



**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE  
PERCEPTIONS OF HUMAN RESOURCES PRACTICES,  
ORGANISATIONAL LEADERSHIP, AND HOPE AND OPTIMISM IN  
THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

Research report presented to the

**Graduate School of Business Leadership  
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by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

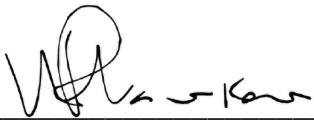
**MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION**

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# Declaration

I Phuti Michael Manakana, Student Number 50815105, declare that *The Relationship Between the Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Perceptions of Human Resources Practices, Organisational Leadership, Hope and Optimism in the Private Sector* is my own work and that all sources which I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



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Phuti Michael Manakana

11.12.2021

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Date

# Acknowledgements

**“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.” Psalm 118:1(NIV)**

I would like to convey my greatest gratitude to my maker – God, for his mercy that endures forever. My supervisor Mr. Pwaka, thank you for your guidance throughout this journey.

I want to thank my beautiful wife, Keitumetse, for the love, support and understanding you’ve given me throughout this journey. I love you dearly. To my beautiful daughters Omphemetse and Letago and my awesome son Kgotso, thank you for your understanding and patience when I was working long hours.

To my lovely mother, Maphuti, thank you for the support and encouragement.

# Dedication

This research is dedicated to my lovely Grandmother Tlou Salome Manakana, “the rock from which I came”

# **Abstract**

The general purpose of this study was to examine the significance of the relationships between the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices, organisational leadership, and hope and optimism in the private sector in South Africa. A quantitative research design approach was used in this study. The research was descriptive cross-sectional where probability sampling was used. There were 1733 respondents in the study sample. The results indicate that there is a significant positive correlation between the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices (before COVID-19) and organisational leadership. Furthermore, the results also indicate a significant positive correlation of large effect between the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices (during COVID-19) and organisational leadership. Moreover, findings revealed a significant correlation of medium effect between organisational leadership, hope and optimism. Finally, the results revealed that there is a non-significant correlation of small effect between the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices (before and during COVID-19) and hope and optimism. This study provides through empirical evidence that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices and organisational leadership are positively associated with hope and optimism. In terms of strengthening human resource practices, organisational leadership, hope and optimism, recommendations for additional research and application of the study's findings by organisations were suggested.

## **KEY TERMS**

COVID-19, Human Resources Practices, hope and optimism, organisational leadership, private sector

## **List of Abbreviations**

COVID-19 - Coronavirus disease of 2019

CSR - Corporate Social Responsibility

H&O - Hope and optimism

HRM – Human Resources Management

HRP- Human Resource Practices

OL- Organisational leadership

PsyCap – Psychological capital

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1. Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the study's context that explores the relationship between the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resources practices, organisational leadership, hope and optimism. It starts with the background of the study to provide context regarding facts discussed in the research report. This is followed by the problem statement that explains the problem this research will attempt to solve. The study's significance was established, followed by the research goals and objectives. The delineations and limitations of the study were stated, and the research design and research methods were discussed. To conclude, the study's prospective benefits are indicated, and a chapter outline of the study is presented.

### 1.1 Background

All countries throughout the world are staggering between fear and despair, on the one hand, and hope and optimism on the other, in these unpredictable geopolitical and economic times (Grobler & Flotman, 2021). The year 2020 was a watershed moment in which every individual was directly or indirectly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic is a demanding situation, with global unprecedented challenges faced by the labour industry. Many organisations have been compelled to make significant changes in the way they operate and manage their human resources in a short period of time as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (Seaton et al., 2021). However, the reality is that South Africa, like many other countries around the world, is in lockdown due of the COVID-19 pandemic, which affects people's future expectations, including Hope and Optimism (H&O) (Grobler & Flotman, 2021). Thus, South Africa, similar to other countries, is experiencing economic difficulties, and businesses must find new ways to remain productive.

The world endured a global pandemic, a massive economic crisis, and widespread social unrest. The recent global pandemic has resulted in a slew of workplace issues, including retrenchment, unemployment, demotivation, and the dread of losing one's job (Hu et al., 2020). Employees' psychological well-being is impacted by the ongoing employment uncertainties, whereas on the other hand, they are expected to perform at a higher level in terms of their Key Performance Areas while still receiving less opportunities for job advancement, wage increases, and job stability (Gota, 2017).

In this contemporary environment, employees are constantly being asked to contribute to their psychological presence and involvement. There is no reasonable consideration by the employer on the negative effects of the economy on employees in terms of burnout, stress, and job insecurity. It is believed that companies should take a more proactive approach and assess how people cope with adversity while keeping a strong sense of work performance (Africa, 2017). According to Kola (2018), leaders need to work hard to have a good influence in people's lives as the workplace evolves, the economy struggles, and employees stay immobilised by dread of the unknown. It is difficult for people to remain motivated, and motivation that speaks to their employees' specific needs is sorely needed.

Workplace hope and optimism is a product of organisational climate. Research conducted by Koekemoer et al., (2021) concluded that many companies through their organisational health index survey discovered that there is a lack of hope and optimism during the pandemic. Lee (2021) believes that employees' emotional responses are affected by sudden crises and workplace changes. Engagement levels have been stable, at or near levels indicating that employees are not having a great work experience during the pandemic. Too many employees, from the C-suite to the entry-level worker, dread going to work (Snyman, 2021).

Saleem (2015) found a link between good psychological qualities and objective measures of performance. Despite substantial evidence that the positive psychological qualities of hope and optimism are important for objective performance on the job, there is still a dearth of understanding regarding the specific behavioural mechanisms underlying this link (Koekemoer et al., 2021).

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices and organisational leadership in enhancing hope and optimism has not been extensively researched in the private sector. Evidence to this effect will be presented on Chapter 2.

Consequently, the aim of this study is to examine the relationship between the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices, organisational leadership, hope and optimism in the private sector.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

Many organisations in the private sector are currently grappling with workforce issues (Chanana & Sangeeta, 2020). Positive psychological capital (hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism) in accordance with the positive psychology approach, focuses on individual strengths and can be viewed as a personal resource capable of enhancing an individual's success in a demanding and uncertain working environment (Aybas & Acar, 2017). In such instances, leadership in organisations and innovative human resources practices have become critical, as employees require psychological and emotional support. Individuals with more positive psychological capital are more likely to remain hopeful and optimistic and those that have less positive psychological capital remain pessimistic. The COVID-19 pandemic's impact on perceptions of human resources practises and organisational leadership, as well as their potential to boost individual hope and optimism within the organisation, is the focus of the study.

In theory, there is enough evidence from literature (Du Plessis, 2014; Kenneally, 2020; Grobler & Joubert, 2018a; Mao, He, Morrison, & Coca-Stefaniak, 2020) that variables that relate to human resources practices and organisational leadership may influence employee hope and optimism. There is a paucity of understanding about the theoretical and empirical relationship between the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resources practices, organisational leadership and hope and optimism of employees, particularly in the South African private sector. Limited evidence is available on the holistic relationship of the COVID-19 pandemic's impact

on perceptions of human resources practices and organisational leadership. Hence the importance of leveraging these to improve employee hope and optimism in the private sector which necessitate further research.

From the above-mentioned background, it is evident that the low levels of hope and optimism is a challenge in the private sector. It is also unknown how the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices and organisational leadership relate to hope and optimism in the South African private sector.

### **1.3 Aim and objectives**

The aim of this study is to examine the significance of the relationships between the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices, organisational leadership and hope and optimism . The study objectives are as follows:

- To comprehensively define the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices, organisational leadership, hope and optimism.
- To report on empirical research which links the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to the perceptions of human resource practices, organisational leadership, hope and optimism.
- To empirically investigate the relationship of the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices, organisational leadership, hope and optimism within the context of the private sector.
- To make recommendations for managers in the private sector based on the empirical findings.

Consequently, achieving the aforementioned objectives will ensure that the study's main goal is achieved.

## **1.4 Significance of the study**

This study may assist leaders to gain better insight on organisational leadership regarding disparities in employee's hope and optimism. Leaders can also affect their followers' positive psychological states and psychological capital (PsyCap) through raising self-confidence and instilling hope, optimism, and resilience (Du Plessis & Boshoff, 2018). Furthermore, managers might also utilise the outcomes of the study to anticipate employee attitudes, including their level of hope and optimism, as well as their intention to stay with the organisation. Notably, the level of significance between variables may provide important information for human resource practitioners and managers in establishing the optimal human resource practises for hope and optimism in their organisations.

Academically, the research could add to the body of knowledge on psychological capital and organisational leadership. According to Şeşen, Sürücü, and Maşlakçı, (2019), when followers see their leaders acting positively, they also act positively. Leaders have an important role in organisations since they oversee and supervise the affairs of the organisation and influence the employees' attitudes and behaviours as role models (Aria et al. 2019). When leaders treat people well and care for them, the employees feel valuable and cared for.

This study will add to the literature on hope and optimism in the South African context, based on how the COVID-19 pandemic affected private sector organisations. Future scholars interested in the relationship between the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on human resources practises, organisational leadership, hope and optimism may find the practical significant in relationships between the valuable constructs. As a result, this research serves as an initial point for determining the nature of the relationship between the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resources practices, organisational leadership, and hope and optimism in the private sector.

## **1.5 Delineation**



This study was conducted amongst employees within the private sector; hence the results cannot be generalised to the larger population. The study was restricted to researching the relationship between the three core constructs, namely the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resources practices, organisational leadership, and hope and optimism.

Notably, not all variables that could affect the relationships were included in the analysis. It was found that apart from the perception of human resources practices, job insecurity influences the hope and optimism of employees in an organisation (Amelia et al.,2020). Apart from organisational leadership, organisational commitment influences the hope and optimism of employees (Thakre & Mayekar, 2016).

### **1.6 Limitations of the study**

This research was conducted as a cross-sectional study, which meant that data was collected from a population at a single point in time in a single institution (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Cross-sectional studies have several drawbacks, including the fact that the data cannot be utilised to analyse behaviour across time. Due to the fact that this was a cross-sectional study, the emphasis was placed on determining the nature, direction, and size of the relationship between the variables rather than determining cause and effect.

All the questionnaires utilised were self-reporting. As a result, it is possible that respondents misrepresented themselves when answering the questions, driven by the desire to be perceived favourably by others, referred to as social desirability bias. This is one type of misrepresentation that may have resulted in over-reporting good behaviour or under-reporting bad behaviour (Demetriou et al., 2015). In addition, self-report surveys do not offer additional clarity of the items, which increases the chance of diverse interpretations of questions (Brenner & DeLamater, 2016).

### **1.7 Research design**

At a metatheoretical level, this research was positivist. Positivism is defined by Aliyu et al. (2014) as the self-governing, independent, and objective existence of truth, as it is a research paradigm founded on the ontological concept and teaching that truth and reality are free and independent of the viewer and observer. Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) state that positivism refers to the general relevance of what is provided, with a more rigid focus on pure data and facts that are not influenced by human interpretation or bias. According to Park et al. (2021), to verify a priori hypotheses, which are often formulated statistically, positivism applies the hypotheticodeductive method, which involves determining functional connections between causative and explanatory factors (independent variables) and results (dependent variables).

In positivist research, quantitative approaches are not usually applied. For example, according to Park et al. (2021), the positivist paradigm encompasses a qualitative analysis of the effects of an intervention in an experimental study. Positivists believe that by carefully utilising statistical tests and employing identical research techniques to study, a big sample and multiple researchers who discover the same factual hurdles will produce a similar outcome. This can be achieved only by employing the proper methods so that accuracy can be achieved.

As a result, the positivist approach is based on the following assumption: there is extrinsic and objective truth (i.e., facts and laws). Science's goal is to prove extrinsic and objective facts. The collection of data through scientific procedures aids in the attainment of the objective reality. However, it is difficult to grasp the totality of reality. As a result, it should be broken up into pieces and placed within the whole as needed. When a cause-and-effect relationship is established, it may be applied to the entire population, and scientists can be objective in their research by employing positivist scientific approaches (Kau, 2020).

As stated by Basias and Pollalis (2018), a proper selection of a good research approach is a critical decision for conducting effective scientific research, and it is mostly dependent on matching research objectives to the characteristics of accessible research methodologies. The two (2) main types of research approaches are qualitative research and quantitative research. Quantitative research typically

comprises the systematic and empirical investigation of phenomena, as well as the processing of numerical data, applying statistics and mathematics. Conversely, qualitative research is a broad phrase that encompasses research approaches that deal with phenomena by studying experiences, behaviours, and relationships without the use of statistics, mathematics, or numerical data processing (Basias & Pollalis, 2018).

According to Adedoyin and Soykan (2020), quantitative research designs are usually highly structured and include tight controls to prevent contaminating influences. Quantitative research examines a hypothesis – usually the null hypothesis, or the assumption about the relationships between dependent and independent variables – by selecting a representative sample of people from a known population, measuring the variables, and evaluating them statistically (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019).

To achieve the research aims, a research design was created. A research design, according to Saunders et al. (2019) is a roadmap that the researcher uses to address research questions. This research is descriptive cross-sectional. Brief descriptive coefficients are used to assemble data collection that is either a representation of the entire population or a sample. The main purpose is to offer an overview of the samples and measurements collected throughout a study. Descriptive statistics are an important aspect of any quantitative data analysis when used in conjunction with a range of visual analyses. The primary purpose of descriptive statistics is to characterise the behaviour of a sampled data set. It is a visual representation of a quantitative analysis of a piece of data. Because a study must measure several variables, descriptive statistics is used to reduce the huge amount of data to its most basic form (Sharma, 2017).

According to Setia (2016), cross-sectional studies are a kind of observational study design. The investigator makes no changes to the exposure status. The investigator assesses the outcome and the exposure(s) in the population and may investigate their relationship. In a cross-sectional study, the investigator measures the outcome as well as the study participants' exposures at the same time. The participants in a cross-sectional study are simply picked based on the study's inclusion and exclusion criteria.

A cross-sectional design is appropriate when assessing the prevalence of disease or features, attitudes, and knowledge, as well as in validation and reliability research (Kesmodel, 2018).

## **1.8 Research method**

This study is based on a literature review and empirical investigation. The literature review serves as the foundation for building a new conceptual model or theory, and it can be valuable in charting the evolution of a certain study issue across time (Snyder, 2019d). An empirical review discusses and/or quantifies observable phenomena that has been pre-arranged in advance of the observation in a methodical manner (Meloncon & St.Amant, 2018). Each phase comprised of various steps, which are listed below.

### **1.8.1 Literature review**

According to Grobler and Flotman (2021), hope and optimism concepts have gotten a lot of attention in the previous few decades. It has been demonstrated that hope and optimism are unique constructs with diverse paths to beneficial results. Positive organisational behaviour factors, such as psychological capital dimensions (including hope and optimism), are frequently investigated as independent variables, by examining their impact on other variables. There is a need to study organisations and individual processes that contribute to hope and optimism. In this study, hope and optimism are studied as the dependent variable, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices and organisational leadership as antecedents.

The study conducted by Asgari, Mezginejad and Tahepour (2020) focused on the relationship between transformational leadership (organisational leadership style), organisational support (human resource [HR] practice), transactional leadership (organisational leadership style), and organisational support (HR practice) to establish whether these variables have any kind of correlation. The results indicated a medium correlation between these variables.

Şeşen, Sürücü and Maşlakcıc (2019) believe that positive and motivating leaders improve their organisation's ability to generate psychological capital (hope, resilience, self-efficacy, and optimism) whereas negative leaders are a key cause of dissatisfaction within an organisation. There has been very little research into the relationship between organisational leadership, and hope and optimism. However, significant studies have been conducted on authentic leadership and psychological capital (hope, resilience, self-efficacy, and optimism). By contagion or transmission, authentic leadership promotes and fosters the development of positive psychological capacities in their followers, leading to higher levels of self-effectiveness, hope, optimism, and resilience (Rego, Lopes & Nascimento,2016).

Despite the importance of human resource strategies in boosting organisational performance, their impact on increasing employee hope and optimism has received little attention in management and organisational literature (Khan et al., 2016). A study conducted by Roemer and Harris (2018) focused on the relationship between psychological capital and perceived organisational support. The results indicated that perceived organisational support is positively correlated to hope and optimism.

Compensation and benefits were shown to have a value of  $r = .49$  correlation with transformational leadership when analysing the relationship between perceptions of human resource practices and organisational leadership (Shabane et al. ,2017). Africa (2017) discovered a moderate to strong relationship between the aspects of PsyCap capital (hope, resilience, self-efficacy, and optimism) and with coefficients ranging from .45 to .88 in authentic leadership and employee psychological capital in a Fast-Moving Consumer Goods food industry (FMCG) in Western Cape.

Following the literature review, the theoretical and empirical relationship between the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices, organisational leadership, hope, and optimism was clearer, and the summative information was useful in preparing for the empirical investigation.

### **1.8.2 Empirical investigation**

The steps of the empirical investigation were aligned with the overall objectives of the study and consisted of the following steps:

1. The author became acquainted with the study's concepts through the literature review.
2. Important information on research ethics, including a copy of the University of South Africa (UNISA) research ethics policy, was received as part of the induction to the project. Permission to conduct this research was obtained by contacting the Human Resources Director of the selected research organisation. Once permission was obtained, the Human Resources Director offered to distribute the online link and participant information sheet to the respective departments. The sample for the study was selected through random sampling.
3. The respondents completed the questionnaires online by means of google forms.
4. The participants' responses were captured, using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet format. All the data was analysed by means of statistical analysis, utilising the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27 for Windows.
5. The data was pooled from 29 participants in the private sector.
6. Data analysis focused on the relationship between the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices, organisational leadership, hope and optimism. This was done with a simple correlation and regression analysis.
7. The study results were presented in the form of tables and the discussion of the findings in a systematic framework, ensuring that interpretation was conveyed clearly and articulately.

### **1.9 Chapter Outline**

This chapter provided a synopsis of the study and introduced the study's aim and objectives, research design and methodology, and the significance of the study.

**Chapter 2** provides an outline of the variables that were be investigated, namely, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices, organisational leadership, hope and optimism. The constructs are defined in detail, as well as their relationships with other organisational variables in this chapter. The chapter begins with a review of the literature and a discussion of the research's theoretical foundation. **Chapter 3** provides a thorough analysis of the research design and methods utilised to explore the research question. The sampling procedure, sample size, and applicable procedures followed, including research instruments used, and statistical approaches used to analyse the data will all be discussed in detail.

**Chapter 4** reports on the study's findings and insight on whether the scales employed are accurate for the sample used in this study or not. In addition, histograms tables and percentages will be used to show the data in the study. **Chapter 5** presents interpretations, conclusions and recommendations based on the findings in Chapter 4, as well as the limitations of the study and offers suggestions for how to minimise them.

## **1.10 Summary**

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a comprehensive overview of the study's context that explores the relationship between the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resources practices, organisational leadership hope and optimism. This was achieved by providing the background and motivation for the study, the problem statement, aim of the study, the research design and research methodology, and chapter summary follow thereafter. The following chapter presents the literature review of the variables being investigated.

