PREDICTORS OF ONLINE FACULTY'S ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

by

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ABSTRACT

Online higher education is a booming industry; however, concerns have been voiced about the quality of online education. As a significant participant in the online environment, the online faculty member plays an essential role in the delivery of quality online education. Yet, research on online faculty and their experience is limited. With high turnover rates and the quality of online education coming into question, this mixed methods study sought to gain a more in-depth understanding of the predictors of online faculty's organizational commitment. The delivery method of faculty's previous educational experience as a student, their highest earned degree, employee status, length of employment, perceived organizational support, and leader member exchange as they relate to their organizational commitment were chosen as the predictor variables in this study and assessed through and online survey. A total of 101 online faculty members at a private post-secondary university in the southeast United States participated in this study. A 1-way ANOVA revealed a positive relationship between online faculty's length of employment and their organizational commitment. Pearson's *r* correlations showed a strong positive relationship between perceived organizational support and leader member exchange as they relate to organizational commitment. A follow-up stepwise multiple regression analysis revealed that perceived organizational support was the main contributor to online faculty's organizational commitment. Many quantitative findings were supported by the analysis of the faculty's qualitative responses, revealing a strong desire for faculty members to be supported in tangible multifaceted ways by their institution and their supervisor.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Online education has become a popular means of attaining a higher education degree (Cochran & Benuto, 2016). While trends in residential enrollment decline, online education has continued to rise (Allen & Steaman, 2017; Martin et al., 2020). In the United States alone, nearly 6 million students were enrolled in at least one online course in 2016 (Reyes & Segal, 2019). Predictions indicate this trend will only increase with technological advances and intensifying demand with projections indicating online education will be internationally mainstream by 2025 (Palvia et al., 2018). Online education has the ability to provide education to an increasingly diverse population that would not have access to traditional brick-and-mortar institutions. With the potential to reduce the cost of education to institutions and students alike it is easy to understand why nearly half of postsecondary institutions in the United States have adopted online learning (Xu & Xu, 2019).

However, in light of the increased popularity and demand of online education, concerns have been raised about the effectiveness and quality of online education (Kebritchi et al., 2017). Additionally, students tend to struggle with fully online courses (Unger & Meiran, 2020). Emerging research has identified the main source of these struggles as the difficulty with enabling human interaction in an online setting (Robinson et al., 2017). One of online students' main source of human interaction is their instructor. The ability of the online faculty member to create a human connection with their student and facilitate their learning experience is crucial to the student's success (Protopsaltis & Baum, 2019).

To a large degree, the ability of the faculty member to perform their role is shaped by their relationship with their institution (Afif, 2018; Lovakov, 2016; Maiti & Sanyal, 2018). In the research community, this relationship is often described as an employee's organizational commitment (Al-Jabari & Ghazzawi, 2019). It has been well documented that higher levels of employee organizational commitment often lead to many valuable outcomes for the employee and organization (Kaplan & Kaplan, 2018; Kawiana et al., 2018; Loan, 2020; Mohamed et al., 2021). Research on organizational commitment of faculty has chiefly focused on understanding residential faculty's commitment. However, concerning trends of online faculty turnover reveals a need to investigate online faculty's organizational commitment in a manner that appreciates the differences between online and residential instruction (Larkin et al., 2018; Mathews, 2018; Nawaz & Pangil, 2016).

Background

There is a rich body of research dedicated to the importance of employee's organizational commitment. Organizational commitment is an employee's feelings of connection and dedication to their employer, which is affected by many contributing influences (Reeder, 2020). Pay, achievement, working conditions, stress, and many other factors can affect an individual's organizational commitment (Li et al., 2017). Organizations whose employees enjoy high organizational commitment see greater company health and performance (Ehido et al., 2020; Hanaysha & Majid, 2018; Kaplan & Kaplan, 2018; Karami et al., 2017; Kim et al. 2018, Mustafa, et al., 2020). Organizational commitment has also been studied as it relates to employee burnout, turnover, professionalism, employee retention, and empowerment (Ahmad, et al. 2020;

Brown et al., 2019; Jordan et al., 2017; Mathews, 2018; Mohamed et al., 2021; Nawaz &
Pangil, 2016; Santoso et al., 2018).

Common predictors of organizational commitment across industry types include
perceived organizational support, effective leadership, job satisfaction, motivation,
psychological contract fulfilment, and person-organization fit (Grant-Vallone & Ensher,
2017; Hanaysha & Majid, 2018; Jehanzeb & Mohanty, 2018; Quratulain et al., 2018;
Soares & Mosquera, 2019; Yahaya, 2016). When employees do not have the protection
of these predictive factors, their work and personal outcomes suffer. It is well
documented that employees whose personal resources are overtaxed by work stress
experience conflict between work-life demands, and insecure contingent working
arrangements present challenges to their organizational commitment (Talukder, 2019;
Watson et al., 2021).

Given the importance of employee organizational commitment to organizational
outcomes, it can be reasoned that organizational commitment could be an important
factor in online education outcomes as well (Luna, 2018). While some research exists on
the relationship between organizational commitment and educational outcomes, most of
this research has focused on residential delivery platforms (Maiti & Sanyal, 2018; Singh
& Thurman, 2019). Research on traditional residential education has highlighted the
benefits of the residential community and culture for both students and faculty, with
many reporting significant benefits from outside-of-the-classroom interactions as a
primary key to their success (Astin, 1993; Lundberg, 2004). Similarly, a sense of
community in the residential setting has been shown to be a predictor of faculty and
student satisfaction (Arneson, 2011).

Challenges for residential faculty in their ability to perform their job well have identified the time commitment of administration tasks, tenure process, faculty reward structure, and the difficulty in balancing pressures to research and publish while also teach (Arneson, 2011). Furthermore, residential research has highlighted the impacts of job stress, job engagement, job satisfaction, and organizational structure as powerful correlates to faculty's organizational commitment (Li et al., 2017). Job demands and characteristics of residential faculty compared to online faculty present significant differences. Given the platform differences between online and residential education, the role of the online faculty member has naturally shifted to be more of a facilitator for education (Woldeab et al., 2020). Research on residential higher education makes certain assumptions about who students are as well as their needs in the classroom (Lichterman & Bloom, 2019). On average, the online student varies in the life stage and work-life demands as well as greater demographic diversity as compared to students in residential 4-year institutions (Newman et al., 2018; Xu & Xu, 2019). These variables have made the applicability of research on residential faculty tenuous and theoretically imprudent for online faculty.

Therefore, organizational commitment has been shown to be related to educational outcomes, albeit in the residential delivery format. The uniqueness of online education necessitates an examination of organizational commitment among online education faculty. Of additional concern is the growing trend in contingent online adjunct work, which occurs when the faculty member is non-benefited and is not guaranteed class assignment (Luna, 2018). This precarious nature of the online adjunct's working

relationship with their institution has impacted higher education's culture, climate, and structure (Moustafa et al., 2019; Sabir & Bhutta, 2018).

Research trends in organizational commitment align with a biblical understanding of man's relationship with work and explain the adverse outcomes that are seen when working conditions are subpar. Scripture holds that man was created in God's image and therefore inherited God's ability and desire to create and have relationships. In one of the first recorded interactions between God and man, God gave man a purpose, or job, to name the animals and be a caretaker of the garden (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Genesis 2:19). Clearly there is a Biblical imperative for man to engage with purposeful work alongside each other to produce a desired outcome.

As a reflection of God's design, man functions best when he operates under the protective hierarchy of allegiance to serve the Lord above self and others (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Colossians 3:23-24). Man is designed to have a purpose and industry in his relationship with work, which has been reflected in research on callings (Kemsley, 2018; Kim et al., 2018). Also reflected in research is the observation that when there is a healthy relationship between the employee and the employer both benefit (Eisenberger et al., 2016; *King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Ecclesiastes 4:9; Proverbs 27:17).

Challenges and issues facing employee commitment and other work outcomes can also be considered through a Biblical perspective. As a challenge to the underpinning self-motivations of the social exchange theory, for which most employee commitment research is founded, a Biblical understanding points to the commitment of the believer to serve the Lord in their work. Both research and scripture offer great insights into God's designed nature of work and conditions best for employee commitment; however, little is

understood about these constructs as they impact the unique population of online faculty. To address these issues, the goal of the present study is to gain a better understanding of online faculty's organizational commitment.

Problem Statement

With the quality of online education coming into question, it is important to understand the key factors that contribute to the concerning trends seen in this field (Xu & Xu, 2019). Poor student outcomes, faculty turnover, and the contingent nature of online adjunct work have been identified as concerning trends in online higher education (Kebritchi et al., 2017; Luna, 2018; Mathews, 2018). Much research has been dedicated to understanding the reasons for the issues seen in higher education, with considerable attention being given to the role of the faculty member. However, much of this research has been conducted in residential settings (Maiti & Sanyal, 2018; Singh & Thurman, 2019). Similar to the residential setting, the primary factors in the online environment include the course/learning platform, the student, and the faculty member, yet, there are drastic differences between the role and experience of a residential faculty member and an online faculty member (Nabi, 2020; Woldeab et al., 2020).

Distance education, by nature, is conducted with the faculty and the student in different locations and is often asynchronous (Nieuwoudt, 2020). The nature of online education challenges the ability of the student and faculty to develop a relationship, which has been identified as a major factor contributing to student issues in online courses (Xu & Xu, 2019). As the primary means of human interaction in the online setting, the faculty member plays a critical role in the outcomes of the online learning environment (Kebritchi et al., 2017; Protopsaltis & Baum, 2019).

Among factors related to a faculty member's performance in higher education is organizational commitment. Organizational commitment has been shown to be related to faculty's job satisfaction, turnover intention, and job change (Afif, 2018; Mathews, 2018). While robust relationships between various outcomes and faculty organizational commitment have been seen in higher education research, most of this research has been conducted with residential faculty (Maiti & Sanyal, 2018; Singh & Thurman, 2019). Given the unique nature of an online faculty member's relationship with their institution, research on organizational commitment must be conducted with online faculty as well. As increasing amounts of higher education are being offered in an online setting the relationship between the faculty and the institution has changed (Moustafa et al., 2019; Sabir & Bhutta, 2018). How faculty engage in their work is influenced by many factors, including pay, status, achievement, stress, leadership, and job insecurity (Luna, 2018; Reeder, 2020; Zamin & Hussin, 2021). The construct of employee organizational commitment centers on understanding such factors (Dias & Silva, 2016).

Organizational commitment has been linked to important outcomes such as employee performance, turnover, job satisfaction, and organizational effectiveness (Akram et al., 2017; Novitasari, et al., 2020; Osibanjo et al., 2019; Yahaya, 2016; Zhou & Li, 2021). In light of the connection between organizational commitment and employee/organization outcomes, it is reasonable to assume that online faculty's organizational commitment plays a vital role in their job performance. However, there is a paucity of research on organizational commitment in online faculty. Given the nuanced nature of online faculty's relationship with their institution, more research needs to be conducted on the influencing factors that contribute to online faculty's organizational

commitment. A better understanding of online faculty's relationship to their institution has important implications for students, faculty, and institutions alike (Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2017; Kebritchi et al., 2017).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to explore the factors that contribute to online faculty's organizational commitment. Specifically, this study examined the delivery method of faculty's previous educational experience as a student, their highest earned degree, employee status, length of employment, perceived organizational support, and leader member exchange as they relate to their organizational commitment.

Research Question(s) and Hypotheses

Research Questions

RQ 1: What is the relationship between the delivery method of faculty's previous educational experience as a student (online/residential/mixed) and reported organizational commitment in online faculty?

RQ 2: What is the relationship between faculty's personal highest education level (Doctorate/Specialist/Masters/Bachelors) and reported organizational commitment in online faculty?

RQ 3: What is the relationship between employee status (benefited/non-benefited) and reported organizational commitment in online faculty?

RQ 4: What is the relationship between faculty's length of employment and reported organizational commitment in online faculty?

RQ 5: What is the relationship between faculty's perception of organizational support and reported organizational commitment in online faculty?

RQ 6: What is the relationship between faculty's reported leader member exchange and reported organizational commitment in online faculty?

RQ 7: How do online faculty describe what it means to be committed to their employing institution?

RQ 8: How do online faculty describe the factors that contribute to their commitment to their institution?

RQ 9: How do online faculty describe what their employing institution can do to improve their organizational commitment?

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between faculty's previous educational experience as a student, online/residential/mixed, and reported organizational commitment in online faculty.

Hypothesis 2: There is a relationship between faculty's personal highest education level (Doctorate/Specialist/Masters/Bachelors) and reported organizational commitment in online faculty.

Hypothesis 3: There is a relationship between employee status (benefited/non-benefited) and reported organizational commitment in online faculty.

Hypothesis 4: There is a relationship between faculty's length of employment and reported organizational commitment in online faculty.

Hypothesis 5: There is a relationship between faculty's perception of organizational support and reported organizational commitment in online faculty.

Hypothesis 6: There is a relationship between faculty's leader member exchange and reported organizational commitment in online faculty?

Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

Faculty are a very busy body of participants, and the time commitment of another work-related tasks may feel like a burden to them. It is reasonable to assume that longer term commitments of a research study will produce fewer participants and poorer follow through; therefore, a short online survey method has been chosen to reduce this burden. Also, given that faculty will be recruited from their employing university presents several issues to be considered. Faculty may fear answering questions about their job and their commitment to their university, which may dissuade them from participation or authentic responses. Of additional concern is the researcher's personal role as a member of the online faculty community. Not only did the researcher have to disclose their potential conflict of interest to the faculty, but they also had to ensure that they were only recruiting from departments outside of their influence. Furthermore, the researcher's own experience as an adjunct instructor will have given them preconceived theories and beliefs about this topic, which can alter how the research is conducted and interpreted.

Limitations of this study resulted from the unique nature of the population being recruiting. Since the university where faculty were recruited from is a private evangelical institution, the findings may not be easily generalizable to the larger field of higher education faculty. The rational for limiting the population of this study to this university is for the convenience of sampling and to establish a baseline for future research on the predictors of organizational commitment in other populations. In a situation such as this it is of paramount importance that these challenges and limitations be mediated with a clear

explanation of the researcher's relationship to the topic as well as including the guidance and perspectives of expert researchers and the institutional review board.

Theoretical Foundations of the Study

The theoretical foundation of this study is centered on the social exchange theory. Developed as a synthesis of behaviorism principles and basic economics, the social exchange theory explains how people engage in groups determined by perceptions of individual costs, rewards, losses, and profits (Beebe & Masterson, 2020). This theory holds that individuals will likely continue in a relationship if they evaluate themselves as being in a state of profit, where they have more rewards than costs (Jaiswal et al., 2020). Common costs for employees include anxiety, time, effort, and stress, while rewards are seen in gratifying outcomes of satisfaction, purpose, achievement, and a sense of belonging. When considering employee organizational commitment, the social exchange theory aids in the understanding of the predictive economic balance between employee and organizational factors (Zoller et al., 2018).

