Exploring the relationship between perceived organisational support, employee engagement and their impact on commitment

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

Academics are regarded as the operational core of universities and the manner in which they perform determines the quality of the student's higher education experience and impacts at the societal level. Hence, higher education institutions base their sustainability on the scholarly knowledge and innovative capabilities of employees. No academic institution can sustain itself without highly skilled, experienced, competent and committed employees. The aim of this study is to establish the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee engagement and their impact on organisational commitment.

This research study adopted the quantitative research approach utilising a closed-ended questionnaire comprising of academics' biographical information, the Utrecht work engagement scale, the perceived organisational support scale and the original commitment scale. The sample size for the study consisted of 292 permanent academic staff members from the University of KwaZulu-Natal's four Colleges, namely, Health Sciences, Humanities, Law and Management Studies and lastly, the College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science. The reliability and validity of the measuring instruments used in the study were tested using Factor Analysis and Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha respectively. Data was processed using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

The findings of this study indicate that UKZN academics display differing levels of work engagement, organisational commitment and perceived organisational support with work engagement being the highest, followed by organisational commitment and lastly, perceived organisational support. Furthermore, significant relationships were found between work engagement, perceived organisational support and organisational commitment respectively. In addition, work engagement and perceived organisational support significantly account for 54.8% (Adjusted R^2) of the variance in determining the Organisational Commitment of academics with perceived organisational support having a greater impact on organisational commitment than work engagement. Biographical influences are also assessed. The results of the study and ensuing recommendations are graphically represented. The implementation of the recommendations have the potential to enhance work engagement, perceived organisational support and hence, organisational commitment.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

Organisational commitment (OC)

Affective commitment (AC)

Continuance Commitment (CC)

Normative Commitment (NC)

Perceived Organisational Support (POS)

Work engagement (WE)

<div align="center">**CHAPTER 1**</div>

<div align="center">**INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**</div>

1.1 Introduction

The modern day employee is very different from employees of the early 20th century. In today's work setting there are various factors that motivate employees to do their best and perform beyond what is expected of them. The greatest challenge for organisations operating in the 21st century lies in harnessing creativity and enhancing productivity levels in its employees. The amount of support afforded by the organisation as perceived by the workers bear direct influence on the manner in which employees engage with their work and thus demonstrate their commitment to the organisation. Like any other business sector, higher education institutions are also driven by the need to sustain both national and global competitive advantage and, thus, rely on productive and committed employees (academics). The academic profession is important to the overall operation of a university. No academic institution can sustain itself without highly skilled, experienced, competent and committed employees. Higher education institutions base their sustainability on the scholarly knowledge and innovative capabilities of its employees (Robyn & du Preez, 2013). Engagement and organisational commitment are equally significant to the employee: this means that employees want to be provided with the best possible circumstances, facilities and support. An organisation's success stems from three crucial employee qualities, namely, competence, engagement and commitment. The ideal worker is described as an employee who possesses qualities such as aggressiveness, independence and the demonstration of devotion to the organisation and his/her career (Markos, 2010). Hence, it is important for an organisation to provide a supportive environment that enhances employee engagement and encourages employees to remain loyal. The aim of this study is to explore the relationship between perceived organisational support, employee engagement and their impact on organisational commitment. The results from this study aim to establish the link and interdependency among the three variables, namely, perceived organisational behaviour, organisational commitment and employee engagement.

1.2 Background to the study

Organisations envisage a work environment in which all employees make a valuable contribution towards organisational objectives and stay loyal to the organisation. The rapid growing pace of organisational operations now requires employers to pay close attention to their employee needs and look after their well-being (Vance, 2006). The organisational support theory maintains that employees develop an awareness and understanding about the manner in which the organisation cares, values and supports their contributions. This implies that perceived organisational support draws focus on the organisation's side of the interchange process as perceived by the employee (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). In such cases, employees that perceive their organisation as being supportive may reciprocate by exhibiting positive behaviours such as engaging in their work tasks and, remaining loyal to the organisation (Benlioglu & Baskan, 2014).

The South African educational system has undertaken significant changes with the focus area being redress and equal access to education (Coetzee & Rothmann, 2005). Such change within the educational system has called for the establishment of new policies and mechanisms at the institutional level. This means that higher educational institutions have undergone restructuring with the aim of providing better services to their clients, thereby exerting pressure on employees. Like any other business entity, the University of KwaZulu-Natal requires its employees to be fully engaged and committed to it in order to remain globally competitive and, produce excellent and employable graduates. According to Thomas (2000), there is general consensus that skilled and competent employees are an important asset. Organisations operating in the 21st century have developed a proactive approach to ensuring that they have a workforce that complements their current and future business needs. These organisations have made employee engagement a critical component in their drive for organisational success (Bakker, 2011). Engagement is said to occur when one fully absorbs themselves both psychologically and emotionally into a work related task (Kahn, 1990). Engagement leads to several positive outcomes, namely, employee commitment, job satisfaction, motivation, and organisational citizenship behaviour (Markos, 2010). A committed employee is described as a person that exhibits behaviours such as having a positive attachment and willingness to perform beyond what is expected of them. In order to enhance engagement and commitment in employees, it is important for the organisation to value, acknowledge and provide a supportive working climate for its employees. Hence, the aim of this study is to explore the relationship

between perceived organisational support and employee engagement and, their impact on organisational commitment.

1.3 Focus of the study

This study draws focus on three variables, namely, perceived organisational support, employee engagement and employee commitment. The employees' work engagement levels bear direct impact on the organisation's overall performance. The perception level of organisational support affects the employees' level of commitment towards the organisation. The purpose of the study is to examine the relationship between perceived organisational support, employee engagement and, their impact on employee commitment.

1.4 Problem statement

Lepak and Snell (1999) maintain that some organisations view human capital management in a singular approach; they provide warning about this one dimensional approach. In order to improve work performance employees must be treated as valuable assets. This entails providing a supportive work environment that inspires employees to engage and remain committed to the organisation. Disengaged employees have been characterised as displaying prolonged periods of distraction, and decreased pace in activity, absenteeism and loss of interest in their work. Due to the increasing level of business competitiveness, there is a need for employees to be both cognitively and emotionally present at work. Kahn's theory of engagement identifies three components related to the mental and emotional conditions that influence and informs an individual's level of engagement, namely, psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety and psychological availability (Kahn, 1990). Employee engagement comprises of the employee's ability to immerse in a work related task and demonstrate dedication during the performance of the task. Organisations also use engagement as a way of measuring employee dedication to the organisation and their work (Corporate Leadership Council, 2008). Organisations use perceived organisational support as a determinant of organisational commitment (Eisenberger , 1986). The manner in which an organisation treats its personnel impacts on the employee's perception and can make him/her reciprocate by treating the organisation in the same way too (Armeli, Eisenberger, Lynch, Rexwinkel, & Rhoades, 2001). Hence, if the employee experiences organisational support this, in turn, will increase employee engagement and commitment. Therefore, the research problem to be

investigated is: What is the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee engagement and to what extent do they impact on employee commitment?

1.5 Objectives of the study

The key aim of this study is to establish the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee engagement and how they impact on organisational commitment. In addition, the study aims:

- To evaluate the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee engagement.
- To establish the link between employee engagement and organisational commitment.
- To evaluate the relationship between perceived organisational support and organisational commitment.
- To assess the influence of biographical profiles of academics (age, gender, marital status, job status, position currently held and tenure) and college on levels of perceived organisational support, employee engagement and organisational commitment respectively.
- To determine whether perceived organisational support and employee engagement significantly account for the variance in organisational commitment.

1.6 Research questions of the study

Main question: What is the relationship between perceived organisational support, employee engagement and organisational commitment?

Sub questions:

- Are perceived organisational support (POS) and employee engagement significantly related and how?
- Are employee engagement and organisational commitment significantly related and how?
- Are perceived organisational support (POS) and organisational commitment significantly related and how?
- Do the biographical profiles of academics (age, gender, marital status, job status, position currently held and tenure) influence the levels of perceived organisational support, employee engagement and organisational commitment respectively and how?
- To what extent do perceived organisational support and employee engagement account for the variance in determining organisational commitment?

1.7 Hypotheses of the study

The hypotheses of the study, in alternate form, are:

H_1: The sub-dimensions of work engagement (emotional cognitive, physical) significantly intercorrelate with each other.

H_2: The sub-dimensions of organisational commitment (willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation, emotional attachment, sense of belonging and duty) significantly intercorrelate with each other.

H_3: There is a significant relationship between work engagement, organisational commitment and perceived organisational support of academics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

H_4: There exist significant relationships between the sub-dimensions of work engagement (emotional dimension, cognitive dimension, physical dimension) and the sub-dimensions of organisational commitment (willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation, emotional attachment, sense of belonging and duty) respectively.

H_5: There exist significant relationships between the sub-dimensions of work engagement (emotional dimension, cognitive dimension, physical dimension) and perceived organisational support respectively.

H_6: There exist significant relationships between the sub-dimensions of organisational commitment (willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation, emotional attachment, sense of belonging and duty) and perceived organisational support respectively.

H_7: There is a significant difference in the perceptions of academics varying in biographical profiles (age, marital status, position, tenure, gender) and college regarding work engagement and its sub-dimensions respectively.

H_8: There is a significant difference in the perceptions of academics varying in biographical profiles (age, marital status, position, tenure, gender) and college regarding organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions respectively.

H_9: There is a significant difference in the perceived organisational support of academics varying in biographical profiles (age, marital status, position, tenure, and gender) and college.

H_{10}: Work engagement and perceived organisational support significantly account for the variance in the organisational commitment of academics.

1.8 Significance and contribution of the study

Research regarding perceived organisational support and psychological and emotional foundations of employee engagement in higher education institutions will help researchers to gain an understanding of how organisations can create supportive work environments that foster employee engagement and commitment. The findings of the study may also assist the university's human resources practitioners to develop programmes and policies for academic staff which, in turn, may enhance employee engagement and commitment towards the organisation. The study also aims to contribute to the call from other research studies such as Capelleras (2005), Bakalis and Joiner (2006) and Rowley (1996), for more studies to be undertaken to examine the role of perceived organisational support (POS) towards the enhancement of engagement and commitment levels for academics who are not from western countries.

1.9 Summary outline per chapter

In this section the structure of the thesis is outlined, foreshadowing the entire thesis.

Chapter 2 provides a critical review of the concept organisational commitment (dependant variable) through the utilisation of relevant literature. The discussion includes the definition of the concept, the evolution of organisational commitment throughout the era, the development of organisational commitment, factors associated with commitment, consequences and implications of commitment for academics.

Chapter 3 provides a critical review of Employee Engagement and Perceived Organisational Support. The two independent variables are discussed by using an eclectic approach to theorising and conceptualising the previously mentioned concepts. The discussion draws focus on different theoretical debates in relation to Perceived Organisational Support (POS) and Employee Engagement.

Chapter 4 elaborates on the methodological approach used in the study. It begins with a consideration of the research design, the quantitative method paradigm, and the rationalisation for using the quantitative approach. This is followed by methods and data analysis techniques, the research context and finally the ethical considerations.

Chapter 5 presents the results of the study in detail. SPSS Version 22.0 software was used to generate the results of the study using descriptive (percentages, frequencies, measures of central tendency, measures of dispersion) and inferential (correlation, T-test, Analysis of variance, multiple regressions) statistics. The generated results are presented using tabular and graphical representations and all results are narratively interpreted. However, findings are meaningless until they are compared and contrasted with the findings of other researchers in the field.

Chapter 6 discusses the results emanating from this study in connection with numerous other studies to substantiate the evidence obtained in the study. The findings of the study are compared and contrasted to find similarities and differences from other similar studies. The results of the study are also graphically presented to enable the enthusiastic but time constrained human resource practitioner the opportunity to obtain a cursory view of the results of the study.

Chapter 7 provides recommendations and conclusion, implications and limitations of the study. This concluding chapter presents an overview of the findings in relation to the five broad research questions, which are the focus of the thesis. The chapter concludes by making recommendations for future research and this is achieved by considering the limitations of the research and important areas for future research. The recommendations are graphically presented to enable a quick reference guide for enhancing perceived organisational support, employee engagement and organisational commitment.

1.10 Conclusion

This chapter has enlightened the reader on the background to the study, the focus of the study, its research objectives, research questions and hypotheses to be tested. The significance and potential for contribution of the study as well as the structure of the thesis are outlined. The chapter has thus, provided a brief overview of the study and a succinct preview of the concepts to be discussed in the forthcoming chapters.

CHAPTER 2

ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

2.1 Introduction

The modern day employee is very different from employees of the early 20th century. In today's work setting there are various factors that motivate employees to do their best and perform beyond what is expected of them, while remaining loyal and committed to their organisation. As a result, organisations are constantly challenged to find various ways of enhancing employee commitment and performance. The main focus of this chapter is to explore the concept of organisational commitment. The discussion includes the definition of the concept, the evolution of organisational commitment throughout the era, the development of organisational commitment, factors associated with commitment, consequences and implications of commitment for academics.

2.2 Background

The emblematic credo which maintains that, be loyal to the organisation, and the organisation will be loyal to you is of bygone era (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982 as cited in Ghosh & Swamy, 2014). The belief understates the employee's behaviour and attitude towards his/her organisation (Ghosh & Swamy, 2014). The Oxford English Dictionary (2012) refers to the term commitment as the engagement or involvement that restricts one's freedom of action. The concept of organisational commitment has been extensively researched and is regarded as a fascinating trait of employee behaviour. A vast amount of studies have also associated the conceptualisation of organisational commitment with job occupation, workgroups, and representative employee bodies and work itself. Changes in the world of work now challenge organisations operating in the 21st century to develop new ways of retaining and inducing higher levels of employee commitment (Hislop, 2003 as cited in Krishna & Marquardt, 2007). Research in the area of organisational commitment has been based on the need to establish a relationship between antecedents of organisational commitment and organisational outcomes with the aim of creating and sustaining a committed workforce.

In the case of higher education, new expectations exist whereby universities play a critical role in national development by producing state of the art professionals and various field experts.

Globalisation has made higher education a global issue because it represents the shift from national competitiveness to international competitiveness (Zubair, Gilani, & Nawaz, 2012). This kind of new role requires keeping up to date with the global world, making provisions for international level facilities, the adoption of ISO standards, digitisation of educational institutions and so forth. One of the major updates that educational institutions are cautioned to pay attention to is the commitment of academics towards their institutions. The development of commitment in academics has significant consequences and implications for educational institutions. Highly committed academics are said to have stronger aspirations to be psychologically present at work and are likely to pay a meaningful contribution to their respective institutions (Imran, Jilani, Sial, & Zaheer, 2011). Hence motivation and commitment on the employee's part is a critical condition for the achievement of organisational goals (Aydin & Dogan, 2012).

2.3 Definition of Organisational commitment

The multi-dimensionality of organisational commitment as a concept makes it somewhat difficult to define. According to Cohen (2003), organisational commitment is a very much researched area; however, it still remains as a challenge to the field of management, organisational behaviour and human resources management. There various definitions of organisational commitment. Muthuveloo and Che Rose (2005) define commitment as an employee's level of attachment to some aspect of work. Cohen (2003) refers to commitment as a force that ties an individual to a particular course of action that bears relevance to one or more goals. For instance, the course of action may be directed towards family or friends as well as to other institutions.

Allen and Meyer (1990 as cited in Anttila, 2014) define organisational commitment (OC) as the mental and emotional states that tie a worker to the organisation. Herscovitch and Meyer and (2001) describe organisational commitment as a frame of mind that commits an employee to a particular action or purpose. Brinsfield, Klein and Molloy (2012) define organisational commitment as one of many bonds or attachments that an employee develops in the workplace over time. According to Eslami and Gharakhani (2012), commitment is a format that seeks to explain consistencies comprising of attitudes, values, behaviour and involves behavioural choices and implies a response of possible alternative courses of action. Organisational commitment refers to the employee's emotional attachment to, recognition with, and

involvement in the organisation. The aptitude to accomplish the stated aims and objectives in the law depends upon a number of variables from qualitative and quantitative perspectives (Samad, 2011).

In spite of the lack of agreement pertaining to the conceptualisation and definition of OC, there is consensus that commitment is a connection that exists between the employee and the organisation (Martin & Roodt, 2008 as cited in Lumley, 2009).

2.4 Evolution of Organisational Commitment

The evolution of organisational commitment (OC) stems from several theories: The Side Bet theory from Becker (1960), Porter's (1974) Affective Dependence theory, Chatman & O'Reilly (1986) and, Allen and Meyer's Multi-dimension theory (1990) to Cohen's Two-dimension (2007) and Somers's Combined theory (2009). Each of these theorists has their own unique way of conceptualising organisational commitment and thus has laid the foundation on the status and to the development of new theories. The literature will briefly discuss the abovementioned theories; however, for purposes of discussion it will draw more focus on recent theories of organisational commitment, namely, Cohen's Two-dimension theory (2007) and Somers's combined theory (2009).

2.4.1 Early era: The Side-Bet Approach

The side bet theory is based on the premise that the relationship between the organisation and the employee is founded on behaviours which ties both parties to a contract of economic gains. The side bets are critical to the employee because of the cost they bear in the exchange relationship. This theory identifies organisational commitment as a leading predictor of labour turnover. The side bet theory may have been abandoned as a major proponent of organisational commitment; however, the influence of this approach is evident in Meyer and Allen's measurement instrument for OC referred to as continuance commitment. Becker's approach sees a close connection between the process of commitment and the process of turnover (Becker 1960 as cited in Ghosh & Swamy, 2014).

2.4.2 The Middle Era: The Psychological Attachment Approach

The middle era marks the shift from tangible side bets to the psychological link between the organisation and the employee. This school of thought describes commitment as the combination of interest and attitude towards economic gains derived from one's association

with their organisation. Porter (1979, as cited in Ghosh & Swamy, 2014) defined organisational commitment as an individual's association and dedication towards an organisation. This approach to organisational commitment helped develop a questionnaire which not only highlighted the notion of commitment but also the consequences of commitment. However, the inherent flaws found in the previous questionnaire led to the development of the three dimensional model proposed by Allen and Meyer (1984) and, Chatman and O'Reilly (1986).

2.4.3 The Third Era: The Multidimensional Approach

This era marks the shift from a single dimension era to the multi-dimensional era of organisational commitment. The contributing scholars to this era are Allen and Meyer and Chatman and O'Reilly. Allen and Meyer's Three Dimensional Theory (1984, 1990, 1997) has been the leading approach to organisational commitment for more than two decades. The flaws in Becker's side bet theory paved the way for Meyer and Allen's three dimensional theories (Ghosh & Swamy, 2014). Even though Meyer and Allen's theory was preferred as a basis for future research, it failed to explain the intricacies and connections between the distinctive dimensions of organisational commitment. Furthermore, Meyer and Allen's definition of organisational commitment did not comprise of all the attributes associated with the three dimensions of organisational commitment and classified it as a psychological state. The three dimensional model was also heavily criticised for failing to provide an explicit definition of the meaning of psychological state. The abovementioned critique led to the establishment of newer models such as Cohen's four dimensional model developed in the year 2007.

2.4.4 Cohen's four dimensional model of commitment model (2007)

Cohen's theory of the four dimensional commitment model states that there is a difference between organisational commitment developed before entering the organisation and commitment developed after the employee has entered the organisation (Cohen, 2007). The model suggests two dimensions to commitment, namely, (1) the timing of commitment and (2) the bases of commitment. Timing is the first dimension of commitment and it makes the distinction between commitment propensity, which develops before entry into the organisation and organisational commitment, which develops after entry into the organisation. According to Cohen (2007), timing is a crucial element in commitment which in turn creates two dimensions: pre-entry commitment propensity versus post-entry commitment propensity. Commitment propensity refers to the employee's general inclination to be committed to the

organisation or the job while post entry commitment draws focus on the actual commitment to the specific organisation.

The second dimension draws focus on the bases of commitment and distinguishes between commitment based on instrumental considerations and commitment based on psychological attachment. Following the above conceptualisation, the suggested theory advances four forms of organisational commitment (Figure 2.1).

Timing

| Before entry | | After entry |

Bases of commitment

| Instrumental attachment | Instrumental Commitment Propensity | Instrumental Commitment |

| Psychological attachment | Affective Commitment Propensity | Affective Commitment |
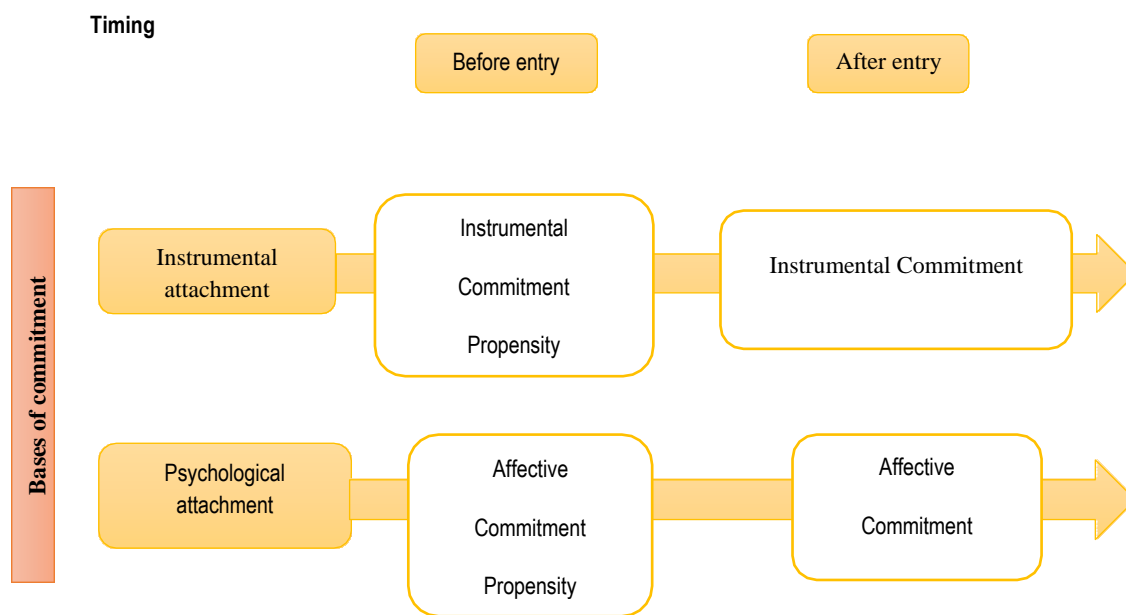
Figure 2. 1: **A four component model**

Cohen, A. (2003). Commitment before and after: an evaluation and reconceptualization of organisational commitment. *Human Resources Management Review*, 17, p. 346.

Cohen (2007) maintains that two forms of commitment develop before entry into the organisation and the other two forms develop after entry into the organisation. The first two forms of commitment that develop before one's entry into the organisation are instrumental commitment propensity, which stems from one's general expectations about the quality of the exchange with the organisation in terms of the expected benefits, and rewards one might receive from it, and affective commitment propensity, which is a general moral obligation towards the organisation. The two forms developed after entry are instrumental commitment, which results from one's perception of the quality of the exchange between one's contributions and the rewards that one's receives, and affective commitment, defined as a psychological

attachment to the organisation demonstrated by identification with it, emotional involvement and a sense of belonging.

- **Commitment as an attitude**

The aim of Cohen's four component model was to minimise the mixture of commitment with behavioural outcomes of commitment. The general framework of this model makes use of the theory of reasoned action which was advanced by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975 as cited in Cohen, 2007). This theory utilises social, attitudinal influence and intention variables to try and predict behaviour. The theory maintains that the intention to engage in a certain kind of behaviour is determined by one's attitude towards the performance of that behaviour and it is also subjective to one's norms. The implication here is that attitude is the first antecedent of behavioural intention.

Subjective norms are determined by an individual's normative beliefs about whether significant others think the individual should or should not engage in a certain kind of behaviour coupled with the behavioural intention to obey them. The term behavioural intention can be defined as a person's perceived likelihood or "subjective probability that he or she will engage in a given behaviour" (Consensus Activity of the Health & Medicine Division, 2002, p. 31).

Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975 as cited in Cohen, 2007) conceptualisation of reasoned action helps this theory to differentiate between commitment as an attitude and behavioural intention, such as turnover intentions, as outcomes of commitment. Mowday, Porter and Steers (1982 as cited in Ghosh & Swamy, 2014) also made the contribution towards the advancement of the distinction between commitment and behaviour intentions. They argued that attitudinal commitment draws focus on the process of how the employees perceive their relationship with the organisation. Attitudinal commitment can also be referred to as a mind-set in which the individual considers the congruence between their own goals and values with those of the organisation. Behavioural commitment refers to the process whereby individuals become locked into a certain organisation and how they deal with this problem.

- **Time and commitment: pre-entry commitment versus post-entry commitment**

The notion of time is a significant factor in the conceptualisation of organisational commitment. An employee does not commence work in a particular organisation without some

sort of attitude pertaining to commitment towards the organisation. However, such attitudes are regarded as general perceptions of commitment which may be developed during the socialisation process and some may also be influenced by personal values, beliefs and expectations related to the job. This implies that commitment propensity is developed before the employee enters the organisation. Cohen (2007) connotes that high levels of post-entry commitment is likely to lead to the enhancement of actual commitment after entry.

- **The nature of commitment: instrumental versus normative**

Cohen (2007) describes the notion of commitment as two dimensions, namely, pre-entry and post-entry commitment (Figure 2.2). This theory further contends that one dimension is instrumental (pre-entry) while the other one is affective (post-entry). The instrumental dimension regards commitment as an exchange between the employee and the organisation. This dimension draws focus on the perceived benefits associated with remaining in the organisation. Cohen (2007) tries to bypass past difficulties in the conceptualisation of commitment by shifting the emphasis from the cost of leaving (continuance commitment) to the benefits of staying (instrumental commitment).

Cohen (2007) describes the second dimension as affective in nature. The term normative commitment can be referred to as a belief held by the individual that one has a moral duty to engage in behaviour that demonstrates loyalty. This kind of individual tends to believe that it is good to be loyal. The notion here is that an individual's attachment to a person, object or organisation results from the individual's ability to identify with the values, attitude or goals which become incorporated into the person's cognitive response. According to Cohen (2007), affective commitment propensity can be regarded as a stable attitude which is founded in one's prior experiences relating to culture and socialisation. The notion of time frame is what distinguishes Cohen's conceptualisation of organisational commitment from that of Allen and Meyer's (1991). The argument here is that the most dominant dimension during the employee's early stages in the organisation is instrumental in nature. Therefore, sufficient time is needed in order for the employee to develop affective commitment towards the organisation. Such commitment is characterised by feelings such as identification, belonging and emotional involvement within the workplace.
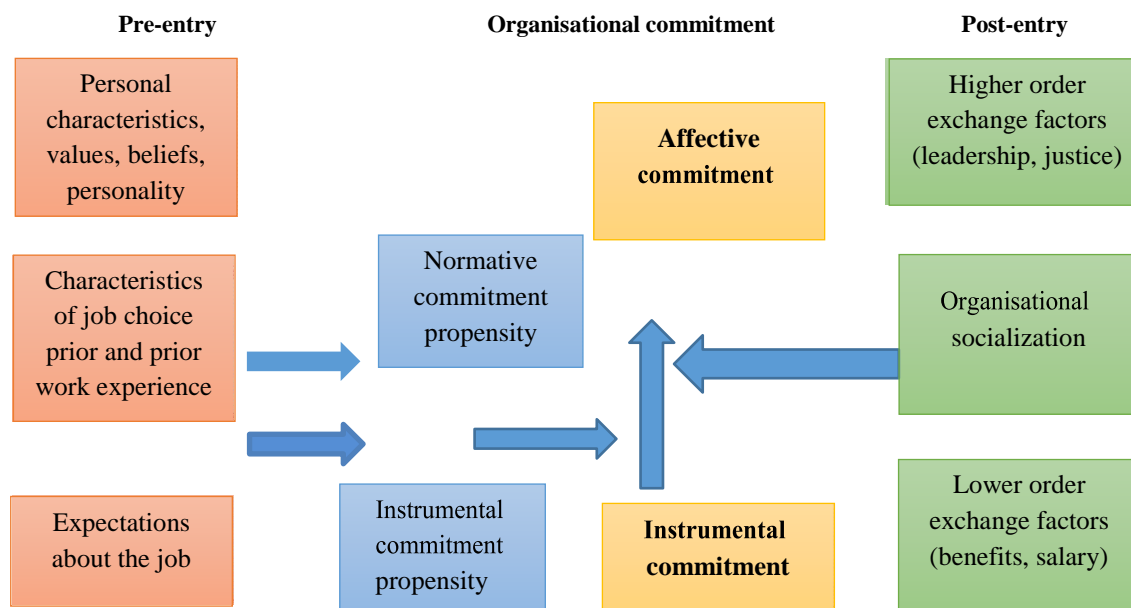
Figure 2. 2 : Cohen's model in detail

Cohen, A. (2003). Commitment before and after: an evaluation and reconceptualization of organisational commitment. *Human Resources Management Review*, *17*, p. 346.

- **Pre-entry**

The first part of the Cohen's model provides a description of the pre-entry process of commitment that the employee undergoes. Figure 2.2 displays three distinguished groups of variables that affect commitment propensities. The first group is that of personal characteristics such as values, beliefs, and personality. The argument here is that pre-employment attitude plays a critical role towards the development of commitment. This means that new employees entering the organisation have distinctive goals and values which they seek to satisfy through employment. As a result, Cohen (2007) maintains that normative commitment propensity is likely to be affected by personal characteristics such as personal values and beliefs.

Organisational socialisation refers to the manner in which employees learn the values, beliefs, behaviours and skills required for performing the job and this process is known as on-boarding. On-boarding refers to a process aimed at the development of employee behaviours to ensure long term success and commitment towards the organisation (Carrell, Elbert & Hatfield, & Warnich, 2015). The process of on-boarding is aimed at integrating the employees into the organisation and acquainting them with the details of their job requirements. Once the employees are integrated into the organisation and establish congruence between their values

and beliefs with those of the organisation, their propensity towards committing to the organisation becomes stronger. Cohen (2007) argues that after entering the organisation, instrumental commitment starts to develop faster than affective commitment which takes more time and needs more information to develop. In this sense, instrumental commitment is perceived as a shallow commitment because it is founded upon tangible exchange. Companies vested in this type of exchange are cautioned that an employee might easily seek greener pastures if they receive a better offer elsewhere. The implication here is that lower order exchange factors such as salaries and benefits are most likely to affect the employees' levels of commitment (Cohen, 2007).

The second group deals with the characteristics of job choice and the employee's job expectations and are also related to instrumental propensity because the employee has to make instrumental decisions pertaining to things like expected income, working conditions and so forth. This implies that instrumental commitment propensity is strongly affected by the characteristics of job choice and expectations about the job. A prior work experience has the ability to shape one's commitment propensity. This means that an employee that has undergone a positive work experience is likely to have greater propensity to become committed to the new organisation (Cohen, 2007).

The third group of variables draws focus on the employee's job expectations. Cohen (2007) maintains that employees who enter organisations with high expectations are likely to have a greater propensity to become committed to the organisation. This means that circumstances associated with new employee's decision to join the organisation affects commitment. For instance, low extrinsic reasons for taking a job and sacrifices made in job preference are associated with increased levels of propensity to become fully committed to an organisation.

- **Development of organisational commitment – Post-entry**

The second part of the model describes the post-entry process of commitment which may result in higher or lower levels of instrumental and affective commitment. The model suggests a relationship between two commitment propensities and two actual commitments, those developed post-entry into the organisation. Due to the similarity of the abovementioned conceptual frames of reference, naturally instrumental commitment propensity is expected to impact on instrumental commitment and normative commitment propensity is expected to impact on affective commitment. An employee with a high level of normative commitment

propensity is most likely to develop increased levels of affective commitment while an employee with a high level of instrumental commitment propensity is more likely to develop a high level of instrumental commitment. The logic for using two different mechanisms to create different dimensions of attachments is common in leadership literature. Avolio, Bass, Berson and Jung (2003) argue that transactional leadership has the ability to build trust in the leader if he/she sets clear job expectations and rewards and reliably executes what has been agreed upon by both parties (instrumental commitment). A study conducted by Epitropaki and Martin (2005) revealed that transformational leaders do indeed appear to evoke a much deeper identification with the organisation by satisfying employees' self-enhancement needs.

Brainin, Ganzach, Ohayun and Pazy (2002) conducted a study which examined the effects of exchange-inducing treatments on pre- and post-entry commitment of military recruits. The research findings indicated that the level of post-entry commitment of military recruits who were trained for better decision-making processes was higher than the commitment level among the control groups. The implication here was that non-instrumental rewards increased employee felt responsibility in comparison to instrumental ones.

Procedural justice is perceived as one aspect of treatment indicative of the extent to which the organisation supports its employees. The same applies with distributive justice when it is utilised more broadly to integrate work outcomes other than just pay. In such cases, the employees perceive the outcome of fairness as related to the organisation's discretion and not that of a union. In terms of the norm of reciprocity, employees with strong perceptions of organisational support are likely to reciprocate back by remaining loyal and committed to the organisation (Foley, Hang-Hue, & Loi, 2006). This means that affective commitment will be influenced by variables such as transformational leadership, perceptions of justice, and organisational support that represent higher order exchanges. Higher order exchange factors refer to transformational leadership, perceptions of justice and organisational support (Cohen, 2007). Affective commitment is perceived as the deepest and highest level of commitment which in turn also affects the formation of instrumental commitment. Higher order needs play a critical role in the enhancement of organisational commitment. Cohen (2007) cautions organisations to pay attention to this factor in the long term.

Organisational socialisation can also affect one's instrumental and affective commitment. The socialisation process focuses on how employees learn the beliefs, values, orientations,

behaviours, and the necessary skills needed to perform their new roles (Van Maanen, 1976 as cited in Cohen, 2007). Socialisation tactics can influence the role orientations that newcomers ultimately adopt (Clark, Fullagar, Gordon, & Gallagher, 1995 as cited in Cohen, 2007). However, the suggested two dimensional conceptualisation of commitment might clarify the role of socialisation in affecting commitment by specifying the different content that socialisation brings to each of the commitment dimensions. First, the contribution of the socialisation process to commitment may be in providing the individual with information on the procedures (paths) and the quality of exchange will then facilitate the instrumental exchange between employees and the organisation. The information is said to enhance instrumental commitment. Socialisation tactics can also influence affective commitment by providing information about the goals and values of the organisation and by attempting to increase the fit between the organisation's goals and values and the individual's ones. This may increase the level of affective commitment which is based in large part on identifying with the organisation's goals and values (Cohen, 2007).

- **Implications of the model for theory and practice**

Cohen's theory builds upon previous approaches. The proposed theory has a number of advantages. Firstly, it attempts to take an attitudinal approach in order to bypass an overlap pertaining to outcomes and behavioural intentions that characterise other concepts. Secondly, the theory acknowledges that commitment has various meanings in different time periods during one's career. Due to this fact, a differentiation is made between commitment propensity developed before the employee enters the organisation and post-entry. Thirdly, the theory places emphasis on the basis behind commitment. Fourthly, the theory perceives affective commitment as the highest and deepest form of commitment (Cohen, 2007).

The theory emphasises the motivational force or the bases behind commitment. One of the two dimensions of commitment, the instrumental one, is part of an ongoing exchange process. The theory here places emphasis on affective commitment as being the highest and deepest. It should also be noted that Cohen's conceptualisation of continuance commitment draws focus on the perceived benefits of remaining with the organisation and not the costs of leaving it (Cohen, 2007).

Lastly, the fourth dimensional model of organisational commitment also has practical organisational and human resources management implications. First, it recommends that

organisations/companies should differentiate between commitment propensity and post-entry commitment. This means that employees with higher levels of commitment propensity would require less training and organisational socialisation aimed at maximising commitment in comparison to those with lower levels of commitment propensities (Cohen, 2007).

The distinction between normative commitment propensity and instrumental propensity is also crucial. Employees with a higher level of normative propensity would need less socialisation and training that emphasises the benefits of membership in the organisation in comparison to the instrumental ones. The theory cautions organisations that after entry, they should acknowledge the significance of instrumental commitment for developing increased levels of affective commitment. Instrumental commitment may be perceived as a shallow level of commitment as it is based on tangible extrinsic exchanges. It is also critical for the development of affective commitment especially during the early stages of employment (Cohen, 2007).

This does not necessarily mean that organisations should pay less attention to the ways of avoiding employee turnover but rather on strategies aimed at developing a fair and supportive work environment in terms advancement and rewards. The theory also maintains that it is important for organisations to consider satisfying higher order needs as these are needed for the creation and maintenance of the higher and deeper level of commitment of employees to their organisation. The theory also warns organisations that focus solely on instrumental exchange to be aware of the fact that their employees will develop a shallow level of commitment which is not based on deep psychological attachment and this, in turn, may make the organisation vulnerable to an increased level of staff turnover. Therefore, higher order needs are the key for enhancing levels of employee commitment so that better rewards in other organisations will not always be sufficient for an employee to consider exiting the organisation (Cohen, 2007).

2.5 The combined influence of affective commitment (AC), continuance commitment (CC) and normative commitment (NC)

Somers (2009) maintains that research in organisational commitment should draw focus on the combined influence of commitment on work outcomes. According to Somers (2009), studying commitment variables in terms of their relative levels of commitment for individuals creates a new perspective in a sense that the combined influence of AC, CC and NC is examined in

relation to work outcomes. This means that the possibility that certain patterns of commitment may alter the dynamics of the relationship between any given form of commitment and work outcomes is explicitly tested. Herscovitch and Meyer (2001) had previously hypothesised that the beneficial influence of affective commitment is weakened by normative commitment and continuance commitment. However, other research studies indicated that normative commitment whether alone or in conjunction with continuance commitment heightens the positive relationship between affective commitment and essential work outcomes such as that of employee turnover, work withdrawal behaviour and citizenship behaviour (Gellatly *et al.*, 2006; Wasti, 2005).

It should be noted that Somers's study was conducted with the aim of testing Herscovitch and Meyer's (2001) theoretical framework for codifying patterns of commitment in organisations. Herscovitch and Meyer (2001) hypothesised that there are eight commitment profiles based on the relative levels of affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment ranging from increased levels of commitment (high AC, CC and NC) to low levels of commitment (low AC, CC and NC). There are six commitment profiles formed between the abovementioned two anchors. For instance, there are three commitment profiles originating from one form of commitment, namely, affective dominant, and continuance dominant and normative dominant. The other three commitment profiles depict increased levels of commitment of two forms of commitment, namely, affective–continuance dominant, affective–normative dominant, and normative–continuance dominant.

In 2009, Somers conducted a research study comprising of a sample of 288 hospital nurses. Their commitment profiles were compared to turnover intentions, job search behaviour, work withdrawal (absenteeism and lateness) and job stress. Five empirically-derived commitment profiles emerged: highly committed, affective–normative dominant, continuance–normative dominant, continuance dominant, and uncommitted. The results indicated that the most positive work outcomes were associated with the affective–normative dominant profile which included lower turnover intentions and lower levels of psychological stress. There were no differences among the commitment groups for late coming, and the continuance–normative dominant group had the lowest levels of absenteeism. Somers (2009) suggested that future research should focus on the combined influence of commitment on work outcomes.

Somers (2009) maintains that the process of commitment is complicated in nature. The reason for this is that the relative level of commitment for each and every employee affects the manner

in which the psychological state of commitment is experienced for each and every employee. For instance, increased levels of affective commitment and normative commitment may potentially have negative effects on continuance commitment because the employee might not feel stuck in their organisation, but rather invested in it. Potential negative effects of continuance commitment may be alleviated when there are increased levels in affective commitment and normative commitment with regards to employee retention. Somers (2009) argues that due to such factors, building beneficial patterns of commitment to organisations goes beyond affective commitment. Whilst human capital is an important resource, its value in terms of output and performance lies in the commitment of employees.