# **Chapter 2**

## **Literature review**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter provides a detailed review of literature related to the study. To ensure sufficient depth and profundity, the literature review explores the differences and similarities between leadership and management, and its impact on employee behaviour in general and during times of crisis. Secondly, the study also observes the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practises, organisational leadership, and hope and optimism. The construct definition is presented for each variable. There is also a review of the antecedents and implications of the various variables. The last section of the literature review considers the empirical research that has been conducted on the variables in the study to give theoretical support for the suggested correlations between them. There is currently a knowledge gap on the relationship between this study's variable combinations.

### **2.2 Leadership vs management, and its impact on employee behaviour in general during times of crisis**

According to Grundei and Kaehler (2019), management is a driving effect on market production, and/or resource operations in an organisation and its units. It may handle both people and non-people's concerns, and it is exercised by various organisational actors by either instantaneous norms or long-term strategic planning situations or environment - particular management engagement aimed at attaining the unit's goals. Managing a unit is the same as "directing" or "leading" it.

Raffo and Clark (2018), claim that definitions of leadership have developed throughout time, and leadership is complex, hence resulting in a plethora of perspectives, frameworks, and concepts. Because there is no standard definition for leadership, how we define it becomes personal, reflecting who we are, what we value, and the message we want to give to others as we share our thoughts on leadership. A leader, according to Strait (2020), is someone who has the ambition, talents, personality, and other characteristics to encourage and persuade a group of individuals to work together to achieve a shared purpose.



Management and leadership both have similarities and contrasts. Leadership and management have some overlapping features, but they are not the same. Management and leadership, according to Wajdi (2017), is essential for offering high-quality services. They may have diverse outlooks, talents, and behaviours, despite their similarities in other aspects. Drawing from Tschohl (2014), the focus of management, similar to that of leadership, is the establishment of goals, decisions, business outcomes, and administration of the central workings of an organisation. The overwhelming focus on outcomes might make it difficult to distinguish between leadership and management. Harvard professor and leadership innovator John Kotter distinguished between management and leadership by distinguishing between their goals (see Table 1 below). Management is responsible for maintaining order and consistency, whereas leadership is responsible for bringing about change and movement (Leonard, 2016).

**Table 1:** Subtle leadership and management differences.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Leadership</b>	<b>Management</b>
Thinking Process	Focuses on people Looks outward	Focuses on things Looks inward
Goal Setting	Articulates a vision Creates the future	Executes Plans Improves the present
Employee Relations	Sees the forest Empowers Colleagues	Sees the trees Controls Subordinates
Operation	Trusts and develops Does the right things Creates change	Directs & coordinates Does the right thing Manages change
Governance	Serves subordinates Uses influence Uses conflict Act decisively	Serves superordinates Uses authority Avoids conflict Acts responsibly

Source: Lunenburg (2011).

Effective leaders require management skills, and good managers should aspire to be successful leaders. Leaders will have a vision of what can be accomplished, be able to communicate that vision to others, and devise tactics to achieve that vision. Leaders can inspire others and negotiate for resources and other sorts of support to help them achieve their goals (Skripak, 2016). According to Wadji (2017), managers make certain that the available resources are adequately structured and used to achieve the best results. To achieve its goals, the organisation requires both good managers and successful leaders, yet managers and leaders contribute differently. Managers advocate stability, exert power, and seek to get things done, whereas leaders support change, innovative ways, and attempt to understand people's beliefs in order to acquire their commitment. As a result, a diverse group of people is required in management and leadership roles (Wadji, 2017).

Thürmer, Wieber, and Gollwitzer (2020) state that a crisis entails a plethora of new and fast changing information. Acute situations, such as the Coronavirus pandemic, disturb our typical routines and force us to rethink how we work. Currently, organisations and communities are in a state of crisis. Organisations attempt to provide their clients' fundamental necessities while also ensuring the safety of their employees. During a crisis, businesses are likely to experience unimaginable difficulties (Dirani et al., 2020). According to Carnevale and Hatak (2020), organisations are dealing with more uncertainty as they deal with contemporary challenges or problems that are not generally confined by geographical, economic, or societal boundaries. External contentment (salaries and benefits, working conditions, and job security) is more affected by the crisis than internal contentment (opportunities for further education, career evolution, creativity, independent action). The crisis diminishes job satisfaction while increasing job stress in both cases (Halkos & Dimitrios, 2016).

During a crisis, according to Vardarlier (2016), an organisation may lose critical individuals by terminating them or electing to leave the company owing to the anxiety they are experiencing. Managers have new obstacles in supervising and nurturing the development of their subordinates from a considerably larger distance than is normal (Mwita, 2020). It is appropriate to describe the consequences of a crisis on any

organisation or personnel level. As a result, some of the more dire consequences are panic within the organisation, loss of important personnel, knowledge workforce turnover is high, low performance due to a lack of morale and motivation, rising health-care costs, HR-related costly litigations, emerging compensation policy, a negative public image, misinformation, leadership and reassurance loss, and difficulty understanding psychological problems during the responding and recovery phases (Vardarlier, 2016).

During a major crisis, some managers flourish, while others do not (Chiş-Manolache, 2020). To respond to a crisis, a strategic manager must follow a full protocol that includes the formation of teams, systems, and tools. It also necessitates having a plan in place to react promptly, quell rumours, and respond honestly to victims and stakeholders while recovering from the effects of the crisis (Kaul et al, 2020). A response to crisis begins with a willingness to ask and answer critical questions such as: what is the worst that may happen? Then there is the question of how to prepare for and avoid crises by securing and managing the workplace. This included knowing how to prepare technically, purposefully for natural disasters, and communicating effectively during a crisis. (Dirani et al., 2020).

Communication is an important part of crisis response. Benlahcene and Abdullah, (2020) argue that employees expect managers to communicate frankly and frequently (at least daily) about the present situation of the organisation during times of crisis. Employees must be informed of the company's current position as quickly as practicable. If leaders do not provide regular updates to their staff, they may fabricate information to cover the information void.

The relationships that employees have with their immediate managers are maybe the most important element in employee happiness. Employee morale improves when managers and employees have solid working connections. According to Dirani et al. (2020), a successful manager will be able to detect their team members' skills, likes, and dislikes, as well as when the volume or intricacy of the task is too much for them. The better line manager is skilled at identifying a person's unique interests and

concerns; hence they are more likely to be able to establish a team in which employee well-being is an integral element of getting the job done (Priya & Sundaram, 2016).

According to Mwita (2020), organisations prefer to utilise a variety of techniques to ensure that employees are not negatively impacted by a crisis while still contributing favourably to organisational performance. Therefore, it is critical that the Human Resources (HR) department understands how to adjust to a turbulent environment and ensuring that HR practises that stem from a crisis do not harm employees so that they may continue to conduct their work in the best way possible. Chen and Sripon (2021) state that working from home has resulted in a lack of confidence between managers and employees because supervisors disagree with allowing people to work remotely. As a result, managers try to supervise and monitor employees more closely than they did prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, which causes employees to feel uneasy and have negative views towards their bosses.

### **2.3 Defining key concepts**

In this section, three (3) key concepts relevant to this study are defined. The purpose of a definition is to explain the meaning of the terms which may be obscure or difficult to understand. Variable definitions can be far more exact and unambiguous when written in operational form, which specifies the operation by which they can be seen and measured. This section unifies definitions of terms for alignment.

#### **2.3.1 Human resource practices**

There have been numerous definitions of human resource practices reported. According to AlShaikhly (2017) the practice of Human Resources Management (HRM) is defined as organisational activities designed to manage a pool of human resources and ensuring that they are recruited to achieve organisational objectives. Recruitment, selection, training and development, motivation, and maintenance are only a few examples of human resources management practises. Similarly, human resource practices are also defined by Koednok and Sungsanit (2018) as the primary responsibilities of the human resource function within an organisation, such as: training, development, selection, and compensation. Cajee and Grobler (2021) adds

that human resources practices also include compensation and benefits, flexible working practices, organisational image, and organisational support structures.

According to Radonić and Milosavljević (2019), Human Resources Practises (HRP) are a system and set of practises that improve employee motivation and engagement, as well as their abilities, with the goal of improving organisational performance and results. Despite the lack of an official and agreed-upon set of practises, training and development, performance-based compensation and promotion, job security, as well as work design and internal communication, are all commonly mentioned.

From the above-mentioned, it is clear that human resources practices are concerned with activities geared towards organisational goals and business performance (Alshaikhly, 2017; Koednok & Sungsanit, 2018; Radonić & Milosavljević, 2019), motivation and participation (Koednok & Sungsanit, 2018; Radonić & Milosavljević, 2019) organisational image, activities, and support structures (Alshaikhly, 2017; Cajee and Grobler, 2021). In general, human resource practices are the source for innovation in organisations.

### **2.3.2 Organisational leadership**

Organisational leadership has been defined by several authors in literature. According to Dibiku (2017), organisational leadership is a dual-focus management approach that works for the greatest interests of both individuals and the group at the same time. Likewise, Bratton (2020) defines organisational leadership as a process of persuasion within an employment relationship including continuing human connection with others in which those others assent to the achievement of a goal. Organisational leadership is defined by Etse, McMurray and Muenjohn (2021) as a multi-level leader-follower interaction process that occurs in a setting where a leader and followers share a common goal and work together freely to achieve it.

Organisational leadership according to Enslin and Grobler (2021) is defined as leaders who are aware of their surroundings and uphold high ethical standards while preparing and imagining a better future. Organisational leaders foster trustworthy connections while demonstrating courage, humility, inventiveness, and integrity, all while adhering

to shared principles. Organisational leaders engage with subordinates in an engaging and open manner to establish a safe environment where people are encouraged to take calculated risks. Organisational leaders get extraordinary outcomes from a broad set of people by establishing consistent, long-term results through effective incentive and recognition programmes.

From the above definitions, it can be deduced that organisational leadership has a dual approach; what is best for individuals and what is best for a group (others) (Dibiku, 2017; Bratton 2020). This entails having a common goal, shared principles, (Bratton, 2020; Etse et al.,2021; Enslin & Grobler, 2021) and trustworthy connections while demonstrating courage, humility, inventiveness, and integrity (Enslin & Grobler, 2021).

### **2.3.3 Hope and optimism**

As stated by Scheier and Carver (1985) optimism is defined as the expectation that positive outcomes will come about. Equally, Luthans and Youssef (2004) state that optimism involves a positive explanatory style that attributes positive events to internal, permanent, and pervasive causes, and negative events to external, temporary, and situation-specific ones. Furthermore, Luthans et al. (2007) note that optimism relates to an optimistic outcome/view or attribution of events, which includes positive emotions and motivation, with the caveat that it must be reasonable. According to Grobler and Joubert (2018a), optimism can be divided into two (2) categories: (1) permanence (when positive events are seen as permanent and negative events are seen as temporary) and (2) pervasiveness (when positive causes are seen as applicable to all events and negative causes are seen as applicable to some events).

According to Snyder (2002c) definition, hope is the perceived ability to deduce pathways to desired goals and to urge oneself to utilize those pathways through agency thinking. Luthans and Youssef (2004) state that hope is a motivational state that is based on the interaction between three factors: goals, agency, and pathways. According to Rand and Cheavens (2012), hope is described as the confidence in one's capability to generate and inspire oneself to follow paths that lead to desired outcomes. Hope according to Grobler and Joubert (2018) is defined as an employee's willpower (having optimistic expectations and aims) and way-power (having alternate

pathways in place to deal with these expectations if things do not happen the way they were expected to) towards a certain goal.

The concept of optimism has to do with positivity (Scheier & Carver, 1985; Luthans & Youssef, 2004; Luthans et al., 2007; Grobler & Joubert, 2018) and the degree of permanence and pervasiveness (Grobler & Joubert, 2018), whereas hope has to do with motivation (Rand & Cheavens, 2012; Snyder, 2002c; Luthans & Youssef, 2004; Grobler & Joubert, 2018) and goal achievement (Snyder, 2002c; Snyder, 1991a; Luthans & Youssef, 2004; Grobler & Joubert, 2018).

#### **2.4 Antecedents to hope and optimism**

With the emergence of positive psychology, the study of hope and optimism has grown in recent decades. Early studies of hope were primarily concerned with the alleged effects of individual differences in hope. Most of the antecedents of hope are negative, unfavourable situations. The rise of the hope theory, it is claimed, resulted in measures that allowed hope to be established as a measurable concept. Hope, according to Snyder et al. (1991) is a cognitive, goal-directed phenomenon. Hope is supposed to give the cognitive foundation required for achieving one's goals (Feldman et al., 2009). Lazarus's (1991) conception of hope is closely associated with uncertainty. The emotion of hope requires just the belief that a desirable goal can be attained or stimulated. There is no need for hope if there are no obstacles. Furthermore, in order to deal constructively with these problems, hope must be actively nurtured. As a result, hope is a positive sensation about the future prompted by optimistic, albeit unclear thoughts about desired goals and active coping in the face of adversity, according to this perspective.

Similar to Lazarus' (1991) perspective, Snyder (2002c), state that understanding the hope theory can make a broad, positive contribution to society by reducing frustration and despair. Snyder (2000b) created a theory that connected hope firmly to action components. In this theory the cognitive part of hope is seen as comprising three different aspects: (1) a positive future goal; that which we want to happen, (2) pathway thinking to find ways to reach the desired goal, and (3) agency thinking to motivate oneself to use these pathways.

In terms of hope, clearly expressed, achievable, and quantifiable goals are critical for the development of one's agency and pathways. Simultaneously, it has been discovered that breaking down complex or challenging goals into sub-goals increases hope (Sameer, Mohamed, & Mohamad, 2019). According to Luthans & Youssef (2004), people are motivated to attain their goals by their sense of agency, which gives them the internalised motivation and willpower to put in the effort required. Those who have high hopes are also motivated by their belief that they can create new ways to attain what they want, which gives them the ability to create new paths to their goals if the original ones are blocked. It is expected that the variety of skills and the importance of the task would be closely proportional to hope (Sameer, Mohamed, & Mohamad, 2019).

It is well established that neuroticism and extraversion, both of which are known to be genetically affected, are associated with optimism (Carver & Scheier, 2003). It has also been discovered that an individual's optimism is rooted in their formative experiences. Scheier and Carver (1985) predicated optimism on the expectancy-value model of motivation, although expectation differs depending on the goal. In their theory (Scheier & Carver, 1985) emphasise generalised outcome expectations and assume that optimism is a goal-oriented attitude that arises when an outcome has significant value. According to this optimism model, people believe they can progress toward desirable goals and away from unpleasant goals. People, according to Scheier and Carver (1985), have a more dispersed feeling of expectation (also known as optimism) about their life goals. As a result, optimism influences people's situation-specific opinions when they are working toward a goal. Optimism refers to having favourable expectations for the future.

In terms of optimism development, good goal setting in organisations should encourage employee optimism since optimists believe in their ability to succeed. The employee will be able to see the main goal behind the work done as a result of the flexibility and completion of a specific task, and so job autonomy and job identity are likely to enhance optimism. Furthermore, when there is some good feedback and a



sense of significance, an employee is more likely to have favourable expectations (Sameer, Mohamed, & Mohamad, 2019).

Individuals have intuitions that advise them on whether or not to engage in goal-directed behaviour, according to the implicit school of thought. Individuals can be motivated in this way to engage in work activities in the hopes of reaching the desired outcomes. It has been shown that when a learning goal is perceived as a developmental stage, it might inspire hope. Verbal cues are another antecedent of hope. Oral persuasion from others is said to improve one's commitment to pathways and agency (Gota, 2017).

Lastly, there is agreement that individual differences/cognition in terms of proactive personality are the biggest predictors of hope and optimism. Avey (2014) discovered a correlation between optimism, pleasant feelings, and involvement. Furthermore, optimism has been found to be connected to job satisfaction (Luthans & Youssef, 2004; Luthans et al., 2007), and work happiness (Luthans & Youssef, 2004). It has also been discovered that an individual's optimism is rooted in their formative experiences. Sameer, Mohamed, and Mohamad (2019) found hope to be associated with job characteristics like: a variety of skills, importance and breaking down of tasks, while optimism is associated with job characteristics such as: effective goal setting, job identity, positive feedback, and feelings of significance.

## **2.5. The relationship between the impact of COVID-19 on the perceptions of human resource practises, organisational leadership, hope and optimism.**

The final section of the literature review reflects on the empirical research that was conducted on the study's variables to provide theoretical grounding for the proposed relationships between these variables. Correlational studies are used to address significant research issues in a range of disciplines; therefore, the study of correlations is an important element. Without comprehension of this, one risks falling into several errors associated with statistical analysis and inferring incorrect results from the data.

### **2.5.1 The relationship between the perceptions of human resource practices and organisational leadership**

The significance of human resource practises in organisational behaviour has long been recognised. Existing research acknowledges that good human resource practices are multifaceted, interrelated, and based on organisational rationales (Khan, Nawaz, & Khan, 2016). Human resource practices are used to improve organisational performance because it is assumed that they will raise employee motivation and allow them to acquire other skills. Organisations may, however, also develop human resource practices without the involvement of employees. Employees' needs must be recognised for true sustainable human resource management such as offering human resource practices that enable negotiation and adaptability to the preferences and needs of employees (Villajos, Tordera, & Peiró, 2019).

According to Grobler, Grobler, and Mathafena (2019), human resource practices contribute to and sustain organisational effectiveness and are particularly crucial in attracting, retaining, and improving employees' skills and expertise. Human resource practises must be carefully planned and strategically executed to preserve strong organisational boundaries and establish high levels of organisational and professional identity; more specifically, it helps employee retention in a highly competitive organisation (Alshuaibi & Shamsudin, 2016).

Innovative HR practises such as selective recruitment, extensive and well-designed training, self-managed teams, decentralised decision making, information sharing throughout the organisation, comparatively high compensation, and compensation contingent on organisational performance, according to Xiu, Liang, Chen, and Xu (2017), would benefit organisations with a strategy to promote flexibility and responsiveness to environmental changes. Employee perceptions of HR practises have a significant impact on their effectiveness (Wang, Kim, Rafferty & Sanders, 2020).

Agarwal (2020) states that the global economy is undergoing a continuous and rapid shift in people's expectations. Employees' expectations of organisations are likewise rapidly shifting. Employees look up to their leaders in terms of organisational

leadership, observing how they interact with others and evaluating whether they follow through on their promises or not. Schein (2017) asserts that the tone of an organisation's communication is determined by its leaders. Employees frequently consider direct leaders (i.e., supervisors) who interact with them daily as dependable sources of knowledge. For better organisational performance, organisations and human resource practitioners must develop numerous solutions for acknowledging reciprocal expectations of employers and employees (Lacerda, 2015). Human resource management practises and leadership are both multi-level concepts.

Existing research implies that gender variations in leadership would draw a narrow line between effective and poor HRM practices (Xiu et al.,2017). Bamber, Bartram, and Stanton (2017) believe that female leaders are more likely to utilise a transformational leadership style to achieve organisational goals which may lead to a larger usage of innovative HR practices to motivate and empower followers. Female managers may be more willing to implement innovative HR practices than male managers since doing so strengthens the alignment of their organisational and societal responsibilities as female leaders.

