, p.67) states that "dedicated employees feel valued because they have opportunities to contribute and make a difference". When employees feel valued they perceive that they are being effective, which is the opposite of another characteristic of burnout (lack of efficacy). Employees who are devoted to what they are doing will persevere despite the challenges presented by the role. Over and above this, such employees recognise the value of the product or service they offer to their clients and hence they find contentment in managing challenging assignments.

### **2.3.3 Absorption**

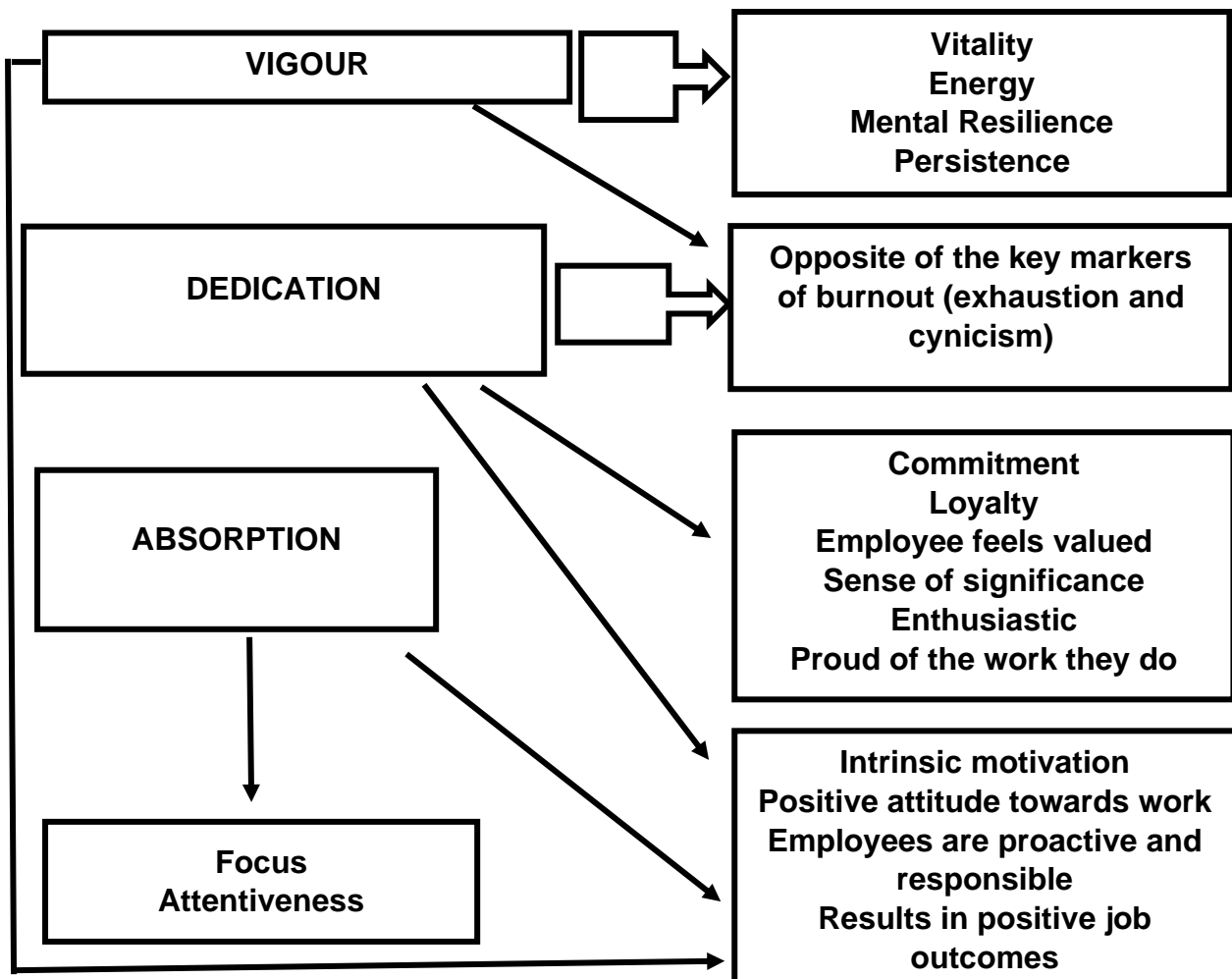
A third dimension of work engagement is absorption. "It entails being fully concentrated and happily engulfed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with separating oneself from work" (Ugwu, 2013, p.17). Employees who exhibit absorption are fully engrossed in their work without paying attention to anything else that happens around them. Individuals experience pleasure when doing



their jobs and paying high costs for the job is not an issue as compared to others who might not be totally absorbed in their work (Shekari, 2015). Employees operate at an elevated level of concentration with the aim of not only completing the work as quickly as possible but also doing it in the best possible way (Rayton & Yalabik, 2014). Absorption is the opposite of detachment which is another characteristic of burnout. More beneficially, there is no detachment when one has full absorption in the task at hand, making it a barricade against burnout behavior. The diagram below depicts the similarities and differences between the dimensions of work engagement.

Figure 2.1

*Similarities and differences between dimensions of Work Engagement*



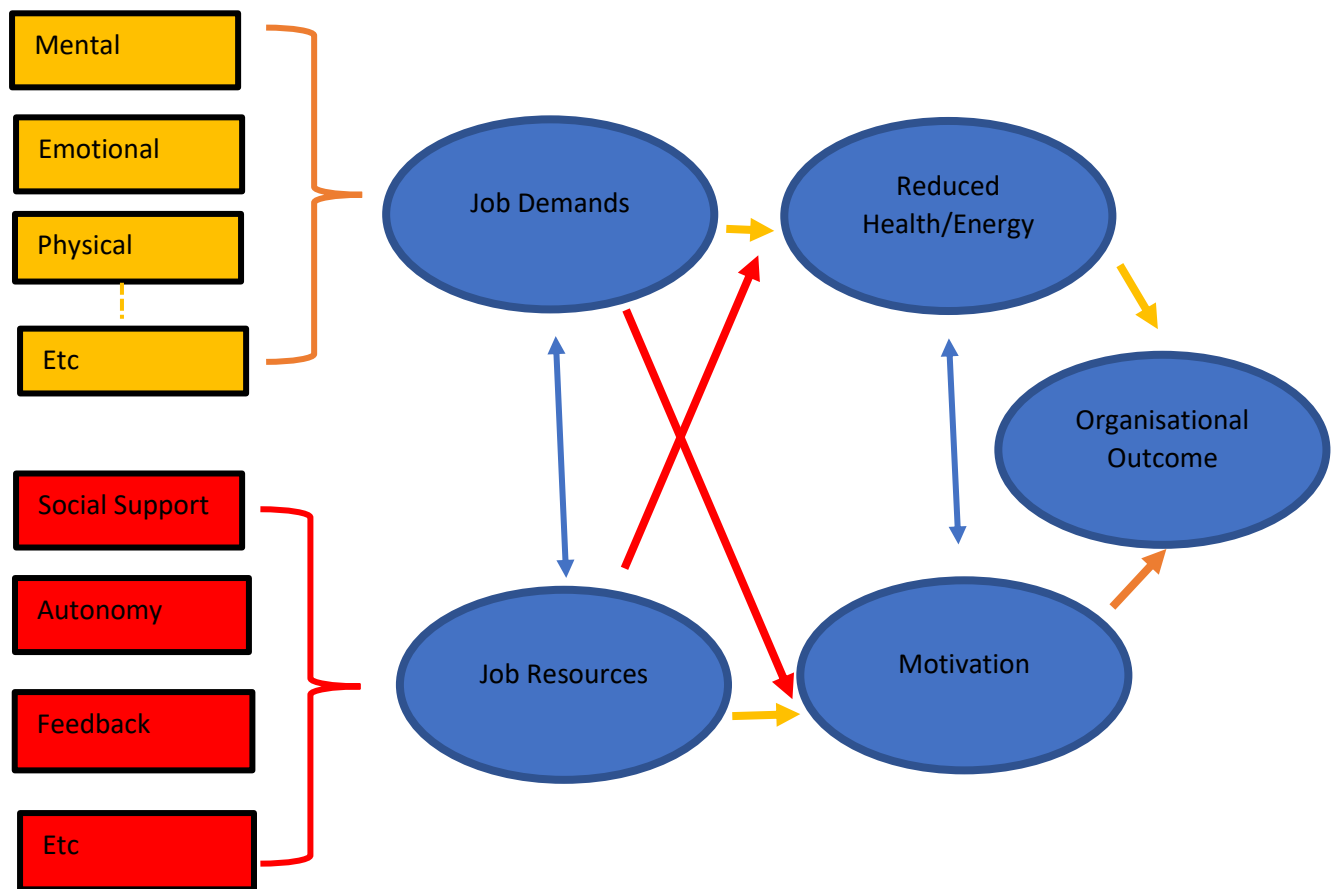
Source: Author's own work

## **2.4 Theories underlying the study**

### **2.4.1 The Job Demand Resources (JDR) model**

The Job Demand Resources (hereinafter JDR) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) is the theory underlying the current study. The JDR model examines the impact of job demands and job resources on work engagement (D'Emiljo & Dupreez, 2017). The model underscores the importance of two psychological processes in the wellness of people. It refers to an effort-driven process and a motivation-driven process. An effort-driven process explains a scenario whereby the ubiquitousness of extreme role exigencies and devoid role support may result in distress (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). A motivation-driven process explains a scenario whereby the presence of job resources may result in work engagement. Below is an illustration of the JDR model by Bakker and Demerouti (2011).

Figure 2.2  
The JDR model



Source: Bakker and Demerouti (2011)

According to the above model, specific factors fall under job demands whilst specific factors fall under job resources. If a lot of pressure is exerted on an individual mentally, emotionally, and physically, this translates to high job demands which result in a negative state of health that, in turn, pans out to negative organisational outcomes such as poor performance. However, if job demands are combined with job resources like social support, autonomy, and feedback, this will result in increased employee intrinsic motivation which will lead to positive organisational outcomes such as good performance and job satisfaction.

#### 2.4.1.1 Job demands

Job demands refer to the somatic, cognitive, gregarious, or structural features of a work role requiring continued somative and cognitive exertion or skills and may result in certain health conditions (Bakker & Demourouti, 2006). When somatic, cognitive,

gregarious, or structural requirements of a work role are excessive they may result in detrimental effects on one's mental and physical health e.g. strain and burnout. Job demands are initiators of the well-being diminishing process (D'Emiljo & du Preez, 2017). Work pressure, poor working environment, and the absence of work-life balance are examples of job demands. Health problems and weakened strength may arise due to employees' exposure to severe job requirements which physically and mentally exhaust the resources that the employee is supposed to use to cope with the excess requirements (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). Employees who perceive their jobs to be highly demanding might be negatively affected by it, experiencing health challenges both mentally and physically. Not all job demands are bad. However, if not controlled, job demands can convert into role pressures especially if excessive exertion is needed to meet the job needs (Bakker & Demerouti, 2011). Past studies have indicated that specific job demands may impose a weighty effect on employees' health and an after-effect on important organisational issues like emotional exhaustion, quitting intentions and engagement (Tremblay & Messervey, 2011).

Certain studies point to the existence of anticorrelations between job demands and job resources. Excessive job demands coupled with limited resources result in job strain. Evidence indicates that some employees' health problems are a consequence of high job demands (Tremblay & Messervey, 2011). Schaufeli and Taris (2014, p.56) redefine job demands to state that they are "negatively valued physical, social or organisational aspects of the job that require sustained physical or psychological effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and psychological costs". This definition therefore eliminates certain job demands that have been included in the initial definition. The job demands within the model are not all equal as not all of them will result in either stress or burnout. Schaufeli and Taris (2014) found that the relationship between job demands and engagement is not statistically significant but sometimes can be either positive or negative.

Whilst certain job demands can be seen as stifling an employee's performance, other job demands can act as positive stressors, with a motivating effect on the employee. Crawford, Lepine, and Rich (2010) distinguished between demands that employees considered as hindrances and demands that employees considered as challenges. They found that hindrances were negatively associated with engagement whilst

challenges were positively associated with engagement. The Job Demands Resources model does not surmise an affiliation between job demands and work engagement, but certain studies have found evidence pointing to such a relationship (Kotze & Nel, 2019). A study by D’Emiljo and du Preez (2017) identified mental load as a job demand that was negatively correlated with work engagement, however they did not find certain physical demands such as pace and amount of time as related to work engagement. Janse van Rensburg et al. (2013) suggest that lessening job demands such as computer challenges, task changes, emotional demands and task overload may enhance work engagement.

#### 2.4.1.2 Job resources

Research on work engagement indicates that job resources can result in work engagement and job performance. D’Emiljo and du Preez (2017, p.71) define job resources as “physical, social, or organisational aspects of the job that may reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs, be functional in achieving work goals, and stimulate personal growth, learning, and development”. Job resources may therefore refer to any form of support that is given to employees to enable them to meet or to cope with job demands. Further, job resources reduce negative behaviour such as absenteeism and presenteeism and increase positive behaviour such as good job performance. The support given to employees can either be formal, for example through organisational policies, or informal for example through social support (Kotze & Nel, 2019). Rothmann and Jordaan (2006) include the following job resources in their version of the JDR model: variety of work, learning opportunities, self-governance, workmate relationships and relationships with one’s superior etc. Job resources therefore predict work engagement as they begin a motivational process that results in quality performance and worker engagement (Janse van Rensburg, Boonzaier & Boonzaier, 2013). A closer analysis of the JDR model indicates that engaged individuals can generate their own resources, enabling more engagement and improved functioning.

There is a very close association between job resources and job demands. If job resources are limited, this may lead to job strain especially if the job demands are high (Tremblay & Messervey, 2011; Bakker & de Vries, 2020). This may then result in burnout and a decrease in work engagement. In instances where job resources are

present, they may act as a shield against job demands; individuals can cope better with job demands if they are provided with relevant job resources. Bakker and de Vries (2020), in their study on self-regulation, point out that when work becomes more stressful, stable resources become useful. Employees need to be provided with resources within the organisation to assist them to deal with psychological and physiological costs, examples of such include human resource practices and effective leadership. Organisational resources may assist employees to control their short-term fatigue and avoid continued burnout (Bakker & de Vries, 2020). It is therefore important for organisations to be concerned about their work environment and provide resources that enable effective performance of work roles.

Kotze and Nel (2019) state that in situations where employees may be experiencing hindering job demands, such employees may consider their job resources inefficient. Positive and negative life circumstances may have an impact on job resources; these circumstances may not necessarily be related to an individual's work or the organisation that the individual works in. Life-changing events like a death in the family or a divorce may interrupt the effective role of job resources and disrupt effective work performance (Bakker & de Vries, 2020). The impact of job resources on work engagement is moderated by job demands, for instance providing a job resource like learning opportunities may not yield the anticipated results on work engagement if certain job demands like emotional load are not addressed (D'Emiljo & du Preez, 2017). When job resources are surpassed by job demands, an individual's contribution to the organisation depreciates (Bakker & de Vries, 2020). Work engagement is an example of an individual's positive contribution to an organisation that may be negatively impacted when job demands exceed job resources. Janse van Rensburg et al. (2013) point to specific job resources being unique to certain job settings, for example team effectiveness and leadership effectiveness, are job resources that are critical to a call centre environment. Janse van Rensburg et al. (2013) found that a 32% variance in work engagement in call centres in South Africa was determined by job resources such as team effectiveness and leadership effectiveness.

#### 2.4.1.3 Personal resources

Personal resources have recently been included as part of the JDR model. Personal resources were included after the realisation that people's conduct is a consequence

of personal resources. Bakker and de Vries (2021, p.12) state that “key resources include stable personality traits and abilities that facilitate an active and efficient coping style”. Tremblay and Messervey (2011) define personal resources as individuals’ assessment of themselves that allow them to influence and control their environment. Personal resources are known to predict worker engagement and engaged workers create their own personal resources. Recent studies in South Africa have indicated that personal resources, including psychological capital and mindfulness, are positively related to work engagement (Kotze & Nel, 2019). Personal resources can be described as personal characteristics that influence how an individual performs in his/her job. Examples of personal resources are “emotional stability, extraversion, conscientiousness, optimism, self-esteem, achievement, striving, self-efficacy, flexibility, and adaptive perfectionism” (Schaufelli, 2011, p.29). Schaufelli and Taris (2014) point to the co-option of personal resources into the JDR model in the following ways:

- Personal resources have a direct influence on wellness. Studies have shown that personal resources may result in the reduction of burnout and increases in engagement. Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti and Schaufeli (2009) conducted a study in which they found that certain personal resources were positively related to later work engagement. The absence of personal resources will have a negative influence on well-being. Tremblay and Messervey (2011) argued that the absence of personal resources will result in the generation of negativity by job demands, leading to the development of depression and job strain symptoms.
- The link between job characteristics and well-being is controlled by personal resources. Personal resources are at times a shield against the influence of job demands on exhaustion, and may enlarge the beneficial influence of job resources on engagement. In a study conducted among military chaplains, Tremblay and Messervey (2011, p.59) found that the personal resource “compassionate satisfaction” partly moderated the relationship between job demands and job strain.
- Personal resources enact a notable part in the relationship between job characteristics and well-being. Hobfoll (2002) in his theory of the Conservation of Resources, proposes that resources accumulate. If workers work in an

environment that offers adequate support they are likely to grow in self-confidence and are more optimistic about where they are going, these personal resources will be positively related to work engagement.

- Personal resources have an effect on how job characteristics are perceived. Personal resources have been proposed to mould people's comprehension of their environment and their reactions to it. Personal resources shape people's views and understanding of their context.
- Personal resources as a "third variable", have an impact on the way job characteristics are viewed and on wellness. They thus may act as another variable that could explain the relationship between the two.

From the above it is clear that no unilateral way exists to co-opt personal resources into the JDR model. Schaufeli and Taris (2014, p.59) state that "they can be integrated as mediators, moderators, a third variable, antecedents of job demands and job resources, or any combination of these". There has however been conflicting evidence on the function of personal resources as moderators in literature. Some researchers have recognised that personal resources like self-efficacy may buffer the relationship between job demands and health-related and organisational outcomes, whilst other scholars acknowledge that personal resources do not shield this relationship (Tremblay & Messervey, 2011). According to the JDR model, personal resources on their own, or when coupled with job resources can act as predictors of work engagement (Janse van Rensburg et al., 2013).

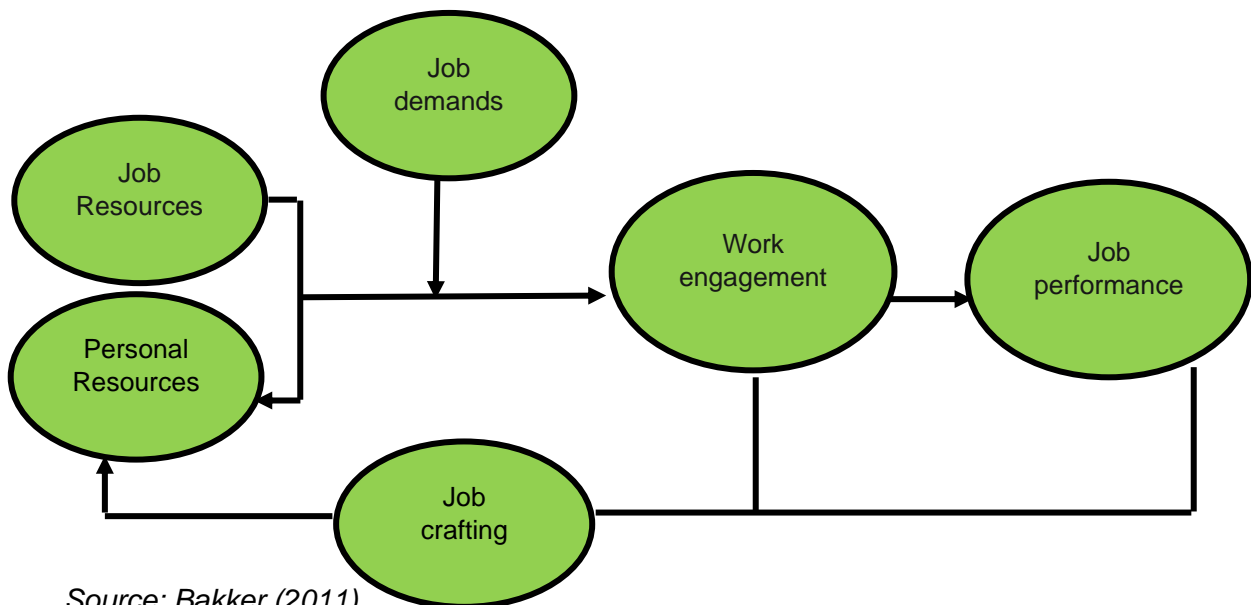
#### 2.4.1.4 Job crafting

"The Job Demands Resources theory proposes that employees who experience work engagement proactively try to optimise their job demands and job resources through job crafting" (Bakker & de Vries, 2021, p.7). Engaged and high performing employees can generate their own resources that enhance engagement and performance. This is depicted in figure 2.3 below.



Figure 2.3

*The JDR model of work engagement*



*Source: Bakker (2011)*

Employees may generate their personal resources through proactive behaviors like job crafting. Job crafting is an adaptive self-regulatory strategy (Bakker & de Vries, 2021). In job crafting employees take the initiative to improve their vocational context, by making changes to job requirements, relationships, and even work expectations and support, to achieve job goals (Bakker & de Vries, 2021; Janse van Rensburg et al., 2012). The adaptive behavior will change the stressor and the way employees respond to the stressor resulting in new personal resources (Bakker & de Vries, 2021). Kuijpers, Kooij and van Woerkom (2019) focused on three types of job crafting which are crafting toward strengths, crafting towards interests and crafting towards development. By engaging in job crafting, employees will be ensuring that their jobs align with their interests, preferences and motivation and this, as a result, has a positive impact on work engagement. In line with the JDR model, job crafting can be conceptualised as reducing hindering job demands and increasing challenging job demands and resources (Kuijpers et al, 2019).

#### **2.4.2 Conservation of Resources (COR) theory**

The second theory underpinning work engagement is the Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll, 1988). “The basic tenet of Conservation of Resources (hereinafter

COR) theory is that humans are motivated to protect their current resources (conservation) and acquire new resources (acquisition)” (Halbesleben et al., 2014, p. 1335). The COR theory is a concept that researchers have used to understand engagement and is a basis of the Job Demands theory. The COR theory proposes that most of the way people conduct themselves is arranged around the procurement and maintenance of treasured resources (Hu et al., 2019). There are several principles that emerge from the COR theory, these being primacy of resource loss and resource investment (Halbesleben et al., 2014). The primacy of resource loss refers to the assumption that it is more destructive mentally when one loses resources than it is helpful when one recovers lost resources. Resource investment refers to investment of resources for the protection against losing resources, to retrieve resources, and to gain resources (Hobfoll, 2001). The theory assumes a personal investment in resources that counter hazardous environments and protect against harmful consequences, and that individuals safeguard and accumulate resources to deal with demanding resources (Odejokun & Edemudia, 2014). According to the COR theory, individuals get stressed if treasured resources are unsafe, lost, or when they fail to gain treasured resources following a substantial attempt (Hobfoll et al., 2018). The negative impact on resources may lead to stress which may diminish engagement.

Hobfoll (1988) defines resources as the things that people value. Work engagement mostly thrives in environments that offer extraordinary levels of work-related resources. Acquired resources are immediately turned into investments to acquire more resources. Engaged employees have more resources to invest in obtaining further resources (Halbesleben et al., 2009; Wu & Lee, 2020). For example, people develop skills that are invested in job performance to obtain other resources such as pay and status (Halbesleben et al., 2009). However, if the energy and resources available to employees are limited, it is difficult to achieve sustained levels of engagement (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Using energy and resources in one area may mean that one will not have resources and energy for other areas. Highly engaged people struggle with multiple role demands meaning that they expend their energy and resources at work and have less energy and resources when they go home (Halbesleben et al., 2009). Halbesleben et al. (2014) provide several examples of resources which include job security, rewards, autonomy, opportunities for professional development and supervisor and coworker support self esteem, self

efficacy and emotional stability. The resources provided by Halbesleben et al. (2014) equate to the job resources and personal resources in the job demand resources model. A connection can therefore be drawn between the job demand resources model and the conservation of resources theory in that valued resources are personal and job resources, which when conserved protect and assist individuals to deal with job demands, increase desired work behaviours such as work engagement.