2.6 The development of organisational commitment

There is wide consensus that organisations benefit from loyal and committed employees (Eddy, Lorenzet, & Mastrangelo, 2004; Meyer, Parfyonova, & Stanley, 2012). A significant research gap was noted by Meyer and Herscovitch (2001), who acknowledge that considerable work remains to be done before we arrive at a clear understanding of the underlying mechanisms which develop organisational commitment in employees. Despite the insurmountable amount of theoretical and empirical attention that has been given to organisational commitment, very little is known about how commitment develops over time (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2001; Herscovitch, Meyer, Stanley, & Topolnytsky, 2002).

2.6.1 Development of Organisational Commitment Using Action Learning: A theoretical Framework (2007)

This section of the literature will discuss recent models with varying perspectives pertaining to the development of commitment. Hislop (2003) maintains that organisations are always trying to find new ways of retaining and inducing high levels of employee commitment. The current workforce is becoming less traditional. Employees are driven by opportunity, while organisations on the other hand believe that tenure dictates growth (Campell, 2002). Tumwesigye (2010) maintains that employees who perceive their organisations as supportive and appreciative of their efforts are likely to stay committed. Krishna and Marquardt (2007) maintain that there are positive outcomes associated with organisational commitment such as employee turnover, performance, citizenship already have solid foundation in the field of organisational commitment. However, the relationship between organisational commitment and its antecedents is mostly distinctive and inconsistent. Krishna and Marquardt (2007) maintain that inadequate attention has been given to how organisational commitment develops.

They further contend that although organisational commitment has been researched for over four decades, the majority of the variables that have undergone scrutiny as possible antecedents to organisational commitment are transactional in nature. For example, variables such as compensation and benefits, recruitment and selection, assessment and promotion which are associated with organisational commitment have a significant component.

Krishna and Marquardt (2007) consider such variables as instrumental in nature, while merely making the suggestion that none of the researched probable antecedents of organisational commitment possess a developmental component. On the other hand, variables such as job scope, work design, participation, training and development have a significant developmental component. Krishna and Marquardt (2007) maintain that the instrumental perspective of commitment (the exchange process between the employee and the organisation) has influenced research on antecedents of organisational commitment in numerous ways. Krishna and Marquardt (2007) argue that variables emanating from the instrumental perspective will have very little impact on fostering commitment among knowledge workers. Instead employees will become committed to an organisation if they perceive it as providing them with learning opportunities. Therefore, employees who believe that they are being treated as valuable assets for developmental purposes show increased levels of commitment in comparison to those who view themselves as commodities ready to be bought and sold. Employees are only committed to the degree to which they believe the organisation is providing them with long-term development opportunities.

In a research study conducted by Paul and Anantharaman (2004) in Information Technology companies in India it was found that of all the HRM variables that correlate with commitment variables, namely, (1) career development, (2) the human resource development, (3) comprehensive training development, (4) oriented appraisal and (5) a sociable workplace had the strongest correlation. The research by Paul and Anantharaman (2004) echoes the need for understanding organisational commitment from a learning and development perspective. However, to date only a few studies have explored the linkages between learning and commitment. Dirkx and Kovan (2003) maintain that this is surprising since a deep, profound form of on-going learning seems to be the basis of sustained commitment. Theorists in the field of knowledge management have presented research findings on the impact of organisational learning subsystems such as knowledge sharing and employee perception of learning and development opportunities on organisational commitment (Dessler, 1999 as cited in Krishna &

Marquardt, 2007). A few empirical studies have been undertaken to understand the relationship between organisational commitment and knowledge sharing (Hooff & Ridder, 2004) and between knowledge based structures and organisational commitment (Brooks, 2002).

The concept of action learning was first introduced by Reg Revans in the coal mines of Wales and England in the 1940s and since then there have been various definitions of this concept. All of the different forms of action learning involve real people solving and taking action on real problems and acquiring knowledge while doing so (Marquardt, 2004 as cited in Krishna & Marquardt, 2007). Several components are critical to action learning (Figure 2.3).
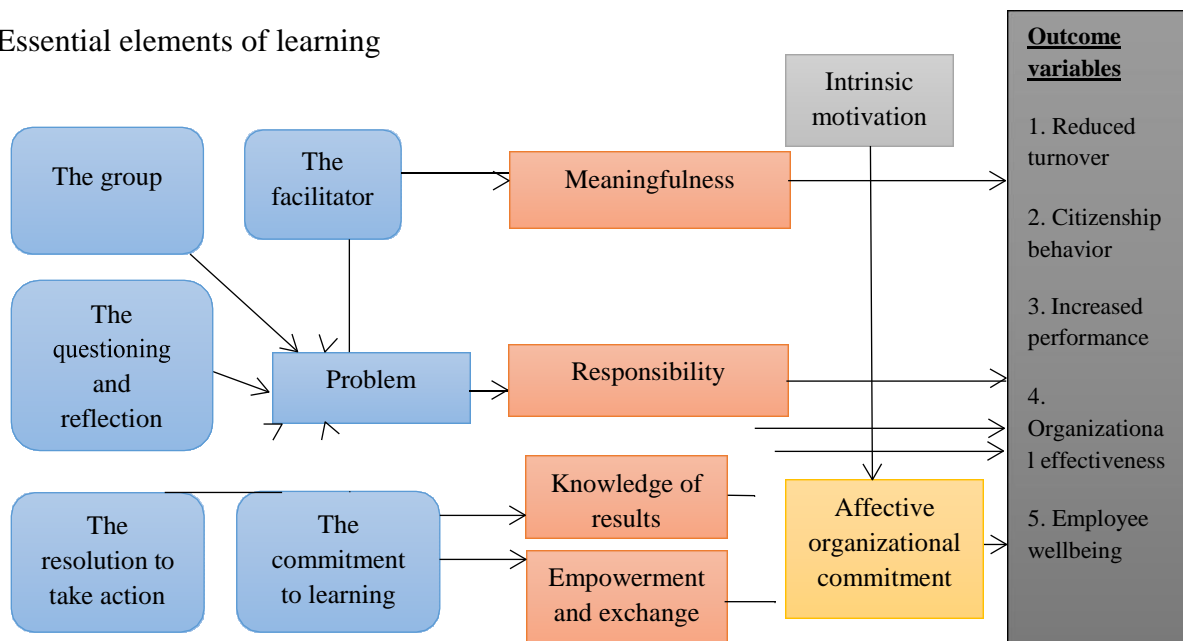
Figure 2. 3 : A Framework for the Development of Organisational Commitment Using Action Learning

Krishna, V., & Marquardt, M. (2007). A *Framework for the Development of Organisational Commitment Using Action Learning*. George Washington University, p. 4.

Marquardt (2004) lists the following components as critical to action learning:

- **A problem**

Action learning draws focus on a problem, a project, a challenge, an issue, or a task whereby the resolution of such is of great importance to the employee or group of employees and the

organisation. The problem must also provide the employee or group with the opportunity to acquire learning, build knowledge and allow for the development of individual, team and organisational skills. The proceeding component of action learning draws focus on group diversity, engagement and team collaboration.

- **Action learning group or team**

The fundamental principal of action learning is that the action learning group comprises of four to eight people from different backgrounds and experiences. Such diversity enables the group to see the problem or task from a varying perspective, and thus be able to offer new and ground-breaking ideas (Krishna & Marquardt, 2007).

While other members of the group focus on solving the problem, one member, the action learning coach, devotes all of his or her efforts toward helping the group learn. This person identifies opportunities that enable the group to improve its problem-solving and strategy-creation capacity. Experience shows that unless there is a person dedicated to the learning, a group will tend to put all of its time and energies on what they consider to be urgent (the problem) and will neglect what is more important in the long-run (the learning). Through a series of questions, the coach enables group members to reflect on how they listen, how they may better frame the problem, how they give each other feedback, how they are planning and working, and what assumptions may be shaping their beliefs and actions. The next component of action learning describes the role of the facilitator.

- **The facilitator**

The action learning coach or facilitator plays a critical role in helping the group to learn. The facilitator assists the group in finding strategies of harnessing and enhancing their problem solving abilities and creativity. The facilitator achieves this by probing the group with questions, which in turn allows the group to undergo a reflection phase. Reflection enables the group to assess or evaluate how they listen, communicate, plan and work together as a team (Krishna & Marquardt, 2007). Given that the role of the facilitator is based on the notion of helping the group to function efficiently and effectively, the next component is more concerned with thought processes.

- **Questioning and reflection process**

This process draws focus on perceptive listening and reflective listening. Action learning involves the questioning and reflection of views and opinions. The process focuses on asking the correct questions instead of correct answers and involves looking at what one does not know and what one is well informed about (Krishna & Marquardt, 2007). The proceeding component draws focus on the resolution process.

- **The resolution of action**

A crucial component of action learning is that of empowerment whereby the employee/group is assured that their recommendations will be taken into consideration or implemented. According to Krishna and Marquardt (2007), the group may lose drive, creativity and commitment if it only makes recommendations. The implication here is that there is no meaningful or practical learning until action is taken and reflected upon; one can never be sure if a plan or idea will be effective until it has undergone implementation. Therefore, reflection on an action is the best source for knowledge and organisational change.

- **A commitment to learning**

There are short term benefits associated with solving an organisational problem. The preferred long term benefits transpire when knowledge acquired by each group member, as well as the group as a whole, is tactically applied in the organisation. Action learning also puts equal emphasis on the learning and development of the employee or group of employees as it does on the resolution of problems; the more intelligent the group, the faster and better it becomes at taking action and making decisions (Krishna & Marquardt, 2007).

- ➢ **Relationship between action learning and organisational commitment**

The development of organisational learning is a critical factor in the retention of committed employees. This is based on the notion that employees develop loyalty towards an organisation if the organisation is committed towards their learning and developmental needs. The following components mentioned below outline the relationship between action learning and organisational commitment.

- **Meaningfulness**

The sharing of a problem amongst group members produces a common understanding towards others' situations and also improves bonds between the group members (Marquardt, 2004, 2006). A link exists between trust and problem sharing. This means that sharing problems in an environment of trust inherently results in high levels of trust between the group members. Hence, action learning problem sharing is regarded as an effective instrument that increases trust amongst group members.

Research on organisational commitment indicates that perceived fairness of the organisational policies is one of the significant antecedents to affective commitment (Dilworth & Willis, 2003 as cited in Krishna & Marquardt, 2007). The process of reflective questioning and accounting for actions inherently found in action learning groups helps to foster group creativity. Action learning helps groups to improve their potential collectively and, collaborate in meaningful and insightful ways which, in turn, produces coordinated action (Marquardt, 2004). Participation in action learning promotes meaningfulness because it provides group members with the opportunity to use various sets of skills.

Group members often find the experience of participating in action learning as transformative. Research suggests that skill variety and task significance increases affective commitment in employees. Therefore, the theoretical framework proposes that groups utilising action learning are most likely to experience increased levels of meaningfulness in comparison to those that do not use action learning and hence, the action learning groups will have higher affective organisational commitment (Krishna & Marquardt, 2007).

- **Responsibility**

Responsibility action learning helps with the advancement of various team related skills and proficiencies (Marquardt, 2004). Such skills consists of the ability to focus on goods and services issues, emotional intelligence and empathy through communication channels such as that of feedback, team building skills and different leadership skills. There is evidence that people's perception of their own competencies plays a significant role in the development of affective commitment. The theoretical framework proposes that groups that use action learning

will experience increased levels of responsibility than groups that do not utilise action learning and hence, the action learning groups will have higher affective organisational commitment.

- **Knowledge of Results**

Marquardt (2006) maintains that action learning helps with the enhancement of dialogue. Dialogue is a process that comprises of active and compassionate listening, non-judgemental and innovative ways of tackling problems. The abovementioned aspects are regarded as core components of action learning. Commitment literature draws links between communication and commitment. This means that the manner in which information is communicated to employees in the workplace affects organisational commitment. Encouragement and feedback develops employees and may result in stronger loyalty to the organisation. The implication is that groups using action learning will demonstrate increased levels of knowledge of results in comparison to groups that do not use action learning and, therefore, action learning groups are likely to show increased levels of affective commitment.

- **Empowerment and Exchange**

One of the distinctive features of action learning is that it allows participants to own the process. Action learning assists in the improvement of commitment because of the intensity of personal sharing between the group members (Marquardt, 2004). The process involved in action learning encourages groups to work in a collaborative manner (Marquardt, 2003). The ownership and accountability that the group has over the problem and proposed course of action makes them seek ways in which they can work as a team. The theoretical framework proposes that groups using action learning are most likely to have increased levels of empowerment and exchange than groups that do not use action learning and hence, the action learning groups will have higher affective organisational commitment.

In summary, the theoretical framework attempts to describe how action learning can be used as an influential antecedent towards the development of organisational commitment. It illustrates how action learning produces working conditions that foster organisational commitment. It is founded on the notion that employees will be devoted to an organisation if the organisation is also supportive and dedicated to their learning and developmental needs. The study perceives learning as a strategy that has the ability to harness and enhance organisational commitment. This marks the shift from the traditional instrumental view of

encouraging commitment through the provision of increased salaries and benefits and, promotions to a learning and developmental approach.

2.7 An events-based perspective on the development of organisational commitment

Bergman, Benzer, Bhupatkar, Kabins and Panina (2012) developed a theoretical model of how commitment develops over time. This theoretical model maintains that organisational events are evaluated in relation to a person's values which in turn determine whether the person fits or does not fit into the organisation. The fit information is then organised into commitment elements that reflect the extent to which the elements fit a certain value across events over a particular period of time (Figure 2.4). The elements are organised around values and not events because values are the main effect and events are regarded as the moderators of the said effect on elements. Elements are regarded as formative indicators of the latent commitment construct. The notion here is that the elements are regarded as the proximal causes of commitment.
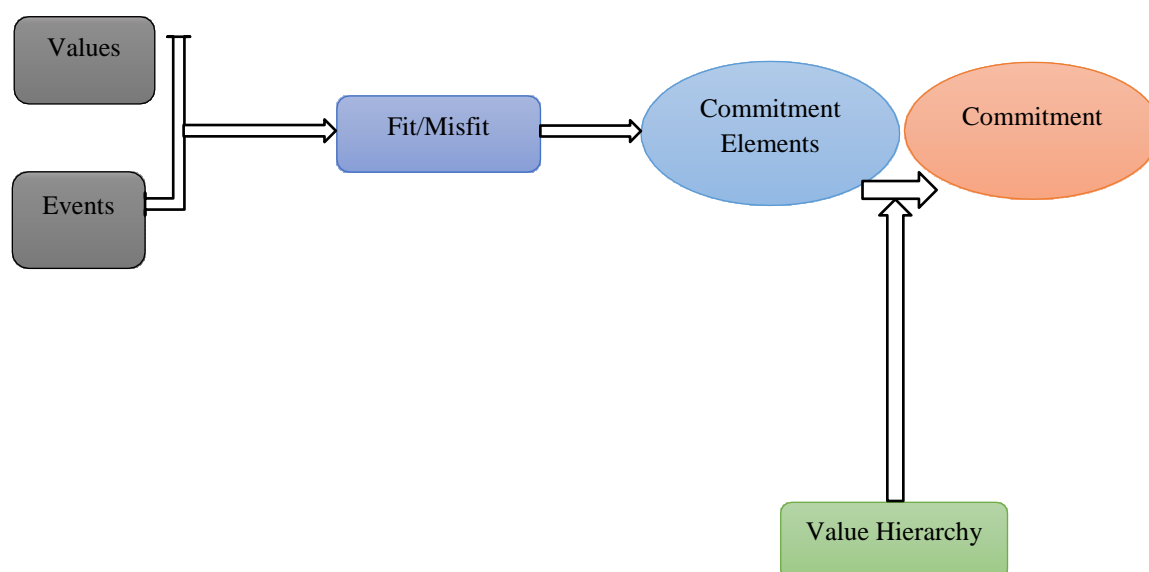
Figure 2. 4 : The proposed framework of the events based perspective of organisational commitment

Bergman, M.E., Benzer, J.K., Bhupatkar, A., Kabins, A.H., & Panina, D. (2012). An event-based perspective on the development of commitment. *Journal of Human Resources Management,* p. 2.

There are several components of the events based theoretical framework of the development of commitment:

- **Values**: The model refers to values as the ultimate basis of commitment elements and this means that changes in values results in changes in commitment elements and hence, commitment (Bergman *et al.*, 2012).

- **Fit/misfit** refers to the match or mismatch between the person and the work environment (Tett & Burnett, 2003).

- **Events** refer to the time needed for an employee to reach a stable level of a commitment. An element is a function of the frequency of events relevant to that element and the range of events around the mean level of events (Bergman *et. al.*, 2012).

- **Commitment elements** can be described as the extent to which workplace events fit (vs. misfit) a particular value across events over time resulting in commitment elements (Bergman *et al.*, 2012).

- **Value Hierarchy** refers to the prioritisation/arrangement of a person's values. The hierarchical arrangement of these values and goals is essential to understanding the development of commitment (Bergman *et. al*, 2012).

The theoretical model proposes that the values and goals that a person holds are the most critical individual differences for commitment and the hierarchical arrangement of such values and goals is important for the understanding of the development of commitment. The theory further proposes that the fit of such events to values provides information to employees about a new concept referred to as commitment elements, which are more proximal causes of commitment (Tett & Burnett, 2003). The elements in this model provide reflection about the extent to which workplace events fit (relative to misfit) a particular value across events over time. This means that people make sense of different events in relation to their values via person–environment fit processes. The new information is structured according to an element that reviews information in accordance to fit or misfit in relation to a particular value. The multiple elements are then weighted and summed to create commitment to a particular target. The weighting of elements demonstrates the position of the relevant values in the values hierarchy (Rupp & Weiss, 2011). Values that are higher in the hierarchy carry heavy weightings. The information and elements are evaluative in nature, because fit/misfit is not simply regarded as knowledge but they are also considered as good/bad, useful/not useful, and so forth (Bergman *et al.*, 2012). The event based perspective is derived from the work of Meyer and Parfyonova (2010), who acknowledged that value congruence and person–environment (PE) fit are significant

components in the development of commitment. The above-mentioned perspective is also founded upon research done by Rupp and Weiss (2011) who argued that organisational science should embrace a paradigm that pays attention to and examines the phenomenological work experiences of employees and how they assimilate information that arises from those work experiences. The event based theoretical model focuses on the interaction between values and organisational events which provides the employee with information regarding their fit in the organisation. The employee makes sense of the event-level information to create commitment elements. Bergman *et al.* (2012, p. 5) define "commitment elements as to the extent to which workplace events fit a particular value". The elements are perceived as formative indicators of the latent commitment construct:

- **Experiences are organised around values and not events**

The argument here is that when organisational events take place, the employee evaluates the fit/congruence of such events in relation to their values for work. The congruence of the events and values are assessed in accordance to the person-environment fit theory (Bergman *et al.*, 2012). This means that each commitment element is based on different elements predicted by values-events interactions. Most psychological constructs and measures are developed as reflective models whereby the latent construct causes evident measurable behaviour or manifestations (Bagozzi & Edwards; Jarvis, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2003; Bentler, Mair, & Treiblmaier, 2011; Edwards, 2001). For instance, conscientiousness is perceived as a latent construct that makes people to be punctual, tidy and adhere to company rules and regulations. Therefore, each behaviour is an indicator of latent conscientiousness, because the latent personality construct is the cause of the behaviour.

- **Experiences are evaluated via fit processes**

Events that are congruent or fit to values deliver positive information to commitment, while events that are incongruent with values give negative information to commitment elements (Bergman *et al.*, 2012).

- **Commitment elements are organised around values, not events**

Commitment elements reflect the extent to which workplace events fit (vs. misfit) a particular value across events over time. Based on trait activation theory and PE fit theory, the event based model proposes that when organisational events are relative to values, they are assessed

as either fitting (that is, congruent; meets the requirements) or misfitting (that is, incongruent; fails to meet the requirements) the value. Such events provide the employee with information regarding the extent to which the organisation is meeting their needs. Fit feeds positive information to the elements whereas misfit feeds negative information to the elements. Therefore, the combination of organisational experiences and values creates commitment elements (Bergman *et al.*, 2012).

- **Multiple values, events, and elements**

The events based theoretical framework takes full recognition that people's day-to-day work experiences are filled with events that cue them towards organisational values, resources that provide them with information relevant to commitment elements and commitment (Rupp & Weiss, 2011). Employees are regularly informed with regards to their fit in the organisation and have multiple values relevant to the workplace. Hence, it is crucial to acknowledge that multiple work events contribute towards each commitment element. The fit or misfit events determine whether an element signals that the employee should commit (that is, more fit experiences than misfit experiences) or not (that is, more misfit experiences than fit experiences) (Rupp & Weiss, 2011).

- **Relationship between the elements and commitment**

The framework regards elements as a formative indicator of the underlying commitment bond. Each commitment is a derivative of a variety of elements which are based on value–events interactions. It should be noted that elements that are relative to values higher in the person's value hierarchy are likely to have greater influence on the development of commitment (Rupp & Weiss, 2011). Individual differences in value hierarchies can also help explain why two people with similar workplace experiences may develop different commitment (Obstfeld, Sutcliffe, & Weick, 2005). Firstly, people differ in the manner in which they value work experiences due to differences in their instrumental and psychological values of work. Secondly, even if two people develop similar work values, the values may not be necessarily be arranged in the same hierarchy. This means that both people can potentially experience fit and misfit work experiences. In such cases, both people would develop different levels of commitment. For example, Person A fits on values higher in the hierarchy while Person B fits on values lower in the hierarchy. In this case, Person A would develop a higher level of the commitment element in comparison to Person B.

In summary, theoretical and empirical work on the development of commitment, that is, how commitment grows and changes over time, has been scarce. Bergman *et al.,* (2012) states that the abovementioned framework provides an event–within person based perspective that draws focus on how commitment develops. The model differs from other previous models in the following ways:

(a) it takes a developmental approach instead of the antecedent approach and is thus able to explain how commitment can not only become relatively stable but also be open to change over time;

(b) it draws focus on event based-level experiences rather than comprehensive, retrospective recollections; and,

(c) it provides a within-person account of commitment development as well as a between-person account for how exposure to the same events can result in different commitment levels among employees (Bergman *et al.*, 2012).

2.8 Organisational commitment and value internalisation

The value internalisation model attempts to explain the critical role played by the process of internalised motivation in the development of organisational commitment. According to Afshari and Gibson (2015), the idealised influence of transformational leadership style is not only linked to organisational commitment but also to the internalisation process of motivation which operates as an explanatory causal mechanism. The model focuses on two forms of motivation, namely, identified motivation and intrinsic motivations which is associated with the internalisation process and are also close to self-values. The theoretical model proposes that a set of charismatic leadership behaviours associated with transformational leadership (referred to as the idealised influence) constitutes the most relevant antecedent variables within which develops affective organisational commitment in employees, through the mechanism of internalised motivation. The model also proposes that the development of identification which relates charismatic leadership with affective organisational commitment is significantly dependent upon a specific form of motivation, namely, internalised motivation.

Herscovitch and Meyer (2001) conceptualised organisational commitment as a force that binds a person to an organisation and this means that it is important to make an inquiry regarding the nature of that force. The force in this context is psychological and not physical meaning that mind-sets are involved. In order for one to be committed to an organisation one has to have a

particular mind-set. In their study, Herscovitch and Meyer (2001) identified three commitment mind-sets: desire (affective commitment), obligation (normative commitment) and perceived cost of leaving (continuance commitment). Other research studies have also shown that there is a strong correlation between affective commitment and organisational citizenship (Meyer *et al.*, 2012).

Afshari and Gibson (2015) relate experience as an affect to an emotion, a desire or feeling. It should be noted that the affective mind-set referred to here is one whereby the employee feels an attachment to an organisation and as a result wants to support that organisation. The argument here is that to be attached to a person or an organisation implies caring about it, to identify with it, and to agree with its goals, its purpose, and its values. A question that arises here is: what antecedent conditions are most likely to produce the affective mind-sets? There are good reasons to believe that the answer is the set of behaviours that constitute transformational leadership (TL) (Caldwell, Fedor, Herold, & Liu, 2008; Jonas, Kovjanic, Quaquebeke, Schuh, & Van Dick, 2012; Meyer, Jackson, & Wang, 2013).

The model applies the notion of commitment profiles which were introduced by Meyer *et al.* (2012). The model introduces the target construct of organisational commitment as a formative construct which takes the form of two reflective constructs, namely, normative and affective commitment. According to Becker, Klein and Wetzels (2012), the two stage approach is the most appropriate method for a reflective-formative model. The value internalisation theoretical model employs a two stage approach in which the basic model is divided into two parts. The first part of the model comprises of two first-order constructs (Figure 2.5) whereby latent variable scores were extracted with the aim of replacing the two first-order constructs of normative and affective commitment with the higher-order construct (Figure 2.6) of organisational commitment. The study indicates that the coefficient of determination R^2 value of 0.662 for the target construct of the model supported the predictive validity in the model (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2012).
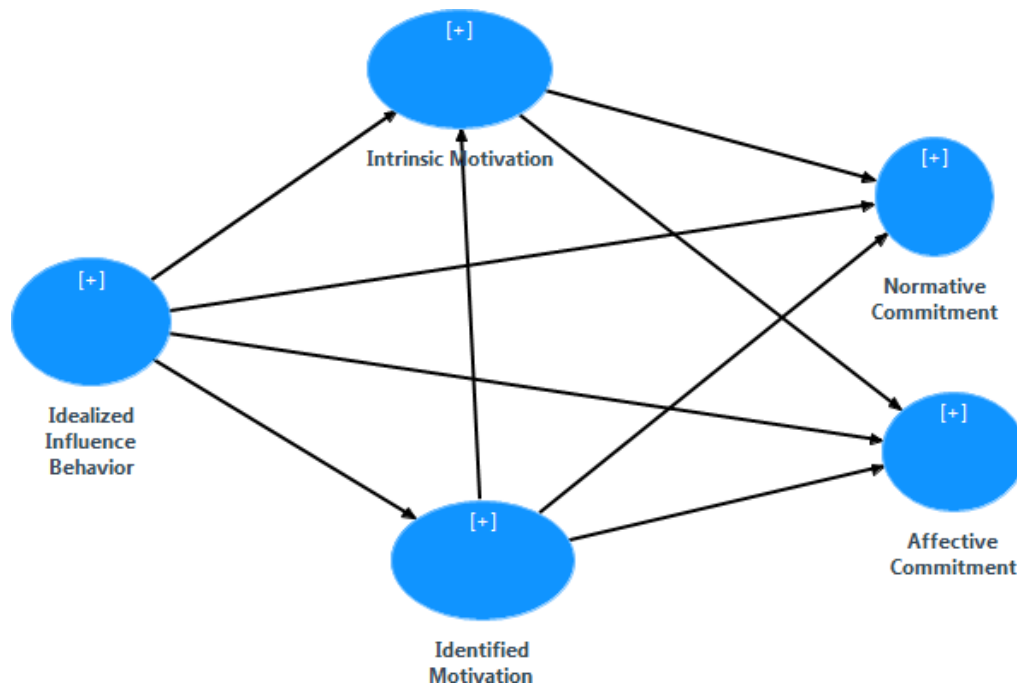
Figure 2. 5: Structural Model with First- Order Constructs

Afshari, L., & Gibson, P. (2015). Development of Organisational Commitment and Value Internalisation. *World Journal of Management*, *6*(2), 187-198.
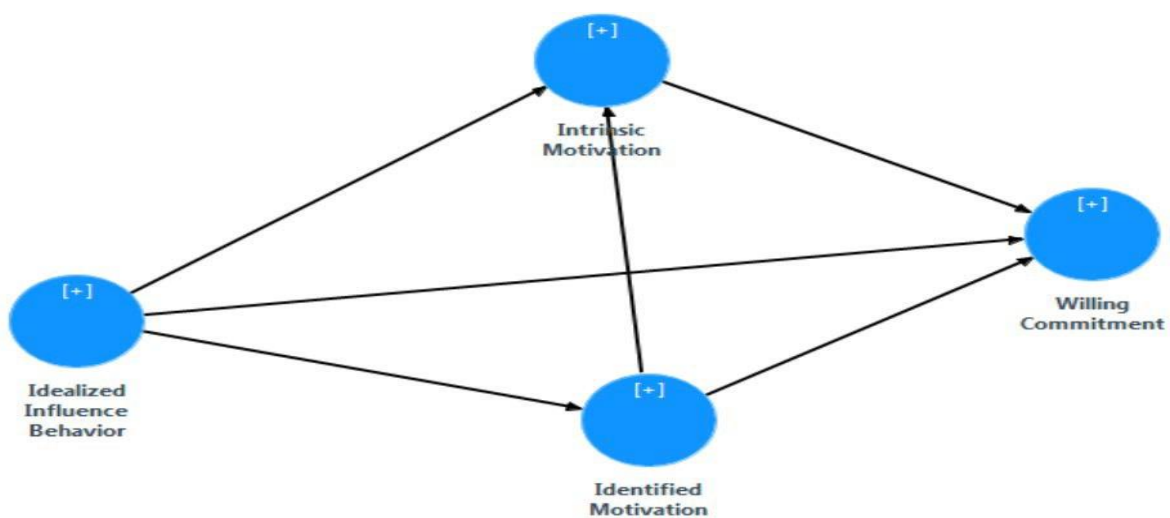
Figure 2. 6: Structural Model with Higher-Order Target Construct

Afshari, L., & Gibson, P. (2015). Development of Organisational Commitment and Value Internalization. *World Journal of Management*, *6*(2), 187-198.

Afshari and Gibson (2015) maintain that their research findings support the contention that employees who experience idealised influence during interaction with their managers are most

likely to accept and adhere to values underlying management assigned tasks and also perceive the work tasks as congruent to that of their self-values. The implication is that such employees are most likely to experience self-determination during the performance of work tasks. In essence, it can be safely said that organisationally committed employees may potentially come to identify and accept the organisation's values as their very own and accept them as their own. Afshari and Gibson (2015) maintain that more still needs to be said about how the internalisation process occurs.

According to Afshari and Gibson (2015), the internalisation and identification process occurs when the employee experiences admiration of their leaders and is in agreement with the views and values of the leader. The former is said to cohere with the experience of idealised influence. Such experiences materialise in accordance with the difference between leaders who explain what tasks have to be done, and those who explain the necessity for the tasks to be done especially when the explanation of why appeals to a value-laden higher purpose. Caldwell *et al.* (2008) maintains that transformational leaders provide followers with meaning for their work through the articulation of a compelling organisational vision and mission and also by encouraging followers to apply themselves toward the accomplishment of the higher vision.

The identification with values and goals championed by the leader is imperative to the internalisation of motivation, in comparison to how compellingly the leader is able to explain such values and goals. This becomes important because it determines whether the employee agrees and accepts such values and goals as their own. Equally central to internalisation however, is the manner in which the employees experience the leader as an individual. Eddy *et al.* (2004) maintain that a leader's message is mediated according to how followers experience that leader as a person and this implies that the personal dimension of leadership conveys a professional message of leadership. The implication is that if employees perceive and experience their leader as untrustworthy or uncaring, they are less likely to adopt the leader's views and values.

Afshari and Gibson (2015) fully acknowledge that there is an unavoidable element of speculation in their analysis. The data in their research supports the hypotheses concerning the importance of idealised influence, identified motivation, and the internalisation process in the development of organisational commitment; however, the data fails to sufficiently provide fine-grained information from which to develop a comprehensive and detailed theory.

29 Organisational commitment of university academics in 3rd world/developing countries

Employees become committed to their organisation when (1) they are firm believers of the vision and mission of the organisation, (2) when they are willing to go beyond job expectations and (3) show a strong desire to serve the organisation. Ahmad, Fakhr, Shah and Zaman (2010, p. 230) maintain that commitment is a "partisan or affective attachment towards the aims and standards of an organisation, to one's role in relation with these aims and standards and to an organization for its own sake". The cost-benefit approach refers to commitment as a consequence of the employee's perception of benefit associated with remaining in the organisation and the perception of cost related to exiting. The normative approach describes commitment as the aggregate internalised normative pressure to perform in a manner that meets organisational objectives and interests (Mudor & Tooksoon, 2011). Danish, Malik, Nawab and Naeem (2010) state that a workforce that is committed to their organisation may easily believe and obey organisational goals and objectives. Employees become loyal to an organisation for many reasons: an employee may remain with the organisation due to the congruence of the organisation's goals and mission with their own; another employee may continue working for the same organisation due to reputational reasons such as benefits or social networking and lastly, another employee may remain committed to the organisation because of felt obligation (Choong, Lau, & Wong, 2012).

An academic's commitment is perceived as the level of psychological affection to the profession of teaching and research which is said to take three forms, namely, affective, normative and continuance. Affective commitment is the consequence of the employee's emotional affection with the organisation, continuance commitment is the consequence of cost associated with leaving the organisation and normative commitment is the consequence of employee's sense of obligation to be a part of the organisation (Aydin & Dogan, 2012). Commitment brings decline in absenteeism, reduces turnover, development in performance and increases in profitability amongst other organisational benefits.

Hoda, Mojtahedzadeh, and Mastaneh, (2011) contend that if employees are content with the organisational environment, that is, leadership and reward, they will strongly demonstrate commitment to their organisations. The reward factor should not be ignored because it influences employee commitment, job satisfaction, labour turnover and employee productivity (Hoda, Mojtahedzadeh, & Mastaneh, 2011). Extrinsic rewards have a positive relationship with

commitment and job satisfaction. According to Lew (2011), demographic factors such as marital status, gender and job experience have a major influence on the commitment and job satisfaction levels of academics.

Various studies have been conducted with the aim of identifying factors that contribute to the development of organisational commitment (Adekola, 2012; Aydin & Dogan, 2012; Imran *et al.*, 2011; Saifuddin, Nawaz, & Jan, 2012). For example, research indicates that commitment has been positively related to individual characteristics such as age, tenure, and marital status and it has also has been negatively related to the employee's level of education (Saifuddin *et al.*, 2012). In addition, commitment has also been found to be related to job characteristics such as autonomy, feedback and job experiences like job security, advancement, training and development and transformational leadership (Chughtai & Zafar, 2006). Lastly, research studies demonstrate that commitment is influenced by employee perceptions of organisational integrity (Adekola, 2012).

The development of commitment in academics is said to have significant consequences and implications for educational institutions. Highly dedicated academics are required to prolong their association with their employer. This means that they are likely to work extra hard for their institution. The strongly committed faculty members would have a stronger aspiration to come to work and pay a meaningful contribution to their respective institutions (Imran *et al.*, 2011). It is widely reported that an affectively committed workforce continues working with high levels of loyalty.

Continuance commitment ensures that employees maintain their organisational membership while those who are normally committed feel obligation on their part to continue working for the organisation (Khan, Khan, & Nawaz, 2013). Thus, motivation and commitment on the part of workers are considered as important conditions for the accomplishment of the organisational goals (Aydin & Dogan, 2012).

2.10 Associated factors that have a positive relationship with organisational commitment. This section outlines six factors that affect commitment levels of employees towards their organisation, namely, work

environment, job security, pay satisfaction and participation in decision making, career and age.

- **Work environment**

Work environment refers to the atmosphere where an employee works. People join organisations for a specific purpose such as the fulfilment of their needs and desires. Such people expect and anticipate a work environment which allows career flourishment and needs satisfaction. A positive/negative work relation among peers and management has an impact on an employee's commitment to the organisation. An employee's commitment towards the organisation is influenced by the nature of relationships between colleagues. Therefore, conflicting relationships between colleagues and management is most likely to threaten organisational commitment. Deniz and Kirmizi (2009) maintain that organisations must advocate for the promotion of social activities to improve social relations between employees which in turn will increase commitment levels.

- **Job Security**

A secure job is every employee's requirement and wish. Arguably job insecurity impacts on an employee's level of commitment towards the organisation. Employees do not like risks and only stay in an environment that provides satisfaction rather than optimised change (Deniz & Kirmizi, 2009). Job security is generally not perceived as an antecedent of organisational commitment; however, in a study that was conducted by Abdullah and Ramay (2012) it was considered to be a factor of organisational commitment. The research study found a significant relationship between job security and organisational commitment indicating that a secure job can yield higher levels of commitment.

- **Pay Satisfaction and Participation in decision making**

Pay satisfaction relates to an employee's mind-set regarding the payment or compensation received for the services rendered. The components of pay may comprise of a basic salary, bonuses or any other form of monetary benefits that an employee may receive during employment. People have certain needs and desires which they seek to satisfy. Therefore, the extent to which an employee remains committed to an organisation is also determined by extrinsic rewards provided by the organisation. Organisations that support its employees are likely to receive desired feedback from employees, whereby the employees experience a felt

need to reciprocate. Organisations with highly qualified and skilled employees may not be able to fulfil the employees' needs and financial desires and this makes the qualified and experienced employee less committed to the organisation and more committed to their professions, instead. Participation refers to the employee's role in the decisions relating to the organisation. Ensuring employee participation in the decision-making process and involving them in organisational plans and goals is said to have a positive impact on the employees' commitment towards the organisation (Deniz & Kirmizi, 2009). The involvement of employees in such processes adds to their satisfaction and commitment. A high level of employee participation results in increased employee performance and organisational commitment. In their study, Abdullah and Ramay (2012) found that pay satisfaction and participation in decision making had low correlations with organisational commitment which meant that such factors did not potentially contribute towards employees' commitment towards their organisations.

- **Career**

Findings from previous studies indicate that employees become more committed if they are satisfied with the manner in which the organisation caters for their personal development (Finegold, Mohrman, & Spreitzer, 2002). Contrary to previous career-stage models' prediction, career advancement affects both employee commitment and their willingness to change company for all organisational members (Finegold *et al.*, 2002). Additionally, it has also been noted that career management is a very critical factor for organisational commitment. If companies support their employees with such, the employees are likely to become committed. This in turn helps the employees to understand that the organisation not only values but also supports them.

- **Age**

In an array of research studies, age has been considered as an important factor in organisational commitment; however, the value of this factor has been scrutinised (Finegold *et al.*, 2002; Ruokolainen, 2011). There is evidence that the older the employee becomes, the more organisationally committed he/she is (Ruokolainen, 2011). There are three reasons why age has been taken as an explanatory factor for organisational commitment, some of which are also contradictory in nature.

Firstly, age influences impacts on what employees want from work and therefore, this determines their level of commitment to the organisation. Compared to the older generation, younger employees are most likely to remain in one organisation if they are happy with skill development (Ruokolainen, 2011). In addition, commitment is strongly associated with good work-life balance in younger employees in comparison to older employees. On the other hand, older employees have increased levels of commitment because they are less likely to switch jobs if they perceive the current one to be secure (Finegold *et al.*, 2002).

Secondly, the stage of employees' career is often associated with age because it reflects their organisational commitment (Finegold *et al.*, 2002). For instance, it is more common that an employee that has been working for a long time and is on their middle and late stages will have a job that consists of broad organisational roles and responsibilities (Ruokolainen, 2011). However, the 21st century age does not always correlate with one's career stage. Due to flatter organisational structures, reduced employment security and greater labour flexibility, employees often do not remain within one company for their whole tenure. This is referred as protean career (Finegold *et al.*, 2002). A protean career can be described as a career driven by the employee and not the organisation (Briscoe, 2006). The term demonstrates the diversity and changes associated with today's careers. The implication is that an employee may change the organisation he/she is working for as well as his/her entire field of focus. This means that the employees embarks on a new learning curve but not necessarily from the very beginning since previously acquired skills are left unaffected (Finegold *et al.*, 2002). Overall, this leads to the fact that employees of the same age are going on different stages of their career and therefore, age will not always correlate with one's career stage.

Thirdly, research also suggests that the effect of birth cohorts can explain the relationship between age and organisational commitment (Finegold *et al.*, 2002). The term birth cohort refers to a group of people born at the same time, who have been affected by the same economic, cultural and societal changes of the environment. Unlike the career stages, cohort effect will not change during the employees' career. This is something that the members of a certain cohort carry throughout their entire career (Finegold *et al.*, 2002). Such cohorts have been shown to affect many matters but also how people perceive their professional identity and employment preferences (Ruokolainen, 2011).