Shah (2020) argues that when a leader and followers have similar or the same values and attributes, transformational leadership with associated HRM practises may be beneficial. Because followers tend to identify leaders with the organisation they represent, leadership plays an important role in understanding perceptions of organisational support. As a result, supportive leadership should contribute significantly to employees' beliefs that their workplace cares about their well-being and values their efforts. Xiang et al., (2017), assert that employees feel organisational support from leaders when leaders adopt an inclusive leadership style. Employees work hard to attain organisational goals when leaders adopt an inclusive leadership style.

Several studies were conducted on organisational leadership and organisational support. Through the mediation of perceived organisational support and job satisfaction, the role of leadership styles in organisational citizenship behaviour was investigated by Asgari, Mezginejad and Tahepour (2020) with a sample of  $N=250$  at

the University of Birjand, with Iran employees. According to the results, transformational leadership was positively associated with perceived organizational support ( $r = .48, p < .01$ ) and transactional leadership returned significant correlations of ( $r = -.31, p < .01$ ) with perceived support. Qi, et al. (2019) found a positive correlation between inclusive leadership and perceived organisational support ( $r = .70; p < 0.01$ ) when they studied how inclusive leadership influenced employee innovative behaviour by examining perceived organisational support as a mediator with a sample of  $N = 226$  employees and supervisors from 15 service-based enterprises in six (6) Chinese cities, including banks, legal firms, Sinopec, and retail stores. According to a study by Akar and Ustuner (2019), with a sample of  $N=658$  teachers, there was moderate-to- significant positive correlations between the perceptions of teachers on their administrators' transformational leadership behaviour and organisational support ( $r = .61; p < .01$ ).

Remuneration and compensation are also HR practices that organisations need to put emphasis on as remuneration and compensation play a critical part in creating employees' trust in the organisation. A study conducted by Shabane, Scholtz and van Hoek (2017) focused on the relationship between satisfaction with remuneration and the retention of artisans in the military ( $N = 108$ ). The purpose of the research was to determine whether the lack or presence of transformative leadership has a mediating influence on the artisans' level of compensation satisfaction. Compensation and benefits were found to have a  $r = .49, p < .01$  correlation with transformational leadership. This suggests that when supervisors use a transformational management style, employee compensation and benefits rise dramatically and the motivation–supervisor connection improves. Research conducted by Tian et al. (2021) shows a correlation of  $r = .30, p < .01$  between leadership and overall compensation benefits when impacts of job stress and overall compensation benefits on the employees' job satisfaction with moderation effect of leadership were studied with a sample of  $N = 515$ .

Leadership is an essential component of any organisation, assisting it in achieving its goals and objectives. Understanding senior managers' origins, experiences, values, and worldviews is critical for contextualising the decision-making processes

(Verissimo & Laceda, 2015). According to Ocema et al. (2020), practical experience shows that in order for an organisation to be socially responsible, it must have the blessing and commitment of its top management or senior managers.

In a study conducted by Manzoor et al. (2020) in the Pakistani Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) sector with a sample of  $N = 132$ , they investigated the impact of transformational leadership on job performance and investigated the mediating mechanism of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). It was found that transformational leadership has a positive correlation with CSR ( $r = .28, p < .01$ ). Similarly, Verissimo and Laceda (2015) in their study of the mediating role of transformational leadership and the integrity of CSR activities focused on the relationship between transformational leadership and CSR (organisational image practice) with a sample of  $N= 170$  senior managers from 50 organisations in Portugal. The MLQ (5x short form) was employed for this study to assess transformational leadership and to assess the organisations' orientation to CSR. The study used SPICE, developed by Hemming et al. (2004). The results indicate that transformational leadership is significantly and positively correlated with CSR ( $r = .51, p < .01$ ).

Another study by Girma (2016) on the relationship between transformational and transactional leadership style with subordinates' job satisfaction focused on the relationship between transformational and transactional leadership style with the subscales of employee job satisfaction with a sample of  $N=185$  in Addis Ababa administrative sport organisation employees in Ethiopia. The leadership styles were measured by means of Multifactor Leadership Questionnaires (MLQ) and job satisfaction was assessed using job satisfaction questionnaires (IJS). The results revealed that pay satisfaction, promotion, supervisory, benefits, work itself and communication satisfaction had relatively positive relationships with transformational leadership style were ( $r=.35,.80,.24,.15,.17,.20$ ) respectively.

Schein (2017) argues that understanding the relationship between leadership and organisational culture necessitates knowledge of the stages of organisational growth. Xenikou (2019) adds that leadership and organisational culture are constantly in flux and knowing the nature of their interaction is critical to comprehending their combined

influence on organisational phenomena. A study conducted by Men and Jiang (2016) on cultivating quality employee-organisation relationships focused on the relationship between organisational leadership and organisational culture, examined a sample of  $N=391$  of employees working in various industrial sectors in the United States. In this study, authentic leadership was positively correlated with all the cultural dimensions examined and was most strongly correlated with the culture of supportiveness ( $r = .48$ ,  $p < .01$ ), performance orientation ( $r = .53$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and emphasis on rewards ( $r = .58$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Correspondingly Ahmed, Dajani, and Saad (2016) conducted a study on leadership style, organisational culture, and organisational learning capacity in the education sector with a sample of  $N = 298$ . The research findings revealed that there was a positive correlation between the variables. Transactional leadership correlated with organisational cultures, namely, adhocracy ( $r = .43$   $p < .01$ ), clan ( $r = .29$   $p < .01$ ), market ( $r = .12$   $p < .01$ ) and hierarchy culture ( $r = .28$   $p < .01$ ). Transformational leadership showed these correlations adhocracy ( $r = .26$   $p < .01$ ), clan ( $r = .36$   $p < .01$ ), market ( $r = .13$   $p < .01$ ) and hierarchy culture ( $r = .14$   $p < .01$ ).

From the above-mentioned literature it is apparent that the research between human resource practices and organisational leadership is done in variety settings. It can be observed that Asgari et al, (2020); Akar and Ustuner (2019); Ahmed et al. (2016), did it in the education sector. Men and Jian (2016) focused on various industrial sectors, Qi et al. (2019) on service-based enterprises, Manzoor et al. (2020) looked at SMEs while Girma (2016) looked at sports organisation and Shabane et al. (2017) focused on military artisans. Sampling ranges from  $N=108$  to  $N= 658$  averaging 267 samples. Multi-factor leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was the common instrument used to measure the organisational leadership variable. The results indicated a low to moderately strong relationship between human resources practices and organisational leadership with coefficient correlation ranging from  $-.31$  to  $.80$ .

### **2.5.2 The relationship between organisational leadership, hope and optimism**

Leadership has been the focus of several research studies as a difficult and popular issue since it has a crucial influence in the performance of organisations. Positive and motivational leaders increase their ability to produce psychological capital (hope, resilience, self-efficacy, and optimism) among organisation members, while negative

leaders are a major source of negative feelings within the organisation (Şeşen et al., 2019).

There is scant research on the relationship between organisational leadership, hope and optimism. There has been more research conducted on authentic leadership and psychological capital (hope, resilience, self-efficacy, and optimism). As stated by Maher, Mahmoud, and Hefny (2017), in response to economic, geopolitical, and technological pressures on organisations to select and develop leaders capable of creating competitive advantage not only through short-term bottom line but also by demonstrating long-term value. Hence management scholars have conducted research in both authentic leadership and positive psychological capital.

According to Stander, de Beer, and Stander (2015), authentic leadership is characterised by positive leader capabilities and an established organisational leadership culture. Authentic leadership, as described by Munyaka, Boshoff, Pieterse, and Snelgar (2017), is being at the heart of positive organisational behaviour, which is crucial for improving PsyCap. It is described as a style of leadership behaviour that cultivates increased self-awareness by drawing on and promoting both positive psychological capacities and an ethical climate. Authentic leadership also refers to internalised moral perspective, balanced information processing, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, as well as to promote the self-development of both leaders and subordinates (Munyaka et al. ,2017).The authentic leadership model encapsulates good organisational behaviour and employee psychological capacity, with the goal of capturing the leadership and employee behaviours that contribute to high-performing teams (Leonard, 2016).

In a study conducted by Du Plessis (2014) with a sample of  $N=647$ , focused on the national private sector healthcare industry organisations. She discovered that the elements of authentic leadership and the elements of psychological capital had a low correlation. The correlation between optimism, a component of psychological capital, and the elements of authentic leadership ranges from  $r=.13$  to  $r=.16$ , indicating that the two notions are slightly related. Authentic leadership was positively correlated with optimism ( $r=.45$ ) in a study with  $N=633$  of public health employees from various functions within 27 public hospitals and clinics in the North West province in South

Africa. To measure authentic leadership, the Authentic Leadership Inventory was used and the PsyCap construct of optimism was measured through specific optimism items on the 12-item PsyCap Questionnaire (Stander, de Beer, & Stander, 2015).

Authentic leadership has an impact on employees' psychological capital, including hope, optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience. Owens (2017) found that there is a positive relationship between psychological capital and authentic leadership ( $r = .38$ ) in his study of the relationship between authentic leadership and positive psychological capital in a public organisation. This was also the case for the moderating effects of professional development and gender. Hope showed a non-significant but moderately large correlation with the total score of authentic leadership ( $r = .30$ ). Similarly, Anwar et al. (2019) investigated the relationship between authentic leadership/leaders and creativity, using resilience and hope as a mediating factor in the health sector with a sample of  $N = 172$ . The research findings showed that authentic leadership significantly predicts hope among employees ( $r = 0.20, p < 0.01$ ). According to Amunkete and Rothmann (2015), the positive correlation between authentic leadership and psychological capital meant that the more employees felt their bosses exhibited authentic leadership qualities and characteristics, the more hopeful, optimistic, confident, and resilient they were at work.

Şeşen et al. (2020) found that the transformational leader has a significant impact on improving the psychological performance and well-being of members of the organisation. This helps to improve PsyCap and is a significant psychological capital antecedent. According to Agarwal (2020), when leaders are more positive in the face of conflict, failure, and hurdles, and display willpower to achieve goals, employees are more likely to be optimistic about the future. Such transformational leadership behaviour will instil a sense of hope and optimism, which will have a good impact on psychological capital.

A study conducted by Wang, Zheng, and Zhu (2018) showed positive correlation between transformational leadership and psychological capital ( $r = .63, p < .01$ ). The research included employees from enterprises in southern China as well as a small group of Master of Business Administration students who were also working ( $N = 237$ ).



Similarly, in another study conducted by Pugar and Parahyanti (2017) amongst 31 employees of startup companies in Indonesia, the correlation of  $r = .39$ ,  $p < .01$  was found between transformational leadership and psychological capital. Another study conducted by Li et al. (2018) on knowledge workers who have worked for at least one year in three (3) high-tech businesses in Henan Province, China  $N = 556$ , found that there is a correlation between transformational leadership and psychological capital ( $r = .28$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

Furthermore, Grobler and Joubert (2020), studied the relationship between hope and optimism, ethical leadership and person-organisation fit, while focusing on the relationship between ethical leadership and optimism with a sample of  $N=1663$  from employees of 30 organisations in South Africa. 16 of the organisations were from the private sector and 14 from the public sectors. The three-factor Ethical Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ) developed by De Hoogh and Den Hartog (2008) was used to measure ethical leadership, and hope and optimism (as a composite variable), measured with the psychological capital instrument developed by Luthans et al. (2007) and validated by Grobler and Joubert (2018) for the South African context. The results indicate that hope and optimism correlate with ethical leadership with  $r = .39$ .

From the above-mentioned literature, it is apparent that the research between organisational leadership and hope and optimism is done in variety settings. It can be observed that Du Plessis (2014) focused on the private sector healthcare industry organisations, and Stander, de Beer, and Stander (2015) and Anwar et al. (2019) focused on the public health care sector. Owens (2017) focused on public organisation, Pugar and Parahyanti (2017) analysed start-up companies, Li et al. (2018) focused on high-tech enterprises, and Grobler and Joubert (2018a) focused on public and private organisations. Sampling ranged from  $N=27$  to  $N= 1663$  averaging 645 samples. The Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ) developed by Luthans et al. (2007) was the common instrument used to measure the hope and optimism variable. The results indicated a low to moderate relationship between organisational leadership and hope and optimism with the coefficient correlation ranging from  $-.33$  to  $.45$ .

### **2.5.3 The relationship between the impact of COVID-19 on the perceptions of human resource practices, hope and optimism**

Khan et al. (2016) stated that despite the contribution of human resource practices to improving organisational performance, their impact on enhancing employee hope and optimism is underexplored in the wider management and organisation literature. Organisational operations around the world have changed considerably since the COVID-19 outbreak, with all but essential employees compelled to transition to flexible working practises, such as working from home. According to Biron et al. (2020), in crisis situations, and in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic specifically, individuals high in optimism are more likely than those low in optimism to curb and manoeuvre through external disturbances inflicted on them (e.g., physical threat, job insecurity, school closure), and weather disturbances that might otherwise undermine their ability to adjust to working from home.

Daraba, Wirawan, Salam, and Faisal (2021) conducted a study on the role of authentic leadership, psychological capital, and employees' gender in predicting employees' performance in an Indonesian public organisation during the implementation of WFH among 116 governmental institution employees under the Minister of Home Affairs. There was no significant relationship between psychological capital and WFH ( $r = .06$ ,  $p < .01$ ), according to the results. In contrast, a study of the trait optimism and the working from home adjustment during the COVID-19 pandemic by Biron, Peretz and Turgeman-Lupo (2020) focused on the relationship between working from home adjustments and trait optimism with a sample of  $N=388$  participants who worked from home during the pandemic. It was found that there is a positive relationship between the trait of optimism, and the adjustment of working from home ( $r = .23$ ).

Moreover, a study conducted by Mao et al. (2020) on the effects of tourism CSR on employee psychological capital during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis focused on the relationship between CSR, hope and optimism, and the relationship between corporate COVID-19 pandemic responses. Hope and optimism was studied with a sample of  $N=430$  focused on employees of tourism companies of different types in China. To measure CSR, Ong et al. (2018) used the CSR scale. Watkins et al. (2015)

recommended the measure of satisfaction with corporate COVID-19 pandemic responses, and Luthans et al. (2007) recommended the psychological capital scales. The results show that there is a positive relationship between CSR and hope ( $r = .44$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and between CSR and optimism ( $r = .45$ ,  $p < .01$ ). There is also a positive relationship between satisfaction with corporate COVID-19 pandemic responses and hope ( $r = .45$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and between satisfaction with corporate COVID-19 pandemic responses and optimism ( $r = .44$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

A study conducted by Roemer and Harris (2018) on perceived organisational support and well-being focused on the relationship between psychological capital and perceived organisational support with a sample  $N=159$  South Africans. The results indicated that perceived organisational support is positively correlated to hope  $r = .50$ ,  $p < .01$ , and optimism  $r = .59$ ,  $p < .01$ . These results were also supported by a study done by Pieters and Matheus (2020) on improving general health and reducing the burnout of nurses, with a focus on the relationship between psychological capital and organisational support with a sample of  $N=672$  registered nurses and student nurses in Namibia. Organisational support reported a positive relationship with hope ( $r = .23$ ,  $p < .05$ , small effect) and was found to improve mental health and well-being. Correspondingly, Bilgetürk and Baykal, (2021), also found a significant correlation between perceived organisational support and hope ( $r = .44$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The correlation between perceived organisational support and optimism was significant ( $r = .50$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The study was focused on how perceived organisational support affects psychological capital with a sample of  $N = 584$  managers and white-collar employees in the Turkish service sector.

This literature review has made it apparent that research on human resource practises and hope and optimism is done in a variety of settings. It can be observed that Mao et al. (2020), focused on the tourism industry, Bilgetürk and Baykal (2021) focused on the service sector, Daraba et al. (2021) focused on governmental institutions, and Roemer and Harris (2018) analysed people who were employed, but not self-employed. Pieters and Matheus (2020) focused on registered nurses and student nurses from public hospitals and clinics. Sampling ranged from  $N=116$  to  $N= 672$  averaging 412 samples. The psychological capital questionnaire (PCQ) developed by

Luthans et al. (2007) was the common instrument used to measure the hope and optimism variable. The results indicated a low to moderate relationship between human resource practises and hope and optimism the with coefficient correlation ranging from .06 to .59.

#### **2.5.4 The relationship between the impact of COVID-19 on the perceptions of human resource practises, organisational leadership, hope and optimism.**

According to Manuti et al. (2020), individuals, groups, and organisations have seen extreme transformations because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has totally altered the world as we know it. Forced remote working, staff reductions, temporary production interruptions, and in certain cases, plant closures due to imposed lockdowns are just a few of the events that have shattered work procedures, role distribution, job expectations, and performance. Employees and managers were completely unprepared to deal with this cognitive, affective, and behavioural burden, which required both to demonstrate and develop soft skills such as resilience, optimism, ingenuity, and adaptation, which are essential in dealing with the unexpected (Manuti et al., 2020).

Marashda and Albdareen (2020) state that employee psychological well-being and satisfaction are enhanced by the crucial function of leadership behaviour, particularly transformational, interactive, and ethical behaviour, and the importance of organisational support in meeting individual psychological requirements. Increasing the degree of psychological capital owned by organisations by making them more hopeful and optimistic, more flexible, and efficient in carrying out their work responsibilities is critical.

A study by Grobler and Flotman (2021) with a sample of  $N= 1560$  private and public sector employees on servant leadership, team-based learning, and hope and optimism focused on determining the role of servant leadership in promoting employee well-being, specifically a positive future expectation in terms of hope and optimism, as well as the impact that team-based learning has on this relationship. The 7-item SL questionnaire (SLQ7), developed by Liden et al. (2008), was used to measure spiritual

leadership. To measure team-based learning, TBL instrument that uses a 6-point Likert scale was used. Hope and optimism were measured on a 7-point Likert scale H&O instrument developed by Grobler and Joubert (2018) after validating the Psychological Capital (PsyCap) instrument originally developed by Luthans et al. (2007). The results indicated that spiritual leadership is positively correlated to hope and optimism  $r = .44, p \leq 0.01$ , and team-based learning  $r = .72, p < 0.01$ . Team-based learning was found to be positively correlating with hope and optimism  $r = .58, p \leq 0.01$ .

Marashda and Albdareen (2020) studied the impact of leadership behaviour on psychological capital through the mediating role of organisational support focused on the influence of organisational support as a mediating factor in the relationship between leadership behaviour and psychological capital (hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism) in Jordanian insurance businesses ( $N=335$ ). The results indicated that in insurance firms, there is a substantial correlation between leadership conduct and psychological capital, with a correlation coefficient of  $r = .81, p = .08$ . There is also a relationship between leadership behaviour and organisational support  $r = .91, p \leq 0.01$ , and a strong correlation between organisational support and psychological capital  $r = .82, p \leq 0.01$ .

A study conducted by Olaniyan and Hystad (2016) on employees' psychological capital, job satisfaction, insecurity, and intentions to quit found that the direct and indirect effects of authentic leadership focused on the impact of an authentic leader on employees' psychological capital (hope, efficacy, resilience, optimism), job satisfaction, job insecurity, and intentions to quit the organisation using data collected from an offshore organisation  $N = 926$ . Authentic leadership was measured using the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire, PsyCap was measured with an abridged 12-item psychological capital questionnaire that is drawn from the original 24-items scale developed by Luthans et al. (2007). Job satisfaction was measured using the job satisfaction scale, and job insecurity was measured using one out of the two dimensions of job insecurity. The results indicated that authentic leadership had a positive correlation with psychological capital  $r = .39, p < .01$ , and a negative

correlation with job insecurity  $r = -.17, p < .01$ . Psychological capital also had a negative correlation with job insecurity  $r = -.21, p < .01$ .