## **2.5 Antecedents of work engagement**

The JDR model postulates that personal resources and job resources are precursors of work engagement. Sun and Bunchapattanakada (2019) state that the antecedents, or influencing factors of work engagement, can be categorised into three factors which are organisational factors, job factors and individual factors. Organisational factors include leadership, superior support, job resources, and fairness, whilst job factors include work environment, job participation and job enrichment. Individual factors include extraversion, resilience and self-consciousness among other factors. However, a review of literature shows that there are other antecedents of work engagement which include job characteristics, rewards and recognition, supervisory and organisational support, and organisational justice.

### **2.5.1 Job characteristics**

Sohrabizadeh and Sayfour (2021) state that job characteristics are based on the model by Hackman and Oldham (1980) which has five core elements namely: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. The motivational potential of every job is dependent on these five core elements (Wan, Li, Zhou & Shang, 2018). Other job characteristics that have been identified are social support and leadership (Christian et al., 2011). As a result of these job characteristics, job attitudes are enhanced through the moulding of three critical psychological states (an experience of job meaningfulness, a sense of responsibility for work outcomes and knowledge of work results) (Wan et al., 2018).

### **2.5.2 Rewards**

There is an assumption that the better employees are compensated the more engaged they will be. Reward systems have been deemed to be important factors within a workplace (Victor & Hoole, 2017). Anything in the form of monetary, non-monetary and mental aids provided to workers in return for their services is regarded as rewards. Organisations use rewards to drive performance, attract and retain talent, enhance job satisfaction and increase employee and work engagement. A review of literature reveals that an increase in rewards results in increased work engagement whilst research indicates that higher levels of work engagement are a result of extrinsic rewards (Victor & Hoole, 2017). Extrinsic rewards may be defined as significant incentives that are used to attract employees to an organisation (Nujjoo & Meyer, 2012); they are tangible (Porter & Lawler, 1968); and may be financial or non-financial (Kimutai & Sakataka, 2015).

The relationship between work engagement and rewards is supported by social exchange theory which proposes that when staff members receive rewards and recognition for their services they will fairly reciprocate through elevated work engagement (Wadas & Salim, 2014). The implied condition of exchange is that both parties achieve the goal of mutual benefit by exchanging their own unique resources (Yin, 2019). Employees unique resources are their effort toward organisational tasks and activities, whilst the employers' resources are the monetary and non-monetary benefits that they provide employees. Intrinsic rewards are essential for work engagement and therefore should not be overlooked. Intrinsic rewards are intangible benefits generated from a staff member's participation in work roles and duties (Byars & Rue, 2011). They can be regarded as "psychological, positive, meaningful and encompass an emotional, work-related experience which individuals obtain from their work" (Victor & Hoole, 2017, p.3). Ram and Prabhakar (2011) assert that both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards result in increased levels of work engagement.

### **2.5.3 Supervisory and organisational support**

Organisational and supervisory support results in higher levels of engagement. Research indicates that perceived social support from the workplace most likely

results in increased work engagement (Sulea, Maricutoui, Schaufeli, Dumitry & Sava, 2012). The authors go on to state that feeling supported at work increases employee motivation and hence has an impact on engagement. Wan et al. (2018) emphasise that a supportive work environment with various resources promotes engagement. There is evidence from literature that supports the importance of a supportive work environment in predicting work engagement (Wan et al., 2018).

#### **2.5.4 Organisational justice**

Organisational justice is described as the perception of organisational members regarding fairness and justice within an entity (Adams, 1965). Organisational justice therefore refers to whether an employee considers that they are being treated with fairness within an organisation. Organisational justice consists of two components, distributive: how rewards are distributed within the organisation; and procedural: decisions are based on correct information and morals that take into account everyone affected by the decision (Adams, 1965). The third component of organisational justice was added by Bies and Moag (1986). This component is known as interactional justice focusing on the treatment of organisational members by authority figures within an organisation, whether these authority figures respect employees, are sensitive to diversity, and explain their decisions clearly (Bies & Moag, 1986). Research by Hassan and Jubari (2010) indicates that only interactional justice is related to work engagement, indicating that when employees perceive that the decision-makers within their organisations treat them fairly, are sensitive to individual differences and explain organisational decisions with clarity, then the employees become more engaged in their work.

### **2.6 Consequences of work engagement**

#### **2.6.1 Engagement, retention and turnover intention**

Work engagement has been found to impact whether an organisation can keep an employee in the long run. Lowly engaged employees have a high desire to leave an organisation and some do leave the organisation (Takawira, Coetzee & Schreuder, 2014). Work engagement is closely related to one's attitude, conduct and what it is

they intend to do (Takawira et al., 2014). Engaged employees are highly connected to the organisations they work for, such that they are without exiting thoughts. Certain factors within an organisation are considered as retention factors. The presence of retention factors within an organisation is likely to improve work engagement (Shibiti, 2020). Examples of retention factors are compensation, training and development and career opportunities.

### **2.6.2 Engagement and productivity**

Many organisations strive to improve their employees' productivity. The success of an organisation is assessed through employee productivity hence it has therefore become important for many organisations to focus on productivity as one of their business objectives (Hanaysha, 2015). Resources can only be generated in an organisation if there is increased productivity. Research of literature indicates that there is a relationship between work engagement and productivity. Hanaysha (2015) proposes employers must recognise their employees strengths, talents, knowledge and skills. Once this awareness is there, employees can be placed in roles that align with their talents. This results in motivation and engagements which ultimately has an impact on productivity. Employees who exhibit vigour, dedication and absorption in their work seem to be engaged and therefore are productive in their work (Grobler, 2016). This is supported by Hanaysha (2015) whose study indicated that the three constructs of work engagement have considerable influence on employee productivity. Engaged employees therefore impact the financial results of a company positively (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti & Schaufeli, 2009).

### **2.6.3 Engagement and job satisfaction**

Research reveals that involved employees are generally fulfilled (Mitonga-Monga, Flotman & Cilliers, 2017). This is supported by Babakus, Yavas and Karatope (2017, p.547) who state that employees with elevated levels of work engagement are "psychologically, physically and emotionally connected to the organisation". This results in positive work-related outcomes like job satisfaction. Satisfied employees experience a pleasant state of mind (Mitonga-Monga, 2019). Employees who are

happy with the conditions in which they work, the organisations compensation system, interact well with their workmates and are afforded chances for career progression, are likely to be engaged in their jobs (Havens, Gittel, & Vasey, 2018). If job satisfaction is viewed as Havens et al. (2018) explain it, it is then considered not as a consequence of engagement, but as an antecedent of work engagement. Organisational leaders should therefore focus on enhancing job satisfaction among employees (Slatten, Lien & Mutonyi, 2022).

#### **2.6.4 Organisational citizenship behaviour**

Organisational citizen behaviour can be defined as deliberate behaviours by employees that are enacted at the will of the employee, are not typically rewarded, but improve the way the business operates (Organ, 1997). This is in line with the view that resources increase engagement whilst creating other resources. Christian et al. (2011) state that engaged employees are likely to be involved in organisational citizenship behaviours as they can competently achieve their personal goals and are confident to take up additional roles.

#### **2.6.5 Organisational commitment**

Organisational commitment is described as the magnitude at which one recognises themselves as being part of a particular organisation and their involvement with the organisation (Albdour & Altarawneh, 2014). It can also be described as a mental condition that ties a person to an entity (Allen & Meyer, 1990). A committed worker willingly involves themselves in the organisational tasks and is with the organisation for the long haul (Mitonga-Monga, Flotman & Cilliers, 2018). Committed individuals will therefore stay with their organisation and contribute happily to the attainment of the organisation's mission and objectives. People that display high levels of organisational commitment are said to display much more positive workplace job attitudes, inclusive of work engagement. Previous studies point to a positive correlation between work engagement and organizational commitment (Diedericks et al., 2019). Engaged workers are most likely to perform optimally whilst experiencing positive emotion. Sarath and Manikandan (2014) found that there is a strong

relationship between overall work engagement and well-being. Engaged employees have low work stress (Sarath & Manikandan, 2015). Work engagement impacts positively on the success of an organisation because of employees who are driven and loyal to their organisation (Geldenhuis et al., 2014). Engaged workers may therefore be perceived to be happy with their organisation and might be committed to the organisation.

## **2.7 Current trends in work engagement**

Current trends in work engagement look at its relationships with other concepts such as human resource practices, leadership and daily and episodic engagement. There is a swathe of research in these areas, but more and more academics are focusing on research on the current trends in work engagement.

### **2.7.1 Human Resource Management (HRM) practices and work engagement**

Human Resource Management (hereinafter HRM) practices refer to all activities that have something to do with the management of people and these include regular training and development and participation in decision-making (Veth, Korzilius, Van Der Heijden, Emans & De Lange, 2019). It may also include other human resource practices such as performance appraisal and compensation (Memon, Salleh, Mirza, Cheah, Ting, Ahmad & Tariq, 2019). Previous research indicates the impact of HRM practices on individual work outcomes such as work engagement, and refer to such as HRM engagement strategies (Memon et al., 2019). For example, when employees participate in training programmes they increase in confidence and involvement (Veth et al., 2019). Job design as a HRM practice has also been shown to have an impact on work engagement (Holman & Axtel, 2016). Albrecht et al. (2015) proposed that they may be a need to embed engagement into HRM policies and practices such as recruitment, performance management, and training and development. HRM practices are vital in every organisation and form the backbone of organisational outcomes.



## **2.7.2 Leadership and work engagement**

More and more studies are showing the critical role of leaders in work engagement (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). Early studies concentrated on the relationship between transformational leadership and engagement, but the current focus is now more on inclusive leadership, looking at other leadership styles such as shared, collective, distributive, and adaptive (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). Specific behaviours of leaders influence employee organisational outcomes. Maximo, Standers and Coxin (2018) state that if leaders are open, transparent and mindful of how their actions affect others, their subordinates will be able to identify with organisational goals and objectives, resulting in increased engagement.

## **2.7.3 Daily work engagement**

Bakker and Albrecht (2018, p.5) refer to daily engagement as “daily levels of vigor, dedication, and absorption that may fluctuate as a function of daily demands, resources and proactive behavior”. Daily engagement has been shown to result from the presence of daily job resources and personal resources with evidence indicating that employees become more engaged during the days when they have access to more resources (Xanthopoulos et al., 2009). Daily work engagement can be said to be synonymous to episodic work engagement. Episodic engagement is explained by the Episodic Process model which stipulates that employees who perform well have certain times when they do not perform well because of inadequate attention regulation (Reina-Tamayo, Bakker & Derks, 2018). Research shows that in instances where there is a presence of episodic resources, employees will experience more engagement (Reina-Tamayo et al., 2018). Engagement thus fluctuates depending on the period and on the resources that are available to an employee in a specific period. Periods of excess resources result in increased engagement and periods of scarce or low resources result in low engagement.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the concept of ‘work engagement’ was defined. The different dimensions (vigour, dedication, and absorption) of work engagement were also

discussed. The model of work engagement (JDR model) and concepts closely related to the construct were also discussed. The various antecedents of work engagement have been discussed along with the consequences thereof. Finally, the current trends in work engagement have been highlighted. The next chapter is a literature review centered on organisational commitment.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter will introduce organisational commitment. The three components of organisational commitment which are affective commitment, normative commitment, and continuance commitment will be looked at in greater detail. The social exchange and the organisational attachment theories will be discussed when explaining the concept of organisational commitment. The antecedents of the three components of organisational commitment will be elaborated on and finally the consequences of organisational commitment will be discussed.

#### **3.2 Definition of organisational commitment**

Commitment to ones organisation is a valuable attribute to many organisations, as once committed to an entity, an employee is likely to remain with the entity for the long haul, thus absolving the organisation of human capital associated costs on recruitment and training to replace employees that would have resigned. Various studies demonstrate a linkage between organisational commitment and specific attitudes and outcomes such as job performance, job satisfaction, and motivation (Fayda-Kinik, 2021; D'Souza & Poojary, 2018). It does not matter the size of the organisation, every organisation strives to maintain the best employees and acknowledges the valuable role and influence that such employees have on the organisation (Al-Shurafat & Halim, 2018). Haque, Fernando and Caputi (2020, p.1137) note that "the demand for managerial responsibility and increasing business scandals has prompted scholars to pay increasing attention to employees' organisational commitment".

Organisational commitment can be defined as a cognitive condition representing an organisational member's kinship with the entity which drives the organisational member's conviction to either stay or leave the entity (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Allen and Meyer (1996, p.252) had previously defined organisational commitment as "a psychological link characterised by an attachment due to an employee's needs, wants,

and/or obligations that make it less likely for the employee to leave the organisation". Porter (1968) defines organisational commitment as an employee's desire to exercise what is beneficial for the organisation, willingness to be part of the organisation and identifying with organisational goals and values. Organisational commitment is also regarded as the magnitude of one's attachment to the organisation they work for (Abdullah, 2011; Dey, 2012; Sharma, 2016). The importance of organisational commitment has been recognised for a significant period of time (Bae, 2021). Organisational commitment is identified among the main influences of organisational effectiveness (Haque et al., 2020). Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian (1974), identified the following features of organisational commitment:

- (1) one's trust in what the organisation stands for;
- (2) one's willingness to exert some effort towards organisational tasks and goals;
- (3) an individuals' willingness to ensure that they stay employed by the organisation.

These assertions have been supported by Blau (1987) who notes that committed employees, therefore, identify with the organisation, work without being instructed or micro-managed, and are happy to continue as organisational members. Committed employees can therefore be perceived as loyal, have the desire to ensure the attainment of organisational goals and objectives, view the organisation as their own, and hence treat it as such. Nandan et al. (2018, p.256) state that "employee expectations of both intrinsic and extrinsic growth affect their commitment toward an organisation". If employees perceive that they are going to grow both in tangible and intangible ways within an organisation, then the likelihood of their commitment to an organisation is high. Research has shown that human resource practices such as personal development opportunities, promotion and training, influence organisational commitment (Nandan et al., 2018). Researchers have proposed two theories to explain organisational commitment: organisational attachment theory and the social exchange theory.

### 3.3 Organisational attachment theory

Organisational attachment theory explains the propensity of individuals to form bonds with others (Bowlby, 1969). Bowlby's work focused on childhood relationships but the theory was later expanded (by Hazan & Shaver, 1990) to include adult and work relationships. Yip et al. (2019, p.1) postulate that "this includes relationships with leaders, coworkers, and mentors in the organisation, as sources of social support and membership". Simpson et al. (2020) indicate that the attachment theory's purpose is to uncover any likely threats when they appear. Simpson et al. (2020) indicate that the attachment theory has three features which are as follows:

- (1) keeping track of any likely threats that may trigger the attachment system;
- (2) keeping track of a possible person who may be present and willingly provides assistance by providing protection against the likely threat;
- (3) assessing whether seeking closeness to a person who may be able to provide protection in the face of a threat is possible.

The person that one seeks closeness to and that they perceive to provide security is known as an attachment figure (Bowlby, 1969). People form secure bonds with attachment figures because of the recognition that those attachment figures will be able to meet their needs but may form insecure bonds with attachment figures as they recognise that the attachment figures cannot be relied on to be there for them (Hinojosa et al., 2020; Scrima et al., 2016). Bowlby (1969) postulates that people will seek closeness to those people that they believe will protect them from specific threats. In organisational attachment theory, personal attachment is perceived as similar to the attachment to the organisation whereby the organisation is viewed as the custodian of job security (Coetzee et al., 2019). The attachment theory can be understood in light of the place attachment theory, which describes how people may form emotional ties with specific places (Altman & Low, 1992). The relevant place for this research is the workplace, and hence Rioux's (2006) workplace attachment model is applicable.

Workplace attachment is the affective bond between an employee and their work environment (Rioux, 2006). Attachment dynamics in organisations are closely knitted

to organisational outcomes such as organisational commitment. Attachment is described much like a bonding behavioural technique which is a cognitive arrangement that drives humans to search for assistance externally and is activated as persons come across somatic and cognitive hazards (Yip et al., 2019). In organisational attachment theory, personal attachment is perceived as similar to the attachment to the organisation whereby the organisation is viewed as the custodian of job security (Coetzee et al., 2019). Attachment theory clarifies why individuals may choose to remain with their organisation. Certain workplace factors like working conditions, practices and experiences that negatively impact workplace fulfillment are perceived as a risk to employment security and may negatively impact organisational commitment (Wu & Parker, 2017). Employees who have strong attachments to their organisations and have formed strong bonds with those organisations are likely to remain in the organisation for the long haul. Scrima (2014) found a positive correlation between affective organisational commitment and secure attachment, in the workplace, among a sample of public and private employees.

Individual attachment styles seem to determine the type of relationship that an employee will have with an organisation. Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) propose that there are four types of attachment styles. These styles are noted as: secure; preoccupied; dismissive; and fearful/disorganised attachment. Those with a secure attachment style view themselves and others positively (Scrima et al., 2016). Those with a preoccupied attachment style view themselves negatively and others positively (Scrima et al., 2016). Those with a dismissive attachment style view others negatively and themselves positively (Scrima et al., 2016). Whilst fearful/disorganised attachment style individuals view themselves and others negatively (Scrima et al., 2016). Scrima (2014) found a positive correlation between affective organisational commitment and secure attachment in the workplace, among a sample of public and private employees. Scrima et al. (2015) found that the attachment style was differently associated to the different components of organisational commitment, affective commitment was higher in secure attachment, and normative was higher in dismissive attachment.

### **3.4 Social exchange theory**

Social exchange theory has been utilised for the comprehension of employees' affective and conduct towards their organisations (Bae, 2021). Jalilvand and Voster (2015) state that commitment is based on principles of the social exchange theory, which views the employment relationship as grounded by resource trade regulated by the norm of reciprocity. Blau (1964) proposed that the basis of the start, maintenance and end of a relationship are the apparent costs versus benefits of that relationship. Exchange relationships can be categorised into either social exchanges or economic exchanges. Social exchange rests on "feelings of personal obligation, trust, and gratitude" (Blau, 1964, p.2). Social exchange views resources to be varied and may include money, affection, approval etc. Organisations can therefore provide their employees with opportunities for promotion, recognition, and development in exchange for organisational commitment (Cicekli & Kabasakal, 2016). The norm of reciprocity assumes that once an employee gets something they value or have been promised from their employer, they reciprocate through positive behaviors like attachment which then result in organisational commitment.

The social exchange theory might be said to be closely related to the organisational attachment theory whereby working conditions, practices and experiences that increase job satisfaction and hence enhance attachment, may be equated to what the employee gets from the employer in the exchange relationship. Social exchange can be considered as a moderator for organisational commitment because employees who may perceive that they are respected and treated with fairness by their leaders, will most likely commit to the organisation (Mitonga-Monga, 2020). Mitonga-Monga's (2020) results are consistent with previous studies (Hansen et al., 2013; Liokas & Reuer, 2015) which revealed that employees' social exchange plays a crucial role in their psychological tie to the organisation. Employees are likely to commit to the organisation if they believe that the organisation cares for them, thereby increasing their level of affective commitment (Yigit, 2016). Social exchange can also explain continuance and normative commitment, in that individuals may feel that they owe it to the organisation to stay because of what the organisation has done for them (normative commitment) and also because of the possibility of losing the benefits that the organisation has provided to them (continuance commitment) (Yigit, 2016).

### **3.5 Components of organisational commitment**

Affective commitment, normative commitment, and continuance commitment are the components of organisational commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1991). The three component model is derived from these elements. Allen and Meyer (1990) state that the three components of organisational commitment are different but are not isolated classes of commitment, and hence to some extent employees may experience each of these types of commitment. Bae (2021, p.3) further note “for example, an individual may feel a strong need and obligation to stay with the organisation, however, they may not have a desire to stay”. A person may experience continuance commitment without experiencing either affective or continuance commitment.

#### **3.5.1 Affective commitment**

Affective commitment refers to the degree of ones attachment to the organisation and its vision and mission (Abdullah, 2011). This definition is supported by Abdelmoula (2021, p.200) who defines affective commitment as “the psychological attachment to the firm”. Organisational members experience good feelings towards the company they provide services to and are proud to be members of that company. The emotional attachment that individuals experience is based on the joy that they get by being part of that organisation and identifying with that organisation. Specific emotions such as loyalty, affection, warmth, belongingness, fondness, happiness, and pleasure are associated with affective commitment (Haque et al., 2020). Affective commitment is perceived to result in elevated commitment levels and job performance. Organisational members with heightened organisational commitment together with a conviction to continue as members, desire to add toward the success of the enterprise (Lovakov, 2016).

Research has shown that affective commitment increases as job satisfaction increases and vice versa (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Dinc, 2017). Dinc (2017) conducted a study among furniture manufacturing firms in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the results acknowledge the overall impact of affective commitment on job satisfaction. Affective commitment leads to elevated performance levels and employee retention (Haque et



al., 2020). The impact of affective commitment on employees' behaviours and attitudes can thus never be understated. An individual's feelings of closeness and connection to the firm they work for influences their behaviours and attitudes. A strong emotional bond to an organisation brings out positive attitudes like job satisfaction and job performance which, in turn, exert an influence on overall retention. The experiences of organisational members also influence organisational commitment. Specific organisational experiences meet individual needs so that they are comfortable and competent within their work role (Allen & Meyer, 1990). When employees join organisations they have specific needs that they anticipate to be fulfilled by the organisation. If those needs are not met, this has a negative impact on employees' psychological contracts.

### **3.5.2 Continuance commitment**

Continuance commitment is an individual's perception of what it is they are likely to lose if they exit the organisation (Meyer et al., 1993). Individuals recognise what they are likely to forfeit if they are to leave. Economic and social losses are aligned with organisational exit (Allen & Meyer, 1997). If employees perceive that they are going to lose certain financial benefits with no hope of getting those financial benefits elsewhere, then they are likely to stay where the financial benefits are available. At times individuals also form strong bonds with their work colleagues and consequently become reluctant to leave their organisations. Organisational members with notable continuance commitment consider the benefits of staying (Lovakov, 2016). Continuance commitment "signifies when employees stay in a job because they need to, not necessarily because they want to" (Haque et al., 2020, p.1140).

### **3.5.3 Normative commitment**

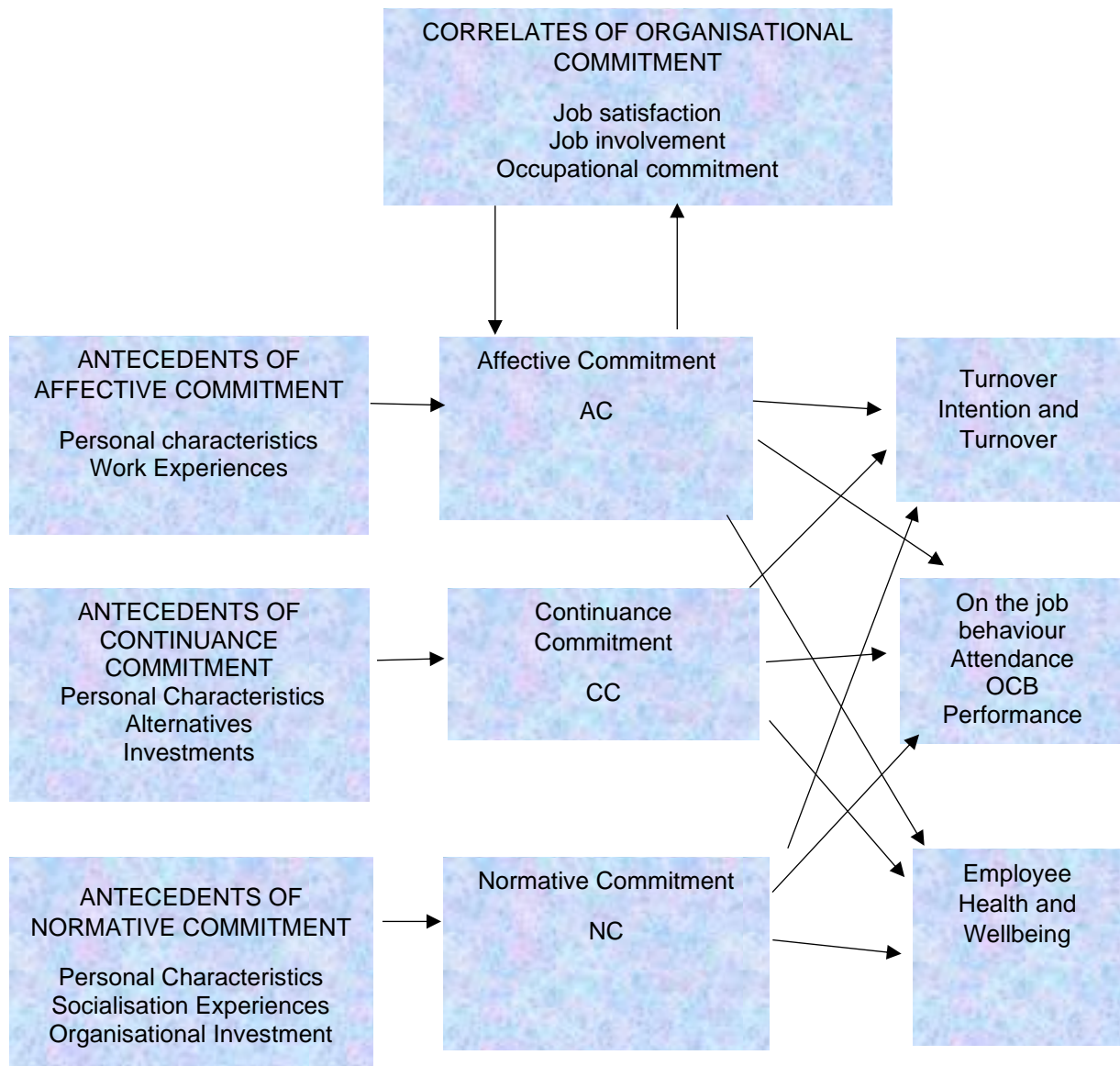
Abdelmoula (2021, p.200) defines normative commitment as "the obligation to stay in the firm". An individual may feel that staying with the organisation is the appropriate behavior. Employees may stay with the organisation due to "their sense of obligation and feel the need to remain with the organisation because of their perceived reciprocal obligations to the organisation" (Haque et al., 2020, p.1140). Organisational members discern that they owe it to the organisation to stay (Lokanove, 2016). For instance,

within volunteer organisations where individuals may consider their goals and values to be in sync with the organisation and where they view the organisation's mission as compelling, they may view exiting the organisation as inappropriate behaviour (McCormick & Donohue, 2019). Furthermore, McCormick and Donohue (2019) state the importance of socialisation and alignment of the individual goals with that of the organisation as supreme.