Allan and Myers (1991) three component model (TCM) of organizational commitment will be used as a theoretical foundation as well as providing the measurement for the construct of organizational commitment. The TCM model not only describes the employee's psychological state of mind toward their employer, but it also predicts their willingness to continue to work and the degree of their dedication to their work (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Within this model employees are seen as having three components to their organizational commitment, the affective, normative, and continuance components describe the desire, obligation, and necessity of the employee's relationship with their organization (Cesário & Chambel, 2017; Ahuja, & Gupta, 2019).

A Biblical perspective on the nature of work and healthy working conditions offers further foundations for this study. Man was created in God's image and given a purpose (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Genesis 1:31). As a reflection of God's character, man is a capable of creation and was given instructions to cultivate, maintain, subdue, and rule over the earth. Work as God intended was declared good; however, with the fall man's relationship with work and others changed. Issues and challenges in the world of work can be understood as a product of the fall. Likewise, conditions that promote healthy work circumstances and outcomes can be understood through God's prescriptions for honest work, fair treatment, and dedication to Him (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Ephesians 4:28; Matthew 6:24; Proverbs 27:17). The benefits of commitment noted in research are a product of God's design for man's relationship with his work, purpose, and identity.

Definition of Terms

The following is a list of definitions of terms that are used in this study.

Online Higher Education. Post-secondary education that is offered via a form of technology to allow the student to be at a different location than their institution/instructor (Woldeab et al., 2020). Online higher education can either be synchronous, where the faculty member and the student meet at the same time or asynchronous, where they do not meet at the same time and perform their roles independent of time constrains (Nieuwoudt, 2020).

Online Faculty. Often called adjunct faculty, online faculty perform their work at a different location than their students (Singh & Thurman, 2019). Online faculty course

load is contingent on the enrollment of students in a given semester and is not guaranteed (Hearn & Burns, 2021).

Organizational Commitment. The psychological state and feelings of connection employees have toward their organization (Al-Jabari & Ghazzawi, 2019; Dias & Silva, 2016).

Affective Commitment. This refers to the employee's emotional connection to the objective, values, and goals of their employing organization. Affective commitment is often described as the employee's "want" drive for continuing with their relationship with the company (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Reeder, 2020).

Normative Commitment. Normative commitment, is the degree the employee feels that they "should" or "ought to" stay with an organization because it is the right thing to do (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

Continuance Commitment. Continuance commitment on the other hand refers to the employee's "need" or "have to" stay with the organization due to the evaluation of the cost of leaving (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

Level of Education. Faculty's personal highest level of education experience will be described as doctorate, specialist, masters, or bachelor's degree (Borup & Evmenova, 2019)

 Education Delivery Method. The nature of faculty's degree, whether it was attended online at a distance, in person face-to-face, or a mixture of both (Rhode et al., 2017).

Perceived Organizational Support. The degree to which an employee believes their organization is ready to meet their needs, values their contributions, and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 2016).

Leader Member Exchange. The two-way relationship between leaders and followers in an organization determined by the quality of the interpersonal exchanges between the dyad (Graen & Uhl-Blen, 1995).

Significance of the Study

Many of the theoretical understandings and practices of online education have been adopted from residential settings. However, the differences between online and residential settings make these theories and practices ill-fitting and potentially unsuitable to the online environment. Contributing to the theoretical understanding of this field would help to correct the theoretical shortcoming that are currently dominating the field. With a greater understanding of the contributing factors of online faculty's organizational commitment, institutions can implement this knowledge into their hiring practices, training, and management of their faculty. Targeting individuals who are a good fit for the online environment can prevent turnover, frustration, and valuable time loss for both faculty and management. Training and professional development techniques that are specific to the needs of online faculty can be informed by the potential findings of this study. Time and resources that are spent gaining and retaining quality online faculty can be best utilized by universities if they have a better understanding of their faculty's needs. In sum, improving online faculty's organizational commitment could have major implications for the quality of online education.

Summary

Online education draws much of its andragogy from the understanding and practices formed by the long-standing history of residential education. Furthermore, the majority of the available literature of teacher organizational commitment centers on K-12

teachers and residential 4-year institutions (Maiti & Sanyal, 2018; Singh & Thurman, 2019). While there are implications to be made from this research, these constructs have been understudied as they apply to online higher education faculty, which have unique challenges presented by the delivery platform of online education. The primary purpose of this research is aimed at gaining a better understanding of concerning trends seen in the field of online higher education. The quality and effectiveness of online education has come into question and the ability of the faculty member to overcome the challenges of distance education has been identified as one of the main ways to improve the negative trends in online education (Kebritchi et al., 2017).

Furthering the issues facing online education, there is a concerning trend in online faculty turnover (Larkin et al., 2018; Lovakov, 2016). Research has shown a contributory relationship between organizational commitment and many valuable individual and organizational outcomes (Reeder, 2020). With this in mind, the hope in understanding what factors contribute to online faculty's organizational commitment is to highlight the importance of the role of the online faculty member as well as stress the importance of their relationship with their university as a potential conduit for better student, faculty, and institutional outcomes. In the next chapter, a literature review of past research on organizational commitment and current trends in online higher education will be presented.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

In this chapter, the theoretical frameworks that support the foundation of organizational commitment research will be examined. Next common predictors of organizational commitment and commonly associated variables in research will be discussed. Additionally threats to organizational commitment will be considered. Organizational commitment in traditional education settings with the nuances of contingent working relationship will be used to explain trends and challenges in the field.

Lastly, online education and the differences between residential and online education platforms will be explored as well as the scarcity of research related to online faculty to conclude the scientific literature review on this topic. To address a Biblical perspective on organizational commitment, scripture and Christian principles related to the construct of work and God's intended design for human relationships will be considered. A conclusion will provide a comprehensive synthesis and analysis of both scientific research findings and Biblical understandings of organizational commitment particular to the role of online faculty.

Description of Search Strategy

The literature search strategy for this research utilized google scholar, EBSCO, Psyc INFO, ProQuest, and APA PsycNet databases. This search was refined with the delimitations of full text online, peer-reviewed journal article, and within the last five years. Search words included "faculty", "instruct", "higher education", "adjunct", "teach" and "organizational commitment". For the biblical foundations of the study, a word search was conducted for the words "work", "labor", and "toil" with Blue Letter Bible's dictionary and lexicon information.

Review of Literature

Organizational commitment has been operationalized as employees'

psychological state and feelings of connection toward their organization (Al-Jabari &

Ghazzawi, 2019; Dias & Silva, 2016). Across industry types organizational commitment

is linked to reduced employee turnovers and better-quality product (Doll, 2019; Donovan

& Payne, 2021; Erlangga et al., 2021; Kose & Kose, 2017). The success of organizations

is largely derived from the quality of its human resources; therefore, it is important for

organizations to care about how their employees are supported and how their employees

feel about their organization (Dias & Silva, 2016; Fako et al., 2018; Putri & Setianan,

2019).

Organizational Commitment Models

The social exchange theory is the theoretical foundation for many relations-

related research (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). In early research, organizational

commitment was believed to be a singular construct that defined the employee's loyalty

and collective action (Jaiswal et al., 2020). However, in 1958 sociologist George Homans

developed the social exchange theory from a synthesis of basic economies and

behaviorism principles to explain how people participate in groups via the mechanism of

cost, rewards, losses, and profits (Beebe & Masterson, 2020). This issued the behavioral

perspective on organizational commitment research (Jaiswal et al., 2020). Here costs

often come in the form of time, stress, anxiety, and effort, while rewards are seen in

gratifying outcomes of achievement, satisfaction, purpose, and a sense of belonging. The

central presumption of the social exchange theory holds that so long as an individual

evaluates themselves as being in a state of profit, where they have more rewards than

costs, then they will continue in the relationship or group. Within this theory decisions are based on a predictive economic balance (Zoller et al., 2018). The underpinning mechanisms within this theory that predict how an individual feels about a relationship are based on three main factors. First, as discussed above, there is a cost-benefit analysis that calculates the value of a relationship base on possible benefits and losses. The related second and third mechanisms are the comparison level and comparison level of alternatives. Comparison level highlights people's expectations for relationships given past exchanges in other relationships/groups. Comparison level of alternatives comes into play when individuals believe that a better alternative is possible. When considering the relationship employees have with their organization, these social exchange mechanisms tie in nicely with the phenomenon of turnover and employee retention, as well as setting the framework for different forms of commitment seen in later organizational commitment theories such as Allen and Meyers three component theory (Allan & Meyer, 1990).

Drawing mainly from the social exchange theory Howard Becker proposed that, similar to comparison level mechanism, people make decisions based on the assumptions they gained from previous decisions (Jaiswal et al., 2020). In this decision-making process, people link what he referred to as "side bets" or extraneous interests that are dependent on the success of their main bet. In his side bet theory, Becker deemed that the main bet for an employee was the continuation of their job. Side bets could come in the form of anything of value that the individual has invested in, such as time, status, effort, and money that would be lost if their employment ended. The more side bets that are waged on the success of the main bet the more committed the employee will be. In the

same era of research, Rosabeth Kanter contributed to the understanding of human loyalty and commitment to a social group with her study on the commitment mechanisms in utopian communities (Kanter, 1968). Linking socialization theories and motivation models, Kanter concluded that successful organizations or groups utilized several commitment producing strategies to bind an individual's personality to a social system. The person's commitment is seen as having three parts: continuance, cohesion, and control elements. Here continuance commitment primarily involves the individual's cognitive reasoning or conclusion that remaining in the groups will being them profit. Cohesive commitment involves the individual's sense of solidarity or cathectic emotional orientations that binds them to the group. Lastly, the control elements of commitment involve the absorption and obedience of the individual to the group's norms and authority. When a group and individual bind in cognitive, affective, and moral ideologies, commitment will be high.

In a summary of the research at that time, Mowday et al. (1982) concluded that there were methodological and theoretical shortcomings in the cross-sectional nature of most of the foundational research on commitment. He instead insisted that employee commitment could be seen on a behavioral-attitudinal continuum, where the employees' expectations play a large role in how they will develop their sense of commitment to the organization over time. In this period of scholarship, the focus shifted to the psychological attachment employees have toward their organization and moved away from the tangible investment frameworks (Jaiswal et al., 2020). Further acknowledging the employee's role in the development of commitment, Eisenberger et al. (1986) began his research on the coined term of perceived organizational support. Perceived

organizational support (POS) describes the reciprocal relationship between employee-to-organization and organization-to-employee commitment. This theory maintains that employees will be committed to the organization to the degree they feel that the organization is committed to them (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

In the early 1990's, the field of organization commitment research was not unified and lacked agreement on terminology (Jaiswal et al., 2020). To provide effort in unifying this body of research Allen and Meyer (1991) devised a three-component model of organizational commitment. With many current day researchers still utilize the 3-component model (or TCM) to understand organizational commitment, their model has become the standard means of understanding and measuring employee organizational commitment (Reeder, 2020). Withing this TCM model, organizational commitment is seen as having three different components that impact an individual's commitment to their employer. The affective, normative, and continuance components of commitment describe the desire, obligation, and need of an employee's relationship with their organization (Cesário & Chambel, 2017; Ahuja, & Gupta, 2019).

Allen and Meyer developed the TCM model to not only describe the employees psychological state of mind toward their employer, but to also predict their willingness to continue to work and the degree of their dedication to their work (Allen & Meyer, 1990). They stressed that organizational commitment was a complex and multidimensional construct, with affective commitment being the highest form of organizational commitment. This refers to the employee's emotional connection to the objective, values, and goals of their employing organization. Affective commitment is often described as

the employee's "want" drive for continuing with their relationship with the company and pulls heavily from Mowday's (1982) and Kanter's (1968) works.

It is important to note that affective commitment and organizational identity are often conflated in literature, however, they represent empirically different constructs. While affective commitment represents the emotional attachment and sense of belonging with an organization, organizational identity implies the linking between the employee's self-concept on a cognitive and/or emotional level (Dávila & García, 2012). Both terms are used describe the employee's psychological attachment to their organization but are linked to different outcomes (Ashforth et al, 2008). Affective commitment is based on the premise of an exchange of resources between the employee and the organization, while organizational identity is based on the perceived similarity between the employee and the organization (Dávila & García, 2012). For example, an employee who works at a distance, such as an online faculty member, might feel very similar to the goals and objectives of an organization and have high organizational identity. Still, due to the distance, there are limited exchanges between the employee and their supervisor, colleagues, and organization resulting in low affective commitment. Organizational identity involves the self-definitional aspects of the relationship between employee and organization; affective commitment does not (Van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006).

Continuance commitment, on the other hand, refers to the employee's "need" or "have to" stay with the organization due to the evaluation of the cost of leaving. This form of commitment was largely derived from Becker's side bet theory. Normative commitment, first described by Wiener (1982) is the degree the employee feels that they "should" or "ought to" stay with an organization because it is the right thing to do. All

three forms of commitment have a negative relationship with turnover intention (Loan, 2020). While affective commitment has been shown to lead to fewer absenteeism, the other forms of commitment have a weaker relationship to absenteeism. Affective commitment has also been linked to higher levels of organizational citizenship behaviors (Djaelani, 2021). For reasons such as this, affective commitment is often seen as the pinnacle or most desired form of employee commitment, while normative and continuance are seen as less powerful forms of commitment (Reeder, 2020). While affective commitment has been shown to lead to better employee and organizational outcomes, it is important to remember the complex nature of employee commitment. Correctly evaluated, the employee will have a commitment profile that realizes the interaction between all the three components of affective, continuance, and normative commitment.

More recently, the TCM model has come under scrutiny, with researchers questioning the conceptual quality of the theory. They argue that the TCM model is not a pure model of organizational commitment but rather is better used as a model for predicting the specific behavior of turnover (Solinger et al., 2008). When seen through the lens of attitude-behavioral theory, the different forms of commitment defined in the TCM model represent different attitudinal experiences. Affective commitment is likened more to general feelings the employee possesses about their organization, while normative and continuance represent employee attitudes that are more behavior-based, such as staying or leaving.

As a response to the criticism that the TMC model does not qualify as a general model of organizational commitment due to its behavioral focus, Allen and Herscovitch

(2001) offer that behaviors and attitudes impact each other over time in a reciprocal

relationship. Both attitudes toward a target (organization) and attitudes toward a behavior

(leaving/staying) are part of an overall commitment profile comprised of the patterns of

relations among affective, normative, and continuance commitment. Defendants of the

TCM model do not see it as a conceptual shortcoming to measure normative and

continuance commitment as behavior-specific attitudes, as these are still very important

to many studies and further the understanding of employee commitment. Understanding

the motivational aspects that binds an employee to a course of action and shapes their

behavior is the desire for many who find themselves in the management of those

employees. With acknowledgment of the criticisms of the TCM model, the focus and

purpose of this study allows this model to still hold value in understanding online faculty

organizational commitment. Namely in the prevalence of online faculty's turnover rates

and for the purpose of establishing a comparison basis for the existing literature on

organizational commitment, which has been shaped in large by the use of the TCM

model.

Predictors of Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment has been linked to important outcomes such as

improved work performance, lower absenteeism, lower turnover, improved job

satisfaction, and better organizational citizenship behavior (Akram et al., 2017;

Novitasari, et al., 2020; Osibanjo et al., 2019; Yahaya, 2016; Zhou & Li, 2021).