Finegold *et al.,* (2002) conducted a research study with the aim of finding out whether age has an effect on some parts of employment, which predict commitment and willingness to change one's company. It included over 3000 technical professionals from six different companies. The results of the study revealed that age has a statistically significant effect on employees' organisational commitment (Finegold *et al.*, 2002). Given that organisational commitment draws focus on the loyalty of employees, research also indicates other positive outcomes such as the demonstration of positive on-the-job behaviours, increased job satisfaction and involvement (Herscovitch *et al.*, 2002).

2.11 Organisational dimensions that correlate with organisational commitment

Organisational commitment and employee engagement are distinctive yet closely related constructs. Organisational commitment draws focus on the organisation while engagement draws focus on the work itself (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001 as cited in Jordaan & Rothman, 2006). Arguably, employees may be engaged in their work but demonstrate no commitment to the organisation. In a study conducted by Sarros, Taylor and Winter (2000) it was discovered that even though academics remained engaged and committed to their jobs, they did not demonstrate the similar levels of commitment towards their organisations. In the study conducted by Jordaan and Rothman (2006) it was noted that organisation support played a significant role in predicting engagement levels. The abovementioned study investigated the impact of job resources on the work engagement of academics in a number of South African higher education institutions.

2.11.1 Relationship between organisational commitment and perceived organisational behaviour

A supportive work environment is regarded as important for the functioning of employees. There is a vast amount of research that identifies the link between perceived organisational support and employee outcomes such as increased commitment (Armeli *et al.*, 2001; Bishop, Cropanzano, Goldsby, & Scott, 2005; Saks, 2006). The organisational support theory perceives the level of support that an organisation provides for the employee as the degree of commitment that the organisation has for its employee. For instance, if the university supports its academic staff, the academics are likely to respond with increased levels of commitment to the organisation.

For many years perceived organisational support (POS) has been used to predict organisational commitment (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986 as cited in Tumwesigye, 2010). Currie and Dollery (2006 as cited in Tumwesigye, 2010) conducted a study with the aim of using perceived organisational support to predict normative and affective commitment in workers. The study found a significant relationship between perceived organisational support and organisational commitment. However, no significant relationship was found between perceived organisational support and continuance commitment. In Uganda, Onyinyi (2003) conducted a study exploring the relationship between perceived organisational support and organisational commitment among Ugandan employees. There was a weak but significant relationship among the two variables. A study conducted by Hartzer, Makanjee and Uys (2006) revealed that POS had a positive influence on radiographers' organisational commitment in South African hospitals. Another case study examined the relationship between commitment and perceived organisational support and a positive correlation between POS and affective commitment (r = 0.597, p = 0.001) was noted. This means that employees that felt supported and appreciated by the organisation demonstrated a degree of emotional attachment towards the organisation and their professional roles. The study also found a negative correlation between continuance commitment and perceived organisational support (r = -0.146, p = 0.024) meaning that employees that showed high levels of perceived organisational support felt that they did not need to stay with the organisation due to the availability of other attractive alternatives. Sarros *et al.* (2000) also indicated that several academics believed their university displayed lack of support, loyalty and commitment towards them.

2.12 Antecedents of organisational commitment for academics

A number of studies conducted in academia indicate that the organisational commitment of the academics has similar antecedents such as that of employees in business (organisational justice, job insecurity, trust in management of the university, perceived organisational support, perceived organisational prestige) (Chughtai & Zafar, 2006; Fuller *et al.*, 2014 as cited in Khan *et al.*, 2013). Affective organisational commitment is said to be stronger when academics have adequate time to learn new tasks and also when they are granted the freedom to freely express their ideas and opinions (Khan *et al.*, 2013). Antecedents of normative commitment comprise of academic tenure and perceived person-organisation fit. Antecedents of continuance commitment consist of academic ranking, organisational tenure and employment status (full time or part time). Other studies (Marchiori & Henkin, 2004 as cited in Khan *et al.*, 2013) maintain that there is a correlation between the academic's commitment to the university and

their gender; however, these results are not accordance with the literature (Herscovitch et al., 2002).

2.13 Consequences of organisational commitment for academics

As noted above, academics also have specific consequences for organisational commitment. Research conducted on academic staff from 18 European universities indicates that affective and continuance commitment predicts self-reported job performance (Eisinga, Teelken, & Doorewaard, 2010 as cited in Khan *et al.*, 2013). Similar results were found for Pakistani university teachers (Chughtai & Zafar, 2006). A weak but significant relationship was also found between organisational commitment and job performance with an objective measurement of job performance. Jing and Zhang (2014) measured job performance of Chinese academic staff by assessing the quantity and quality of scientific publications and grants. The results showed that all of the three types of organisational commitment significantly predict job performance (Jing & Zhang, 2014). Academics with high levels of normative continuance commitment published more actively and received more grants while other academics with low levels of affective commitment were less active in publishing and receiving grants. Jing and Zhang (2014) speculate that academic staff with strong affective commitment often take on additional activities within the university that are beyond their formal job requirements (for example, supervising student clubs, working on department or university committees, organising trips or parties, or replacing colleagues who cannot work). Due to this additional work, these academics have less time or energy for their own research. As in other types of organisations, in universities organisational commitment of academics is one of the main predictors of the intention to stay at the university. Studies show, as in other types of organisations, in universities the organisational commitment of academics is one of the main predictors of the intention to stay at the university. Studies show that staff at faculties with low levels of affective commitment more often intend to leave the organisation (Chughtai & Zafar, 2006).

2.14 Conclusion

Organisational commitment is a complex concept and the evolving world of work constantly challenges organisations to seek better strategies towards the enhancement of employee commitment. In conclusion, this chapter has drawn focus on the concept of organisational commitment. The discussion revolved around the definition of the concept, the evolution of

organisational commitment, the development of organisational commitment, factors associated with commitment and consequences and implications of commitment for academics.

CHAPTER 3

PERCEIVED ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

3.1 Introduction

Organisations envisage a work environment in which all employees make a valuable contribution towards organisational objectives and stay loyal to the organisation. The rapid growing pace of organisational operations now requires employers to pay close attention to their employee needs and look after their well-being. The organisational support theory maintains that employees develop an awareness and understanding about the manner in which the organisation values, cares and supports their contributions. This implies that perceived organisational support draws focus on the organisation's side of the interchange process as perceived by the employee. In such cases, employees that perceive their organisation as supportive may reciprocate by exhibiting positive behaviours such as engaging in their work tasks and, remaining loyal to the organisation. Organisations operating in the 21st century have also developed a proactive approach by ensuring that they have a workforce that compliments their current and future business needs. These organisations have made employee engagement a critical component in their drive for organisational success. Engagement is said to occur when one fully absorbs him/herself both psychologically and emotionally into work related tasks. This chapter will discuss the concept of perceived organisational support (POS) and employee engagement.

3.2 Background

Organisations value employee commitment and hard work. By contrast employees prefer to work for organisations that support and treat them as valuable assets (Hoffmeister, 2006 cited in Khalid, Khalid, Waseem, Farooqi, & Nazish, 2015). Emotionally committed employees exhibit high levels of performance, reduced absence at work and are less likely to quit their job. According to Hoffmeister (2006 as cited in Khalid *et al.*, 2015), engagement fosters increased levels of commitment and enhances creativity. The notion of work in this perspective entails constructs such as perceived organisational support, employee engagement and its impact on organisational commitment. These three constructs draw connections between the employee and the organisation they are associated with. Numerous studies positively affirm the benefits associated with the three constructs, namely, perceived organisational support,

employee engagement and organisational commitment (Allen, Armstrong, Reid, & Riemenschneider, 2008; Gallup Institute, 2008; Rose & Shuck, 2013).

Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Sucharski, Vandenberghe and Rhoades (2002) maintain that POS is a critical basis of socio-emotional events as it affects the employee's level of engagement and organisational performance. POS generates healthier and a manageable working environment. It has also been positively associated with constructs such as job satisfaction, employee well-being, a positive mood and attitude, job performance and affective commitment.

3.3 Perceived organisational support

The literature of perceived organisational support covers its definition and nature, the rationale behind its development incorporating employee attribution and self enhancement, its antecedents, its multi-dimensional nature and, POS and attitudes, organisational commitment and employee engagement respectively.

3.3.1 Definition and nature of perceived organisational support

Perceived organisational support refers to views developed by employees regarding the level to which an organisation appreciates and cares for their well-being (Eisenberger *et al*., 2002). Such beliefs are based on the ascription of human like characteristics upon an organisation which in turn allows the organisation to hold responsibility over its employees. Employees subconsciously perceive the organisation as an entity that enacts policies, defines behaviour and exercises power. POS has also been defined as assistance provided by the organisation in order to help employees to do their work tasks efficiently and be able to handle stressful situations (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2002). This definition implies that organisations should work towards designing programs to aid with employee work productivity.

The theory of perceived organisational support draws its foundation from theories associated with the employee and employer relationship, based on reciprocity (Golparvar, Nayeri, & Mahdad, 2009). According to this theory a supportive organisation is one that values employee cooperation and effort and, also cares about employee welfare. According to David, Martha and Neil (2007), organisations can show organisational support by providing specific rewards and conditions, namely, secure jobs, employee development, advancement opportunities, independence and recognition. POS provides employees with assurance that the organisation

fully supports them when they encounter challenges, perform their jobs and handle stressful conditions (David *et al.*, 2007).

Allen *et al*., (2008) define perceived organisational support as the manner in which an organisation cares about its employees' contributions and values them. Perceived organisational support is characterised by components such as the creation of positive working climates, fair treatment, managerial support and the provision of rewards (Eisenberger *et al*., 2002). The organisational support theory states that personnel that perceive their employer as being supportive go the extra mile to help the organisation to achieve its objectives (Aselage & Eisenberger, 2009).

The competitive environment has raised employee concern about the extent to which the organisation cares and values them. Eisenberger *et al.,* (2002) maintain that supervisors play an influential role with regards to perceived organisational support. Supervisors play a critical role of acting as mediators and exercising fair employee treatment which in turn positively contributes to perceived organisational support (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2002). The organisation's treatment impacts on the overall employee perception of the organisation and results in the employee reciprocating in hard work and loyalty (Armeli *et al.*, 2001). This psychological contract fosters employee devotion and commitment.

3.3.2 Rationale behind the development of POS

Research conducted on perceived organisational support (POS) is founded on the notion that whilst managers on the one hand develop concern about employee commitment, employees on the other hand also develop concern about the organisation's obligation to them (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986).

The success of today's knowledge based industry is heavily dependent on employee effort and hard work. The employee is considered as a valuable asset. This means that efforts from the Human Resource Department towards understanding and analysing different aspects that affect employee performance is crucial in terms of ensuring organisational efficiency and effectiveness. Research literature maintains that perceived organisational support is positively linked to positive outcomes which are both beneficial to the organisation and the individual, namely, employee diligence on work related tasks, organisational commitment and job satisfaction.

According to Krishnan and Mary (2012), an organisation can present new measures to maximise perceived organisational support levels among employees with the aim of reducing staff turnover and raise talent retention. Therefore, determinants of POS must be examined in order to introduce measures that will increase the level of POS. Krishan and Mary (2012) argue that it is important for organisations to demonstrate how they value and care about their employees. This eliminates demotivation and scepticism from employees. Perceived organisational support is said to be strongly dependant on the employee's attributions concerning the extent to which the organisation cares and values them. This means that POS initiates and creates an exchange process whereby the employee feels inclined to help the organisation to succeed (Adis, Buffardi, Eisenberger, Ford, Kurtessis, & Stewart, 2015).

Over the past years, some scholars have identified attribution, social exchange and self-improvement as three components that have an impact on POS (Aselage & Eisenberger, 2009; Baran, Shanock, & Miller, 2012; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2009 as cited in Adis *et al.*, 2015).

3.3.2.1 Employee attribution

Attribution refers to the extent to which employees' associate favourable treatment from the organisation in a positive manner. The social exchange theory perceives employment as an exchange whereby the employee transacts hard work and loyalty in exchange for monetary gains and social resources (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005 as cited in Adis *et al*., 2015). The notion behind POS is to stimulate the norm of reciprocity leading to the employee feeling inclined to assist the organisation to accomplish its goals, as well as the expectation that excellent performance will be recognised and rewarded. Therefore, employees with high levels of POS are likely to show high levels of job-related efforts resulting in the enhancement of extra role performance useful to the organisation. In addition, employees also develop affective commitment which results in the demonstration of favourable behaviours and attitudes consistent with those of POS. According to Armeli *et al.* (2001), felt obligation due to POS is significantly related to affective organisational commitment.

3.3.2.2 Self-Enhancement

POS is presumed to fulfil socio-emotional needs such as self-regard professional relationship, approval and emotional support resulting in organisational association which leads employees to positively identify themselves with the organisation (Adis *et al.*, 2015). The theory of

organisational support maintains that affective commitment results from self-enhancement and social exchange. With regards to self-enhancement, association arising from POS can result in affective organisational commitment achieved by the development of shared values and the promotion of interaction between employees and the organisation (Becker, Meyer, & Van Dick, 2006).

3.3.3 Antecedents of Perceived organisational support

The concept of POS draws it roots from the social exchange theory whereby an employee provides an organisation with intellectual or physical labour in exchange for material commodities and social rewards. POS is determined via different aspects of the organisation's conduct towards its employees. Therefore, the way in which the organisation treats its employees determines how the employees view the organisation (Ghani & Hussin, 2009). Perceived organisational support is also associated with employee and organisational outcomes (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Adis *et al.*, 2015). For example, a vast amount of studies indicate that perceived organisational support is linked to high levels of work accomplishment, affective commitment, work engagement, job satisfaction, organisational identification and lesser levels of job stress, non-attendance, and turnover (Baran *et al.*, 2012; Caesens, Marique & Stinglhamber, 2014; Eisenberger *et al.*, 2002; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Adis *et al.*, 2015; Neves & Eisenberger, 2012).

Specific HR practices which may potentially meet employee needs and maximise the levels of POS include:

- **Rewards**

The organisational support theory maintains that favourable rewards indicate that the organisation cares about its employees. It is argued that on the part of the organisation, rewards are a form of investment which serves as a form of employee recognition (Krishnan & Mary, 2012).

- **Career development opportunities**

According to Chien (2007), the new knowledge based labour era requires up-to-date knowledge, skills and abilities to remain creative and innovative in the forever shifting work environment. This demands that employees look for the appropriate set of skills, expertise,

and actions required to do their job efficiently and effectively. In order to fulfil the rising need for dynamically skilled employees, diverse training methods must be developed and implemented (Chien, 2007). Such methods may satisfy multiple individual needs required by employees. Facilitative leadership training, co-ordination and change management can aid in providing the needed knowledge in collaborative problem-solving (Strauss, 2002).

Johlke, Stamper and Shoemaker (2002) maintain that organisations are increasingly making the use of investments in people by providing training and development to encourage employee performance, satisfaction and commitment. Professional development, not only serves as an important tool for the improvement of employee performance but it also facilitates and encourages change in a higher education institution (Blandford, 2000). Specialised skills development empowers the lecturer/academic to grow and improve his/her practices, look back on past experience pertaining to inquiry and practices to satisfy students' needs and provide support to the university by cooperating with society and external agencies (Blanford, 2000). Professional development also improves the lecturers' understanding of their role and willpower for the attainment of organisational objectives (Harding *et al.*, 1981 as cited in Ghani & Hussin, 2009).

- **Work-family support and well-being**

Another HR practice which may potentially meet employee needs and maximise the levels of POS is that of work-family support. It should be noted that certain organisational actions may strengthen employee beliefs regarding the extent to which the organisation cares for them. Actions such as empathy and providing material to help employees to deal with stressful situations both at work and home may increase the level of POS on the part of the employee. Such actions help in terms of meeting employee emotional support and it also improves employee interpersonal relationships and increases POS. By providing appropriate work-family support, employees will perceive the organisation as being more caring and understanding of their well-being. POS should fulfil socio-emotional needs, increase the employees' eagerness to assist when required, and increase incentives and self-efficacy, through the enhancement of job satisfaction, organisation-based self-esteem, and stability between work and family life.

- **Leader-Member exchange**

Leader-member exchange draws focus on the exchange relationship between the leader (supervisor/manager) and the follower (employee). When this concept is applied to POS, it is evident that both parties have something valuable to offer. The employee offers hard work and desired work behaviour as ascribed by the organisation and is rewarded for it. While on the other hand the organisation benefits from employee hard work through profit gain. It is thus believed that there is a significant relationship between leader-member exchange (LMX) and POS (Krishnan & Mary, 2012). The leader-member exchange is the only leadership approach that considers the dual relationship between the leader and follower and also the various exchanges that influence organisational effectiveness. Relationships between the leaders and employees not only influence employee performance but also impact the relationship between the worker and the organisation. In summary, the nature of the LMX relationship may directly and indirectly influence subordinate perceptions of organisational support (Krishnan & Mary, 2012).

- **Organisation size**

There have been arguments stating that individuals/employees working for large organisations tend to feel less valued because the work environment is highly formalised and policies and procedures also create inflexibility in dealing with and catering for individual employee needs. Although large organisations may show generosity to groups of employees, reduced flexibility for meeting employee needs at the individual level, conveyed through formal rules, has the ability to reduce POS (Krishnan & Mary, 2012).

- **Procedural justice**

Procedural justice can be described as the notion of fairness in the resolution of disputes and the allocation of resources. Perceived organisational support plays an important part in the mediation of linking the perceptions of procedural justice and organisational citizenship behaviour (Krishnan & Mary, 2012).

- **Trust**

The term trust can be defined as an assumption that both the organisation and employee can be counted upon to do what is expected of them (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001). Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1997 cited in Ghani & Hussin, 2009) define trust as aspects founded on behaviour,

communication and outlook or discernment. According to Blanchard, Carlos and Randolph (2001), open and duty-oriented communication can maximise employee trust. Trust has been significantly found to be linked to perceived organisational support (Kazanchi, 2005 as cited in Krishnan & Mary, 2012). The employees' trust in an organisation may impact their outlook pertaining to the quality of the exchange relationship with the organisation. Trust in educational institutions is perceived as some form of relational trust. When there is a high level of employee trust amongst each other, all parties involved operate under the assumption that no one will prey on others (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001). When there is a strong foundation built on trust, leadership may not be required to ensure that rules and protocols are observed; hence, the need for control is reduced to a minimum resulting in high levels of POS.

- **Access to information**

According to Blanchard *et al.,* (2001), knowledge dissemination is a tool that allows employees to account for the achievement of their goals. When a leader openly shares information which may be good or bad they obtain employee trust. Such behaviour on the part of the leader makes employees feel that they have the leader's full attention and trust. Data and technical knowledge can be achieved through education and training (Blanchard *et al.*, 2001). Actions taken to reduce information from employees may lead to the notion that employees cannot be entrusted with knowledge or may abuse the knowledge (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001). Through information dissemination, there can be continuous improvement. By providing training, organisations enable employees to comprehend, interpret and utilise information provided to them in a rightful manner (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001).

- **Treatment by organisational members**

Favourable treatment of organisational members by the organisation may enhance the employees' views that the organisation cares for them (Krishnan & Mary, 2012).

- **Supervisor and co-worker supportiveness**

The term perceived supervisor support can be defined as views or perceptions that employees develop with regards to how their manager appreciates them (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2002). Supervisors in leadership positions play a critical role in terms of bestowing organisational rewards and resources to employees. This means that they should be viewed as a good source of organisational support. Therefore, supportive behaviour from supervisors is said to be

related to POS compared to support from co-workers and team-mates who may be perceived as being less representative of the organisation.

- **Leader consideration and initiating structure**

Leader consideration refers to the extent to the leader demonstrates support and shows concern for subordinates' well-being and is usually contrasted with initiating structure in which the leader communicates clear work role expectations to subordinates. Although followers associate both types of leadership with effectiveness (Judge & Piccolo, 2004), consideration should be more strongly related to POS since it directly conveys high regard for the work group.

- **Transformational and transactional leadership**

Transformational and transactional leadership should differ in the extent to which each type of leadership fulfils socio-emotional needs and lead to POS. Transformational leadership includes individualised consideration and inspirational motivation. Because individualised consideration involves concern for followers' needs, transformational leadership should enhance their subjective well-being. Inspirational motivation provides followers with purpose and efficacy, thus conveying positive valuation of their contributions to the organisation. In contrast, transactional leadership involves the use of rewards to motivate followers' performance and corrective action to prevent or mend errors and should be more associated with the short-term trade of effort for wages, conveying less positive valuation of employees (Eisakhani, 2008).

3.3.4 POS as a multi-dimensional construct

Most research conducted concerning perceived organisational support has conceptualised it as a uni-dimensional construct and are discussed below.

A research investigation conducted by Kraimer and Wayne (2004) attempted to describe perceived organisational support as a multi-dimensional construct. The study classified POS into three categories, namely, adjustment POS (assistance concentrating on the employee's copying after relocation), career POS (support aimed at the employee's profession) and financial POS (help aimed at employee monetary needs).

According to Eisenberger *et al*. (2002), there are three kinds of good employee treatment and two employee qualities that maximise perceived organisational support, namely, impartiality, managerial support, and organisational incentives, together with the worker's character and

demographic profile. Out of the five antecedents, organisationally related constructs such as impartiality, supervisor support, and incentives were also found to strongly affect POS while there was a weak relationship between employee characteristics and POS (Eisenberger & Rhoades, 2002). The results of the study strongly advocate that POS must be studied as a multi-dimensional construct. In the same study, Eisenberger and Rhoades (2002) demonstrate that the outcomes of high levels of POS are increased loyalty and hard work, improved work involvement and work performance and a decrease in employee burnout. In another meta-analysis conducted by Edmonson, Hansen and Riggle (2009) positive attitudinal behavioural outcomes associated with perceived organisational support were confirmed.

A study conducted by Eisenberger and Shanock (2006) indicated that perceived support from a manager is also likened to perceived organisational support of an employee together with role and extra-role work performance. A boundary-spanning employee study conducted by Stamper and Johlke (2003) maintains that POS may reduce role ambiguity and conflict, which affects employee work performance. Boundary-spanning employees refer to workers that work with external people and, therefore, spend a large amount of time outside the organisation. The implication of the results of Stamper and Johlke's (2003) study is that organisations with maximum levels of POS are most likely to be able to clarify job expectations, thus eliminating role uncertainty and confusion.

3.3.5 Perceived organisational support and attitude

A successful organisation can be described as one that can fully adapt itself to the ever changing environment (Eisakhani, 2008). Employees' discernment of how much an organisation values them is regarded as critical for determining employee attitudes which may benefit the organisation. Perceived organisational support is theorised to ultimately influence employee attitudes and behaviours through the creation of felt obligation within organisational members. Not only are the perceptions of organisational support and respect deemed essential by employees but the quality of the exchange relationship with the organisation impacts on work attitude and behaviour.

The employees' attitudes towards their work environment are based on perceptual and cognitive processes. Attitude affects the employee's behavioural reciprocity towards the work environment. People's attitudes towards others in the work environment are shaped by perceptual and deductive processes. Such mind-sets may be favourable or unfavourable to the

organisation (Hellgren & Vliet, 2002). According to Pickens (2005), attitude assists individuals to define how they perceive things as well as how they behave.

Attitude consists of three elements, namely, emotional, mental (cognitive), and behavioural elements. The affective element is concerned with feelings, values, and emotional state of being. The cognitive component consists of beliefs such as whether something is accurate or incorrect. Finally, the behavioural element consists of decisions and the intent. It can be safely said that, from this perspective attitude falls between three types of stimuli, namely, people, objects and process and also the various responses or reactions towards such stimuli.

The above tripartite approach maintains that all reactions to objects and stimuli are subjective in nature (Hellgren & Vliet, 2002). The term work attitude is defined in terms of individual development of attitude congruent with a certain kind of behaviour towards work. It should be noted that POS has been studied as an employee perception. This perception can be referred to as judgement regarding the extent to which the employees feel or think an organisation provides. In other words, POS draws focus on the organisation's commitment towards the employee. Andrews and Kacmar (2001) maintain that POS is a distinctive construct from organisational politics.

Muse and Stamper (2007) separate perceived organisational support into dualistic constructs, namely, POS-J (employee results and work task accomplishment) and POS-R (respect and well-being). The two constructs influence employee perceptions regarding organisational support. The lack of one or both elements affects socio-emotional perceptions, that is, the overall perception of support afforded by the employer to the employee. The norm of reciprocity maintains that perceived organisational support should potentially produce some sort of felt responsibility on the side of the organisational member to care about the organisation. Secondly, aspects such as caring, support and respect symbolised by perceived organisational support must ideally satisfy employee needs, resulting in the incorporation of organisational membership and role status into social identity. Ultimately, perceived organisational support must reinforce the belief that the organisation identifies and compensates social exchanges whereby hard work and commitment are traded in return for tangible and social rewards which in turn also maximises employee performance. Such processes should comprise of positive results for the employees and the organisation. For

example, high levels of job satisfaction and employee positivity lead to high levels of affective commitment, performance and a decrease in staff resignations (Eisenberger & Rhoades, 2002).

A study on POS and work attitude conducted by Ali-Nezhad, Beheshtifar and Nekoie-Moghadam (2012) indicates a significant relationship between perceived organisational support (and its various dimensions, namely, managerial support, justice, organisational incentives, and working environment) and employee positive job attitudes. Employee perceptions concerning the job environment impacts on their job approach, enthusiasm and performance.

Ali-Nezhad *et al.,* (2012) note that attitude has a significant effect on employee work behaviour. The results of the study also indicate that workers with increased levels of perceived organisational support are more likely to have good attitudes and behaviours which in turn increases employee felt obligation, affective commitment and improved performance. Behavioural outcomes of perceived organisational support comprises of increased work performance and satisfaction and limited staff turnover.

Ali-Nezhad *et al.,* (2012) maintain that when an employee feels supported their behaviour towards the organisation is most likely to be positive which results in organisational success. In summary, Ali-Nezhad *et al.* (2012) state that devoting value to employees is an act of giving back the very same value to the organisation itself. The implication is that the perceptions of organisational support and respect are not only imperative to employees but also to their perceptions of the quality of their exchange relationship with the employer. Perceptions largely influence employee work attitudes and behaviours. Literature on perceived organisational support maintains it is important for the organisation to use discretionary effort to enhance loyalty from its organisational members. Employees' perceptions toward organisational environment may impact their outlook, drive, and work accomplishment. Perceived organisational support is important as it alters employee attitude in the workplace if executed properly. Therefore, managers through the support of employees, need to provide work incentives, treat employees fairly and develop good working conditions to influence positive work attitudes.

3.3.6 Link between perceived organisational support and organisational commitment

A supportive work environment is regarded as important for the functioning of employees. There is a vast amount of research that recognises the link between perceived organisational support and favourable outcomes such as high levels of commitment (Armeli *et al*., 2001; Saks, 2006, Tikare, 2015). The organisational support theory perceives the level of support that an organisation provides for the employee as the degree of commitment that the organisation has for its employees. For instance, if the university supports its academic staff, the academics are likely to respond with increased levels of loyalty and dedication to the organisation.

For many years perceived organisational support has been used to predict organisational commitment (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986 cited in Tumwesigye, 2010). Currie and Dollery (2006 cited in Tumwesigye, 2010) conducted a study with the aim of using perceived organisational support to predict normative and affective commitment in workers. The study found a significant relationship between perceived organisational support and organisational commitment. However, no significant relationship was found between perceived organisational support and continuance commitment (Currie & Dollery, 2006 cited in Tumwesigye, 2010). In Uganda, Onyinyi (2003) conducted a study exploring the relationship between perceived organisational support and organisational commitment amongst Ugandan employees. There was a weak but significant relationship among the two variables. A study conducted by Hartzer *et al.,* (2006) revealed that POS had a positive influence on radiographers' organisational commitment in South African hospitals. In a case study conducted by LaMastro (1999) investigating the relationship between commitment and perceived organisational support, a strong, positive relationship between POS and affective commitment was noted. Winter and Sarros (2002) also indicated that several academics believed their University displayed a lack of support, loyalty and commitment towards them.

3.3.7 Link between perceived organisational support and employee engagement

Gokul, Sridevi and Srinivasan (2012) studied the impact of work engagement and perceived organisational support on employee commitment. The study found that committed employees performed better than non-committed employees. Their research findings also indicated that the provision or lack of job resources has a strong influence on work engagement in higher education (Gokul *et al.*, 2012). The lack of provision from the organisation in terms of job resources may result in long term consequences such as that of reduced motivation and commitment. This means that organisations must strive towards finding ways of creating a

supportive environment in order for their employees to be loyal and do well. According to Gokul *et al*. (2012), there are two conditions that need to be met in order for academics in higher education institutions to demonstrate commitment to their organisations, namely, the availability of resources and a supportive work environment**.**

3.4 Employee engagement

Successful organisations proactively take action in making provisions for better human capital to meet their current and future business requirements. These organisations have made talent management and employee engagement a critical force in their drive for excellence (Bakker, 2011). Human capital can be described as investment in employee expertise and competence aimed at upskilling them to achieve organisational objectives (Bakker, 2011).

Over the years, a lot of interest has been generated with regards to employee engagement. This has occurred alongside the need for improved technology and streamlined work processes in order to gain employees' discretionary effort (Bakker, 2011). Employee engagement is regarded as an effective way of maximising productivity and enhancing organisational performance. Literature maintains that employee engagement predicts employee outcomes, organisational triumph, and the generation of profit (Bakker, 2011).

In the environment of innovation, market speed and the increasing need to create a competitive edge, organisations are relying on employees to help them survive. However, studies indicate that employee engagement is rapidly declining thereby costing businesses billions (Chen, 2000).

3.4.1 Early Conceptualisation of employee engagement

The concept of employee engagement stems from work done by Maslow on employee motivation (1943 cited in Marczake, 2014). This concept draws its foundation from the field of healthy psychology. Employee engagement, like various other concepts, is easy to comprehend, nonetheless problematic to measure and define. Both academic scholars and practitioners are yet to develop a unanimous definition for the term engagement. Although there has not been agreement regarding the development of a singular formal definition of the term 'engagement' some sort of common threads have emerged.

There is agreement that employee engagement is concerned with the extent to which an employee devotes to a work role related activity. This conceptualisation is derived from Kahn's definition of engagement as "the harnessing of organisation members' selves to their work roles" (Kahn, 1990, p. 694 cited in Marczake, 2014). The implication is that during the process of engagement, individuals apply and articulate themselves emotionally, psychologically and physically when engaging in their job roles (Marczake, 2014).

According to Kahn (1990 cited in Marczake, 2014), engagement occurs in three phases. The mental element of employee engagement reflects the personnel opinions about the company, leadership and employment conditions. The emotional element reflects employee relations with one another in relation to feelings about the organisation, leadership and the work environment. The emotional element also provides reflection on employee attitude, be it negative or positive. Lastly, the physical element of employee engagement is concerned with the kind of energy that the employee exhibits in carrying out his/her work tasks. Thus, according to Kahn (1990 cited in Marczake, 2014), engagement refers to the mental and physical state of being whilst performing the job.

Employee engagement can also be described as an "emotional and intellectual commitment to the organisation" (Marczake, 2014, p. 89). Frank, Finnegan and Taylor (2004) describes employee engagement as the hard work put by employees on their job. It should be carefully noted that employee engagement has been recognised and accepted as a multi-faceted construct (Kahn, 1990 cited in Marczake, 2014). Burnett, Croll, Edwards, Soane, Truss and Wisdom (2006) define employee engagement as 'desire for work', a mental state comprising of three dimensions of engagement as conferred by Kahn (1990).

The common theme is captured by the varying definitions provided by different scholars. The varying definitions make information pertaining to the concept of employee engagement challenging to define as researchers may investigate or examine employee engagement under diverse properties. This also gives reflection to problems of comparability due to the differences in definitions. While it is critical to acknowledge that employee engagement has vast definitions, it can be also safely argued that the definitions have similarities or established constructs.

3.4.2 Definition of employee engagement

London and Mone (2010) describe an engaged employee as an individual that exhibits involvement, commitment, passion and transmits such characteristics into work behaviour. The abovementioned scholars studied the concept of engagement from an individual's perspective and indicated that engagement levels differ across individuals.

Alfes, Truss, Soane, Rees and Gaten (2010) describe an engaged employee as an individual who is positively present both psychologically and emotionally when performing a work task. They maintain that engagement is achieved when the employee voluntarily demonstrates intellect and exudes positive emotions in an effort to find meaningfulness in a work task. They draw emphasis on the determination of engagement levels in different climate settings and suggest that organisations must develop strategies to enhance workforce engagement.

Harter, Hayes and Schmidt (2002) describe an engaged employee as an individual demonstrating involvement, enthusiasm and satisfaction for work. The study conducted by Harter *et al.,* (2002) provided a meta-analysis of business outcomes associated with employee engagement and found that there is an existing connection between high levels of engagement and business outcomes. Development Dimensions International (2005 as cited in Albrecht, Bakker, & Leiter, 2011) characterised the engaged employee as an employee that values, enjoys, and believes in what he/she does. Their research study draws its findings from the individual perspective and identifies different aspects in relation to higher levels of engagement. The study was particularly concerned with the conceptual understanding and favourable conditions that employees need in order to be engaged.

Schaufeli and Salanova (2007) define an engaged employee as a person whose work state of mind is characterised by drive, commitment and immersion when performing a work task. This study also draws its findings from an individual perspective. It should be noted that the aforementioned definitions are concerned with the transmission of cognitive and emotional behaviours into work activities.

Barbera, Macey, Schneider and Young (2009) describe an engaged employee as one whose sense of purpose, energy, and persistence is directed towards organisational goals. The main objective of the study was to address the problem of ambiguity when it comes to the

conceptualisation of engagement. Therefore, the study defined engagement as energy that the employee experiences and shows in the accomplishment of work related tasks.

The combined definitions or descriptions of the engaged employee represent the synchronised expression of mental, emotional, and physical drive into one's work performance and can be regarded as the hallmark of engagement. Merging and leveraging performance through various individual interpretations of the work environment serves as the foundation of the footprint for engagement (Shuck & Rose, 2013).

3.4.3 Employee engagement, organisational commitment, job satisfaction and organisational citizenship behaviour: Similar or distinct constructs?

The construct, employee engagement is founded on two concepts, namely, commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2014). Employee engagement may share similarities or overlap with the abovementioned concepts but also have differences.

Robinson *et al.,* (2004 as cited in Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2014) argue that neither commitment nor organisational citizenship behaviour provides sufficient evidence to shed light into the two aspects of engagement, namely, commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour and also the degree to which an engaged employee needs to be business minded. Rafferty *et al.* (2005 as cited in Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2014) differentiates employee engagement from commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour on the basis that engagement explicitly shows that it is a dualistic reciprocal activity between the organisation and the employee. Furthermore, Saks (2006) contends that organisational commitment is distinctive from employee engagement in the sense that it is concerned with an individual's attitude and affection to their organisation. It can also be argued that engagement is not solely based on attitude and affection for their organisation; it is also the degree to which employees are focused on their work performance roles. In addition, although organisational citizenship behaviour focuses on intentional and informal behaviours that assist employees and the organisation, engagement is more concerned with one's formal role in work performance instead of voluntary behaviour.

Eisinger, Guggenheim, Mone, Price and Stine (2011) maintain that engagement should not be confused with commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour and identify two components of employee engagement:

- Feelings of engagement draw focus and enthusiasm.
- Engagement behaviour is characterised by proactivity and persistence.

Eisinger *et al*., (2011) differentiate engagement from commitment and OCB by stating that engagement suggests energy and not a person's attachment to the organisation. Engagement provides reflection of the extent to which a person is attentive and absorbed when performing a work related task.

Gilson, Harter and May (2004) maintain that the concept of engagement is related to two constructs, namely, job involvement and flow. "Job involvement can be defined as the cognitive state of psychological identification" (Gilson *et al*., 2004, p. 210). This is distinctive from engagement in the sense that it draws focus with the way in which the individual applies him or herself when performing work tasks. The second construct is called job flow and can be described as a holistic sensation that individuals experience during task performance. It is argued that individuals experiencing 'flow' do not need extrinsic motivators to motivate them because the work task itself is challenging. It should be noted that the notion of flow is predominantly a cognitive element of the individual's involvement with his/her job on a momentary basis. Definitions of employee engagement are described as long term in nature, characterised with holistic involvement in the performance of a task.

Barbera *et al*., (2009) deals with the issue of engagement by designing a model of engagement with information acquired from previous studies. The investigation identifies three categories of engagement, namely, trait, state and behavioural entities. These categories help to explain the multifaceted nature of engagement, where Barbera *et al*. (2009) found that engagement is not only a mental, emotional or behavioural state but rather a mixture that results in an intricate construct. A supporting study conducted by Agut, Peiro and Salanova (2005) maintains that employee engagement is an extensive concept that reflects certain characteristics to that of job involvement. In a study conducted by Leiter, Maslach and Schaufeli (2001), engagement is described as momentum, involvement and efficiency which shed light into the notion of involvement as the employee performs a task. The abovementioned studies support the view of employee engagement being a multi-dimensional concept integrated with other related mental and behavioural concepts.

3.4.4 Levels of Engagement: Does my engagement matter?

Some scholars maintain that the emergence of engagement from a practical perspective in the workplace is nuanced and individually offered. This implies that since it is offered, engagement cannot be artificially created (Wollard & Shuck, 2011 cited in Rose & Shuck, 2013).

According Rose and Shuck (2013), to some extent an individual cannot exclusively determine his or her engagement levels; however, the empowerment of engagement lies both problematically and proportionately with the organisation. The former is described as problematic because organisations expect engagement from employees but also fail to create the necessary conditions for the employees in order for the process of engagement to take place. The latter is described as proportionate because employees perform in exchange for the sense of personal investment.

The Blessing White Organisation (2005 cited in Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2014) created a model for employee engagement by organising engagement into five categories in relation to contributions made by employees towards organisational outcomes and also from the satisfaction received after performing the job. These categories have specific characteristics:

- The engaged employee is characterised as having high levels of productivity coupled with effort and commitment (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2014).
- The almost engaged employee is reasonably productive and relatively content with his/her current job. This type of employee engagement level could be improved with assistance from the organisation (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2014).
- Honeymooners and hamsters are employees that are highly satisfied with the current positions they hold in the organisation but they also provide a low level of contribution towards organisational outcomes (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2014).
- Crash burners are very productive employees that make maximum contributions towards the success of organisation. It should be noted that such employees are often not happy with their own success and as a result may lose interest in their work (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2014).
- Disengaged employees show high levels of dissatisfaction and have negative perceptions or opinions about the organisation (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2014).

3.4.5 The condition for engagement

There is consensus that it is essential to look at day-to-day changes in the work environment in order for one to have a better understanding of the different aspects of engagement (Albrecht *et al*., 2011). The term climate for engagement refers to how the employee perceives workplace conditions. The climate for engagement can be regarded as a determinant of whether the employee finds the work environment challenging and resourceful, which ultimately facilitates engagement. Albrecht *et al*., (2011) proposes that there are six areas of work life that need to be assessed in order to conceptualise the climate for work engagement. These are common perceptions on how personnel view the six areas of work life:

- *Workload* is the degree to which work demands may or may not affect the employee's personal life (Leiter & Maslach, 2008).

- *Control* is concerned with whether the employee is able to make choices, decisions, provide solutions and make contributions towards the fulfilment of his/her work responsibilities. This is the extent to which the employee is able to participate in key decisions regarding his/her job (Leiter & Maslach, 2008).

- *Reward* refers to both financial and social recognition (Leiter & Maslach, 2008). Employees participate in situations that may benefit or reward them in the form of tangible or intangible rewards (Shuck & Rose, 2013). The ascription of meaning one attaches to one's work is largely based on the rewards he/she receives in acknowledgement for a task well done. This interpretation can be regarded as valuable and the notion of value is often based on the organisation's reward framework.

- *Community* relates to the quality of interaction among employees in the workplace (Leiter & Maslach, 2008).

- *Fairness* draws focus on the application of fairness of organisational procedures and processes (Leiter & Maslach, 2008). Kahn (1990) argues that there must be a fair balance between salary, growth opportunities and feelings of value and recognition and satisfaction.