Normative commitment can develop through socialisation (Coetzee et al., 2019). Socialisation is characterised by the ability to handle ones tasks, the extent to which a role is made clear to an individual, and social integration (Filstad, 2011). Once an individual perceives that they are competent enough to handle their work tasks, and believes that the organisation gives a clear direction of what should be done, the individual might experience some level of culpability for merely thinking about exiting the organisation. This might also be enhanced by the extent to which an individual feels that they have been accepted as part of the organisation. Researchers have singled out affective commitment's role in normative commitment. Affective commitment can result in an attachment relationship to an organisation that generates an awareness of moral duty to the enterprise (Coetzee et al., 2019). Having a certain fondness towards ones organisation might create a 'soul tie' like bond that even when presented with a lucrative opportunity, an individual might turn down due to feeling obligated to stay. The absence of affective commitment does not prevent normative commitment. Individuals may still feel obliged to stay with their organisations even though they may not be happy in that organisation (Coetzee et al., 2019). Figure 3.1 below is a representation of the three components model of organisational commitment and includes antecedents and consequences, some of which are elaborated on later in this chapter.

Figure 3.1:

*The three component model of organisational commitment*



Source: Meyers, Stanley, Herscovitch & Topolnytsk (2002)

### 3.5.4 Criticism of the three components model of organisational commitment

The three component model of organisational commitment has guided commitment research for around 30 years (Somers, Birnbaum & Casal, 2019). However, it has not been viewed as properly measuring commitment and hence several other commitment models have emerged. Somers (2019) states that most of the criticism stem from conceptual arguments but these have not yet been confirmed by research. Another criticism of the model is that only a few studies have studied all three components

together. Limpanitgul et al. (2017, p228) note “it thus falls short of providing a holistic understanding of the three components of commitment”. The model has also been criticised as a model that predicts turnover behaviour without necessarily measuring organisational commitment (Dinc, 2017). Despite these criticisms, the three component model of organisational commitment remains valuable in research as it provides a basis for understanding organisational commitment. Its criticisms posit a research gap that might need to be addressed through further research in this area.

### **3.6 Antecedents of organisational commitment**

Extensive research has taken place to date on the antecedents of organisational commitment. Previous work published on the topic reveal a gap in the study of the antecedents of the three components of organisational commitment together, but antecedents have been studied as either a single or two components. Meyer and Parfyonova (2010) stress the necessity to comprehend the driving forces behind organisational commitment. In this section antecedents of each component are discussed separately.

#### **3.6.1 Antecedents of affective commitment**

The antecedents of affective commitment have been grouped as work experiences, structural and personal characteristics (McCormick and Donohue, 2019). Other authors add a fourth category, namely job and role characteristics (Preethi & Lourthuraj, 2015).

##### **3.6.1.1 Work experiences**

Work experiences refer to the events that an individual encounters over the period that they are with an organisation and these promote the development of bonds to the organisation (Mowday et al., 1982). To some extent the level of attachment that an individual has toward an organisation is a result of work experiences. Examples of work experiences include perceived coworker support, role scope, role ambiguity, perceived organisational support and perceived personal importance (McCormick & Donohue, 2019). Preethi and Lourthuraj (2015) exclude role and role ambiguity from

work experiences but discuss it under job and role characteristics. They further add rewards and organisational dependability as part of work experiences.

#### *3.6.1.1.1 Perceived coworker support*

Perceived coworker support implies one's perception of the degree of support that they get from their colleagues (Ng & Sorensen, 2008; Blerish, Shrand & Ronnie, 2020). The support can either be formal or informal but it is additional to that of supervisors. Friendships formed within the work environment and formal programmes such as being a buddy in an induction programme, can be regarded as support that employees can get from coworkers. Some studies have combined coworker and supervisor support as important in the organisation (Blerish, Shrand & Ronnie, 2020). Employees might believe that they have support from their coworkers and this might influence their behavior within the work context (Lee et al., 2015). Some studies indicate that perceived coworker support is one of the main influences of organisational commitment (Blerish et al., 2020). Dachner and Miguel (2015) have emphasised the role of friendship as a social incentive to ensure commitment toward the organisation. Relationships formed within an organisation might create a safe place for the employee that they become reluctant to leave. Studies have also shown that the type of an individual may impact the influence of perceived coworker support. Benson and Brown (2007) in a comparative study, found that coworker support had more influence on knowledge workers than on routine workers.

#### *3.6.1.1.2 Perceived organisational support*

The term perceived organisational commitment was devised by Eisenberger et al. (1986). Perceived organisational support refers to what the individual believes is the measure at which the employer acknowledges the person's input and is invested in the person's wellness (McCormick & Donohue, 2019). Employees view the actions and decisions of their managers as that of the organisation (Satardien, Jano & Mahembe, 2019). If any employee perceives that their manager supports and cares about their wellbeing they then equate it to the organisation as showing support. Opportunities provided by the organisation determine whether the organisation is viewed as supportive or not. Satardien et al. (2019) state that an organisation's investment in the organisation's people and intellectual property determines the affective commitment of its employees. Perceived organisational support enhances an individual's attachment towards an organisation, supporting the view that perceived

organisational support is rooted in the organisational attachment theory. A study conducted by McCormick et al. (2019) revealed that perceived organisational support was the most influential antecedent of affective commitment. Whilst perceived petty organisational support is likely to result in employees not wanting to stay with the organisation. Perceived organisational support is said to be rooted in the social exchange theory (Satardien et al., 2019; Bae, 2021). Bae (2021, p.5) states that “when employees receive high levels of perceived organisational support they may feel obligated to reciprocate the support to the organisation”. The support may thus be shown by deciding to remain with the organisation.

#### *3.6.1.1.3 Rewards*

Rewards given to employees influence affective commitment and the influence of rewards depends on individual experiences. Mabaso (2019), and Mabaso and Dhlamini (2018) studied total rewards effect on organisational commitment. Wasiu and Adejalo (2014) suggested that the value of total rewards should be considered. Mabaso (2019) in his study, used a total rewards model consisting of six elements: compensation; fringe benefits; work-life balance; performance; recognition and talent development; and career opportunities. These equate to some human resource practices. Mabaso (2019) states that an organisation’s remuneration policy can be effective in influencing organisational commitment whilst a lack of rewards can increase employee turnover. Preethi and Lourthuraj (2015) state that employees who receive rewards after having encountered and overcome challenges are more likely to be committed, compared to automatically receiving rewards. Mabaso and Dhlamini (2018) in their study on the effects of total rewards and organisational commitment in higher education institutions, found a positive and significant relationship between the six elements of total rewards and organisational commitment.

#### *3.6.1.1.4 Perceived personal importance*

An individual’s perceived sense of personal importance is based on the extent they are involved in decision-making in the organisation and their role within the formal communication process of an organisation (Farndale et al., 2011). McCormick and Donohue (2019, p.2582) state that “the contribution of substantive opinions into the group and organisational decision making generate a sense of personal “value”

thereby promoting commitment”. This is supported by empirical research conducted by Boezeman and Ellemers (2007) and McComick and Donohue (2019). McCormick and Donohue (2019) found that perceived personal importance was one of the dominant antecedents of affective commitment in a study carried out among volunteers at an Australian non-profit organisation. However, research on perceived personal importance and its relationship with organisational commitment is still quite porous and can be considered an area for future research.

#### 3.6.1.2 Structural

A quick scan through Sabinet African Journals, EBSCOhost, Proquest and Emerald Insight yielded no articles on the relationship between affective commitment and structure, indicating a gap in research in this area. Preethi and Lourthuraj (2019) indicate that organisational structure has an essential part in organisational commitment. Sener and Balli (2020) studied organisational structure as a sub-dimension of organisational climate, in their study on the effect of organisational climate on affective commitment. Organisational structure can either be rigid or flexible and that determines its impact on organisational outcomes. Rigid structures can act as a barrier to empowerment and innovation, whilst flexible structures enhance empowerment and innovation (Keles, 2008). Flexible structures can be presumed to affect affective commitment positively whilst rigid structures impact it negatively. Sener and Balli (2020) point to a positive relationship between organisational structure and affective commitment. However, there is porous research in this area to confirm this relationship.

#### 3.6.1.3 Personal characteristics

Scholars have studied personal characteristics and their impact on affective commitment. Personal characteristics include need satisfaction (McComick & Donohue, 2019) age, years of service, and gender (Allen & Meyer, 1997; Jabri & Ghazzawi, 2019). Early researchers in the field (Decotis & Summer, 1987) argued that personal characteristics do not determine commitment as there is no profile for commitment. Later research however seems to dispute this fact. The employee’s personal characteristics also determine their commitment to the organisation (Monday, Steers & Porter 1992; Irshad & Naz, 2011; Olukayode, 2013). There have

been significant studies on the influence of demographics. Studies have shown that the age of the employee determines the extent to which they become attached to the organisation (Gursoy et al., 2013; Singh & Gupta, 2015; Van Dyk, 2012). Singh and Gupta (2015) conducted a study among 500 employees from 13 companies in India. The study revealed that older employees (45 years and older) showed highest levels of affective commitment whilst the youngest employees (23 and younger) showed the lowest levels of affective commitment. The implication is that older employees are more loyal to their organisation and are willing to stay in that organisation for longer. This is consistent with an earlier study by (Olukayode, 2013) in Nigeria which showed that the age of the employee influenced their commitment to the organisation. The influence of culture demographics on affective commitment needs further research as the current studies seem to be in only certain contexts.

Studies have also looked at the impact of gender on affective commitment. Gender role theories are still being used in a variety of research and they postulate that certain roles are for males whilst certain roles are for females, and that certain behaviors are said to be gender-specific (Peterson, Kara, Fanimokun & Smith, 2018). There are suggestions that males tend to be more committed to their organisation compared to females. Sammar, Zaib, and Manuela (2014) state that specific stereotypes of males and females tend to influence the perception that males are more committed to their organisation than females. However, this is inconsistent with the findings in some studies. Olukayodes' (2013) study revealed that gender did not have an impact on employee commitment. Sloan (2017) states that several studies have shown females to have higher levels of affective commitment to males. Peterson et al.'s (2018) study showed a difference in male and female organisational commitment based on the countries they reside in. In four countries (Australia, Jamaica, Hungary and China) males showed high levels of commitment compared to their female counterparts. However, in Bulgaria and Romania females showed higher levels of commitment. In a study of affective commitment among state employees, the results indicate that females show greater levels of commitment especially if they perceived that they had coworker support (Sloan, 2017). Inconsistencies on the impact of gender differences on affective commitment are massive in organisational commitment research and hence further research with moderators might be necessary.



Another dimension of personal characteristics is need satisfaction. Need satisfaction has been described as the extent to which employees readily work towards achieving the goals of the organisation based on whether the organisation is satisfying their basic needs (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Theorists have suggested that the desire to satisfy basic needs is universal and once these needs are satisfied it leads to positive outcomes (Rathi & Lee, 2016). There are psychological benefits associated with needs satisfaction whereas dissatisfaction may result in demotivation and reduced well-being (Chen et al., 2015). Rathi and Lee (2016) discuss three psychological needs: competency; autonomy and relatedness. McComick and Donohue (2019) in their study, looked at two need dimensions: value and esteem. McComick and Donohue (2019) state that individuals who perceive that their psychological needs are being met have a high level of affective commitment, which was supported by the results of their study among volunteers for a nonprofit organisation in Australia. The results indicate that value and esteem result in affective commitment among volunteers. Rathi and Lee's (2016) study among retail workers in India showed that there is a positive relationship between basic needs autonomy and relatedness with affective commitment. The basic needs vary from individual to individual but research is however consistent in its findings that the satisfaction of basic needs results in affective commitment.

#### 3.6.1.4 Job-role characteristics

The key elements of job-role characteristics are job scope, role ambiguity and role conflict (Preethi & Lourthouraj, 2015; McCormic & Donohue, 2019). Job characteristics apply to certain jobs in an organisation and not all employees in the organisation (Sabella, El Far & Eid, 2016).

##### 3.6.1.4.1 *Job scope*

Studies indicate that individuals who perceive themselves as having a wide job scope tend to be committed to their entities (Sabella et al., 2016; Preethi & Lourthouraj, 2015). A variety of duties gives employees more challenges in their work experience, resulting in high job satisfaction. There is therefore a trade-off between job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Preethi & Lourthouraj, 2015). Zarger, Vandenberghe, Marchand, and Ayede (2014) state that the relationship between job scope and

affective commitment can be explained by the social exchange theory, in that there is reciprocity at play when employees with a perceived job scope tend to display high levels of affective commitment.

#### *3.6.1.4.2 Role conflict*

There is not a lot of information on role conflict and its relationship with affective commitment. The concept has however been described as the struggle to decide which tasks to focus on first (Preethi & Lourhouraj, 2015). Avoiding role conflict is important in creating commitment. The lack of research on the relationship between role conflict and affective commitment points to a gap in the understanding of affective commitment, which may require further studies in the future.

#### *3.6.1.4.3 Role ambiguity*

Role ambiguity denotes the degree to which tasks are perceived as being clear. Avoiding role ambiguity is important in creating commitment. This is backed by the results of a study conducted by McComick and Donohue (2019) which found that role ambiguity was negatively related to affective commitment. Like role conflict, there is insufficient literature regarding the relationship between role ambiguity and affective commitment. The lack of research on the relationship between role ambiguity and affective commitment points to a gap in the understanding of affective commitment, which may require further studies in the future.

### **3.6.2 Antecedents of normative commitment**

As already described, normative commitment forms when an individual believes that they are obliged to stay with an organisation. There are two antecedents of normative commitment that have been reviewed in the literature. These are socialisation and congruence of the organisation's mission and values to personal values (McComick & Donohue, 2019).

#### **3.6.2.1 Socialisation**

Socialisation has been described as a process by which individuals convert from being strangers within an organisation to regarding themselves as part of the organisation

(Nishanthi & Kailasapathy, 2018; Batra, 2020). Employees begin to behave in ways that are consistent with organisational expectations. Individuals unlearn their old behaviors and attitudes and learn new behaviours and attitudes that are deemed acceptable by the organisation (Yilmaz & Yilmaz, 2016). Several tools may result in the socialisation of an employee within an organisation and these may include on-the-job training, performance reviews, and employee induction (Yilmaz & Yilmaz, 2016). Through the socialisation process, individuals acquire information that assists them to settle comfortably within their new job roles and are acclimatised in their new environment. However, as the work environment continually goes through transition, the socialisation process is not limited to new employees (Nishanthi & Kailasapathy, 2018).

Allen and Meyer (1991) suggest that socialisation is an important antecedent of normative commitment, emphasising the role of socialisation experiences in influencing an individual's loyalty to an organisation and how benefits received from the organisation influence the need to reciprocate. It is perceived that there is reciprocal accountability between organisational leaders and subordinates, which can be comprehended through the social exchange theory. The social exchange theory suggests that if an individual receives something of value from an organisation, they are normatively obliged to pay it back (Nishanthi & Kailasapathy, 2018) and one way of paying it back is through staying within the organisation. There is a paucity of research on the relationship between socialisation and normative commitment. However, in their study among executive employees within the banking sector in Sri Lanka, Nishanthi and Kailasapathy (2018) found that there is a positive relationship between socialisation and normative commitment.

### 3.6.2.2 Congruence of organisational mission and values with personal values

Several studies have examined the importance of the congruence of organisational mission and values with personal values and mission. Organisational mission has been defined as the purpose of the organisation's existence (Malbasic, Ray & Posaric, 2018) and organisational values have been defined as the organisation's guiding principles which cannot be bent despite the promise of potential financial benefits (Tabane, Bosch & Roodt, 2013). Organisations should clarify their missions and values to enable them to be in sync with the organisations mission and values, and

allow those that do not identify to exit the organisation (Malbasic et al., 2018). It is however important for the organisations mission and values to align with an individual's mission and values, if individuals are going to identify and stay with the organisation. Malbasic et al. (2018) emphasise that a personal mission is a predictor of an individual's happiness. Discovering one's mission enables an appreciation of one's existence. An individual's mission is often tied to an individual's goals and values (Boonzaaier, 2008). Employee's values influence organisational effectiveness (Tabane, Bosch & Roodt, 2013).

Studies indicate that congruence between the organisation's mission and values with personal mission and values influence organisational outcomes such as work engagement and organisational commitment (Tabane et al., 2013; Malbasic et al., 2018). McCormick and Donohue (2019, p.2586) state that "congruence of organizational mission and values with personal values refers to the degree of alignment between an organisation's mission and values, and the personal values of an individual". Such congruency is likely to force employees to stay with the organisation even if they are presented with other opportunities elsewhere. In their studies among volunteers McCormick and Donohue (2019) found a positive relationship between the congruence of the organisation's mission and values and the personal values of an individual with normative commitment. This is a possible relationship because volunteers are driven by their mission and values and therefore likely to stay with organisations that they identify with. However, more research needs to be conducted in this area.

### **3.6.3 Antecedents of continuance commitment**

The formation of continuance commitment is influenced by the perceived sacrifices and perceived investments by the individual that could be forfeited if the individual is to exit the organisation (Rungruang, 2012). Whether an individual leaves the organisation depends on the loss they may incur if they leave. The unavailability of suitable alternatives may force an individual to stay with their organisation (Abdelmoula, 2021). Becker (1960) proposed the side bet theory as one of the theories that could explain continuance commitment. He suggests that commitment comes into being when a person, by making a side bet, connects unnecessary pursuits with a

consistent line of activity (Becker, 1960). Employees who increase their side bets, as a result, raise the cost of leaving their organisation (Averin, 2020). Becker (1960) and Powell and Meyer (2004) categorised side bets as follows:

- Generalised cultural expectations – known behavioral patterns that employees have to stick to. Any breach results in punishment.
- Face-to-face interaction – concerns about hurting the people’s known view of the employee if they act against expectations.
- Impersonal bureaucratic arrangements – organisational systems set up to discourage short-term tenures and turnover.
- Individual adjustments to social position – resources invested in nurturing relationships with colleagues and superiors to ensure they fit in their current positions, rendering other positions unattractive.
- Non-work concerns – relationships established outside the organisation that would be impacted negatively if the job ends.

Allen and Meyer (1984) state that continuance commitment increases with the buildup of side bets and investments. A study carried out by Powell and Meyer (2004) indicated a positive relationship between side bet measures and the intention to stay within the organisation. Continuance commitment seems to be strengthened in situations of scarce employment opportunities and immense risk. This view is supported by Akbar, Rashid and Farooq (2018), who state that in the public sector in Pakistan, individuals have a strong sense of continuance commitment when working conditions like job security and long-term benefits, coupled with a scarcity of jobs, are present. A view supported by Coetzee, Ferreira and Potgieter (2019), who state that continuance commitment poses a threat that results from the perceived cost associated with investments like pay, seniority, and social relationships, which results in job security. Once the employment relationship is terminated employees will no longer enjoy these benefits.

### **3.7 Consequences of organisational commitment**

Organisational commitment has an impact on several organisational outcomes. Coetzee, Ferreira and Potgieter (2018) state that some of the positive consequences

of psychological attachment include job satisfaction, reduced absenteeism and reduced turnover. Sarkar and Nirala (2020) propose that there are three consequences of organisational commitment: job satisfaction, intention to leave the organisation, and job involvement. Job performance is an additional result of organisational performance. This section discusses the consequences of organisational commitment in detail.

### **3.7.1 Turnover intention/Intention to quit**

Serhan, Nehmeh and Sioufi (2021) define turnover intention as an intentional plan on the part of the employee to leave the organisation. When turnover intention translates to turnover, it has negative consequences for the organisation. Serhan and Tsangari (2019) state that there has been a general increase in staff turnover in recent years due to high competitiveness, as well as increased demand for skilled and experienced workers. Costs associated with staff turnover include an increase in recruitment expenses, relocation expenses, and an increase in training expenses because of the need to continuously upskill new employees (Alkahtani, 2015). Satardian, Jano, and Mahembe (2019) have proposed turnover intention as one of the consequences of organisational commitment. Organisational commitment theory is built on the premise that employees that recognise themselves as part of the organisation and that align themselves with the mission and goals of an entity, will display a notable longing for a continued relationship with the entity (Serhan et al., 2021; Satardian et al., 2019). Organisational commitment has a negative impact on turnover intention. Zhao and Zhao (2017) state that the three forms of organisational commitment (affective, continuance and normative) are inversely related to the intention to quit and staff turnover. Serhan et al. (2021) carried out a study that examined the effect of organisational commitment on turnover intention among Islamic bank employees. The results indicated that there is a negative effect between affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment with organisational commitment.

### **3.7.2 Job performance**

Motowidlo and Kell (2015) define job performance as the individual's behaviour that they exert towards their work and its perceived value to the organisation over a period of time. Some researchers view job performance as a multidimensional concept (Sonnentag & Volmer, 2008) and can be distinguished between performance as a process and performance as an outcome (Roe, 1999). The process aspect is also known as the behavioral aspect and refers to the actions that individuals carry whilst doing their work tasks (Campbell, 1999). Examples of the behaviours could include an Microsoft Teams meeting that takes place between a salesperson and a customer, or a poultry factory worker packing chicken in preparation for dispatch. The behavioural aspect of job performance consists mainly of behaviors that can be counted and that contribute toward achieving a specific goal (Campbell et al., 1993).

The outcome aspect of performance refers to the consequences of an individual's behaviour (Sonnetttag & Volmer, 2008). Such an outcome may determine whether the meeting between the salesperson and the customer can result in closing a deal. Individuals must be driven to perform optimally in both aspects of performance and one of the methods that push employees to do well in their work roles is their commitment to their organisation. Jakada (2019) states that organisational commitment is an essential motivation that reduces specific negative organisational behaviours such as lateness, absenteeism, withdrawal, and staff turnover. The reduction of these negative behaviors results in improved job performance. Rustamadji and Che Omar (2019) carried out a study on the relationship between organisational commitment and job performance and their study concluded that organisational commitment influences job performance.

### **3.7.3 Job involvement**

Job involvement can be defined as the extent to which one mentally recognises their work as being part of them (Culibrk, Deli, Mitrovi & Culibrk, 2018). It is described as the extent to which one is concerned about and actively participates in their current job (Singh & Gupta, 2015). Rahati, Sotudeh-Arani, Adib-Hajbaghery and Rostami (2015) describe job involvement as behaviors that organisations should strive for as it

ensures that employees exert their efforts towards their tasks and enable optimal performance. Job involvement results in job enjoyment and fatigue reduction. People who are high in job involvement are sincerely concerned about their work (Singh & Gupta, 2015). Job involvement may be perceived to be similar to organisational commitment, but it is an outcome of organisational commitment. Rahati et al. (2015) state that job involvement increases organisational commitment, which they proved when they found a significant correlation between the scores of job involvement and organisational commitment of the employees in Kashan PMES. This is in line with Singh and Gupta's (2015) research which indicated a significant relationship between job involvement and affective commitment.