Understandably, due to the impact of organizational commitment on positive

organizational outcomes, there has been great attention to understanding what predicts or

promotes organizational commitment. Themes in literature point to the importance of

employee perception of support, leadership style, leader member exchange, job

satisfaction, motivation, and employee personal factors as some of the main influencers

to employee organizational commitment. Given the scarcity of research on these factors

as they pertain to online faculty it is important to pull from the larger understanding of

these factors that is available in literature. In this section, a presentation on the

background and mechanisms for which these factors impact organizational commitment

will be explored from a general perspective as well as from a specific focus on higher

education faculty. Lastly, common threats to employee organizational commitment will

be presented as well as gaps in literature pertaining to the specific population of online

faculty.

Perceived Organizational Support

As mentioned previously, social exchange theory posits that employees

essentially trade caring for caring; if the organization cares about their well-being, they

will in turn care about the organization. The basis of this relationship functions on the

psychological norm of reciprocity. Reciprocity dictates that when an organization treats

an employee well, it obligates them to return the favorable treatment (Quratulain et al.,

2018). Organizational commitment is reached when employees trade their effort and

loyally and receive tangible benefits in return in a reliable and predictable manner.

Through the process of expectations and experiences, employees develop a perception of

the readiness of the organization to meet their needs, value their contributions, and care

about their well-being. This is known as the organizational support theory (Eisenberger et

al., 2020). An employee's perceived organizational support (POS) is highly related to

their organizational commitment (Eisenberger et al., 2016). Other favorable outcomes of

high POS include reduction of stress, better performance, and lessened absenteeism (Talukder, 2019).

According to organizational support theory, an employee's POS is created in part by the tendency of the employee to assign human qualities such as caring to the organization (Eisenberger et al., 2016). Understandably it can be reasoned that online faculty may experience difficulty with this process given the limited type and number of exchanges they have with their organization. Eisenberger et al. (2016) reasoned that it is by this process of personification of the organization the employee will come to believe that the organization favors or disfavors them base on how the organization meets their needs. One of the psychological mechanisms that explains the outcomes of POS is the process in which the socioemotional needs of the employee is met by the esteem, approval, and affiliation with the organization (Eisenberger et al., 2020). POS is also understood to function based on performance-reward-expectancies. High POS should lead to increased performance due to the employee's expectation that increased performance will be met with recognition and reward.

The forms of support and favorable treatment from and organization that consistently lead to high POS include fairness, organizational rewards/job condition, and supervisor support (Eisenberger et al., 2016). Research on fairness most often defines fairness in the context of equity theory that states that individuals feel entitled to a certain level of reward given their level of input (Nimmo, 2018). Fairness in the workplace can be understood through the idea of justice. Distributive, procedural, and interactional justice are all forms of justice found in the workplace (Olson & Ro, 2020). Olson and Ro (2020) offer definitions of the forms of justice and state that distributive justice is simply

the surface evaluation of how evenly or correctly rewards and costs are shared among the workforce. Procedural justice references the fairness of the processes used to make workplace decisions. Procedural justice can be seen as having two subsets; social and structural (Olson & Ro, 2020). The social subset of procedural justice is distinguished by the interpersonal treatment of employees and is often called interactional justice. This interactional justice is the degree of dignity and respect in which the employ has been treated. Olson and Ro (2020) clarify that the structural procedural justice subset deals with the formal rules and policies in an organization that affect employee's sense of fairness.

Perceptions of justice are vastly important to the perception of organizational support (Novitasari et al., 2020). Just fair treatment is of such importance to the life outcomes of the employee that it has even been shown to have a significant moderating relationship with health outcomes such as cardiovascular health (Rineer et al., 2017). The field of higher education has seen major shifts in management styles and models that challenge the perceived organizational support for faculty (Huang et al., 2020). Faculty roles have become increasingly stressful, and many faculty struggle to find secure tenured positions (Lovakov, 2016). As the relationship with the process and procedures of higher education shifts how this impacts faculty's sense of fairness, organizational rewards/job condition, and supervisor support will inevitably change the relationship between institutions and their faculty members.

Organizational rewards and job conditions are also highly correlated with POS (Huang et al., 2020). Rewards and job conditions that have been studied in relation to POS include "recognition, pay, promotions, job security, autonomy, role stress, and

training" (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002, p. 699). Job conditions have been studied at length as they relate to employee and organizational outcomes. Employee safety and other environmental factors if not handled properly by the organization have a drastic effect on the employee's relationship with their employer (Geisler at al., 2019). Organizational culture, or the set of shared values and norms that prescribe how individuals interact have shown to impact organizational commitment and POS and gives a nod to the foundational work conducted by Kanter on utopian communities (Batugal & Tindowen, 2019; Kanter, 1968). This bring up an important caveat to the study of online faculty's organizational commitment given their limited opportunities to be part of and experience an organization's culture in the same manner that is assumed in the current literature on residential higher education.

Support from leadership is the last noted consistent predictor of POS (DeConinck et al., 2018). As an extension of the organization, supervisors are often viewed as the main mechanism by which an employee develops their feelings toward their organization (Eisenberger et al., 2016). As an agent of the organization, supervisors engage in direct communication, training, and evaluation of their employee. It is the nature and quality of their orientation toward the employee that informs the employee of how the organization feels about them by extension of their supervisorial role (Kurtessis et al., 2017).

Leadership Style

With the importance of supervisor support well established in research, it is important to note the characteristics of supervisor support and the contributing factors that lead to positive outcomes such as organization commitment. Once such area is the topic of leadership style. Leadership style has many definitions but is generally

understood as the skills, traits, behaviors, and characteristic, used by leaders to motivate subordinates toward a goal (Al Khajeh et al., 2018). Studies have shown a consistent connection between organizational commitment and leadership style (Bismala & Manurung, 2021; Djaelani et al.,2021, Huang et al., 2020; Lambersky, 2016; Mbonu & Azuji, 2021; Meixner & Pospisil, 2021; Zamin, & Hussin, 2021). Over the past 50 years, the research topic of leadership styles has been given much attention and has been investigated as one of the primary sources of organizational commitment (Yahaya, 2016, p.190). Yahaya (2016) concluded that based on the overwhelming amount of attention and research on leadership styles and organizational commitment that there is a predictive quality of effective leadership on employee commitment.

In his pioneering work, Kurt Lewin (1994) proposed a leadership style framework with three main styles of leadership: autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire. Each style has defining characteristic and traits for how they influence the workforce in which they oversee. Autocratic leaders make all the decisions and leave very little power to their employees. Democratic leaders involve their employees in the decisions and give them equal power. Laissez-faire leaders are hands off and place the responsibility and power of decision making in the hands of their employees. Most current literature on leadership style identifies several other types of leaders in addition to Lewin's three model styles (Zamin & Hussin, 2021). Countless works have focused on transformational leadership vs. transactions leadership as they related to organizational performance (Huang et al., 2020). Transformational leadership style considers the needs of their employees and cares for their wellbeing. The socioemotional needs-meeting by transformational leader's functions on the same principles as the social exchange and organizational support

theories. Employees who felt that their leader genuinely cared for them and supported them in their job role report improved performance (Al Khajeh et al., 2018). Transactional leadership style is characterized by the exchange of rewards to the employee for meeting the targets and goals set forth by their leader. Generally transactional leadership has positive to moderate relationship with organizational performance; however, employees are not motivated to be innovative or creative.

The more harmful styles of leadership are autocratic (authoritarian) and bureaucratic (Al Khajeh et al., 2018). The bureaucratic style defines a leader that cares more about the policies and procedures of an organization than the individual. With both of these styles, performance may see a short gain, but over time they are detrimental to the workforce as they lessen motivation and organizational commitment. Here the employee deems that the organization does not value them, so there is little reason for the employee to value the mission and goals of the organization. In light of this the concept of employee empowerment has gathered attention as it relates to leadership style in an organization (Huang et al., 2020).

In an attempt to understand the mechanisms through which leadership styles impact faculty employee organizational commitment Huang et al. (2020) reasoned that psychological empowerment mediated the relationship between transformational and contingent (transactional) reward leadership and faculty organizational commitment. As a motivational construct, psychological empowerment is defined as "increased intrinsic task motivation manifested in a set of our cognitions reflecting an individual's orientation to his or her work role" (Huang et al., 2020, p.2477). Here the individual's orientation to their work is a reflection of their perceptions of competence, impact, meaning, and self-

determination. An individual who feels a sense of mastery and self-efficacy perceives themselves as being competent to perform their job. Impact is the significance of their work and meaningful work is arrived at when the individual's goals and beliefs line of with their work values and goals. Self-determination is in reference to the degree of freedom the employee feels to conduct their work. The results of Huang et al. (2020) study not only further established the positive predictive relationship between transformational and contingent (transactional) leadership styles and higher levels of faculty organizational commitment, but showed evidence for the significant and positive impact of psychological empowerment as a mediator of organizational commitment and transformational and contingent (transactional) leadership styles.

Leader Member Exchange

As a means of understanding how a leader and their leadership style impacts the relationship with their employee, the construct of leader member exchange (LMX) has become a popular topic in research (Power, 2013). This is understandable given the importance of the quality of the relationship between the employee and their leader and individual and organizational outcomes. Leader member exchange expands beyond most other leadership theories in that it is not centered on a quality or characteristics of the leader, as in leadership-style research, but is instead interested in the nature and quality of the relationship between leaders and their subordinates (Martin et al., 2018). However, it is important to note that some researchers argue that LMX is an significant mediator for transformational leadership-styles (Power, 2013).

A powerful predictor of performance, high-quality leader member exchange has been linked to increased job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior, and

organizational commitment (Martin et al., 2018). As a conceptual framework for understanding why some leader-flower relationships thrive and others do not, most LMX research has focused on the two-way dyadic relationship between a leader and a follower, though group level LMX effects have been addressed in research (Buengeler et al., 2021). The central foundation of LMX holds that leaders do not treat all subordinates the same. Rather their relationships are differentiated by social exchanges leading to varying degrees of relationship quality between each follower, aptly named the LMX differentiation process (Martin et al., 2018). Through the lens of the social exchange theory, it is the pursuit of shared goals between the employee and their leader that leads to a mutually beneficial relationship.

Perceived organizational support and leader member exchange have many overlapping concepts; however, it is possible for an employee to separate their feelings about an organization and their relationship with their leader (Wayne et al., 1997). Researchers have quantitatively differentiated POS and LMX as related but unique constructs, both with different antecedents and outcomes. Conceptual distinctions have led researchers to recommend using both of these constructs to pursue predictive models of employee behaviors and attitudes (Wayne et al., 1997). Within the population of higher education faculty LMX has been seen as of primary importance to the support and management of faculty as faculty are often described as highly autonomous, making the quality of the one-on-one relationship between the faculty and their leader particularly influential (Power, 2013).

Job Satisfaction

Teachers commonly report high levels of job satisfaction even in light of high stress levels (Toropova, 2021). The variable most often mediating this relationship between stressors faculty face and their job satisfaction is perceptions of support. In light of the concerning trends of faculty turnover, much research has been conducted on faculty job satisfaction with the assumption that faculty who are satisfied with their job usually have greater retention of their employment as well as other positive outcomes (Batugal & Tindowen, 2019; Moustafa et al., 2019). The construct of job satisfaction is a well-studied topic across job types and has many implications for turnover, burnout, individual success, and organizational success. Job satisfaction has been defined as the overall feelings of satisfaction an employee has for their work and is a major predictor of organizational commitment (Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2017). How job satisfaction impacts online faculty is relatively unknown. Given the strong link between job satisfaction and perceptions of support as they relate to important outcome variables in other populations, job satisfaction is an important variable to consider when assessing the predictors of online faculty's organizational commitment.

The Two-factor Theory (motivator-hygiene theory) of job satisfaction is important to this construct, which highlights the interaction between individual motivation and environmental working conditions (Kose & Kose, 2017). Herzberg developed the motivation-hygiene theory to identifying two types of factors contributing to individual job satisfaction (Alshmemri et al., 2017). He believed that factors were either constructive toward creating job-satisfaction or created dissatisfaction, both of which occur independent of one another. This two-factor motivator-hygiene theory pulls from the concept of needs addressed by Maslow's hierarchy (Velmurugan & Sankar, 2017).

Herzberg et al. (1959) reasoned that individuals were not as motivated by basic needs of pay and working conditions, but higher level needs such as recognition and achievement were more directly impactful on the individual's job-satisfaction. These higher-order needs are what Herzberg calls intrinsic motivators that give positive satisfaction. Hygiene factors in this theory represent lower-order extrinsic needs of pay, benefits, and working conditions. Within this two-factor theory, there are four possible working conditions related to job satisfaction: low motivation/low hygiene, high motivation/low hygiene, low motivation/high hygiene, and high motivation/high hygiene (Herzberg et al., 1959). With considerable empirical evidence for this theory many studies on job satisfaction have utilized the Herzberg's two factory motivation-hygiene theory. This theory highlights the complex interplay between individual and environmental factors that affect employee job satisfaction and willingness to continue in their work role (Kose & Kose, 2017).

Motivation

Motivational interpretations of Allen and Myers (1991) TCM model used in this study have been offered to validate the behavioral aspects of the TMC model. Therefore, it is important to understand the foundations of motivation research and its supporting mechanisms to better understand the credibility of the TMC model. Human motivation has been studied at length in many fields of research. In the field of business, work motivation has been used to determine hiring and training practices and address work productivity issues (Hanaysha & Majid, 2018). A basic definition of motivation describes the individual's needs and drives that are required to reach a desired state (Velmurugan & Sankar, 2017). Motivation explains why people continue or end their behavior and in layman's terms is often used to describe why a person acts the way they do. The forces

acting within an individual that lead them to goal-directed behaviors are often seen as desires, beliefs, and needs. Motivation is seen as having three major impacts on human behavior; it activates or initiates behavior, guides the behavior's direction and persistence, and determines the intensity and vigor in which the individual moves toward their goal (Herzberg et al., 1959).

Understandably the degree to which an employee is motivated greatly affects their work engagement. Studies have consistently shown a positive relationship between employee motivation and productivity (Bakker, 2018). Moreover, Hanaysha and Majid (2018) establish a positive connection between motivation and employee organizational commitment. As a driving force for employee outcomes, it is important to understand what factors improve and maintain employee motivation. Common factors that have been identified as means of enhancing employee commitment include promotions, job security, fair wages, and bonuses (Zameer et al., 2014).

To describe and understand motivation, various humanist theories such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Herzberg's two-factor theory, and Self-Determination Theory have been presented (Velmurugan & Sankar, 2017). Additionally, employee motivation as it relates to the surrounding constructs of job satisfaction and organizational outcomes has been linked to Psychological Contract Theory (Soares & Mosquera, 2019). Rousseau originally defined a psychological contract as the set of "individual's beliefs about the terms of the exchange agreement between employee and employer" (Rousseau, 1989). Here the contract of exchange is determined by the reciprocal obligations of both parties in the relationship. If one entity in the contract fails to meet their obligations, a breach occurs and is met with feelings of disappointment and often disengagement with the

relationship. An employee's commitment has been related to the degree to which they see their organization fulfilling their psychological contract (Hanaysha & Majid, 2018). Significant support exists that stresses the dangers of organizations not fulfilling the psychological contact and its detriment on employee wellbeing, productivity, and commitment (Soares & Mosquera, 2019).