- *Values* relate to values that the employee brings to the organisation and values inherent in the organisation (Leiter & Maslach, 2008). The notion of value is also concerned with the degree to which individuals believes that their involvement will bring them a return in investment. According to Sonnentag (2011 as cited in Leiter & Maslach, 2008), examining engagement on a daily basis is a difficult task because the level of engagement changes. In the context of work, employees engage when they pride themselves with their jobs, feel fairly compensated, respected and believe that advancement is possible**.**

3.4.6 Reasons why employees become disengaged

According to Branham (2005) and Pech and Slade (2006), there are various factors that contribute to the cause of employee disengagement which may be categorised as follows:

- The external environment can pose as a challenge to employees, for instance, job insecurity or an unexpected job offer.
- Psychosomatic reasons which include absence of mental meaningfulness and safety at work, poor self-organisational identification, mistrust, feeling unappreciated, perceived inequalities in remuneration and performance, unrealised ambitions, stress and anxiety.
- Organisational reasons, such as organisational restructuring, change in organisational culture with insufficient norms and values, bad working conditions, lack of appropriate management and leadership, absence of resources, low standards and lack of performance.
- Substance abuse, and inappropriate behaviour, sickness, laziness, capability issues and poor interactive relationship.

A study conducted by the Saratoga Institute suggests a significant relationship between peoples' initiators of disengagement and reasons for leaving the organisation. According to the research results, employees leave due to lack of appropriate leadership (35%), work environment (49%), and occupation characteristics (11%). Five percent reported that the reasons of resigning were inescapable and involved retirement, child birth and family issues (Branham, 2005).

Negative comments pertaining to leadership comprised of employee objections regarding lack of managerial respect for employees, imprecision, insufficient support, inadequate management skills, partiality, lack of skill, lack of responsiveness, and inconsistency. There were also issues relating to poor work environment which included the lack of career growth, insufficient remuneration and benefits, too much workload, limited recognition, bad working conditions, the lack of training and the lack of teamwork. Employees were unhappy with the job itself and described them as tedious and boring (Heikkeri, 2010 as cited in Benlioglu & Baskan, 2014).

3.4.7 Current contributions in the field of engagement

This section reviews the different contributions made to the field of employee engagement from existing literature. There are three schools of thought that have made contributions to engagement research, namely, scholars of management, consultants and psychology. This

section highlights various definitions and shows the many ways in which the notion of engagement is perceived and articulated.

3.4.7.1 Management Scholars

Contributions made by management scholars have primarily focused on the enhancement of organisational performance and the development of engagement models. This implies that the contribution made from this field is perhaps limited in comparison to contributions from other fields. Although there may have been several contributions to engagement literature, there has also been limited research that has been conducted pertaining to the relationship between employee engagement and work performance (Saks, 2006).

In the management study arena there has been disagreement regarding the definition of the term engagement. For instance, in a study that was conducted by the Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training (ACIRRT), a lack of agreement pertaining to the definition of engagement was reported. The report indicated that most definitions comprised of the alignment of individual values and organisational values. Therefore, engagement is said to occur when there is positive alignment between organisational values and employee values. This was also confirmed in a case study conducted by Greenfield (2004 as cited in Saks, 2006) which indicated that in order for organisations to succeed in the engagement of employees, they need to have a mutual commitment and understanding to organisational notions and objectives. It should be noted that the abovementioned viewpoints do not comprise the state of engagement but the meaning of employee engagement to organisations. In addition, Greenfield (2004 as cited in Saks, 2006) stated that having shared organisational value yields significant benefits for both the organisation and employee.

Haudan and MacLean (2002) likened the feeling of being engaged to that of being in a fascinating dinner conversation or watching a riveting soccer game. They perceive, engaged employees as individuals whose focus is on their work to the extent that they pay very little attention to time. This process is referred to as absorption and has also been associated with the concept of job flow. Haudan and MacLean (2002) describe an engaged employee as an individual who is solely focused on the task at hand. The absorbed state provides reflection of the nature of engagement in the sense that the employees are fully focused on their work. Therefore, the notion of Haudan and MacLean's (2002) idea of engagement is different when

compared to other management scholars in the sense that it has been interpreted as a state of being.

Saks (2006) provides an alternative approach to the conceptualisation of engagement. The definition provided by Saks is influenced by Kahn's conceptualisation of engagement. Saks (2006) investigated engagement through the use of the social exchange theory which maintains that the advancement of relations among people produces a sense of loyalty together with trust and commitment. Saks (2006) used the abovementioned premise as a basis for investigation and developed his own model to measure employee psychological presence at work.

3.4.7.2 Consultants

Consultants' measures of employee engagement have been heavily criticised in terms of lacking academic rigour and validity. There are various claims that have been made pertaining to the increase of work performance from engaged employees; the majority of these remarks are found in expert literature and some scholars hold the view that consultants' measures of engagement lack rigour because results from such measures are not made publicly available. Consultants' research is different from that of management scholars in a sense that it is utilised for commercial purposes (Somers, 2009). For the purposes of this section, it is crucial to review popular and influential contributions made by companies such as Towers Perrin, International Survey Research, Gallup Institute and lastly, the Corporate Leadership Council.

- **Towers Perrin**

Towers Perrin is an HR Consultancy group that provides strategic methods to businesses that aim to increase their competitive advantage through valuable financial, risk and people management. Towers Perrin has also conducted studies in the field of engagement by developing nine categories that measure the different levels of engagement and lack of engagement. This group defined engagement as the degree of 'high performance' that workers apply in the work place (Towers Perrin Talent Report, 2003). This means that an engaged worker goes the extra mile for the organisation without any expectation for reward or recognition.

Towers Perrin (2003) makes a distinction between the two terms rational endurance and engagement. The former is concerned with the employee performing at optimal level while the latter draws focus on the employee applying discretionary effort. From a comparative

perspective, individuals performing from a high level of engagement do not yield the same gain as that of the disengaged worker.

Towers Perrin (2003) maintains that engaged employees are a critical asset to the successful operation of an organisation. Towers Perrin (2003) argues that when combined together, the emotional-rational components of employee engagement have the ability to yield significant organisational performance outcomes. They refer to the duality of both these components as the 'will and way' (Figure 3.1). The rational dimension of engagement means that the employee has the 'will' to work with the organisation to achieve organisational objectives. The emotional dimension of engagement refers to the manner in which the employee feels about his or her job. Personal feelings about one's job are also a big determinant in terms of the 'way' one engages with one's work. The organisation must also provide the necessary resources in order to accommodate the process of engagement.

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┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│      Rational Engagement - working   │
│      towards organisational goals    │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                   ⇩
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│    Emotional Engagement - personal   │
│      feelings regarding one's job    │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                   ⇩
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│     The Will - employee discretionary│
│   effort on the performance of the job│
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                   ⇩
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│     The Way - organisation providing │
│   resources to create and enable     │
│        conditions for engagement     │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
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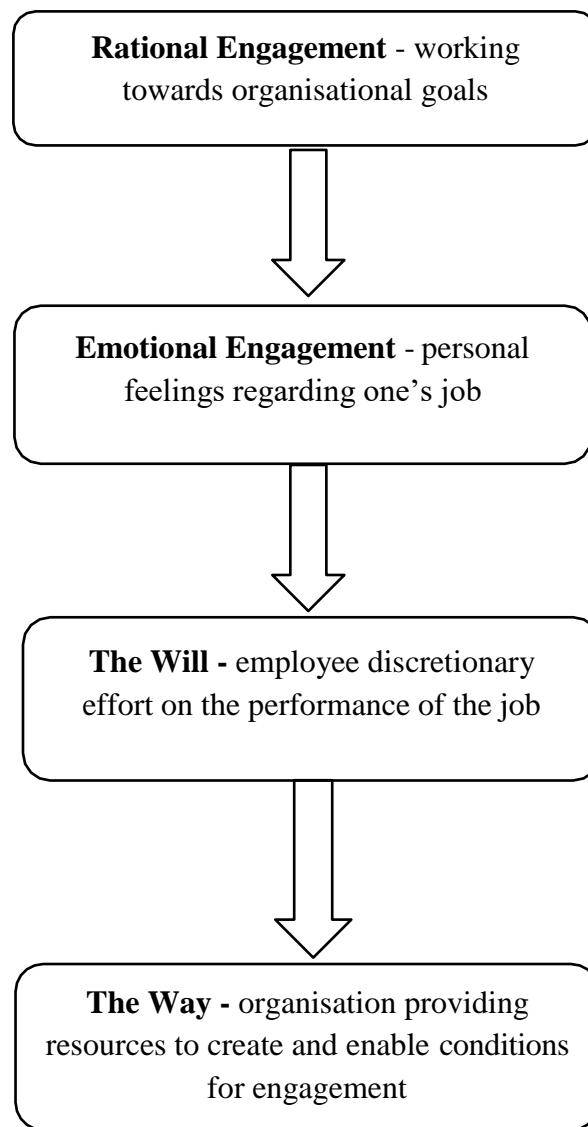
Figure 3. 1: Towers Perrin conceptualisation of engagement

Towers Perrin Talent Report. (2003). Working Today: Understanding What Drives Employee Engagement. Retrieved from www.towersperrin.com. [Accessed 6 August 2016].

- **International Survey Research**

According to the International Survey Research (ISR) (2008), one method of developing human capital is by ensuring that workers are fully engaged. ISR (2008) describes employee engagement as the extent to which the employee supports the organisation's goals, mission and values, are loyal, and willing to work extra hard. Their definition of employee engagement comprises of the specific components, namely, mental, emotional and behavioural components which correspondingly refer to the capacity to reason, feel and conduct oneself, that is, think, feel and act (Figure 3.2).

The cognitive component reflects the notion of thinking or rather, the employee's state of mind. The affective component is concerned with the manner in which the employee feels about the organisation and their work. For summary purposes the affective component in the area of engagement represents the emotional connection which is defined by attachment, sense of belonging and pride. The final component of engagement is referred to as the behavioural component which ISR refers to as the 'act', which has two aspects, namely, extra effort and stay. Extra effort refers to when the employee works hard and goes above and beyond to help the organisation achieve its goals and objectives. Stay refers to when employees plan on remaining with the organisation (ISR, 2008). According to the ISR (2008), the abovementioned two components must be in full force in order for a worker to be fully engaged. This is important for the benefit of the organisation. ISR (2008) research also relates employee engagement to organisational profitability.
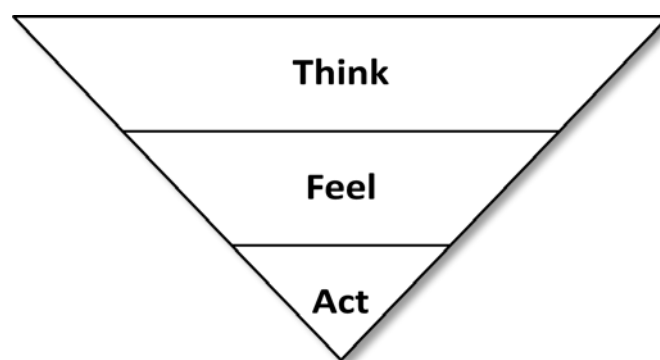
Figure 3. 2: ISR Engagement Conceptualisation

International Survey Research. (2008). Creating competitive advantage from your employees: A global study of employee engagement. Retrieved from http://isrsurveys.com/ pdf/insight/Engagement%20White%20Paper-US%20Singles.pdf [Accessed 6 August 2016].

- **The Gallup Institute**

The Gallup Institute has made significant contributions in researching the connectedness of work constructs such as that of organisational commitment and job satisfaction. It has also contributed to the field of engagement. Gallup defines engagement in three distinctive ways, namely, engaged, non-engaged and actively disengaged (Figure 3.3) and studies conducted on employee engagement by this institute provide reflection on these three states (Gallup Consulting, 2014).
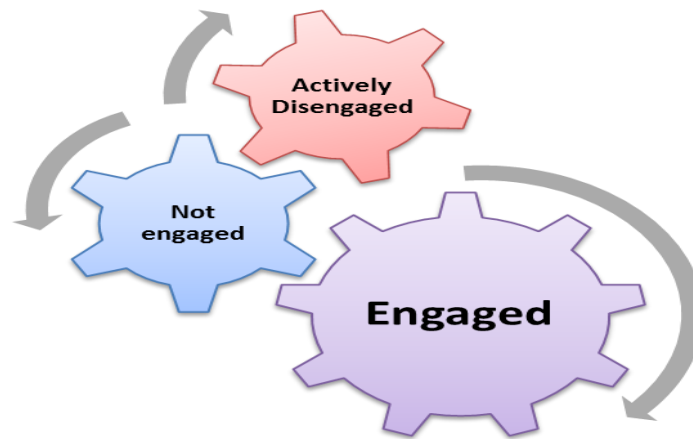
Figure 3. 3: The Gallup Institute concept of engagement

Gallup Consulting. (2008). The evolution of the employee engagement concept: communication implications. Retrieved from http://www.gallup.com/ corporate/115/About-Gallup.aspx [Accessed 6 August 2016].

Engaged employees are characterised as having passion and connectedness to their organisation. Such employees are useful for the establishment and sustenance of an organisation's competitive advantage. Non-engaged employees are described as lacking drive for work. Employees that are actively disengaged are often infuriated and an element of discontentment is often reflected in their work performance. The definition provided by the Gallup Institute expands Kahn's (1990) definition of engagement by providing the state and consequence of employee engagement. To measure engagement the Gallup Institute developed an instrument called the 'Gallup Workplace Audit' (GWA) which comprises of twelve engagement questions aimed at testing a uni-dimensional construct. The questions focus on employee mind-sets and issues of managerial feedback. Feedback is regarded as a critical engagement element. The GWA views feedback as a mechanism for managers to respond to. It is helpful for discovering areas of concern pertaining to the personnel conduct or ensuring engagement in employees. The research study conducted by Luthans and Peterson (2002) revealed a theoretical fit between the Gallup Workplace Audit and emotional and mental engagement dimensions as outlined by Kahn (1990).

• **Corporate Leadership Council (CLC)**

The Corporate Leadership Council (2008) has also made significant contributions to the field of engagement. This group defines employee engagement as both rational and affective commitment which in turn leads to extra employee effort and loyalty. The outcome here is that

of an increase in the level of employee performance and retention. In their study, the CLC linked engagement with organisational commitment and differentiated employees in three ways, namely, uncommitted, neither uncommitted nor fully committed, or being fully committed. The above categories shed light into other views of engagement. For instance, the Gallup Institute described engaged employees, disengaged and actively disengaged (Crabtree, 2005) while Towers Perrin (2003) categorised workers as extremely engaged, moderately engaged or disengaged. The CLC links the concept of engagement with the concept of commitment, that is, rational and emotional commitment (Figure 3.4). There is debate in academic literature which argues that engagement and commitment are distinct constructs (Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006).
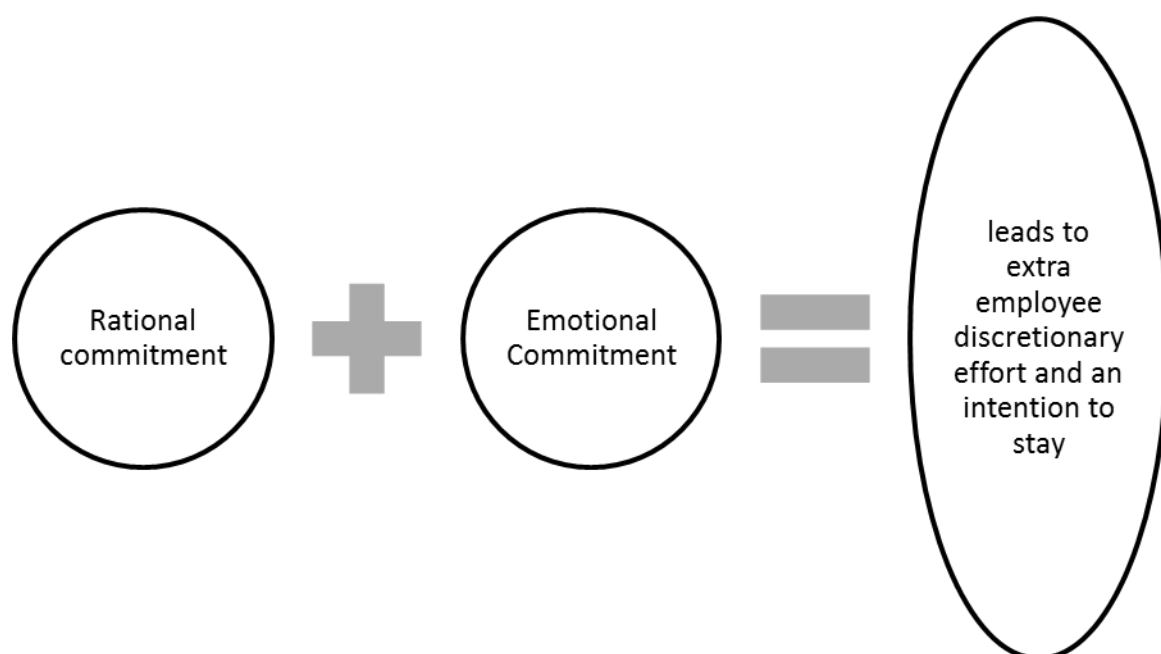
Figure 3. 4: Corporate Leadership Council conceptualisation of engagement

Corporate Leadership Council. (2008). Driving performance and retention through employee engagement. Corporate Executive Board, Washington. Retrieved from: https://www.clc.executiveboard.com/Public/AboutUs.aspx [Accessed 6 August 2016].

3.4.7.3 Psychologists

Management and psychology scholars share differing perspectives with regards to the conceptualisation of engagement. Scholars of psychology have drawn focus on the individual aspects of behaviour projected by employees in relation to engagement. This section is concerned with the notion of the employee's mind-set at work. The idea behind psychological

presence is founded on the view that cognition, behaviours and emotions are determinants of engagement. The section pays particular attention to individual engagement abilities of emotions and cognition as being crucial in the attainment of individual engagement results. The literature connects the link between emotion and cognitions and proposes that there is a connection between the two; however, the existing interaction is complex in nature.

Emotional and cognitive engagement components work together to produce the individual's engagement (Figure 3.5). The manner in which a person feels (emotions) and thinks (cognitions) about his/her job does have an impact on work outcomes. Some researchers argue that emotions are a key dimension in engagement (Bakker & Schuafeli, 2004a). This means that the study of emotions at work is not a recent thing. According to Bakker and Schuafeli (2004a), emotions play a critical role when it comes to the measurement of engagement levels in employees. Emotions indicate behaviours that employees display in the workplace. For instance, a disgruntled employee at work may have a destructive impact on customer service. The implication here is that emotions are part and parcel of the task and social components in the workplace.

Cognitive dimensions in the engagement categories help to recognise the notion behind engagement as well as different thought process required in order for employees to be engaged. Constructs highlighted in this section are cognitive constructs which capture cognitive engagement proficiencies. From an individualistic point of view these are cognitive aptitudes needed by employees to engage. This comprises of properties such as interest, attentiveness, job loyalty, job involvement and internal motivation.

Cognitive state of engagement

Emotional state of engagement

Engagement outcome dimensions
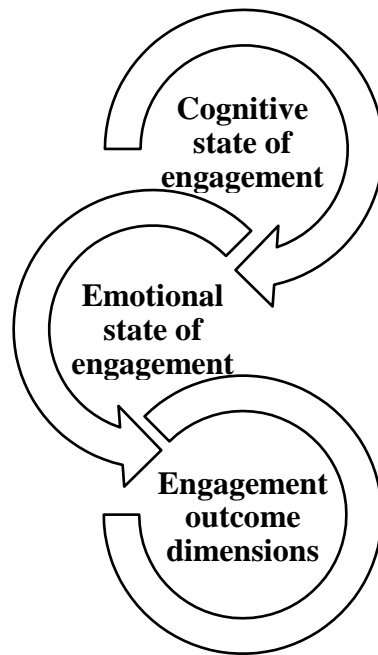
Figure 3. 5: The conceptualisation of employee engagement in the field of psychology

Harter J.K., Hayes, T.L., & Schmidt, F.L. (2002). Business unit level relationship between employee satisfaction, employee engagement, and business outcomes: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *87*(2), 268-279.

• **Organisational Psychology**

There are numerous contributions that have been made to the field of engagement based on Kahn's (1992) notion of engagement or disengagement in the workplace and also the degree of 'self' brought to work (Harter *et al.*, 2004). This draws focus on the notion of one's psychological presence at work which was introduced by Kahn (1992) in addition to personal engagement and lack of engagement. Psychological presence refers to being fully immersed in one's job and exhibiting behaviours associated with engagement. The psychological state of being draws its basis from models of the self within the role which consists of one's sense of security and display of courage which brings a degree of one's self into the work. Schaufeli and Salanova (2007) perceives burnout as the psychological state that is the opposite of engagement. The scholars contend that the idea of psychological presence is essential but they also criticise Kahn's (1992) notion of engagement for being an inoperative construct.

According to Kahn (1992), psychological presence varies among people even if they show similar levels of psychological meaningfulness, safety and availability. This is mainly because of individual influences which may act upon psychological presence; especially individual

cognitions and emotions linked with perceptions of the work. Richman (2006 as cited in Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007) conducted an investigation on engagement and burnout and found that individualistic differences do have an impact on those with higher or lower levels of engagement and those with high or low scores on burnout. Despite the findings, this idea of the individuality of engagement has not received much research attention. However, Briner (2014) utilised Kahn's notion of engagement and demonstrates that the three psychological conditions, namely, meaningfulness, safety and availability were linked to the whole measure of engagement. The measures utilised in the abovementioned study were also used in another study utilising the identical types of measures for engagement (Olivier & Rothmann, 2007 as cited in Briner, 2014). It was also later tested in a South African research study of employee engagement (Gilson *et al.*, 2004).

- **Positive Psychology**

The field of positive psychology has made critical contributions to employee engagement research. The fundamental flows draw focus on human strengths and the efficient functioning of human beings (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007).

The field of positive psychology paired the construct of engagement with that of burnout as differing constructs (Leiter & Maslach, 2008). Freudenberger (1974) first introduced the term 'burn-out' and associated it with exhaustion and fatigue. Maslach (1982 cited in Leiter & Maslach, 2008) identified three burnout dimensions, namely, emotional exhaustion, cynicism and lack of professional efficacy.

Emotional exhaustion can be described as being emotionally depleted and drained. Cynicism refers to an insensitive or callous response to other people. Lack of professional efficacy refers to a deterioration in one's feelings of proficiency and accomplishment in one's work. Leiter and Maslach (2008) developed a framework for engagement which identified vigour, participation and professional efficacy as components connected to engagement. They contend that if employees are engaged in the work place, they will have maximum levels of work energy, increased levels of involvement and a sense of professional accomplishment.

Rothbard (2001) investigated role engagement by looking at the depletion and enrichment framework. The depletion framework suggests that several engagement roles have the ability to cause negative emotional response to that particular role. This implies that the performance

of multiple work roles can result in strain and stress (Rothbard, 2001). The enrichment framework, on the other hand, maintains that engaging in various roles can result in enriching effectives and enjoyment. It should be noted that the framework draws focus on the development of a greater sense of self whereby the individual experiences fulfilment and value when performing work related tasks.

3.5 Conclusion

In conclusion higher education institutions base their sustainability on the scholarly knowledge and innovative capabilities of employees. A supportive work environment is regarded as important for the functioning of employees. Therefore, the manner in which an organisation treats its personnel impacts on the employee's perception and can make him/her reciprocate by treating the organisation in the same way too. Hence, if the employee experiences organisational support this, in turn, has the potential to enhance employee engagement and commitment.

CHAPTER 4

THE RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapters examined literature relating to the relationship between the variables being studied. This study evaluates perceived organisational support and employee engagement as independent variables in a sense that both variables are being assessed with specific reference to their impact on employee commitment. Due to the nature of the study one parametric and three non-parametric statistical methods were utilised, namely Spearman rho, Kruskal-Wallis test, Mann-Whitney U test and Multi Regression.

4.2 Objectives of the study

The key aim of this study is to establish the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee engagement and how they impact on organisational commitment. In addition, the study aims:

- To evaluate the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee engagement.
- To establish the link between employee engagement and organisational commitment.
- To evaluate the relationship between perceived organisational support and organisational commitment.
- To assess the influence of biographical profiles (age, gender, marital status, job status, position currently held and tenure) and college on levels of perceived organisational support, employee engagement and organisational commitment respectively.
- To determine whether perceived organisational support and employee engagement significantly account for the variance in organisational commitment.

4.3 Hypotheses

The hypotheses of the study, in alternate form, are:

H_1: The sub-dimensions of work engagement (emotional cognitive, physical) significantly intercorrelate with each other.

H_2: The sub-dimensions of organisational commitment (willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation, emotional attachment, sense of belonging and duty) significantly intercorrelate with each other.

H_3: There is a significant relationship between work engagement, organisational commitment and perceived organisational support of academics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

H_4: There exist significant relationships between the sub-dimensions of work engagement (emotional dimension, cognitive dimension, physical dimension) and the sub-dimensions of organisational commitment (willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation, emotional attachment, sense of belonging and duty) respectively.

H_5: There exist significant relationships between the sub-dimensions of work engagement (emotional dimension, cognitive dimension, physical dimension) and perceived organisational support respectively.

H_6: There exist significant relationships between the sub-dimensions of organisational commitment (willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation, emotional attachment, sense of belonging and duty) and perceived organisational support respectively.

H_7: There is a significant difference in the perceptions of academics varying in biographical profiles (age, marital status, position, tenure, gender) and college regarding work engagement and its sub-dimensions respectively.

H_8: There is a significant difference in the perceptions of academics varying in biographical profiles (age, marital status, position, tenure, gender) and college regarding organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions respectively.

H_9: There is a significant difference in the perceived organisational support of academics varying in biographical profiles (age, marital status, position, tenure, gender) and college.

H_{10}: Work engagement and perceived organisational support significantly account for the variance in the organisational commitment of academics.

4.4 Sampling Technique and description of the sample

The primary objective of sampling is to ensure the equal representation in a certain population group. Sampling can be described as the process of choosing units from a larger population such that the researcher can investigate the smaller group and ideally produce an accurate generalisation about the larger population (Couper, Fowler, Groves, Lepkowski, & Tourangeau, 2004).

Researchers often draw focus on very specific sampling techniques that will produce highly representative samples (that is, samples that are very much alike with the rest of the population). According to Bryman (2008), the term population has a confined meaning in the context of sampling. The term population refers to a group of people or objects possessing similar characteristics. These are individuals or objects from a particular population that usually share certain similarities. A sample can be referred to as a subset of elements from a population chosen in accordance with the rules and regulations of a specific sample design (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010).

The target population is also referred to as the theoretical population (Babbie & Mouton, 2006). In this study, the target population comprises of 292 permanent academic staff members of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The transition from an apartheid state to a post-apartheid democracy created conditions for fundamental changes to all levels of education including higher education. The former University of Natal and the University of Durban Westville were merged in the year 2004 and the merger resulted in the development of a new structural model consisting of four clustered faculties/colleges for the newly formed University of KwaZulu-Natal. The target population for this study consists of permanent academic staff members of UKZN across the four colleges, namely, Health Sciences, Humanities, Law and Management Studies and lastly, the College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science.

The sample will be drawn from the target population using a particular sampling technique. A sampling technique refers to the manner in which entities of a particular sample have been chosen. There are groups into which sampling techniques can be categorised, namely, probability and non-probability methods. Probability methods draw focus on the notion of randomness while non-probability sampling does not select units from the population in a mathematically random manner because the researcher sets the criteria and procedure for obtaining the sample (Bickel, 2007). Bryman (2008) defines probability sampling as a sample chosen utilising random selection in a sense that each unit in the population stands a chance of being selected. Bryman (2008) refers to the non-probability sample as the process of selecting a certain portion of the population being studied at hand. The non-probability sampling method does not make an attempt to select a random sample from the population of interest. This method is very subjective in the sense that only subjective methods are employed to decide which elements are included in the sample of the research study.

In this study, the population elements will be selected across the four colleges, namely, Health Sciences, Humanities, Law and Management Studies and lastly, the College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science which will be regarded as clusters and cluster sampling will be adopted. Cluster sampling can be defined as a method in which population elements are chosen according to groupings (Creswell, 2013). The academics will be selected across the four colleges to ensure proportionate representation and this will be achieved by using cluster sampling. This process will ensure representivity of the sample.

In order to ensure the adequacy of the sample, the appropriate sample size will be assured. A relationship is said to exist between the sample size and margin error. This implies that smaller sample sizes have a high probability of yielding large margin errors. To ensure the appropriate sample size Sekaran and Bougie's (2010) population-to-sample size table will be utilised. The total number of permanent employees (academic and professional services) vary across Colleges (Table 4.1) with Humanities being the largest and the College of Law and Management Studies being the smallest. Across the four Colleges the total population of 1 255 staff is in the employ of the institution. According to Sekaran and Bougie's table (2010, p. 294), the corresponding minimum sample size for a population of 1 255, proportionately determined, is 292.

Table 4. 1: Required sample size

College	Total permanent Population (academic and professional services) across Colleges	Proportionate minimum sample size per cluster
Humanities	364	85
Law & Management Studies	230	53
Health Sciences	332	77
Agriculture, Engineering and Science	329	77
Total	**1 255**	**292**

Table 4.1 reflects that since the College of Humanities is the largest it has the highest proportion or participants (85) and since the College of Law and Management Studies is the smallest it has the least number of participants (53), thereby confirming the proportionate nature of sampling followed.

4.5 Data collection

Data collection can be defined as a systematic process of collecting information which in turn allows the investigator or researcher to answer research questions (Creswell, 2013). In this study, a questionnaire will be used for the purposes of data collection.

4.5.1 Definition and nature of questionnaire

This research study utilises closed-ended questionnaires. A questionnaire refers to a set of questions whereby participants record their answers within closely defined alternatives. The use of questionnaires is appropriate for this study because it enables the researcher to collect data in a timely manner, especially when dealing with a large number of participants. According to Durrheim, Painter and Terr Blanche (2007), questionnaires enable the researcher to collect large amounts of data in a timely manner. Self-administered questionnaires will be distributed among academics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (n = 292). For this research study, three key variables, namely, perceived organisational support (POS), employee engagement and employee commitment will be measured using the 5 point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neither agree nor disagree (3), agree (4) to strongly agree (5).

Perceived organisational support will be assessed using the measuring instrument developed by Eisenberger *et al.* (1986) which has Cronbach reliability coefficients between 0.77 and 0.89 thereby proving its suitability since 0.70 is the acceptable reliability coefficient level in terms of research standards. To measure the extent to which employees perceive themselves as being valued and important to the organisation the researcher will use the medium version of the Survey for Perceived Organisational Support (SPOS) designed by Eisenberger *et al.* (1986). This instrument consists of a 17-item questionnaire which comprises of items that represent feelings that an employee might have about their organisation. Respondents' answers shall be measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Items include valuing of contributions, consideration of goals and values of an individual. Most research involving perceived organisational support has conceptualised it as a single

dimensional construct. A study conducted by Kraimer and Wayne (2004) attempted to define POS as a multi-dimensional construct. Kraimer and Wayne (2004) divided POS into three dimensions, namely, adjustment POS (support directed towards the employee's adjustment to the job transfer), career POS (support directed towards the employee's career), and financial POS (support directed towards employee's financial needs in terms of compensation and benefits) (Kraimer & Wayne, 2004). For the purposes of this study, POS will be conceptualised as a single dimension as the aim of the instrument is to evaluate the extent to which employees perceive themselves as being valued and important to the organisation.

Employee engagement will be assessed using the Utrecht work engagement measurement scale developed by Bakker, Chaufeli, Salanova and González-Romá (2001) with Cronbach reliability coefficients between 0.71 and 0.88. The instrument consists of 9 items rated on a 5 point Likert scale which varies from strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (5). The employment engagement questionnaire consists of three dimensions, namely, the Emotional dimension (having the emotional capacity and capabilities to engage), the Cognitive dimension (thinking capacity and capabilities to engage), and the Physical dimension (the outcome responses) (Kahn, 1990). The instrument comprises of 9 items which can be categorised further: items 1-3 focuses on the emotions a person feels towards his/her work, items 4-6 draw focus on the person's ability to be able to be fully absorbed, dedicated and intrinsically motivated to do his/her work and lastly, items 7-9 draw focus on the physical components of the job such as job demands and job resources that employees need in order to engage with their work.

Organisational commitment is assessed using the three component model of the organisational commitment questionnaire designed by Allen and Meyer (1997) with the Cronbach reliability coefficient of 0.810 for affective commitment, 0.720 for normative commitment and 0.767 for continuance commitment. Hence, the organisational commitment survey instrument can be described as tri-dimensional in nature, characterised by three dimensions, namely the affective, continuance and normative commitment. Affective commitment represents the individual's emotive attachment to the organisation. Allen and Meyer (1997, p. 41) define continuance commitment as "awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organisation". Continuance commitment is said to be calculative in nature because the individual weighs the costs and risks associated with leaving the organisation (Allen & Meyer, 1997). Allen and Meyer (1997) describe normative commitment as a sense of obligation on the part of the employee to remain

with the organisation. The employee commitment survey instrument consists of 8 items representing the individuals' emotional attachment, their willingness to remain loyal members of the organisation. Item 1 represents the employee's willingness to continue working for the organisation, items 2-3 represent emotional attachment towards the organisation and lastly, items 4-8 represent the employee's sense of belonging and duty to remain with the organisation.

4.5.2 Administration of the questionnaire

The questionnaires in this research study will be administered using one method of distribution. The questionnaire will be physically distributed to research participants in close proximity to the researcher. The time frame set for data collection is two months.

4.5.3 In-house pretesting and pilot testing

In-house pretesting will be used to ensure that the items in the questionnaire taps into the dimensions of the study appropriately. Since these are established questionnaires, the research study supervisor and other academics in the field will review the items to confirm its suitability for the current study population.

It is also important to conduct a pilot study before administering a questionnaire. Pilot testing is a tool that enables the researcher to find out if the survey works in the real world. A pilot study can be defined as a small scale version of the full scale study. It can also be a specific pre-testing of research instruments, including questionnaires or interview schedules (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001 as cited in Roberts, 2007). The purpose behind pilot testing is to make sure that the participants not only understand the research questionnaire but also understand them in the same manner. Pilot-testing also helps the researcher to find out how long it would take for the participant to complete the questionnaire. This research study will employ the pilot testing technique which enhances validity and also enables the researcher to test the process and the measuring instruments. The pilot study will be undertaken using 3 academics from each college and will adopt the same procedures and protocols as that which will be followed when conducting the larger study.

4.6 Data Analysis

According to White (2009), data analysis refers to the identification of a variable that the researcher wants to analyse statistically. Antonius (2003 as cited in Bryman & Bell, 2014) maintains that the term data refers to information that is collected in a systematic manner and

prearranged and recorded to permit the reader to interpret the information correctly. This means that data is not collected unsystematically, but in response to questions that the investigator wishes to answer.

There are two subdivisions of statistical methods:

(a) Descriptive Statistics is concerned with the presentation of numerical facts or data in the form of tables or graphs (White, 2009).

(b) Inferential Statistics involves methods that can be used for drawing deductions about the entire population based on observations attained from samples.

This research study will use both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques for analysing data gathered from the study. This will be done with the assistance of a statistician only for the purpose of processing the results.

4.6.1 Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics will be used with the aim of providing demographic information about the participants; it will consist of variables such as age, gender, marital status, job status, position currently held and tenure and will utilise frequencies, percentages and measures of central tendency and dispersion. The college from which the academic reigns will also be assessed using descriptive statistics.

4.6.1.1 Frequencies and percentages

Frequencies can be described as the number of times in which different subgroups of a particular phenomenon transpires, from which *percentages* and cumulative percentages of their occurrence can be calculated (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). Bickel (2007) refers to the term frequency as the number of observations of a specific value within a variable. Frequency distributions, bar charts, histograms and pie charts provide a more graphic representation of data.

4.6.1.2 Measures of central tendency

Measures of central tenden*cy* also help the researcher to further understand the data. There are three measures of central tendency, namely, the mean, the median and mode. The three measures are simply single numbers attempting to convey the impression of what constitutes 'typical' performance. Each measure has its own pros and cons as a summary description of data.

In some cases, a set of observations does not lend itself to a meaningful representation through either the mean or the median, but can be signified by the most frequently occurring phenomenon, that is, the mode. This means that the mode may be defined as a value that occurs most frequently in a set of scores. It is also possible to have more than one mode (bimodal distribution). The advantages of the mode are that it is relatively easy to calculate, and comprehend and is regarded as the only measure of central tendency that can be used with nominal data. However, the disadvantages of the mode are that it can also be unrepresentative of the bulk of data thus producing a misleading picture, there may be more than one mode in a set of scores and the mode is considered as a very sensitive measure in terms of size and number of class intervals used. This is mainly because it can easily be made to 'jump around' by differing the limits of the class intervals (Strang, 2015).

Action, Fullerton, Miller and Maltby (2009) describe the *median* as the central item in a group of items when organised in ascending or descending order. For example, the median of 3, 4, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 8, 96, 96, and 96 is 7. The advantages of the median are that it is resistant to the misrepresenting effects of extreme high or low scores and can be used with ordinal, interval or ratio data; however, it cannot be utilised with nominal data because categories have no numerical order. There are a few disadvantages associated with the median as a measure of central tendency. For example, it is more predisposed to sampling fluctuations and is also arithmetically less useful when compared to the mean (Action *et al.*, 2009).

According to Coldwell and Herbst (2004), the mean can be described as a measure of central tendency that provides a general overview of the data without needlessly overwhelming one with each of the observations in a data set. Coldwell and Herbst (2004) connote that there are numerous advantages associated with the mean. First, the mean is the only measure of central tendency that uses information from every single score and can be used in statistical formulae in one form or another. Furthermore, it is a measure that is considered the most unaffected by sampling variability. Finally, the mean is useful in performing statistical procedures like comparing the means of several data sets. The mean also has certain disadvantages. It is prone to misrepresentation from extreme scores and can only be utilised with interval or ratio data and cannot be utilised with ordinal or nominal data. The measure of central tendency that will be used in this study is the mean.

4.6.1.3 Measures of dispersion

Bryman and Bell (2014) describe the term dispersion as a measure used to indicate facts within a given group of items. The items may vary from one another in terms of size. Hole (2000) defines it as the extent to which numerical data is spread about an average value which is referred to as the variation or dispersion of the data. Similarly, Couper *et al.,* (2004) refers to dispersion as a measure of variation across items. Bryman and Bell (2014) also define the term measures of dispersion as descriptive statistics that illustrate similarities between a set of scores. Therefore, the scatteredness or variation of observations from their average is referred to as dispersion. Couper *et al.,* (2004) lists the objectives of dispersion as:

(i)   To determine the reliability of an average.

(ii)   To draw comparisons of variability among a series of two or more items.

(iii)   It serves as foundation for other statistical measures such as correlation.

(iv)   It serves the basis of statistical quality control.

According to Kumar (2010), a good measure of dispersion is one that is easy to comprehend, simple to determine, can be distinctively defined, is based on all observations and should not be disproportionately affected by extreme items. There are three measures of dispersion, namely, the range, variance and the standard deviation.

The range can be referred to as extreme values in a set of observation. The range is the variance between the minimum and maximum values in a group of observations. The variance is calculated by deducting the mean from the set of the observations in the data set, taking the square of this difference and dividing the total of these by the number of observations (Coldwell & Herbst, 2004). The standard deviation provides an indication regarding the spread of distribution and the variance of the data. It is a generally used measure of dispersion and is simply the square root of the variance. The bigger the standard deviation, the greater the variance (Brandimarte, 2011). The advantage of the standard deviation is that its measure also utilises information obtained from every score (Brandimarte, 2011). However, the standard deviation can only be employed with interval and ratio data. In this study, the measure of dispersion used is the standard deviation.