#### **3.7.4 Job satisfaction**

Job satisfaction has been defined as a pleasant psychological state which is an outcome of how positively an individual perceives their work experiences (Dinc, 2017). The degree to which an employee perceives that their job experiences are beneficial and valuable influences their satisfaction with the job. Job satisfaction might be equated to one's likeness for their job and can be categorised as intrinsic job satisfaction and extrinsic job satisfaction (Bennett & Hylton, 2021). Intrinsic satisfaction is evidenced by intangible reactions. How one might receive the news of a promotion is an example of intrinsic satisfaction. Whilst extrinsic satisfaction may be represented by external factors such as working conditions and salary. Mitonga-Monga, Flotman, and Cilliers (2018) state that there are five dimensions of job satisfaction, namely: satisfaction with pay; satisfaction with promotion; satisfaction with supervisors; satisfaction with coworkers; and satisfaction with the work itself. Whilst some studies consider job satisfaction to be an antecedent of organisational commitment, other studies consider it to be a consequence of organisational commitment (Dinc, 2017). In their study Bennett and Hylton (2021) found that organisational commitment positively influences extrinsic job satisfaction, supporting the view that job satisfaction is a consequence of organisational commitment. This is in line with Dinc's (2017) study which demonstrated that affective and normative commitment influence job satisfaction. Employees that are likely to remain in their jobs are those who are most likely to like their jobs and get some satisfaction from the job.



### **3.8 The theoretical relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment**

Work engagement and organisational commitment are two distinct concepts focusing on two different areas. Work engagement focuses on the relationship between the employee and his job, whilst organisational commitment focuses on the relationship between an employee and the organisation they work for (Aboramadan et al., 2019). There are differing views regarding the relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment. To appreciate the significance of work engagement and organisational commitment, it is important to determine whether a relationship between these two variables exist. Engagement seems to enhance commitment whilst disengagement seems to decrease commitment. Knotts and Houghton (2020) state that in recent years employees who are not engaged in their work seem to easily choose to change jobs or careers. In line with social exchange theory, highly engaged employees are prone to put more trust in their organisations, they value the type of relationship they have with the organisation, and exhibit organisational commitment (Aboramadan et al., 2019). The JDR model has been used to explain work engagement and a significant relationship has been found between job resources and organisational commitment (Gan & Kee, 2021). The presence of job resources such as social support and training opportunities, enhance work engagement and result in organisational commitment.

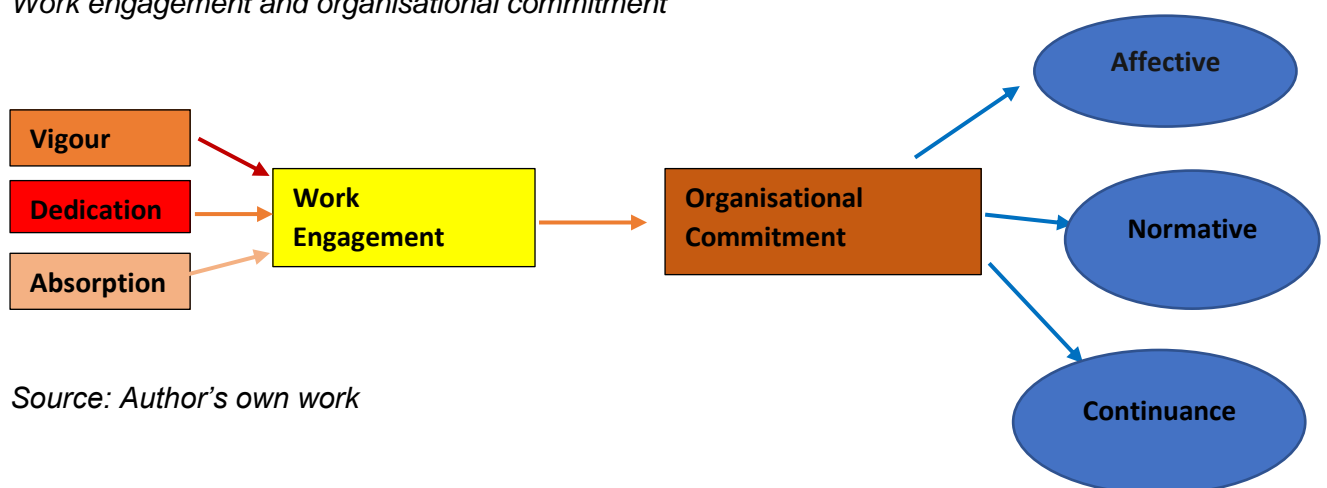
Previous studies have found a positive correlation between work engagement and organisational commitment (Kantse, 2011; Beukes & Botha, 2013). An increase in organisational commitment can improve work engagement (Lin et al., 2018). The comprehension of work engagement can also be enhanced through establishing whether the variable is a predictor of organisational commitment. Some studies indicate that work engagement is an antecedent of organisational commitment whilst others indicate that work engagement is a consequence of organisational commitment (Kim et al., 2017; Albrecht et al., 2015). The impact of work engagement on organisational commitment and the impact of organisational commitment on work engagement are statistically significant (Kim et al., 2017). A study of literature reveals

that employee engagement can lead to organisational commitment (Karatape, 2013; Richardsen et al., 2006).

Work engagement and organisational commitment can be influenced by key biographical factors such as age, gender and educational qualifications. The age of employees explains significant differences in work engagement as younger employees tend to be more engaged when compared to older employees (Mvana & Louw, 2020). The employee's age can determine the extent to which they become attached to an organisation (Gursay et al., 2013). The influence of age on organisational commitment is opposite to that of work engagement, as older employees are more committed than younger employees (Singh & Gupta, 2015). Gender has also been revealed to influence both organisational commitment and work engagement. There is inconsistent literature on the influence of gender on commitment. Sloan (2017) indicates that females are more committed than males whilst Peterson et al. (2018) indicate that males are more committed than females. Educational qualifications role in both organisational commitment and work engagement have been studied in literature, revealing that an employee's level of commitment decreases as they obtain higher levels of qualifications (Sakar & Nirala, 2020) whilst the level of engagement increases as the level of qualifications increases, as shown in figure 3.2 below.

Figure 3.2

*Work engagement and organisational commitment*



Source: Author's own work

### **3.9 Chapter summary**

To conclude, in this chapter the concept of 'organisational commitment' was defined. Two theories that explain organisational commitment, the organisational attachment theory and the social exchange theory, were discussed. The three components of organisational commitment: affective, normative and continuance commitment, were elaborated on. The various antecedents of the three components of organisational commitment were also discussed. Finally, the various consequences of organisational commitment were presented. The next chapter focuses on the research design of this study.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This study focuses on examining the relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment within the private higher education distance context. This chapter elaborates and gives grounds for the research design choices made in this study, including explaining the methodology utilised to establish if there is a relationship between the two constructs. The sampling strategy that was used in this research is explained. The two measuring instruments used in this study are explained including the rationale for choosing these two instruments. The data collection methods and the data analysis methods are explained as well as the ethical considerations in this study. Finally, the methodological implications of this research are also explained.

#### **4.2 Research methodology**

Creswell (2014) and Creswell and Creswell (2018) propose that four philosophical worldviews can be used in research design, these being postpositivism, constructivism, transformativism and pragmatism. The philosophical worldview used for this study is postpositivism or positivism. Positivism is also known as scientific research. This position takes into account four elements, which are determination, reductionism, empirical observation and measurement, and theory verification, the deterministic element explains the cause and effect of a relationship (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The positivist view is reductionistic and its purpose is to scale back the ideas into bite-size sets to test, such as the variables that comprise hypotheses and research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). There is a strong emphasis on empirical observations and measurement. The knowledge that is gathered through a postpositivist or positivist view is based on careful observation and measurement. Goduka (2012) states that positivism is related to the exploration of observable phenomena which is measured using quantitative methods. The postpositivist/positivist view underscores the importance of verifying theory. In this

approach, evidence is collected to support or disprove theories and hypotheses and there is objective interpretation of the data.

### **4.3 Research design**

The research design used a cross-sectional study. Babbie (2021), and Babbie and Mouton (2011) refer to a cross-sectional study as a study that involves the collection of data or the observation of the sample in one single time frame. A cross-sectional study was relevant for this study because data was collected at one point and the study made use of a correlational research design. A correlational research design focuses on the relationship between variables which could be positive (same direction), negative (opposite direction), or non-existent, and is suitable for studies that seek to reconnoitre the association between constructs (Team Leverage Edu, 2022). The correlational research design is appropriate for this study as it sought to investigate the relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment.

### **4.4 Research approach**

The study was undertaken using a quantitative approach. Creswell and Creswell (2018) define quantitative research as a methodology that is used to assess if specific concepts explain the association between constructs, the constructs are measured numerically, and results are statistically analysed to either confirm or disconfirm the theory. The quantitative approach undertaken in this research can be referred to as deductive research as it starts with a theory or concept, succeeded by data gathering and then the analysis of the data to confirm or disconfirm the theory (Wagner, Kawulich & Garner, 2012).

### **4.5 Research methods**

#### **4.5.1 Research participants**

The research participants were drawn from a population of 110 employees at a private educational institution under study. De Vos et al. (2018) refer to a population as the

total number of subjects within a study that possess attributes that are of interest to the researcher. The entire population in this study consists of both academic and non-academic employees attached to the institution on a permanent basis. A digital list of all the employees at the institution was requested from the Human Resources Department and this list was used to filter for permanent employees, ending up with a total of 110 permanent employees. The Chief Executive Officer of the institution under study provided written permission to access the population.

#### **4.5.2 Research sample**

The total population sampling method was used for this inquiry. This is a purposive sampling technique involving the examination of the entire population that has specific unique features (dissertation.laerd.com, 2020). Babbie (2021), and Babbie and Mouton (2011) describe purposive sampling as a non-probability technique whereby the researcher makes use of their knowledge of the population, its components and what the study intends to achieve. A non-probability technique is a non-random sampling method that makes use of people that are accessible and ready to participate (Wagner et al., 2012). For this specific study, the population was readily available to the researcher. Due to the size of the population, the total population sampling technique was utilised. The total population sampling method is often used in instances where the total population size is very small and where the population shares uncommon characteristics. In this study, the total sampling method was used because a total population of 110 is relatively small for quantitative research. The use of the total sampling technique would also enable generalisation to other private distance learning environments. Using any other sampling method would have resulted in an even smaller sample. Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016, p.3) note that “leaving out certain cases from your sampling would be as if you had an incomplete puzzle – with obvious pieces missing”.

#### **4.5.3 Measuring instruments**

Two measuring instruments were used in this study. The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003) was used for measuring work engagement and the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (Allen & Meyer, 1990) was used for

measuring Organisational Commitment. In this section, the reasons for using the two instruments as well as dimensions, interpretation, administration, and reliability of the two instruments will be discussed.

#### 4.5.3.1 The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale

##### 4.5.3.1.1 *Development*

The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale makes use of three scales to assess level of engagement, these scales are vigour, dedication, and absorption. The instrument was developed by Schaufeli and Bakker (2003). It is based on the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Capri, Gunduz & Akbay, 2017). The scale initially consisted of 24 items, but these were shortened to 17 after psychometric evaluation using two different samples (Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2002). The outcomes of the psychometric evaluation were that out of the 24 items, 7 did not effectively measure work engagement. The 7 flawed items were removed, leaving the scale with 17 items that consist of 6 vigour items, 5 dedication items, and 6 absorption items (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma & Bakker, 2002).

Further psychometric evaluations revealed that 2 items within the 17 items were weak resulting in a 15-item scale. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) shortened the work engagement scale, remaining with a 9-item scale consisting of 3 vigour items, 3 dedication items, and 3 absorption items. Studies, however, have been carried out using any of the three forms of the work engagement scale (Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2006; Capri, Gunduz & Akbay, 2017; Lathabavan, Balasubramanian & Thamaraisevan, 2017). This study utilised the 17-item work engagement scale. The 17-item scale was used because previous studies on the psychometric properties of the scale indicated that it was robust among education employees, and hence was regarded as most appropriate for the context (Ahmed, Majid & Zin, 2016).

##### 4.5.3.1.2 *Rationale*

Work engagement has been regarded as the opposite of burnout. However, the construct cannot be measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) but requires its own measuring instrument (Naude & Rothman, 2004). The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale was used because of its ability to measure the three dimensions of work engagement, which are vigour, dedication, and absorption. Each of the items

in the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale was precisely constructed to measure each component of work engagement, for example: “I am bursting with energy in my work”, measures vigour; “My job inspires me”, this item measures dedication; and “I feel happy when I am engrossed in my work” measures absorption. The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale was also used as it is an instrument that has been tested within various cultural contexts.

#### *4.5.3.1.3 Dimensions*

The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale is a 17-item measuring instrument consisting of the three features of the construct (vigour, dedication and absorption). Schaufeli and Bakker (2004, p.6) define vigour as “high levels of energy and resilience, the willingness to invest effort, not being easily fatigued, and persistence in the face of difficulties”. The scale measures work engagement using six items and an example of a vigour item is “At my work, I feel bursting with energy” (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, p.6). Persons with high degrees of vigour exhibit high energy levels, strength and passion, whereas those with low levels of vigour exhibit low energy levels, strength and passion (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). Dedication is defined as “deriving a sense of significance from one’s work, feeling enthusiastic and proud about one’s job and feeling inspired and challenged by it” (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, p.7). Dedication is measured by the five items within the scale and an example of one of the items is “To me, my job is challenging” (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, p.7). Individuals with high levels of dedication have a solid connection with their work and they derive meaning from it, they find their work exciting and stimulating (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). They are proud of the work that they do and show great enthusiasm for their work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003).

The third aspect of work engagement is absorption. Absorption refers to complete submersion in job tasks and being incapable of separating the persona from the job tasks (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Six items measure absorption, an example of such an item is “Time flies when I am working” (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, p.8). Individuals high in absorption put all their thoughts into the work that they are doing, forgetting everything around them and concentrating only on the work. It is hard for such individuals to distinguish between their work and personal life. Whereas those that do



not have high levels of absorption find it easy to separate their personal life from their work life, can think about other things besides work, and are not totally immersed in their work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

#### *4.5.3.1.4 Administration*

The administration of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale for this study was conducted at an individual level but within a single institution. An informed consent letter was distributed to all potential participants for the research, explaining the reasons for conducting the research and revealing the voluntary and anonymous nature of participation. A link to the Work Engagement questionnaire was sent to all potential participants using the email medium. The institution's IT department was requested to distribute the link to all participants via email. The administration of the instrument adhered to ethical requirements – an ethical clearance certificate was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology at the University of South Africa (hereinafter UNISA) and individual participants agreed to take part in the study after having gone through the informed consent letter. In completing the questionnaire, participants were asked to rate the frequency they felt each of the reactions described using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (always).

#### *4.5.3.1.5 Reliability*

Reliability can be described as the accuracy of a tool or research tool that, when used repeatedly in the same situation, consistently yields the same results (Heale & Twycross, 2015). Middleton (2019) states that there are four types of reliability which are test and retest reliability, interrater reliability, parallel forms reliability, and internal consistency. In using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale for this study, the reliability of concern was internal consistency. Middleton (2019, p.4) states that internal consistency “assesses the correlation between multiple items that are intended to measure the same construct”. Schaufeli and Bakker (2003) state that the internal consistency (Cronbach Alpha Coefficient) of the 17-item work engagement scale is acceptable with values indicated in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1

*Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of the 17-item UWES scale*

	UWES – 17 (N = 2,313)		
	Total	Md	Range
Vigour	.83	.86	.81 - .90
Dedication	.92	.92	.88 - .95
Absorption	.82	.80	.70 - .88
Total/Overall	.93	.94	.91 - .96

Source: Schaufeli & Bakker (2003)

#### 4.5.3.1.6 Interpretation

In completing the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, participants were asked to rate the frequency they felt each of the reactions described using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (always). The responses on the scale are linear scales, indicating the extent to which an individual has felt the emotions on the scale. An individual's scores for the multiple items are summated and averaged resulting in a mean score. Individuals scoring high mean scores for the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale have elevated degrees of work engagement whilst those scoring low mean scores have low degrees of engagement. The mean scores could also focus on the scores of each of the three dimensions of work engagement (vigour, dedication and absorption) with individuals scoring either high or low on any of the three constructs.

#### 4.5.3.2 Organisational Commitment Questionnaire

##### 4.5.3.2.1 Development

The Organisational Commitment Questionnaire also referred to as the Three-Component Model (TCM) of Commitment Questionnaire was constructed in 1990 for the North American context and revised in 1997 (Neves, Graveto, Rodrigues, Maroco & Parreira, 2018). The Organisational Commitment Questionnaire was designed to measure three forms of commitment which are affective commitment (desire-based), normative commitment (obligation-based), and continuance commitment (cost-based) (Employeecommitment.com, 2022). The initial survey has eight statements pertaining to each of the commitment scales. The scales were revised by Allen and Meyer in

1997 to end up with 6 statements pertaining to each of the commitment scales (Allen & Meyer, 2004).

#### *4.5.3.2.2 Rationale*

The Organisational Commitment Questionnaire can be used to show the strength of individuals' attachment to an organisation. The questionnaire has been validated to measure three forms of commitment which are affective, normative, and continuance commitments (Allen & Meyer, 2004). There is a different commitment scale for each form of commitment – Affective Commitment Scale (ACS), Normative Commitment Scale (NCS), and Continuance Commitment Scale (CCS). Each of the three scales contains eight commitment items.

#### *4.5.3.2.3 Dimensions*

According to Allen and Meyer (1991; 1997) commitment is made up of three components which are affective, normative, and continuance. Affective commitment focuses on the desire of an employee to stay within an organisation focusing on the degree of an employee's attachment to an organisation and the organisation's goals (Abdullah, 2011). An example of a statement that measures affective commitment using the Affective Commitment Scale is "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my life with this organisation" (Allen & Meyer, 2004, p.11). According to Allen and Meyer (2004) individuals who display elevated levels of affective commitment (high ACS scores) stay with their organisations willingly. Allen and Meyer (2004) also state that research has shown that individuals with high affective commitment scores are high performers compared to those with low levels of affective commitment.

Normative commitment is obligation-based. Abdelmoula (2021, p.200) defines normative commitment as "the obligation to stay in the firm". An individual may perceive that the correct thing to do is to continue to stay with the organisation even though they may not feel like it. Employees may stay with the organisation because of "their sense of obligation and feel a need to remain with the organisation because of their perceived reciprocal obligations to the organisation" (Haque et al., 2020, p.1140). An example of a statement that assesses normative commitment is: "One of the major reasons I continue to work for this organisation is that I believe that loyalty is important and therefore feel a sense of moral obligation to remain" (Allen & Meyer, 2004, p.11).

Allen and Meyer (2004, p.2) state that “those with strong normative commitment (high NCS scores) stay because they feel they ought to”. Similar to those with high affective commitment scores, employees with high normative scores perform higher than those with low normative commitment scores.

Continuance commitment is cost-based. Continuance commitment is a person’s belief of what it is they are likely to lose if they exit an organisation (Meyer et al., 1993). Persons recognise the costs of leaving the organisation and decide to stay. Allen and Meyer (2004, p.2) state that “those with strong continuance commitment (high CCS scores) stay because they have to do so”. The following statement is an example of one of the statements used in the measurement of continuance commitment: “One of the few serious consequences of leaving this organisation would be the scarcity of available alternatives” (Allen & Meyer, 2004, p.11). Allen and Meyer (2004) report that unlike the other two forms of commitment, those with elevated degrees of continuance commitment do not outperform those with low levels of continuance commitment however they only do what is expected of them because of the absence of an incentive that would make them perform otherwise.

#### *4.5.3.2.4 Administration*

The supervision of the Organisational Commitment Scale can be done alone, or it can be incorporated into other extensive organisational surveys. In this study, it was administered alone. An informed consent letter was distributed to all the potential participants in the study explaining the purpose of the study and indicating that participation was voluntary and anonymous. Anonymity in the completion of this survey was especially important to ensure that the best results were obtained. Allen and Meyer (2004) state that some of the items in the questionnaire are quite sensitive such that employees may not feel comfortable responding honestly if they feel that anonymity is not guaranteed. The institution’s IT department was requested to distribute the link to the survey to all participants using email medium.

The administration of the instrument adhered to ethical requirements – an ethical clearance certificate was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology at UNISA and individual participants agreed

to take part in the study after having gone through the informed consent letter. The questionnaire was combined with the Work Engagement Scale and the information on demographic details. In completing the questionnaire, participants were required to rate the degree to which they consented with the given statement using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

#### 4.5.3.2.5 Reliability

Allen & Meyer's (2004) Organisational Commitment Questionnaire is well established in literature as reliable and valid. The table below shows the revised version of the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire's internal consistency (Cronbach Coefficient) on Affective Commitment, Normative Commitment and Continuance Commitment.

Table 4.2

*Revised Organisational Commitment Questionnaire internal consistency*

Affective Commitment (AOC)	0.85
Continuance Commitment (COC)	0.79
Normative Commitment (NOC)	0.73

*Source: Allen & Meyer (1997)*

Various Cronbach Alpha Coefficients indicate the reliability of the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire in various contexts and cultures as reported by Mitonga-Monga (2019), Moshoeu and Geldenhuys (2015), and Alam (2011). The instrument adheres to the recommended guidelines of 0.70. The instrument can therefore be used internationally.

#### 4.5.3.2.6 Interpretation

In completing the questionnaire, volunteers were required to rate the degree to which they agreed with the given statement using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). To produce an individual score, an employee's responses to the items of each of the three scores are averaged to produce an overall score. Some of the responses in the commitment scales are "reverse keyed" meaning strongly agreeing with a specific item may mean low levels

of commitment. When interpreting the responses to the reverse keyed items, the items should be recorded e.g., 7=1 and 6=2 before producing the average score. At the end of the scoring, the final result should range from between 1 to 7 for each response for each commitment scale, with 1 indicating the lowest level of commitment and 7 indicating the highest level of commitment. To establish an overall commitment scale, the average scores of the three commitment scales are summed up, then averaged.

#### 4.5.3.3 Demographic details

Demographic details were included in the measuring instruments. The data that was obtained were age, gender, and educational qualifications.

### **4.6 Ethical considerations**

The research has not contravened UNISA's policy on research ethics. Before the research could be undertaken it had to be approved by an appropriate Unisa ethics review committee. An application was submitted to the committee responsible for ethical clearance within the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology. Once ethical clearance was given, work on the research commenced. The research was also undertaken in line with UNISA's Covid-19 guidelines to minimise the spreading and contracting of the disease. It was also essential to obtain permission from the organisation that the data was collected within, to enable access to the research context. An application was submitted to the Chief Executive Officer of the institution requesting permission to access the context and was granted accordingly. An undertaking was made to use the information provided by participants for this inquiry only. In conducting the study and authoring the dissertation, no reference was made to the actual name or location of the institution.

Human beings were the participants in this study and therefore this brought to the surface unique ethical problems and if this study was going to be successful, ethical considerations had to guide the undertaking of this research. The research participants were not exposed to any form of harm either physically or emotionally. Participants took part in this study at their own will and their identities remained protected and therefore anonymous. Participants were asked to sign an informed consent form

before taking part, assuring them of the safety of the information they provided (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A statistician who signed a non-disclosure agreement was contracted to analyse the data. The research context was made up of individuals from diverse groups. Care was undertaken not to use language that was biased against persons because of the groups they belonged to. This was done by using language that was sensitive to labels and acknowledging the word 'participant' instead of 'subject'.

#### **4.7 Data collection**

Data collection was conducted in line with UNISA's Covid-19 guidelines. Microsoft Forms was the platform that was used to collect data. The two survey questions were inputted into a Microsoft Forms form to create a combined online questionnaire. The form generated a URL link. The survey setting was set up to generate anonymous responses. The URL link was sent through the institution's IT department to all potential participants. Microsoft Forms was chosen because it is easy to use and all the participants at the institution have access to it as the institution makes use of Microsoft 365. The combined survey consisted of demographic details, 17 Work Engagement Scale items (borrowed from Schaufeli and Bakker, 2002), and 24 Organisational Commitment Scale items (borrowed from Allen and Meyer, 2004). Both scales were measured on a Likert scale. The aim was to survey 110 employees at a private distance learning institution in South Africa. An employee was defined as someone who was permanently employed by the institution. The survey took approximately seven minutes to complete. The institution included in this study is a small organisation, so the Total Sampling Method was used with the anticipation of getting 110 responses. The data collection was initially supposed to take place from 1 April 2022 – 31 April 2022 but due to the slow rate of responses, the period was extended.