There is currently a knowledge gap regarding the relationships between the current study's variable combinations. However, from the presented literature, it can be deduced that there is a low to strong relationship between human resources practices, organisational leadership, and psychological capital ranging from  $-.17$  to  $.91$ .

## **2.6 Chapter summary**

This chapter evaluated the difference between leadership and management, and its impact on employee behaviour during times of crisis. It was found that during a major crisis, some managers flourish, while others do not. The antecedents to hope and optimism were reviewed from several perspectives in existing literature. This chapter also considered the relationship between human resource practices and organisational leadership, and it was apparent that the research can be done in a variety of settings. The relationship between organisational leadership, and hope and optimism was also analysed, and the results indicated a low to moderate relationship. While evaluating the relationship between human resource practises and hope and optimism, it was found that there is a moderate relationship. There was no significant research on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's perceptions of human resource practises, organisational leadership, and hope and optimism. Most research was on the relationship between human resources practices, organisational leadership, and psychological capital.

# Chapter 3

## Methodology

### 3.1. Introduction

The purpose of this study sought to investigate if there were any correlations between the following constructs: the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on human resource practises, organisational leadership, and hope and optimism. To provide systematic answers to the research questions, an appropriate research framework is necessary. This chapter discusses the study's research design. Following that, the sampling technique is described in depth, as well as the demographic features of the sample. It also mentions the measuring instruments that were used to administer the samples. The research design and techniques are not without shortcomings, which are discussed in the next section. The data collection procedure and measurement models utilised for the measuring instruments for the rest of the data analysis are covered in the next section. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the concepts of validity and internal reliability of the measurement instruments used in the research sample.

### 3.2. The aim of the empirical investigation

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices, organisational leadership, hope and optimism.

### 3.3. Sample size

The entire group of individuals, events, or things that exhibit the behaviours and/or have the attributes that the researcher is interested in is referred to as the population (Berndt, 2020). The study participants consisted of employees from 29 private sector organisations in South Africa.

A sample is a group of people, objects, or items selected for measurement from a large population (Mujere, 2016). It is a predetermined proportion of a statistical population, and a subset of a larger population. Because sampling has such a large impact on the quality of research findings, it is an essential component of any research

project. The sample for this study was drawn from the population in such a way that it is as representation of the population sampled (Salkind, 2017).

Given the sampling technique utilised in the study, a sample frame is a set of individuals that can be picked from the target population (Martinez-Mesa at al., 2016). For this study, the sample frame consisted of all employees of the 29 identified organisations in South Africa. This forms part of a sector sample, and the reporting will be based on the pooled results.

Probability and non-probability sampling methods are the two main types of sampling approaches. A random selection component is included in probability sampling methods, ensuring that each case in the population has an equal chance of being chosen (Shorten & Moorley, 2014). For this study, probability sampling was used. Elfil and Negida (2017) define probability sampling as the use of a representative sample when the entire population is available, and the researchers have a list of all subjects in the target population. Probability sampling methods are most effective when the population of interest is large and departures from genuine population values can be discovered. Variances from genuine population parameters are referred to as sampling errors, and these variations are best discovered when sufficiently large samples are selected (Berndt, 2020). According to Tyrer and Heyman (2016), probability sampling further reduces selection bias because the researcher does not focus on a subset of the population but rather on the complete population.

Random, systematic, stratified, and cluster sampling are all common types of probability approaches. Non-probability sampling methods employ a method in which the sample is chosen based on the researcher's subjective judgement rather than random selection (Elfil & Negida, 2017). Snowball, quota, purposive, and self-selection sampling, and other non-probability sampling methods are widely used.

Due to the size of the population and accessibility of the people, probability sampling was employed for this study. Simple random sampling was utilised as the method of probability sampling. A random sample is a sampling strategy in which sampled members are chosen at random and solely by chance. As a result, the sample's quality



is unaffected because each member has an equal probability of being chosen (Bhardwaj, 2019). According to Sharma (2017), one of the best aspects of simple random sampling is how simple it is to put together the sample. This study has a sample size of 1733 respondents.

A total of 60 employees from each identified company were chosen at random to participate in the study. The subset sample size of 60 people per organisation was based on the central limit theorem. The Central Limit Theorem (CLT) is one of the most important theories in statistics, states that the sampling distribution of the sample's mean will approach normality as the sample size grows under most distributions, normal or non-normal (Islam, 2018). It allows for population assumptions and states that with a sufficiently large sample size, a normal distribution will arise regardless of the baseline distribution (Mwiti, Wanyonyi & Marangu, 2019).

### **3.4. Measuring instruments**

Data can be collected in a variety of ways, but ultimately, data is categorised as primary or secondary data. Secondary data is information that has previously been collected or developed by others, whereas primary data is information that the researcher acquires for the first time (Ajayi, 2017).

During the gathering of primary data, a quantitative method of data collection was used to meet the research's goals. Surveys, observations, experiments, questionnaires, and personal interviews are all examples of primary data sources. In order to respond to the study objectives, a survey design was adopted that included the use of standardised measuring instruments. A self-administered survey form was utilised. A questionnaire, which is an observational technique that consists of a sequence of items provided to a respondent in written form, to which the participant is intended to respond in writing, was one of the main sources of data. Respondents are provided a list of written items to which they respond by ticking the one item deemed relevant (Ajayi, 2017). Because questionnaires may easily be transformed into statistical databases, they can be used to produce statistically supported predictions.

According to Young (2016), questionnaires appear to appeal to less experienced researchers such as students working on dissertation projects. This could be for a variety of reasons, such as them being simple to put together, or at least they appear to be easy to compile. There are a plethora of existing surveys that can be utilised or adapted, and which are frequently made accessible to researchers for free. They are portable or can be accessed on the internet. Ajayi (2017) states that they may be used to easily collect big datasets through direct contact, mail, or online through the web or email. In comparison to verbally acquired data which must be recorded and transcribed before analysis, the data they collect is relatively easy to handle and analyse.

Specified variables were measured using standardised measuring instruments. Three (3) instruments were identified as being reliable, valid, and appropriate for the aim of the research based on the literature review. The three (3) instruments were merged into a single computerised questionnaire which was supplemented by a demographic questionnaire. The following section provides a general review of each instrument's attributes as reported on the literature review in terms of content, structure, and scientific aspects.

### **3.4.1 The impact of COVID-19 on the perceptions of human resource practices**

The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of Human Resource practices (IHRp) instrument was used to measure the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of Human Resource practises. IHRp measures the elements of the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of Human Resource practises namely: compensation and benefits, flexible working practices, organisational image, and organisational support structures.

Cajee and Grobler (2021) conducted research as part of a doctoral study to build on the extensive work of Grobler at al. (2019) to validate the Human Resource Practices Perceptions Questionnaire (HRPPQ) for the South African (African) context while considering contextual realities such as collectivism (embedded in, for example, Ubuntu) and Afrocentrism.

IHRp consists of a total of 26 items. This comprises of 13 items under the following two headings: the general organisation specifically before the COVID-19 pandemic, and what I as the researcher have recently experienced at my employment organisation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Each heading consists of the same thirteen questions which relate to the above-mentioned human resource practices. Examples of the items include “The general organisation, and specifically before the COVID-19 pandemic which offered an attractive compensation and benefits package” and “I have experienced the following at my organisation recently, specifically during the COVID-19 pandemic – which offered an attractive compensation and benefits package”.

The scale used in the measure is a 5-point Likert scale with the responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The maximum score is 65 and the minimum score is 13. A high score presents a high perception of HR practices, and a low score presents a low perception of HR practices.

The composite reliability value for both EVP\_JOIN and EVP\_EXP exceed the threshold of 0,7 at 0,839 and 0,857 respectively. This implies that the measured variables consistently represent the latent constructs which were chosen as it was deemed suitable for this study. It is a quick and straightforward tool to use, with demonstrated validity and reliability, and it is free of biases.

### **3.4.2 Organisational Leadership**

The Organisational Leadership Behaviour Scale was used to measure organisational leadership. The measure was developed by Enslin and Grobler (2021) as part of a doctoral study. It measures elements of organisational leadership, namely, leadership awareness, leadership culture, leader vision, leadership style and characteristics, engaging communication, support, team dynamics, and delivering strategy.

The instrument consists of 32 items. The following subscales comprising of four (4) items each are identified:

- The leader awareness subscale (e.g., “In my organisation leaders manage their own emotions effectively”),
  - Leadership culture subscale (e.g., “In my organisation, leaders trust me to get the job done”),
  - Leader vision subscale (e.g., “In my organisation, leaders provide me with a clear picture of the ideal future”),
  - Leadership style and characteristics subscale (e.g., “In my organisation, leaders take responsibility, even when under pressure.”),
  - Engaging communication subscale (e.g., “In my organisation, leaders communicate openly and transparently.”),
  - Support subscale (e.g., “In my organisation, leaders create a safe emotional space to work in.”),
  - Team dynamics subscale (e.g., “In my organisation, leaders embrace diversity.”).
- while

The remaining four (4) items measure the delivering strategy subscale (e.g., “In my organisation, leaders keep me accountable for my results”).

A 5-point Likert Scale was chosen to measure the responses to each item as it is the most common item format in instruments measuring opinions, beliefs, and attitudes. In line with standard practice and to avoid the challenges of a neutral or undecided option, the responses to the statements formed a five-point continuum ranging from “strongly disagree,” “disagree,” “neither agree nor disagree,” “agree,” to “strongly agree”. The maximum score is 160 and the minimum is 32.

To test reliability and validation of the measure, the scale of 32 items will be included in a battery of instruments used by students pursuing a Master of Business Leadership (MBL) or Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree through the University of South Africa’s (UNISA) Graduate School of Business Leadership. The aggregate data will be used to statistically determine the validity and reliability of the Organisational Leadership Behavioural Scale. The most important factor considered when selecting this instrument was how well the instrument aligned to the research objectives. Alignment is crucial because it relates directly to the utility of the information gained from survey. When alignment is poor, the results of the survey provide weak or limited

information. The more reliable the scores obtained from the instrument, the higher the quality of the instrument.

### **3.4.3 Hope and Optimism**

Hope and optimism were measured with the psychological capital instrument developed by Luthans et al. (2007) and validated by Grobler and Joubert (2018) for the South African context.

The measure is based on the work of Luthans et al. (2007). The instrument consisted of 24 items that were answered on a six-point Likert scale ranging from one (1) to six (6), with one (1) indicating strong disagreement and six (6) indicating strong agreement. The PCQ was created by combining four (4) distinct scales that evaluate the four (4) Psychological Capital (PsyCap) dimensions, namely, (a) hope, (b) resilience, (c) optimism, and (d) self-efficacy. The items were modified from the four (4) original scales to reflect the employment environment. Grobler and Joubert (2018) adapted the original conceptualisation and empirically confirmed factorial composition of PsyCap by four (4) elements, namely, hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy. However, the study yielded a three-factor conclusion with hope and optimism as a merged factor, and Resilience and Self efficacy as a rearranged set of substantively valid components (three (3) of the original 24 items were found not to be suitable). The three (3) redesigned components had adequate levels of convergent and discriminant validity, as well as good psychometric characteristics and supporting construct validity.

The instrument consists of eight (8) items. The items of the scale were measured using a six-point Likert scale which ranges from (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) somewhat disagree, (4) somewhat agree, (5) agree and (6) strongly agree. Typical items of the instrument include “I feel confident helping to set targets/ goals in my work area” to “I always look on the bright side of things regarding my job” with each item measuring a specific dimension of PsyCap.

The PCQ's validity was also determined using the various definitions and types of validity presented. The Cronbach alpha coefficients ( $\alpha$ ) of the factors were acceptable for Hope (0.86) and Optimism reported a low Cronbach alpha value with 0.55, most

likely due to the negative or reversed items (20 and 23) (Grobler & Joubert, 2018). The PCQ was chosen for this study because of its theoretical coherence with the explanation of the hope and optimism notion, as well as its degree of validity and reliability.

#### **3.4.4 Demographic items**

Seven (7) items were included in the study which could indicate the representativity of the sample within the South African workforce. The items included:

- Gender: Male or female.
- Race: Asian, Black, Coloured, or White.
- Age: Number of years.
- Years of formal schooling: Less than 12 years, 12 years (matric), 1<sup>st</sup> Degree / Diploma, higher degree / diploma
- Number of years with present employer: In years.
- Type of work: Support/admin, core business/operations.
- Post level: Top / senior management, middle management / professional, junior management / supervisors / semi-skilled workers.

In total, 66 items were included in this study. The number of items for the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on human practices (26), organisational leadership (32) and hope and optimism (8). The measures as it appeared on the questionnaire are presented as Annexure A.

#### **3.5. Design of the study**

A quantitative method was utilised for primary data collection, and to meet the aims of the study. Primary data consisted of responses to a survey questionnaire, while the secondary data comprises of literature sources that served as a theoretical foundation for the proposed correlations between the study's variables (Gota,2017). Quantitative research is described as the systematic analysis of phenomena through the gathering of numerical data and the application of statistical, mathematical, or computational methodologies. Quantitative research is based on the positivism paradigm, which

advocates for statistical approaches that include inferential statistics, hypothesis testing, mathematical exposition, experimental and quasi-experimental design randomization, blinding, structured protocols, and questionnaires with a limited number of predetermined answers (Adedoyin, 2020).

Quantitative research entails quantifying and analysing variables to arrive at conclusions. It consists of analysing numerical data with specialised statistical techniques in order to answer questions such as who, how much, what, where, when, how many, and how (Apuke, 2017). Quantitative research objectives are measurable and are inextricably linked to variables and hypotheses. According to Eyisi (2016), quantitative research allows for the use of numerical metrics that can offer a researcher with exact descriptions of variables. The problem with this strategy is that the information acquired is limited and not authentic, and the research's realism is low.

The goal of the research design is to create empirical data that supports or refutes the operational hypotheses to answer the study-initiating question. The research design is influenced by both the research problem and the research questions. The research questions emanated from the literature review, which also suggested the most effective method for addressing the research topic. This study used a cross-sectional design method which is a form of observational study that examines data from a population at a single point in time (Wang & Cheng, 2020).

The cross-sectional design methodology has the advantage of allowing for the collection of reliable data, which in turn allows for the generation of strong findings and new hypotheses for investigation in future research (Zangirolami-Raimundo et al., 2018). In a cross-sectional study, researchers examine both the study subjects' results and their exposure at the same time. It is referred to as capturing a "snapshot" of a group of people. Subjects in a cross-sectional study are simply recruited from a population of potential relevance to the research issue, as opposed to case-controlled studies (participants chosen based on outcome status) or cohort studies (subjects chosen based on exposure status). There is no prospective or retrospective follow-up with the subjects (Wang & Cheng, 2020). Cross-sectional research is the most basic and cost-effective time dimension that may be used in research.

The cross-sectional design is frequently criticised for two (2) reasons: for common technique variance, and the difficulty to derive causal inferences. Common method variance may develop as a result of event circumstances that bias distinct measures in the same way. The difficulty to make strong causal findings stems from a lack of temporal features in the research design, which could show temporal precedence as a required, but not sufficient, aspect in a causative situation. The most common solution for both of these difficulties is to incorporate the element of time using a longitudinal (all variables are assessed at all time points) or prospective (various variables are assessed at different time points) design (Spector, 2019).

The scope of the study is presented below in the form of a text box.

**Text box 1: Scope of study**

This study forms part of a research project within the research focus area of organisational behaviour leadership. The overarching project comprised of 13 constructs. The instruments measuring these constructs were identified and, in some instances, adapted by the project leaders. Each participant in the project administered all 13 instruments. The analysis and the reporting of the statistical results was based on the pooled data of the research project, which is a composite of all datasets of participating students with each student researcher focusing on three variables.

Based on the three concepts allocated to the research student, they needed to identify and contextualize a research problem in the environment where they intend to collect the data. Following the identification of a suitable research site, students had to obtain permission to conduct the study from appropriate authority, as per the granted ethical clearance from the SBL Research Ethics Committee, [ref nr:2021\_SBL\_AC\_005\_CA] (see Annexure B).

Students were trained in research ethics, appropriate sampling techniques and the administration of the instruments. The students then had to draw samples independently, contact respondents, and obtain consent from participants before administering the instruments. The data was captured in a present excel spreadsheet. An administrator merged the data files of all the participants and prepared it to be imported into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software package.



Students were trained in the relevant and appropriate statistical techniques applicable to their study and also informed of alternative methods of analysis. They consequently received the SPSS outputs related to their studies, which they needed to report and interpret independently. The project leader is Professor A Grobler, and he is the author of the text box. The same strategy was followed by all involved in the study.

### **3.6. Method**

To conduct research, important information on research ethics, including a copy of the Unisa Research Ethics Policy was received in various seminars, as part of the induction to the project. Ethical considerations meant that research methodologies must respect the respondents' social, legal, and professional commitments. Most importantly, respondents (previously referred to as subjects) must be assured that they will not be subjected to any physical or psychological harm. If there is a significant risk, the experiment should not be permitted (Salkind, 2017). Ethical clearance was approved and obtained from the UNISA.

Permission to conduct this research was obtained by contacting the targeted research organisation's Human Resources director. The HR director received an organisational access letter outlining the research's purpose, goals, and ethics (letter attached as Annexure C). The key factors for choosing the identified organisations was based on their willingness to engage, and the demographics of their workforce, which were collected or returned to the researcher after completed.

Once permission was obtained, the HR director offered to distribute the online link and participant information sheet to their respective departments. The email came with a cover letter that asked for assistance and confirmed executive authorisation. However, the returning of the distributed questionnaires was delayed. Questionnaires could not be completed by all of the participants in each department, and coercion on the part of the researcher would have been inappropriate. As a result, the questionnaire was only completed by individuals who were willing to participate and had the time to do so. The completion of the questionnaire constituted consent to take part in the research. Contact persons were instructed to ask responders to complete all parts and pages of the questionnaire completely to preserve confidentiality.

Random sampling was used to select the study's sample. Random sampling approaches employ random selection (i.e., probabilistic methods) of units from the sampling frame (i.e., comparable to, or identical to your population) to be included in the sample (Mujere, 2016). These processes (i.e., probabilistic approaches) are well described, thus making them simple to implement. Certain parameters for the appropriate study sample were conveyed to the research organisation in order to identify these groups. Participation in the study needed access to a computer and the internet, as well as acceptable English literacy because the questions required respondents to be able to discriminate between fine nuances of behaviour represented in words.

Training was conducted on the relevant and appropriate statistical techniques applicable to the study, and information on alternative methods of analysis were provided. The received SPSS outputs related to the study needed to be reported and interpreted independently.