4.6.2 Inferential statistics

Inferential statistics involves methods that can be used for drawing inferences about the entire population based on the information received from data samples. Inferential statistics include

techniques used for drawing and measuring the reliability of conclusions regarding a particular population based on information obtained from a sample of the population. There are various inferential statistical tests/methods in quantitative research (Creswell, 2013) and the following will be utilised for analysis in this study:

4.6.2.1 Spearman rho

This test evaluates the extent to which individuals or cases with high rankings on one variable were observed to have similar rankings with another variable. The calculation of this statistical test is relatively simple procedure. For example in certain cases, the researcher will work with data which has been ranked already. In other cases, the first step in the process of calculating Spearman's Rho will involve assigning ranks (Ranjit, 2005). With Spearman's rho, the highest value is assigned a rank of 1 and ranks are assigned separately for each variable. A solution matrix is created once ranks have been assigned to each case on both of the variables under consideration. This means that each of the tied scores is assigned a rank equal to the average of all the tied positions.

4.6.2.2 Kruskal Wallis H-test

The Kruskal Wallis test is the non-parametric statistical method alternative to the One Way Anova. This statistical test can be utilised to determine if there are statistically significant differences between two or more groups of independent variables on a continuous or ordinal dependent variable. This Kruskal Wallis test assumes the following:

- Whether the medians of two or more groups are different. Like most statistical tests, it calculates a test statistic and compares it to a distribution cut off point (Kumar, 2010).
- The dependent variable is measured in Ordinal scale or Ratio scale or Interval scale of dependent variables.
- The independent variable consists of two or more categorical independent groups. This means that the test is commonly used for three or more levels. When there are two levels only, the Mann Whitney U Test should be utilised (Borden *et al.*, 2009).

4.6.2.3 Mann Whitney U-test

The Mann-Whitney U-test, is a statistical comparison of the mean. The U-test is a member of the bigger group of dependence tests. Dependence tests assume that the variables in the analysis can be split into independent and dependent variables. The Mann-Whitney U-test is a dependence tests that compares the mean scores of an independent and a dependent variable.

It assumes that differences in the mean score of the dependent variable are caused by the independent variable. In most analyses the independent variable is also called factor, because the factor splits the sample in two or more groups, also called factor steps. Other dependency tests that compare the mean scores of two or more groups are the F-test, ANOVA and the t-test family. Unlike the t-test and F-test, the Mann-Whitney U-test is a non-parametric test and this means that it does not assume any properties regarding distribution. Therefore the Mann Whitney U-test is appropriate to use when analysing variables of ordinal scale. It also a mathematical basis for the H- test also referred to as the Kruskal Wallis H-test (Strang, 2015).

This test was designed in 1945 by Wilcoxon for two samples with same size , it was also further developed in 1947 by Mann and Whitney with the aim of accommodating different sample sizes and was also called the Mann–Whitney–Wilcoxon (MWW), Wilcoxon rank-sum test, Wilcoxon–Mann–Whitney test, or Wilcoxon two-sample test. The Mann-Whitney U-test is mathematically identical to conducting an independent sample t-test (also called 2-sample t-test) with ranked values. This approach is similar to the step from Pearson's bivariate correlation coefficient to Spearman's rho. The U-test, however, does apply a pooled ranking of all variables. The U-test is a non-paracontinuous-level test, therefore it is different from the t-tests and the F-test because it does not compare mean scores but median scores of two samples. This in turn makes much more robust against outliers and heavy tail distributions. Due to the non-parametric nature of the Mann-Whitney U-test it does not require a special distribution of the dependent variable in the analysis. Thus it is the best test to compare mean scores when the dependent variable is not normally distributed and at least of ordinal scale. For the test of significance of the Mann-Whitney U-test it is assumed that with n > 80 or each of the two samples at least > 30 the distribution of the U-value from the sample approximates normal distribution. The U-value calculated with the sample can be compared against the normal distribution to calculate the confidence level (Strang, 2015).

4.6.2.4 Multiple regression

Multiple regression refers to a measuring tool that enables one to evaluate the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The strength of the relationship between multiple independent variables against a dependent variable is determined. The multiple regression analysis has been developed for use with a numerical scale (dependent and independent) variables only (Roberts, 2007). According to Bertram and Christainsen (2014) the multiple regression analysis serves two functions namely, prediction and causal analysis. The two functions/purposes of multiple regression correspond to different goals in research in

a sense that the former is concerned making projections while the latter focuses on understanding a certain phenomenon. In a prediction study, the objective is to create a formula for making predictions about the dependent variable based on the value of the independent variable. A causal analysis on the other hand regards independent variables as causes of the dependent variable. The aim is to determine whether a particular independent variable really affects the dependent variable, and to estimate the magnitude of that effect, if any exists. According to Bertram and Christainsen (2014), despite the factual argument that regression can be used for both prediction and causal inference, there are critical differences in terms of how the methodology should be used between the two applications. The following factors should be taken into consideration:

- Omitted variables: For causal inference, the main goal is to ensure that the regression coefficient estimated are unbiased. It is particularly important to ensure that variables that affect the dependent variable correlate with variables in the model because omission of such variables can invalidate conclusions of the study. This issue of omitted variable bias with predictive modelling is less of an issue. The aim is to get optimal predictions based on a linear combination of whatever variables are available (Bertram & Christainsen, 2014).

- Multicollinearity: In causal inference, multicollinearity is often regarded as a major stumbling block. The problem is that when two or more variables are highly correlated, it can be very difficult to get reliable estimates of the coefficients for each one of them, controlling for the others. And since the goal is accurate coefficient estimates, this can be devastating. In predictive studies, if two or more variables are highly correlated it can be worth including both of them if each one contributes significantly to the predictive power of the model (Bertram & Christainsen, 2014).

- Measurement error: Measurement error in predictors leads to bias in estimates of regression coefficients. This means that poor measurement of predictors is likely to reduce their predictive power.

In summary, the multiple regression analysis provides a means of objectively assessing the degree and the character of the relationship between independent and dependent variables: the regression coefficients indicate the relative significance of each independent variable in the prediction of the dependent variable (Strang, 2015). In this study, multiple regression was used

to assess whether and the extent to which perceived organisational support and employee engagement significantly account for the variance in organisational commitment.

4.7 Statistical analysis of the questionnaire

Instruments used to collect and measure data are very important in terms of the validity and the reliability of the research results. Validity can be described as a test that determines how well an instrument measures a particular concept that it purports to measure. In this study, established questionnaires are used and hence, the items have already been tested for face and content validity. In addition, in this study factoral validity will be used by presenting the data for factor analysis (Strang, 2015). The results derived from the factor analysis will then validate whether or not the theorised dimensions emerge. The reliability of the measuring instruments will also be assessed. According to Strang (2015), reliability refers to how consistently a measuring instrument measures whatever concept it purports to measure. The reliability of a measure is determined by assessing both reliability and stability. Cronbach's alpha is a reliability coefficient that determines whether items are positively correlated to each other. Cronbach's alpha is calculated in terms of the average correlations between items. The closer Cronbach's alpha is to 1, the higher the internal consistency.

Although established questionnaires will be used in this study, validity and reliability will be tested using Factor Analysis and Cronbach's coefficient alpha respectively.

4.8 Ethical considerations

The researcher ensured that the participants' identity and anonymity are protected by using the coding system. The participants were also be informed that the study is voluntary and that they have the choice of withdrawing from the study. Individuals that volunteerd on the study signed informed consent forms. The participants were also be informed that there will be no benefits received for choosing to participate in the study and neither will they be jeopardised if they choose to withdraw from the study at any point in time. Confidentiality was assured throughout the study and individual responses will not be assessed. Instead, data will be aggregated. The data collection will only be conducted after ethical clearance has been granted by the Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter discussed and outlined research instruments that will be utilised in this study which is a closed-ended questionnaire comprising of Likert scale items relating to the participants' biographical information, the Utrecht work engagement scale, the survey of perceived organisational support and the original commitment scale. The sample size for this study consists of 292 permanent academic staff members from the University's four colleges namely, Health Sciences, Humanities, Law and Management Studies and lastly, the College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science. SPSS software will be used to generate the results, draw conclusions on the relationship among the variables being studied and data will be assessed using descriptive (frequencies, percentages, frequencies, measures of central tendency, measures of dispersion) and inferential statistics (Spearman rho, Kruskal-Wallis test, Mann-Whitney U test, multiple regression).

CHAPTER 5

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

The methodology, planned to evaluate perceived organisational support and employee engagement and their relationship with employee commitment respectively, was implemented. This research study adopted the quantitative research approach utilising a nominal scale to capture biographical information and a closed-ended questionnaire comprising of Likert scale items relating to the Utrecht work engagement scale, the perceived organisational support and the original commitment scales. The sample size for the study consisted of 292 permanent staff members from the University of KwaZulu-Natal's four colleges, namely, Health Sciences, Humanities, Law and Management Studies and lastly, the College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science. The SPSS Version 22.0 software was used to generate the results of the study using descriptive (frequencies, percentages, measures of central tendency, measures of dispersion) and inferential (Spearman rho, Kruskal-Wallis test, Mann-Whitney U test, multiple regression) statistics. The results are presented using tabular and graphical representations. In order to assess the value that can be attached to the results of the study, the psychometric properties of the questionnaire were established first.

5.2 Statistical analysis of the questionnaire

The psychometric properties of the questionnaire (validity and reliability) were evaluated statistically. Validity was assessed by looking at eigenvalues and only those loadings with eigenvalues >1 (unity) was considered to be significant. Furthermore, when an item loaded significantly on more than one factor only that with the highest loading was considered.

5.2.1 Validity

Validity refers to how well an instrument as measures what it is intended to measure. The validity of the self-developed questionnaire measuring work engagement was evaluated using Factor Analysis (Table 5.1). Before processing the factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer- Olkin Measure of Samplingx Adequacy (0.752) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (1002.195; p = 000) were assessed and the results respectively indicated adequacy, suitability and significance.

Table 5. 1: Factor Analysis: Rotated Component Matrix (Work Engagement)

Item	Statement	1	2	3
WE1	At my work, I feel bursting with energy.	0.013	0.172	0.883
WE2	At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.	0.133	0.228	0.823
WE3a	I feel happy when I am working intensely.	0.403	0.025	0.639
WE3b	I am enthusiastic about my job.	0.746	0.182	0.385
WE4	My job inspires me.	0.803	0.161	0.252
WE5	To me, my job is challenging.	0.704	0.047	-0.045
WE6	I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose.	0.534	0.465	0.086
WE7	I am confident in my ability to handle competing demands at work.	0.259	0.818	0.129
WE8	I am confident that I can handle the physical demands at work.	0.094	0.858	0.158
WE9	I am able to express my opinions at work.	0.044	0.631	0.112
	Eigenvalue	**2.242**	**2.164**	**2.142**
	% of total Variance	**22.42**	**21.64**	**21.42**

Table 5.1 indicates that 4 items load significantly on Factor 1 and account for 22.42% of the total variance. Three items relate to the cognitive dimension of Work Engagement and 1 item relates to the emotional dimension of Work Engagement. Since the majority of the items relate to the *Cognitive dimension of Work Engagement*, Factor 1 may be labelled likewise.

Table 5.1 indicates that 3 items load significantly on Factor 2 and account for 21.64% of the total variance. All three items relate to the Physical dimension of Work Engagement. Hence, Factor 2 may be labelled as the *Physical dimension of Work Engagement*.

Furthermore, Table 5.1 indicates that 3 items load significantly on Factor 3 and account for 21.42 % of the total variance. All three items relate to the Emotional dimension of Work Engagement. Hence, Factor 3 may be labelled as the *Emotional dimension of Work Engagement.*

Evidently, all three dimensions of work engagement surfaced as factors in the factor analysis, thereby proving the validity of the items in measuring these sub-dimensions of work engagement and overall work engagement.

The validity of the self-developed questionnaire measuring perceived organisational support was evaluated using Factor Analysis (Table 5.2). Before processing the factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (0.891) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (1656.335; p = 000) were assessed and the results respectively indicated adequacy, suitability and significance.

Table 5. 2: Factor Analysis: Rotated Component Matrix (Perceived organisational support)

Item	Statement	1
POS1	The University values my contribution to its well-being.	0.722
POS2	The University fails to appreciate any extra effort from me.	0.681
POS3	The University would ignore any complaint from me.	0.719
POS4	The University really cares about my well-being.	0.680
POS5	Even if I did the best job possible, the University would fail to notice.	0.663
POS6	The University cares about my general satisfaction at work.	0.575
POS7	The University shows very little concern for me.	0.551
POS8	The University takes pride in my work accomplishments.	0.775
POS9	The University tries to make my job as interesting as possible.	0.595
POS10	The University is willing to extend itself in order to help me perform my job to the best of my ability.	0.806
POS11	The University is willing to help me when I need a special favour	0.737
POS12	If given the opportunity, the University would take advantage of me	0.525
POS13	The university cares about my concerns and opinions.	0.675
	Eigenvalue	**5.917**
	% of total Variance	**45.51**

Table 5.2 indicates that 13 items load significantly on one factor and account for 45.51% of the total variance. All of the 13 items relate to Perceived organisational support with item loadings ranging from moderate to high (0.525 to 0.806). Hence, it is clearly evident that the items are

valid in measuring perceived organisational support and that all items contribute significantly to its measurement. Hence, the unitary factor may be labelled as *Perceived organisational support*.

The validity of the self-developed questionnaire measuring organisational commitment was evaluated using Factor Analysis (Table 5.3). Before processing the factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (0.884) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (1512.395; p = 000) were assessed and the results respectively indicated adequacy, suitability and significance.

Table 5. 3: Factor Analysis: Rotated Component Matrix (Organisational commitment)

Item	Statement	1	2	3
C1	I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this University.	0.582	0.347	0.480
C2	I enjoy discussing my University with people outside it.	0.256	0.175	0.874
C3	I really feel as if the University's problems are my own.	0.269	0.385	0.720
C4	I think that I could easily become as attached to another University as I am to this one.	-0.801	-0.248	-0.262
C5	I do not feel like I am part of the family at my University.	0.775	0.299	0.303
C6	I do not feel emotionally attached to this University.	0.854	0.334	0.183
C7	This University has a great deal of personal meaning for me.	0.380	0.808	0.331
C8	I feel strong sense of belonging with the University.	0.356	0.851	0.260
	Eigenvalue	**2.719**	**1.946**	**1.882**
	% of total Variance	**33.99**	**24.33**	**23.53**

Table 5.3 indicates that 3 items load significantly on Factor 1 and account for 33.99% of the total variance. Two items relate to the Sense of belonging and duty dimension of Organisational Commitment and 1 item relates to the Willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation dimension. Since the majority of items relate to the former, Factor 1 may be labelled as the *Sense of belonging and duty dimension of Organisational Commitment*.

Table 5.3 indicates that 2 items load significantly on Factor 2 and account for 24.33% of the total variance. Both items relate to the Sense of belonging and duty dimension. Hence, Factor 2 may be labelled as the *Sense of belonging and duty* dimension of Organisational Commitment.

Furthermore, Table 5.3 indicates that 2 items load significantly on Factor 3 and account for 23.53% of the total variance. Both items relate to the Emotional attachment of Organisational Commitment. Hence, Factor 3 may be labelled as the *Emotional attachment dimension* of Organisational Commitment.

From the analysis of the factor analysis, it is evident that two factors surfaced as the Sense of belonging and duty dimension of organisational commitment and none of the factors were labelled as the Willingness to remain a loyal member of organisation dimension of organisational commitment. It is evident that subjects view the sense of belonging and duty dimension in terms of 'being part of the family' and being 'emotionally attached'. Hence, these items surfaced as sense of belonging and duty rather than willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation.

5.1.2 Reliability

The reliability of the measuring instrument assessing the various dimensions (work engagement, perceived organisational support, and organisational commitment) was evaluated using Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha (Table 5.4 to Table 5.6).

Table 5. 4: Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha: Reliability of Work engagement

Dimension being measured		Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha
Work engagement		0.794
Item Statistics		
Item	Statement	Cronbach's Alpha if item is deleted
1	At my work, I feel bursting with energy.	0.773
2	At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.	0.760
3a	I feel happy when I am working intensely.	0.775
3b	I am enthusiastic about my job.	0.768
4	My job inspires me.	0.773
5	To me, my job is challenging.	0.793
6	I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose.	0.779
7	I am confident in my ability to handle competing demands at work.	0.763
8	I am confident that I can handle the physical demands at work.	0.767
9	I am able to express my opinions at work.	0.809

From Table 5.4 it is evident that the items measuring work engagement have a high level of reliability and inter-item consistency (Cronbach's α = 0.794). It is also evident that all items significantly measure work engagement as the item reliabilities are high. They range from 0.760 to 0.809 and therefore, there is no need to eliminate any item.

Table 5. 5: Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha: Reliability of Perceived organisational support

Dimension being measured	Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha	
Perceived organisational support	0.897	
Item Statistics		
Item	Statement	Cronbach's Alpha if item is deleted
1	The University values my contribution to its well-being.	0.888
2	The University fails to appreciate any extra effort from me.	0.890
3	The University would ignore any complaint from me.	0.888
4	The University really cares about my well-being.	0.889
5	Even if I did the best job possible, the University would fail to notice.	0.890
6	The University cares about my general satisfaction at work.	0.894
7	The University shows very little concern for me.	0.895
8	The University takes pride in my work accomplishments.	0.884
9	The University tries to make my job as interesting as possible.	0.893
10	The University is willing to extend itself in order to help me perform my job to the best of my ability.	0.882
11	The University is willing to help me when I need a special favour	0.886
12	If given the opportunity, the University would take advantage of me	0.898
13	The university cares about my concerns and opinions.	0.889

From Table 5.5 it is evident that the items measuring Perceived organisational support have a very high level of reliability and inter-item consistency (Cronbach's α = 0.897). It is also evident that all items significantly measure perceived organisational support as the item reliabilities are very high. They range from 0.882 to 0.898 and therefore, there is no need to eliminate any item.

Table 5. 6: Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha: Reliability of Organisational commitment

Dimension being measured	Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha	
Organisational commitment	0.764	
Item Statistics		
Item	**Statement**	**Cronbach's Alpha if item is deleted**
1	I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this University.	0.691
2	I enjoy discussing my University with people outside it.	0.706
3	I really feel as if the University's problems are my own.	0.704
4	I think that I could easily become as attached to another University as I am to this one.	0.914
5	I do not feel like I am part of the family at my University.	0.693
6	I do not feel emotionally attached to this University.	0.697
7	This University has a great deal of personal meaning for me.	0.676
8	I feel strong sense of belonging with the University.	0.684

From Table 5.6 it is evident that the items measuring Organisational commitment have a high level of reliability and inter-item consistency (Cronbach's α = 0.764). It is also evident that all items significantly measure work engagement as the item reliabilities are high. They range from 0.676 to 0.914 and therefore, there is no need to eliminate any item.

5.3 Composition and description of the sample

Table 5.7 depicts the composition of sample in terms of each biographical variable and the institutional variable of the college from which the academic staff member reigns. The percentages of each category are used to depict the graphical representations (Figure 5.1 to 5.6). The sample comprises of academics that were selected across the four colleges, namely, Health Sciences, Humanities, Law and Management Studies and lastly, the College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science. The expected sample was 292 and the sample that was achieved was 262 resulting in a shortfall of 30 questionnaires due to the unavailability of participants (staff travelling) and also because of time constraints. The biographical data of academics and institutional information are reflected in Table 5.7.

Table 5. 7: Composition of Sample

Biographical/ Institutional data	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Age	20-30 years	53	20.2
	31-40 years	117	44.7
	41-50 years	70	26.7
	51-60 years	21	8.0
	60+ years	1	0.4
	Total	**262**	**100**
Gender	Male	169	64.5
	Female	93	35.5
	Total	**262**	**100**
Marital status	Single	144	55.2
	Married	103	39.5
	Widowed	14	5.4
	Total	**261**	**100**
Position	Lecturer	160	61.3
	Senior Lecturer	52	19.9
	Associate Professor	24	9.2
	Professor	25	9.6
	Total	**261**	**100**
Tenure	1-5 years	89	34.2
	6-10 years	78	30.0
	11-15 years	48	18.5
	16-20 years	32	12.3
	21+ years	13	5.0
	Total	**260**	**100**
College	Law and Management Studies	53	20.2
	Agriculture, Engineering and Science	77	29.4
	Humanities	83	31.7
	Health Sciences	49	18.7
	Total	**262**	**100**

The statistics provided in Table 5.7 are depicted graphically and described thereafter.
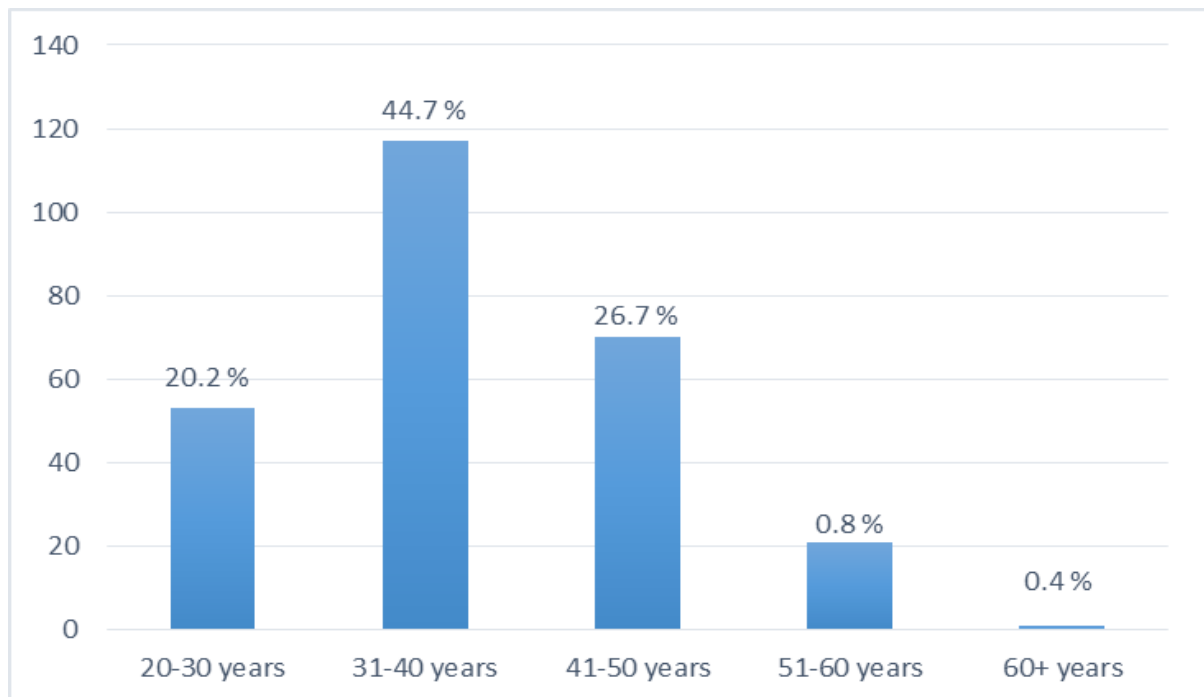
Figure 5. 1: Age of Academics

From Table 5.7 and Figure 5.1 it is evident that the participants that enrolled in the study are from varying age groups with the majority of academics being 31-40 years (44.7%), followed by those between 41-50 years (26.7%), then 20-30 years (20.2%), 51-60 years (0.8%) and lastly, 60+ years (0.4%).
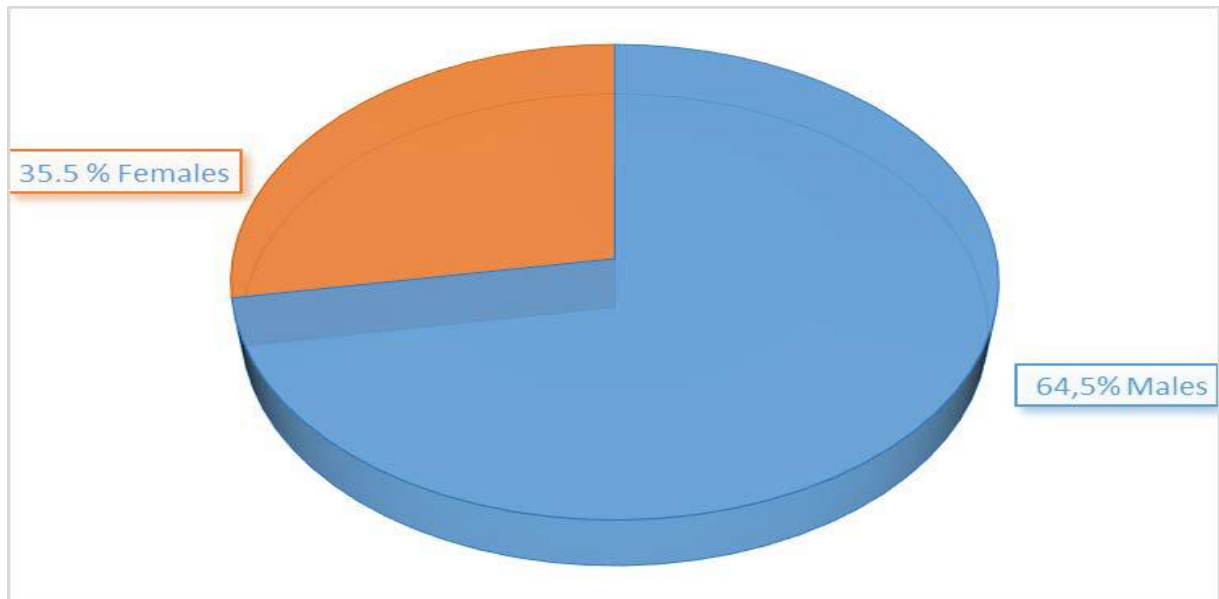
Figure 5. 2: Gender of Academics

From Table 5.7 and Figure 5.2 it is evident that of the 262 participants, 64.5% are male and 35.5% are female academics.
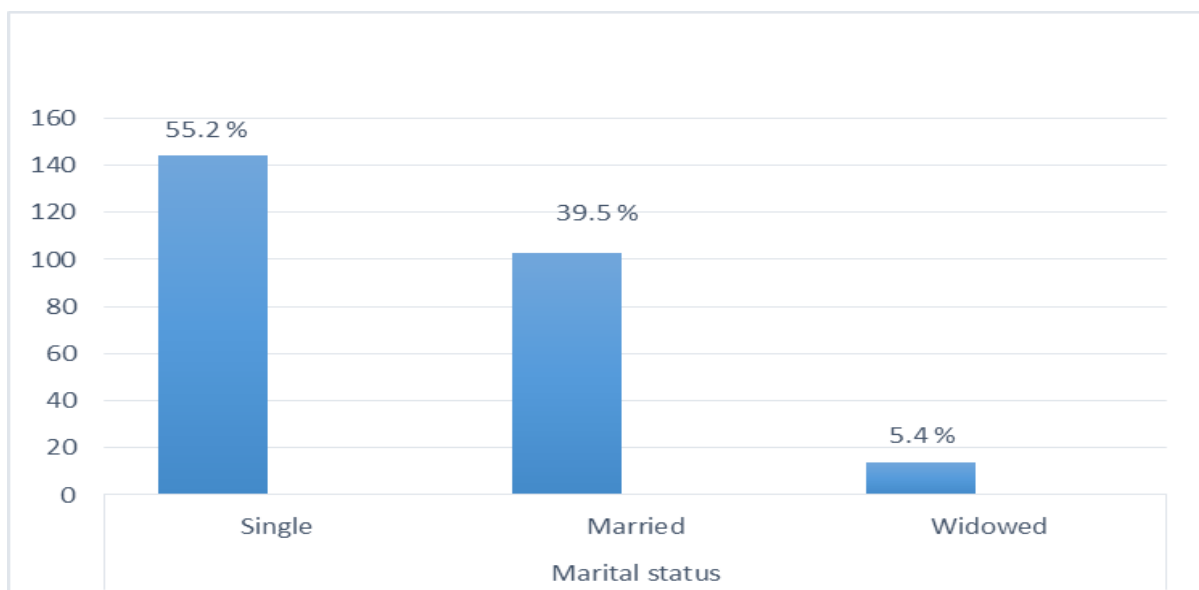
Figure 5. 3: Marital status of the Academics

Table 5.7 and Figure 5.3 reflect that 55.2% of the academics are single, 39.5% are married and the remaining 5.4% are widows/widowers.
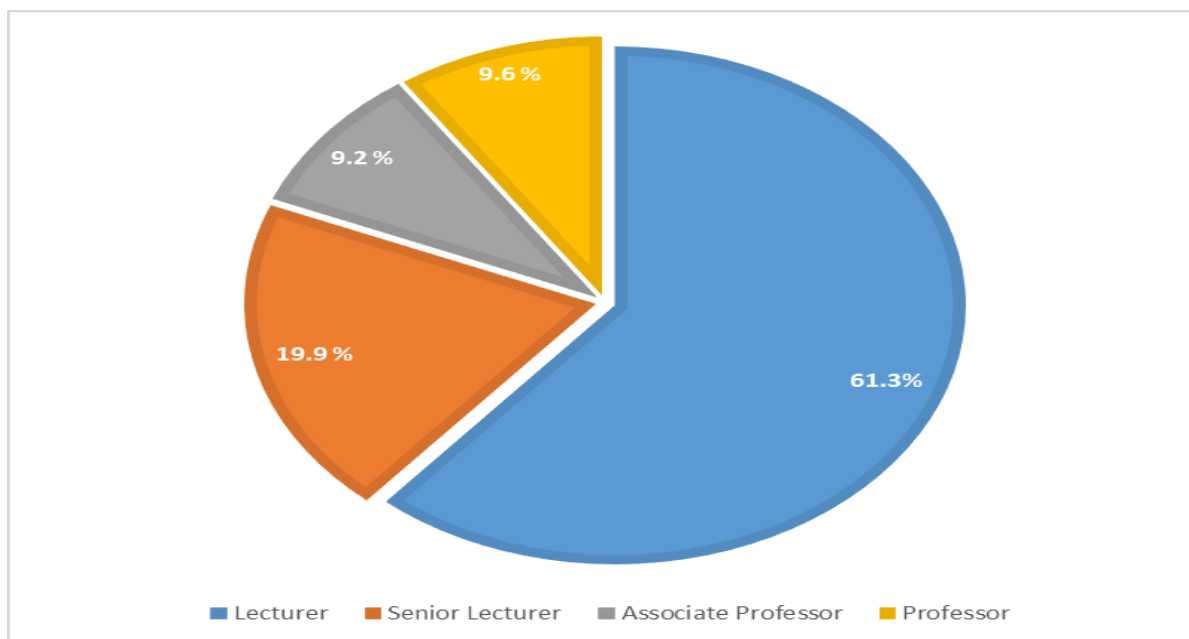
Figure 5. 4: Position of Academics

Table 5.7 and Figure 5.4 depict the varying levels of work positions occupied by the academics in their respective disciplines, namely, 61.3% of the academics are at the Lecturer level while 9.2% are Senior Lecturers, 9.2% are Associate Professors and 9.6% are Professors.
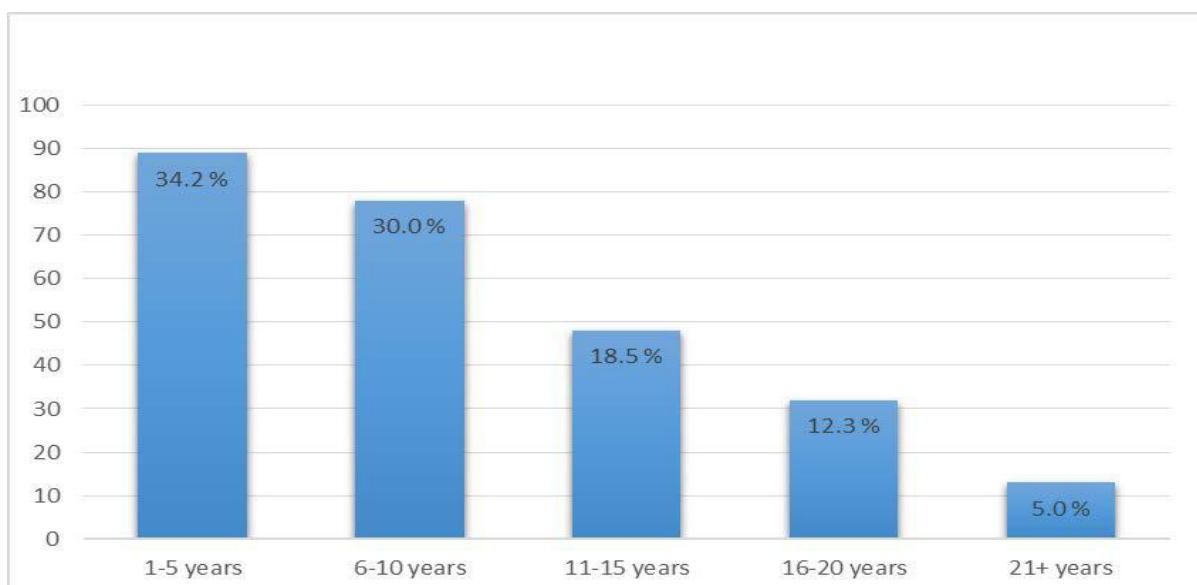
Figure 5. 5: Tenure

Table 5.7 and Figure 5.5 reflect the tenure of academics at the institution, that is, 34.2% of the academics served for 1 to 5 years, 30% have a tenure of 6 to 10 years, 18.5% have worked for

11 to 15 years, 12.3% have a tenure of 16 to 20 years while 5% are working for the institution for over 21 years.
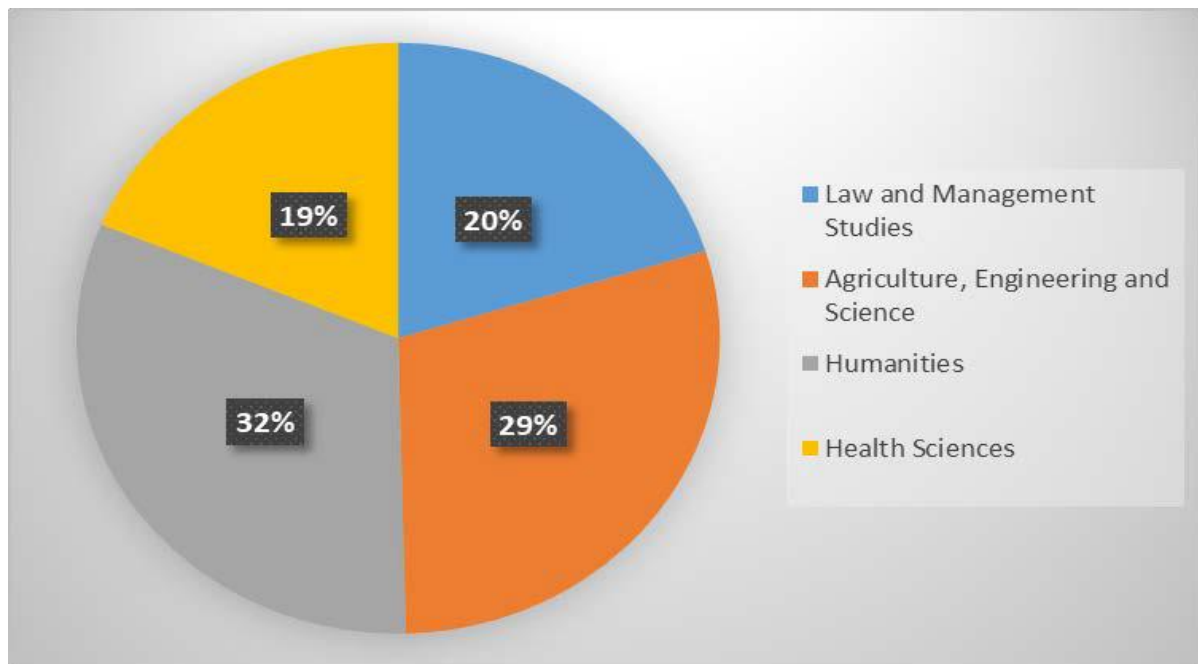
Figure 5. 6: Colleges

Table 5.7 and Figure 5.6 provide an overview of the participants from the four colleges, namely, Humanities (32%), Agriculture, Engineering and Science (29%), Law and Management Studies (20 %) and lastly, the College of Health Sciences (19%).

5.4 Descriptive statistics

The perceptions of employees regarding organisational support, work engagement and their level of organisation commitment as well as their dimensions were assessed by asking respondents to respond to various items using a 1 to 5 point Likert scale. The results were processed using descriptive statistics (Table 5.8).

Table 5. 8: Descriptive Statistics: Key dimensions of perceived organisational support, work engagement and organisational commitment

Dimension		Mean	95 % Confidence Interval		Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound			
Perceived organisational support		2.858	2.785	2.930	0.596	1	5
Work engagement (WE)		3.725	3.673	3.777	0.426	2	5
√	Emotional dimension of WE	3.687	3.618	3.703	0.569	2	5
√	Cognitive dimension of WE	3.953	3.908	3.998	0.370	2	5
√	Physical dimension of WE	3.547	3.465	3.629	0.678	1	1
Organisational commitment (OC)		2.951	2.872	3.032	0.659	1	5
√	Willingness to remain loyal member of organisation dimension of OC	2.572	2.421	2.723	1.241	1	5
√	Emotional attachment dimension of OC	3.040	2.930	3.149	0.901	1	5
√	Sense of belonging and duty dimension of OC	2.992	2.920	3.064	0.592	1	4

The results in Table 5.8 indicate that there are differing levels of work engagement, organisational commitment and perceived organisational support amongst academics at the institution. It is evident that the level of workplace engagement (Mean = 3.725) is the highest amongst the academics serving the university, followed by organisational commitment (Mean = 2.951) and lastly, perceived organisational support (Mean = 2.858). Against a maximum attainable score of 5, the aforementioned information indicates that there is room for improvement in all dimensions. In order to assess exactly where the strengths and areas for improvement lie, frequency analyses were undertaken.

It is evident that the greatest level of improvement is needed in perceived organisational support as it has the lowest mean score value (Mean = 2.858). Perceived organisational support assesses employees' perceptions of various aspects of support from their organisation. The results reflect that 38.2% of the academics (34% agreed and a further 4.2% strongly agreed) believe that the university values their contribution to its well-being. Beyond this, however,

employees' perceptions are predominantly unfavourable and signal a high level of uncertainty. It was found that 57.3% of the academics are uncertain as to whether the university cares about their general satisfaction at work, 57.3 % are uncertain if the university has concern for them, 55.3% are uncertain whether or not the university cares about their well-being and 47.7 % are uncertain whether or not the university cares about their concerns and opinions. In addition, 45.8% of the academics are uncertain whether the institution would ignore their complaints while on a positive note, 27.9% disagreed and another 4.6% strongly disagreed that the university would ignore their complaints. Likewise, whilst 45% of the academics are uncertain if the university appreciates their extra efforts, in favour of the institution, 34% believe that the university appreciates the extra effort from them. Furthermore, 44.7% of the academics (36.3% disagreed and 8.4% strongly disagreed) did not believe that the university is willing to extend itself to help them better perform and 45.6% (39.9% disagreed and 5.7% strongly disagreed) did not believe that the university exerts efforts in making their work tasks interesting. In addition, 41.6% (34% disagreed and 7.6% strongly disagreed) did not believe that the university provides assistance whenever they needed a special favour whilst only 24.5% of the academics agreed that it does.

Overall work engagement is fairly high (Mean = 3.725) but there is room for improvement. In terms of the dimensions of work engagement, the cognitive dimension was the highest (Mean = 3.953), followed by the emotional dimension (Mean = 3.687) and lastly, the physical dimension (Mean = 3.547). On a positive note, it is evident that 91.2% of the academics (83.6% agreed and 7.6% strongly agreed) believe that they are enthusiastic about their jobs/academic work, 90.1% (83.6% agreed and 6.5% strongly agreed) found their jobs to be inspiring, 90.9% (82.1% agreed and 8.8% strongly agreed) found meaningfulness and purpose in their work and 89.7% (83.2% agreed and 6.5% strongly agreed) believe that their jobs are challenging. Furthermore, 83.6% of the academics (76.3% agreed and 7.3% strongly agreed) are convinced that they are able to deal with the competing demands of their jobs and 82.4% (77.1% agreed and 5.3% strongly agreed) experience happiness when they are working intensely. In addition, 82.1% (75.6% agreed and 6.5% strongly agreed) believe that they were able to handle the physical demands of work. However, in terms of being able to voice out opinions at work, 26.3% of the academics are uncertain, 16.8% disagreed and 13.7% strongly disagreed.