#### **4.8 Statistical analysis/data analysis methods**

Data analysis for this study was conducted using SPSS version 27, and AMOS.

#### **4.8.1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)**

CFA assesses whether the items in a specific measuring instrument accurately measure the variable under study. For instance, do the 17 items in the Work Engagement Scale accurately measure work engagement, or do the 24 items in the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire accurately measure organisational commitment? CFA can therefore be described as “a multivariate statistical procedure that is used to test how well the measured variables represent the number of constructs” (Statistics Solutions, 2013, p.1). CFA can either confirm or reject the measurement theory. CFA within this study was conducted using AMOS.

#### **4.8.2 Cronbach Alpha Coefficient (CAC)**

CAC is a tool that is used to measure the internal consistency of an instrument and is expressed as a figure from 0 to 1 (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Internal consistency refers to the degree to which the measurement tools measure the variable under study. If the items in the measuring instrument are not related to the construct, the CAC would be 0, items whose CAC approaches 1 have a high covariance (move together), and have a high probability that they measure the same concept (Goforth, 2015).

#### **4.8.3 Descriptive Analysis (DA)**

DA was used to explain the rudimentary characteristics of the information collected in the study. It focused on describing the study's demographic features as well as the study's theoretical variables and constructs. DA simply indicates what the information from the collected data shows in a manageable form (Trochim, n.d). DA ensures that a large amount of data is arranged in a manner that is easily understood. Descriptive statistics was also used for the analysis of the mean and standard deviation. Standard deviation is a measurement of the deviation from the mean or expected value and thus indicates the extent to which the participants' feedback on a question differs from the mean. The Independent Samples Test was used to examine if there existed any statistically significant differences in work engagement and organisational



commitment by gender, age, and educational qualifications. Kent State University Libraries (2017) explains an Independent Samples T-Test as a test that compares the means of two different groups to determine whether the population means are significantly different.

#### **4.8.4 Shapiro Wilki Test (SWT)**

The SWT was used to measure the normality of the data. The SWT is one of the three tests that can be used to determine any deviations from normality. Van den Berg (2021, p.2) states that “the null hypothesis for the Shapiro Wilki test is that ‘a variable is normally distributed in some population’”. The null hypothesis is rejected if  $p < 0.05$ . Therefore if  $p < 0.05$  then the variable is not normally distributed.

#### **4.8.5 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)**

ANOVA assesses the distinctions between group means (Foster, Lane, Scott, Hebl & Guerra, 2018). Bevans (2023) explains that a two ANOVA is an approximation of how the mean of a numerical variable alters in line to the levels of two categorical variables. Two way ANOVA is used for the comprehension of the influence of two independent variables on a dependent variable. Friedman’s two-way ANOVA test was used to establish the dominant construct for both work engagement and organisational commitment.

#### **4.8.7 Correlational Statistics (CS)**

In CS the relationship between two variables is analysed. In this study, Spearman’s Rank or Spearman’s Rho or Spearman’s Correlation Coefficient was used to measure the strength of the association between work engagement and organisational commitment. Frost (2022) states that if the Spearman Rho yields a positive correlation it is evidence of a positive relationship between the variables.

#### **4.8.8 Inferential Statistics (IS)**

This study made use of simple linear regression and multiple linear regression. Linear regression is an example of predictive analysis. Statistics Solutions (2013, p.2), states that “the overall idea of regression is to examine two things: (1) does a set of predictor variables do a good job in predicting an outcome (dependent) variable? (2) Which variables, in particular, are significant predictors of the outcome variable, and in what way do they – indicated by the magnitude and sign of the beta estimates – impact the outcome variable?”. Regression estimates are therefore used to understand the association between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables.

#### **4.9 Research Hypothesis**

The following hypothesis was tested in this research

- H01: A significant relationship does not exist between work engagement and organisational commitment.
- H1: A significant relationship exists between work engagement and organisational commitment.
- H02: Work engagement does not significantly predict organisational commitment.
- H2: Work engagement significantly predicts organisational commitment.
- H03a: An employee’s gender, age, and educational qualifications will not significantly influence work engagement.
- H03b: An employee’s gender, age, and educational qualifications will not significantly influence organisational commitment.
- H3a: An employee’s gender, age, and educational qualifications will significantly influence work engagement.
- H3b: An employee’s gender, age, and educational qualifications will significantly influence organisational commitment.

#### **4.10 Chapter summary**

In this chapter, the research design used for the study was discussed. This was followed by explaining the research participants for this study focusing on participants' characteristics. The Total Sampling Method, as the sampling method used for this

study, was elaborated on in this chapter. The two measuring instruments utilised in this study were explained in detail, focusing on the purpose, rationale, dimensions, and administration of each of the instruments. The data collection methods used were also explained in this chapter as well as ethical issues that had to be taken into consideration before the commencement of data collection. The methods of data analysis have also been explained. The various methodological limitations identified were discussed. Finally, the research hypotheses were showcased. The next chapter will focus on the data analysis of this study.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **RESULTS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

Research design was the focus of the preceding chapter. The outcomes of the study will be interpreted in the current chapter focusing on validity and reliability analysis using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Cronbach Alpha Coefficient (CAC) respectively. Descriptive Analysis (DA) for the description of the study's demographic features, and theoretical variables and constructs. The Shapiro Wilki Test (SWT) was used to assess the normality of the study's theoretical variables and constructs. To establish the dominant work engagement and organisational commitment constructs that exist within the sample, a Friedman's two-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test was conducted. To examine if there exist any statistically significant differences on work engagement and organisational commitment by gender, the Independent Samples T-Test was used. It was also imperative to test for mean differences on work engagement and organisational commitment by categorical demographic variables with more than two levels. To address the hypothesised frameworks, the Spearman's Rho's Correlation Coefficient was used to examine the nature, strength and direction of the correlations that exist within the hypothesised frameworks. To quantify the effect and influence of the selected variables within the hypothesised frameworks, linear regression models were utilized. All the necessary linear regression assumptions were checked.

#### **5.2 Factor and reliability of the measuring instruments**

##### **5.2.1 Validity and reliability of the Work Engagement Scale**

- Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

CFA was used to measure the validity of the Work Engagement Scale. A CFA was performed on the 17-item instrument for the purpose of determining the empirical items for the work engagement tool. The analysis resulted in the 15 items correlating with

the three factors. All factors loading were more than 0.70 as depicted in Table 5.1 and Figure 5.1 below

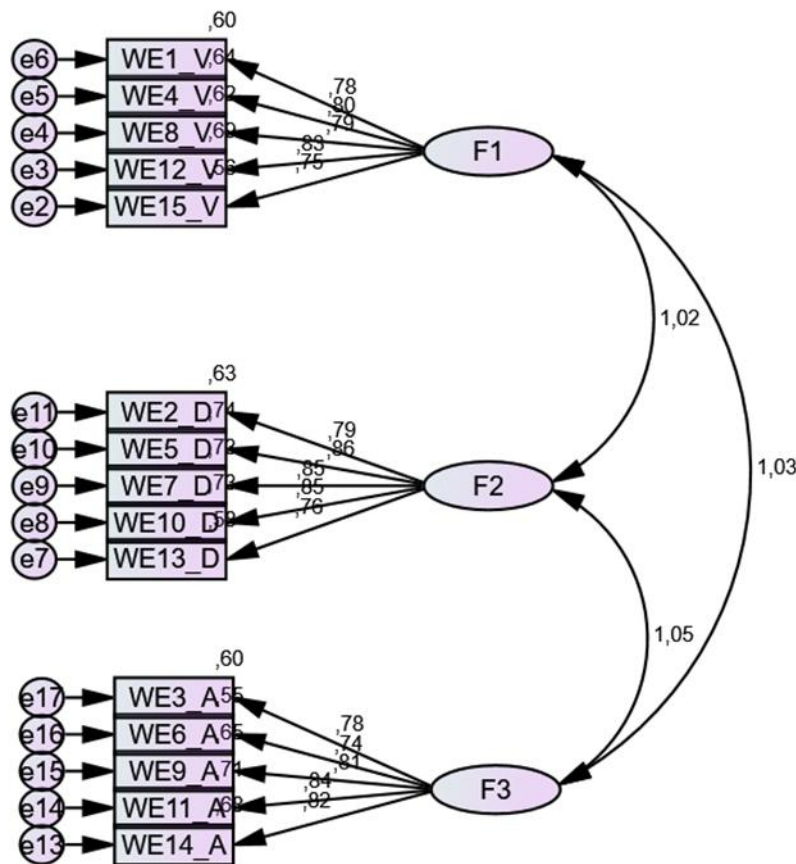
Table 5.1  
CFA of the Work Engagement Scale

Factor/item	CFA Loadings
Factor 1. Vigor	
At my work I feel bursting with energy	0.778
At my job, I feel strong and vigorous	0.802
When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work	0.787
I can continue working for very long periods at a time	0.831
At my job, I am very resilient mentally	0.750
Factor 2. Dedication	
I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose	0.794
I am enthusiastic about my job	0.860
My job inspires	0.854
I am proud of the work that I do	0.852
To me, my job is challenging	0.762
Factor 3. Absorption	
Time flies when I'm working	0.776
When I am working, I forget everything else around me	0.745
I feel happy when I am working intensely	0.809
I am immersed in my work	0.840
I get carried away when I am working	0.822

Source: Author's own work

Figure 5.1

The Path Diagram for CFA of the Work Engagement Scale



Source: Author's own work

- Convergent Validity of the Work Engagement Scale

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value for all constructs is in excess of 0.60 as depicted in Table 5.2 below. The convergent validity of work engagement is sufficient with the lowest limit being 0.50.

Table 5.2

Convergent Validity of the Work Engagement Scale

Item	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Vigour	0.624
Dedication	0.681
Absorption	0.639

Source: Author's own work

- Cronbach Alpha Coefficient (CAC)

The CAC was used to measure the internal consistency of the Work Engagement Scale and the value is greater than 0.80 for all, as indicated in Table 5.3 below.

Table 5.3

*CAC for the Work Engagement Scale and the three dimensions*

Scale	Number Of Items	CAC	Reliability
<b>Work Engagement</b>		0.967	Very high
Vigour	5	0.895	Very high
Absorption	5	0.912	Very high
Dedication	5	0.892	Very high

Source: Author's own work

- Composite Reliability (CR) of the Work Engagement Scale

The Joreskog Rho was used to measure composite validity. The results are shown in Table 5.4 below.

Table 5.4

*Composite Reliability of the Work Engagement Scale*

Scale	CR	Construct Validity
Vigour	0.892	Very high
Dedication	0.914	Very high
Absorption	0.898	Very high

Source: Author's own work

- Absolute Fitness

Table 5.5 below shows the absolute fitness, with each of the index ratings almost meeting the mandatory standard.

Table 5.5

*The Fitness indexes assessment for the Structural Model of work engagement*

CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA	RMSEA 90% CI	
				Lower	Upper
0.867	0.839	0.0493	0.152	0.134	0.171

Source: Author's own work

The above results indicate that the model satisfies the necessary standards and is appropriate for establishing a link between factors and determining the contribution of constructs in measuring work engagement. Validity of the scale was confirmed with all factor loadings being more than 0.70, thus, as per the results above, the assumed model is satisfactory.

### **5.2.2 Validity and reliability analysis for Organisational Commitment Questionnaire**

- **Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)**

CFA was used to measure the validity of the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire. The CFA was conducted on the respective items measuring each construct. The initial items for affective commitment were 8, those for continuous commitment were 8 and those for normative commitment were 8. The most parsimonious result was obtained on 3 items for affective commitment, 2 items for continuance commitment and 3 items for normative commitment. All factor loadings were more than 0.65 indicating an acceptable fit of these loadings as indicated on Table 5.6 below.



Table 5.6:

*CFA of the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire*

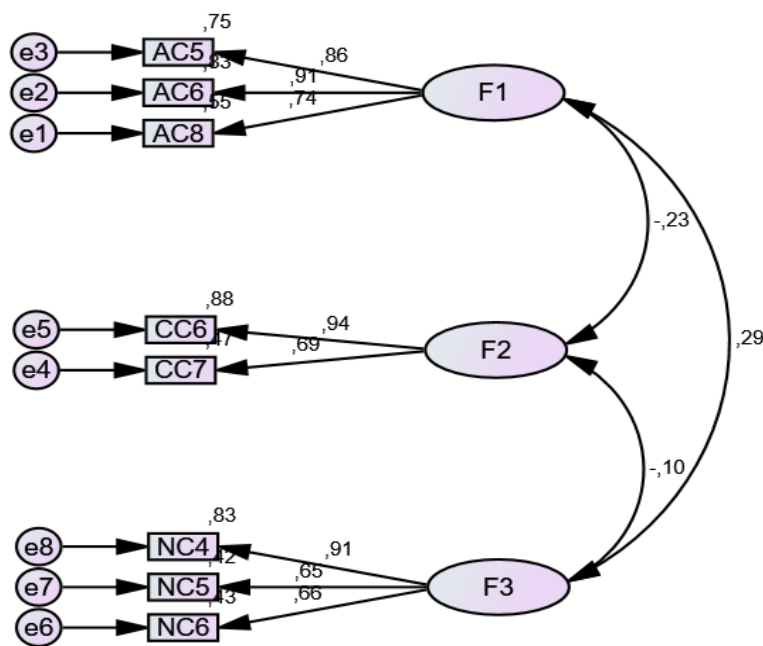
Factor item	CFA Loadings
<b>Factor 1. Affective commitment</b>	
I do not feel like part of the family at my organisation	0.864
I do not feel emotionally attached to this organisation	0.909
I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organisation	0.738
<b>Factor 2. Continuance commitment</b>	
I feel I have too few options to consider leaving this organisation	0.936
One of the few serious consequences of leaving this organisation would be the scarcity of available alternatives	0.686
<b>Factor 3. Normative Commitment</b>	
One of the major reasons I continue to work for this organisation is that I believe that loyalty is important and therefore feel a sense of moral obligation to remain	0.913
If I got another offer for a better job elsewhere, I would not feel it was right to leave my organisation	0.651
I was taught to believe in the value of remaining loyal to one's organisation	0.656

Source: Author's own work

The standardised regression weights (factor loadings) for the common factors and each of the indicators are shown in the path diagram in Figure 5.2 below.

Figure 5.2

The Path Diagram for CFA for the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire



Source: Author's own work

- Convergent Validity of the Organisational Commitment Scale

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value for all constructs is more than 0.50 as depicted in Table 5.7 below. The convergent validity of organisational commitment is adequate as the minimum cut-off point of 0.50 has been met.

Table 5.7:

Convergent Validity of the Organisational Commitment Scale

Item	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Affective Commitment	0.706
Continuance Commitment	0.673
Normative Commitment	0.563

Source: Author's own work

- Cronbach Alpha Coefficient (CAC) of the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire

The CAC was used to measure the internal consistency of the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire and the value is greater than 0.70 for all items. The overall CAC of 0.621 is acceptable reliability, results of which are indicated in Table 5.8 below.

Table 5.8

*CAC for the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire and the three dimensions*

Scale	Number Of Items	CAC	Reliability
<b>Organisational Commitment</b>		0.621	Acceptable
Affective Commitment	3	0.873	Acceptable
Continuance Commitment	2	0.781	Acceptable
Normative Commitment	3	0.773	Acceptable

*Source: Author's own work*

- Composite Reliability of the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire

The Joreskog Rho was used to measure composite validity. The results are shown in Table 5.9 below.

Table 5.9

*Composite Reliability of the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire*

Scale	CR	Construct Validity
Affective Commitment	0.877	Acceptable
Continuance Commitment	0.801	Very high
Absorption	0.790	Very high

*Source: Author's own work*

- Absolute Fitness

Table 5.10 below shows the absolute fitness, with each of the index ratings almost meeting the mandatory standard.

Table 5.10

*The Fitness indexes assessment for the Structural Model of the Organisation Commitment Questionnaire*

				RMSEA 90% CI	
CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA	Lower	Upper
0.934	0.891	0.0859	0.113	0.0684	0.157

*Source: Author's own work*

The above results indicate that the model satisfies the necessary standards and is appropriate for establishing a link between factors and determining the contribution of constructs in measuring work engagement. The validity of the scale was confirmed with all factor loadings being more than 0.65, thus, as per the results above, the assumed model is satisfactory.

### **5.3 Descriptive statistics**

#### **5.3.1 Demographic data of respondents**

Participants were requested to take part in the study through email communication. A total of 110 participants completed the questionnaire. Basic distributions in accordance with the study's demographic profile was initially carried out before thoroughly analysing the data. The depiction of the demographic research variables is outlined using a descriptive methodology, in Table 5.11 below.

Table 5.11

*Descriptive statistics for demographic details*

Variable	Levels	f	Valid %
Gender	Male	24	21.8
	Female	86	78.2
Age	18 to 24 years	2	1.8
	25 to 34 years	46	41.8
	35 to 44 years	45	40.9
	45 years and above	17	15.5
Educational	Grade 12 or Less	38	34.5
	Occupational Qualification (e.g. N1 to N6)	5	4.5
	Higher Certificate	20	18.2
	Diploma (NQF Level 7)	21	19.1
	Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BCom, BSc)	11	10.0
	Honours degree or Postgraduate Diploma	9	8.2
	Master's degree or Doctorate	6	5.5

*Source: Author's own work*

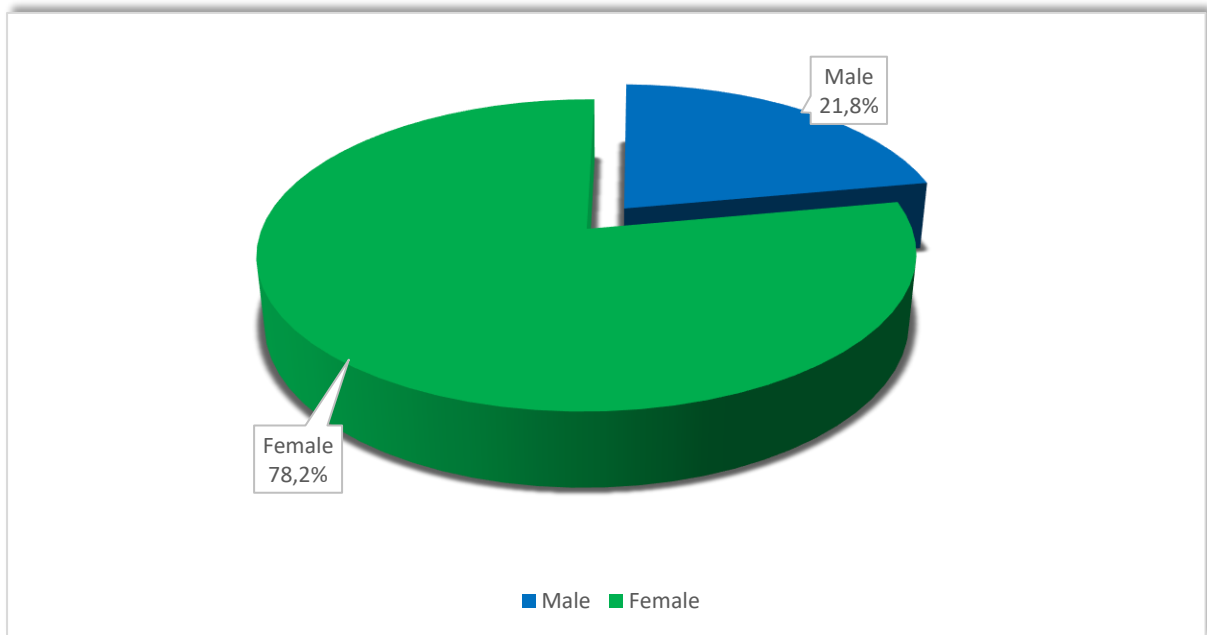
The above data is illustrated in the pie chart below.

#### 5.3.1.1 Gender

The female and male distribution of respondents is depicted in Figure 5.3. Males made up 21.8% (n=24) of the respondents, whilst females made up 78.2% (n=86). As a result, the majority of the participants were women.

Figure 5.3

*Percentage distribution by gender*



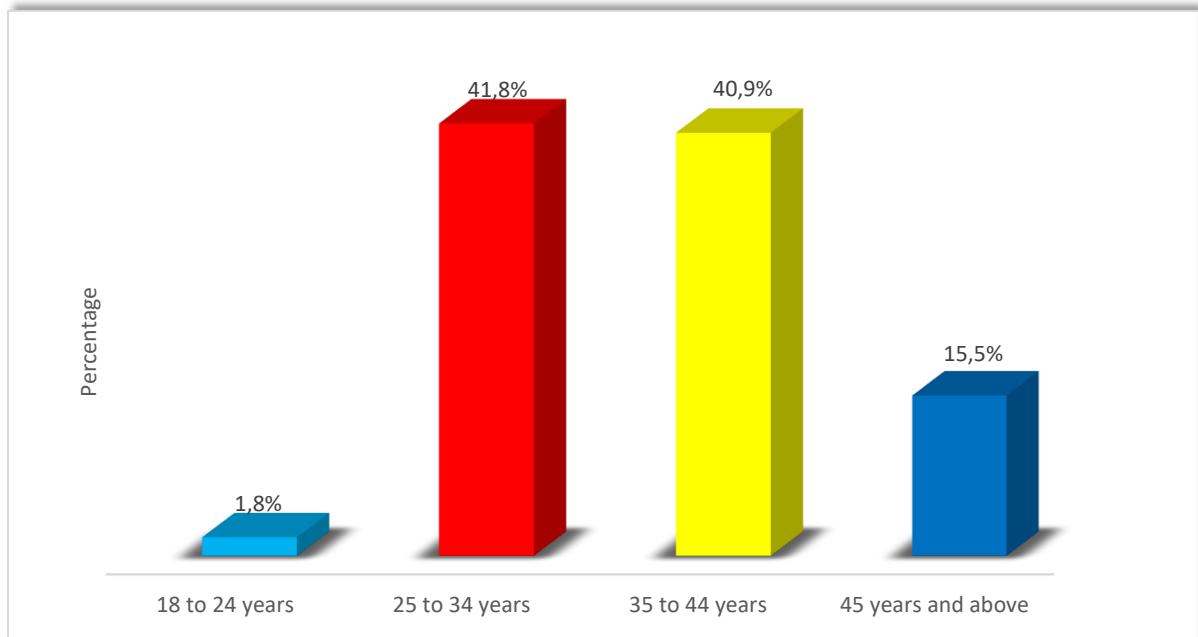
*Source: Author's own work*

#### 5.3.1.2 Age group

Figure 5.4 illustrates that the vast number of responses (41.8%, n=46) were provided by the 25–34 age group. Forty-five responses (40.9%) were from people in the 35–44 age group, seventeen (15.5%) were of the age 45 years or above, whilst only two (1.8%) were in the 18–24 age category.