In recent years research has drawn a link between psychological or ideological contract fulfillment and the concept of a calling (Kim et al., 2018). Research on the process by which individuals seek meaning in their work arrived at the concept of a calling, or the individuals "approach to work that reflects the belief that one's career is a central part of a broader sense of purpose and meaning in life and is used to help others or advance the greater good in some fashion" (Kemsley, 2018). Research has shown that individuals who view themselves as having an occupational calling have strong drive or motivation, enhanced work levels, greater life satisfaction, and overall improved well-being (Kim et al., 2018). Kim et al. (2018) research demonstrates that a calling also increase the degree to which ideological contract fulfillment or breaches by their organization affects the individual. As such, the organizational context plays a role in how the individual with the calling will perform. It is quite possible that an individual with a calling will have poor performance if they have low affective commitment to their organization and perceive that the organization has not lived up to their ideological contract (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019).

Certain occupations, such as teaching, ministry, and police work tend to draw calling-oriented individuals (Kemsley, 2018). Individuals in these occupations who see their work as a calling are noted as having superior performance and take on increased

workloads voluntarily. Here the term occupational commitment has been used to define individuals who are committed to their occupation. Studies have shown that occupational commitment can moderate the relationship between organizational commitment and job performance (Sungu et al., 2019). The component of motivation is important to note in light of this study on organizational commitment in online faculty given the trends in higher education for contract work paid at a lower and more insecure schedule which will be discussed in the proceeding sections (Deem, 2017; Franco-Santos & Otley, 2018).

Employee Personal Factors

In addition to the aforementioned organizational factors, much research has been conducted on the potential impact of various employee demographic variables and employee and organizational outcomes (Kawiana et al., 2018). Variables such as age, gender, ethnicity, education level, and tenure have shown mixed results as it relates to their predictive relationship with work-related outcomes like organizational commitment (Al Jabari, 2019; Gopinath, 2021; Hill, 2014; Meyer & Allen, 1997). In light of the mixed results of demographic research on organizational commitment, many professionals have called for further investigation to advance this field of study (Hasan et al., 2021). Of the existing literature on employee age, several studies have concluded that this variable is likely more reflective of the level of experience and length of employment than the chronological age of the employee (Al Jabari, 2019). Nevertheless, in general, age seems to be positively related to organizational commitment (Singh & Gupta, 2015). It stands to reason that employees have different needs and goals at different stages of their career and the time spent under one organization's umbrella will relate proportionally to the degree the employee feels an identification and dedication with the organization. Singh

and Gupta's (2015) research findings indicated that different generations were committed in different ways. In their study of age, experience, and organizational commitment, older employees had higher levels of affective commitment, while younger employees had low affective commitment but higher normative commitment. As explained by the social exchange theory, the length of employee time spent at an organization is an investment, and the more invested the individual the more committed they typically are to their career (Jaiswal et al., 2020). Therefore, age and organizational commitment is not a simple relationship and likely involves different types of commitment, particularly affective commitment, and motivations.

Similar to age, gender differences and organizational commitment have been observed. Of the studies noting gender differences in organizational commitment, the most common trend is for women to show more affective commitment to their organization, while men have shown more overall commitment; however, some studies have contradicted these findings (Hill, 2014; Hasan et al., 2021, Karakuş, 2018). Further complicating the relationship between gender and organizational commitment is the interplay between occupational type and gender, as some occupations are disproportionate in their gender representation, such as teaching and police work (Cortes & Pan, 2018). Finding similar mixed result are studies on potential differences in organizational commitment by ethnicity (García-Rodríguez et al., 2020). As the social exchange theory is based on socially prescribed norms of reciprocity, one's culture can influence the inherent social norms that contribute to organizational commitment. Other personal factors that are noted as potential influencers of organizational commitment include marital status and religion (Al Jabari, 2019).

Literature has also identified the role of person-organization fit as an agent of organizational commitment (Jehanzeb & Mohanty, 2018). Perceived person-organization fit is the individual's evaluation that their personal values and personality are similar to that of their organization (Miller & Youngs, 2021). The process by which perceived organization fit influences organizational commitment is similar to the understanding of psychological and ideological contract research in that people tend to base their feelings and behavior on expectations and form a personal relationship with an organization they have personified (Eisenberger et al., 2016). For person-organization fit, this relationship is encouraged if there is a sense of kinship between the employee and organization.

Studies have demonstrated that employees with high levels of perceived organizational fit have better job satisfaction, longer tenure, and higher levels of organizational commitment and citizenship behavior (Chhabra, 2021). The overall improved wellbeing of the employee if they are ideologically aligned to their place of work is well documented in research (Oo, 2018; Sørlie, 2022). Furthermore, the impact of the employee's personality and the fit between leadership and organizational characteristics are known to have a significant effect (Meixner & Pospisil, 2021). Clearly the dynamic between employee and organizational factors is important to consider when seeking to understand organizational commitment. Additionally, with such a wide variety of potential personal and work environment factors that contribute to organizational commitment it is important to note that these effects are often the product of the interaction between these factors and not their stand-alone contribution. For this reason, demographic variables related to online faculty have been included as control variables in

this study, as much is unknown about how these factors impact online faculty's organizational commitment.

Threats to Organizational Commitment

It stands to reason that if any of the factors that support employee organizational commitment are not present then there is a risk of decreased commitment. However, research has identified other major threats to organizational commitment across industry types. Employees who experience heightened work-related stress suffer a myriad of negative outcomes related to their decreased wellbeing and organizational commitment (Abdelmoteleb, 2019). Job stress occurs when an individual's job requires more resources than they possess. Understood through the social exchange theory, job stress produces an imbalance in the equation of employee output and organizational input for the employee. At a resource deficit, the employee is prone to decreased productivity, low motivation, poor job satisfaction, burnout, and turnover (Bottiani et al., 2019; Lan et al., 2020).

An area of research pertaining to a particular form of job stress highlights the conflict between work and life demands for employees. Work-family-conflict researchers have sought to understand and predict how individual's two main life stressors, work and family, compete for limited personal resources (Dorenkamp & Ruhle, 2019). Also called work-life-conflict this variable of interest has been used to describe the struggle employees face when work role demands spill over and impact their family (life) responsibilities. This construct is also reciprocal as family life can spill into work life, termed life-work-conflict (Gisler et al., 2018). When employees have high work-life balance and are able to meet the demands of both their work and family (life) domains

they tend to report better job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Talukder, 2019). Talukder (2019) specifies that supervisor support has a strong negative relationship with work-life-conflict and a highly positive relationship with work-life-balance. Therefore, it would seem that perceived supervisor support has an ameliorative effect on work-life-conflict, furthering the explanation of processes through which supervisor support impacts employee organizational commitment.

It should be noted that work-life-conflict is impacted by the stage of life and length of employment of the employee. In their study of employee emotional exhaustion and work-life-conflict Zhou and Li (2021) showed that employees have different levels and types of (affective, continuance, normative) commitment depending on their stage of career. While all employees, regardless of the stage of their career, showed a significant positive relationship between work-life-conflict and emotional exhaustion, their exhaustion was buffered by different types of commitment. Early career employees' feelings of exhaustion from work-life conflict were buffered by continuance commitment, while experienced employees work-life-conflict exhaustion was buffered by affective commitment (Zhou & Li, 2021). Furthering the understanding of the relationship between work-life-conflict and employee outcomes are noted gender differences (French et al., 2018; Lyu & Fan, 2020). When work interferes with family (life) women tend to engage less in work than men (Lyu & Fan, 2020). A possible explanation for gender differences in work-life-conflict outcomes is explained by different societal and cultural pressures placed on men and women as they relate to work and family roles and norms.

Similar to the impact of superior's support on work-life balance, studies have shown a connection between perceptions of fairness in the workplace and employee organizational commitment. A major threat to employee organizational commitment is their appraisal of their organization as an entity that operates on the principles of fair and just treatment of their employees (Qureshi & Hamid, 2017). When employees feel that they or others are not being treated fairly, their confidence and trust in their organization is challenged and they will be less affectively committed to their organization. If they feel like they can leave their organization without too high of a cost, they are more likely to seek alternative employment when conditions are not fair or right. The construct of organizational justice encompasses this phenomenon of employee perceptions of fairness and has been well documented as a predictor of employee organizational commitment (Novitasari et al., 2020).

A more recent trend in threats to organizational commitment research is the impact of increasing numbers of non-traditional contingent jobs on the market. These non-traditional contingent jobs have many similarities to online adjunct faculty positions, given their non-benefited contingent status. Like the field of higher education, many other jobs have turned to the digital world as their primary platform. In the 2000's advances in technology and the availability of the internet to more areas ushered in the potential platform for gig jobs (Tan et al., 2021). More and more jobs are being transferred to online and non-benefited positions, drastically changing the relationship between employee and their organization. While researchers debate the definition of this new term, gig work is most often characterized as short-term, finite assignments and loose boundaries concerning when and where employees perform their work tasks

(Watson et al., 2021). This flexible or freelance form of employment has the advantages of autonomy and can adapt to fit around employee's life circumstances; however, the growth of gig work has raised some concerns about the health and safety of employees (Jiang & Lavayssee, 2018). Furthermore, researchers have noted negative consequences of gig work produced by the lack of legislative protection of their non-benefited contingent working conditions (Watson et al., 2021).

Employees with gig jobs often experience high levels of job insecurity (Kim & Kim, 2020). One of the foundational definitions of job insecurity is the "perceived powerlessness to maintain desired continuity in a threatened job situation" (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984). Job insecurity negatively affects employee job satisfaction, job involvement, trust and commitment to their organization, and has been linked to physical and mental health issues in employees (Alghamdi, 2018; Kim & Kim, 2020). In their work on the effect of gig worker's psychological contract fulfillment, Liu et al. (2020) found that employees with higher organizational identification and longer lengths of service had a significant positive effect on the workers' task performance. This seems to mirror traditional work-setting research; however, with the existing ambiguity in the field and lack of agreement in terminology, the impact of the gig economy on employee outcomes has much left to be investigated. The terminology and research surrounding gig work draws many parallels to the current trends in higher education.

Organizational Commitment in Traditional Education Platforms

While research across industries has consistently shown a relationship between organizational commitment and many positive work outcomes. including lower absenteeism, lower turnover, improved job satisfaction, and better organizational

citizenship behavior, researchers have also examined these relationships in the educational sector (Hanaysha & Majid, 2018). Similar to previously reviewed research, it is important for researchers to understand the mechanisms by which educators' organizational commitment is fostered so that positive organizational outcomes can result (Akram et al., 2017; Novitasari, et al., 2020; Osibanjo et al., 2019; Yahaya, 2016; Zhou & Li, 2021).

Educational literature has identified several factors that influence faculty's organizational commitment. Organizational commitment has been linked to faculty's relationship with their leadership and perceived support (Afif, 2018; Donovan & Payne, 2021; Sabir & Bhutta, 2018). Work environment, stress, organizational climate, and performance have also been shown to have a significant relationship with faculty's organizational commitment (Batugal & Tindowen; 2019; Erlangga et al., 2021). Additionally, Psychological empowerment provided by leadership has also been shown to be a moderator of faculty job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Jordan et al., 2017).

Research on traditional higher education platforms has noted a major shift in the structure and processes used to govern institutions (Huang et al., 2020). Over the past three decades, higher education has experienced a managerial revolution in which ideologies and techniques from the private sector of business administration, that espouse prevailing capitalistic goals, have been adopted (Deem, 2017; Franco-Santos & Otley, 2018). In many colleges and universities, traditional collegiality has been replaced with dominant leadership models that enforce the effectiveness and efficiency of the economic side of higher education institutions. Trends in higher education management in large

now value market-driven-competition and performance-oriented measurements of succuss over the traditional values of academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and collective professionalism (Deem, 2017). This modern means of higher education management has led to a decline in faculty professional autonomy and a lessened sense of control over their profession, ultimately leading to decreased rates of faculty organizational commitment (Huang et al., 2020).

As a means of addressing this concerning trend, Huang et al. (2020) sought to understand the mechanisms by which leadership styles impacted faculty organizational commitment. Their study showed a positive relationship between transformational and contingent reward leaders and faculty organizational commitment that was mediated by the psychological empowerment faculty received from supportive leaders. A vast amount of research has identified leadership style and perceived organizational support as means of addressing trends in lower job satisfaction and reduced affiliation with their institution (Franco-Santos & Otley, 2018).

As the trends in the management of higher education institutions have changed, so have many of the job requirements of faculty. Increasing amounts of administrative work has been noted by faculty as major stressors in their career (Lovakov; 2016). The competitive pressures of performance-oriented organizational structures have increased the load and strain of faculty role responsibilities (Deem, 2017). This is important to note in light of the numerous studies demonstrating decreases in organizational commitment of employees as a result of increased work role stress (Richards et al., 2018). Furthering the strain on faculty is the trend in contingent non-tenured contract work in higher education. In an attempt to meet budget constraints, many universities have restructured

their workforce from mostly tenured faculty to non-tenured faculty (Hearn & Burns, 2021). However, in their expansive longitudinal study on the financial impact of contingent faculty employment, Hearn and Burns (2021) found no evidence for the financial benefit of contingent non-contract faculty for institutions.

Hearn and Burns (2021) research sites that universities that once employed most of their faculty on a traditional higher education model, now have less than half of their faculty on a tenured track. Their findings represent a nationwide shift in hiring fix-term contract faculty for the purposes of organizational strategic flexibility and decreased financial burden to the institution. Instead of clear financial benefit, institutions with primarily contingent faculty saw a decreased focus on student development and success as well as lower quality of instruction (Hearn & Burns, 2021). Having to pay contingent faculty at a lower rate may be alluring to institutions; however, this often leads to faculty having to teach at multiple universities, which have been shown to lead to greater turnover, burnout, and lower levels of organizational commitment (Lovakov, 2016).

Concerning trends in faculty turnover have produced a wide breadth of research on faculty job satisfaction with the assumption that faculty who are satisfied with their job usually have greater retention of their employment and other positive outcomes (Batugal & Tindowen, 2019; Moustafa et al., 2019). As an occupation, teaching is often associated with high levels of stress; however, teachers often express high job satisfaction (Toropova, 2021). It seems that variables that mediate the stressors faculty face are often related to perceptions of support. Having a healthy work environment and supportive organizational culture and climate allows faculty to engage in their work knowing that they are not alone in their struggles (Afif, 2018; Batugal & Tindowen, 2019; Donovan &

Payne, 2021; Erlangga et al., 2021; Moustafa et al., 2019). This perceived support from

their organization and peers provides faculty with some of the resources needed to

promote their commitment to their organization.