Overall, the level of organisational commitment amongst academics was fairly low (Mean = 2.951). The dimensions for organisational commitment also varied with emotional attachment

being the highest (Mean = 3.040), followed by the sense of belonging and duty (Mean = 2.992) and willingness to remain a loyal member of organisation having the lowest mean (Mean = 2.572). On a positive note, 41.2% of the academics (32.8% agreed and 8.4% strongly agreed) reflected that they enjoyed discussing the university with people from outside. However, 45.4% of the academics are uncertain and a further 33.3% either disagreed or strongly disagreed that they perceived the university's problems as their own, 43.1% are uncertain whether the institution has a great deal of personal meaning to them and 40.8% are uncertain if they feel a strong sense of belonging in the institution. Furthermore, in terms of attachment, 55.3% of the academics (32.4% agreed and 22.9% strongly agreed) believe that they could easily become attached to any other university. In addition, whilst 50% of the academics either disagreed or strongly disagreed that they are happy to spend the rest of their lives with the institution, only 23.3% either agreed or strongly agreed and the remaining 26.7% were uncertain.

5.5 Inferential statistics

Inferential statistics were computed to test the hypotheses of the study. All hypotheses are stated in the alternate form.

5.5.1 Relationships within the dimensions of work engagement and organisational commitment

Inferential statistics were computed on the sub-dimensions of work engagement and organisational commitment to assess their cohesiveness.

Hypothesis 1

The sub-dimensions of work engagement (emotional, cognitive, physical) significantly intercorrelate with each other (Table 5.9).

Table 5. 9: Spearman rho: Sub-dimensions of work engagement

Sub-dimension of work engagement	rho/ p	Emotional	Cognitive	Physical
Emotional	rho	1.000		
Cognitive	rho p	0.455 **0.000***	1.000	
Physical	rho p	0.336 **0.000***	0.367 **0.000***	1.000

* p < 0.01

Table 5.9 indicates that the sub-dimensions of work engagement (emotional, cognitive, physical) significantly intercorrelate with each other at the 1% level of significance. Hence, hypothesis 1 may be accepted.

Hypothesis 2

The sub-dimensions of organisational commitment (willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation, emotional attachment, sense of belonging and duty) significantly intercorrelate with each other (Table 5.10).

Table 5. 10: Spearman rho: Sub-dimensions of organisational commitment

Sub-dimension of organisational commitment	rho/ p	Willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation	Emotional attachment	Sense of belonging and duty
Willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation	rho	1.000		
Emotional attachment	rho p	0.611 **0.000***	1.000	
Sense of belonging and duty	rho p	0.607 **0.000***	0.639 **0.000***	1.000

* p < 0.01

Table 5.10 reflects that sub-dimensions of organisational commitment (willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation, emotional attachment, sense of belonging and duty)

significantly intercorrelate with each other at the 1% level of significance. Hence, hypothesis 2 may be accepted.

5.5.2 Relationships between the dimensions of work engagement, organisational commitment and perceived organisational support respectively

The relationships between the dimensions of work engagement, organisational commitment and perceived organisational support were statistically assessed.

Hypothesis 3

There is a significant relationship between work engagement, organisational commitment and perceived organisational support of academics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Table 5.11).

Table 5. 11: Spearman rho: Relationship between work engagement, organisational commitment and perceived organisational support respectively

Dimension	rho/ p	Work engagement	Organisational commitment	Perceived organisational support
Work engagement	rho	1.000		
Organisational commitment	rho p	0.406 **0.000***	1.000	
Perceived organisational support	rho p	0.330 **0.000***	0.706 **0.000***	1.000

* p < 0.01

Table 5.11 indicates that there is a significant relationship between work engagement, organisational commitment and perceived organisational support respectively at the 1% level of significance. Hence, hypothesis 3 may be accepted. It is also noted that the relationship between organisational commitment and perceived organisational support is strong (rho = 0.706).

In order to undertake more in-depth analysis of the relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment, work engagement and perceived organisational support and

organisational commitment and perceived organisational support, the relationships between the sub-dimensions of these dimensions were also assessed.

Hypothesis 4

There exist significant relationships between the sub-dimensions of work engagement (emotional dimension, cognitive dimension, physical dimension) and the sub-dimensions of organisational commitment (willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation, emotional attachment, sense of belonging and duty) respectively (Table 5.12).

Table 5. 12: Spearman rho: Sub-dimensions of work engagement and sub-dimensions of organisational commitment

Sub-dimension of work engagement	rho/p	Sub-dimensions of organisational commitment		
		Emotional	**Cognitive**	**Physical**
Willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation	rho	0.222	0.192	0.341
	p	**0.000***	**0.002***	**0.000***
Emotional attachment	rho	0.185	0.164	0.351
	p	**0.003***	**0.008***	**0.000***
Sense of belonging and duty	rho	0.258	0.223	0.370
	p	**0.000***	**0.000***	**0.000***

* p < 0.01

Table 5.12 reflects that the sub-dimensions of work engagement (emotional dimension, cognitive dimension, physical dimension) correlate significantly with the sub-dimensions of organisational commitment (willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation, emotional attachment, sense of belonging and duty) respectively at the 1% level of significance. Hence, hypothesis 4 may be accepted.

Hypothesis 5

There exist significant relationships between the sub-dimensions of work engagement (emotional dimension, cognitive dimension, physical dimension) and perceived organisational support respectively (Table 5.13).

Table 5. 13: **Spearman rho: Sub-dimensions of work engagement and perceived organisational support**

Sub-dimensions of work engagement	rho/ p	Perceived organisational support
Emotional dimension	rho	0.187
	p	**0.002***
Cognitive dimension	rho	0.128
	p	**0.038****
Physical dimension	rho	0.432
	p	**0.000***

* p < 0.01

** p < 0.05

Table 5.13 indicates that there is a significant relationship between the emotional and physical sub-dimensions of work engagement and perceived organisational support respectively at the 1% level of significance. Furthermore, there is a significant relationship between the cognitive sub-dimension of work engagement and perceived organisational support at the 5% level of significance. Hence, hypothesis 5 may be accepted.

Hypothesis 6

There exist significant relationships between the sub-dimensions of organisational commitment (willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation, emotional attachment, sense of belonging and duty) and perceived organisational support respectively (Table 5.14).

Table 5. 14: **Spearman rho: Sub-dimensions of organisational commitment and perceived organisational commitment**

Sub-dimensions of organisational commitment	rho/ p	Perceived organisational support
Willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation	rho	0.793
	p	**0.000***
Emotional attachment	rho	0.833
	p	**0.000***
Sense of belonging and duty	rho	0.921
	p	**0.000***

* p < 0.01

Table 5.14 indicates that there exist significant relationships between the sub-dimensions of organisational support (willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation, emotional attachment, sense of belonging and duty) and perceived organisational support at the level of 1% significance. Hence, hypothesis 6 may be accepted.

5.4.3 Impact of biographical variables

The influence of the biographical variables of age, marital status, position, tenure, gender and, college on work engagement and its sub-dimensions, organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions and perceived organisational support was assessed using tests of differences (Mann-Witney, Kruskal Wallis).

Hypothesis 7

There is a significant difference in the perceptions of academics varying in biographical profiles (age, marital status, position, tenure, gender) and college regarding work engagement and its sub-dimensions respectively (Table 5.15 to Table 5.22).

Table 5. 15: **Kruskal Wallis Test: Work engagement and Age**

Work engagement and its	Age		
sub-dimensions	H	df	p
Work engagement	4.672	4	0.323
√ Emotional dimension	4.136	4	0.388
√ Cognitive dimension	4.082	4	0.395
√ Physical dimension	6.285	4	0.179

From Table 5.15 it is evident that there is no significant difference in the levels of work engagement and its sub-dimensions (emotional, cognitive and physical engagement) respectively amongst academics based on age. Hence, hypothesis 6 may be rejected in terms of age.

Table 5. 16: **Kruskal Wallis Test: Work engagement and Marital status**

Work engagement and its	Marital status		
sub-dimensions	H	Df	p
Work engagement	0.776	2	0.678
√ Emotional dimension	0.503	2	0.778
√ Cognitive dimension	0.043	2	0.978
√ Physical dimension	3.557	2	0.169

From Table 5.16 it is evident that there is no significant difference in the levels of work engagement and its sub-dimensions (emotional, cognitive and physical engagement) respectively amongst academics varying in marital status. Hence, hypothesis 7 may be rejected in terms of marital status.

Table 5. 17: **Kruskal Wallis Test: Work engagement and Position**

Work engagement and its sub-dimensions		Position		
		H	**Df**	**p**
Work engagement		10.147	3	0.017**
√	Emotional dimension	5.413	3	0.351
√	Cognitive dimension	3.273	3	0.351
√	Physical dimension	12.195	3	0.007*

* p < 0.01

** p < 0.05

Table 5.17 indicates that there is a significant difference in the physical dimension of work engagement amongst academics in varying positions at the 1% level of significance. Furthermore, there is a significant difference in the overall work engagement of academics in varying positions at the 5% level of significance. However, there is no significant difference in the emotional and cognitive dimensions of work engagement amongst academics in varying positions. Hence, hypothesis 7 may only be partially accepted in terms of position.

In order to assess exactly where the significant differences lie in terms of the physical dimension of work engagement and overall work engagement amongst the academics from the various positions, mean differences were analysed (Table 5.18).

Table 5. 18: Mean differences: Physical dimension of work engagement and overall work engagement across academic positions

Dimension	Position	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Physical dimension of Work engagement	Lecturer	3.458	160	0.746
	Senior Lecturer	3.576	52	0.608
	Associate Professor	3.819	24	0.393
	Professor	3.800	25	0.482
Work engagement	Lecturer	3.775	160	0.460
	Senior Lecturer	3.737	52	0.377
	Associate Professor	3.913	24	0.353
	Professor	3.832	25	0.293

From Table 5.18 it is evident that academics from various positions display varying degrees of the overall dimension of physical work engagement. Table 5.18 demonstrates that Associate Professors display the highest level of physical work engagement, followed by Professors, Senior Lecturers and lastly, Lecturers. Evidently, against a maximum attainable score of 5, the level of the physical dimension of work engagement is not high enough; hence, there is room for improvement. Furthermore, it is evident that academics from the various positions display varying degrees of overall work engagement. Table 5.18 reflects that the level of overall work engagement of Associate Professors is the highest, followed by Professors, Lecturers and lastly, Senior Lecturers. It must however, be noted that against a maximum attainable score of 5, the level of overall work engagement is not high enough and there is room for improvement to enhance the levels of work engagement of academics.

Table 5. 19: Kruskal Wallis Test: Work engagement and Tenure

Work engagement and its	Tenure		
sub-dimensions	H	Df	p
Work engagement	4.417	4	0.353
√ Emotional dimension	4.362	4	0.359
√ Cognitive dimension	2.833	4	0.586
√ Physical dimension	5.789	4	0.215

From Table 5.19 it is evident that there is no significant difference in the levels of work engagement and its sub dimensions (emotional, cognitive and physical engagement) respectively amongst academics varying in tenure. Hence, hypothesis 7 may be rejected in terms of tenure.

Table 5. 20: Kruskal Wallis Test: Work engagement and College

Work engagement and its	College		
sub-dimensions	H	Df	p
Work engagement	4.039	3	0.257
√ Emotional dimension	1.747	3	0.627
√ Cognitive dimension	6.913	3	0.075
√ Physical dimension	8.472	3	0.037**

** p < 0.05

Table 5.20 reflects that there is a significant difference in the physical dimension of work engagement amongst academics from various colleges at the 5% level of significance. However, there is no significant difference in the overall work engagement as well as the emotional and cognitive dimensions of work engagement amongst academics from the various colleges. Hence, hypothesis 7 may only be partially accepted in terms of colleges.

In order to assess exactly where the significant differences lie in terms of the physical dimension of work engagement amongst the academics from the various colleges, mean differences were analysed (Table 5.21).

Table 5. 21: Mean differences: Physical dimension of work engagement across the various colleges

Dimension	College	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Physical dimension of Work engagement	CLMS	3.767	53	0.677
	AES	3.424	77	0.757
	Humanities	3.518	83	0.585
	Health Sciences	3.551	49	0.678

From Table 5.21 it is evident that academics from the various colleges display varying degrees of the physical dimension of work engagement. Table 5.21 demonstrates that the physical dimension of work engagement is highest in the College of Law and Management Studies, followed by the College of Health Sciences, then the College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science and lastly, the College of Humanities. Evidently, against a maximum attainable score of 5, the level of the physical dimension of work engagement is not high enough; hence, there is room for improvement.

Table 5. 22: Mann-Whitney U Test: Work engagement and Gender

Work engagement and its	Gender	
sub-dimensions	U	p
Work engagement	7388.500	0.418
√ Emotional dimension	7091.500	0.158
√ Cognitive dimension	7705.500	0.732
√ Physical dimension	7489.500	0.519

From Table 5.22 it is evident that there is no significant difference in the levels of work engagement and its sub-dimensions (emotional, cognitive and physical engagement)

respectively amongst male and female academics. Hence, hypothesis 7 may be rejected in terms of gender.

Hypothesis 8

There is a significant difference in the perceptions of academics varying in biographical profiles (age, marital status, position, tenure, gender) and college regarding organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions respectively (Table 5.23 to Table 5.33).

Table 5. 23: Kruskal Wallis Test: Organisational commitment and Age

Organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions		Age		
		H	**Df**	**p**
Organisational commitment		26.859	4	0.000*
√	Willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation	38.889	4	0.000*
√	Emotional attachment	16.473	4	0.002*
√	Sense of belonging and duty	20.655	4	0.000*

 * p < 0.01

From Table 5.23 it is evident that there is a significant difference in the level of organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions (willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation, emotional attachment, sense of belonging and duty) respectively amongst academics varying in age at the 1% level of significance. Hence, hypothesis 8 may be accepted in terms of age.

In order to assess exactly where the significant differences lie in terms of organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions amongst the academics varying in age, mean differences were analysed (Table 5.24).

Table 5. 24: Mean differences: Organisational commitment and Age

Dimension	Age group	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Organisational Commitment	20-30 years	2.891	53	0.678
	31-40 years	2.813	117	0.561
	41-50 years	3.019	70	0.704
	51-60 years	3.589	21	0.534
	+60 years	4.250	1	.
Willingness to remain loyal member of organisation dimension of OC	20-30 years	2.320	53	1.189
	31-40 years	2.290	117	1.075
	41-50 years	2.757	70	1.267
	51-60 years	4.047	21	0.921
	+60 years	5.000	1	.
Emotional attachment dimension of OC	20-30 years	2.867	53	0.986
	31-40 years	2.906	117	0.779
	41-50 years	3.193	70	0.968
	51-60 years	3.619	21	0.705
	+60 years	5.000	1	.
Sense of belonging and duty dimension of OC	20-30 years	3.015	53	0.647
	31-40 years	2.880	117	0.521
	41-50 years	3.003	70	0.607
	51-60 years	3.485	21	0.527
	+60 years	3.000	1	.

From Table 5.24 it is evident that academics from the various age groups display varying degrees of organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions. Table 5.24 demonstrates that organisational commitment and the dimensions of willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation and sense of belonging and duty are the highest amongst academics who are 60 years and over, followed by those who are 51-60 years, then those who are 41-50 years, 20-30 years and lastly, 31-40 years. A similar trend was noted in the sub-dimension of emotional attachment, which was highest amongst the oldest academics and reduced progressively as one reaches the younger academic staff members. Evidently, older academics display higher levels of organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions. However, against a maximum attainable score of 5, it is evident that there is still room for improvement in all aspects of

organisational commitment amongst all age groups but particularly amongst younger academic staff members.

Table 5. 25: Kruskal Wallis Test: Organisational commitment and Marital status

Organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions		Marital status		
		H	Df	p
Organisational commitment		10.287	2	0.006*
√	Willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation	19.869	2	0.000*
√	Emotional attachment	6.222	2	0.045**
√	Sense of belonging and duty	63.375	2	0.041**

* p < 0.01

** p < 0.05

Table 5.25 indicates that there is a significant difference in overall organisational commitment and its sub-dimension of willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation amongst academics varying in marital status at 1% level of significance. Furthermore, there is a significant difference in the other two sub-dimensions of organisational commitment (emotional attachment, sense of belonging and duty) at the 5% level of significance respectively amongst academics varying in marital status. Hence, hypothesis 8 may be accepted based on marital status.

In order to assess exactly where the significant differences lie in terms of organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions amongst the academics varying in marital status, mean differences were analysed (Table 5.26).

Table 5. 26: Mean differences: Organisational commitment and Marital status

Dimension	Marital status	Mean	N	Std.Deviation
Organisational Commitment	Single	2.883	144	0.610
	Married	2.955	103	0.671
	Widowed	3.562	14	0.751
Willingness to remain loyal member of organisation dimension of OC	Single	2.381	144	1.122
	Married	2.612	103	1.269
	Widowed	4.071	14	1.072
Emotional attachment dimension of OC	Single	2.958	144	0.878
	Married	3.048	103	0.878
	Widowed	3.714	14	1.014
Sense of belonging and duty dimension of OC	Single	2.954	144	0.563
	Married	2.986	103	0.610
	Widowed	3.400	14	0.647

From Table 5.26 it is evident that academics varying in marital status display varying degrees of overall organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions. Table 5.26 shows that widowed academics display the highest levels of organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions, followed by married and then single academics. Evidently, against a maximum attainable score of 5, the level of the overall organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions amongst academics is not high enough thereby displaying room for improvement.

Table 5. 27: Kruskal Wallis Test: Organisational commitment and Position

Organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions		Position		
		H	Df	p
Organisational commitment		37.806	3	0.000*
√	Willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation	58.343	3	0.000*
√	Emotional attachment	30.670	3	0.000*
√	Sense of belonging and duty	24.122	3	0.000*

* p < 0.01

Table 5.27 reflects that there is a significant difference in the level of organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions (willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation,

emotional attachment, sense of belonging and duty) amongst academics in the varying positions at the 1% level of significance. Hence, hypothesis 8 may be accepted in terms of position.

In order to assess exactly where the significant differences lie in terms of organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions amongst the academics in varying positions, mean differences were analysed (Table 5.28).

Table 5. 28: Mean differences: Organisational commitment and Position

Dimension	Position	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Organisational Commitment	Lecturer	2.816	160	0.599
	Senior Lecture	2.942	52	0.617
	Associate Professor	3.104	24	0.651
	Professor	3.740	25	0.656
Willingness to remain loyal member of loyal member of organisation dimension of OC	Lecturer	2.243	160	1.056
	Senior Lecture	2.576	52	1.210
	Associate Professor	2.958	24	1.301
	Professor	4.360	25	0.568
Emotional attachment dimension of OC	Lecturer	2.881	160	0.813
	Senior Lecture	2.990	52	0.915
	Associate Professor	3.375	24	0.899
	Professor	3.920	25	0.893
Sense of belonging an and duty dimension of OC	Lecturer	2.905	160	0.5861
	Senior Lecture	2.996	52	0.5201
	Associate Professor	3.025	24	0.557
	Professor	3.540	25	0.5180

From Table 5.28 it is evident that academics from the various positions display varying degrees of organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions. Table 5.28 demonstrates that organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions are the highest amongst Professors, followed by Associate Professors, then Senior Lectures and lastly, Lectures. Evidently, senior academics display higher levels of organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions. However, against a maximum attainable score of 5, it is evident that there is still room for

improvement in all aspects of organisational commitment amongst academics in all positions but particularly amongst junior academic staff members.

Table 5. 29: Kruskal Wallis Test: Organisational commitment and Tenure

Organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions		Tenure		
		H	Df	p
Organisational commitment		26.971	4	0.000*
√	Willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation	37.599	4	0.000*
√	Emotional attachment	19.896	4	0.001*
√	Sense of belonging and duty	18.410	4	0.001*

* p < 0.01

From Table 5.29 it is evident that there is a significant difference in the level of organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions (willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation, emotional attachment, sense of belonging and duty) respectively amongst academics varying in tenure at the 1% level of significance. Hence, hypothesis 8 may be accepted in terms of tenure.

In order to assess exactly where the significant differences lie in terms of organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions amongst the academics in varying tenure, mean differences were analysed (Table 5.30).

Table 5. 30: Mean differences: Organisational commitment and Tenure

Dimension	Tenure	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Organisational commitment	1-5 years	2.833	89	0.651
	6-10 years	2.809	78	0.566
	11-15 years	3.010	48	0.601
	16-20 years	3.297	32	0.689
	+21 years	3.625	13	0.711
Willingness to remain loyal member of organisation dimension of OC	1-5 years	2.269	89	156
	6-10 years	2.282	78	1.055
	11-15 years	2.687	48	1.151
	16-20 years	3.312	32	1.354
	+21 years	4.153	13	1.068
Emotional attachment dimension of OC	1-5 years	2.852	89	0.933
	6-10 years	2.955	78	0.734
	11-15 years	3.104	48	0.825
	16-20 years	3.531	32	0.941
	+21 years	3.653	13	1.125
Sense of belonging and duty dimension of OC	1-5 years	2.948	89	0.617
	6-10 years	2.856	78	0.555
	11-15 years	3.307	48	0.526
	16-20 years	3.200	32	0.567
	+21 years	3.507	13	0.551

From Table 5.30 it is evident that academics varying in tenure display varying degrees of overall organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions. Table 5.30 reflects that the dimensions of willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation and emotional attachment are the highest amongst academics who are over 20 years in the organisation, followed by those with 16-20 years of service, then 11-15 years, then 6-10 years and lastly, those with 1-5 years of service. A similar trend was noted for overall organisational commitment which was highest amongst the longer serving academics and reduced progressively as one reaches the younger academic staff members with those with a tenure of 1-5 years having a negligibly higher level of organisational commitment than those with 6-10 years in the organisation. A similar trend was observed regarding sense of belonging and duty,

except that those with 11-15 years of service displayed negligibly higher levels of sense of belonging and duty than those with 16-20 years in the organisation. Evidently, academics with longer tenure display higher levels of organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions. However, against a maximum attainable score of 5, it is evident that there is still room for improvement in all aspects of organisational commitment amongst academics in all tenure groups but particularly amongst newer academic staff members.

Table 5. 31: Kruskal Wallis Test: Organisational commitment and College

Organisational commitment	College		
and its sub-dimensions	H	Df	p
Organisational commitment	9.966	3	0.019**
√ Willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation	2.979	3	0.395
√ Emotional attachment	8.793	3	0.032**
√ Sense of belonging and duty	14.284	3	0.003*

* p < 0.01

** p < 0.05

Table 5.31 indicates that there is a significant difference in the sense of belonging and duty amongst academics from the different colleges at the 1% level of significance. Furthermore, there is a significant difference in overall organisational commitment and the sub-dimension of emotional attachment amongst academics from the various colleges at the 5% level of significance. However, academics from the different colleges do not display significant differences in terms of their willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation. Hence, hypothesis 8 may only be partially accepted in terms of college.

In order to assess exactly where the significant differences lie in terms of organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions amongst the academics from the different colleges, mean differences were analysed (Table 5.32).

Table 5. 32: Mean differences: Organisational commitment and College

Dimension	College	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Organisational commitment	CLMS	3.063	53	0.5463
	AES	2.878	77	0.680
	Humanities	2.837	83	0.862
	Health Sciences	3.140	49	0.704
Sense of belonging and duty dimension of OC	CLMS	3.173	53	0.546
	AES	2.929	77	0.68
	Humanities	2.850	83	0.528
	Health Sciences	3.135	49	0.525

From Table 5.32 it is evident that academics from various colleges display varying degrees of overall organisational commitment. Table 5.32 demonstrates that overall organisational commitment is highest amongst staff in the College of Health Sciences, followed by the College of Law and Management Studies, then the College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science and lastly, the College of Humanities. Staff in the College of Law and Management Studies followed by the College of Health Sciences also display higher levels of sense of belonging and duty than staff in the College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science and the College of Humanities. When compared against a maximum attainable score of 5, it is evident that there is room for improvement in overall organisational commitment of staff in all colleges.

Table 5. 33: Mann-Whitney U Test: Organisational commitment and Gender

Work engagement and its		Gender	
sub-dimensions		U	p
Work engagement		7369.500	0.404
	Emotional dimension	7131.500	0.203
√	Cognitive dimension	7456.500	0.482
√	Physical dimension	7377.500	0.409

Table 5.33 indicates that there is no significant difference in the level of organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions (willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation,

emotional attachment, sense of belonging and duty) amongst male and female academics. Hence, hypothesis 8 may be rejected in terms of gender.

Hypothesis 9

There is a significant difference in the perceived organisational support of academics varying in biographical profiles (age, marital status, position, tenure, gender) and college (Table 5.34 to Table 5.39).

Table 5. 34: Test of differences: Perceived organisational support and biographical data and College

Biographical Data and College	Kruskal Wallis Test		
	H	**Df**	**p**
Age	21.209	4	0.000*
Marital status	13.518	2	0.001*
Position	35.700	3	0.000*
Tenure	25.931	4	0.000*
College	11.237	3	0.011**
Biographical variable	**Mann-Whitney U Test**		
	U		**p**
Gender	7129.000		0.213

Table 5.34 indicates that there is a significant difference in the perceived organisational support of academics varying in biographical profiles (age, marital status, position, tenure) at the 1% level of significance. Furthermore, there is a significant difference in the perceptions of academics from different colleges regarding organisational support at the 5% level of significance. However, there is no significant difference in the perceived organisational support of male and female academics. Hence, hypothesis 9 may be partially accepted in terms of biographical profiles and perceived organisational support.

In order to assess exactly where the significant differences lie in terms of perceived organisational support and the biographical profiles of age, marital status, position, tenure and college, mean differences were analysed (Table 5.35 to Table 5.39).

Table 5. 35: Mean differences: Perceived organisational support and Age

POS	Age	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Perceived organisational support	20-30 years	2.789	53	0.634
	31-40 years	2.756	117	0.551
	41-50 years	2.941	70	0.592
	51-60 years	3.278	21	0.553
	+60 years	3.615	1	0.00

From Table 5.35 it is evident that academics from various age groups display varying degrees of perceived organisational support. Table 5.35 demonstrates that perceived organisational support is the highest amongst academics who are over 60 years of age, followed by those between 51-60 years, then those between 41-50 years, then 20-30 years and lastly, those between 31-40 years. Evidently, older academics perceive higher levels of organisational support. However, against a maximum attainable score of 5, the level of the overall perceived organisational support amongst academics is not high enough; hence, there is room for improvement especially amongst younger academics.

Table 5. 36: Mean differences: Perceived organisational support and Marital status

POS	Marital status	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Perceived organisational support	Single	2.790	144	0.564
	Married	2.871	103	0.610
	Widowed	3.439	14	0.541

From Table 5.36 it is evident that single, married and widowed academics display varying degrees of perceived organisational support. Widowed academics display the highest level of perceived organisational support, followed by married and then single academics. Evidently, against a maximum attainable score of 5, the level of the perceived organisational support amongst academics is not high enough; hence, there is room for improvement especially amongst single academics.

Table 5. 37: Mean differences: Perceived organisational support and Position currently held

POS	Position	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Perceived organisational support	Lecturer	2.732	160	0.561
	Senior Lecturer	2.896	52	0.588
	Associate Professor	2.990	24	0.525
	Professor	3.455	25	0.523

From Table 5.37 it is evident that academics from the different positions display varying degrees of perceived organisational support. Perceived organisational support is the highest amongst Professors, followed by Associate Professors, then Senior Lecturers and lastly, amongst Lecturers. Evidently, as one progresses in academic rank, the level of perceived organisational support increases progressively. However, against a maximum attainable score of 5, the level of the perceived organisational support amongst academics is not high enough; hence, there is room for improvement in perceived organisational support especially amongst Lectures, Senior Lectures and Associate Professors.

Table 5. 38: Mean differences: Perceived organisational support and Tenure

POS	Tenure	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Perceived organisational support	1-5 years	2.735	89	0.571
	6-10 years	2.769	78	0.572
	11-15 years	2.984	48	0.505
	16-20 years	3.014	32	0.731
	+21 years	3.426	13	0.440

From Table 5.38 it is evident that academics varying in tenure display varying degrees of perceived organisational support. Table 5.38 demonstrates that as the tenure of academics increases the levels of perceived organisational support increases progressively. However, against a maximum attainable score of 5, the level of perceived organisational support is not high enough amongst academics; hence, there is room for improvement especially amongst academics who joined the academia more recently.

Table 5. 39: Mean differences: Perceived organisational support and College

POS	College	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Perceived organisational support	CLMS	2.901	53	0.510
	AES	2.768	77	0.691
	Humanities	2.783	83	0.563
	Health Sciences	3.077	49	0.526

From Table 5.39 it is evident that academics from various colleges display varying degrees of perceived organisational support. Table 5.39 demonstrates that perceived organisational support is the highest amongst academics from the College of Health Sciences, followed by academics from the College of Law and Management Studies, then the College of Humanities and lastly, the College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science. Evidently, against a maximum attainable score of 5, the level of the perceived organisational support is not high enough; hence, there is room for improvement.

5.5.3 Factors influencing organisational commitment

The extent to which work engagement and perceived organisational support impact on organisational commitment were statistically assessed.

Hypothesis 10

Work engagement and perceived organisational support significantly account for the variance in the organisational commitment of academics (Table 5.40).

Table 5. 40: Multiple Regression: The impact of work engagement and perceived organisational support on organisational commitment

Model Summary				
Model	**R**	**R Square**	**Adjusted R Square**	**Std. Error of the Estimate**
1	0.727[a]	0.527	0.527	0.453
2	0.743[b]	0.552	0.548	0.443

a. Predictors: (Constant), Perceived organisational support

b. Predictors: (Constant), Perceived organisational support, Work engagement

ANOVA					
Model	**Sum of Squares**	**Df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**p**
1 Regression	59.980	1	59.980	292.277	0.000[b]
Residual	53.365	260	0.205		
Total	113.345	261			
2 Regression	62.516	2	31.258	159.278	0.000[c]
Residual	50.828	259	0.196		
Total	113.345	261			

a. Dependent Variable: Organisational Commitment

b. Predictors: (Constant), Perceived organisational support

c. Predictors: (Constant), Perceived organisational support, Work engagement

Model	**Unstandardised Coefficients**		**Standardised Coefficients**	**T**	**p**
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
1 (Constant)	0.653	0.137		4.754	0.00
Perceived organisational support	0.804	0.47	0.727	17.095	0.00
2 (Constant)	-0.091	0.247		-0.370	0.712
Perceived organisational support	0.743	0.049	0.672	15.147	0.000
Work Engagement	0.247	0.069	0.160	3.595	0.000

Table 5.40 indicates that Work Engagement and Perceived Organisational Support significantly account for 54.8% (Adjusted R^2) of the variance in the Organisational Commitment of academics. Hence, hypothesis 10 may be accepted. Table 5.40 also indicates that Perceived organisational support accounts more for the variance in Organisational commitment than Work Engagement. The Beta value (Beta = 0.672) indicates that Perceived organisational support significantly influences Organisational commitment. The influence of Work Engagement on Organisational commitment is also significant but based on the Beta value (Beta = 0.160) it is evident that Work Engagement has a smaller impact on Organisational Commitment than Perceived Organisational Support.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter the results of the study were presented using tabular and graphical representations and all results were narratively interpreted. However, findings are meaningless until they are compared and contrasted with the findings of other researchers in the field. This will be achieved in Chapter 6.

6.1 Introduction

Universities are a critical source of human capital and are responsible for educating and producing intellects to specialise in various fields of occupation (Danish *et al.*, 2010). The new trend of globalisation and educational reforms challenges universities to seek different ways of improving staff commitment and engagement in order to attain higher rankings in the educational sector. One of the critical components for a world class university is its ability to attract and retain excellent and technically competent academics. Academics are regarded as the operational core of the universities and the manner in which they perform determines the quality of the student's higher education experience and impacts at the societal level (Eghlidi & Karimi, 2016). This implies that academic staff who are well motivated and committed to their institution can build a national and international reputation for themselves and the institution and the universities can attract high calibre students, research funds and consultancy contracts (Mabasa, Ngirande, & Shambare, 2016). As such, the overall performance of the institution rests upon their contribution and effort and, more importantly, upon their level of perceived organisational support and work engagement, as well as organisational commitment (Mabasa *et al.*, 2016).

In the same vein, employees prefer to work for organisations that support and treat them as valuable assets (Hoffmeister, 2006 cited in Khalid *et al.*, 2015). Emotionally committed employees exhibit high levels of performance, reduced absence from work and are less likely to quit their jobs. The notion of work in this perspective entails constructs such as perceived organisational support, employee engagement and its impact on organisational commitment. Numerous studies positively affirm the benefits associated with the three constructs, namely, perceived organisational support, employee engagement and organisational commitment (Allen *et al.*, 2008; Rose & Shuck, 2013).

This chapter discusses the implications of the results presented in Chapter 5.

6.2 Discussion of results based on the results of the study

The perceptions of employees regarding organisational support, work engagement and their level of organisation commitment as well as their dimensions were assessed by asking respondents to respond to various items using a Likert scale.

6.2.1 Levels of Perceived Organisational Support, Work Engagement and Organisational Commitment displayed by staff at UKZN

Employee engagement is a top talent issue facing many organisations today. However, many Higher Education institutions are not fully vested in the enhancement of employee levels of work engagement. Focusing on employee engagement has benefits such as increased employee attraction, maximum staff retention, higher levels of productivity, and improved customer service. Comparably, university employee engagement has benefits such as increased faculty retention and enhanced student attainment (Murthy, 2017). A university is a major source of human resource capital and is liable for not only educating but also producing intellects (Danish *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, academic staff members play an important role in higher education together with their various important responsibilities. As such, the overall performance of the institution is highly dependent on their contribution and effort, more importantly upon their level of work engagement, perceived organisational support and organisational commitment (Murthy, 2017). In this study, it was found that UKZN academics display differing levels of work engagement, organisational commitment and perceived organisational. Specifically, it was observed that the level of workplace engagement (Mean = 3.725) is the highest amongst the academics serving the university, followed by organisational commitment (Mean = 2.951) and lastly, perceived organisational support (Mean = 2.858).

> **Work engagement and organisational commitment**

In this study, it was found that UKZN academics display higher levels of workplace engagement (Mean = 3.725) than organisational commitment (Mean = 2.951). Similarly, in a study conducted by Hassan and Hashim (2011), work engagement was higher than organisational commitment. In another similar study investigating University lecturers' levels of engagement and commitment conducted by Cherubin (2011 cited in Khalid *et al.,* 2015) the results revealed when employees feel that their employer is monitoring their work progress, the employees perceive this as support and become more engaged in their work. As a result, the study found that engagement was higher when employees felt supported by their organisation. For example, the employee will take on extra-roles, tasks, and assignments at the

job that go beyond normal responsibilities (Cherubin, 2011 cited in Khalid *et al*., 2015). In another study conducted by Beukes & Botha (2013), organisational commitment was found to be higher than work engagement. This indicates that the more committed employees are to the organisation, the more engaged they will be in their work (Beukes & Botha, 2013).

A vast amount of research studies link work engagement and commitment (Baker, Hakanen, & Schaufeli, 2006; Hult, 2005; Jackson, Rothmann & Van de Vijver, 2006). Although the relationship between organisational commitment and engagement has been widely researched, there is insufficient consensus regarding the link between the two variables. Some studies argue that employee engagement is an antecedent of organisational commitment (Albrecht, 2012; Saks, 2006). Some studies view work engagement and organisational commitment as related but independent constructs (Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006; Bakker & Schaufeli, 2010). A few studies argue that work engagement overlaps with the organisational commitment construct (Newman & Harrison, 2008). Gruman and Saks (2011) note that the related concepts do overlap to some extent but this does not overrule the distinctiveness of both constructs. Bahar and Türkay (2017) maintain that engaged employees go the extra mile and show maximum performance. Research findings of a study conducted by Bahar and Türkay (2017) deduced that the common level of work engagement of university teachers was higher than organisational commitment levels. Another similar study conducted by Karataş and Güleş (2010 as cited in Gülbahar, 2017) revealed that university teachers with high levels of job satisfaction displayed higher levels of organisational commitment.

Upon deeper analysis into academics' levels of workplace engagement at UKZN it was found that overall work engagement is fairly high (Mean = 3.725). The academics also displayed high levels on the dimensions of work engagement, with the cognitive dimension being the highest (Mean = 3.953), followed by the emotional dimension (Mean = 3.687) and lastly, the physical dimension (Mean = 3.547). On a positive note, 91.2% of the academics (83.6% agree and 7.6% strongly agree) agree that they are enthusiastic about their jobs/academic work. It should also be noted that 90.1% (83.6% agreed and 6.5% strongly agreed) found their jobs to be inspiring, 90.9% (82.1% agreed and 8.8% strongly agreed) found meaningfulness and purpose in their work and 89.7% (83.2% agreed and 6.5% strongly agreed) agreed that their jobs are challenging. Furthermore, 83.6% of the academics (76.3% agreed and 7.3% strongly agreed) are convinced that they are able to deal with the competing demands of their jobs and 82.4% (77.1% agreed and 5.3% strongly agreed) experience happiness when they are working

intensely. In addition, 82.1% (75.6% agreed and 6.5% strongly agreed) believe that they were able to handle the physical demands of work. Similarly, a study conducted by Ahola, Hakanen and Schaufeli (2008) on professional employees drawing focus on doctors, universityteachers and nurses found that work engagement facilitates the relationship between job resources and organisational commitment. As a result, the study found that professional employees identify strongly with their professional work in which they become engaged before they become committed to their organisation, client, team and profession. As employees become more engaged, they become more involved in, and identify with, their work and they actively shape their work and work environment. On the contrary, a longitudinal study conducted by Kinnunen, Mauno and Ruokolainen (2007) found that non-professional employees had higher levels of work engagement when compared to professional employees.

In this study, academics also expressed unhappiness in terms of being able to voice out opinions at work (26.3% of the academics are uncertain about being able to voice their opinions, 16.8% disagreed that they can and 13.7% strongly disagreed). Similarly, in several studies, academics maintain that they have 'lost their voice' as the management of universities have become increasingly reluctant to listen to their concerns regarding the lack of rewards and respect for their knowledge and expertise, increase in their teaching loads and the unmanageable administrative burden (Aneet & Kaur, 2017; Humphreys & Hoque, 2007; Mansor, Warokka, & Yahya, 2012; Van Rossenber & Swart, 2014 as cited in Leow & Khong, 2015). In a similar study conducted by Winter and Sarros (2002), the findings of the study revealed that several academics believed their university displayed a lack of support, loyalty and commitment towards them. On the contrary, other studies argue that engagement involves a specific action and active presence whilst organisational commitment is directed to a passive attitude and thus, precedes engagement (Crawford, Lepine & Rich, 2010; Harrison, Newman & Roth, 2006; Sonnentag, Binnewies, & Mojza, 2010 as cited in Beukes & Botha, 2013). Arguably, employees may be engaged in their work but demonstrate no commitment to the organisation. In another study conducted by Jordaan and Rothman (2005), it was noted that organisational commitment played a significant role in predicting engagement levels. The abovementioned study investigated the impact of job resources on the work engagement of academics in a number of South African higher education institutions. Therefore, work engagement and organisational commitment are distinctive yet closely related constructs. Organisational commitment draws focus on the organisation while engagement draws focus on the work itself (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001 as cited in Jordaan & Rothman, 2005).