Figure 5.4:

*Percentage distribution by age*



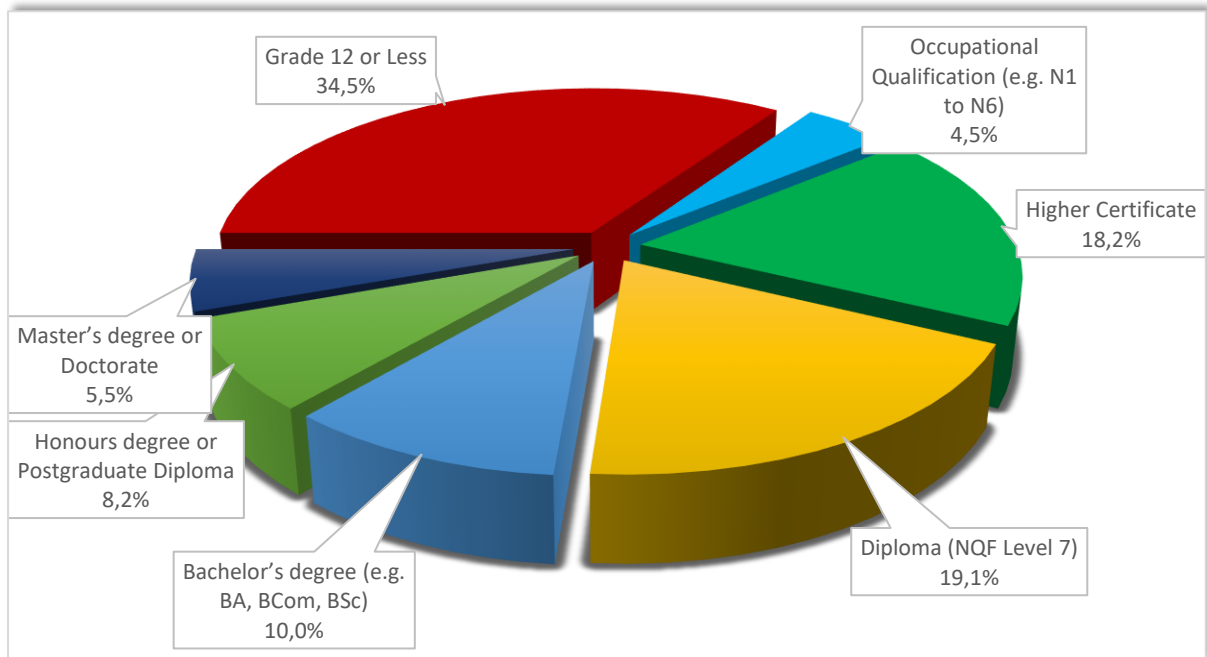
*Source: Author's own work*

#### 5.3.1.3 Distribution of responses by educational qualifications

Figure 5.5 illustrates the highest educational qualification categories. According to the graph, the majority of respondents (34.5%; n=38) had a matric certificate or less as their highest educational achievement. From the 110 participants, 20 (18.2%) had a Higher Certificate as their top level credentials, whilst 5 participants (4.5%) had an occupational qualification as their top-level qualification. Meanwhile, 21 participants (19.1%) had a Diploma as their top-level qualification, 9 (8.2%) participants reporting an Honours degree or Postgraduate Diploma as their top-level qualification. 6 (5.5%) of the people surveyed had either a Masters or Doctoral degree.

Figure 5.5

Percentage distribution by qualification



Source: Author's own work

### 5.3.2 Descriptive statistics for work engagement

The descriptive statistics for work engagement are shown on Table 5.12 below. The Shapiro-Wilki Tests for normality of the sample are all displayed below too.

Table 5.12

Descriptive statistics for the dimensions of work engagement\*

Item	Descriptive summary			Shapiro Normality Test	
	N	Mean	S.D	S-W Stat	S-W Sig.
Work Engagement	110	3.60	1.00	0.979	0.086*
Vigour	110	3.48	0.98	0.976	0.055*
Dedication	110	3.70	1.06	0.980	0.093*
Absorption	110	3.61	1.03	0.981	0.129*

\*Statements for work engagement were rated on a 7-point Likert scale (from 0 to 6)

Source: Author's own work



The above results indicate a moderately high level of both the mean (3.60) and standard deviation (1) for overall work engagement. Both the mean and standard deviation for the item vigour were moderately low at 3.48 and 0.98 respectively. The mean and standard deviation for the items dedication and absorption were moderately high at (mean=3.70, SD=1.06) and (mean=3.61 and SD=1.03) respectively.

### 5.3.2.1 One sample Wilcoxon signed rank tests and one sample T-tests for the mean responses for work engagement

To establish whether there was, indeed, significant evidence to suggest with statistical certainty whether the ratings were indeed above moderate a non-parametric one-sample Wilcoxon signed rank test (for non-normal data) and a one sample T-Test (for normally distributed data) were conducted. The results of both tests are presented in Table 5.13 below.

Table 5.13

*One sample Wilcoxon signed rank tests and one sample T-Tests for the mean responses of work engagement\**

Variable	<sup>a</sup> Mean or <sup>b</sup> Median	Test Value	Test Statistic	P-value	Cohen's d effect sizes [95%CI]
Work engagement	3.60	3.00	6.28	<0.001	0.599 [0.40 0.80]
Vigor	3.49	3.00	5.190	<0.001	0.495 [0.3 0.7]
Dedication	3.70	3.00	6.926	<0.001	0.660 [0.45 0.86]
Absorption	3.61	3.00	6.23	<0.001	0.594 [0.390 0.796]

\*Statements for work engagement were rated on a 7-point Likert scale (from 0 to 6). (\*) Represents statistically lower mean/median (i.e., lower than the test value). (\*\*) Represents statistically higher mean/median (i.e., higher than the test value).

Source: Author's own work

The observed means for work engagement and respective constructs were compared to a theoretical mean of 3. Mean and median levels significantly higher than the test value were regarded as respondents rating significantly high to the respective items, measuring particular variables or constructs. Those that are significantly lower than the test value was regarded as respondents rating significantly low to the item/s. The

Cohen's d effect sizes and the associated 95% confidence intervals were also used. The data also suggested that the respondents had statistically significant moderately high ratings on work engagement (mean=3.6008; test statistic=6.282; p=<0.001). This suggests that respondents often experience the items measuring work engagement. This was a similar trend with all the respective constructs for work engagement. The values of the effect sizes using Cohen's d estimates, reveals a medium effect.

### 5.3.3 Descriptive statistics for organisational commitment

The descriptive statistics for organisational commitment are shown on Table 5.14 below. The Shapiro-Wilki Tests for normality of the sample are all displayed.

Table 5.14

*Descriptive statistics for the dimensions of organisational commitment\**

Item	Descriptive Summary			Shapiro Normality Test	
	N	Mean	S.D	S-W Stat	S-W Sig.
Organisational commitment	110	4.24	0.78	0.989	0.517
Affective commitment	110	4.47	1.38	0.965	0.006
Continuance commitment	110	5.32	1.30	0.926	<0.001
Normative commitment	110	3.30	1.21	0.959	0.002

\*Statements for organisational commitment were rated on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 – 7.

*Source: Author's own work*

The above results indicate a moderately high level for both the mean and standard deviation for overall organisational commitment at 4.24 and 0.78 respectively. The results of the individual constructs indicate that continuance commitment (mean=5.32 and SD=1.30) was highly rated as compared to other constructs whilst normative commitment (mean=3.30, and SD=1.21) was the least rated construct.

### 5.3.3.1 One sample Wilcoxon signed rank tests and one sample T-Tests for the mean responses for organisational commitment

To establish whether there was, indeed, significant evidence to suggest with statistical certainty whether the ratings were indeed above moderate a non-parametric one-sample Wilcoxon signed rank test (for non-normal data) and a one sample T-Test (for normally distributed data) were conducted. Results from both tests are presented in Table 5.15 below.

Table 5.15:

*One sample Wilcoxon signed rank tests and one sample T-Tests for the mean responses of work engagement\**

Variable	<sup>a</sup> Mean or <sup>b</sup> Median	Test Value	Test Statistic	P-value	Cohen's d Effect Sizes [95%CI]
Organisational Commitment	4.24	4.00	3.247	<0.001	0.310 [0.118 0.500]
Affective commitment	4.67	4.00	3.529	<0.001	-
Continuance commitment	5.50	4.00	7.375	<0.001	-
Normative commitment	3.33	4.00	-5.422	<0.001	-

\*Statements for organisational commitment were rated on a 7-point Likert scale (from 1 to 6). (\*) Represents statistically lower mean/median (i.e., lower than the test value). (\*\*) Represents statistically higher mean/median (i.e., higher than the test value).

Source: Author's own work

The observed means for organisational commitment and respective constructs were compared to a theoretical mean of 4. Mean and median levels significantly higher than the test value were regarded as respondents rating significantly high to the respective items, measuring particular variables or constructs. The Cohen's d effect sizes and the associated 95% confidence intervals were also used. In Table 5.15 there was strong significant evidence from the data gathered in the study that there were low levels of normative commitment (median=3.33; test statistic=-5.422;  $p < 0.001$ ). Thus, respondents were generally disagreeing to the items measuring normative commitment. However, on the other hand, there was statistically significant evidence to suggest that respondents were generally agreeing to the items measuring organisational commitment (mean=4.2416; test statistic=3.247;  $p < 0.001$ ) as well as

affective commitment (median=4.67; test statistic=3.529;  $p < 0.001$ ) and continuance commitment (median=5.50; test statistic=7.375;  $p < 0.001$ ).

### 5.3.4 Descriptive statistics for demographic variables

#### 5.3.4.1 Independent samples T-tests on major theoretical variables by gender

Table 5.16 reflects the outcomes of the independent samples T-tests. The tests evaluated the means of the different genders' scope of overall work engagement and organisational commitment. Levene's test for variance homogeneity was applied. This test demonstrated that presupposing equal variances holds across all samples. Only on work engagement did significant differences in means between men and women emerge. Males presented significantly more elevated mean size of work engagement (mean=3.93; SD=0.77) than females (mean=3.51; SD=1.04) ( $t=1.862$ ;  $Pr > |t| = 0.033$ ). Males (mean=4.29; SD=0.90) displayed an indistinguishable mean level of organisational commitment compared to their female counterparts (mean=4.23; SD=0.23) ( $t=0.354$ ;  $Pr > |t|=0.362$ ).

Table 5.16

*Independent sample T-tests for differences in mean rating for major theoretical variables by gender*

Variable	Male (n=24)	Female (n=86)	T- Test	p-value
	Mean ± SD	Mean ± SD	Statistic	
Work engagement	3.93 ± 0.77	3.51 ± 1.04	1.862	0.033*
Organisational commitment	4.29 ± 0.90	4.23 ± 0.75	0.354	0.362

\*Statistically significant differences in mean ranking.

Source: Author's own work

#### 5.3.4.2 Independent samples T-Tests on major theoretical variables by age

Table 5.17 below depicts an independent-samples T-Test which compared the means between younger participants (< 35 years) and older (35 years and older) participant's levels on overall work engagement and organisational commitment.

Table 5.17

*Independent sample T-Tests for differences in mean rating for major theoretical variables by age*

Variables	<35 years (n =48)	Older (n = 62)	T- Test	p-value
	Mean ± SD	Mean ± SD	Statistic	
Work engagement	3.69 ± 1.02	3.53 ± 0.99	0.852	0.396
Organisational commitment	4.02 ± 0.82	4.41 ± 0.71	0.605	0.008*

\*Statistically significant differences in mean levels.

Source: Author's own work

Levene's test for homogeneity of variance verified that the assumption of equal variances holds in all samples. Significant differences in means between younger and older participants were only noticed on organisational commitment. Younger participants (mean=4.02; SD=0.82) showed significantly lower mean levels of organisational commitment than their older (mean=4.41; SD=0.71) counterparts (t=0.605; Pr>|t|=0.008). On the other hand, younger participants (mean=3.69; SD=1.02) showed no significant difference in the mean level of work engagement with their older (mean=3.53; SD=0.99) counterparts (t=0.852; P>|t|=0.396).

#### 5.3.4.3 Independent samples T-Tests on major theoretical variables by educational qualifications

Table 5.18 below depicts an independent-samples T-Test which compared the means levels on overall work engagement and organisational commitment between those without a degree and those with at least a degree.

Table 5.18

*Independent sample T-Tests for differences in mean rating for major theoretical variables by education level*

Variables	<Degree (n=84)	Degree (n=26)	T- Test	p-value
	Mean ± SD	Mean ± SD	Statistic	
Work engagement	3.37 ± 0.96	4.34 ± 0.77	-4.667	<0.001*
Organisational commitment	4.20 ± 0.80	4.37 ± 0.72	-0.981	0.178

\*Statistically significant differences in mean ranking.

Source: Author's own work

The Levene's test for homogeneity revealed that the assumption of equal variances holds in all samples. Significant differences in means between those without a degree and those with at least a degree were only noticed on work engagement. Those without a degree (mean=3.37; SD=0.96) showed a significantly lower mean level of work engagement than those with at least a degree (mean=4.34; SD=0.77). On the other hand, those without a degree (mean=4.20; SD=0.80) showed no significant difference in the mean level of organisational commitment with those with at least a degree (mean=4.37; SD=0.72).

### 5.3.5 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

#### 5.3.5.1 Friedman's two-way ANOVA tests for work engagement constructs

In this study the researcher used Friedman's two-way ANOVA to determine the most powerful work engagement constructs existing within the sample. The outcome proved that work engagement was experience in distinct proportions by the people that took part in the study ( $p < 0.001$ ) (see Table 5.8 and Figure 5.6). Dedication was the dominant work engagement construct as suggested by the mean ranking (mean rank=2.30) followed by absorption (Mean rank=1.95) whilst vigour (Mean rank=1.76) was rated the lowest.

Table 5.19

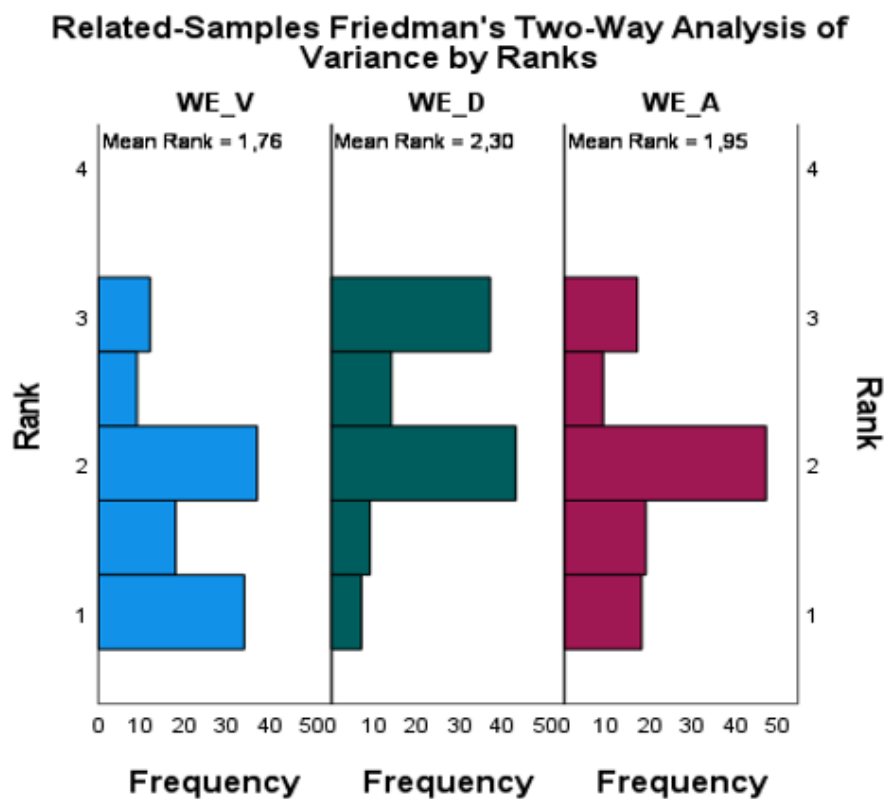
*Related samples Friedman's two-way ANOVA by ranks for work engagements constructs*

Variable	Mean Rank	N	Test Statistic	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Work engagement					
1. Vigor	1.76				
2. Dedication	2.30	110	24.837	2	<0.001
3. Absorption	1.95				

Source: Author's own work

Figure 5.6

*The related-samples Friedman's two-way analysis of variance mean ranking for the work engagement scale*



Source: Author's own work

The dominance of dedication, when compared with other work engagement constructs, is illustrated in Table 5.20, depicting the post-hoc pairwise comparisons. There is therefore enough evidence to deduce that dedication was rated higher than

vigour (Test statistic=-0.186;  $p < 0.001$ ) and absorption (Test statistic=-0.536;  $p = 0.028$ ) at 5% significance level. Vigour and absorption significantly rated the same (Test statistic=0.350;  $p = 0.501$ ).

Table 5.20

*Post hoc test, Friedman's two-way ANOVA pairwise comparisons for work engagement constructs*

Sample 1 – Sample 2	Test Statistic	Std. Test Statistic	Sig	Adj.Sig
Vigour - Absorption	-0.186	-1.382	0.167	0.501
Vigour - Dedication	-0.536	-3.978	<0.001	<0.001
Absorption - Dedication	0.350	2.596	0.009	0.028*

\*Statistically significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ). Each row tests the null hypothesis that the Sample 1 and sample 2 distributions are the same. Asymptotic significances (2-sided tests) are displayed. Significance values have been adjusted by the Bonferroni correction for multiple tests.

*Source: Author's own work*

### 5.3.5.2 Friedman's two-way ANOVA tests for organisational commitment constructs

To establish the dominant organisational commitment constructs that exist within the sample a Friedman's two-way ANOVA test was also conducted. Results in Table 10 and Figure 7 that there was significant evidence to conclude that the organisational commitment factors were rated differently by the respondents ( $p = < 0.0001$ ). The mean rankings suggests that continuance commitment (Mean rank = 2.54) was the dominant organisational commitment scale followed by affective commitment (Mean rank = 2.09) whilst normative commitment (Mean rank = 1.37) was the rated the least.



Table 5.21

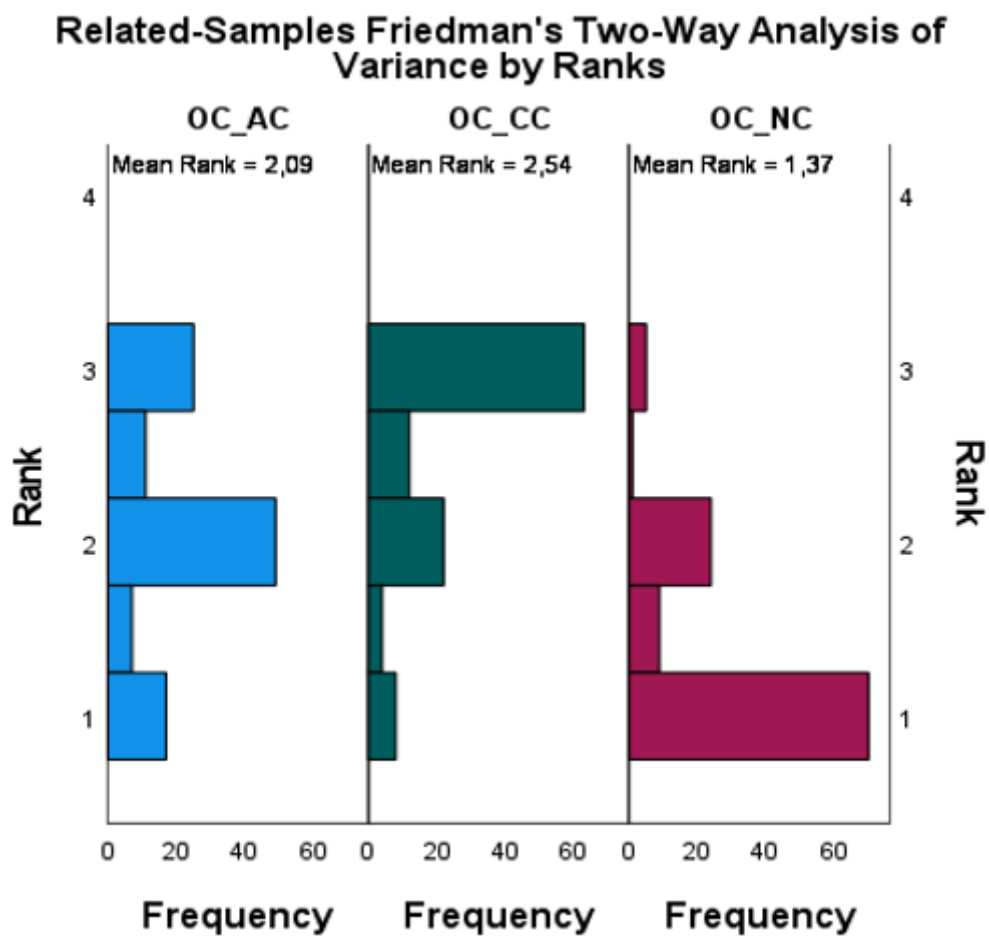
*Related samples Friedman's two-way ANOVA by ranks for organisational commitment constructs*

Variable	Mean Rank	N	Test Statistic	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Organisational Commitment Factors					
1. Affective commitment	2.09				
2. Continuance	2.54	10	83.839	2	<0.0001
3. Normative commitment	1.37				

Source: Author's own work

Figure 5.7

*The related-samples Friedman's two-way analysis of variance mean ranking for the organisational commitment scale.*



Source: Author's own work

Table 5.22 below shows the post-hoc pairwise comparisons, which further shows the dominance of continuance commitment as compared to other organisational commitment constructs. Thus, there is sufficient evidence at 5% significance level to conclude that continuance commitment was rated highly than normative commitment (Test statistic=1.174;  $p < 0.0001$ ) and affective commitment (Test statistic=-0.450;  $p < 0.0001$ ). In addition, there is sufficient evidence at 5% significance level to conclude that affective commitment (Test statistic=-0.536;  $p = 0.009$ ) was significantly highly rated than normative commitment (Test statistic=0.725;  $p < 0.0001$ ).

Table 5.22

*Friedman's two-way ANOVA pairwise comparisons for organisational commitment constructs*

Sample 1 – Sample 2	Test Statistic	Std. Test Statistic	Sig	Adj.Sig
Normative - Affective	0.725	5.351	<0.001	<0.0001*
Normative - Continuance	1.174	8.669	0.000	<0.0001*
Affective - Continuance	-0.450	-3.319	<0.001	0.003*

\*Statistically significant differences (\*  $p < 0.05$ ). Each row tests the null hypothesis that the Sample 1 and sample 2 distributions are the same. Asymptotic significances (2-sided tests) are displayed. Significance values have been adjusted by the Bonferroni correction for multiple tests.

Source: Author's own work

#### 5.4 Correlational statistics

Spearman's correlation coefficient was used to examine the nature, strength and direction of the correlations that exist within the hypothesised frameworks. A two-tailed Spearman's Rho correlation test was opted because of the associated composite null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the two variables. Cohen (1988) classified the value of the correlation coefficient into three categories, weak (0.10 to 0.29), moderate (0.30 to 0.49) and strong (0.50 to 1.00). Effect size was then used to decide on the practical significance of the findings. According to the basic rules of thumb by Cohen (1988; 1992), the effect size is low if the value of the correlation coefficient varies around the absolute value of 0.1, medium if it varies around 0.3 and

large if it varies more than 0.5. Thus, the correlation coefficient itself is interpretable as an effective size measure. Table 5.23 shows the results of the Spearman's Rho correlation coefficients ( $r_s$ ) for relations of the various correlations.

Table 5.23

*Spearman's correlation coefficient*

Variables	Work engagement	Vigour	Dedication	Absorption
	$r_s$	$r_s$	$r_s$	$r_s$
Organisational Commitment	0.283**	0.313**	0.231*	0.283**
Affective Commitment	0.498**	0.517**	0.457**	0.470**
Continuance commitment	-0.248**	-0.256**	-0.232*	-0.210*
Normative commitment	0.154	-0.256**	0.118	0.169

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Author's own work

Hypothesis 1: The work engagement and organisational commitment hypothesis

- H01: A significant relationship does not exist between work engagement and organisational commitment.
- H1: A significant relationship exists between work engagement and organisational commitment.

The results suggest that work engagement had a weak and positive significant linear relationship with organisational commitment ( $r_s=0.283$ ). These findings reveal medium effect size for the established relationship. Thus, there is sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis in favour of the alternative hypothesis and conclude there is a weak

and positive significant relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment.

Assessing the relationship that exists between organisational commitment and work engagement constructs, the results also revealed positive and significant relationships with vigor ( $r_s=0.313$ ), dedication ( $r_s=0.231$ ) and absorption ( $r_s=0.283$ ). According to Cohen (1988; 1992), the effect size of these relationships is regarded as medium. Similar positive and significant, but moderate relationships were also observed between affective commitment with work engagement as a whole ( $r_s=0.498$ ), vigor ( $r_s=0.517$ ), dedication ( $r_s=0.457$ ) and absorption ( $r_s=0.470$ ). The effect size of these relationships also suggests a medium effect. On the contrary, continuance commitment had significant and weak, negative correlations with work engagement as a whole: ( $r_s=-0.248$ ), vigor ( $r_s=-0.256$ ), dedication ( $r_s=-0.232$ ) and absorption ( $r_s=-0.210$ ) suggesting a low effect size. Normative commitment had no significant correlations with work engagement as a whole: ( $r_s=0.154$ ), vigor ( $r_s=0.154$ ), absorption ( $r_s=0.118$ ) dedication ( $r_s=0.169$ ).