Online Education

A sector of education that has seen enormous growth over the past twenty years is

online education (Allen & Steaman, 2017; Martin et al., 2020). Organizational

commitment is an important factor in online education and may operate differently given

the uniqueness of online education. It is important to understand the background and

context of online education to fully appreciate the dynamic growth this field has

witnessed. Nuances and challenges unique to the online education setting will be

addressed as well as a look into who online faculty are and what their work life entails.

Differences between traditional face-to-face and online instruction are noted to highlight

the ill fit for many of the theoretical and pedagogical practices currently being used in the

field. Current research trends and issues facing online education will be explored as well

as gaps in the literature as they relate to understanding online faculty's organizational

commitment.

Background of Online Education

The terms distance and online are often used interchangeably, with the boarder

category of distance education involving mail correspondence education, radio/television

education, and videoconferencing (Singh &Thurman, 2019). Surprisingly, distance

education has a long past, with the first course dating back to 1728 in Boston where

training in shorthand lessons were sent my mail (Woldeab et al., 2020). As pioneers in

the field, Penn State offered courses via radio as early as 1922; however, it was not until

the advent of the internet and personal computers that online education as it is commonly

understood today began to rapidly develop (Casey, 2008). Scholars have struggled to

come to a concise agreed upon definition for online education, and this is likely the

product of the many forms and nuances to this field. However, the common thread

between all definitions of online education implies that the student and teacher are not at

the same location (Woldeab et al., 2020). In their systematic literature review on the

many ways online learning is defined in research, Singh and Thurman (2019) offered the

following summary definition: "online education is defined as education being delivered

in an online environment through the use of the internet for teaching and learning. This

includes online learning on the part of the students that is not dependent on their physical

or virtual co-location" (Singh & Thurman, 2019, p.302).

There also seems to be two main methods of delivering online education via

either synchronous and asynchronous classrooms (Nieuwoudt, 2020). In synchronous

classrooms, the student and instructor meet or join online at the same time, while in

asynchronous classrooms, students and their instructor communicate academic material at

different times and do not meet live. Differences in student success have been noted in

the varying forms of delivery, most often showing a slight increase in student

performance with synchronous classes even though students report that they are less

convenient (Fehrman & Watson, 2021).

Differences in Online and Residential Education

The touted benefits of online education are greater flexibility and lower cost to

students and institutions alike (Xu & Xu, 2019). With online degrees students no longer

need to take several years to attend in-person classes that create time constraints that

often make full-time jobs and family life unmanageable. Online education also reaches a greater audience that would not otherwise have access to higher education (Palvia et al., 2018). Early forms of distance education primarily served women and individuals in rural areas that could not make accommodations to attend courses in person (Singh &Thurman, 2019). Trends in increasing diversity of online students has only continued. As technology availability continues to advance, so does the access to online higher education across the globe (Reyes & Segal, 2019).

This globalization in online education challenged traditional pedagogy as the needs and challenges facing online students greatly differ from the average residential college student (Trammell et al., 2018). Many thought leaders in the field of online education prefer the term andragogy to describe the methods used in the instruction of adult learners (Darby & Lang, 2019). Fundamentally, pedagogy describes the teaching of children who are dependent on the teacher to provide external motivation to acquire content knowledge (Bowling & Henschke, 2020). Andragogy on the other hand, describes the teaching of adults who are intrinsically self-motivated and self-directed and requires education that is more problem centered on building skills and certification for employment purposes. While complimentary, andragogy and pedagogy practices serve different audiences with different needs. Most online learners are returning to school later in life with the need for degrees or certifications to give them better employment (Darby & Lang, 2019). They need education to be efficient, cost effective, and outcomes to have immediate practical applications in their life.

With less overhead for online programs, universities can offer classes at a lower cost as they do not need infrastructure fees for on-campus accommodations and services

(Huang et al., 2020). This has led to universities prizing online education as having a high return on investment with many prioritizing the earning potential of the online section of their institutions as means of addressing issues in funding (Hearn & Burns, 2021). With continued decreases in residential enrollment, online enrollment seems to be a promising source of revenue with the U.S. Department of Education reporting 7,313,623 students enrolled in distance courses across all degree-granting postsecondary institutions in 2019. With the impact of the global Covid-19 pandemic, the education industry saw rapid adoption of online education platforms out of necessity, where many institutions were required to figure out barriers to online education out of necessity (Nabi, 2020). The long-term effects of the pandemic on online higher education are still being observed and will undoubtedly continue to shape trends in the field.

Another significant difference between online and residential education platforms is the faculty-student interaction (Trammell et al., 2018). The relationship between student and instructor drastically shifts when courses go online. Likewise, student-to-student relationships are obstructed due to the drastic difference in the quality of time spent together in a community. Many students and faculty of residential schools cite the community and relational aspect of their college experience as the most formative and important to their overall success (Schriver & Kulynych, 2021). The rapport and support between faculty and student are constantly linked to better student outcomes and undoubtedly helps the residential education process (Protopsaltis & Baum, 2019). One of the main critiques of online education is the decreased quality and frequency of faculty-to-student interaction (Xu & Xu, 2019).

This critique is notable as their faculty member is the main source of interaction for online learners. Research has shown that the ability of the faculty member to create a human connection with their online students is crucial for the student's success (Protopsaltis & Baum, 2019). Furthermore, job responsibilities for an online instructor and a residential instructor differ drastically. The ability of the faculty member to bridge the gap created by distance education requires different skills and practices than traditional face-to-face instruction (Kebritchi et al., 2017; Protopsaltis & Baum, 2019). Faculty must have technical skills and offer an increased amount of feedback in the form of electronic communications. Students who receive quick detailed instruction and feedback on performance in online courses have the best chance for success (Darby & Lang, 2019).

Adjunct Factors

With the importance of the faculty member to the success of online education, it is necessary to understand the role and characteristics that typify online instructors. A reported 39% of higher education faculty have taught online, and 81% of those were involved in converting traditional courses to online courses (Jaschik & Lederman, 2018). Demand for increasing amounts of online education has produced the need for competent online instructors. However, a literature review revealed a scarcity of interest in who online faculty are with research instead focusing on elements that drive online classroom success. The quick emergence of online education resulted in the rapid conversion of many residential in-person courses to online formats (Leary et al., 2020). Faculty members were largely tasked with this conversion; however, teachers tend to teach in the same manner in which they were taught leading to poor online course design (Borup &

Evmenova, 2019). Faculty report that it is more difficult to teach online courses, and it has been proposed that without the experiences of being an online student themselves faculty struggle to adapt to online teaching methods (Rhode et al., 2017).

With a scarcity of research on online faculty needs and interest Luna (2018) sought to provide a view into the role of contingent faculty in higher education, many of which taught primarily in remote modalities. Luna (2018) found that these faculty members often do not have health or retirement benefits, lower pay, limited career advancement, and unpredictable income. They were also less likely to participate in university or department decisions, curriculum planning, or faculty governance, often leaving them feeling voiceless. With challenging working circumstances and a scarcity of research on online faculty's personal factors, further research is required to better understand online faculty.

Current Trends in Online Education Research

A literature review of research in online education revealed that most research on online learning has centered on learning outcomes to show the effectiveness of online learning compared to residential platforms (Woldeab et al, 2020). Few studies have attempted to understand the faculty experience in the online setting, and very little is understood about their organizational commitment (Luna, 2018). With high turnover rates for online faculty alongside high levels of online faculty job satisfaction, the relationship faculty have with their employer needs further investigation.

Of the research available on online faculty teacher satisfaction, self-efficacy, and attitudes toward online education has produced valuable information (Horvitz, 2015; Marasi et at., 2020; Stickney et al., 2019). Faculty who express high levels of job

satisfaction and self-efficacy are more likely to continue their employment in online

higher education (Hampton et al., 2020). Factors that seem to support faculty job

satisfaction also include flexibility and connection to students (Stickney et al., 2019).

Faculty satisfaction has also been linked to the number of courses taught (Hampton et al.,

2020). Here the faculty's experience and comfort with online teaching modalities

provided the mechanism for their satisfaction. Hampton (2020) also noted that feelings of

sufficient training and support also play into faculty's feelings of job-satisfaction.

Teachers who are comfortable with technology and computers feel more self-efficacy and

benefit from appropriate training. Several studies show that on average online faculty

report high levels of job satisfaction, with a weaker but still positive link between faculty

job satisfaction and institutional support (Marasi et al., 2020; Stickney et al., 2019).

Historically faculty have been hesitant to adopt online education and place lower

value on online education as an efficacious method of higher education (Woldeab et al.,

2020). Nevertheless, with continued student demand for online courses, the number of

online faculty continues to grow. As more and more faculty join the online higher

education community, it is important to assess their perspectives and experiences, as

these factors play a significant role in the development and practice of higher education.

Very little research exists investigating the explicit connection between online faculty

and their organizational commitment (Luna, 2018).

To date, research on online faculty's relationship with their organization has

largely focused on the ability of the faculty to adopt and successfully implement online

learning platforms (Glass, 2017; Martin et al., 2019). It seems that the major trend in

relevant research on online faculty is centered on their performance, job satisfaction, and

self-efficacy (Horvitz, 2015; Marasi et at., 2020; Stickney et al., 2019). However, when considering reported high levels of performance, job satisfaction, and self-efficacy along with high turnover rates, there seems to be a gap of understanding as to what motivates online faculty to stay in their role (Marasi et at., 2020). With the challenges facing online faculty's relationship with their work and employer and the lack of attention to these factors in the research community, a further investigation on the predictors of online faculty's organizational commitment is needed.

Biblical Foundations of the Study

Through both special and general revelation, God has communicated the design of man as a working creation and that the nature of work, as it was originally designed to be, is good. The book of Genesis depicts the original relationship man had to work. After God created the heavens and the earth, he looked at the product of his work and declared that it was very good (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Genesis 1:31). By example, God has imparted the idea that work can be profitable and pleasing. In the creation story, God made man in his own image and instructed him to cultivate, maintain, subdue, and rule over the earth. This conveys that God designed man to work and to work alongside one another. This is the foundation of the Biblical worldview as it relates to the field of industrial organizational psychology and the topic of organizational commitment.

Challenges in the world of work can also be understood through the Genesis story. While God created man to work, the fall changed man's relationship with work, making it hard and laborious. However, scripture offers that man is to work as if working for the Lord, while also serving only one master (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Matthew 6:24). With ultimate allegiance to God, man is to engage in his work wholeheartedly as

an act of worship. But this will not come without its struggles. As a Christian researcher, it is possible to offer a biblical perspective on the pitfalls of poor organizational practices and suggestions for how to better this process in a God-honoring way.

Scripture is clear that God equipped man to work and that through work, others can benefit. The book of Ephesians offers that through labor and honest work, an individual will have resources to share with those in need (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Ephesians 4:28). Furthermore, trends in research on organizational commitment align with the special revelation of Scripture. When there is a healthy relationship between the employee and the employer, both will profit (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Ecclesiastes 4:9; Proverbs 27:17). The benefits of commitment are a product of God's design for man's relationship with his work. However, it should be noted that labor and toil alone without purpose is not reflective of God's intended design. Man functions best when he has a godly purpose and identity.

King Solomon reflects on this in his conclusion that "all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun" (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Ecclesiastes 2:11). Finding significance in work alone is insufficient for many. Working for self, not the Lord, can only bring so much purpose. For this reason, scripture extorts every believer to "be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (*King James Bible*, 1769/20171, Corinthians 15:58).

When considering the pertinence of the social exchange theory in organizational research from a biblical perspective, it is hard to find agreement. The social exchange

theory provides a clear equation for the reasons why an individual will remain in a relationship, working or otherwise. If people get more than they receive, they will stay in the relationship; if the equation is less favorable to the person, then they will be more likely to terminate that relationship. This reflects a very self-centered approach to relationship continuance. While the social exchange theory may very well describe how people often operate, it is not biblical because God calls believers to a life of giving and selflessness. For the believer, their equation is less about what they get out of a relationship than what they can give. As the recipient of the Lord's adoption and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the believers motivation is to share their gifts with others. In this sense, the motivation behind their commitment would be drastically different than the motives and drives described by the social exchange theory.

In the context of the working relationship, a biblical view of organizational commitment would highlight the principle of working for the Lord and not for the self or others. It is not that a working exchange is without reward; it is just that the source of the reward for a biblical view of organizational commitment is found in the inheritance promised to all believers. Colossians 3:23-24 states that, "and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ" (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017). Here a moderator of employee organizational commitment would be the employee's belief that their work and reward is for and from the Lord. Of course, this brings up the potential for believers to be in a place of work that does not embody their beliefs, or openly embodies antichristian principles. Understandably this could cause strain for the employee and corresponds with research on person-organization fit as an important

predictor of organizational commitment (Jehanzeb & Mohanty, 2018; Miller & Youngs, 2021). Biblical study in organizational commitment opens up the conversation to explore alternative sources of employee motivation and attitudes that involve the employee's belief system.

Summary

In this literature review, foundational concepts of organizational commitment research revealed trends that parallel research on organizational commitment in higher education. Across industry-type conditions that promote organizational commitment in employees include perceived organizational support, effective leadership styles, job satisfaction, motivation, psychological contract fulfillment, and person-organization fit (Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2017; Hanaysha & Majid, 2018; Jehanzeb & Mohanty, 2018; Quratulain et al., 2018; Soares & Mosquera, 2019; Yahaya, 2016). Damage to organizational commitment occurs when employee's do not feel supported by their organization or leader, when they experience greater stress than their resources can accommodate, when there is conflict between work-life demands, and insecure contingent working arrangements (Talukder, 2019; Watson et al., 2021). The advent of rapid demand for online education has produced a field of prolific growth and a body of employees that have been understudied and underrepresented in higher education literature (Luna, 2018). There is a sense of practitioners and universities still putting the metaphorical plane together as online education continues to fly.

While research on organizational commitment in other industry types parallels research on organizational commitment in traditional face-to-face classrooms it cannot be assumed that this research applies correctly to online higher education. This is largely due

to the drastic difference between online education platforms' working conditions and job demands and tradition residential education. Online faculty do not have the benefit of community and collegiality with their university or students (Schriver & Kulynych, 2021). Extra effort must be provided in the online environment to build relationships strained by time and distance. Unpredictable course load and lower income challenge the commitment of online faculty to their institution, which has long-term impacts on the quality of instruction. It is clear there are challenges that need to be addressed in online higher education.

From a biblical perspective, these challenges can be helped with a foundational understanding of God's creation of man as an entity that is made to produce and have dominion over creation. The God-intended design for work challenges the assumptions of social exchange theories that serve as the theoretical backing for most organizational commitment research. There are prescribed ways of relating to work in which man functions best. When man's core needs for purpose, satisfaction, and relationships are not met due to deficits in the working environment, negative outcomes follow. This Biblical principle is reflected in research on employee burnout, stress, conflict, and turnover. When considering the organizational commitment and challenges facing online faculty, a biblical perspective offers insight into motivation, reward, and purpose-making in their work.