> **Perceived organisational support and organisational commitment**

In this study, it was found that UKZN academics display higher levels of organisational commitment (Mean = 2.951) than perceived organisational support (Mean = 2.858). A supportive work environment is regarded as important for the functioning of employees. There is a vast amount of research that recognises the link between perceived organisational support and favourable outcomes such as high levels of commitment (Armeli *et al.*, 2001; Saks, 2006). The organisational support theory perceives the level of support that an organisation provides for the employee as the degree of commitment that the organisation has for its employees. For instance, if the university supports its academic staff, the academics are likely to respond with increased levels of loyalty and dedication to the organisation. Research conducted on perceived organisational support (POS) draws its foundation from the notion that managers develop concern regarding employee commitment while employees develop concern about the organisation's obligation/commitment towards them (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986). Perceived organisational support assesses employees' perceptions of various aspects of support from their organisation. In the current study, the results reflect that 38.2% (34% agreed and a further 4.2% strongly agreed) believed that the university values their contribution to its well-being. Beyond this, however, employees' perceptions were predominantly unfavourable and signalled a high level of uncertainty. It was found that 57.3% of the academics are uncertain as to whether the university cares about their general satisfaction at work, 57.3% are uncertain if the university has concern for them, 55.3% are uncertain whether or not the university cares about their well-being and 47.7 % are uncertain whether or not the university cares about their concerns and opinions. In addition, 45.8% of the academics are uncertain whether the institution would ignore their complaints while on a positive note, 27.9% disagreed and another 4.6% strongly disagreed that the university would ignore their complaints. Likewise, whilst 45% of the academics are uncertain if the university appreciates their extra efforts, in favour of the institution, 34% believe that the university appreciates their extra effort from them. Furthermore, 44.7% of the academics (36.3% disagreed and 8.4% strongly disagreed) did not believe that the university is willing to extend itself to help them better perform and 45.6% (39.9% disagreed and 5.7% strongly disagreed) did not believe that the university exerts efforts in making their work tasks interesting. In addition, 41.6% of the academics (34% disagreed and 7.6% strongly disagreed) did not believe that the university provides assistance whenever they needed a special favour whilst only 24.5% of the academics agreed that it does. In another study conducted by Burns (2016) in the higher education sector, academics identified support or the lack of support as a problem. A similar study conducted by Murthy (2017) also indicated

that several academics believed their university displayed lack of support, loyalty and commitment towards them.

Although higher than perceived organisational support, in this study the overall level of organisational commitment amongst academics was fairly low (Mean = 2.951). The dimensions for organisational commitment also varied with emotional attachment being the highest (Mean = 3.040), followed by the sense of belonging and duty (Mean = 2.992) and willingness to remain a loyal member of organisation having the lowest mean (Mean = 2.572). On a positive note, 41.2% of the academics (32.8% agreed and 8.4% strongly agreed) reflected that they enjoyed discussing the university with people from outside. However, 45.4% of the academics are uncertain and a further 33.3% either disagreed or strongly disagreed that they perceived the university's problems as their own, 43.1% are uncertain whether the institution has a great deal of personal meaning to them and 40.8% are uncertain if they feel a strong sense of belonging in the institution. Furthermore, in terms of attachment, 55.3% of the academics (32.4% agreed and 22.9% strongly agreed) believe that they could easily become attached to any other university. The findings of this study also coincides with some of the findings from previous studies. A study conducted by Hartzer *et al.,* (2006) revealed that POS had a positive influence on radiographers' organisational commitment in South African hospitals. In the current study, whilst 50% of the UKZN academics either disagreed or strongly disagreed that they are happy to spend the rest of their lives with the institution, only 23.3% either agreed or strongly agreed and the remaining 26.7% were uncertain. In the study conducted by Jordaan and Rothman (2005) it was noted that organisational support played a significant role in predicting organisational commitment levels. The abovementioned study investigated the impact of job resources on the work engagement and commitment levels of academics in a number of South African higher education institutions.

6.2.2 The relationships between work engagement, perceived organisational support and organisational commitment

The findings in this study revealed that the sub-dimensions of work engagement (emotional, cognitive, and physical) significantly intercorrelate with one another. The sub-dimensions of organisational commitment (willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation, emotional attachment, sense of belonging and duty) also significantly intercorrelate with each other. Perceived organisational support does not have sub-dimensions. The relationships between work engagement, perceived organisational support and organisational commitment

respectively are discussed by comparing and contrasting findings from this study with that of previous research.

➢ The relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment

In the current study, it was found that there is a significant, direct relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment. Studies undertaken by Essen (2011 as cited in Murthy, 2017) and Gülbahar (2017) also found a significant, positive relationship between organisational commitment and work engagement. In a study conducted by Buitendach, Johanna and Simons (2013) on work engagement and organisational commitment amongst call centre employees in South Africa, it was found that a positive and significant relationship between psychological capital, work engagement and organisational commitment exists. The results further indicated that work engagement was the only indicator that could predict organisational commitment.

Gokul *et al.,* (2012) examined the impact of work engagement and perceived organisational support on employee commitment and found that committed employees performed better than non-committed employees. The research findings also indicated that the provision or lack of job resources has a strong influence on work engagement in higher education; lack of provision from the organisation in terms of job resources may result in long term consequences such as that of reduced motivation and commitment (Gokul *et al*., 2012). This means that organisations must strive towards finding ways of creating a supportive environment in order for their employees to be better committed and consequently, perform better. According to Gokul *et al*. (2012), there are two conditions that need to be met in order for academics in higher education institutions to demonstrate commitment to their organisations: (1) availability of resources and (2) supportive work environment.

➢ The relationship between perceived organisational support and organisational commitment

The current study found a significant relationship between perceived organisational support and organisational commitment of academics at UKZN. The results of this study are in accordance with the findings of Armeli *et al.,* (2001), Eisenberger and Rhoades (2002), Lee and Peccei (2006) and Liu (2009), that is, if employees perceive their organisation as being supportive, their level of organisational commitment increases. As Eisenberger *et al*. (1986) denote, POS represents employee beliefs in the organisation's commitment to them and

consequently, employees with higher levels of POS repay the organisation with stronger levels of commitment. In addition, increased levels of POS create a sense of felt obligation to reciprocate the organisation's support by caring about the organisation's well-being and helping achieve its objectives (Armeli *et al.*, 2001).

Many studies have been conducted on the relationship of perceived organisational support either towards organisational commitment or job satisfaction only (Al-Ajmi, 2006; Alijanpour, Dousti, & Khodayari, 2013; Batool & Ullah, 2013; Makanjee, Hartzer, & Uys, 2006 as cited in Chaudhary & Rangnekar, 2017). However, there is limited research done on the relationship between perceived organisational support and organisational commitment among academic staff members in the South African context. Lecturers play a crucial role in fine-tuning, shaping and cultivating intellectual ability and the capacity of students in higher learning institutions. The value of knowledge imparted by lecturers creates a better future for the country (Mabasa *et al.*, 2016). The concept of perceived organisational support has been employed to predict organisational commitment (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986 as cited in Tumwesigye, 2010). Currie and Dollery (2006) conducted a study with the aim of using perceived organisational support to predict normative and affective commitment in employees. In the current study, it was found that there is a significant relationship between perceived organisational support and all the sub-dimensions of organisational commitment (affective, continuance, normative). However, LaMastro (1999) found a negative relationship between continuance commitment and perceived organisational support (r = -0.146, p = 0.024), meaning that employees that showed high levels of perceived organisational support felt that they did not need to stay with the organisation due to the availability of other attractive alternatives.

Based on the norm of reciprocity employees with high levels of POS are more likely to reciprocate the organisation with positive attitudes such as increased levels of affective commitment and positive work behaviours such as commitment towards organisational goals and low level of turnover. Cohen and Tansky (2001) identified perceived organisational support as a building block for satisfaction among employees. In addition, the empirical findings of Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) identified perceived organisational support as a factor that partially mediates the relationships between HRM practices and organisational commitment. In a similar study conducted by Mabasa *et al.* (2016), POS was not only found to have a direct influence on organisational commitment, but also an indirect impact via felt

obligation. POS was also found to have both a direct impact on affective organisational commitment and an indirect impact mediated by felt obligation.

Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and organisational support theory (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986) suggest that employees who perceive high levels of support from their organisation are inclined to repay the organisation. This study suggests that the academics will repay the organisations who supported them with stronger commitment to the organisation and developing a sense of felt obligation to reciprocate the organisation's support by caring about the organisation's well-being and helping achieve its objectives (Armeli *et al.*, 2001). However, the academics will not repay the organisations by maintaining membership in the organisation, which means they may still have the desire to leave the organisation though the organisation has supported them. Therefore, organisational support for the academic staff members is crucial for the quality of higher education institutions.

> **The relationship between work engagement and perceived organisational support**

In the current study, it was found that there is a significant and direct relationship between work engagement and perceived organisational support. In a similar study conducted by Johnson and Lolitha (2016) it was found that employee engagement is positively correlated with perceived organisational support. This means that employees are a critical asset in an organisation and therefore, organisations that adopt good measures support and enhance engagement levels in their employees (Johnson & Lolitha, 2016). Engagement is said to occur when employees are committed to their work and the organisation and are motivated to achieve organisational goals. In a study conducted by Freeney and Tiernan (2006) it was found that engagement was a constructive indicator of perceived organisational support. Research findings by Trofimov, Bondar, Muliutina and Riabchych (2016) also concurs that there exists a powerful connection between perceived organisational support and work engagement. This means that the more engaged the employee is, the more he/she displays higher levels of perceived organisational support and hence, remain loyal to the organisation (Trofimov *et al*., 2016).

> **The relationships between the sub-dimensions of work engagement and organisational commitment**

In the current study, it was found that the sub-dimensions of work engagement (emotional dimension, cognitive dimension, physical dimension) significantly correlate with the sub-dimensions of organisational commitment (willingness to remain a loyal member of the

organisation, emotional attachment, sense of belonging and duty) respectively. Similarly, Noori, Arizi, Zare and Babamiri (2010) studied the relationship of the components of work engagement and organisational commitment and found that a significant correlation exists between components of work engagement and dimensions of organisational commitment. Furthermore, among the components of work engagement, dedication was the best predictor of organisational commitment. Likewise, in a research study conducted by Burke and Elkot (2010) on managers and experts of different organisations in Egypt, it was found that work engagement is significantly and negatively related to intention to leave. A vast amount of research studies continue to emphasise the importance of studying employees' engagement and commitment and their vital impact on organisational success and performance (Buitendach, Field, Johanna, & Lyndsay, 2011; Chovwen, 2006; Lumley, 2009; Nurittamont, 2012 as cited in Leow & Khong, 2015). Committed and engaged employees are regarded as valued assets in organisations (Bothma & Roodt, 2012; Jerie & Ncube, 2012; Nurittamont, 2012 as cited in Affum-Osei, Acquaah, & Acheampong, 2015). Organisations, therefore, continue to focus on human resource initiatives that enhance the commitment, satisfaction and engagement of their employees (Bennet & Soulsby, 2012; Jerie & Ncube, 2012; Takash, 2012; Vuori, Toppinen-Tanner, & Mutanen, 2012 as cited in Adhikari, Singh, & Shukla, 2015).

Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) had previously hypothesised that the beneficial influence of affective commitment is weakened by normative commitment and continuance commitment. However, on the contrary other research studies indicate that normative commitment, whether alone or in conjunction with continuance commitment, increases the positive relationship between affective commitment and critical work outcomes such as that of employee turnover, work withdrawal behaviour and citizenship behaviour (Gellatly, Meyer, & Luchak, 2006; Wasti, 2005).

Krishna and Marquardt (2007) maintain that the instrumental perspective of commitment (the exchange process between the employee and the organisation) has influenced research on antecedents of organisational commitment in numerous ways. Krishna and Marquardt (2007) argue that variables emanating from the instrumental perspective will have very little impact on fostering commitment among knowledge workers. Instead, employees will become committed to an organisation if they perceive it as providing them with learning opportunities. Therefore, employees who believe that they are being treated as valuable assets for developmental purposes show increased levels of commitment in comparison to those who

view themselves as commodities ready to be bought and sold. Employees are only committed to the degree to which they believe the organisation is providing them with long-term development opportunities (Krishna & Marquardt, 2007). Continuance commitment ensures that employees maintain their organisational membership while those who are normally committed feel obligation on their part to continue working for the organisation (Khalid *et al.*, 2015). Thus, motivation and commitment on the part of workers is considered as important conditions for the accomplishment of the organisational goals (Aydin & Dogan, 2012).

A number of studies conducted in academia indicate that the organisational commitment of the academics have similar antecedents to that of employees in business (organisational justice, job insecurity, trust in management of the university, perceived organisational support, perceived organisational prestige) (Ambrose & Cropanzano, 2003; Barnett, Fuller, Frey, Hester, & Relyea, 2006; Chughtai & Zafar, 2006 as cited in Khalid & Khalid, 2015). Affective organisational commitment is said to be stronger when academics have adequate time to learn new tasks and also when they are granted the freedom to freely express their ideas and opinions (Khalid & Khalid, 2015). Antecedents of normative commitment comprise of academic tenure and perceived person-organisation fit. Antecedents of continuance commitment consist of academic ranking, organisational tenure and employment status. Other studies (Falkenburg & Schyns, 2007; Marchiori & Henkin, 2004 as cited in Khalid & Khalid, 2015) maintain that there is a correlation between the academic's commitment to the university and their gender; however, these results are not in accordance with literature (Herscovitch *et al.*, 2002).

Research conducted on academic staff members from 18 European universities indicates that affective and continuance commitment predicts self-reported job performance (Eisinga, Teelken, & Doorewaard, 2010 as cited in Khan *et al.*, 2013). Similar results were found for Pakistani university teachers (Chughtai & Zafar, 2006). A weak but significant relationship was also found between organisational commitment and job performance with an objective measurement of job performance. Zhang and Jing (2016) measured job performance of Chinese academic staff by assessing the quantity and quality of scientific publications and grants and found that all of the three types of organisational commitment significantly predict job performance (Zhang & Jing, 2016). Academics with high levels of normative and continuance commitment published more actively and received more grants while other academics with low levels of affective commitment were less active in publishing and receiving grants. Zhang and Jing (2016) maintain that academic staff with strong affective commitment often take on

additional activities within the university that are beyond their formal job requirements (for example, supervising student clubs, working on department or university committees, organising trips or parties, or replacing colleagues who cannot work). Due to this additional work, these academics have less time or energy for their own research. As in other types of organisations, in universities the organisational commitment of academics is one of the main predictors of the intention to stay at the university. Studies show that staff at faculties with low levels of affective commitment more often intend to leave the organisation (Chughtai & Zafar, 2006 as cited in Adhikari *et al*., 2015).

> ## The relationships between the sub-dimensions of perceived organisational support and organisational commitment

The findings of this study indicates that there exist significant relationships between the sub-dimensions of organisational commitment (willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation, emotional attachment, sense of belonging and duty) and perceived organisational support. Humphreys and Hoque (2007) maintain that while committed academics are key to the success of higher educational institutions, limited research has been conducted to examine the role of perceived organisational support (POS) to enhance the level of affective commitment of academics using the academics working in institutions of higher learning (Bakalis & Joiner, 2006; Capelleras, 2005; Rowley, 1996 as cited in Choong *et al.*, 2012). However, in the current study, a significant relationship was noted between perceived organisational support and emotional attachment. Similarly, in a case study conducted by LaMastro (1999) examining the relationship between commitment and perceived organisational support, a strong, positive correlation between POS and affective commitment ($r = 0.597$, $p = 0.001$) was noted. This means that employees that felt supported and appreciated by the organisation demonstrated a degree of emotional attachment towards the organisation and their professional roles. Likewise, a study conducted by Barnett *et al.* (2006) revealed that POS was strongly related to academics' affective commitment to the university. Furthermore, in a similar study conducted by Gokul *et al.* (2012) it was found that the dedication dimension of work engagement partially mediates the relationship between POS and affective commitment (Gokul *et al.*, 2012). This implies that, when employees perceive their organisation to be supportive, they become more dedicated and this creates an affective commitment towards the organisation. Thus, it is the responsibility of the organisation to understand employee needs and to provide a supportive climate for their employees, to keep them committed. According to Gokul *et al.* (2012), the extent to which the employee is

dedicated to their work determines the level of affective commitment towards their organisation. The authors add that although the other dimensions contribute to engagement with the organisation, it is only dedication that contributes to attachment with the organisation (Gokul *et al.*, 2012).

Organisations value employee commitment and hard work. By contrast, employees prefer to work for organisations that support and treat them as valuable assets (Hoffmeister, 2006 as cited in Khalid & Khalid, 2015). Emotionally committed employees exhibit high levels of performance, reduced absence at work and are less likely to quit their job. According to Hoffmeister (2006 as cited in Khalid & Khaldi, 2015), engagement fosters increased levels of commitment and enhances creativity. Organisations value employee support, commitment and allegiance. The employee's emotional attachment to an organisation has been said to yield benefits such as loyalty and high job performance (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982 as cited in Eisenberger & Rhoades, 2002). Employees are more concerned with the organisation's level of commitment to them because being valued comprises of benefits such as approval and respect, pay and promotion, and access to information and other forms of aid needed to better carry out one's job. The theory of social exchange describes employment as the exchange of effort and loyalty. The basic tenant that underpins the theory of social exchange is that relationships change over time resulting in trust, loyalty and mutual commitment. This means that when the employer treats the employee well, the employee will reciprocate in the same manner leading to beneficial outcomes for both the employer and employee. In such instances, the social exchange relationship is regarded as the mediator of advantageous and fair transaction between the employer and employee (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Social exchange theorists argue that resource provision and support received from the employer is only regarded as valuable if it is based on discretionary effort as opposed to circumstance. This kind of aid shows that the organisation genuinely appreciates the employee. The implication here is that organisational rewards such as bonuses and promotions contribute more to perceived organisational support if the employee believes that they stem from the organisation's voluntary efforts rather than from the union's demands (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986; Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli, & Lynch, 1997; Shore & Shore, 1995 as cited in Eisenberger & Rhoades, 2002). The theory of organisational support is based on the premise that employees who perceive the organisation as supportive and caring are more likely to reciprocate in favourable behaviours directed towards the success of the organisation (Ahmed, Amin, Ismail, & Ramzan, 2012). Tansky and Cohen (2001 as cited in Cohen, 2007)

acknowledged that perceived organisational support helps build organisational commitment among employees.

> **The relationships between the sub-dimensions of work engagement and perceived organisational support**

The findings of the current study revealed that there is a significant relationship between the emotional, cognitive and physical sub-dimensions of work engagement and perceived organisational support. Similarly, Kinnunen *et al.* (2008 as cited in Beukes & Botha, 2013) found significant positive correlations between POS and the three dimensions of work engagement. Additionally, Dumitru, Maricutoiu, Sava, Sulea, Schaufeli and Virga (2012) demonstrated that POS had a positive impact on work engagement which, in turn, led to more organisational citizenship behaviours and less counterproductive behaviours at work. Engaged employees are said to possess a sense of energetic and affective connection with their work tasks and also have a high level of mental resistance (Bakker, Gonzalez-Roma, Salanova, & Schaufeli, 2002). A study conducted by Caesens and Stinglhamber (2014) also examined the relationship between POS and work engagement and aimed to identify the mechanisms through which POS positively influences work engagement and the consequences of the aforementioned relationship between the two constructs on employees' job satisfaction, psychological strains and performance. Firstly, the results showed that self-efficacy partially mediated the relationship between POS and work engagement. The implication here is that, the more employees feel supported and valued by their organisation, the more they develop a high self-efficacy and, consequently, the more they become absorbed into their tasks and perform their jobs with vigour and dedication (Caesens & Stinglhamber, 2014). The results provide evidence that the motivational role of POS (that is, a job resource) and self-efficacy (that is, a personal resource) are good antecedents for predicting employee work engagement (Caesens & Stinglhamber, 2014). The results of the study by Caesens and Stinglhamber (2014) are in line with the theoretical suggestion from Eisenberger and Stinglhamber (2011) that POS, by reinforcing employees' self-efficacy, trigger them to develop an intrinsic interest in their work tasks, which in turn, gives rise to increased levels of engagement.

6.2.3 The impact of work engagement and perceived organisational support on organisational commitment

The findings of the current study reflect that work engagement and perceived organisational support significantly account for 54.8% (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.548$) of the variance in the

organisational commitment of academics. Furthermore, perceived organisational support accounts more for the variance in organisational commitment than work engagement meaning that perceived organisational support has a greater impact on organisational commitment than work engagement. Similarly, Saks (2006) found that work engagement and perceived organisational support significantly impact on organisational commitment The study also concurs with a study conducted by Zhang and Jing (2016) which found that work engagement and perceived organisational support impact on employee commitment. However, Fard, Seyedyousefi and Tohidi (2015) found that work engagement and organisational support had no direct bearing on organisational commitment. This implies that an employee may demonstrate high levels of engagement and perceived the organisation as being supportive with regard to their career, however, this does mean the employee will be committed to the organisation.

6.2.4 Impact of biographical variables

This section discusses the influence of biographical (age, marital status, position, tenure, gender) and institutional (college) variables on work engagement, organisational commitment and perceived organisational support respectively.

➢ **Work engagement and Biographical and Institutional variables**

The traditional blanket approach followed by most employers whereby the needs of all employees are treated similarly is no longer effective due to the diversity of the current workforce. According to Robinson (2015 as cited in Murthy, 2017), research surrounding engagement ignores the issues of gender, age, education, tenure, position religion and class yet these can have an influential impact on work engagement. Thus, it is important to appreciate the impact of demographics while studying employee engagement (Balain & Sparrow, 2009). Another research study conducted by the Institute for Employment studies (as cited in Robinson, Perryman, & Hayday, 2004) in 2003 in 14 organisations demonstrated the impact of biographical and job characteristics on employee engagement. Literature, however, presents mixed evidence with regards to the influence of various demographic factors, such as gender, age, education, tenure, position, and income, on employee engagement.

➢ **Work engagement and Age**

Research evidence with regards to the relationship between age and work engagement reflect a few inconsistencies. For example, Bakker and Schaufeli (2004b) in their multi-country study

on testing the psychometric properties of Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) reported no significant correlation between age and work engagement for the overall sample. Leiter and Maslach (2008) maintain that variables such as age, work experience, sex, marital status and occupation type make interpreting demographic variables in relation to engagement a challenging task due to a lack of research evidence.

The findings of this research study indicates that there is no significant difference in the levels of work engagement and its sub-dimensions (emotional, cognitive and physical engagement) respectively amongst UKZN academics varying in age. The results of the above-mentioned study are also consistent with that of Coetzee and Rothmann (2005) who found no significant differences in the work engagement levels of employees of different age groups. However, in a study conducted by Mostert and Rothmann (2006) it was reported that there is a significant positive association between age and work engagement in their study on 1 794 South African Police service officers. Furthermore, Coetzee and de Villiers (2010) found that different age groups differ significantly with respect to only the absorption dimension of work engagement. In their study it was found that absorption levels for employees in the age group 26–40 years and above 40 years were significantly higher than those for younger employees (< 25 years). On the contrary, Avery, McKay and Wilson (2007) in a study among UK employees reported that engagement decreases with age, that is, younger employees displayed higher engagement levels when compared to older employees. Hayday, Hooker and Robinson (2007) research findings maintain that engagement is highest among younger employees (< 20 years) and declines for older employees during the middle of their careers. James, Swanberg and McKechnie (2007) reported that older workers were more engaged than younger workers when they worked with a supportive supervisor in a supportive psychological climate.

➢ **Work engagement and Marital status**
The findings of this research study indicated that there is no significant difference in the levels work engagement and its sub-dimensions (emotional, cognitive and physical engagement) respectively amongst UKZN academics varying in marital status. In other contrary findings, according to a Gallup report (2014 as cited in Adhikari *et al*., 2015) a significant difference was noted in the engagement levels of employees varying in marital status. The study found that married employees were more engaged when compared to those who were unmarried. The aforementioned finding implies that a settled personal and professional life may be one of the reasons behind the high engagement level. The results of the Gallup Consulting Report (2014

cited in Adhikari *et al*., 2015) is also consistent with the findings as they reported that married employees were more engaged than unmarried employees. However, in a study conduct by Kong (2009) it was found that as far as marital status was concerned, unmarried employees were less occupied at the home front, had less responsibilities, more time and were full of energy to spend on jobs which led to increased levels work engagement.

> **Work engagement and Position**

The findings of the current research study indicate that there is a significant difference in overall work engagement of UKZN academics in varying positions. In the study, it was noted that academics from various positions display varying degrees of the work engagement and the physical work engagement both of which are highest amongst Professors and Associate Professors and exceeds that of Senior Lecturers and Lectures. Arora and Adhikari (2013) maintain that there exists a significant relationship between an employee's level of position and work experience. Mohapatra and Sharma (2010) also concur that work experience and work positions are consistent predictors of employee engagement. Similarly, Swaminathan and Ananth (2012) found that work position influences employee engagement. Furthermore, in a research study conducted by Adhikari *et al.* (2015) it was found that employees in high positions coupled with many years of work experience were more engaged than those in low level positions with minimal work experience. Adhikari *et al.* (2015) found that employees in higher positions in the organisational hierarchy were exposed to numerous benefits and job autonomy which ultimately leads to increased work engagement levels. For example, employees in managing positions had access to strategic resources, better relations with the executives of the organisation and higher levels of accountability, leading to higher engagement. Employees in non-managerial positions displayed low levels of engagement and this was related to job related characteristics and work atmosphere.

> **Work engagement and Tenure**

In the current study, there is no significant difference in the levels of work engagement and its sub-dimensions (emotional, cognitive and physical engagement) respectively amongst UKZN academics varying in tenure. Similarly, Cooper-Thomas and Xu (2011) did not find any significant association between tenure and engagement. Likewise, Chaudhary and Rangnekar (2017) found no significant differences in work engagement levels of executives with varying tenure in the organisation. Furthermore, in their study, Chaudhary and Rangnekar (2017) found that vigour, dedication, and absorption were found to have no significant difference in terms

of tenure which is also contradictory with the findings of some of the previous studies. A number of academic and practitioner studies have reported an inverse relationship between tenure and work engagement (Avery *et al*., 2007; Buckingham, 2001; Kohli, Bhattacharyya, & Kohli, 2015), that is, engagement levels tend to decrease with increasing organisational tenure for some employees. For example, Coetzee and Rothmann (2005) in their study found that amongst employees of a higher education institution, employees with less than 5 years of work experience scored significantly higher on the vigour dimension of engagement as compared to employees with more than 10 years of experience. Avery *et al.* (2007) also found that employees with higher organisational tenure were less engaged in comparison to those with lower organisational tenure. The implication here is that when employees have been with the same organisation for long periods, they are more likely to become stagnant and complacent which perhaps could be the reason for their low levels of engagement. Deery, Iverson and Walsh (2006) maintain that an increase in tenure means that employees get more time and opportunities to experience disappointments and contract breaches which may result in lower engagement levels. This means that new recruits are more likely to display positive perceptions of the organisational life due to the novelty effect, whereas individuals with longer tenure in the organisation are well informed about the organisational loopholes and are likely to assess the organisation in a cynical manner. Similarly, Yildirim (2008) found that employees with high levels of work experience were more engaged compared to employees with less experience. However, Swaminathan and Ananth (2012) maintain that employees who have more experience display higher levels of involvement and engagement towards their work when compared to others with less work experience.

➢ **Work engagement and College**

In the current study, it was found that academics from the various colleges displayed varying degrees of the physical dimension of work engagement. The physical dimension of work engagement is highest in the College of Law and Management Studies, followed by the College of Health Sciences, then the College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science and lastly, the College of Humanities. However, there was no significant difference found in terms of the overall work engagement as well as the emotional and cognitive dimensions of work engagement amongst academics from the various colleges. The results of the study are in line with that of Adhikari *et al*. (2015), who found that IT and Bank employees from varying departments displayed different levels of work engagement.

Work engagement and Gender

The current study found that there is no significant difference in the levels of work engagement and its sub-dimensions (emotional, cognitive and physical engagement) respectively amongst UKZN male and female academics. Literature has remained somewhat inconsistent with regards to the relationship between work engagement and gender with some studies reporting higher engagement for women, some for men, and others reporting no differences at all. For instance, Bakker, Salanova and Schaufeli (2006) in their scale validation study from nine countries reported weak and ambiguous relationships between gender and work engagement. For some countries, no correlation was observed but for some, men were found to have higher engagement levels than women. However, in studies conducted by Eghlidi and Karimi (2016) as well as Chaudhary and Rangnekar (2017) it was found that there were no significant differences in the work engagement levels between men and women. Similarly, Mostert and Rothmann (2006) reported no significant association between gender and work engagement in South African police service officers. Likewise, in another study conducted by Coetzee and Rothmann (2005), it was found that there is no significant correlation between gender and work engagement amongst academics of a higher educational institution in South Africa. In a research study of Turkish counsellors conducted by Yildirim (2008) it was found that levels of engagement did not differ significantly between males and females. However, Avery *et al.* (2007) found that women were more engaged than their male co-workers. In contrast, some research findings maintain that females are at higher risk of developing stress due to competing work demands and household responsibilities and therefore, reported higher levels of burnout and lower levels of engagement (Bakker *et al.*, 2006; Clark, Sprang, & Whitt- Woosley, 2007).

Organisational commitment and Biographical and Institutional variables

A vast number of studies have been conducted with the aim of identifying factors that contribute to the development of organisational commitment (Adekola, 2012; Aydin & Dogan, 2012; Sial, Jilani, Imran, & Zaheer, 2011 as cited in Fard *et al.*, 2015). The findings of these and other studies will be compared and contrasted with that obtained in the current study.

Organisational commitment and Age

In a range of research studies, age has been considered as an important predictor of organisational commitment; however, the value of this factor in commitment has received some scrutiny (Finegold *et al.*, 2002; Ruokolainen, 2011). The current study indicates that there is a

significant difference in the level of organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions (willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation, emotional attachment, sense of belonging and duty) respectively amongst UKZN academics varying in age. Specifically, the study reflects that older academics display higher levels of organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions. Likewise, Ruokolainen (2011) noted that the older the employee becomes, the more organisationally committed he/she becomes. There are three reasons why age has been taken as an explanatory factor for organisational commitment, some of which are also contradictory in nature. Firstly, age has an influence on what an employee is seeking from work and, therefore, serves as a determining factor in terms of their level of commitment towards the organisation. According to Ruokolainen (2011), compared to the older generation, younger employees are most likely to stay in one organisation provided they are satisfied with skill development. Commitment is also strongly associated with good work-life balance especially with younger employees in comparison to older employees. Finegold *et al*., (2002), on the other hand, maintain that older employees have increased levels of commitment because they are less likely to switch jobs if they perceive the current one to be secure. Secondly, the stage of an employee's career is often linked with age because it reflects their organisational commitment (Finegold *et al.*, 2002). Like Ruokolainen (2011), Finegold *et al*., (2002), Saifuddin *et al.,* (2012), Dongre and Nifadkar (2014) found that age has a statistically significant effect on employees' organisational commitment. Likewise, Amangala (2013) found in his study that age has a significant impact on organisational commitment amongst Nigerian academics. However, several studies found no significant correlation between organisational commitment and age (Chughtai & Zafar, 2006; Iqbal, 2010; Weidmer, 2006 cited in Salami, 2008) and in the Pakistani knitwear industry, Iqbal (2010) attributes this to high employee turnover.

➢ **Organisational commitment and Marital status**

Marital status, as a biographical variable, is believed to have a potential influence on organisational commitment. The findings of this research study indicates that there is a significant difference in overall organisational commitment and its sub-dimension of willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation amongst UKZN academics varying in marital status. Specifically, in this study widowed academics display the highest levels of organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions, followed by married and then single academics. Similarly, recent literature shows that married employees have higher levels of organisational commitment compared to single employees and attribute this to the fact that they

need a stable job, due to their perceived responsibility to, and economic safety of, their families (Kónya, Matić, & Pavlovic, 2016). The findings of this study are consistent with those of Saifuddin *et al.* (2012), and Tikare (2015), who also found that marital status has a significant impact on organisational commitment in African universities. Likewise, Dongre and Nifadkar (2014) found that marital status is related to organisational commitment in India.

➢ **Organisational commitment and Position**

The influence of job characteristics consists of two categories, namely, higher and lower level positions in the organisational hierarchy (Gülbahar, 2017). The findings of the current study reflects that there exists a significant difference in the level of organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions (willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation, emotional attachment, sense of belonging and duty) amongst UKZN academics in varying positions. Specifically, this study shows that organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions are the highest amongst Professors, followed by Associate Professors, then Senior Lectures and lastly, Lectures. This evidently implies that, more senior academics display higher levels of organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions in comparison to those academics in lower level work positions. Likewise, Gülbahar (2017), Kónya *et al*. (2016) and Tikare (2015) noted that the level or work position an employee is in serves as a determining factor in terms of their level of organisational commitment. In their various studies, these researchers found that employees in higher levels of work positions had higher levels of commitment in comparison to those in lower levels of work positions. Furthermore, Eker, Eker and Pala (2008) found that position is related to organisational commitment amongst healthcare workers in Turkey. Likewise, Amangala (2013) found in his study that position has a significant impact on organisational commitment amongst Nigerian academics.

➢ **Organisational commitment and Tenure**

The findings of the current study indicates that there is a significant difference in the level of organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions (willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation, emotional attachment, sense of belonging and duty) respectively amongst UKZN academics in terms of tenure. Specifically, it was observed that academics with longer tenure display higher levels of organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions. Similarly, Lew (2011) found that tenure positively influenced the commitment of academics. Likewise, Iqbal (2010) found that length of service was significantly and positively associated with organisational commitment in Pakistan. Numerous other researchers

confirmed the relationship between tenure and organisational commitment (Davis & Newstrom, 2007; Dongre & Nifadkar, 2014; Eker *et al.*, 2008; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Saifuddin *et al.*, 2012; Salami, 2008; Steers, 1977 as cited in Bahar & Türkay, 2017) and suggested the possibility that the longer people remain in an organisation and the older they become, their feelings of responsibility for outcomes relevant to them, also increases. This argument was further attested by Davis and Newstrom (2007). Furthermore, Amangala (2013) found in his study that tenure has a significant impact on organisational commitment amongst Nigerian academics. However, Kónya *et al*., (2016) cautions that employees with longer length service are the only ones who have higher levels of organisational commitment but that does not mean that other employees are not committed to their organisations. It simply implies that employees with longer services have slightly higher commitment, that is, they are the most committed employees to their organisations.

➢ **Organisational commitment and College**

The current study indicates that academics from various colleges display varying degrees of overall organisational commitment. The overall organisational commitment is highest amongst staff in the College of Health Sciences, followed by the College of Law and Management Studies, then the College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science and lastly, the College of Humanities. Staff in the College of Law and Management Studies followed by the College of Health Sciences also display higher levels of sense of belonging and duty than staff in the College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science and the College of Humanities. The findings of this study are in line with that of Burke and Elkot (2010), who found that there was a significant difference in commitment levels of employees from the various departments and the differences were associated with the nature of the job and work positions. On the contrary, in a study conducted by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2012) at the Lancaster University Management School, no significant differences were found in the commitment levels of academics from various colleges.

➢ **Organisational commitment and Gender**

The relationship between gender and organisational commitment is controversial in nature due to the lack of consistency amongst research findings by various researchers. The findings of the current study indicate that there is no significant difference in the level of organisational commitment and its sub-dimensions (willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation, emotional attachment, sense of belonging and duty) amongst male and female UKZN

academics. Similarly, Karamad, Pourghaz and Tamini (2011) found no difference in male and females' overall organisational commitment. Likewise, in a study on demographic and psychological factors predicting organisational commitment amongst industrial workers, Salami (2008) found that gender was not a significant predictor of organisational commitment. However, a study by Affum-Osei *et al*. (2015) reported a weak relationship between gender and organisational commitment but suggested that gender affects the employees' attitude towards the organisation. Furthermore, Lew (2011) found that gender has a major influence on the commitment levels of academics. Furthermore, Dongre and Nifadkar (2014) found that gender is related to organisational commitment in India. Another study conducted by Forkuoh, Affum-Osei, Osei and Addo Yaw (2014) revealed that female employees were highly committed compared to their male counterparts. However, Kumasey, Delle and Ofei (2014) found that males displayed higher levels of organisational commitment when compared to their female counterparts.

➢ **Perceived organisational support and Biographical and Institutional variables**

Eisenberger *et al,*. (1986) refers to perceived organisational support (POS) as notions developed by employees with regards to how much the organisation cares about them and their well-being. Allen *et al*. (2008) defines perceived organisational support as the manner in which an organisation values its employees' contributions and cares about them. Perceived organisational support is characterised by components such as the creation of positive working climates, fair treatment, managerial support and provision of rewards (Eisenberger & Rhoades, 2002). The organisational support theory states that, personnel that perceive their employer as being supportive go the extra mile to help the organisation to achieve its objectives (Aselage & Eisenberger, 2003). However, the question is whether biographical variables influence perceived organisational support.

➢ **Perceived organisational support and Age**

The findings of this study indicates that academics from various age groups display varying degrees of perceived organisational support. Perceived organisational support was highest amongst academics who were over 60 years of age, followed by those between 51-60 years, then those between 41-50 years, then 20-30 years and lastly, those between 31-40 years. Evidently, older academics perceive higher levels of organisational support. Similarly, Atay Colakoglu and Culha (2010) found that age has a significant effect on perceived organisational

support and revealed that perceived organisational support was highest amongst older employees compared to the younger generation.

> **Perceived organisational support and Marital status**

In the current study, single, married and widowed academics display varying degrees of perceived organisational support. Widowed academics display the highest level of perceived organisational support, followed by married and then single academics. The findings of this study are also in line with a similar study conducted by Mabasa *et al*. (2016), who found that academics displayed varying levels of perceived organisational support in terms of marital status. On the contrary, Aneet and Kaur (2017) found no significant difference in the level of perceived organisational support among married and unmarried bank employees.

> **Perceived organisational support and Position**

The findings of this study show that academics from the different positions display varying degrees of perceived organisational support. Perceived organisational support was the highest amongst Professors, followed by Associate Professors, then Senior Lecturers and lastly, amongst Lecturers. Similarly, Aneet and Kaur (2017) found a significant difference in the levels of perceived organisational support between respondents in higher positions and those in lower level positions. On the contrary, Chaudhary and Rangnekar (2017), found no significant differences in perceived organisational support of employees in different work positions.

> **Perceived organisational support and Tenure**

The findings of this research study indicate that academics varying in tenure display varying degrees of perceived organisational support. It also demonstrates that as the tenure of academics increases, the levels of perceived organisational support increases progressively. The levels of perceived organisational support amongst academics who recently joined academia is relatively low. The findings of this research study are consistent with that of Ucar and Ukten (2010 as cited in Burns, 2016) who conducted their study in the banking, pharmaceutical, insurance, chemical, and telecommunication industries and found that these employees displayed varying degrees of perceived organisational support. The study by Gokul *et al*. (2012) in the petrochemical industry revealed that there is a link between perceived organisational support and tenure and concluded that employees who had served the organisation for longer periods perceived it as supportive towards them. Similarly, decades

ago, Porter *et al.* (1974 as cited in Burns, 2016) revealed that in an engineering firm, employees with strong perceived organisational support also demonstrated a strong desire to serve the organisation for long periods. Likewise, Driscoll and Randall (1999 as cited Deery *et al.*, 2006) noted that organisational attachment tends to increase among employees who have a strong belief in the organisation's support system. There is evidence that perceived organisational support creates a positive atmosphere thereby encouraging employees to provide their long term skills to the organisation and enhancing trust and resulting in creative innovation; therefore, increased perceived organisational support has an indisputable impact on tenure (Książek *et al.*, 2016 as cited in Murthy, 2017).