To eliminate typing mistakes or duplicating entries, the obtained data was captured on Microsoft Excel using the appropriate Microsoft Excel functions. The researcher was present during a session in which the data was analysed, and students were advised of the interpretation of their data. The specific details from data analysis were presented on section 3.6. The study's findings are presented on Chapter 4. Chapter 5 presents the interpretations of the study's findings, and the study's concluding remarks.

The nature and motivation for the study were communicated to participants prior to completing the questionnaires. This was also mentioned on the cover letter that accompanied the questionnaire. The participants provided informed consent, which was also narrated to them. They were asked to mark a box to indicate their willingness to participate in the study. The participants were informed that their responses to the questionnaires would be kept confidential. Responses were captured as anonymous because no identifying information was necessary. Participants were also told that the data would be kept private and would only be used for research purposes. Participants

were informed that their involvement in the study was solely at their own volition, and they may withdraw from the study at any given time without any repercussions.

### **3.7. Data analysis**

Descriptive and inferential statistics are the two (2) types of data analysis methodologies utilised in research. Using methods such as frequencies, indices of central tendency, dispersion, and descriptive statistics are used to explain generated findings by converting raw data into a more understandable and transparent format (Kaur, Stoltzfus & Yellapu,2018 ;Sharma, 2019). Conversely, inferential statistics are used to analyse the relationship between two (2) variables, discover changes in a variable across subgroups, and anticipate how many independent variables might account for the variance in a dependent variable.

Descriptive statistics and preliminary analyses were appropriate to determine the nature of participant responses and the questionnaires employed due to the study's intrinsic quantitative structure. Obtaining means (the average values) and standard deviations was one of the descriptive statistics. The most frequent measure of central tendency is the mean, which refers to the average value of a group of data. The average or mean is calculated by adding up all of the numbers and dividing the total by the number of values (Sykes, Gani & Vally,2016). According to Andrade (2020), the standard deviation is the most useful indicator of variability. The variability or spread of a distribution is expressed as a single number (group of scores). This was done to determine the groups' standing on the multiple factors. A low standard deviation implies that the data points are close to the mean, whereas a high standard deviation suggests that the data is dispersed throughout a large range of values (Sykes et al. , 2016).

Firstly, data describing/representing the sample was generated. This was accomplished through the use of means (averages) for continuous variables (such as age) and frequencies for categorical data (e.g., qualifications). This was done to get to know the group with which the researcher was going to work with.

Reliability data was generated. The most widely used scale for reliability statistics is Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha Coefficient was utilised in this study to examine the reliability and efficacy of the various instruments employed to measure the constructs. Cronbach's alpha measures the internal consistency or reliability of a set of items, measurements, or ratings. In other words, it measures the reliability of a questionnaire's responses (or a domain of the questionnaire), an instrumentation or rating reviewed by respondents indicating the tools' stability (Bujang et al. , 2018). Cronbach's alpha divides all the questions in an instrument in every imaginable way and computes correlations for each of them (Taber, 2018). Cronbach's alpha correlational coefficient is equivalent to the average of these values. Statisticians have questioned whether the size of Cronbach's alpha is appropriate. According to Nawi et al.,(2020), there are four (4) cut-off points for reliability, which includes excellent reliability (0.90 and above), high reliability (0.70-0.90), moderate reliability (0.50-0.70) and low reliability (0.50 and below). An alpha of 0.70 – 0.80 is commonly deemed "sufficient" for a scale used in human dimensions research (Vaske, Beaman & Sponarski,2017).

To determine the homogeneity of mean scores between organisations, ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) (one-way analysis of variance) calculations were utilised. In general, the goal of ANOVA is to look for statistically significant differences between the means of distinct groups (Chen, Li & Zhoung,2019). The statistical significance of differences in the current study were established by comparing changes in the mean scores of the demographic categories to determine if homogeneity exists, or if the groups differ. This was done to examine if we could pool together all the organisation's knowledge – or if organisations differ fundamentally on the many levels of the phenomenon. A significant P-value in an ANOVA test shows that there was a statistically significant difference in mean between at least one (1) pair if P-value is less than .05 (Mishra et al. , 2019).

When two (2) groups were compared, T-tests were conducted to see if there were any significant differences. A P-value is used to measure the significance of the results in relation to the null hypothesis while performing a statistical test. Statistical significance is regarded as a P-value of less than 0.05 (typically 0.05). It provides a strong

counterargument to the null hypothesis, as the null hypothesis has a less than a 5% chance of being correct (and the data are random) (Spurlock, 2017). To establish whether or not samples have equal variances, the Levene's testing was conducted. When the difference is insignificant ( $p > 0.05$ ), equal variances are assumed; when it is significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), unequal variances are assumed (Mishra et al, 2019). The assumption that variances are equal across groups or samples is made by some statistical tests, such as analysis of variance. The Levene test can be used to verify that assumption (Kim & Cribbie, 2017).

For the T-tests, the practical significance of the differences in mean scores (effect size) was applied. The effect size indicates the significance of a link between variables or a difference between groups. It expresses the practical importance of a study's findings. While statistical significance determines whether or not an effect exists in a study, practical significance determines whether or not the effect is large enough to be significant in the actual world (Thompson et al. , 2021). If the Sig. value for Levene's test is larger than .05, then the first line in the table which refers to equal variances assumed should be used. Similarly, if the significance level of Levene's test is .05 or below, the data contradicts the assumption of equal variance, and the second line of the t-test table which relates to equal variances not assumed, should be utilised.

Effect sizes can be measured in a variety of ways. Cohen's "d" is the most widely used effect size metric. The size of the difference between two (2) groups is measured by Cohen's "d" (Spurlock, 2019). According to Goulet-Pelletier and Cousineau (2018), Cohen's "d" is used to assess and normalise the difference between two (2) measures. It is then possible to compare the impact of a treatment across studies that do not necessarily use the same units of measurement. The interpretation of Cohen's "d" is simple: a large Cohen-d represents a large difference between two (2) means. Cohen's "d" magnitude is represented in terms of the number of standard deviations separating the two (2) groups.

This study used the Pearson correlation coefficient to determine whether there was a relationship between the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices, organisational leadership, hope, and optimism. Pearson's

correlation coefficient was determined as an investigation of the relationship between the measured variables in order to determine if the variables relate in a meaningful manner. Pearson correlation is a measure of the linear relationship between two (2) normally distributed random variables. The Pearson product moment correlation, denoted by the letter “r”, is the most commonly used to assess relationships, followed by symbols representing the variables that are correlated (Salkind, 2017).

Both variables are considered to be regularly distributed in a Pearson correlation study. Natural random variation affects the observed values of these variables (Schober et al., 2018). According to Brydges (2019), researchers often interpret observed effect sizes as small, medium, or large practical effect sizes using Cohen’s criteria of Pearson’s  $r = 0.2$ ,  $r = .50$ , and  $r = .80$ .

The influence between a set of variables was investigated using linear regression analysis. Linear regression is a statistical method for estimating the value of a dependent variable from the value of an independent variable. Linear regression is a basic and commonly used predictive analysis technique. Linear regression is used to determine the relationship between two (2) variables. Kumari and Yadav (2018) define it as a sort of modelling in which one or more independent variables are utilised to predict a dependent variable. Regression estimations describe the relationship between one or more independent variables and one dependent variable.

According to Agarwal and Ranganathan (2017), regression analysis (i.e., its coefficient or “b”) forecasts the nature of the connection; it describes a method for predicting the value of the dependent variable based on the independent variable’s value. It indicates how much and in which direction the dependent variable changes on average for each unit increase in the former. This was done to check if combining variables might predict the dependent variable accurately.

### **3.8. Summary**

This chapter provided an overview of the study’s research design and methodology. Following a discussion of the sampling strategy, the relevant instruments and the research method employed for the study were presented. Thereafter, the statistical

analysis performed on the study data was discussed. Chapter presents the study's data analysis which was conducted using the methods described on Chapter 3.

# Chapter 4

## Results

### 4.1. Introduction

The study's primary goal was to investigate the relationship between the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resources practices, organisational leadership, hope and optimism in the private sector in South Africa. The purpose of this chapter is to present the study's research findings. The statistical analysis software SPSS version 27 was used to for the data analysis. The findings of the statistical procedures mentioned in Chapter 3 are depicted and interpreted on this chapter. This chapter will also discuss descriptive data and outcomes pertaining to the instrument's reliability, probable correlations between constructs, and variations between groups.

The variables used in this study are unidimensional. Human resources practices, organisational leadership, and hope and optimism consist of a single factor. The descriptive, correlational, and reliability analyses will include the respective factors of the variables for the purposes of this study, but inferential statistics and multiple regression will only be performed on the total scores of the three (3) major variables, as stated in the study's objectives.

### 4.2. Sample

The study sampled 60 employees from 29 private sector organisations in South Africa, making a total of 1733 study participants. The raw data acquired in the demographic questionnaire is described on the next section, which discusses the responses of participants based on their age, gender, race, education, and tenure. The organisations were each assigned a number as depicted on the tables below. The organisations are not tabled in sequence but appear on the tables below in ascending order.

On the biographical questionnaires, respondents were requested to indicate a category that best fit their age group. Table 4.1 provides insight into the responses received according to each respondent's the age within the target organisation.



Table 4.1: Age statistics pooled per company

Organisation	Mean	Std. Deviation
4	39.90	9.28
5	40.50	9.84
6	38.45	9.18
7	34.72	7.93
8	38.44	9.13
9	35.23	8.46
10	44.59	8.34
14	37.73	6.20
15	44.28	8.05
16	37.65	8.21
18	34.37	4.62
19	40.02	8.31
21	43.64	8.76
22	37.47	8.26
24	37.22	5.68
26	36.98	7.20
27	37.83	8.93
29	36.20	8.50
31	39.03	9.76
32	37.37	7.97
33	36.97	9.57
35	38.35	8.64
36	35.07	7.23
37	38.92	9.83
40	39.28	11.32
41	39.66	9.50
42	43.58	7.04
44	39.20	8.79
45	36.93	6.55
<b>Pooled</b>	<b>38.59</b>	<b>8.77</b>

Table 4.1 depicts the mean age for the sample reported across 29 organisations which is 38.59 years (SD=8.77). The highest reported mean age score was for organisation number 10 (M=44.59, SD=8.34), and organisation number 18 recorded the lowest mean age score (M=34.37, SD=4.62). It can therefore be deduced that because of the relatively high mean score, participants were matured in terms of their age. The sample's age distribution appears to be reflective of the South African workforce in general, especially when considering the distribution of labour force participation rate as reported by Statistics South Africa (2021) was 71.1% for the age group of 25-34 years, and 77.1% for the 35-44 years age group respectively.

Job tenure refers to the number of years of service in a particular organisation. Table 4.2 below provides insight into the responses received according to the period that the personnel have been in the target organisations.

Table 4.2: Tenure statistics pooled per company

Organisation	Mean	Std. Deviation
4	11.40	6.60
5	10.05	8.47
6	9.47	5.89
7	3.23	2.32
8	4.22	3.14
9	4.85	2.70
10	11.85	9.05
14	4.17	2.21
15	16.70	8.20
16	6.67	4.74
18	2.83	1.06
19	11.15	7.75
21	11.80	7.54
22	6.12	4.81
24	4.73	2.92
26	7.42	4.53
27	10.28	6.86
29	5.78	3.97
31	7.87	6.51
32	9.45	7.71
33	9.62	7.10
35	9.70	6.72
36	7.48	4.80
37	8.02	6.28
40	5.35	3.81
41	10.34	8.43
42	12.00	5.19
44	9.69	7.98
45	5.68	4.41
<b>Pooled</b>	<b>8.18</b>	<b>6.71</b>

Table 4.2 indicates that the mean tenure for the sample reported across 29 organisations is 8.18 (SD=6.71). The highest reported score was for organisation number 15 (M=16.70,SD=8.20), and organisation number 18 recorded the lowest (M=2.83,SD=1.06). The sample's tenure distribution appears to be fairly typical of the South African workforce in general, given that the workforce distribution as reported by Statistics South Africa (2021) was 3.11. This implies that the typical participant has enough job experience within the company to form an opinion on it. On the biographical questionnaires, respondents were asked to indicate a category that best represents their gender. Table 4.3 below provides insight into the responses received according to the various respondents' gender within the targeted organisations.

Table 4.3: Gender statistics pooled per company

Organisation	Male	Female
4	24(40%)	36(60%)
5	41(68.3%)	19(31.7%)
6	19(31.7%)	41(68.3%)
7	21(35%)	39(65%)
8	18(29.5%)	43(70.5%)
9	40(66.7%)	20(33.3%)
10	31(57.4%)	23(42.6%)
14	24(40%)	36(60%)
15	22(36.7%)	38(63.3%)
16	34(56.7%)	26(43.3%)
18	30(50%)	30(50%)
19	32(54.2%)	27(45.8%)
21	26(42.6%)	35(57.4%)
22	23(38.3%)	37(61.7%)
24	36(60%)	24(40%)
26	22(36.7%)	38(63.3%)
27	27(45%)	33(55%)
29	9(15%)	51(85%)
31	35(58.3%)	25(41.7%)
32	40(66.7%)	20(33.3%)
33	33(55%)	27(45%)
35	35(58.3%)	25(41.7%)
36	43(71.7%)	17(28.3%)
37	5(8.3%)	55(91.7%)
40	20(33.3%)	40(66.7%)
41	29(50%)	29(50%)
42	17(28.3%)	43(71.7%)
44	21(35%)	39(65%)
45	32(53.3%)	28(46.7%)
Pooled	789(45.5%)	944(54.5%)

The representation of the gender groups was slightly higher for women at 54.5% compared to 45.5% for men. The gender distribution of the sample does not appear to be typical of the South African workforce in general, considering that according to Statistics South Africa (2021), the percentage of males in employment is 56.6%, while the percentage of women in employment is 43.4%. Table 4.4 below provides the responses received from the different race groupings.

Table 4.4: Racial statistics pooled per company

Organisation	Black	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White
4	14(23.3%)	28(46.7%)	3(5.0%)	15(25.0%)
5	12(20%)	30(50%)	1(1.7%)	17(28.3%)
6	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	60(100%)
7	10(16.7%)	0(0.0%)	3(5%)	47(78.3%)
8	38(62.3%)	6(9.8%)	4(6.6%)	13(21.3%)
9	4(6.7%)	1(1.7%)	0(0.0%)	55(91.7%)
10	29(53.7%)	9(16.7%)	1(1.9%)	15(27.8%)
14	56(93.3%)	3(5.0%)	0(0.0%)	1(1.7%)
15	51(85%)	2(3.3%)	1(1.7%)	6(10.0%)
16	20(33.3%)	5(8.3%)	12(20.0%)	23(38.3%)
18	26(43.3%)	13(21.7%)	16(26.7%)	5(8.3%)
19	40(67.8%)	2(3.4%)	14(23.7%)	3(5.1%)
21	40(65.6%)	5(8.2%)	6(9.8%)	10(16.4%)
22	24(40%)	31(51.7%)	0(0.0%)	5(8.3%)
24	46(41.7%)	2(3.3%)	8(13.3%)	4(6.7%)
26	25(41.7%)	21(35%)	2(3.3%)	12(20%)
27	46(76.7%)	3(5.0%)	3(5.0%)	8(13.3)
29	13(21.7%)	12(20.0%)	2(3.3%)	33(55.0%)
31	43(71.7%)	3(5.0%)	10(16.7%)	4(6.7%)
32	47(78.3%)	2(3.3%)	2(3.3%)	9(15%)
33	34(56.7%)	9(15%)	10(16.7%)	7(11.7%)
35	21(35.0%)	5(8.3%)	11(18.3%)	23(38.3%)
36	43(71.7%)	6(10.0%)	1(1.7%)	10(16.7%)
37	28(46.7%)	9(15%)	15(25%)	8(13.3%)
40	35(58.3%)	5(8.3%)	1(1.7%)	19(31.7%)
41	21(36.2%)	3(5.2%)	13(22.4%)	21(36.2%)
42	7(11.7%)	1(1.7%)	3(5.0%)	49(81.7%)
44	39(65.0%)	2(3.3%)	2(3.3%)	17(28.3%)
45	28(46.7%)	11(18.3%)	8(13.3%)	13(21.7%)
Pooled	840(48.5%)	229(13.3%)	152(8.8%)	512(29.5%)

In terms of the racial distribution, the majority of the participants were Black (48.5%), followed by white (29.5%), Coloured (13.3%), and Indian (8.8%). The race distribution of the sample appears to be fairly typical of the South African workforce in general, considering that the South African workforce is 73.4% Black, 12.7% White, 3.2% Indians, and 10.7% Coloured according to Statistics South Africa (2021).

Descriptive statistics per variable will be discussed in the next section. Descriptive statistics enable researchers to compare and describe variables numerically (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019).

### 4.3. Descriptive statistics of variables

The mean and standard deviation of COVID-19 pandemic impact on perceptions of human resources practises, organisational leadership, and hope and optimism variables are presented in this section. Furthermore, the explanations of these scores for each variable are explained below.

Table 4.5: Descriptive statistics per item

Item	N	Mean	Std.Deviation
<b>Impact of Covid-19 on the perceptions of Human Resource practises (IHRp)</b>			
IHRp_comp_b	1733	3.45	1.09
IHRp_bonus_b	1732	3.12	1.26
IHRp_perks_b	1733	2.14	1.22
IHRp_train_b	1732	3.53	1.05
IHRp_aut_b	1731	3.42	0.96
IHRp_recog_b	1733	3.29	1.05
IHRp_flex_b	1731	3.39	1.15
IHRp_image_b	1733	3.84	0.97
IHRp_supp_b	1733	3.37	1.05
IHRp_jsc_b	1732	3.71	1.03
IHRp_teams_b	1733	3.89	0.87
IHRp_ind_b	1732	3.92	0.85
IHRp_jfit_b	1733	3.67	0.87
IHRp_comp_C19	1733	2.99	1.15
IHRp_bonus_C19	1733	2.60	1.20
IHRp_perks_C19	1733	1.94	1.01
IHRp_train_C19	1732	3.15	1.10
IHRp_aut_C19	1732	3.25	1.00
IHRp_recog_C19	1733	3.04	1.08
IHRp_flex_C19	1733	3.48	1.13
IHRp_image_C19	1733	3.58	1.01
IHRp_supp_C19	1732	3.22	1.09
IHRp_jsc_C19	1732	3.29	1.18
IHRp_teams_C19	1733	3.53	1.02
IHRp_ind_C19	1731	3.80	0.93
IHRp_jfit_C19	1733	3.42	0.95
<b>Organisational Leadership Behaviour Scale (OL)</b>			
OL1	1733	3.46	1.01
OL2	1733	3.37	1.00
OL3	1732	3.58	1.04

OL4	1732	3.54	1.00
OL5	1733	3.97	0.84
OL6	1733	3.79	0.97
OL7	1733	3.92	0.91
OL8	1733	3.73	0.96
OL9	1733	3.50	1.06
OL10	1731	3.65	1.00
OL11	1733	3.54	1.07
OL12	1733	3.65	0.97
OL13	1733	3.68	1.02
OL14	1732	3.54	1.05
OL15	1733	3.59	1.04
OL16	1733	3.64	0.97
OL17	1733	3.54	1.09
OL18	1733	3.68	0.99
OL19	1732	3.43	1.11
OL20	1726	3.47	1.03
OL21	1733	3.56	1.08
OL22	1733	3.36	1.10
OL23	1732	3.65	1.03
OL24	1733	3.30	1.09
OL25	1733	3.65	0.99
OL26	1732	3.64	1.01
OL27	1733	3.60	1.06
OL28	1732	3.55	1.04
OL29	1731	3.57	0.97
OL30	1732	3.73	0.95
OL31	1733	3.94	0.85
OL32	1733	3.63	1.06
<b>Hope and Optimism (H&amp;O)</b>			
HandO1	1733	4.43	1.102
HandO2	1733	4.38	1.105
HandO3	1732	4.45	1.043
HandO4	1733	4.40	1.064
HandO5	1733	4.08	1.185
HandO6	1733	4.58	1.045
HandO7	1732	4.38	1.147
HandO8	1733	4.47	1.073

In terms of the impact of Covid-19 on the perceptions of human resources practices before the COVID-19 pandemic, the scores are all reported on a 5-point Likert scale. Item (IHRp\_ind\_b) has a high mean score of 3.92 (SD=0.85). This item reads: *“The organisation generally, and specifically before COVID-19 offered an opportunity to work as an individual.”* A low mean score was measured for item IHRp\_perks\_b, with a mean score of 2.14 (SD=1.22). This item reads: *“The organisation generally, and specifically before COVID-19 offered innovative perks e.g., onsite gym/ day-care/ etc.”*

With regard to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resources practices during the COVID-19 pandemic, the scores are all reported on a 5-point Likert scale. Item IHRp\_ind\_C19 has a high mean score of 3.80 (SD=0.93). The item reads: *“I have experienced the following at my organisation recently, specific during the COVID-19 pandemic, an opportunity to work as an individual.”* A low mean score was measured for the item IHRp\_perks\_C19, with a mean score of 1.94 (SD=1.01). The item reads: *“I have experienced the following at my organisation recently, specific during the COVID-19 pandemic, innovative perks e.g., onsite gym/ day-care/ etc.”*

In terms of organisational leadership, the scores are reported on a 5-point Likert scale. The item with the highest mean score of 3.97 (SD=0.84) was OL5 which reads: *“In my organisation, trust me to get the job done.”* Item OL24 which reads: *“In my organisation, encourage me to take risks”* recorded the lowest mean score of 3.30 (SD=1.09).