## **5.5 Inferential Statistics**

### **5.5.1 Linear Regression**

A simple linear regression model was examined to determine whether work engagement significantly predicts organisational commitment. Work engagement was treated as the predictor variable on organisational commitment which resulted in a model that was assumed to be statistically significant ( $F=16.695$ ;  $p=0.001$ ). The outcome of the Durbin-Watson fell between  $1.5 < d < 2.5$  at  $d=1.690$ , it can therefore be presumed that no first order autocorrelation exists in the linear regression data. Table 5.24 depicts the model fit and model summary statistics. As per provided framework, work engagement contributed a remarkably small portion of the differences (13.4%) in organisational commitment ( $R^2=0.134$ ,  $R^2$  Adjusted=0.126).

Table 5.24

*Simple linear regression model fit summary for work engagement on organisational commitment*

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean	F Value	Pr>F
Regression	8.882	1	8.882	16.695	0.001
Residual	57.457	108	0.532		
Total	66.339	109			

---

*Model Summary*

R <sup>2</sup> (Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> )	0.134(0.126)
Durbin-Watson Test - Test for auto-correlation	1.690

(\*)Significant fit. Note: Independent variables: Constant, Work engagement; Dependent variable: Organisational commitment

*Source: Author's own work*

The parameter estimate for  $\beta_1$  is statistically significant as indicated in Table 5.24 ( $\beta_1=0.285$ ;  $t=4.086$ ;  $p<0.001$ ), inferring that work engagement significantly predicts work engagement. The results further support the correlational analysis, which also revealed a statistically significant relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment. The resultant unstandardized model is:

$$\text{Organisational commitment} = 3.217 + 0.285 * \text{Work engagement} + \text{residual } (\varepsilon)$$

Table 5.25

*Parameter estimates for organisational commitment on work engagement*

Parameter	Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig
	Coefficients		Coefficients		
	B	Std Error	B		
Constant	3.217	0.260		12.359	<0.001*
Work engagement	0.285	0.070	0.366	4.086	<0.001*

(\*)Significant fit. Note: Independent variables: Constant, Work engagement; Dependent variable: Organisational commitment.

*Source: Author's own work*

### 5.5.2 Post hoc analysis hierarchical regression approach

A stepwise multiple linear regression model was used to pinpoint the independent variable variable/s (work engagement) that adds unique variance in predicting organisational commitment, and only one significant model was found. Table 5.19 shows that the model with vigour as a predictor variable on organizational commitment was the most significant ( $F=19.207$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p=0.0001$ ). According to the standardised  $\beta$  coefficients in Table 5.27, vigour has a significant positive effect on organisational commitment ( $\beta_1=0.306$ ;  $t=4.383$ ;  $p=0.0001$ ). After testing for multicollinearity, tolerance was found to be greater than 0.1 (and  $VIF<10$ ) for vigour which is the significant variable and thus non-existence multicollinearity. The Durbin-Watson autocorrelation fell between  $1.5<d<2.5$  at  $d=1.715$  implying a non-existent first order linear autocorrelation. The framework is illustrated by the following formula;

$$\text{Organisational commitment} = 3.172 + 0.306^* \text{Vigour} + \text{residual } (\varepsilon)$$

Table 5.26

*Stepwise multiple linear regression model fit and summary for work engagement constructs on organisational commitment.*

Source	Df	Sum of	Mean Square	F Value	Pr>F
Regression	1	10.016	10.016	19.207	<0.0001*
Residual	108	56.322	0.522		
Total	109	66.339			

---

*Model Summary*

R <sup>2</sup> (Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> )	0.151(0.143)
Durbin-Watson Test - Test for auto-	1.715

\* Significant fit. Note: Independent variables: Constant, Vigor, Dedication and Absorption; Dependent variable: Organisational commitment.

Source: Author's own work

Table 5.27

*Parameter estimates for the work engagement constructs on organisational commitment.*

Parameter	Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig
	Coefficients		Coefficients		
	B	Std Error	B		
Constant	3.172	0.254		12.51	<0.001
Vigor	0.306	0.070	0.389	4.383	<0.001

\* Significant fit. Note: Independent variables: Constant, Vigor, Dedication and Absorption;  
Dependent variable: Organisational commitment

*Source: Author's own work*

Dedication and absorption were not included in the model due to non significant computations (see Table 5.27).

Table 5.28

*Excluded variables*

Model	Beta In	T	Sig.	Partial Correlation	Collinearity Statistics		
					Tolerance	VIF	Minimum
							Tolerance
Dedication	-0.159	-0.724	0.471	-0.070	0.163	6.145	0.163
Absorption	-0.012	-0.051	0.960	-0.005	0.151	6.604	0.151

Note: Dependent Variable: Organisational commitment

Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Vigor, Dedication and Absorption

*Source: Author's own work*

Hypothesis 3a: The demographics on work engagement hypothesis

- H3a<sub>0</sub>: An employee's gender, age and educational qualifications will not significantly influence work engagement.
- H3a<sub>1</sub>: An employee's gender, age and educational qualifications will significantly influence work engagement.

In ascertaining the effect of demographic variables on work engagement, the researcher made use of a multiple linear regression model. Because demographic variables are categorical predictors, it is not possible to enter them directly into the multiple linear regression model for meaningful construal. The K levels of each categorical variable were changed to k-1 variables with two levels each (dummy coding). Gender as a dichotomous variable has the advantage that it can be directly included in the regression model. Gender was coded, 0=Males, 1=Females. There were four age tiers, and the fourth category (45 years and older) was coded as the reference category. As for educational qualifications, the first category (Grade 12 or less) was coded as the reference category. In such a case, the dummy coded variables were modelled as independent variables, ending up with a statistically significant model (F=3.021; p=0.002). Durbin Watson (d=2.106) fell between  $1.5d < 2.5$  presupposing the nonexistence of first order linear autocorrelation. Table 5.29 below shows the model fit summary.

Table 5.29

*Simple linear regression model fit summary for demographic variables on work engagement*

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean	F Value	Pr>F
Regression	25.635	10	2.564	3.021	0.002
Residual	84.010	99	0.849		
Total	109.645	109			

---

*Model Summary*

R <sup>2</sup> (Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> )	0.234(0.156)
Durbin-Watson Test - Test for auto-correlation	2.106

(\*)Significant fit. Note: Independent variables: Constant, Gender, Age and Educational qualifications; Dependent variable: Work engagement.

*Source: Author's own work*

Parameter estimates were assessed to establish the significance of demographic variables' influence on work engagement (See Table 5.30). The results reveal that the parameter estimate for Gender ( $\beta_1$ ) is somewhat statistically significant ( $\beta_1 = -0.441$ ;  $t = -1.962$ ;  $p = 0.050$ ). This result suggests that females had a somewhat 0.441 lower mean level of work engagement as compared to males. The inference is that gender remarkably affects work engagement because of the statistically significant  $\beta_1$ , providing adequate proof at 5% significance level not to accept the null hypothesis.



On the other hand, none of the dummy coded variables for age had any significant influence on work engagement.

In terms of educational qualifications, the parameter estimates for Bachelor's degree ( $\beta_8$ ) ( $\beta_8=1.062$ ;  $t=3.357$ ;  $p=0.001$ ), Honours degree ( $\beta_9$ ) ( $\beta_9=1.163$ ;  $t=3.183$ ;  $p=0.002$ ) and Masters' degree or above ( $\beta_{10}$ ) ( $\beta_{10}=0.907$ ;  $t=2.143$ ;  $p=0.035$ ) were all statistically significant. Thus, those with a Bachelor's degree had work engagement of 1.062 higher than that of those with Grade 12 or less. In addition, those with an Honours degree had work engagement, which is 1.163 higher than that of those with Grade 12 or less. Lastly, those with a masters' degree or above had work engagement, which is 0.907 higher than that of those with Grade 12 or less. Though those with an occupational qualification ( $\beta_5=0.468$ ;  $t=1.025$ ;  $p=0.308$ ), higher certificate ( $\beta_6=0.143$ ;  $t=0.543$ ;  $p=0.588$ ) and diploma ( $\beta_7=0.098$ ;  $t=0.380$ ;  $p=0.704$ ) had elevated levels of work engagement compared to those with Grade 12 or less, but their mean levels were not significantly higher. Since  $\beta_5$ ,  $\beta_6$  and  $\beta_7$  coefficients for educational qualifications are statistically significant, the proof is adequate to infer that educational qualifications have a remarkable effect on work engagement.

Table 5.30

*Parameter estimates for the demographics on work engagement model.*

Parameter	Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig
	Coefficients		Coefficients		
	B	Std	B		
Constant	3.831	0.342		11.213	<0.001*
Gender	-0.441	0.224	-0.183	-1.966	0.050*
Age (18 – 24 years)	0.555	0.731	0.074	0.760	0.449
Age (25 – 34 years)	-0.218	0.269	-0.108	-0.812	0.419
Age (35 – 44 years)	-0.296	0.273	-0.146	-1.082	0.282
Edu (Occupational	0.468	0.457	0.098	1.025	0.308
Edu (Higher Certificate)	0.143	0.264	0.055	0.543	0.588
Edu (Diploma)	0.098	0.257	0.038	0.380	0.704
Edu (Bachelor's degree)	1.062	0.316	0.319	3.357	0.001*
Edu (Honours degree)	1.163	0.365	0.319	3.183	0.002*
Edu (Master's degree or	0.907	0.423	0.206	2.143	0.035*

(\*)Significant fit. Note: Independent variables: Constant, Gender, Age and Educational qualifications; Dependent variable: Work engagement.

Source: Author's own work

Hypothesis 3b: The demographics on organisational commitment hypothesis

- H3b<sub>0</sub>: An employee's gender, age and educational qualifications will not significantly influence organisational commitment.
- H3b<sub>1</sub>: An employee's gender, age and educational qualifications will significantly influence organisational commitment.

In order to ascertain the effect of demographic variables on organisational commitment, a multiple linear regression model was examined. As previously indicated, the K levels of each demographic variables were changed into k-1 variables with two levels each. Gender, as a dichotomous variable was directly input into the regression model whilst the other variables (age and educational qualifications) were coded as indicated in the previous hypothesis. The dummy coded variables were treated as independent variables, yielding a statistically significant model (F=2.175; p=0.025). The Durbin-Watson fell between 1.5<d<2.5 at d=1.979 presupposing the non existence of first order linear autocorrelation. The resultant model explained 18.0% of the total variation for organisational commitment (R<sup>2</sup> =0.180). Table 5.31 below depicts the model fit summary.

Table 5.31

*Simple linear regression model fit summary for organisational commitment*

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F Value	Pr>F
Regression	11.947	10	1.195	2.175	0.025
Residual	54.391	99	0.549		
Total	66.339	109			

*Model Summary*

R <sup>2</sup> (Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> )	0.180(0.097)
Durbin-Watson Test - Test for auto-	1.979

(\*)Significant fit. Note: Independent variables: constant, gender, age and educational qualifications; Dependent variable: organisational commitment.

Source: Author's own work

Parameter estimates were assessed to determine the demographic variables' influence on organisational commitment. In order to ascertain the significance of the effect of the demographic variables on organisational commitment, parameter

estimates were assessed (see Table 5.25). The results reveal that the parameter estimate for Gender ( $\beta_1$ ) is not statistically significant ( $\beta_1=-0.107$ ;  $t=-0.595$ ;  $p=0.553$ ). Thus, females had an organisational commitment, which is 0.107 lower than of males, but it is not significantly lower. On the other hand, none of the dummy coded variables for educational qualifications had any significant influence on organisational commitment. All the age groups had lower mean levels of organisational commitment than those in the 45-year age group and above category. However, these mean levels were not significantly lower.

In terms of age, the parameter estimates for those in the 25-to-34-year age group ( $\beta_3$ ) ( $\beta_3=-0.719$ ;  $t=-3.326$ ;  $p=0.001$ ) and 35-to-44-year age group ( $\beta_4$ ) ( $\beta_4=-0.530$ ;  $t=-2.413$ ;  $p=0.018$ ) were all statistically significant. Thus, those in the 25-to-34-year age group had organisational commitment, which is 0.719 lower in comparison to the 45+ age range. In addition, those in the 35-to-44-year age group had organisational commitment, which is 0.530 lower when compared to those in the 45-year age group and above. Though those in the 18-to-24-year age group ( $\beta_2=-0.420$ ;  $t=-0.072$ ;  $p=0.477$ ) had organisational commitment levels which were 0.420 lower when compared to the 45+ age group, their mean levels were not significantly lower. Since  $\beta_5$  and  $\beta_{74}$  coefficients for age are statistically significant, presenting adequate proof not to accept the null hypothesis at a significance level of 5% and inferring that age remarkably affects organisational commitment.

Table 5.32

*Parameter estimates for demographics on organisational commitment model.*

Parameter	Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig
	Coefficients		Coefficients		
	B	Std	B		
Constant	4.859	0.275		17.676	<0.001*
Gender	-0.107	0.181	-0.057	-0.595	0.553
Age (18 – 24 years)	-0.420	0.588	-0.072	-0.714	0.477
Age (25 – 34 years)	-0.719	0.216	-0.457	-3.326	0.001*
Age (35 – 44 years)	-0.530	0.220	-0.336	-2.413	0.018*
Edu (Occupational	0.479	0.368	0.128	1.302	0.196
Edu (Higher Certificate)	-0.140	0.212	-0.070	-0.661	0.510
Edu (Diploma)	-0.231	0.207	-0.117	-1.116	0.267
Edu (Bachelor's degree)	0.334	0.255	0.129	1.313	0.192
Edu (Honours degree)	-0.129	0.294	-0.046	-0.439	0.662
Edu (Master's degree or	0.304	0.340	0.089	0.894	0.374

(\*)Significant fit. Note: Independent variables: constant, gender, age and educational qualifications; Dependent variable: organisational commitment.

*Source: Author's own work*

## 5.6 Discussion

This study intended to explore the relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment specifically at a private distance learning institution. The secondary aim of the study was to explore the primary aims in relation to the participants' biographical details (gender, age, educational qualification groups).

### 5.6.1 The sample profile

The sample comprised of permanent employees at a private distance learning institution. The major part of the study sample comprised of females within the 35-to-44-year age range followed by those falling within the 25-to-34-year age range. Most of the participants possessed a matric certificate (Grade 12). The profile of the sample was considered in the interpretation of the outcomes. The sample in this study exhibited moderately high levels of work engagement. Schaufeli (2011, p.19) defined work engagement as "a positive affective-motivational state of fulfillment that is

characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption”. The results of this investigation revealed that that the sample exhibited each of the distinct characteristics of work engagement with vigour being rated moderately low and both dedication and absorption moderately high. Vigour is illustrated by vitality and mental strength whilst on the job, the commitment to apply effort to the job, and perseverance despite challenges (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2006). Dedication refers to one’s devotion to his or her work expressed through the interest one shows in their work and the importance that one attaches to it (Simons & Buitendach, 2013). Absorption has been defined as “being fully concentrated and happily engulfed in one’s work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with separating oneself from work” (Ugwu, 2013, p.17). The sample at the private distance education institution seems to be overall engaged, exhibiting levels of each of the distinct forms of work engagement.

The study sample showed moderately high levels of organisational commitment. Organisational commitment can be defined as an employee’s psychological state which represents their kinship with an enterprise and has effect on the organisational member’s choice to stay with the enterprise (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Organisational commitment is made up of affective, continuance and normative commitment. Continuance commitment was highly rated within the sample, followed by affective commitment. The least rated was normative commitment. Continuance commitment is an organisational member’s perception of the loss they are likely to encounter when they exit their job (Meyer et al., 1993). The magnitude of an organisational member’s bond to an enterprise and the enterprise’s mission, is affective commitment (Abdullah, 2011). Abdelmoula (2021, p.200) defines normative commitment as “the obligation to stay in the firm”. The majority of the respondents felt that they were not obliged to stay with the organisation, however their main reason for staying was due to the costs that may be involved if they chose to leave. Examples of costs include not being able to find an alternative job, not finding a job that provides similar or better benefits, and not being able to provide for their family once one has chosen to leave the organisation. Overall, organisational commitment at the institution is high, with the sample exhibiting continuance commitment as the dominant construct.

The sample in this study exhibited both engagement and organisational commitment. In line with the JDR model, it can be postulated that the organisation under study

provided adequate job resources to meet the job demands at the organisation which resulted in positive organisational outcomes and in this case resulted in organisational commitment.

### **5.6.2 Research aim 1: Determine the relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment from an empirical view**

According to the study's findings, there is a weak positive relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment ( $r_s=0.283$ ). As the level of work engagement increases, the level of organisational commitment also increases. Though the relationship is positive, the strength of the relationship is weak. This is in agreement with past findings by Moshoeu and Geldenhuys (2015) who reported a significant relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment within a distance learning environment. This aligns with Knotts and Houghton (2021) who reported that employees that are not engaged desire to change their jobs or careers for the purposes of finding fulfillment. Engaged staff members voluntarily choose to exert effort and attention towards vocational duties as long as they get satisfaction from the work, but once the satisfaction dissipates they are ready to leave the organisation in search of greener pastures. This is supported by Aboramadam et al. (2019) who state that individuals with elevated levels of work engagement most likely have amicable relationships with their employer which then impacts organisational commitment.

Work engagement focuses on the link between an employee and their vocational duties whilst organisational commitment focuses on the link between a staff member and the enterprise that they work for (Aboramadam et al., 2019). It is evident in this study that employees at this private distance learning institution have both high levels of engagement and commitment and that these two constructs are slightly positively related, concluding that engaged workers had better commitment. This is supported by Beukes & Botha (2013) who state that the more engaged people are the more committed they are to the organisation and vice versa. Also in line with Robyn and Mitonga-Monga's (2017) study in a manufacturing enterprise in South Africa, which

revealed a practically and statistically significant relationship between overall work engagement and overall organisational commitment.

The outcome of the research also points to a weak but positive significant relationship between organisational commitment and the individual constructs of work engagement which are vigour ( $rs=0.313$ ), dedication ( $rs=0.231$ ) and absorption ( $rs=0.238$ ). The effect size of this relationship is medium, meaning that the results have some practical significance and hence can be applied to the real world. The results indicate that committed employees display each of the distinct forms of work engagement. A review of the literature did not yield much on organisational commitment and each of the individual constructs of work engagement. A moderate positive significant relationship was found between affective commitment and work engagement as a whole with a medium effect size. A review of the literature revealed that there are not many published works affective commitment and work engagement as a whole.

A moderate positive significant relationship was also found between affective commitment and each of the individual constructs of work engagement (vigour, dedication and absorption), indicating that affective commitment is positively related to each of the constructs of work engagement. This is in line with a study by Senuhoe, Viviers and Mayer (2015) within the insurance sector. Their results indicated a positive significant relationship with medium effect between affective commitment and vigour, dedication and absorption. It can be inferred from the outcome of this inquiry that employees in this organisation who identify and have an emotional connection with the organisation also exhibit energy in their jobs, are attentive to their tasks and persevere in spite of any challenges.

### **5.6.3 Research aim 2: Determine whether work engagement predicts organisational commitment within the private distance learning context**

The results of the study indicate that work engagement predicts organisational commitment. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) state that the level of one's engagement determines how attached they are to an entity and influences their choice to stay, and that people stay due to the guaranteed of reciprocal exchanges. This is in line with the

Social Exchange Theory. Jalilvand and Voster (2015) state that commitment is based on the Social Exchange Theory which views the employment relationship as grounded in resource trade, regulated by the norm of reciprocity. Saks and Rothmann (2006) postulate that organisational members view involvement as a method of reimbursing the employer. Beukes and Botha (2013) state that engagement can then be perceived as a predictor of commitment. Employees' level of engagement is determined by several features that include overload, time pressures and supervision (Marques, 2013). If requisite support is given to organisational members to meet emotional, physical, and cognitive requirements, this results in engagement (Janik, 2012). Engagement then results in organisational commitment. This supports the Job Demands Resources model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2011), which states that engagement will result in positive job outcomes such as organisational commitment. This is however in contrast to other research which views organisation commitment as a predictor of work engagement. Pieters, Zyl and Nel's (2019) study showed that normative and affective commitment were significant predictors of organisational commitment.

#### **5.6.4 Research aim 3: Ascertain if key demographic groups exhibit significant differences in terms of work engagement and organisational commitment**

##### **5.6.4.1 Gender**

Females in this study experienced lower engagement compared to their male counterparts. These results affirm Steyn and Grobler's (2016) assertions that women's behavior in the workplace tends to be distinct from that of men. This study's outcomes align with those of Steyn and Grobler (2016) among South African persons who were in indefinite employment contracts, which showed elevated levels of engagement in men when compared to that of women. Steyn and Grobler (2016) state that literature on work engagement has no reference to sex differences, with authors preferring to provide an equal approach toward the behavior of men and women in the workplace. Work engagement has been defined as an optimistic satisfying vocation connected psychological condition that is shown through one's energy exerted towards work, perseverance towards work and immersion into that work (Schaufeli, 2002). Work engagement can be expressed as an attitude or behavior, and this study has shown that it is higher in men than it is in women. The workplace environment is the source



of job resources and job demands and when the Job Demands Resources model is considered for this study, it can be concluded that the organisation in this study seemed to provide appropriate resources to the male employees whilst not adequately considering the unique resources required by women and thus resulting in the difference in engagement.

This study's outcomes revealed that men experienced excess organisational commitment when compared to that of women. Organisational commitment can be described as the extent to which individuals align themselves with an enterprise's purpose and the commitment in attaining that purpose (Meyer and Allen, 2004). Organisational commitment is a vital organisational construct as it exerts pressure on employment issues like retention and fulfilment. It can therefore be assumed from the results of this study that men are more committed to the achievement of organisational outcomes compared to women. The results of this study are contrary to the findings of Peterson, Kara, Fanimokun and Smith (2019) in their study carried out among managers and professionals in 26 countries. The results showed indistinguishable differences on both genders organisational commitment. A difference was found once they included masculinity as a moderator. There were higher levels of commitment among men in masculine societies and higher levels of commitment among women in feminine societies. Another study by Sloan (2017) found that of the two genders, women experienced excess amounts of engagement.

#### 5.6.4.2 Age groups

The results of this study indicate that age has no significant influence on work engagement. This is contrary to the research by Mvana and Louw (2020) in their research among teachers in the Tshwane South district in South Africa, which showed that younger teachers were more engaged compared to older teachers. Further probing is required on this finding. The result of this study indicates that those in the 45+ years age group had the highest organisational commitment and those in the 25-to-34-year age group showed the lowest organisational commitment. This difference could be explained by the fact that with increase in age, the chances of getting alternative employment are reduced and this limitation pushes them to stay with the organisation (Sakar and Nirala, 2020). Outcomes of this study align with that of Gupta (2015) among Indian organisations, which showed that Generation Y (born between

1982 and 1994) exhibited more professional commitment and less organisational commitment when compared to generation X (born between 1965 and 1980). The result implies that younger workers perceive themselves to be highly mobile and that there may be other opportunities elsewhere compared to their current organisation.

#### 5.6.4.3 Educational qualifications

The results of the study indicate that qualifications have a significant influence on work engagement with those with a qualification above grade 12 exhibiting higher levels of work engagement compared to those with grade 12 or less. Outcomes of this study align with one carried out in India among employees within the IT industry, which showed that as an organisational members' educational credentials increase vertically their level of engagement increases as well (Sharma et al., 2017). Higher levels of engagement among those with higher qualifications might be attributed to such employees performing more challenging jobs that keep employees more engaged and they also become more confident in performing their duties. These results contradict the results of a study carried out among school teachers in the Tshwane South District in Gauteng which showed that teachers with higher qualifications were less engaged compared with those with lower qualifications.

Mvana and Low (2020) describe educational qualifications as the optimal predictors of work engagement, a view that is supported by Sharma et al., (2017). This study however shows no significant influence of educational qualifications on organisational commitment. These results contrast the results of a study conducted by Sarkar and Nirala (2020) which indicated organisational members become less committed to an enterprise as they obtain higher educational credentials. This may be because as employees attain higher qualifications, the organisation will no longer meet their needs, and as employees begin to desire more challenging work and vertical movement, their current enterprise may not offer this (Sarkar & Nirala, 2020). Results on the influence of educational qualifications require further study.

## 5.7 Chapter summary

This chapter presented the statistical analysis of the results, the results were discussed, limitations given, and key recommendations made. The following research aims for the empirical study were achieved:

- Determine the relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment from an empirical view.
- Determine whether work engagement predicts organisational commitment within the private distance learning context.
- Ascertain if key biographical groups exhibit significant differences in terms of work engagement and organisational commitment.