 Universities and administrators have much to gain by understanding the experience of online faculty and the contributing factors predicting their organizational commitment (Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2017; Kebritchi et al., 2017). Gaining a better understanding of faculty's relationship with their employer could be used to advance

faculty training and support measures. As online education continues to grow in its prevalence, understanding how faculty relate to their work environment is a needed topic of research to improve the online education experience for faculty and student alike. Given the paucity of research on the population of online faculty and factors that contribute to their organizational commitment, research is needed to investigate this phenomenon. The next chapter presents the research methods, procedures, instrumentation, and description of this study's data analysis.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHOD

Overview

This study aimed to determine if a relationship exists between the delivery method of faculty's previous educational experience as a student, their highest earned degree, employee status, length of employment, perceived organizational support, and leader member exchange as they relate to their organizational commitment. Furthermore, how faculty described organizational commitment and factors affecting their commitment were explored. Understanding the factors that predict organizational commitment has implications for university administrators regarding the hiring, training, and support for online faculty. It may also address the concerning trend of online faculty turnover and subsequent quality of online education. This section presents the research questions and hypotheses, research design, instrumentation, data analysis, and possible limitations of this study.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following are the questions and hypotheses for this study:

RQ 1: What is the relationship between the delivery method of faculty's previous educational experience as a student (online/residential/mixed) and reported organizational commitment in online faculty?

> Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between faculty's previous educational experience as a student (online/residential/mixed) and reported organizational commitment in online faculty?

RQ 2: What is the relationship between faculty's personal highest education level (Doctorate/Specialist/Masters/Bachelors) and reported organizational commitment in online faculty?

> Hypothesis 2: There is a relationship between faculty's personal highest education level (Doctorate/Specialist/Masters/Bachelors) and reported organizational commitment in online faculty.

RQ 3: What is the relationship between employee status (benefited/non-benefited) and reported organizational commitment in online faculty?

> Hypothesis 3: There is a relationship between employee status (benefited/ non-benefited) and reported organizational commitment in online faculty.

RQ 4: What is the relationship between faculty's length of employment and reported organizational commitment in online faculty?

> Hypothesis 4: There is a relationship between faculty's length of employment and reported organizational commitment in online faculty.

RQ 5: What is the relationship between faculty's perception of organizational support and reported organizational commitment in online faculty?

> Hypothesis 5: There is a relationship faculty's perception of organizational support and reported organizational commitment in online faculty.

RQ 6: What is the relationship between faculty's reported leader member exchange and reported organizational commitment in online faculty?

> Hypothesis 6: There is a relationship between faculty's leader member exchange and reported organizational commitment in online faculty?

RQ 7: How do online faculty describe what it means to be committed to their employing institution?

RQ 8: How do online faculty describe the factors that contribute to their commitment to their institution?

RQ 9: How do online faculty describe what their employing institution can do to improve their organizational commitment?

Research Design

A mixed methods research design was chosen for this study. The rationale for using both quantitative and qualitative methods is to allow for a more holistic investigation into the factors that contribute to online faculty's organizational commitment. Given prior research on organizational commitment, research in residential faculty, and other industries provided predictive factors of the delivery method of faculty's previous educational experience as a student, their highest earned degree, employee status, length of employment, perceived organizational support, and leader member exchange as they relate to their organizational commitment. Given the lack of research specific to online faculty in regards to their organizational commitment, a qualitative portion was selected to provide the opportunity for unspecified predictors to emerge from the faculty's description of their personal experience. It was hoped that using a mixed methods design would provide a more comprehensive and complete understanding of online faculty's organizational commitment predictors.

Participants

Participants for this study were full and part-time online adjunct instructors from a private post-secondary university in the southeast United States. Participants were

recruited with emails sent from their department heads requesting voluntary participation in the study with a description of the study as well as parameters for participation (see Appendix A). Participants were at least 18 years of age and were currently an online teaching employee of the university. Permission to recruit was obtained through IRB approval. Recruitment emails were sent by various schools within the university, including the school of counseling, social work, religion, government, education, general studies, and business (see Appendix B).

The necessary sample size for this mixed methods study involved the consideration of both power analyses and saturation standards. For quantitative analysis, it is customary to use an alpha significance level of .05 and a conventional desired level of power of .95 (Cohen, 1988; Martin & Bridgmon, 2012). Using G*Power 3.1 software to calculate a priori analysis involving six predictor variables the resulting sample size parameters of 67 participants (see Appendix C). G*Power provides the minimum sample size needed; however, Tabachnick & Fidell (2007) recommend the following formula for calculating sample size ($N > 50 + 8m$) with m representing the number of predictor variables. With 6 predictor variables, the recommended sample size for this study is 98 participants.

For the qualitative portion of this study, the goal was to reach saturation of responses where no new themes or information emerged from the participant's responses. To reach saturation, the nature of the population, whether it is a homogeneous or varied population and the complexity and scope of the research questions explored was considered (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Relative homogeneity of the population can be assumed for the purposes of this study on online faculty given their similar role and

employment from the same institution. The scope of the qualitative questions were fairly narrow, aiming to gain a better understanding of factors contributing to faculties organizational commitment. Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend that for a phenomenological research question whose aim is to describe, understand, and interpret participant's experience, only a small sample size is required to reach saturation. Given these factors, the quantitative sample size of 98 participants more than met the requirements for the qualitative portion of this study.

Study Procedures

Adjunct instructors across levels of instruction were recruited via email from the undergraduate level to the doctoral level from the schools of counseling, social work, government, religion, education, general studies, and business (see Appendix A). Research participants were incentivized with a chance to win one of two $100 gift cards. Participants received a link to take an anonymous Qualtrics survey composed of items measuring the delivery method of faculty's previous educational experience as a student, their highest earned degree, employee status, length of employment, perceptions of support as measured by Eisenberger's 1986 8-item survey of perceived organizational support (SPOS), leader member exchange as measured by the LMX-7, and Allen and Meyer's three-component model of commitment questionnaire. The survey contained both quantitative questions and open-ended qualitative questions. Demographic data was gathered as control variables, including sex, age, and race (see Appendix D). After successfully completing the survey, faculty email information was entered into a random drawing for the gift cards. Recipients of the gift cards received their winnings in the form of a Visa eGift card to their email account provided during the survey.

Instrumentation and Measurement

This study utilized three preexisting instruments to measure online faculty's perceived organizational support, leader member exchange, and organizational commitment. Additionally, demographic information on age, sex, and race was gathered to be control variables. Other predictor variables, including the delivery method of faculty's previous educational experience as a student, their highest earned degree, employee status, and length of employment were asked on the survey. In total the length of the combined survey was 43 questions (see Appendix D).

Quantitative Questions

Of the 43 questions in the combined survey, 40 were quantitative in nature and centered on measuring the delivery method of online faculty's previous educational experience as a student, their highest earned degree, employee status, length of employment, perceived organizational support, leader member exchange, and organizational commitment.

Education Delivery Method

Education delivery method, or modality, is recognized in the field of education as the platform and methods of delivery of instruction, namely, the nature of the degree, whether it was attended at a distance online or in person face-to-face (Rhode et al., 2017). The method of the online faculty member's personal education experience as a student was measured with researcher-created question providing the options of "All Online", "All Residential", "Mixed Online and Residential" to allow for all possible learning experiences across all levels of earned degrees. It is assumed that online faculty will have obtained at least one degree, which could have been obtained in person, online, or a

combination of both online and residential settings. If a faculty member obtained their bachelors, masters, and doctoral degrees residentially they would select "All Residential". If all the faculty member's degrees were obtained at a distance, then they would select "All Online". Likewise, if a faculty member obtained their bachelor's degree in person and their Master's degree online, they would select "Mixed Online and Residential".

Level of Education

Online faculty's highest personal education level was measured by a researcher-created question providing the options of "Doctorate", "Specialist", "Masters", or "Bachelors" to capture all the possible education levels an online faculty member could have obtained. The level of education as an ordinal variable represents the education ladder or progression of degrees which increases in complexity and experience and is recognized by the International Standard Classification for Education (ISCED, 2003).

Employee Status

Employee status of online faculty members was measured by providing participants with a researcher-created question asking faculty for their current employment status with their employing university with the following options, "Benefited", "Non-benefited". According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, employee benefits status is different according to employer but generally implies some level of payment/value that is given beyond wages or salary, such as medical insurance, retirement, and disability (BLS, 2008). Faculty were provided with definitions of employee status criteria on the survey. It is possible that faculty teach at multiple schools;

however, this portion of the study specifically asked faculty to report only on their

experience with the university from which they were recruited for this study.

Length of Employment

Faculty's length of employment was measured by a researcher-created question

asking for the number of years they have been employed as an online adjunct instructor

for the university from which they have been recruited for this study.

Perceived Organizational Support

The perceived organizational support of online faculty was measured with the 8-

itme Eisenberger's survey of perceived organizational support (SPOS) (Eisenberger,

1986). The 8-itme SPOS consists of 8 question asking participants statements that they

rank on a 6-point Likert scale representing possible opinions that they may have about

working at their employing organization. Questions are aimed at measuring to what

degree the employee feels that their organization values their contribution and cares about

their well-being and acknowledges their accomplishments. The 8-item SPOS shortened

version was derived from taking high loading items form the original 36 item survey. The

original survey was unidimensional and had very good internal reliability (Cronbach's α

= .97) (Hutchinson, 1997). The resulting 8-itmes SOPS has a good reliability with

Cronbach's α ranging from .74 to .95 (Eisenberger et al., 1990). Shore and Tetrick

conducted a confirmatory factor analysis and found the SOPS to have adequate construct

validity and to be distinct from affective and continuance commitment (Shore & Tetrick,

1991).

Leader Member Exchange

The faculty's leader member exchange was measured with the revised 1995 LMX-7 scale with 7 questions aimed at describing the relationship with their leader or subordinate. Test takers are asked to indicate to what degree the questions on a 5-point Likert scale best fits what is true for them. The total scores can be interpreted as very high (30–35), high (25–29), moderate (20–24), low (15–19), and very low (7–14). The original LMX-7 (1995) utilized the terminology of leader (follower) to designate the relationship between a leader or a subordinate. Given the focus and population of this study the term "leader (follower)" has been replaced with "immediate supervisor". The LMX-7 is a widely used scale with good validity and reliability and has become the most commonly used scale for leader member exchange operationalization (Caliskan, 2015; Sasaki et al., 2020; Schriesheim et al., 1999). Unidimensionality of the scale is assumed given the high correlations among items capturing trust, respect, and obligation (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), with internal consistency scores ranging from Cronbach's α = .80 to .90 (Hanasono, 2017).

Organizational Commitment

Online faculty's organizational commitment was measured with the revised 1997 Allen and Myers three component Organizational Commitment Questionnaire with 18 questions, 6 questions per subscale (affective, normative, and continuance), on a 5-point Likert scale (Allen & Myers, 1997). As one of the more popular measurements of organizational commitment the psychometric properties of Allan and Myers scale has been extensively examined. Consistent confirmatory factor analysis results show good construct validity (Hackett et al., 1994). Cohen (1996) offered further support for the use of Allan and Myers three component scale demonstrating good discriminant validity and

superior performance as compared to other measures of organizational commitment ($\chi^2 =$ 45.42, p < .01; χ^2/df = 1.89; AGFI = 0.919). This provides good support for Allen and Myers theory that organizational commitment is best seen as a multidimensional concept (Cohen, 1996). The three sub-scales of affective, normative, and continuance commitment are scored individually to provide a complete organizational commitment profile.

Qualitative Questions

For the qualitative portion of the survey open-ended questions pertaining to the faculty's self-reported factors that contribute to their organizational commitment were provided (see Appendix D). The purpose of the qualitative portion of the survey was to give faculty the opportunity to share their experience in their own words and allow for possible predictor variables not captured in the quantitative section to be identified. Qualitative questions asked online faculty to describe what it means for them to be committed to their employing institution as well as a description of the factors they believe contribute to their commitment to their employing institution. Faculty were also asked what they believe their employing university can do to increase their organizational commitment.

Faculty were given the opportunity to provide a reflection of their work experience in their own words in the form of short answer responses. For the purpose of providing validity to the study it was recommended by qualitative standards to use the triangulation of multiple different data sources to corroborate the evidences found (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By using a mixed method approach, the researcher used both forms of data to provide corroborating evidence of any theme or perspective that emerged

from the data. The researcher also clarified their own biases, values, and experiences in this study to strengthen validity and credibility of the findings. The trustworthiness of the qualitative questions was further established with a rich thick description of the research findings, increasing the transferability of the findings. Dependability was aided in the use of collaboration with the chair and committee member overseeing this study. Having a peer, who is familiar with the phenomenon being observed, review the research process and data analysis provides the results with dependability and confirmability.

Operationalization of Variables

This section is a description of how each variable was operationalized and measured.

Delivery Method – The education delivery method variable was a nominal variable with three levels and will be measured by researcher-created educational experience question asking participants to select the category that best fits their prior educational experience as a student. Categories will be "All Online", "All Residential", or "Mixed Online and Residential".

Education Level – The education level variable was an ordinal variable and will be measured by researcher-created personal education level asking participants to select the category that represents their highest level of education earned. Categories will be "Doctorate", "Specialist", "Masters", or "Bachelors".

Employee Status – The employment status variable was an ordinal variable and will be measured by researcher created employee status question asking participants to select the category they fall within. Categories will be "Benefited" or "Non-benefited".

Length of Employment – The length of employment variable was a ratio variable and will be measured by the total number of years served as an adjunct instructor of the university of recruitment for the study.

Perceived Organizational Support – The perceived organizational support variable was a ratio variable and will be measured by the total score on the Eisenberger's 8-item survey of perceived organizational support (SPOS) (Eisenberger, 1986).

Leader Member Exchange – Leader member exchange variable was a ratio variable and will be measured by a total score on the LMX-7 survey (Graen & Uhl-Blen, 1995).

Organizational Commitment – The organizational commitment variable was a ratio variable and will be measured by the profile provided in the three sub-scores of affective, normative, and continuance commitment scores on the Allen and Meyer's three-component employee commitment questionnaire (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

Data Analysis

Statistical package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) – version 27 was utilized to conduct a stepwise multiple regression analysis of the quantitative portions of the survey. There are six predictor or independent variables in this study; delivery method of faculty's previous educational experience as a student (online/residential/mixed), their highest earned degree (doctorate/specialist/masters/bachelors), employee status (benefited/non-benefited), length of employment, perceived organizational support, and leader member exchange. The dependent variable was online faculty's self-reported organizational commitment which has three sub-components, affective commitment, normative, and continuance. For RQ1-RQ3 a 1-way ANOVA was used to determine if there is a relationship between the independent variable in these questions and the

dependent variable. A Pearson's *r* correlation analysis was used to determine if there is a

relationship between the independent variable of RQ4-RQ6 and the dependent variable of

this study. A follow up stepwise multiple regression analysis was use to evaluate the

correlation of RQ5 and RQ6 as they relate to the dependent variable (Martin &

Bridgmon, 2012).