In terms of hope and optimism, the scores are reported on a 6-point Likert scale. Based on that this item, HandO6 measured the highest mean score of 4.58 (SD=1.05). This item reads: *“I always look on the bright side of things regarding my job.”* A low mean score was measured for item HandO5, which reads: *“When things are uncertain for me at work, I usually expect the best.”* The measured mean score was 4.08 (SD=1.19).

This section discusses the reliability of the scale items for the constructs under investigation. Internal reliability was determined by calculating the Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) coefficient, which is based on inter-item correlations. Table 4.6 below summarises descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) coefficients for each instrument.

Table 4.6: Descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha coefficient per instrument

Item	Mean	Std.Deviation	Cronbach Alpha
<b>Impact of Covid-19 on the perceptions of Human Resource practises (IHRp)</b>			
IHRp_total_b	3.44	0.67	0.88
IHRp_total_C19	3.18	0.71	0.89
IHRp_BvsC19	0.27	0.53	
<b>Organisational Leadership Behaviour Scale (OL)</b>			
OLTOT	3.61	0.79	0.98
<b>Hope and Optimism (H&amp;O)</b>			
HandO	4.40	0.80	0.87

The reliability coefficient (Cronbach alpha) for the dimensions of the impact of Covid-19 on the perceptions of human resources practices instrument was 0.88 and 0.89. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach alpha) for organisational leadership instrument was 0.98. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach alpha) for the psychological capital instrument was 0.87 respectively. Given the prescribed value of 0.70 (Vaske et al. , 2017), the values for the instruments were acceptable. For the purpose of this study, a Cronbach's alpha coefficient value ranging from 0.70 and above was believed to be adequate.

#### 4.4. Correlation analysis

For this section, correlation statistics were conducted to test the strength and direction of the relationship between the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resources practices, organisational leadership, hope and optimism. The Pearson product moment correlation is the most commonly used to measure relationships, and it is represented by the letter "r" and symbols that indicate the correlated variables. (Salkind, 2017). According to Kau (2020), correlation is extensively applied in social research to establish the direction and degree of a correlational link between variables. The relationship between the constructs of this study expressed by the Pearson correlations are captured on Table 4.7 below.



Table 4.7: Correlation matrix of the impact of COVID-19 on the perceptions of human resources practices, organisational leadership and hope and optimism.

	IHRp_total_b		IHRp_total_C19		IHRp_BvsC19		OLTOT		HandO	
	Correlation	Sig.	Correlation	Sig.	Correlation	Sig.	Correlation	Sig.	Correlation	Sig.
IHRp_total_b	1.00	-	0.71	≤.001	0.32	≤.001	0.54	≤.001	0.30	≤.001
IHRp_total_C19	0.71	≤.001	1.00	≤.001	-0.44	≤.001	0.51	≤.001	0.34	≤.001
IHRp_BvsC19	0.32	≤.001	-0.44	-	1.00	≤.001	0.12	0.61	-0.77	≤.001
OLTOT	0.54	≤.001	0.51	≤.001	0.12	0.61	1.00	-	0.43	≤.001
HandO	0.30	≤.001	0.34	≤.001	-0.77	≤.001	0.43	≤.001	1.00	-

The magnitude of the correlation coefficient indicates the strength of the association. A correlation coefficient score close to 1.00 indicates a strong positive relationship between variables. A negative or positive result of the correlations coefficient of two (2) variables indicates that the two (2) variables are perfectly correlated. Hence, it was decided to set the value at 95% confidence interval level ( $p \leq 0.05$ ), and the practical effect size at  $r \leq .20$  (small practical effect size),  $r \geq .50$  (moderate practical effect size),  $r \geq .80$  (large practical effect size) (Brydges, 2019).

Table 4.7 above indicates that there is a significant correlation between the impact of Covid-19 on the perceptions of human resource practices (before the COVID-19 pandemic) and the impact of Covid-19 on the perceptions of human resource practices (during the COVID-19 pandemic) ( $r = .71; p \leq .001$ ). The impact of Covid-19 on the perceptions of human resource practices (before compared to during) ( $r = .32$ ; moderate effect;  $p \leq .001$ ), organisational leadership ( $r = .54$ ; large effect;  $p \leq .001$ ), and hope and optimism ( $r = .30$ ; small effect;  $p \leq .001$ ).

The impact of Covid-19 on the perceptions of human resource practices (before the Covid-19 pandemic) was found to be negatively correlated with the impact of Covid-19 on the perceptions of human resource practices (before compared to during) ( $r = -.44$ ; small effect;  $p \leq .001$ ), organisational leadership ( $r = .51$ ; large effect;  $p \leq .001$ ), and hope and optimism ( $r = .34$ ; moderate effect  $p \leq .001$ ).

Organisational leadership ( $r = .12$ ; minor effect;  $p \leq .05$ ) and hope and optimism ( $r = -.77$ ; large effect;  $p \leq .001$ ) were both affected by the impact of Covid-19 on the perceptions of human resource practices (before compared to during the COVID-19 pandemic). Finally, the findings portrayed that organisational leadership had a moderate effect on hope and optimism ( $r = .43$ ; moderate effect;  $p \leq .001$ ).

#### 4.5. Inferential statistics

The tests for significant mean differences are discussed on this section. In order to determine the homogeneity of the private sector, an ANOVA was conducted on all the constructs measured with the sector (in this case 29 companies) as grouping variable. Table 4.8 below reports on the significant variance.

Table 4.8: Test of homogeneity (ANOVA) of the sector

		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
IHRp_total_b	Between Groups	211.08	28	7.54	22.70	$\leq .001$
	Within Groups	566	1704	0.33		
	Total	777.07	1732	-		
IHRp_total_C19	Between Groups	258.38	28	9.23	25.96	$\leq .001$
	Within Groups	605.64	1704	0.36		
	Total	864.02	1732			
IHRp_BvsC19	Between Groups	121.50	28	4.34	20.35	$\leq .001$
	Within Groups	363.43	1704	0.21		
	Total	484.93	1732			
OLTOT	Between Groups	257.51	28	9.20	18.88	$\leq .001$
	Within Groups	830.27	1704	0.49		
	Total	1087.79	1732			
HandO	Between Groups	83.71	28	2.99	5.03	$\leq .001$
	Within Groups	1013.14	1704	0.60		
	Total	1096.86	1732			

The sig. value determines the homogeneity of the sector (across organisations). When mean scores on the variables are compared, a result of  $< .05$  indicates that there is a significant difference between the organisations. It is clear from ANOVA as shown on table 4.8, that the organisations differ from one another, with a statistical significance of  $p \leq .001$ . Moreover, since the organisations differ, it is hard to say with certainty that this is an accurate reflection of the private sector across all three (3) frameworks.

Table 4.9(i): Comparing the mean scores of those involved in core functions to those in support positions

		Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means			
Equal Variances...		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.(2 tailed)	Mean diff
IHRp_total_b	...assumed	0.14	0.71	1.54	1725	0.12	0.05
	...not assumed			1.54	1705.93	0.12	0.05
IHRp_total_C19	...assumed	0.03	0.87	-0.67	1725	0.50	-0.02
	...not assumed			-0.67	1688.79	0.50	-0.02
IHRp_BvsC19	...assumed	4.07	0.44	2.84	1725	0.01	0.07
	...not assumed			2.83	1635.43	0.01	0.07
OLTOT	...assumed	0.79	0.37	1.72	1725	0.09	0.07
	...not assumed			1.72	1713.47	0.09	0.07
HandO	...assumed	1.11	0.29	-1.62	1725	0.11	-0.06
	...not assumed			-1.61	1673.62	0.11	-0.06

The rigorous tests for the equality of mean scores are shown in Table 4.9(i). When the mean scores of those in support and core functions are compared on the impact of Covid-19 on perceptions of human resource practices (before the COVID-19 pandemic), there are no statistically significant differences between those involved in core functions and those involved in support functions in the private sector as  $p = .12$ . Moreover, when the mean scores of those in support and core functions are compared to the impact of Covid-19 on perceptions of human resource practices (during the COVID-19 pandemic), there are no statistically significant differences between those involved in core functions and those in support functions in the private sector as  $p = .50$ .

However, when the mean scores of those in support and core functions are compared to the impact of Covid-19 on perceptions of human resource practices (before compared to during the COVID-19 pandemic), there are statistically significant differences between those involved in core functions and those in support functions in the private sector as  $p = .01$ .

When the mean scores of those in support and core functions are compared on organisational leadership, there are no statistically significant differences between those involved in core functions and those in support functions in the private sector as  $p = .09$ . When the mean scores of those in support and core functions are compared on hope and optimism, there are no statistically significant differences between those involved in core functions and those involved in support functions in the private sector as  $p = .11$ .

The study analysed the statistical significance at a 95% confidence interval which is represented by  $p = <.05$ . Practical significance was also determined. There are a number of different effect sizes, the most commonly used being Cohen’s “d” value. Cohen’s “d” is calculated as  $d = (M_1 - M_2) / s_{pooled}$  where  $M_1$  = mean of group 1,  $M_2$  = mean of group 2 and  $s_{pooled}$  = pooled standard deviations for the two (2) groups (Spurlock, 2019).

When the groups are compared to the impact of Covid-19 on perceptions of human resource practices (during compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic), the practical significance was  $d = 0.14[(.3042 - .2318)/.55433]$  which indicates a large/significant effect.

Table 4.9(ii): Comparing the mean scores of people involved in managerial positions and those who are not.

		Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means			
Equal Variances...		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.	Mean diff
IHRp_total_b	...assumed	0.29	0.59	3.27	1726	≤.001	0.12
	...not assumed			3.36	885.03	≤.001	0.12
IHRp_total_C19	...assumed	0.04	0.84	4.55	1726	≤.001	0.17
	...not assumed			4.63	868.59	≤.001	0.17
IHRp_BvsC19	...assumed	9.03	≤.001	-1.92	1726	0.06	-0.05
	...not assumed			-2.12	1043.82	0.03	-0.05
OLTOT	...assumed	6.57	0.01	3.27	1726	≤.001	0.14
	...not assumed			3.43	926.51	≤.001	0.14
HandO	...assumed	0.71	0.40	3.45	1726	≤.001	0.15
	...not assumed			3.53	879.36	≤.001	0.15

Table 4.9(ii) shows the results of the rigorous tests conducted for the equality of mean scores. When the mean scores of people in managerial and non-managerial positions are compared to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on perceptions of human resource practices (before the COVID-19 pandemic), there are statistically significant differences between people in managerial and non-managerial positions in the private sector as  $p \leq .001$ . Moreover, when the mean scores of people in managerial and non-managerial positions are compared to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices (before the COVID-19 pandemic), there are statistically significant differences between persons in managerial and non-managerial positions in the private sector as  $p \leq .001$ .

Notably, when the mean scores of people in managerial and non-managerial positions are compared to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices (before compared to during the COVID-19 pandemic), there are no statistically significant differences between those in managerial and non-managerial positions in the private sector as  $p = .06$ .

When the mean scores of people in managerial and non-managerial positions are compared to organisational leadership, there are statistically significant differences between people in managerial and non-managerial positions in the private sector as  $p \leq .001$ . When the mean scores of people in managerial and non-managerial positions are compared against hope and optimism, there are statistically significant differences between people in managerial and non-managerial positions in the private sector as  $p \leq .001$ .

The practical significance of people in managerial and non-managerial positions when compared to the impact of Covid-19 on perceptions of human resource practices (before COVID-19 pandemic) was  $d = 0.17 [(3.5265 - 3.4083)/.67835]$ , which according to Cohen's criteria represents a small effect. The practical significance was  $d = 0.24[(3.3000 - 3.1270)/.71001]$  for the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices (during the COVID-19 pandemic).

When the practical significance of people in managerial and non-managerial positions is compared to organisational leadership results, it was found that  $d = .17[(3.7080 - 3.5683)/.81119]$ . Similarly, when the groups are compared against hope and optimism, the results indicated that  $d = .18[(4.5024 - 4.3544)/.80455]$ .

#### **4.6. The relationship between predictor and predicted variable, and mediation**

The regression analysis that was done for the study is detailed in this section. The relationship between the variables will be discussed with reference to Pearson's correlation, and linear regression. This was reported on Table 4.7 above. The impact of Covid-19 on the perception of human resources practices correlates with organisational leadership, and the effect is strong. Organisational leadership correlates with hope and optimism and the effect is weak, whereas the impact of

Covid-19 on the perception of human resources practices correlates hope and optimism and the impact is moderate.

Table 4.10: Regression analysis (contribution of the impact of COVID-19 on the perceptions of human resources practices, organisational leadership and hope and optimism).

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate	R square change	F change	Sig. F change
1	0.08a	0.01	0.01	0.79	0	10.25	1.00
2	0.44b	0.20	0.20	0.71	0.19	409.20	1.00

<sup>a</sup> Model with the impact of Covid-19 on the perceptions of human resources practices predicting hope and optimism.

<sup>b</sup> Model with the impact of Covid-19 on the perceptions of human resources practices, organisational leadership predicting hope and optimism.

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to assess the ability of two (2) control measures (the impact of Covid-19 on the perceptions of human resources practices and organisational leadership) to predict hope and optimism. On Table 4.10, it can be observed that in the first model,  $R = 0.08$ . When adding the additional variable, in this case organisational leadership to the model,  $R$  increased to 0.44. An  $R$  value of .08 represents a small effect and a  $R$  value of .44 represents a large effect. Adding organisational leadership to the model improved the strength of the model by 19%, as can be read in the changed  $R$  square value of 0.19. The total variance explained in hope and optimism by the impact of Covid-19 on the perceptions of human resources practices and organisational leadership is 20%, as can be read on Model 2,  $R$  squared adjusted which equals 0.20.

#### 4.7. Summary

This chapter detailed the statistical findings that were crucial to the study's success. In order to determine the nature of the empirical relationships between the impact of Covid-19 on perceptions of human resource practises, organisational leadership, hope and optimism, and socio-demographic variables (race, gender, age, job level and

tenure), the findings of the preliminary statistical analysis, descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and inferential statistics were presented on this chapter.

The findings of the empirical study were combined with the findings of the literature review. Furthermore, the chapter's rigorous testing supported the theoretical reasoning based on the research study's conceptual framework. The next chapter (Chapter 5) examines the research's final phase, in which significant conclusions are derived based on the literature review and empirical findings. The limitations of the study will also be explored, and recommendations for future research investigations will be offered.

# Chapter 5

## Discussion, recommendations, and limitations

### 5.1. Introduction

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the research problem and the study's objectives. Chapter 2 presented a review of literature relating to the study's constructs, namely the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resources practices, organisational leadership, and hope and optimism. In Chapter 3, the study design and technique used to test the hypotheses produced from the literature review were discussed. The findings of the statistical analyses were provided in Chapter 4, with the goal of answering the study's research questions and reaching conclusions on the viability of each of the research propositions. The purpose of this chapter is to convey the conclusions found after conducting a literature review and an empirical inquiry. The study's weaknesses are also explored on this chapter. Lastly, based on the integrated theoretical framework and the realised empirical objectives, this chapter will conclude with recommendations for future research projects.

### 5.2 Discussion

This study sought to determine the significance of the relationship between the impact of COVID-19 pandemic and the perceptions of human resource practices, organisational leadership, and hope and optimism. As a result, the study objectives were as follows:

- To comprehensively define the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices, organisational leadership, and hope and optimism.
- To report on empirical research which links the impact of COVID-19 pandemic to the perceptions of human resource practices, organisational leadership, and hope and optimism.
- To empirically investigate the relationship between the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices, organisational leadership, and hope and optimism in the South African private sector.
- To make recommendations for managers in the private sector based on the empirical findings.



### **5.2.1 Discussion on Study Objective 1**

The study's first objective was to comprehensively define the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices, organisational leadership, and hope and optimism.

Several definitions of human resource practices were looked reviewed. According to the preceding definitions, it was concluded that human resource practises are concerned with activities geared towards organisational goals and business performance (Alshaikhly, 2017; Koednok & Sungsanit, 2018; Radonić & Milosavljevi, 2019), motivation and participation (Koednok & Sungsanit, 2018; Radonić & Milosavljevi, 2019), and organisational image, activities, and support structures (Alshaikhly, 2017; Cajee and Grobler, 2021). Human resource practises, in general, are the source of organisational innovation.

Organisational leadership was defined from several author's perspectives. Organisational leadership has a dual approach; what is best for individuals, what is best for a group (others) (Dibuku, 2017; Bratton, 2020), and a common goal with shared principles (Bratton, 2020; Etse et al., 2021; Eslin & Grobler, 2021). It fosters trustworthy connections while demonstrating courage, humility, inventiveness, and integrity (Enslin & Grobler, 2021).