In Chapter 6, an elaboration of conclusions and limitations concerning the scholarship will be provided. Appropriate recommendations will be provided regarding the strategies that the institution can implement to augment work engagement and organisational commitment.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

The study's outcomes were presented in the preceding chapter including a discussion on the outcomes. This chapter intends to present conclusions regarding the literature review and the results of the empirical study. This chapter also presents the limitations of the research and proposes recommendations for the research context and future research.

#### **6.2 Conclusions**

The purpose of the study was to explore the relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment at a private distance learning institution. The conclusions in this chapter are drawn from the literature and the empirical study.

##### **6.2.1 Conclusions pertaining to the literature**

The first aim regarding the literature review was to conceptualise work engagement from a theoretical perspective and this aim was achieved in Chapter 2. The Job Demands Resources (JDR) Model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2011) was used to explain work engagement. The JDR Model postulates that when mental, physical and emotional pressure is exerted on an individual, this places a high demand on the individual, resulting in distress which results in poor organisational outcomes. However, if job demands are combined with job resources such as social support, autonomy and feedback, this will result in increased employee intrinsic motivation which will lead to positive organisational outcomes like good performance, job satisfaction, and work engagement. If job resources are limited, this may lead to job strain especially if the job demands are high (Tremblay & Messervey, 2011; Bakker & de Vries, 2020). A third construct that has recently been included in the JDR model is personal resources. Personal resources can be described as personality traits that assist individuals to influence and control their environments (Tremblay & Messervey,

2011). Studies have shown that personal resources may result in reduced burnout and increased work engagement (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). If personal resources are absent, it may become difficult to handle high job demands leading to job strain symptoms, and negatively impacting work engagement.

The Conservation of Resources Theory has been described as the basis of the JDR Model. The theory postulates that individuals invest in resources that assist in dealing with demanding resources (Odejokun & Edemudia, 2014) and get stressed when resources are lost (Hobfoll, 2019) which then results in diminished engagement. Job resources and personal resources are regarded as antecedents of work engagement but there are other antecedents discussed in the literature such as job characteristics (Sohrabizadeh and Sayfour, 2021) rewards and recognition (Victor and Hoole, 2017), supervisory and organisational support (Sulea et al., 2012) and organisational justice (Hassan & Jubari, 2010). The presence or absence of these factors drives work engagement either positively or negatively respectively. Work engagement can result in positive organisational outcomes, which can be referred to as the consequences of work engagement. Consequences of work engagement that have been revealed from the literature review include retention, productivity, job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour and organisational commitment.

The second aim regarding the literature review was to conceptualise organisational commitment from a theoretical perspective and this aim was achieved in Chapter 3. Allen and Meyer (1997) define organisational commitment as an individual's mental state that represents one's connection to an organisation that determines whether one stays or leaves the organisation. Porter et al. (1974) identified three characteristics of organisational commitment: one's trust in what the organisation stands for, willingness to put effort towards organisational goals, and a willingness to stay with the organisation. Allen and Meyer (1991) propose three components of organisational commitment: affective commitment, normative commitment, and continuance commitment. Affective commitment refers to the extent to which an employee is attached to the organisation and the organisation's goals (Abdullah, 2011). Normative commitment is an individual's perception of what it is they are likely to lose if they leave their job (Meyer et al., 1993). Continuance commitment refers to feeling obliged to stay with an organisation (Abdemoula, 2021). Allen and Meyer (1990), state that the three

components of organisational commitment are different but not separate types of commitment, and hence to some extent employees may experience each of these types of commitment.

Organisational commitment can be explained by the organisational attachment theory and the social exchange theory. Attachment theory explains individuals' propensity to bond with others and that people form bonds with attachment figures they believe have the power to offer them security (Bowlby, 1969). There is therefore an attachment with an organisation if it is viewed as the custodian of job security. On the other hand, the Social Exchange Theory states that the relationship between the employer and employee is based on the norm of reciprocity (Blau, 1964). Once an employee gets something they value from the organisation, they reciprocate by committing to the organisation. Organisational commitment results in positive outcomes for the organisation such as reduced turnover, improved performance, job involvement, and job satisfaction.

The third aim was to explain work engagement and organisational commitment's theoretical relationship concerning open distance learning institutions. This aim was achieved as well. A review of the literature indicated that there is a theoretical relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment. There are differing views regarding the relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment. Some studies indicate that work engagement is an antecedent of organisational commitment whilst others indicate that work engagement is a consequence of organisational commitment (Kim et al., 2017). In spite of the contention on the directionality of the two concepts, studies have shown that there is a positive relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment. Cesario and Chambel (2017) state that if employees' values and moral standards are in alignment with the organisation's values and moral standards, this will result in both work engagement and organisational commitment.

## 6.2.2 Conclusions pertaining to the empirical study

The study looked at the following aims:

- Research aim 1: Determine the relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment from an empirical view.
- Research aim 2: Determine whether work engagement predicts organisational commitment within the private distance learning context.
- Research aim 3: Ascertain if key biographical groups exhibit significant differences in terms of work engagement and organisational commitment.
- Research aim 4: Propose recommendations to the organisation regarding strategies to enhance work engagement and organisational commitment.
- Research aim 5: Emphasise areas that may warrant further research on work engagement and organisational commitment for the field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology.

The results of the study provided supportive evidence for the following hypothesis.

- H1: A significant relationship exists between work engagement and organisational commitment.
- H2: Work engagement significantly predicts organisational commitment.
- H3a: An employee's gender, age, and educational qualifications will significantly influence work engagement.
- H3b: An employee's gender, age, and educational qualifications will significantly influence organisational commitment.

6.2.2.1 Research aim 1: Determine the relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment from an empirical view.

It can be concluded from the study, that work engagement is positively related to organisational commitment. The findings from the sample at the private distance learning institution indicate that there is a relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment. The results, therefore, indicate that employees who are engaged in their work are better committed to their organisations.

6.2.2.2 Research aim 2: Determine whether work engagement predicts organisational commitment within the private distance learning context.

The findings from the study indicate that work engagement is a predictor of organisational commitment. It can therefore be concluded that work engagement drives organisational commitment. If an employee is engaged in their work, they are more likely to be committed to their organisation.

6.2.2.3 Research aim 3: Ascertain if key demographic groups exhibit significant differences in terms of work engagement and organisational commitment.

- The results of the study indicated that male participants had both higher work engagement and higher organisational commitment compared to their female counterparts. Based on the findings of this study it can be concluded that overall men are more engaged in their work than women and that men are more committed to their organisations than women.
- Based on the results of the study, the age of an employee does not influence work engagement. It can therefore be concluded that age does not influence work engagement. However, the study revealed that age influences organisational commitment with employees between the ages of 25-to-35-years showing the lowest commitment and those 45+ years showing the highest commitment. It can therefore be concluded that age influences organisational commitment.
- The results of the study indicated that qualifications have a significant influence on work engagement with those with a qualification above grade 12 exhibiting higher levels of work engagement compared to those with grade 12 or less. It can therefore be concluded that educational qualifications influence work engagement. The results of the study show no significant influence of qualifications on organisational commitment. It can therefore be concluded that educational qualifications do not influence organisational commitment.



6.2.2.4 Research aim 4: Propose recommendations to the organisation regarding strategies to enhance work engagement and organisational commitment.

The present study provides recommendations regarding strategies that the private distance learning institution can implement to enhance work engagement and organisational commitment. The recommendations are discussed in section 6.4.

6.2.2.5 Research aim 5: Emphasise areas that may warrant further research on work engagement and organisational commitment for the field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology.

The present study presents areas derived from the research findings that may warrant further research. These areas are presented in section 6.5.

## **6.3 Limitations**

### **6.3.1 Limitations of the literature review**

The following limitations were noted in the literature review:

- There is little to no literature that was found on work engagement and organisational commitment in private distance education institutions. Past studies conducted in South Africa and internationally have focused on the public higher education sector and other sectors.
- There is a dearth of studies exploring the relationship between work engagement and each of the individual constructs of organisational commitment which are affective, normative, and continuance commitments.

### **6.3.2 Limitations of the empirical study**

The following limitations were noted in the empirical study:

- The small sample size. A large sample size is ideal for quantitative research to sufficiently generalise the results (Chetty 2016). The sample size for this study was 110, posing a challenge when generalising the results to similar contexts.
- The researcher couldn't control the environment for this research. Participants' responses may therefore have been influenced by the time of responding to the

survey. In this study, some of the responses for example on the organisational commitment questionnaire may have been influenced by the declining economic conditions in the country. However, if the economic situation improves maybe a year from now, the results from the study may no longer be relevant. Also, at the time the data was collected, the institution was implementing a variable pay system whereby the employee's salary was made up of 75% basic and 25% performance, it is not known how this system may have influenced the results of the study.

- There was unequal representation in terms of age and gender. 21.8% of the respondents were male whilst 78.2% were female. It is not known how this unequal representation may have impacted the results.

Despite the above limitations, this study provides a starting point in attempting to comprehend the relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment within the private distance education context. The results, therefore, provide a basis on which future studies in the context can be based.

#### **6.4 Recommendations**

The results of the study indicate that work engagement and organisational commitment are positively related, with work engagement being a predictor of organisational commitment. A literature review has shown that work engagement and organisational commitment result in positive organisational outcomes such as improved performance and retention. Based on the above, the following strategies are recommended for increasing work engagement and organisational commitment. Organisations should have a talent management management system which incorporates strategies that will positively influence work engagement and organisational commitment. Talent management can be defined as “a set of strategies and systems to increase productivity by developing improved processes for attracting, developing, retaining and utilising people with the required skills and aptitude to the current and future needs of the business” (Savarimuthu & Jothi, 2019, p.134).

Organisations can integrate various activities related to talent management, and the effectiveness of an organisation's talent management will result in work engagement

and organisational commitment. Below are some of the activities that an organisation can include as part of its talent management strategy:

- A foolproof recruitment and selection process – from the onset organisations should recognise candidates who are not only skilled and qualified but who are the best fit for the organisation. There should be an alignment between a potential candidate's values and the organisation's values. A mismatch is likely to result in both poor engagement and commitment.
- Invest in the development of employees – organisations must prioritise the development of employees through the recognition of those employees with potential and providing such employees with opportunities for development. Employees are loyal to organisations that invest in them.
- Provide resources that are unique to the work environment. Within a distance learning environment, employees would appreciate reliable technology, opportunities for remote working, and flexitime.
- Increase job resources like social support, autonomy, and feedback. If employees are provided with adequate social support, are allowed to work independently, and are provided with continuous feedback (both positive and negative), this builds their confidence to tackle their tasks and ultimately positively impacts commitment.
- Another strategy that can be implemented is involving employees in decisions that affect them. Employees resist decisions that are imposed on them. However, if involved in the decision-making process, employees willingly engage in activities required to achieve organisational goals.
- Implementing strategies to recognise employees. Positive reinforcement ensures that employees remain motivated. Motivated employees exercise dedication and absorption in their work. Employers must therefore recognise employees for both everyday accomplishments and extraordinary accomplishments.
- The organisation should invest in the well-being of its employees. An investment in wellness initiatives that meet employees' needs is likely to yield short-term and long-term benefits which can be realised through improved engagement and commitment.

- Emphasise company culture. The company's vision, mission, and goals should be continually communicated to the employees and there must be a clear link with the departmental vision, mission, and goals. Clarity of such goals ensures that employees can give buy-in and take ownership of the goals. People become passionate about the things that they identify with.
- Considering the results that women at the organisation are less engaged than men, the organisation should come up with strategies that specifically address the needs of the women. This may include providing working flexibility to ensure that women can perform their maternal duties but at the same time continue working.

## **6.5 Future research**

In view of the above conclusions and limitations, the following proposals are made for future research. There is a need for further research on work engagement and organisational commitment in the private distance education sector. Research on this topic in this context is scarce. Considering the small sample that was used in this research, it may not be possible to generalise the results to all private distance education institutions in South Africa, however it is recommended that research be carried out with a larger sample. There is also a need to investigate further the impact of age on work engagement and the impact of educational qualifications on organisational commitment. The current research indicates that age does not influence work engagement and qualifications do not influence organisational commitment. Further studies with a larger sample are necessary for the purposes of confirming/disconfirming these results. Further research needs to be done on the relationship between work engagement and each of the individual constructs of organisational commitment. Scarce research has been done in South Africa and therefore it is necessary to add to the current research on work engagement and organisational commitment. This study did not target any specific groups or employment levels at the private distance learning institution. Future studies on work engagement and organisational commitment in private distance learning institutions could focus on academic staff or administrative staff or call centre staff.

## **6.6 Integration of the study**

The study focused on the relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment at a private distance learning institution. The results of the study indicate that there is a relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment. This is in line with the literature review which states that even though there is contention regarding the directionality of the concepts, there is a relationship between the two. This study has revealed that work engagement is a predictor of organisational commitment. The literature review showed that both work engagement and organisational commitment result in positive organisational outcomes such as improved job performance and retention. Organisations need to therefore create environments that promote both work engagement and organisational commitment.

## **6.7 Chapter conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss the conclusions from this study and the study's limitations taking into consideration results from the literature review and the empirical study. Recommendations on the strategies that can be implemented to improve work engagement and organisational commitment were also presented in this chapter including possible focus areas for future research.

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## APPENDICES

### 1. Data Collection Instrument



<b>DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS</b>								
AGE	In which category is your age?	AGE1: 18-24 years AGE2: 25-34 years AGE3: 35-44 years AGE4: 45 years and older						
GENDER	Please specify your gender.	GEN1: Male GEN2: Female						
EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS	What is your highest level of education? (This refers to qualifications already completed)	EDU1: Less than Grade 12 EDU2: Grade 12 EDU3: Occupational Qualification (e.g. N1 to N6, SETA programme) EDU4: Higher Certificate EDU5: Diploma (NQF Level 7) EDU6: Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BCom, BSc) EDU7: Honours degree or Postgraduate Diploma EDU8: Master's degree (e.g. MA, MCom, MEd) EDU9: Doctorate (e.g. PhD, EdD)						
<b>UTRECHT WORK ENGAGEMENT SCALE</b>								
The following 17 statements are about how you feel at work. Please read each statement carefully and decide if you ever feel this way about your job. If you have never had this feeling, cross the '0' (zero) in the space after the statement. If you have had this feeling, indicate how often you feel it by crossing the number (from 1 to 6) that best describes how frequently you feel that way.								
1	At my work I feel bursting with energy	Never	Almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
		Never	A few times a year	Once a month	A few times a month or less	Once a week	A few times a week	Everyday
2	I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose	Never	Almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
		Never	A few times a year	Once a month	A few times a month or less	Once a week	A few times a week	Everyday
3	Time flies when I'm working	Never	Almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always

		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
		Never	A few times a year	Once a month	A few times a month or less	Once a week	A few times a week	Everyday
4	At my job, I feel strong and vigorous	Never	Almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
		Never	A few times a year	Once a month	A few times a month or less	Once a week	A few times a week	Everyday
5	I am enthusiastic about my job	Never	Almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
		Never	A few times a year	Once a month	A few times a month or less	Once a week	A few times a week	Everyday
6	When I am working, I forget everything else around me	Never	Almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
		Never	A few times a year	Once a month	A few times a month or less	Once a week	A few times a week	Everyday
7	My job inspires me	Never	Almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
		Never	A few times a year	Once a month	A few times a month or less	Once a week	A few times a week	Everyday
8	When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work	Never	Almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
		Never	A few times a year	Once a month	A few times a month or less	Once a week	A few times a week	Everyday
9	I feel happy when I am working intensely	Never	Almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
		Never	A few times a year	Once a month	A few times a month or less	Once a week	A few times a week	Everyday
10	I am proud on the work that I do	Never	Almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
		Never	A few times a year	Once a month	A few times a month or less	Once a week	A few times a week	Everyday
11	I am immersed in my work )	Never	Almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
		Never	A few times a year	Once a month	A few times a month or less	Once a week	A few times a week	Everyday
12	I can continue working for very long periods at a time	Never	Almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
		Never	A few times a year	Once a month	A few times a month or less	Once a week	A few times a week	Everyday
13	To me, my job is challenging	Never	Almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
		Never	A few times a year	Once a month	A few times a month or less	Once a week	A few times a week	Everyday
14	I get carried away when I am working	Never	Almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
		Never	A few times a year	Once a month	A few times a month or less	Once a week	A few times a week	Everyday
15	At my job, I am very resilient, mentally	Never	Almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
		Never	A few times a year	Once a month	A few times a month or less	Once a week	A few times a week	Everyday
16	It is difficult to detach myself from my job	Never	Almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
		Never	A few times a year	Once a month	A few times a month or less	Once a week	A few times a week	Everyday

17	At my work I always persevere, even when things do not go well	Never 0	Almost never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Very Often 5	Always 6
		Never	A few times a year	Once a month	A few times a month or less	Once a week	A few times a week	Everyday

**ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

<b>Affective Commitment</b>								
1	I would be very happy to spend the rest of my life with this organisation	Strongly disagree 1	Moderately disagree 2	Slightly disagree 3	Neither agree/disagree 4	Slightly agree 5	Moderately agree 6	Strongly agree 7
2	I enjoy discussing my organisation with people outside it	Strongly disagree 1	Moderately disagree 2	Slightly disagree 3	Neither agree/disagree 4	Slightly agree 5	Moderately agree 6	Strongly agree 7
3	I really feel as if this organisation's problems are my own	Strongly disagree 1	Moderately disagree 2	Slightly disagree 3	Neither agree/disagree 4	Slightly agree 5	Moderately agree 6	Strongly agree 7
4	I think that I could easily become as attached to another organisation as I am to this one	Strongly disagree 1	Moderately disagree 2	Slightly disagree 3	Neither agree/disagree 4	Slightly agree 5	Moderately agree 6	Strongly agree 7
5	I do not feel like 'part of the family' at my organisation	Strongly disagree 1	Moderately disagree 2	Slightly disagree 3	Neither agree/disagree 4	Slightly agree 5	Moderately agree 6	Strongly agree 7
6	I do not feel 'emotionally attached' to this organisation	Strongly disagree 1	Moderately disagree 2	Slightly disagree 3	Neither agree/disagree 4	Slightly agree 5	Moderately agree 6	Strongly agree 7
7	This organisation has a great deal of personal meaning for me	Strongly disagree 1	Moderately disagree 2	Slightly disagree 3	Neither agree/disagree 4	Slightly agree 5	Moderately agree 6	Strongly agree 7
8	I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organisation	Strongly disagree 1	Moderately disagree 2	Slightly disagree 3	Neither agree/disagree 4	Slightly agree 5	Moderately agree 6	Strongly agree 7
<b>Continuance Commitment</b>								
1	I am not afraid of what might happen if I quit my job without having another one lined up	Strongly disagree 1	Moderately disagree 2	Slightly disagree 3	Neither agree/disagree 4	Slightly agree 5	Moderately agree 6	Strongly agree 7
2	It would be very hard for me to leave my organisation right now, even if I wanted to	Strongly disagree 1	Moderately disagree 2	Slightly disagree 3	Neither agree/disagree 4	Slightly agree 5	Moderately agree 6	Strongly agree 7
3	Too much in my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organisation now	Strongly disagree 1	Moderately disagree 2	Slightly disagree 3	Neither agree/disagree 4	Slightly agree 5	Moderately agree 6	Strongly agree 7
4	It wouldn't be too costly for me to leave my organisation now	Strongly disagree 1	Moderately disagree 2	Slightly disagree 3	Neither agree/disagree 4	Slightly agree 5	Moderately agree 6	Strongly agree 7
5	Right now, staying with my organisation is a matter of necessity as much as desire	Strongly disagree 1	Moderately disagree 2	Slightly disagree 3	Neither agree/disagree 4	Slightly agree 5	Moderately agree 6	Strongly agree 7
6	I feel I have too few options to consider leaving this organisation	Strongly disagree 1	Moderately disagree 2	Slightly disagree 3	Neither agree/disagree 4	Slightly agree 5	Moderately agree 6	Strongly agree 7

7	One of the few serious consequences of leaving this organisation would be the scarcity of available alternatives	Strongly disagree 1	Moderately disagree 2	Slightly disagree 3	Neither agree/disagree 4	Slightly agree 5	Moderately agree 6	Strongly agree 7
8	One of the major reasons I continue to work for this organisation is that leaving would require considerable personal sacrifice – another organisation may not match the overall benefits I have here	Strongly disagree 1	Moderately disagree 2	Slightly disagree 3	Neither agree/disagree 4	Slightly agree 5	Moderately agree 6	Strongly agree 7
<b>Normative Commitment</b>								
1	I think that people these days move from company to company too often	Strongly disagree 1	Moderately disagree 2	Slightly disagree 3	Neither agree/disagree 4	Slightly agree 5	Moderately agree 6	Strongly agree 7
2	I do not believe that a person must always be loyal to his or her organisation	Strongly disagree 1	Moderately disagree 2	Slightly disagree 3	Neither agree/disagree 4	Slightly agree 5	Moderately agree 6	Strongly agree 7
3	Jumping from organisation to organisation does not seem at all unethical	Strongly disagree 1	Moderately disagree 2	Slightly disagree 3	Neither agree/disagree 4	Slightly agree 5	Moderately agree 6	Strongly agree 7
4	One of the major reasons I continue to work for this organisation is that I believe that loyalty is important and therefore feel a sense of moral obligation to remain	Strongly disagree 1	Moderately disagree 2	Slightly disagree 3	Neither agree/disagree 4	Slightly agree 5	Moderately agree 6	Strongly agree 7
5	If I got another offer for a better job elsewhere, I would not feel it was right to leave my organisation	Strongly disagree 1	Moderately disagree 2	Slightly disagree 3	Neither agree/disagree 4	Slightly agree 5	Moderately agree 6	Strongly agree 7
6	I was taught to believe in the value of remaining loyal to one organisation	Strongly disagree 1	Moderately disagree 2	Slightly disagree 3	Neither agree/disagree 4	Slightly agree 5	Moderately agree 6	Strongly agree 7
7	Things were better in the days when people stayed with one organisation for most of their careers.	Strongly disagree 1	Moderately disagree 2	Slightly disagree 3	Neither agree/disagree 4	Slightly agree 5	Moderately agree 6	Strongly agree 7
8	I do not think that wanting to be a 'company man' or 'company woman' is sensible anymore	Strongly disagree 1	Moderately disagree 2	Slightly disagree 3	Neither agree/disagree 4	Slightly agree 5	Moderately agree 6	Strongly agree 7

## 2. Ethical Clearance Certificate



### UNISA CEMS/IOP RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

28 April 2021

Dear Ms Y Mushaniga,

NHREC Registration #: (if applicable)  
ERC Reference # : **2021\_CEMS/IOP\_006**  
Name: Ms Y Mushaniga  
Student #: 42334357  
Staff #: N/a

**Decision: Ethics approval from  
30 April 2021 to 30 April 2024**

**Researcher(s):** Name: Ms Y Mushaniga  
Address:  
E-mail address, telephone: [42334357@mylife.unisa.ac.za](mailto:42334357@mylife.unisa.ac.za), 07636924012

**Supervisor (s):** Name: Dr. Betty Maphala  
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**Work Engagement and Organisational Commitment at a private distance learning institution in South Africa.**

**Qualification:** Masters (MCom)- Post graduate degree

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa CEMS/IOP Research Ethics Review Committee for the above-mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for **Three** years.

*The low risk application was reviewed by the CEMS/IOP Research Ethics Review Committee on the 28<sup>th</sup> April 2021 in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment. The decision was approved on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2021.*

The proposed research may only commence with the provision that:



1. ***The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa COVID-19 Position Statement on research ethics dated 26 June 2020 which is attached.***
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics.
3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the Unisa CEMS/IOP Research Ethics Review Committee.
4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
5. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.
6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
7. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **(30 April 2024)**
8. Submission of a complete research ethics progress report will constitute an application for the renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

**Note:**

*The reference number 2021\_CEMS/IOP\_006 should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Yours sincerely,

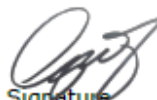


Signature

Chair of IOP ERC

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Signature

Executive Dean: CEMS

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Date: 03 September 2023

**CERTIFICATE OF PROFESSIONAL PROOFREADING**

To whom it may concern

This is to certify that the thesis with title: **Work Engagement and Organisational Commitment at a Private Distance Learning Institution in South Africa**, submitted by **Yvonne Mushaniga**, of the **University of South Africa**, has been edited for language and formatting, by LM Language Editing.

LM Language Editing guarantees the quality of English language in this paper; provided our editor's changes are accepted and no further changes are made to the paper.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'amy', is positioned below the printed name. A large, faint watermark of the LM Language Editing logo is visible in the background of this section.

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