  For the qualitative portion of the study the three open-ended questions asking

faculty to disclose the self-reported factors that contribute to their organizational

commitment was analyzed through the process of memoing and coding to identify

emergent themes and patterns in the faculty's responses. Justification for this data

analysis procedure is provided by standards of qualitative research design. The main

objective for qualitative research is to "make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms

of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3). The phenomena of

online faculty's organizational commitment has been relatively unexplored. Given the

lack of preexisting knowledge the use of open-ended qualitative questions to round out

the breadth of the study provides justification for this method. The process of memoing

and coding to identify emergent themes of the written response data was selected as a

means of providing meaningful representations of the sum of the faculty's experience in

the online education (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Delimitations, Assumptions, and Limitations

  Delimitations of this study signify boundaries for inclusion to ensure that the

population of interest represents the desired population of the research question. In order

to measure the predictors of online faculty's organizational commitment the delimitation

of faculty currently teaching for the selected university's online programs was chosen.

Participants needed to give consent for their participation, therefore, the age of 18 was also provided as a boundary for inclusion. Faculty who teach in the residential program of this university were also excluded as they will inherently have different perspectives than faculty who teach solely for the online division of this university. It is assumed that faculty responded with accuracy and honesty. This presents a potential limitation in that the population of respondents was recruited from the same institution through which they are employed. Faculty may be hesitant to answer questions about their job and their commitment to their university, which may deter them from participation or providing honest responses. Other limitations of this study involve the unique nature of the population being recruiting as well as the manner of recruitment. The findings may not be easily generalizable to the larger field of higher education faculty as the university where faculty will be recruited from is a private evangelical institution, potentially not representative of the large population of online faculty in the United States. Convenience sampling also provides a limit to the generalizability of the study's findings.

Summary

The purpose of this mixed methods study on predictors of online faculty's organizational commitment identified 6 quantitative questions regarding the delivery method of faculty's previous educational experience as a student, their highest earned degree, employee status, length of employment, perceived organizational support, and leader member exchange as they relate to their organizational commitment and 3 opened ended qualitative questions aimed at understanding how online faculty express the factors that contribute to their organizational commitment. It was hypothesized that there was a difference between the delivery method of faculty's previous educational experience as a

student, their highest earned degree, employee status, length of employment, perceived

organizational support, and leader member exchange as they relate to their organizational

commitment.

Faculty were recruited from a private post-secondary university in the southeast

United States and were at least 18 years or older and served as a current online instructor.

They received an anonymous online survey and were entered to win one of two $100

eGift cards for their participation. The quantitative portions of online survey data were

analyzed with SPSS version 27 to conduct a 1-way ANOVA for RQ1-RQ3, a Pearson's *r*

correlation analysis for RQ4-RQ6, and a stepwise multiple regression analysis to

determine if a correlation existed between RQ5 and RQ6 as they related to the dependent

variable of organizational commitment. The qualitative section of the survey data was

analyzed through the process of memoing and coding to identify themes in the faculty's

responses as a means of providing meaningful representations of their experience.

Considerations of the boundaries of the study and assumptions include justification of the

inclusion criteria and measures taken to ensure the validity of the study. Possible

limitations include the nature of the population and methodological design to utilize a

pool of participants that was convenient to the researcher as well as the researcher's

personal relationship to the topic. The next chapter presents the study's results arranged

by research question. Both the statistical findings for the quantitative questions as well as

codes and theme frequencies for the qualitative questions are presented.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Overview

This mixed methods study aimed to investigate the predictors of online faculty's organizational commitment. Researchers have identified common predictors of organizational commitment across industries which informed the selection of this study's predictor variables to include the delivery method of faculty's previous educational experience as a student, their highest earned degree, employee status, length of employment, perceived organizational support, and leader member exchange as they relate to their organizational commitment. The literature also presented a gap on how these variables impact the role of the online adjunct as much of the existing research has been conducted on residential populations of faculty members.

As this was mixed methods study 6 quantitative research questions seeking to examine the relationship, if any, between online faculty members and these predictor variables were posited as well as 3 opened ended qualitative questions aimed at understanding how online faculty express the factors that contribute to their organizational commitment. In this chapter, the research questions and hypotheses are reiterated. A description of the participant's demographics follows. Next, the results of the quantitative data analysis are discussed and the qualitative data show the themes or patterns in the faculty's perceptions of contributors to their organizational commitment. Finally, a summary of this chapter will conclude with an evaluation of the research design and a summation of results.

Research Questions

RQ 1: What is the relationship between the delivery method of faculty's previous educational experience as a student (online/residential/mixed) and reported organizational commitment in online faculty?

RQ 2: What is the relationship between faculty's personal highest education level (Doctorate/Specialist/Masters/Bachelors) and reported organizational commitment in online faculty?

RQ 3: What is the relationship between employee status (benefited/non-benefited) and reported organizational commitment in online faculty?

RQ 4: What is the relationship between faculty's length of employment and reported organizational commitment in online faculty?

RQ 5: What is the relationship between faculty's perception of organizational support and reported organizational commitment in online faculty?

RQ 6: What is the relationship between faculty's reported leader member exchange and reported organizational commitment in online faculty?

RQ 7: How do online faculty describe what it means to be committed to their employing institution?

RQ 8: How do online faculty describe the factors that contribute to their commitment to their institution?

RQ 9: How do online faculty describe what their employing institution can do to improve their organizational commitment?

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between faculty's previous educational experience as a student, online/residential/mixed, and reported organizational commitment in online faculty.

Hypothesis 2: There is a relationship between faculty's personal highest education level (Doctorate/Specialist/Masters/Bachelors) and reported organizational commitment in online faculty.

Hypothesis 3: There is a relationship between employee status (benefited/non-benefited) and reported organizational commitment in online faculty.

Hypothesis 4: There is a relationship between faculty's length of employment and reported organizational commitment in online faculty.

Hypothesis 5: There is a relationship between faculty's perception of organizational support and reported organizational commitment in online faculty.

Hypothesis 6: There is a relationship between faculty's leader member exchange and reported organizational commitment in online faculty?

Protocol

Data were collected through Qualtrics online survey and exported to Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, Versions 27) for analysis. Data were coded per the scoring process dictated by the test developers associated with each subscale. A priori analysis for six predictor variables resulted in a necessary sample size parameter of 67 participants (see Appendix C). G*Power provided the minimum sample size needed, however, Tabachnick & Fidell (2007) recommend the following formula for calculating

sample size (N > 50 + 8*m*) with *m* representing the number of predictor variables. With 6

predictor variables the recommended sample size for this study is 98 participants. A total

of 155 of those faculty members at an online university responded to the survey and after

removing incomplete surveys, the resulting data set consisted of 101 usable survey

responses. With the necessary sample size for this study being met, an alpha significance

level of .05 and a conventional desired level of power of .95 can be assumed for

quantitative analysis of a multiple regression model (Cohen, 1988; Martin & Bridgmon,

2012).

During the online survey creation process, one of the 8 questions in the Survey of

Perceived Organizational Support Section (University of Delaware, 1984) was

erroneously omitted. To resolve this in the resulting data, a mean substitution was applied

to the perceived organizational support sub-scale for the missing item. As the perceived

organizational support section is reported as an average score, it can be assumed that a

mean substitution remedied the possible influence of the missing test question and did not

alter the participant's results on this particular subscale.

Descriptive Results

The following demographic data represent the 101 participants who responded to

the survey with usable results. Table 1 shows the frequency in age subranges regarding

the sample (*n*). Nearly 80% of respondents reported ages ranging from 35-65, with the

most frequent age being 51, the minimum 27 and the maximum age of 80.

Table 1

Age of Participants

Age Range	Frequency	Percent
25 - 35	6	5.9

35 - 44	30	29.7
45 - 54	28	27.7
55 - 64	23	22.8
65 and over	14	13.9

The generations represented in the participant's reported ages show that 46.5% fall in the Gen X generation which includes individual born between the years 1965-1980. Gen Xers are currently 42-57 years of age at the time of the study. Participant's who are 26-41 years of age fall in the Millennial generation and represent 26.7% of the study's participants. Similarly, Boomers with ages ranging from 77-94 represent 23.8% of the study's population. Lastly, the Post War generation is represented in only 3% of the participants.

Table 2

Age Frequency by Generation

Generation	Frequency	Percent
Millennials 26-41	27	26.7
Gen X 42-57	47	46.5
Boomers 58-76	24	23.8
Post War 77-94	3	3.0

The gender of the participants revealed a predominantly female sample, with 65.3% of participants being female and 34.7% male.

Table 3

Gender of Participants

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	35	34.7
Female	66	65.3

Participants had the option to identify as American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacifica Islander, or White. An overwhelming 89.1% selected as White, 7.9% as Black or African American, 2% Asian, and 1% American Indian. This demographic represents the most differentiating demographic of the participants.

Table 4

Race of Participants

Race	Frequency	Percent
American Indian	1	1.0
Asian	2	2.0
Black or African American	8	7.9
White	90	89.1

Participants were asked to report the level of their highest earned degree, resulting in a 71.3% holding a terminal doctoral degree, while 25.7% hold a master's degree, and only 3% hold a specialist degree. No participant reported holding a bachelor's degree as their highest earned degree.

Table 5

Highest Earned Degree

Degree	Frequency	Percent
Doctorate	72	71.3
Specialist	3	3.0
Masters	26	25.7

Similarly, the participants were asked what method of educational delivery they had experienced as a student with the options of residential only, online only, or a mix of both online and residential methods of delivery. The majority of participants have experienced what it is like to be a residential and online student with 75.2% reporting both online and residential methods of delivery of their personal education. Less often did faculty have a uniquely online or residential delivery method with 14.9% only having residential experience as a student and a less frequent 9.9% only having online experience as a student.

Table 6

Method of Delivery of Personal Education

Method	Frequency	Percent
Online	10	9.9
Residential	15	14.9
Both Online and Residential	76	75.2

Participants were then asked to report on their current employment status with this institution. They were given the options of benefited or non-benefited with the qualifying definition of benefited employees being those that receive forms of non-wage compensation outside of their normal wages or salary, such as medical insurance, life insurance, disability, retirement, and paid time off. An overwhelming 85.1% of participants reported holding a non-benefited position with the university with only 14.9% holding a benefited position.

Table 7

Employee Status

Status	Frequency	Percent
Benefited	15	14.9
Non-Benefited	86	85.1

Lastly, the participants were asked to report the number of years they had served as an online faculty member at the university. The majority of participants reported teaching between 1-5 years representing 53.5% of the responses. The next highest range of length of employment was 6-10 years at 18.8%, followed by 14.9% having taught for 11-15 years, then 11.9% teaching for less than a year, and finally, one participant reported teaching for the university for 16 years representing the longest length of employment of all the participants.

Table 8

Length of Employment

Number of Years	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1	12	11.9
1 - 5	54	53.5
6 - 10	19	18.8
11 - 15	15	14.9
16 - 20	1	1.0

Study Findings

To determine if a relationship existed between organizational commitment and the delivery method of faculty's previous educational experience as a student, their highest earned degree, employee status, length of employment, perceived organizational support, and leader member exchange the researcher used 1-way ANOVA for the RQ 1-3 predictor variables of past education, highest degree, employee and employee status as

the most appropriate test for the nature of these variables. Then the researcher sought to determine if a relationship existed between the predictor variables of length of employment, perceived organizational support, and leader member exchange with a Pearson's *r* test of linear correlation. The ratio nature of these variables allowed for the use of the Pearson correlation coefficient for RQ 4-6.

As a follow -analysis for the quantitative research questions, a stepwise multiple regression analysis was conducted to see how the variables of perceived organizational support and leader member exchange predicted organizational commitment. For all of the above analysis, the participant's organizational commitment was represented by a total organizational commitment score (OC_Overall) as well as by sub-type of organizational commitment with (OC_A_Avg) representing the average affective commitment score, (OC_C_Avg) representing the continuance commitment score, (OC_N_Avg) representing the normative commitment score. As Allen and Myers organizational commitment is a multidimensional concept, the three sub-scales of affective, normative, and continuance commitment are scored individually to provide a complete organizational commitment profile that should be taken into consideration when interpreting results (Cohen, 1996).

For the qualitative research questions, the participant's essay responses were analyzed by first reading the responses by research question to get a feel for any repeated words or sentiments expressed by the faculty. Keywords were identified to create codes that captured the main ideas presented in the essays. Each response was labeled with a code that best described what the faculty was conveying in their response. The resulting codes were grouped by emerging themes that summarized the principal ideas of the codes

identified in the research question. The frequencies of both the codes and themes for each research question were then considered.

By using a mixed method approach, the researcher used both forms of data to provide corroborating evidence of any theme or perspective that emerged from the data. This triangulation of multiple different data sources increased the ability of the researcher to provide a valid interpretation of the study findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher also clarified their own biases, values, and experiences in this study to strengthen the validity and credibility of the findings. The trustworthiness of the qualitative questions were further established by providing detailed theme and code descriptions that included direct quotes from the participants. Providing a detailed description of the participant demographics aided the transferability of the findings. Dependability and confirmability were further facilitated by collaboration with the chair and committee member overseeing this study.

Research Question 1

Research question 1 sought to determine if a relationship existed between the delivery method of online faculty's previous educational experience as a student (online/residential/mixed) and reported organizational commitment. A 1-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if there was a difference between the means of the three types of delivery method for online faculty's previous educational experience as a student and reported organizational commitment. The results of the 1-way ANOVA did not indicate that a significant relationship existed between the methods of the faculty member's previous education and their total organizational commitment, nor organizational commitment subscales scores. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not

rejected. Table 9 shows the lack of relationship between these variable means across all sub-types of organizational commitment.

Table 9

1-way ANOVA Past Education Method

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
Overall OC	Between Groups	.270	2	.135	.158	.854
	Within Groups	84.074	98	.858		
	Total	84.344	100			
Affective OC	Between Groups	1.036	2	.518	.294	.746
	Within Groups	172.535	98	1.761		
	Total	173.571	100			
Continuance OC	Between Groups	1.102	2	.551	.259	.772
	Within Groups	208.159	98	2.124		
	Total	209.261	100			
Normative OC	Between Groups	3.656	2	1.828	1.021	.364
	Within Groups	175.446	98	1.790		
	Total	179.102	100			

Research Question 2

Research question 2 sought to determine if a relationship existed between online faculty's personal highest education level (Doctorate/Specialist/Masters/Bachelors) and reported organizational commitment. A 1-way ANOVA was conducted to see if there was a difference between the means of these four groups (Doctorate/Specialist/Masters/Bachelors) and faculty's organizational commitment. The results of the 1-way ANOVA did not indicate that a significant relationship existed between the faculty's personal highest education level and their overall organizational commitment, nor subscale organizational commitment scores. Table 10 shows the lack of

relationship between these variable means across all sub-types of organizational

commitment.

Table 10

1-way ANOVA Highest Degree

		Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	*P*
Overall OC	Between Groups	.270	2	.135	.158	.854
	Within Groups	84.074	98	.858		
	Total	84.344	100			
Affective OC	Between Groups	1.036	2	.518	.294	.746
	Within Groups	172.535	98	1.761		
	Total	173.571	100			
Continuance OC	Between Groups	1.102	2	.551	.259	.772
	Within Groups	208.159	98	2.124		
	Total	209.261	100			
Normative OC	Between Groups	3.656	2	1.828	1.021	.364
	Within Groups	175.446	98	1.790		
	Total	179.102	100			

Research Question 3

Research question 3 sought to determine if a relationship existed between online

faculty's employee status (benefited/non-benefited) reported organizational commitment.