The definitions for hope and optimism were studied from different perspectives. Naturally, optimism is related to positivity (Scheier & Carver, 1985; Luthans & Youssef; 2004; Luthans et al., 2007; Grobler & Joubert, 2018a). Hope, on the other hand, is related to motivation (Snyder, 1995a; Snyder et al., 1991; Luthans & Youssef; 2004; Grobler & Joubert, 2018a) and goal achievement (Snyder, 1995a; Snyder et al., 1991; Luthans & Youssef, 2004; Grobler & Joubert, 2018a).

### 5.2.2 Discussion on Study Objective 2

The second study objective was to report on empirical research relating to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices, organisational leadership, and hope and optimism. Based on the reviewed literature, it was found that the variables relate as follows:

The literature review indicated that the impact of Covid-19 on the perceptions of human resource practices and organisational leadership dimensions showed a statistically significant relationship. Transformational leadership was positively associated with perceived organisational support ( $r = .48, p < .01$ ). Furthermore, the literature review revealed that authentic leadership was positively correlated with all the cultural dimensions examined and correlated strongly with the organisational culture of supportiveness ( $r = .48, p < .01$ ), performance orientation ( $r = .53, p < .01$ ), and emphasis on rewards ( $r = .58, p < .01$ ). Transformational leadership significantly and positively correlated with CSR ( $r = .51, p < .01$ ). Pay satisfaction, promotion, supervisory duties, benefits, work itself and communication satisfaction had relatively positive relationships with transformational leadership style whereby the results were ( $r=.35,.80,.24,.15,.17,.20$ ) respectively.

The study's literature view portrayed that organisational leadership and hope, and optimism's relationship was slightly significant. The relationship between optimism, an element of psychological capital, and the dimensions of authentic leadership, ranges from  $r = .13$  to  $r = .16$ . Authentic leadership was positively correlated with optimism ( $r = .45$ ). Hope, also an element of psychological capital, had a non-significant but moderate-sized relationship with the total score of authentic leadership ( $r = .30$ ). The studies further indicated that hope and optimism correlates with ethical leadership with a score of  $r = .39$ .

The literature review depicted that the relationship between the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices and hope and optimism yielded these results. It was found that there is a positive relationship between trait optimism, and work from home adjustments ( $r=.23$ ). The results show that there is a

positive relationship between CSR and hope ( $r = .44, p < .01$ ), and between CSR and optimism ( $r = .45, p < .01$ ). Moreover, the literature review showed that there is also a positive relationship between satisfaction with corporate COVID-19 responses and hope ( $r = 0.45, p < .01$ ), and between satisfaction with corporate COVID-19 responses and optimism ( $r = .44, p < .01$ ). Perceived organisational support is positively correlated to hope  $r = .50, p < .01$ , and optimism  $r = .59, p < 0.01$ . Organisational support reported a positive relationship with hope ( $r = .23, p < .05$ ).

There is currently a knowledge gap regarding the relationship between this study's variable combinations. However, from the literature review, it was deduced that there is a low to strong relationship between human resource practices, organisational leadership, and psychological capital ranging from  $r = -.17$  to  $r = .91$ .

### **5.2.3 Discussion on Study Objective 3**

The third study objective was to empirically investigate the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices, organisational leadership, and hope and optimism within the context of the private sector.

This study included 60 employees from 29 private sector organisations in South Africa, resulting in a total of 1733 participants. Gender representation was slightly higher for women at 54.5%, compared to 45.5% for men. The sample's gender distribution seemed to be unrepresentative of the South African workforce in general. The majority of the participants were Black (48.55), followed by White (29.5%), Coloured (13.3%), and Indian (8.8%). The sample's race distribution seemed to be fairly reflective of the South African workforce as a whole. The average age for the sample reported across 29 organisations is 38.59 years, while the tenure was 8.18 years. The sample size was limited, thus the conclusions reached were conservative.

The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices (IHRp) instrument was used to measure the impact of Covid-19 on the perceptions of human resource practises, and the reliability coefficient (Cronbach alpha) was 0.88 and 0.89 respectively. To measure organisational leadership, the Organisational Leadership Behaviour Scale was used, and the reliability coefficient (Cronbach alpha)

was 0.98. Hope and optimism (as a composite variable) was measured with the psychological capital instrument developed by Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman (2007) and validated by Grobler & Joubert (2018a) for the South African context. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach alpha) was 0.87.

The tests employed for significant mean differences revealed that there were no statistically significant differences between those participating in core functions and persons involved in support functions in the private sector. A lack of significant differences indicates homogeneity in the private sector, therefore, generalisation within the sector may be possible. Correspondingly, there were statistically significant differences between individuals in managerial roles and people in non-management positions in the private sector. Regarding organisational leadership and hope and optimism, significant differences in the sector show a lack of homogeneity, thus, managers must apply caution when generalising.

There is a significant positive correlation of significant effect ( $r=0.54$ ;  $p \leq 0.001$ ) between the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices (before the Covid-19 pandemic) and organisational leadership. This is supported by the findings of other scholars (Qi et al, 2019; Akar & Ustuner, 2019; Verissimo & Laceda, 2015; Men & Jiang, 2016) who discovered a statistically significant correlation between human resource practices and organisational leadership dimensions in their research studies. Furthermore, there is a significant positive correlation of large effect ( $r=0.51$ ;  $p \leq 0.001$ ) between the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices (during the COVID-19 pandemic) and organisational leadership.

There is a significant correlation of medium effect between organisational leadership and hope and optimism ( $r=0.43$ ;  $p \leq 0.001$ ). This study's findings also supported the findings of researchers such as Stander, de Beer, and Stander (2015) and Wang et al. (2018) who found a moderately positive correlation between organisational leadership and hope and optimism.

There is a non-significant correlation of small effect between the impact of Covid-19 on the perceptions of human resource practices (before the COVID-19 pandemic) and hope and optimism ( $r=0.30; p \leq 0.001$ ). This study's findings concur with literature by Daraba et al. (2021), Biron et al. (2020) and Pieters and Matheus (2020) who posited that there is a non-significant correlation between human resource practices' dimensions and hope and optimism. There is also a non-significant correlation of small effect between the impact of Covid-19 on the perceptions of human resource practices (during the COVID-19 pandemic) and hope and optimism ( $r=0.34; p \leq 0.001$ ).

This study provides further empirical evidence that the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices and organisational leadership are positively associated with hope and optimism. Consequently, when employees feel appreciated and there is an investment in their future, they are more likely to persevere when psychologically engaged, and more dedicated in difficult situations (Grobler & Flotman, 2021). The study has consequences for organisational leadership practices from a leadership standpoint. Leaders and managers have the right to be unsure, especially in tumultuous times. They must, however, be clear about how they will lead.

The ability of two (2) control measures (the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practises and organisational leadership) to predict hope and optimism was assessed using hierarchical multiple regression. The first model had  $R = 0.08$ . The value of  $R$  climbed to 0.44 when the second variable (organisational leadership) was added to the model. A value of  $R = .0.08$  denotes a minor effect, while the value of  $R = 0.44$  denotes a major effect. The addition of organisational leadership to the model increased the model's strength by 19%, as evidenced by the changed  $R$  square value of 0.19. The significant association between organisational leadership and hope and optimism provides a viable topic for organisations to investigate with reference to leadership development that might favourably affect employee insights.

#### **5.2.4 Discussion on Study Objective 4**

The fourth study objective was to make recommendations for managers in the private sector based on the empirical findings, which will be discussed on the below section.

#### **5.3 Recommendations**

The study aimed to investigate the relationship between the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practises, organisational leadership, and hope and optimism. The correlation between the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practises and organisational leadership was large, and between organisational leadership and hope and optimism it was medium. The correlation was small between the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practises and hope and optimism.

Based on the findings of this study and a review of related literature, it is apparent that in order for employees to be more engaged at work, organisations must invest in their psychological capital as well as their leaders' leadership styles. The findings of the study suggest that the organisation's response to the epidemic could have been more noticeable.

According to the findings of this study, the organisations' leadership reaction during the pandemic could have been more visible. Moreover, COVID-19 pandemic affected the human resource management practises. Research has indicated the importance for enhanced levels of organisational and leadership communication, as well as clarity on the organisation's direction since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. All work practises must be 'aligned' with this new method of functioning.

The findings show that leaders that demonstrate dynamic leadership behaviours inspire their followers and develop a shared vision of value creation within the organisation and among its stakeholders. Implementing the appropriate leadership style can create hope and optimism while also ensuring that employees remain within the organisation.

Many employees reported feeling disconnected from their employers and having lower levels of satisfaction (Mwita, 2020). Employees are more likely to engage in good behaviours if they receive support from a high-involvement Human Resource Management (HRM) system (e.g., working in teams, participating in upward feedback programmes, and obtaining information on organisational results). Therefore, to improve human resource practices, organisations should examine their HR policies to ensure that they can handle the current demands that cause them to change their typical operating procedures.

The COVID-19 pandemic has ramifications for both employers and employees, hence working policies must be amended to reduce the impact on both parties and outline how production or services may be continued during the pandemic. Such policies should integrate existing working procedures with modern strategies, revise operational strategies, and redefine employee and customer safety, social distance compliance, workplace COVID-19 infection compensation, and employee productivity expectations (Amoah, 2020).

Managers need to concentrate their efforts on expanding current processes. As a starting point, with changing organisational strategy as a result of the current environment, researchers are urged to consider a social systems perspective (e.g., adopting an organisational development mindset) in how pre-existing practises or recommendations can be amended to fit new structures or strategies. Furthermore, practitioners are urged to evaluate existing approaches to determine how they might solve current difficulties. This entails approaching the need for change from a much more holistic perspective rather than studying or designing and implementing new practises one at a time (Seaton, 2021).

In practise, the findings show that organisations, particularly multinational corporations, should consider their employees' personality traits and cultural contexts when developing work from home arrangements in both crisis and ordinary situations. Optimism may also be a factor to consider when hiring employees and managers. (Biron et al., 2020).

In accordance with the concept of role clarifying leadership and the nature of hope and optimism, organisational and personal goals should be clear, detailed, and rigorous, with measurable targets. Planning for 'what if' scenarios should be done collaboratively, with ideas exchanged and contingency plans or alternate routes in place. Employees should receive continuous feedback to ensure that they are aware of their role in the organisation and are contributing to the achievement of common goals. Finally, chances for evaluating goals and strategies, as well as developing alternative approaches, should be created (Grobler & Joubert, 2020).

Human resource development can result in individual (workers, leaders, etc.) and team interventions, as well as institutional activities at the organisational level. General leadership and employee training that focuses on the enhancement of employee psychological capital (specifically hope and optimism), according to literature and various scholars, will improve not only leadership effectiveness, but also employee well-being, productivity, and, ultimately, organisational performance.

Employees should be engaged in goal setting and decision-making, and leaders should encourage and support self-reflection. Leaders can enhance their capability and ability to build and institutionalise alternate approaches by ensuring that they are exposed to a diversity of positive thought models (for example, through training and coaching).

## **5.5 Study Limitations**

This study had certain limitations such as using a cross-sectional design which may have exaggerated the association between the variables. This indicates that no causal inferences regarding the relationships between the variables can be made. As a result, these relationships are still considered experimental, and they may be further studied using multiple measures or longitudinal research approaches. Furthermore, at one point in time, the data was collected using a merged questionnaire that could've been challenging because the chronological display of scales could have worsened the issue of common method variance.



Despite the limitations described above, the study demonstrated the capacity to analyse the links between the variables that influence hope and optimism in the private sector, particularly, human resource practices and organisational leadership. The findings of the study might be viewed as a first step in moving forward and inspiring more research on hope and optimism in the private sector in South Africa.

To improve the generalisability of the findings, future research studies should involve larger, autonomous samples in various sectors that are more representative of various socio-demographic and occupational groups. Longitudinal studies to investigate cause-and-effect correlations between components in a variety of professional settings should also be included in future studies. This would assist HR managers and practitioners in evaluating data and developing a framework for organisations to better understand their employees' hope and optimism.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

All the set study objectives were achieved. The study found a non-significant correlation of small effect between the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the perceptions of human resource practices, and hope and optimism in the private sector. Research results showed significant correlation of medium effect between organisational leadership and hope and optimism. This chapter discussed the study's limitations and made recommendations for future research. Additionally, recommendations for the respective organisations have been made.

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# Annexure A: Study Questionnaire

## PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

1 July 2021

Dear Prospective Participant

My name is Phuti Manakana, and I am doing research with Professor Anton Grobler at the Graduate School of Business Leadership towards a Master of Business Administration at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study.

The aim of the study is to assess the link between various task directed management / leadership styles / human resource management and effective change management practices on employee as well as organisational wellness, specifically during these challenging times of Covid-19. By determining how these variables influence each other, recommendations will be made to guide managers towards creation of a conducive work environment, to the benefit of not only the organisation, but all employees and the community at large.

You were selected to participate in this study as an employee of Robert Bosch. Penny Hlubi from HR Department granted permission for the study to be conducted. Your name was randomly drawn from a list of all employees. In total 60 employees will be approached to participate in the study, which minimise the possibility that anyone could be identified.

Your role in the study involves completing one questionnaire which enquires about all the constructs explained earlier. A typical question may read as follows: *“Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized”*. The questionnaires consist of ± 150 items (questions) in total and expected duration of participation is no more than 60 minutes. Some of the items might be viewed as duplications, but the similarity is due to the theoretical and conceptual overlap between constructs and will be dealt with in a scientific way.

Being in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep for future reference. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. As the project involves the submission of non-identifiable material, it will not be possible to withdraw once they have submitted the questionnaire. There is no penalty or loss of benefit for non-participation.

You will not benefit directly from your participation in the research. You will receive no payment or reward, financial or otherwise. The results of the research will, however, be of scientific and practical value in understanding how people react to the prevalent leadership style and positive organisational behaviour.

There are no foreseeable physical or psychological risks involved in participation. You will be mildly inconvenienced by the time it takes to complete the questionnaires (60 minutes). If you would like to discuss the research and your reactions to the questionnaires, you are welcome to do so after the session.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by legislation (The Mental Health Care Act, Act 17 of 2002). Confidentiality is however not a concern in this research as the tests will be answered anonymously and individual identifiers will not be requested. The data will be destroyed on completion of the study.

The data collected will be used to write research reports, which include but may not be limited to journal articles, conference presentation, and dissertations. Your privacy, and that of the organisation you represent, will however be protected and no identifiable information will be included in such reports.

Hard and soft copies of your answers will be stored by Prof Anton Grobler for future research or academic purposes including scientific publications in accredited journals. Soft copies will be stored on a password protected computer.

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the Graduate School of Business Leadership, Unisa; Ref no: 2021\_SBL\_AC\_005\_AC.

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Phuti Manakana on [phutimanakana@yahoo.com](mailto:phutimanakana@yahoo.com). The findings will be accessible early in 2021. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Prof Anton Grobler at [grobla@unisa.ac.za](mailto:grobla@unisa.ac.za).

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact the Research Ethics Committee of the University of South Africa.

**CONSENT: I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study.**

Kindly note that you will not be required to sign this declaration, but that you will be indicating your consent by completing the answer sheet. (A signed copy is not required, as this may identify you, and this research is done in such a way that you cannot be identified after participating in this study.)

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for considering participation in this study.

**General information** (the shaded cells are for official usage)

Batch #			A1
Sector			A2(i) Pub/Pr
Company:			A3(ii)
Industry:			A4
Gender:	Male	0	A5 0/1
	Female	1	
Your role:	Core Business	0	A6 0/1
	Support services	1	
Your role:	Management	0	A7 0/1
	Non-management	1	
Age:			A8
Number of years with company:			A9
Highest education:	Less than 12 years	1	A10 1/2/3/4
	12 years (matric)	2	
	1st Degree / Diploma	3	
	Higher degree / Higher diploma	4	
Race:	Asian	1	A11 1/2/3/4
	Black	2	
	Coloured	3	
	White	4	
Post level	Unskilled and defined decision making	1	A12 1/2/3/4/5
	Semi-skilled and discretionary decision making	2	
	Skilled technical and academically qualified workers, junior Management, supervisors, foremen and superintendents	3	
	Professionally qualified, experienced specialists and Middle Management	4	
	Top Management, Senior Management	5	
Contact with direct manager <b>before Covid 19</b>	Daily (5); Weekly (4); Monthly (3); Very few contact (2) or No contact at all (2)	Man	A13 1/2/3/4/5
Contact with direct manager <b>during Covid 19</b>		Man(C19)	A14 1/2/3/4/5

Contact with leadership <b>before Covid 19</b>		Lead		A15 1/2/3/4/5
Contact with leadership <b>during Covid 19</b>		Lead (C19)		A16 1/2/3/4/5
Due to Covid 19, my normal work conditions have	Not changed at all		<b>0</b>	A17 0/1/2
	Changed somewhat		<b>1</b>	
	Changed dramatically		<b>2</b>	
I am currently working	From home	<b>N</b>	<b>Y</b>	A18 0/1
	Frome home and my work place (office)	<b>N</b>	<b>Y</b>	A19 0/1
	Fully back at work	<b>N</b>	<b>Y</b>	A20 0/1

NB – All the instruments refer to leadership, my supervisor, my manager, my boss interchangeably. The term "work unit" refers to the team, department, division, or company for which your boss is the formal leader, and the term "members" refers to the people in the unit who report directly to your boss. Please note that some questions may seem the same, but it has to do with different aspects, so, please answer all the questions if possible.

**Q1: IHRp**

The organisation generally, and specifically before Covid-19 offered:

<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

Question	Answer
An attractive compensation and benefits package	
An attractive bonus structure	
Innovative perks e.g. onsite gym/ day-care/ etc.	
Training	
Job Autonomy	
Recognition and career advancement	
Workplace flexibility e.g. flexible timing/place	
A positive organisational image e.g. brand/ethics	
Good organisational support structures e.g. mentoring programme	
Job security	
An opportunity to work in teams	
An opportunity to work as an individual	
An appealing job-fit	

I have experienced the following at my organisation recently, specific during the Covid-19 pandemic:

<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

Question	Answer
An attractive compensation and benefits package	
Performance-related bonus structure	
Innovative perks e.g. onsite gym /day-care /etc.	
Training	
Job Autonomy	
Recognition and career advancement	
Workplace flexibility e.g. flexible timing/place	

<b>A positive organisational image e.g. brand/ethics</b>	
<b>Good organisational support structures e.g. mentoring programme</b>	
<b>Job security</b>	
<b>An opportunity to work in teams</b>	
<b>An opportunity to work as an individual</b>	
<b>An appealing job-fit</b>	

**Q2: TLb**

<b>Not at all, or Not Applicable</b>	<b>To a Limited extent</b>	<b>To a Moderate extent</b>	<b>To a Considerable extent</b>	<b>To a Very great extent</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

These questions are posed in light of the current Covid-19 working realities.

	<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>
<b>1</b>	Clearly explains task assignments and member responsibilities.	
<b>2</b>	Explains what results are expected for a task or assignment.	
<b>3</b>	Sets specific performance goals and quality standards for important aspects of the work owed.	
<b>4</b>	Makes an inspiring presentation about what the work unit can accomplish.	
<b>5</b>	Develops short-term plans for accomplishing the unit's tasks.	
<b>6</b>	Plans and organizes unit activities to use people, equipment, and resources efficiently.	
<b>7</b>	Schedules work activities to avoid delays, duplication of effort, and wasted resources.	
<b>8</b>	Checks on the progress and quality of the work.	
<b>9</b>	Evaluates how well important tasks or projects are being performed.	