➤ Perceived organisational support and College

This study demonstrates that academics from various colleges display varying degrees of perceived organisational support. Perceived organisational support was the highest amongst academics from the College of Health Sciences, followed by academics from the College of Law and Management Studies, then the College of Humanities and lastly, the College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science. The findings of this study are consistent with that of Colan (2009), who found that employees from different departments in the banking sector revealed varying levels of perceived organisational support. Bitner, Brown and Meuter (2005 as cited in Zhang & Jing, 2016), on the other hand, found no significant differences in the level of perceived organisational support of employees in varying departments.

➤ Perceived organisational support and Gender

The findings of the current study indicate that there is no significant difference in the perceived organisational support of male and female academics. On the contrary, Singaraj (2008) found that there is a significant difference in perceived organisational support of male and females. The analysis of the aforementioned study showed that female employees displayed high levels of perceived organisational support compared to their male counterparts. It was also found that female employees perceived higher levels of job and well-being dimension of perceived organisational support.

Work Engagement (WE)

- Highest – higher than organisational commitment and perceived organisational support.
- Academics display high levels of cognitive work engagement, followed by emotional work engagement and then physical work engagement.
- *Positives*:
  - 91.2% of the academics are enthusiastic about their jobs/academic work.
  - 90.1% of the academics found their jobs to be inspiring.
  - 90.9% of the academics found meaningfulness and purpose in their work.
  - 89.7% of the academics agreed that their jobs are challenging.
  - 83.6% of the academics are convinced they are able to deal with the competing demands of their jobs.
  - 82.4% of the academics experience happiness when they are working intensely.
- *Areas for improvement*:
  - 26.3% of the academics are uncertain about being able to voice their opinions and 16.8% disagreed that they can and 13.7% strongly disagreed.

Organisational Commitment (OC)

- 2nd highest – lower than work engagement but higher than perceived organisational commitment.
- In terms of the dimensions of OC, emotional commitment > sense of belonging and duty > willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation.
- *Positive*:
  - ✓ 41.2% enjoyed discussing the university with people from outside.
- *Lots of room for improvement*:
  - ✓ 45.4% of the academics were uncertain that they perceived the university's problems as their own.
  - ✓ 43.1% of the academics were uncertain whether the institution has a great deal of personal meaning for them.
  - ✓ 40.8% of the academics were uncertain if they felt a strong sense of belonging in the institution.
  - ✓ In terms of attachment, 55.3% of the academics believe that they can easily become attached to another institution.
  - ✓ 50% not happy to spend the rest of their lives with the university.

Perceived Organisational Support (POS)

- Lowest – lower than work engagement and organisational commitment respectively.
- Lots of room for improvement.
- Positives:
  - 38.2% believe that the university values their contribution to its well-being.
- Areas for improvement: Academics are uncertain:
  - As to whether the university cares about their general satisfaction at work (57.3%).
  - Whether the university has concern for them (57.3%).
  - Whether or not the university cares about their well-being (55.3%).
  - Whether or not the university cares about their concerns and opinions (47.7%).
  - (45.8%) of the academics are uncertain whether the institution would ignore their complaints.
  - Whether the university appreciates their extra efforts in favour of the institution (45%).
  - Whether the university is willing to extend itself to help them better perform (44.7%).
  - Whether the university exerts efforts in making their work tasks interesting (45.6%).
  - Whether the university provides assistance whenever they needed a special favour (41.6%).

Relationship between WE and OC

- Academics display higher levels of WE than OC.
- There is a significant relationship between WE and OC.
- The sub-dimensions of WE (emotional, cognitive, physical) significantly correlate with the sub-dimensions of OC (willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation, emotional attachment, sense of belonging and duty) respectively.

WE and POS account for 54.8% of the variance in OC; POS has greater impact on OC than WE

Relationship between WE and POS

- There is a significant relationship between WE and POS.
- There is a significant relationship between the sub-dimensions of WE (emotional, cognitive, physical) and POS respectively.

Relationship between POS and OC

- OC of academics is greater than POS of academics.
- There is a significant relationship between POS and OC.
- There is a significant relationship between the sub-dimensions of OC (willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation, emotional attachment, sense of belonging and duty) and POS.

BIOGRAPHICAL & INSTITUTIONAL INFLUENCES

Significant differences based on:
- Position
- College

No Significant differences based on:
- Age
- Marital status
- Tenure
- Gender

Significant differences based on:
- Age
- Marital status
- Position
- Tenure
- College

No Significant differences based on:
- Gender

Significant differences based on:
- Age
- Marital status
- Position
- Tenure
- College

No significant differences based on:
- Gender

Figure 6. 1: Results of the study

6.3 Conclusion

The modern day employee is very different from employees of the early 20th century. In today's work setting there are various factors that motivate employees to do their best and perform beyond what is expected of them, while remaining loyal and committed to their organisation. As a result, organisations are constantly challenged to find various ways of enhancing employee commitment and performance. Highly committed academics are said to have stronger aspirations to be psychologically present at work and are likely to pay a meaningful contribution to their respective institutions. Hence, motivation and commitment on the employee's part is a critical condition for the achievement of organisational goals provided that the organisation is supportive. In conclusion, this chapter discussed the results emanating from this study in connection with numerous other studies to substantiate the evidence obtained in the study. The conclusions that ensue enable the formulation of meaningful recommendations for enhancing work engagement, perceived organisational support and hence, organisational commitment.

<center>**CHAPTER 7**</center>

<center>**RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**</center>

7.1 Introduction

The emblematic credo which maintains that, be loyal to the organisation, and the organisation will be loyal to you is of bygone era. To whom much is given, much is required; therefore, the amount of support afforded by the organisation as perceived by the workers bears direct influence on the manner in which employees engage with their work and thus demonstrates their commitment to the organisation. Like any other business sector, higher education institutions are also driven by the need to sustain both national and global competitive advantage and, thus, rely on productive and committed employees (academics). The results of the thesis have revealed a considerable number of implications for both the academics within the current South African Higher Education sector, the University of KwaZulu-Natal and also for Human Resource practitioners.

Academics are knowledge workers and they need to be effectively managed for the strategic benefit and competitive advantage of the university. Universities need to recognise that academics are valuable for competitive leverage. Knowledge is a highly sought after commodity and this means that leveraging academic human capital with the knowledge creation capabilities is imperative for the competitiveness of universities. This section will discuss the implications in the wider context of the Higher Education sector and then provide practical implications for the direct managers of academics (Heads of Departments or Schools) and the more general, that is, for the HR managers in universities.

7.2 Recommendations based on the results of the study

From the results of the study, it is evident that the level of workplace engagement is the highest amongst the academics serving the university, followed by organisational commitment and lastly, perceived organisational support. However, there is room for improvement in all dimensions and the aim of this chapter is to make recommendations to enhance all three, namely, work engagement, perceived organisational support and organisational commitment.

Strategies to facilitate each of these imperatives needed to achieve organisational outcomes are recommended.

7.2.1 Recommendations for enhancing work engagement

Emotional engagement comprises of three components, namely, meaningfulness, vigour and psychological presence. The three components represent the feeling or ability to be able to engage oneself at work and to possess these means; to find meaning in the work being done; to be emotionally available to engage; be psychologically present; and have high levels of mental resilience and energy for the job. Cognitive engagement consist of intrinsic motivation, job involvement, attention, absorption and dedication. The notion of cognitive engagement links one's capability to engage oneself at (in) work; be involved; take pride in one's work, be intrinsically motivated by the job/work and requires task attentiveness and absorption. Individual engagement outcomes consist of affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment, job satisfaction and high levels of engagement. The individual engagement outcomes are evident in academics who are emotionally attached to the university; satisfied with the job and the work being done; involved in the dimensions of the job; not emotionally, cognitively, or physically exhausted; and with no intention to leave the university. This implies that there is an interaction between cognitive engagement capabilities, emotional engagement capabilities and individual engagement outcomes. The engagement of academics is highly influenced by the core job dimensions and a supportive organisational environment. Organisational characteristics are important antecedents to the development of all levels of engagement. These engagement precursors include:

➤ *Job enrichment*

The job characteristics have a strong direct impact on employee level of engagement and also on the perceptions of a supportive environment. The notion of job enrichment is driven by the end goal which is reducing job dissatisfaction, enhancing motivation and employee engagement at the workplace. Research indicates that job enrichment positively impacts on engagement through job involvement and intrinsic motivation. The results from this thesis confirmed the significant role that the job characteristics has on the cognitive engagement and the individual engagement outcomes. Providing support for job enrichment as a mechanism to drive engagement through the core job dimensions is a very important precursor of work engagement and it is therefore important for organisations to invest in job redesign and job enrichment.

➢ *Job characteristics as precursors of engagement*

Job characteristics are important precursors of work engagement. Components of a job's characteristics such as skill variety, task identity, autonomy, and feedback not only motivates employees but it also enhances employee engagement. This means that the extent to which a job has task variety and gives employees plenty of room to exercise autonomy while performing complex work tasks, demands a high level of engagement. In other words, the degree to which a job requires an employee to exhibit certain behaviours and, apply a set of varying skills enhances task meaningfulness and purposeful work accomplishment. For instance, low skill variety occurs when an employee is performing the same tasks cyclically which results in a lower level of engagement capabilities, namely, cognitive, emotional and physical engagement. This means job characteristics with task variety, autonomy, task identity and feedback results in higher skill involvement and enhances job meaningfulness. The results of this thesis regards the importance of the job characteristics as a key driver for enhanced engagement.

➢ *Enhance Open Communication Channels*

Engagement can be enhanced by increasing communication channels because this leads to greater cognitive awareness of job characteristics which this thesis has confirmed as a precursor or antecedent of engagement. This means that it is important to involve academics in discussions pertaining to issues that may directly or indirectly affect them such as job expectations, calculation of teaching workloads and supervision workloads, key performance areas (KPAs) in performance management, issues with the work environment, job performance and rewards or even more general university issues.

➢ *Recognition and acknowledgement of Good Work*

It is important for an organisation to give recognition to excelling employees. This means that appreciating good work from academics has a positive impact on intrinsic motivation, affective commitment, dedication, vigour and absorption. To recognise good work requires the perception of a supportive organisational environment, which is the key antecedent or the precursor to enhanced engagement. Recognition can either be formal or informal, for example, personal congratulatory acknowledgements of excelling academics from Head of departments.

Informally, Heads of Departments can, through personal congratulations and recognition, acknowledge the input of academic staff members. Formally, recognition can be given in monetary terms such as performance bonuses and award ceremonies. In particular, performance moderation processes held by Colleges need to fairly recognise good work and not categorise employees using the approach of painting all academics with the same brush with the aim of saving on bonuses.

> *Career development opportunities*

The new knowledge based labour era requires up-to-date knowledge, skills and abilities to remain creative and innovative in the forever shifting work environment. This demands that employees look for the appropriate set of skills, expertise, and actions required to do their job efficiently and effectively. In order to fulfil the rising need for dynamically skilled employees, diverse training methods must be developed and implemented. Such methods may satisfy multiple individual needs required by employees. Facilitative leadership training, co-ordination and change management can aid in providing the needed knowledge in collaborative problem-solving. Professional development, not only serves as an important tool for the improvement of employee performance but it also facilitates and encourages change in a higher education institution. Specialised skills development empowers the lecturer/academic to grow and improve his/her practices, look back on past experience pertaining to inquiry and practices to satisfy students' needs and provide support to the university by cooperating with society and external agencies. Professional development also improves the lecturers' understanding of their role and willpower for the attainment of organisational objectives.

> *Career mapping and counselling*

Related to personal growth opportunities (above), offering academic staff career management and counselling advice can also enhance engagement through increased job involvement. This is driven by a supportive organisational environment which is able to provide counselling and career advice to academics with the aim of enhancing not only engagement but also professional growth. Developing formal career progression planning helps employees to map out and identify opportunities for personal growth. This means that HR should offer professional development opportunities and design policies aimed at career progression planning. Personal development plans must be given careful attention to and not be treated as a tick box activity in the performance management process.

➢ *Provision of comprehensive feedback regarding work performance*

The result of this thesis supports the enhancement of engagement by providing comprehensive feedback and links this with intrinsic motivation, job involvement, dedication, vigour and absorption. This can be achieved through the development of a mentoring system for junior academics in an effort to receive professional feedback from experienced staff members. The system could be used to review academic research by peers within the department. Performance reviews must be aimed at employee development and must fully acknowledge all activities performed by academics.

7.2.2 Recommendations for enhancing Perceived organisational support

Perceived organisational support draws focus on the organisation's side of the interchange process as perceived by the employee. Therefore, employees that perceive their organisation as supportive may reciprocate by exhibiting positive behaviours such as engaging in their work tasks and, remaining loyal to the organisation. In this study, perceived organisational support was the lowest reflecting the greatest room for improvement and recommendations are made to enhance these areas of deficiency by ensuring imperative antecedents. These precursors of perceived organisational support include:

➢ *Provision of a supportive work environment*

Organisations must provide support in all dimensions of one's job as this has a positive impact on employee engagement. Research indicates that the impact of a supportive organisational work environment has a positive impact on intrinsic motivation, dedication, absorption, vigour and meaningfulness. Direct support from the academic's supervisor as well as from University programs and activities is a great precursor for high levels of perceived organisational support. One important support mechanism for academics is the accessibility and availability of information pertaining to job resources and research funds. The Department Head should consider policy development aimed at 'open door' approaches to his or her staff.

➢ *Supervisor and co-worker supportiveness*

Supervisors in leadership positions play a critical role in terms of bestowing organisational rewards and resources to employees. This means that they should be viewed as a good source of organisational support. Therefore, supportive behaviour from supervisors is said to be a precursor for the enhancement of high levels of perceived organisational support.

➢ *Create a conducive climate for employee participation*

The increased level of participation in the workplace can serve as an aid for the development of engagement of the academic since it is well established that participation significantly impacts employee cognitive and emotional engagement capabilities. A conducive environment which allows for employee participation and voicing out employee opinions can drive the perception of support in universities. Employee participation at the departmental or school level can be promoted through emails and meetings, opening issues to discussion and debate. Academics may also be involved in decision making committees, especially on matters pertaining to the governance of the department and school.

➢ *Development of trust*

Trust has been significantly found to be linked to perceived organisational support. The employees' trust in an organisation may impact their outlook pertaining to the quality of the exchange relationship with the organisation. Trust in educational institutions is perceived as some form of relational trust. When there is a high level of employee trust amongst each other, all parties involved operate under the assumption that no one will prey on others. When there is a strong foundation on trust, leadership may not be required to ensure that rules and protocols are observed; hence, the need for control is reduced to a minimum resulting in high levels of perceived organisational support.

➢ *Work-family support and well-being*

Another HR practice which may potentially meet employee needs and maximise the levels of POS is that of work-family support. It should be noted that certain organisational actions may strengthen employee beliefs regarding the extent to which the organisation cares for them. Actions such as empathy and providing support to help employees to deal with stressful situations both at work and home may increase the level of POS on the part of the employee. Such actions help in terms of meeting employee emotional support and it also improves employee interpersonal relationships and increases POS. By providing appropriate work-family support, employees will perceive the organisation as being more caring and understanding of their well-being. POS should fulfil socio-emotional needs, increase the employees' eagerness to assist when required, and increase incentives and self-efficacy, through the enhancement of job satisfaction, organisation-based self-esteem, and stability between work and family life.

➤ *Leader consideration and initiating structure*

Leader consideration refers to the extent to the leader demonstrates support and shows concern for subordinates' well-being and is usually contrasted with initiating structure in which the leader communicates clear work role expectations to subordinates. Although followers associate both types of leadership with effectiveness, consideration is more strongly related to perceived organisational support since it directly conveys high regard for the work group.

➤ *Promote strong social networks*

Workplace social networks allow for the creation of strong interpersonal communication and relations amongst employees. This in turn provides a web of interpersonal relationships that offer information about how to become a successful organisation member as well as provide friendships that make work-life more pleasant. For instance, building strong social networks can also potentially assist new employees to easily integrate into the organisation and adapt more successfully in the work environment.

7.2.3 Recommendations for enhancing Organisational commitment

Modern day employees have a different combination of needs that enable them to be enthusiastic to perform and contribute to the organisation but are, at the same time, cognisant of the organisational culture and work environment and will not hesitate to leave an organisation if unhappy. Hence, organisations are constantly challenged to find various ways of enhancing employee commitment, loyalty and performance. Taking cognisance of the results of the study, it is evident that there is room for improvement in the organisational commitment of academics and to address these, specific antecedents of organisational commitment are highlighted. These precursors to stimulating organisational commitment include:

➤ *Healthy work environment*

People join organisations for a specific purpose such as the fulfilment of their needs and desires. Such people expect and anticipate a work environment which allows career flourishment and needs satisfaction. A positive/negative work relation among peers and management has an impact on an employee's commitment to the organisation. An employee's commitment towards the organisation is influenced by the nature of relationships between colleagues. Therefore, conflicting relationships between colleagues and management is most likely to threaten organisational commitment. Organisations must advocate for the promotion of social

activities to improve social relations between employees which in turn will increase commitment levels.

> *Job Security*

A secure job is every employee's requirement and wish. Job insecurity impacts on an employee's level of commitment towards the organisation. Employees do not like risks and only stay in an environment that provides satisfaction rather than optimised change.

> *Pay Satisfaction and Participation in decision making*

Pay satisfaction relates to an employee's mind-set regarding the payment or compensation received for the services rendered. The components of pay may comprise of a basic salary, bonuses or any other form of monetary benefits that an employee may receive during employment. People have certain needs and desires which they seek to satisfy. Therefore, the extent to which an employee remains committed to an organisation is also determined by extrinsic rewards provided by the organisation as well as perceived fairness in how these rewards are given. Organisations that support its employees are likely to receive desired feedback from employees, whereby the employees experience a felt need to reciprocate. Ensuring employee participation in the decision-making process and involving them in organisational plans and goals is said to have a positive impact on the employees' commitment towards the organisation. The involvement of employees in such processes adds to their satisfaction and commitment. A high level of employee participation results in increased employee performance and organisational commitment.

> *Career advancement within the organisation*

Findings from previous studies indicate that employees become more committed if they are satisfied with the manner in which the organisation caters for their personal development. Contrary to previous career-stage models' prediction, career advancement affects both employee commitment and their willingness to change the company for all organisational members. Additionally, it has also been noted that career management is a very critical factor for organisational commitment. If companies support their employees with such, the employees are likely to become committed. This in turn helps the employees to understand that the organisation not only values but also supports them.

7.2.4 Implications of the relationships between work engagement, perceived organisational support and organisational commitment

The results of the study indicate that the dimensions and sub-dimensions of work engagement, perceived organisational support and organisational commitment significantly intercorrelate with each other. Furthermore, work engagement and perceived organisational support significantly account for the variance in organisational commitment of academics (Adjusted R^2 = 0.548). This implies that implementing the aforementioned recommendations to enhance work engagement, perceived organisational support and organisational commitment has the potential to have a snowballing effect and enhance all these key dimensions and have a rippling effect on overall organisational commitment of academics.

7.2.5 Recommendations based on the influence of biographical variables on organisational commitment

This study assessed the influence of age, gender, marital status, tenure, position and college on work engagement, perceived organisational support and organisational commitment. Since organisational commitment is the focus of the study, recommendations will predominantly be made in terms of the influence of the biographical variables on organisational commitment.

➢ *Age*

In a wide range of research studies as is the case in the present study, age has been considered as an important factor in organisational commitment; however, the value of this factor has been has been questioned/debated upon. There is evidence in the current study as well that the older the employee becomes, the more organisationally committed he/she becomes.

Firstly, age impacts on what employees want from work and therefore this determines their level of commitment to the organisation. Compared to the older generation, younger employees are most likely to remain in one organisation if they are happy with skill development. In addition, commitment is strongly associated with good work-life balance amongst younger employees in comparison to older employees. On the other hand, older employees have increased levels of commitment because they are less likely to switch jobs if they perceive the current one to be secure.

Secondly, the stage of employees' career is often associated with age because it reflects their level of commitment towards the organisation. For instance, it is more common that an

employee that has been working for a long time and is on their middle and late stages will have a job that consists of broad organisational roles and responsibilities.

Thirdly, research also suggests that the effect of birth cohorts can explain the relationship between age and organisational commitment. The term birth cohort refers to a group of people born at the same time, who have been affected by the same economic, cultural and societal changes of the environment. It is thus important for organisations to accommodate and develop employees from various age groups at differing career levels. This can be done through skills development and training to sharpen employee skills and help keep abreast of current skills required in the labour market in terms of academic teaching and research development. The organisation must also strive to promote unity and collegiality.

➢ *Gender*

Gender has a high impact on employees, where it refers to socio-psychological categories of masculinity and femininity both in terms of organisational commitment and perceived organisational support. Whilst the current study reflects no influence of gender on organisational commitment, research studies reveal that women are more committed to their organisations and other studies determined men as more committed than women. The societal ascribed role of gender in the workplace affects men and women on varying levels. For example, research indicates that women have been found to be paid less than men for similar work, are less likely to be promoted, are often evaluated more negatively, and are seen as less congruent with leadership roles compared to men. The traditional social norm has been that men occupy a social role associated with earning money and financially providing for their families, whereas women occupy a social role primarily for child bearing and rearing and home duties. The congruity or incongruity between social gender roles and work roles has been demonstrated to be partially responsible for gender bias in workplace decisions favouring men over women. For instance, typical gender stereotypes maintain that a man is commendable and loyal when he works to support his wife and their children; however, a woman can only be seen as commendable and loyal when she is willing to leave her career to look after her husband and children. Research pertaining to parenthood bias may be generalisable as gender bias as well. This means that the extent to which marital status automatically indicates the intention to have children, also puts employees at a disadvantage with specific regards to their gender orientation and societal ascribed roles of fatherhood and motherhood. For example, studies have found evidence of the 'motherhood penalty', which means that women who are mothers

are perceived as less competent and less committed to their organisations in comparison to men who are fathers. Men in fatherhood roles are viewed as more committed to their organisations. Hence, it is important for organisations to advocate for gender equality and provide employees with equal career advancement opportunities to allow for professional growth. The organisation must also create a conducive work environment which allows for work and family life balance.

➢ *Marital status*

Marital status is also a demographic factor which influences commitment as is evident in the current study. Marital status is sometimes used as an indicator to determine how likely it is an employee will remain in the same geographical location, his or her willingness to travel, his or her health benefits, his or her level of commitment, and his or her fit within the organisation. Literature supports the results of the current study in showing that married people are more committed than single people. This is attributed to the fact that their lifestyle and family responsibility requires a stable job. Therefore, commitment in this case is fostered by the recurring need for economic safety. Organisations can potentially enhance perceived organisational support and employee commitment by designing family-friendly policies and cultures, which are important components for creating a healthy work environment and are positively related to work outcomes. Furthermore, family-friendly policies and culture are critical mechanisms for supporting the careers and advancement of women in academia and enhancing gender equity in public sector employment.

➢ *Tenure and Position*

In this study, it was found that the organisational commitment of academics increased with tenure. Furthermore, academics on the higher levels of the hierarchical structure displayed greater levels of organisational commitment. The amount of time spent by an employee in an organisation impacts on their level of engagement, commitment and the way in which the employee perceives the organisation. Organisational attachment often increases amongst employees who perceive the organisation as supportive. This means that organisations must provide employees with support as this may result in a positive atmosphere thereby encouraging employees to provide their long term skills to the organisation and enhancing trust and resulting in creativity and innovation. Employee level of position and job description in the organisation also influences the extent to which an employee performs his/her job. Organisations must continuously redesign jobs to ensure that employees are challenged,

energised and vigorously absorbed in their work tasks. This can be done to avoid career plateauing especially with those employees with no upward career mobility. The organisation must manage and plan career management for their employees professionally, because this is the process through which individuals develop insight into themselves and their environment, formulate career goals, strategies, and acquire feedback regarding career progress. Organisations are supposed to manage career orientation practices that help employees develop new skills or improve old ones, make sound job and career choices and prepare them for higher levels of responsibility within organisations.

➢ *College*

The results from this thesis confirmed that academics from various departments or colleges display varying levels of work engagement, organisational commitment and perceived organisational. Work engagement, organisational support and perceived organisational support can be enhanced by effective leadership, favourable HR practices, desirable job conditions and fair treatment. Academic Leaders and Head of Schools can enhance POS when they provide supportive policies and HR practices, fair organisational procedures and policies.

The aforementioned recommendations are graphically depicted in Figure 7.1 and, when effectively implemented, have the potential to enhance work engagement, perceived organisational support and organisational commitment.
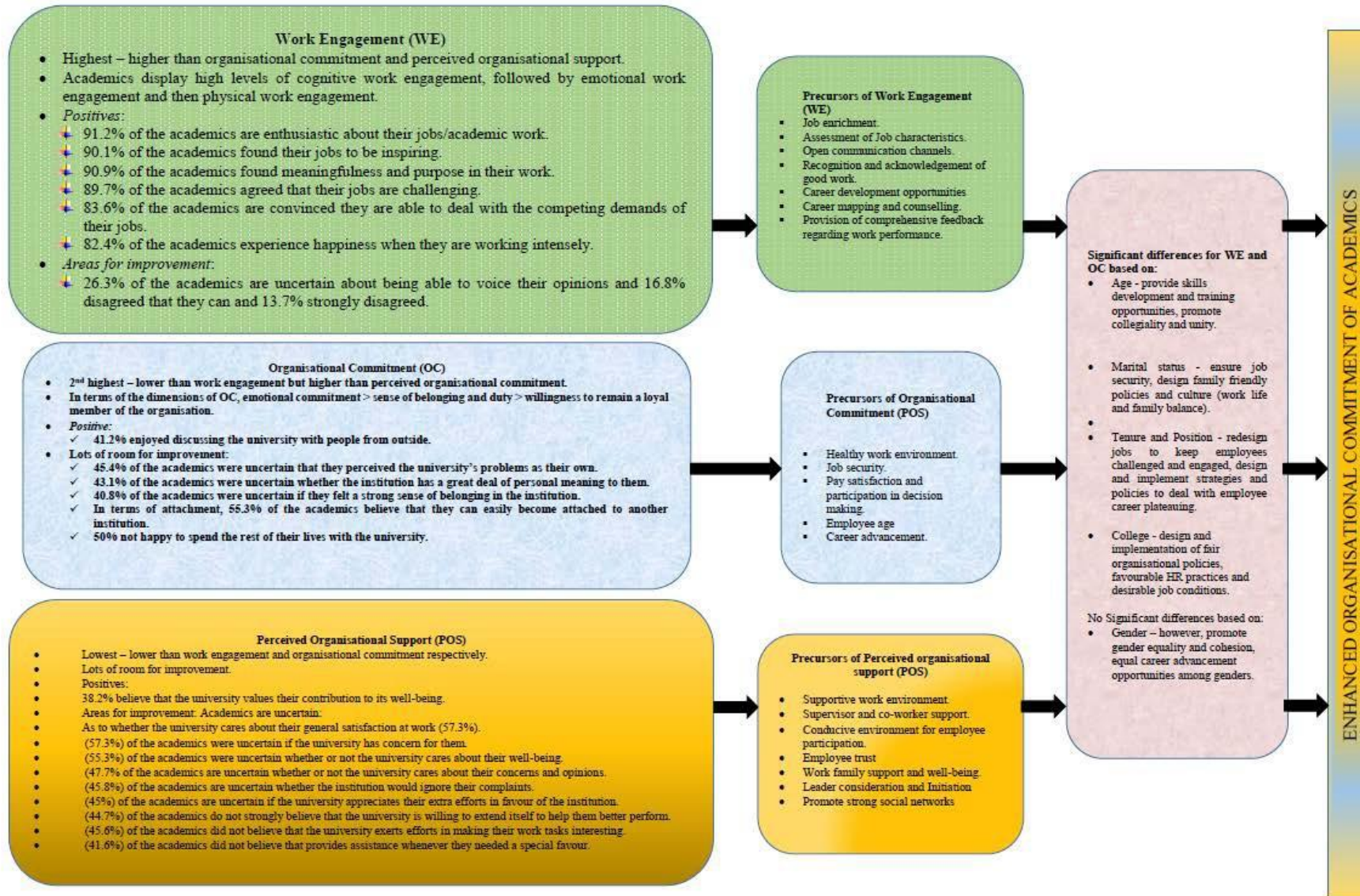
Work Engagement (WE)
- Highest – higher than organisational commitment and perceived organisational support.
- Academics display high levels of cognitive work engagement, followed by emotional work engagement and then physical work engagement.
- *Positives:*
  - 91.2% of the academics are enthusiastic about their jobs/academic work.
  - 90.1% of the academics found their jobs to be inspiring.
  - 90.9% of the academics found meaningfulness and purpose in their work.
  - 89.7% of the academics agreed that their jobs are challenging.
  - 83.6% of the academics are convinced they are able to deal with the competing demands of their jobs.
  - 82.4% of the academics experience happiness when they are working intensely.
- *Areas for improvement:*
  - 26.3% of the academics are uncertain about being able to voice their opinions and 16.8% disagreed that they can and 13.7% strongly disagreed.

Precursors of Work Engagement (WE)
- Job enrichment.
- Assessment of Job characteristics.
- Open communication channels.
- Recognition and acknowledgement of good work.
- Career development opportunities
- Career mapping and counselling.
- Provision of comprehensive feedback regarding work performance.

Significant differences for WE and OC based on:
- Age - provide skills development and training opportunities, promote collegiality and unity.
- Marital status - ensure job security, design family friendly policies and culture (work life and family balance).
- Tenure and Position - redesign jobs to keep employees challenged and engaged, design and implement strategies and policies to deal with employee career plateauing.
- College - design and implementation of fair organisational policies, favourable HR practices and desirable job conditions.

No Significant differences based on:
- Gender – however, promote gender equality and cohesion, equal career advancement opportunities among genders.

Organisational Commitment (OC)
- 2nd highest – lower than work engagement but higher than perceived organisational commitment.
- In terms of the dimensions of OC, emotional commitment > sense of belonging and duty > willingness to remain a loyal member of the organisation.
- *Positive:*
  - 41.2% enjoyed discussing the university with people from outside.
- Lots of room for improvement:
  - 45.4% of the academics were uncertain that they perceived the university's problems as their own.
  - 43.1% of the academics were uncertain whether the institution has a great deal of personal meaning to them.
  - 40.8% of the academics were uncertain if they felt a strong sense of belonging in the institution.
  - In terms of attachment, 55.3% of the academics believe that they can easily become attached to another institution.
  - 50% not happy to spend the rest of their lives with the university.

Precursors of Organisational Commitment (POS)
- Healthy work environment.
- Job security.
- Pay satisfaction and participation in decision making.
- Employee age
- Career advancement.

Perceived Organisational Support (POS)
- Lowest – lower than work engagement and organisational commitment respectively.
- Lots of room for improvement.
- Positives:
- 38.2% believe that the university values their contribution to its well-being.
- Areas for improvement. Academics are uncertain:
- As to whether the university cares about their general satisfaction at work (57.3%).
- (57.3%) of the academics were uncertain if the university has concern for them.
- (55.3%) of the academics were uncertain whether or not the university cares about their well-being.
- (47.7%) of the academics are uncertain whether or not the university cares about their concerns and opinions.
- (45.8%) of the academics are uncertain whether the institution would ignore their complaints.
- (45%) of the academics are uncertain if the university appreciates their extra efforts in favour of the institution.
- (44.7%) of the academics do not strongly believe that the university is willing to extend itself to help them better perform.
- (45.6%) of the academics did not believe that the university exerts efforts in making their work tasks interesting.
- (41.6%) of the academics did not believe that provides assistance whenever they needed a special favour.

Precursors of Perceived organisational support (POS)
- Supportive work environment.
- Supervisor and co-worker support.
- Conducive environment for employee participation.
- Employee trust
- Work family support and well-being.
- Leader consideration and Initiation
- Promote strong social networks

ENHANCED ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT OF ACADEMICS

Figure 7. 1: Recommendations based on the results of the study

7.3 Recommendations for future research

Whilst every attempt was made to ensure the validity and reliability of the results of the study, it must be noted that every study has boundaries of jurisdiction within which the results hold true. This implies that every study has limitations and this study is no different. However, recommendations are made below taking cognisance of methodological and design issues that may be changed or enriched to enhance the study approach in future research.

➢ The thesis brings together the relationship between employee engagement and perceived organisational support and their impact on organisational commitment. A vast amount of research articles were reviewed, however not all possible contributions could be analysed due to the nature and focus of the study at hand.

➢ The sample used in this study was strictly limited to academics from the various colleges at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and cannot be generalised to the wider university employees' reason being that part-time academics and support staff were excluded from the study.

➢ Common method variance is also a significant limitation, due to the self-report nature of the questionnaire and the single, closed-ended data collection method; this limited participants in terms of voicing out their opinions. The inclusion of open-ended questions and the mixed method approach would have also been suitable for the study.

➢ The timing of data collection and potential respondent bias are limitations of the research design which could potentially affect the results. The timing of data collection served as a minor limitation because it was collected at peak times where the academics were very busy and as a result a small portion of the questionnaires were not received after distribution. The expected sample was 292 and the sample that was achieved was 262 resulting in a shortfall of 30 questionnaires due to the unavailability of participants (staff travelling, workloads, administrative duties) and also because of time constraints faced by the researcher. Respondent bias was also another minor limitation because some of the participants were uncomfortable with answering the questionnaire because they were uneasy about how the information would be disseminated and whether it would be traced back to them despite them being informed about confidentiality of responses. As a result

some participants left blank spaces because they were uncomfortable with answering certain parts of the questionnaire.

➢ Due to the need to obtain an informed consent signed, the majority of the participants were uncomfortable with providing their initials and signature because they felt like it violated their anonymity; this was of special concern to them as the researcher is also employed at the institution where the study is being done. Tremendous effort was made by the researcher to assure utmost confidentiality and ethics.

7.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, engagement and organisational commitment is equally significant to the employee: this means that employees want to be provided with the best possible circumstances, facilities and support. An organisation's success stems from three crucial employee qualities namely, competence, engagement and commitment. The ideal worker is described as an employee who possesses qualities such as aggressiveness, independence and the demonstration of devotion to the organisation and their career. Hence, it is important for an organisation to provide a supportive environment that enhances employee engagement and encourages employee organisational commitment. This chapter has discussed the various implications of the results presented in the thesis for both the academics within the current South African Higher Education sector, the University of KwaZulu-Natal and also for Human Resources practitioners.

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ANNEXURE 1: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND
GOVERNANCE

Dear Respondent,

PhD (Human Resources Management) Research Project

Researchers: Miss M.B Dlamini: 207526928, **E-mail Address:** dlaminim6@ukzn.ac.za

Supervisor: Professor Sanjana Brijball Parumasur **Tel.:** +27 31 260 7176, E**-mail**:

brijballs@ukzn.ac.za

HSSREC Research Office: Ms M Snyman, **Tel:** 031 260 8350**, Email:**

Snymanm@ukzn.ac.za

My name is Mbalenhle Dlamini and I am a Lecturer in the School of Management, IT and Governance, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. You are invited to participate in a research project entitled**: Exploring the relationship between perceived organisational support, employee engagement and their impact on organisational commitment at UKZN.**

The aim of this study is to explore the relationship between perceived organisational support, employee engagement and their impact on organisational commitment. Through your participation I hope to establish whether there is a relationship between perceived organisational support, employee engagement and how they impact on organisational commitment. The result of this study is intended to contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of Human Resource Management in the form of publications.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time with no negative consequence. There will be no monetary gain from participating in this research project. Confidentiality and anonymity of records identifying you as a participant will be maintained by the **School of Management, IT and Governance, UKZN.**

If you have any questions or concerns about completing the questionnaire or about participating in this P study, you may contact me, my supervisor or the research office at the numbers listed above. The survey should take you **about 10 minutes** to complete. I hope you will take the time to complete this survey.

Sincerely

Investigator's   signature_____
Date_____

<u>CONSENT</u>

I,
……………………………………………………………………………………………
………….. (full name of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

Participant's   signature_____
Date_____

ANNEXURE 2: QUESTIONNAIRE

Biographical information

For each of the following, mark a cross (X) in the box that best describes you.

1. Age group

1	20-30 YEARS		1
2	31-40 YEARS		2
3	41-50 YEARS		3
4	51-60 YEARS		4
5	+60 YEARS		5

2. Gender

1	MALE		1
2	FEMALE		2

3. Marital Status

1	SINGLE		1
2	MARRIED		2
3	WIDOWED		3

4. Position currently held

1	LECTURER		1
2	SENIOR LECTURER		2
3	ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR		3
4	PROFESSOR		4

5. Tenure

1	1-5 YEARS		1
2	6-10 YEARS		2
3	11-15 YEARS		3
4	16-20 YEARS		4
5	21+ YEARS		5

Work Engagement Scale

Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements by marking a cross (X) in the appropriate box using the scale below:

Strongly Disagree (SD) (1)

Disagree (D) (2)

Uncertain (U) (3)

Agree (A) (4)

Strongly Agree (SA) (5)

No.	Item	1 SD	2 D	3 U	4 A	5 SA
1.	AT MY WORK, I FEEL BURSTING WITH ENERGY.					
2.	AT MY JOB, I FEEL STRONG AND VIGOROUS.					
3.	I FEEL HAPPY WHEN I AM WORKING INTENSELY.					
3	I AM ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT MY JOB.					
4.	MY JOB INSPIRES ME.					
5.	TO ME, MY JOB IS CHALLENGING.					
6.	I FIND THE WORK THAT I DO FULL OF MEANING AND PURPOSE.					
7.	I AM CONFIDENT IN MY ABILITY TO HANDLE COMPETING DEMANDS AT WORK.					
8	I AM CONFIDENT THAT I CAN HANDLE THE PHYSICAL DEMANDS AT WORK.					
9.	I AM ABLE TO EXPRESS MY OPINIONS AT WORK.					

The Survey of Perceived Organisational Support

Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements by marking a cross (X) in the appropriate box using the scale below:

Strongly Disagree SD (1)

Disagree (D) (2)

Uncertain (U) (3)

Agree (A) (4)

Strongly Agree (SA) (5)

No.	Items	1 SD	2 D	3 U	4 A	5 SA
1.	The University values my contribution to its well-being.					
2.	The University fails to appreciate any extra effort from me.					
3.	The University would ignore any complaint from me.					
4.	The University really cares about my well-being.					
5.	Even if I did the best job possible, the University would fail to notice.					
6.	The University cares about my general satisfaction at work.					
7.	The University shows very little concern for me.					
8.	The University takes pride in my work accomplishments.					
9.	The University tries to make my job as interesting as possible.					
10	The University is willing to extend itself in order to help me perform my job to the best of my ability.					
11.	The University is willing to help me when I need a special favour.					
12.	If given the opportunity, the University would take advantage of me.					
13.	The university cares about my concerns and opinions.					

Original Commitment Scale

Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements by marking a cross (X) in the appropriate box using the scale below:

Strongly Disagree SD (1)

Disagree (D) (2)

Uncertain (U) (3)

Agree (A) (4)

Strongly Agree (SA) (5)

No.	Items	1 SD	2 D	3 U	4 A	5 SA
1.	I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this University.					
2.	I enjoy discussing my University with people outside it.					
3.	I really feel as if the University's problems are my own.					
4.	I think that I could easily become as attached to another University as I am to this one.					
5.	I do not feel like I am part of the family at my University.					
6.	I do not feel emotionally attached to this University.					
7.	This University has a great deal of personal meaning for me.					
8.	I feel a strong sense of belonging with the University.					

ANNEXURE 3: ETHICAL CLEARENCE

UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL

INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

08 April 2016

Ms Mbalenhle Bridget Dlamini (207526928)
School of Management, IT & Governance
Westville Campus

Dear Ms Dlamini,

Protocol reference number: HSS/0315/016D
Project title: Exploring the relationship between perceived organisational support, employee engagement and their impact on organisational commitment at UKZN

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received on 01 April 2016, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL.**

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

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Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Professor Sanjana Brijball Parumasur
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor Brian McArthur
Cc School Administrator: Ms Angele Pearce

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
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