**Q 3: ECM**

<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
	<b>(significantly got worse)</b>	<b>(slightly worse)</b>	<b>(no worse, no better)</b>	<b>(a bit; got better)</b>	<b>(significantly got better)</b>
<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

What has changed as a consequence of the COVID 19 pandemic?		
1	Your tasks at work.	
2	Your superior / supervisor or immediate line manager.	
3	Your working team.	
4	Quantity of work.	
5	Risk of job loss.	
6	Conditions of employment.	
7	Your salary / fringe benefits.	

Very poorly	Rather poorly	Neither poorly or well	Rather well	Very well
1	2	3	4	5

This section is concerned about communication during the COVID 19 pandemic		
<b>Management has:</b>		
8	Informed clearly about the goals of the change	
9	Informed about the current state of change progress	
10	Made sure that there are sufficient change support services for whole personnel	
11	Actively solved problems that have emerged during change process	
<b>My immediate line manager has:</b>		
12	Informed clearly about the goals of the change	
13	Informed about the current state of change progress	
14	Clarified new roles for subordinates	

Strongly disagree	Rather disagree	Somewhat disagree / agree	Rather agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

This section is about the employees' involvement during the recent organisational changes as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic:		
15	I was involved in the design of the change	
16	I had opportunity to give my views about the change before it was implemented	
17	Management has made a great effort to involve employees in the change process	

Strongly	Rather	Somewhat	Rather	Strongly
----------	--------	----------	--------	----------



<b>disagree</b>	<b>disagree</b>	<b>disagree / agree</b>	<b>agree</b>	<b>agree</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

**Trust in Management during the COVID 19 pandemic:**

<b>18</b>	There was a feeling that the leader of this change knows what he or she is doing			
<b>19</b>	Overall, there was the feeling that you can count on the organisation's management			
<b>20</b>	I believed that if managers is suggesting this change, they are well informed and have good reasons for it			

**Q4: Trs\_L**

<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

	<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>
<b>1</b>	Leaders in my organisation fail to interfere until problems become serious.	_____
<b>2</b>	Leaders in my organisation provide assistance to others in exchange for their efforts.	
<b>3</b>	Leaders in my organisation focus their attention on irregularities, mistakes, exceptions and deviations from standards.	
<b>4</b>	Leaders in my organisation wait for things to go wrong before taking action.	_____
<b>5</b>	Leaders in my organisation discuss in specific terms who is responsible for achieving performance targets.	
<b>6</b>	Leaders in my organisation concentrate their attention on dealing with mistakes, complaints and failures.	
<b>7</b>	Leaders in my organisation are firm believers in if it isn't broken, don't fix it".	_____
<b>8</b>	Leaders in my organisation make it clear in terms of what we can expect should the performance goals are achieved.	
<b>9</b>	Leaders in my organisation keep track of mistakes.	
<b>10</b>	Leaders in my organisation will take action only when problems become chronic.	_____
<b>11</b>	Leaders in my organisation express their satisfaction when we meet expectations.	

		_____
<b>12</b>	Leaders in my organisation direct their attention towards failures to meet standards.	_____

**Q5: SpL**

<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
1	2	3	4	5

	<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>
<b>1</b>	My leader cares about people in the true sense of Ubuntu.	
<b>2</b>	My leader includes everyone when communicating	
<b>3</b>	My leader's passion for people makes him/her kind.	
<b>4</b>	My leader has a clear vision.	
<b>5</b>	My leader takes full responsibility for his/her actions	
<b>6</b>	My leader's decisiveness leads to respect.	
<b>7</b>	My leader is able to take corrective action swiftly if something goes wrong	
<b>8</b>	My leader is self-driven.	
<b>9</b>	My leader is trustworthy.	
<b>10</b>	My leader makes decisions without being unduly influenced.	
<b>11</b>	My leader shows compassion through nurturing.	
<b>12</b>	My leader is responsible.	
<b>13</b>	My leader encourages a team spirit.	
<b>14</b>	My leader's ability to be transparent encourages honesty.	
<b>15</b>	My leader inspires others by being a co-operative team player.	
<b>16</b>	My leader's behaviour reduces people's intent to leave the organisation.	
<b>17</b>	My leader's engagement improves performance.	
<b>18</b>	My leader's creativity helps improve productivity.	

**Q6: OL**

<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
1	2	3	4	5

	Question	Answer
<b>In my organisation, leaders:</b>		
1	manage their own emotions effectively	
2	share their feelings appropriately	
3	value and care for people	
4	consider different viewpoints with compassion and understanding	
5	trust me to get the job done	
6	demonstrate high ethical standards	
7	understand what winning means	
8	recognise me as an important member of the team	
9	provide me with a clear picture of the ideal future	
10	direct me with clear objectives	
11	frequently discuss the future state and where we are now	
12	develop workable plans to achieve organisational objectives	
13	take responsibility, even when under pressure	
14	are inspirational because of their actions	
15	are humble and act with integrity	
16	change and innovate processes and procedures	
17	communicate openly and transparently	
18	regularly provide clear expectations of what I need to do	
19	coach and mentor me to achieve success	
20	challenge me through engaging conversations	
21	create a safe emotional space to work in	
22	understand my individual development needs	
23	are available when I need them	
24	encourage me to take risks	
25	embrace diversity	
26	use collective energy of team members to achieve goals	
27	create a sense of belonging and unity amongst team members	
28	inspire us by developing healthy relationships	
29	challenge my results (what is possible?)	
30	drive results intensely	
31	keep me accountable for my results	

<b>32</b>	recognise consistent performance	
-----------	----------------------------------	--

**Q7: WLB**

<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Not often</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Regularly</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>All the time</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>

	<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>
<b>1</b>	Personal life suffers because of work during Covid-19.	
<b>2</b>	My current job makes personal life difficult.	
<b>3</b>	I currently neglect my personal needs because of work.	
<b>4</b>	I am currently putting my personal life on hold for work.	
<b>5</b>	I miss personal activities because of my current work.	
<b>6</b>	I struggle to juggle work and non-work.	
<b>7</b>	I am happy with the amount of time for non-work activities.	
<b>8</b>	My personal life drains me of energy for work.	
<b>9</b>	I am too tired to be effective at work.	
<b>10</b>	My work suffers because of my personal life.	
<b>11</b>	It is currently hard to work because of personal matters.	
<b>12</b>	My personal life gives me energy for my job.	
<b>13</b>	My job gives me energy to pursue personal activities.	
<b>14</b>	I am in a better mood at work because of personal life.	
<b>15</b>	I am in a better mood because of my job.	

**Q8: H&O**

<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>

	<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>
<b>1</b>	At the present time, I am energetically pursuing my work goals.	
<b>2</b>	Right now, I see myself as being pretty successful at work.	
<b>3</b>	I can think of many ways to reach my current work goals.	

4	At this time, I am meeting the work goals that I have set for myself.	
5	When things are uncertain for me at work, I usually expect the best.	
6	I always look on the bright side of things regarding my job.	
7	I'm optimistic about what will happen to me in the future as it pertains to work.	
8	I approach this job as if "every cloud has a silver lining."	

**Q9: PsS**

<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Moderately Disagree</b>	<b>Slightly Disagree</b>	<b>Slightly Agree</b>	<b>Moderately Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>

All these questions are posed within the current Covid-19 reality in the workplace

	Question	Answer
1	If you make a mistake on this team, it is often held against you.	
2	Members of this team are able to bring up problems and tough issues.	
3	People on this team sometimes reject others for being different.	
4	It is safe to take a risk on this team	
5	It is difficult to ask other members of this team for help	
6	No one on this team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts	
7	Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized	

**Q10: WSE**

<b>Not well at all</b>	<b>Not well</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Well</b>	<b>Very well</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

	Question	Answer
<b>Thinking about your current working realities, how well can you.....</b>		
1	..... achieve goals that are assigned.	
2	..... respect schedules and work deadlines.	
3	..... learn new working methods.	

4	..... concentrate all energy on work.	
5	..... finish assigned work.	
6	..... collaborate with other colleagues.	
7	..... work with people of diverse experiences and ages.	
8	..... have good relationships with direct supervisors.	
9	..... behave in an efficacious way with clients.	
10	..... work in a team.	

**Q11: PerS**

<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Not often</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Regularly</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>All the time</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>

	<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>
<i>Thinking about your current working realities, how well can you.....</i>		
1	I have too many things to do	
2	I do not have enough time for myself	
3	I feel under pressure from deadlines	
4	I feel I am in a hurry	
5	I have many worries	
6	My problems seem to be piling up	
7	I fear I may not manage to attain my goals	
8	I feel frustrated	
9	I feel tense	
10	I feel mentally exhausted	
11	I have trouble relaxing	
12	It is hard to feel calm	

**Q 12: JSc**

<b>Completely false</b>	<b>Mostly false</b>	<b>Somewhat false</b>	<b>Somewhat true</b>	<b>Mostly true</b>	<b>Completely true</b>
<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

	Question	Answer
1	I am concerned about the possibility of being dismissed.	
2	The possibility of losing my job puts a lot of strain on me.	
3	I would feel stressed if I had to fight for my job.	
4	I believe that my job is secure.	
5	I believe that my career is secure.	
6	I clearly know my chances for advancement in the coming years.	
7	In my opinion I will keep my job in the near future.	
8	In my opinion I will be employed for a long time in my present job.	
9	I look forward with confidence to the introduction of new technologies.	

**Q13: Marker variable (MV)**

Not at all	To a Limited extent	To a Moderate extent	To a Considerable extent	To a Very great extent
1	2	3	4	5

	Question	Answer
1	There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good fortune of others.	
2	I like to gossip at times.	
3	There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone.	
4	There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right.	
5	There have been occasions when I felt like smashing things.	

## **Annexure B: Organisational access letter**

Phuti Manakana  
517 Pebble Falls  
Boksburg  
1459

1 June 2021

Penny Hlubi  
Robert Bosch (Pty) Ltd  
Human Resource Department  
0794959426  
penny.hlubi@za.bosch.com

### **Request for permission to conduct research at Robert Bosch: The relationship between the impact of Covid-19 on the perceptions of human resource practises, organisational leadership, hope and optimism.**

Dear Penny Hlubi,

I, Phuti Manakana, am doing research with Prof Anton Grobler at the Graduate School of Business Leadership towards a Master's Degree in Business Administration. We are seeking your permission to allow Robert Bosch employees to participate in a study entitled: The relationship between the impact of Covid-19 on the perceptions of human resource practises, organisational leadership, hope and optimism.

The aim of the study is to assess the link between various task directed management / leadership styles / human resource management and effective change management practices on employee as well as organisational wellness, specifically during these challenging times of Covid-19. By determining how task directed management / human resource management / effective change management contribute wellness, recommendations will be made to guide managers towards creation of a conducive work environment, to the benefit of not only the organisation, but all employees and the community at large.

The study will entail that 60 employees complete a questionnaire on the constructs mentioned above. As stated earlier the aim is to identify those management practices which facilitate desirable employee behaviours. Administering the questionnaire should not take more than 60 minutes, for the slowest of readers.

Data from several organisations will be collated by myself and will be used for academic purposes, including but not limited to this dissertation. Anonymous data will also use to contribute to the body of knowledge, through the publication of scholarly articles in scientific academic accredited journals.

Potential risks to the organisation or potential participants are minimal. The anonymity of the organisation and potential participants are guaranteed, and no company or individual identifiers will be made available. The content of the research material is also of such a nature that it is almost impossible to harm the organisation or potential



participants. Ethical clearance for this project was granted by the UNISA SBL Research Ethics Committee: 2021\_SBL\_AC\_005\_CA

Feedback procedure will entail that Phuti Manakana will provide feedback on the findings to Robert Bosch.

Yours sincerely

Phuti Manakana  
0832998943

## Annexure C: Ethical approval letter

Graduate School of Business Leadership, University of South Africa, PO Box 392, Unisa, 0003, South Africa  
Cnr Janádel and Alexandra Avenues, Midrand, 1685. Tel: +27 11 652 0000. Fax: +27 11 652 0299  
E-mail: [sbl@unisa.ac.za](mailto:sbl@unisa.ac.za) Website: [www.unisa.ac.za/sbl](http://www.unisa.ac.za/sbl)

### SCHOOL OF BUSINESS LEADERSHIP RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE (GSBL CRERC)

30 April 2021

Ref #: 2021\_SBL\_AC\_005\_CA  
Name of applicant: Prof A  
Grobler  
Staff #: 90166124

Dear Prof Grobler

**Decision: Ethics Approval**

**Main Researcher:** Prof A Grobler, [grobla@unisa.ac.za](mailto:grobla@unisa.ac.za), 011 652 0277

**Project Title:** The role of human resource management, transactional leadership, task centred leadership behaviour as well as spiritual and organisational leadership on individual work attitudes and wellbeing during Covid-19

Thank you for applying for research ethics clearance, SBL Research Ethics Review Committee reviewed your application in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics

**Approval is granted for the duration of the Project for the class group for 2021 only and on condition a list of students and their agreements to participate be submitted to the ethics office by 30 May 2021.**

The application was reviewed in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics by the SBL Research Ethics Review Committee on 28/04/2021.

The proposed research may now commence with the proviso 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 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, as well as changes in the methodology,

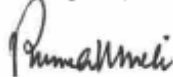
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SBL  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF  
BUSINESS LEADERSHIP  
UNISA

should be communicated in writing to the SBL Research Ethics Review Committee.

4. An amended application could be requested if there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for the research participants.
5. 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.

Kind regards,



Prof P Mswell

**Chairperson: SBL Research Ethics Committee**

011 - 652 0256/ [mswelp@unisa.ac.za](mailto:mswelp@unisa.ac.za)



Prof P Mswell

**Executive Dean: Graduate School of Business Leadership**

011- 652 0256/ [mswelp@unisa.ac.za](mailto:mswelp@unisa.ac.za)

## Annexure D: Permission letter to conduct research

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Phuti Manakana <phutimanakana@gmail.com>

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### MBA permission letter.docx

1 message

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Hlubi Penny (HRL-SAF) <Penny.Hlubi@za.bosch.com>  
To: "phutimanakana@gmail.com" <phutimanakana@gmail.com>

30 June 2021 at 11:45

Dear Phuthi

We acknowledge receipt of your e-mail submission; the management has reviewed your request and you are hereby granted permission to conduct the research at Bosch South Africa.


We will be in contact with you to direct on the process of contacting the research participants.

Best regards,

**Penny Hlubi**

(HRL-SAF)  
Robert Bosch (Pty) Ltd | Private Bag X118 | Midrand, 1685 | SOUTH AFRICA | [www.bosch.africa](http://www.bosch.africa)  
Mobile 0794959426 | [Penny.Hlubi@za.bosch.com](mailto:Penny.Hlubi@za.bosch.com)

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 **MBA permission letter.docx**  
31K

## Annexure E: Declaration of project leader

Graduate School of Business Leadership, University of South Africa, PO Box 392, Unisa, 0003, South Africa  
Cnr Janadiel and Alexandra Avenues, Midrand, 1685, Tel: +27 11 652 0000, Fax: +27 11 652 0299  
E-mail: [sbl@unisa.ac.za](mailto:sbl@unisa.ac.za) Website: [www.unisa.ac.za/sbl](http://www.unisa.ac.za/sbl)

Prof Anton Grobler  
Room 4-10  
SBL Campus  
Midrand  
20 October 2021

To: All examiners  
MBA and MBL research reports  
Structured Leadership (MBL) and Human Resource (MBA) research projects

Dear examiner

### DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY OF MBL and MBA RESEARCH REPORTS (Structured Leadership and Human Resource research projects)

1. I firstly want to thank you for your willingness to do the examination of this research report and your continuous support of the academic activities at the SBL.
2. As project leader of the structured Leadership and Human Resource research projects research projects, please allow me to give you some background and to specifically clear the perception that it is group research which is definitely not the case. Herewith some basic background:
  - Each student did work independently, which is in line with the learning objectives of this module.
  - There are various permutations of the topics, that are mainly centred around 3 – 4 independent variables (e.g. the respective leadership styles / ethical climate measurements) and 5 – 6 dependent variables (e.g. psychological capital / ethical attitudes). All three the projects had one additional independent variable that has been included consistently across the 3.
  - It is also important to mention that some of these variables had been included in previous years' projects to test its relationship with new variables in 2021 and to do the standardisation of instruments across studies.
  - Many of these variables are quite new or little previous research has been conducted on it (and the combinations of it), which limits the literature sources, resulting in students referencing the same work by the same authors.

- In order to give students the opportunity to research a topic of their choice (based on the identification of a researchable problem within their context), the sector was used as multiplier. In other words, 2 students might have the exact same topic, but one doing it in the public sector and one in the private sector.
  - The reporting is done on the pooled data.
3. Taking all of this into consideration, it is clear that this structured approach would have a serious impact on the similarity index, as determined by Turnitin. The baseline of around 35% was set in the module overview, but experience has taught us that for an approach like this, it might be ranging between 45% and 60%, which is acceptable, as long as the research has been done independently, that the results reported are authentic and that the literature sources used are appropriately acknowledged.
  4. When examining these reports, please focus on the unique contribution which is specifically in terms of the problem statement, as well as the information provided in Chapter 5 (the findings, conclusion and recommendations).
  5. Due to the fact that I was involved in the conceptualisation of these projects, the facilitation of 3 compulsory contact sessions with all the students, as well as statistical analysis of each of these studies, I am able to declare that all these reports are based on individual and independent research, and that it is authentic.

Yours sincerely



Professor Anton Grobler

## Annexure F: Editing certificate



09 December 2021

To whom it may concern,

**RE: CONFIRMATION OF PROFESSIONAL EDITING SERVICES RENDERED**

Please be advised that Bathulile Consulting Services Pty (Ltd) rendered the following professional services for Mr Phuti Michael Manaka (student no. 50815105):

- Professional editing for language, content, document formatting, and reference checks on his research report titled **The Relationship Between the Impact of COVID-19 on the Perceptions of Human Resources Practices, Organisational Leadership, and Hope and Optimism in the Private Sector**, which will be submitted to the University of South Africa (UNISA) in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree.

Should you have any enquiries, please contact us on [info@bathulileconsulting.com](mailto:info@bathulileconsulting.com) or 079 116 5703.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lungelo Chamane', is written over a horizontal dotted line.

Lungelo Chamane, MSc.  
Director

## Annexure G: Consent to submit research report

The Programme Administrator: MBL / MBA  
Graduate School of Business Leadership  
P O Box 392  
UNISA  
0003

### CONSENT TO SUBMIT RESEARCH REPORT

Consent is hereby given to:

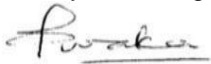
Student name: Phuti Michael Manakana

Student number 50815105 to submit his research report in its final form.

Study Leader Dr Pwaka

Date: November / December 2021

Study leader signature



The student acknowledges that sufficient feedback was provided by the study leader and that s/he took the responsibility to attend to the feedback in a way that satisfies the requirements for a research dissertation on the MBL / MBA level.

Student signature



Date: 11.12.2021