A 1-way ANOVA was conducted to see if there was a difference between the means of

these two groups (benefited/non-benefited) and faculty's organizational commitment.

The results of the 1-way ANOVA did not indicate that a significant relationship existed

between the faculty's employee status and their overall organizational commitment, nor

organizational commitment subscale scores. Table 11 shows the lack of relationship

between these variable means across all sub-types of organizational commitment.

Table 11

1-way ANOVA Employee Status

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
Overall OC	Between Groups	.734	1	.734	.869	.354
	Within Groups	83.611	99	.845		
	Total	84.344	100			
Affective OC	Between Groups	.020	1	.020	.012	.915
	Within Groups	173.551	99	1.753		
	Total	173.571	100			
Continuance OC	Between Groups	.546	1	.546	.259	.612
	Within Groups	208.714	99	2.108		
	Total	209.261	100			
Normative OC	Between Groups	2.850	1	2.850	1.601	.209
	Within Groups	176.252	99	1.780		
	Total	179.102	100			

Research Question 4

Research question 4 sought to determine if a relationship existed between online faculty's length of employment and reported organizational commitment. A correlation analysis was conducted for each form of organizational commitment and the overall average organizational commitment score with length of employment. A Pearson's r correlation revealed a significant relationship for overall organizational commitment (Overall OC), $r (99) = .196$, $p < .001$ (two tailed) and continuance organizational commitment with faculty members length of employment (Continuance OC), $r (99) = .285$, $p < .001$ (two tailed) with faculty members length of employment. The correlation analysis revelated that 3.84% of the variation in overall organizational commitment is accounted for by length of employment and 8.12% of the variation in continuance commitment accounted for by length of employment. Table 12 shows the significant relationship between overall and continuance commitment and length of employment and

the lack of relationship between affective and normative commitment and length of employment.

Table 12

Pearson *r* for Length of Employment

		Years of Employment	Overall OC
Years of Employment	Pearson Correlation	1	.196[*]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.050
	N	101	101
Overall OC	Pearson Correlation	.196[*]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.050	
	N	101	101

		Years of Employment	Affective OC
Years of Employment	Pearson Correlation	1	.047
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.640
	N	101	101
Affective OC	Pearson Correlation	.047	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.640	
	N	101	101

		Years of Employment	Continuance OC
Years of Employment	Pearson Correlation	1	.285[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.004
	N	101	101
Continuance OC	Pearson Correlation	.285[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	
	N	101	101

		Years of Employment	Normative OC
Years of Employment	Pearson Correlation	1	.049
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.627
	N	101	101
Normative OC	Pearson Correlation	.049	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.627	
	N	101	101

Research Question 5

Research question 5 sought to determine if a relationship existed between online faculty's perceived organizational support and reported organizational commitment. A correlation analysis was conducted for each form of organizational commitment and the overall average organizational commitment score with perceived organizational support (POS_Total). A Pearson's r correlation revealed a significant relationship for overall organizational commitment (Overall OC), r (99) = .427, p <.001 (two tailed), affective commitment (Affective OC), r (99) = .622, p <.001 (two tailed), and normative commitment (Normative OC), r (99) = .468, p <.001 (two tailed) with faculty member's perceived organizational commitment. Continuance organizational commitment (Continuance OC) did not have a significant relationship with faculty members perceived organizational support. The correlation analysis revealed that perceived organizational support accounted for 18.23% of the variation in overall organizational commitment, 38.69% of the variation in affective commitment, and 21.90% of the variation in normative commitment. Table 13 shows the significant relationship between overall, affective, and normative commitment and perceived organizational commitment and the

lack of relationship between continuance commitment and perceived organizational

support.

Table 13

Pearson's *r* for Perceived Organizational Support

		POS_Total	Overall OC
POS_Total	Pearson Correlation	1	.427[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	101	101
Overall OC	Pearson Correlation	.427[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	101	101

		POS_Total	Affective OC
POS_Total	Pearson Correlation	1	.622[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	101	101
Affective OC	Pearson Correlation	.622[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	101	101

		POS_Total	Continuance OC
POS_Total	Pearson Correlation	1	-.185
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.063
	N	101	101
Continuance OC	Pearson Correlation	-.185	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.063	
	N	101	101

		POS_Total	Normative OC
POS_Total	Pearson Correlation	1	.468**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	101	101
Normative OC	Pearson Correlation	.468**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	101	101

Research Question 6

Research question 6 sought to determine if a relationship existed between online

faculty's leader member exchange and reported organizational commitment. A

correlation analysis was conducted for each form of organizational commitment as well

as the overall average organizational commitment score with leader member exchange

(LMX_Total). A Pearson's *r* correlation revealed a significant relationship for overall

organizational commitment (Overall OC), r (99) = .350, $p <$.001 (two tailed), affective

commitment (Affective OC), r (99) = .529, $p <$.001 (two tailed), and normative

commitment r (99) = .409, $p <$.001 (two tailed) with faculty members perceived

organizational commitment. Continuance organizational commitment (Continuance OC)

did not have a significant relationship with faculty members perceived organizational

support. The correlation analysis revealed that leader member exchange accounts for

12.25% of the variation in overall organizational commitment, 27.98% of the variation in

affective commitment, and 16.73% of the variation in normative commitment. Table 14

shows the significant relationship between overall, affective, and normative commitment

and leader member exchange and the lack of relationship between continuance

commitment and leader member exchange.

Table 14

Pearson's *r* for Leader Member Exchange

		LMX_Total	Overall OC
LMX_Total	Pearson Correlation	1	.350**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	101	101
Overall OC	Pearson Correlation	.350**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	101	101

		LMX_Total	Affective OC
LMX_Total	Pearson Correlation	1	.529**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	101	101
Affective OC	Pearson Correlation	.529**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	101	101

		LMX_Total	Continuance OC
LMX_Total	Pearson Correlation	1	-.193
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.053
	N	101	101
Continuance OC	Pearson Correlation	-.193	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.053	

	N	101	101
			Normative
		LMX_Total	OC
LMX_Total	Pearson Correlation	1	.409**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	101	101
Normative OC	Pearson Correlation	.409**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	101	101

Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis for LMX and POS

In light of both LMX and POS having a significant predictive relationship with

organizational commitment and varying sub-scales, a stepwise regression analysis was

also conducted to determine which of these multiple predictors best predicted

organizational commitment. Table 15 displays the results of the stepwise multiple

regression analysis for LMX and POS as predictors of overall organizational

commitment. LMX was excluded from the model as it did not contribute to the

significant relationship in this model. POS was shown to account for 17% of the variance

in overall organizational commitment $F(1,99) = 22.11$, $p<.05$, $R^2 = .18$, $R^2_{adj} = .17$.

Table 15

Model with POS as Predictor of Overall Organizational Commitment

Coefficient	Estimate	SE	R	R^2_{adj}	R^2 Change	*p*-value
Intercept	3.35	0.27				<.05
POS	0.28	0.06	0.43	0.17	0.18	<.05

Note: $F(1,99) = 22.11$, $p<.05$, $R^2 = .18$, $R^2_{adj} = .17$. LMX excluded from model.

In addition to overall organizational commitment, a stepwise multiple regression

analysis was computed to examine how LMX and POS predicted organizational

commitment subscale scores. Table 16 shows the results of the stepwise multiple

regression analysis for LMX and POS as predictors of affective organizational

commitment. Both LMX and POS were added to the model and accounted for 44% of the

variance in affective organizational commitment $F(2,98) = 39.55$, $p<.05$, $R^2 = .45$, $R^2_{adj} =$

.44. The adjusted R^2 for POS before the addition of LMX was .38, making the increase in

variance in affective organizational commitment only 6% when LMX is added to the

model.

Table 16

Models with LMX and POS as Predictors of Affective Organizational Commitment

Model	Coefficient	Estimate	SE	R	R^2_{adj}	R^2 Change	*p*-value
1	Intercept	2.74	1.34				<.05
	POS	0.59	0.07	0.62	0.38	0.39	<.05
2	Intercept	1.61	0.47				<.05
	POS	0.45	0.08				<.05
	LMX	0.06	0.02	0.67	0.44	0.06	<.05

Note: $F(2,98) = 39.55$, $p<.05$, $R^2 = .45$, $R^2_{adj} = .44$.

    Table 17 shows the results of the stepwise multiple regression analysis for LMX

and POS as predictors of normative organizational commitment. Both LMX and POS

were added to the model and accounted for 24% of the variance in normative

organizational commitment $F(2,98) = 17$, $p<.05$, $R^2 = .26$, $R^2_{adj} = .24$. The adjusted R^2 for

POS before the addition of LMX was .21, making the increase in variance in normative

organizational commitment only 3% when LMX is added to the model. Finally, a

stepwise multiple regression analysis was conducted for LMX and POS as predictors of

continuance organizational commitment; however, neither of the two predictor variables

significantly predicted continuance organizational commitment.

Table 17

Models with LMX and POS as Predictors of Normative Organizational Commitment

Model	Coefficient	Estimate	SE	R	R^2_{adj}	R^2 Change	*p*-value
1	Intercept	2.91	0.39				<.05
	POS	0.45	0.09	0.47	0.21	0.22	<.05
2	Intercept	1.98	0.56				<.05
	POS	0.34	0.10				<.05
	LMX	0.05	0.02	0.51	0.24	0.04	<.05

Note: $F(2,98) = 17$, $p<.05$, $R^2 = .26$, $R^2_{adj} = .24$.

Qualitative Study Findings

The following research questions present the qualitative portion of this research study. All participants ($N = 101$) provided essay responses to open-ended questions relating to their understanding of their organizational commitment as well as actions (if any) that the university could make in order to improve their organizational commitment.

Research Question 7

Research question 7 sought to understand how online faculty describe what it means to be committed to their employing institution. From their essay responses, 12 codes and 5 themes were identified as follows.

Codes

Code 1. Loyalty

The code of "loyalty" was identified any time a participant expressed a desire to continue their employment and be fully committed to the university. This code is exemplified by the following participant response, "To be committed means that you are "all in". You are not looking elsewhere for employment and you plan to stay at this university long-term."

Code 2. Mission/Vision

The code "mission/vision" was used whenever a participant expressed agreement or alignment with the goals and philosophical agenda of the university. The actual words mission and vision were seen repeatedly in the participant's responses. This code is used to capture the essence of responses like the following, "Commitment to me means being aligned with the institution in both values and beliefs. Commitment means helping the institute achieve its mission."

Code 3. Community

 The code "community" was used to identify participant responses that specified a draw for the relationships and sense of belonging that they received from their work as an online faculty member. One participant shared, "I love working here. I experience a deep sense of meaningful belonging, especially in our group meetings where we get to see and connect with fellow adjunct instructors. This is an institution I am honored to be part of as a graduate but also as an online faculty member." Similar to this response a number of participants also expressed a desire to give back as a result of being a graduate from the university.

Code 4. Policies/Procedures

The code "policies/procedure" was use whenever a participant pointed to the university's operational standards or methods for governing their school as a definition for organizational commitment. This code is best described by the following response, "To abide by the policies that have been set forth for the instruction of curriculum. Following other Departmental and HR policies."

Code 5. Performing Job Duties.

The code "performing job duties" was identified any time a participant mentioned their work-related job responsibilities. The willingness and achievement of the participant's job tasks were seen as a measure of their commitment for these responses. As an example of this code one participant stated, "To be committed is to fulfill all obligations and duties that are required of me to the best of my abilities, for the benefit of the institution and primarily for the benefit of my students."

Code 6. Good Representative

The code "good representative" was used whenever a participant shared that being committed to their organization meant that they strived to be a positive representative for the university. On participant shared a good example of this code when they stated, "Employers take pride in the individuals they employ, as this is a first-hand representation of the institution. I believe it is equally important to take pride in my commitment to provide the highest quality of learning and be a positive representation of the employing institution. Another participant shared that "commitment to this university involves representing the school in the most favorable light possible."

Code 7. Help Students

Code "help students" was identified for responses involving the participant's desire to help students engage with and succeed in the educational process. Many participants expressed a deep love for the student/faculty relationship as one of the primary ways they show their commitment to the job. Exemplifying this code is the following participant response, "Commitment means serving the students and the department to the best of my ability and knowledge. Serving the students as the primary factor of this position ensuring that I am present and knowledgeable in the areas I am asked to teach." Similarly, another

participant shared, "My commitment is ensuring that I reach out to all of my students and letting them know that they are an integral part of this learning family."

Code 8. Go Above and Beyond

Code "go above and beyond" was used whenever a participant shared their practice of performing job tasks that went outside of their minimum requirements for employment. One participant stated that "Committed to me is to go above and beyond the required duties to truly helping students learn and succeed. Valuing this above just a paycheck is important for commitment." Several other participants also used the specific term above and beyond to express their commitment to their university.

Code 9. Higher Calling/Ministry

Code "higher calling/ministry" is used to identify responses that mentioned the participant's faith, ministry, or spiritual calling to serve as an online faculty member at their employing university. This code is exemplified by the following participant's response, "I view my commitment to this university as a ministry in which I serve my students. We are forming champions for Christ, and I am grateful to play a small role in that process." Similarly, another participant shared that they "feel connected to this university and know that teaching here and helping students is my mission for my heavenly Father. He is using me and blesses my journey."

Code 10. Quality Work

Code "quality work" was used whenever a participant mentioned the excellence for which they strive to provide high-quality online instruction. This sentiment was shared in the following response, "Being committed to my employment institution, to me, means I do my best work for them, making my duties a responsibility in my life despite how busy

I am." Another participant stated that being committed meant, "To deliver high quality online instruction."

Code 11. Positive Regard

The code "positive regard" was used to identify participant responses that shared the importance of having positive feelings toward their institution and their role as an online instructor. An example of this code is provided in the following response, "Being committed means that I hold my position and the university in high regard and take any opportunities that I can to share how I am a proponent of the university."

Code 12. Quid Pro Quo

The code "quid pro quo" was identified any time a participant mentioned a transactional exchange for their services to the university as what it means to be committed. As an example of this code one participant stated that they, "need to trust that my institution needs my help, values it, and compensates me for it." While another participant share that "I work there as long as benefits me, my family, and the institution."

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Code Frequencies

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As a means of representing the rank importance for the above-defined codes for RQ 7 a frequency pie chart is provided below in Figure 1. The most frequent codes identified in the participant's responses were, performing job duties 16%, quality work 16%, mission/vision 15%, and help students 14% of the total responses.

Figure 1

Frequency of RQ7 Codes

Performing Job Duties ■ Quality Work ■ Mission/Vision
Help Students ■ Policies/Procedures ■ Good Representative
Higher Calling/Ministry ■ Go Above and Beyond ■ Community
Loyalty ■ Quid Pro Quo ■ Positive Regard
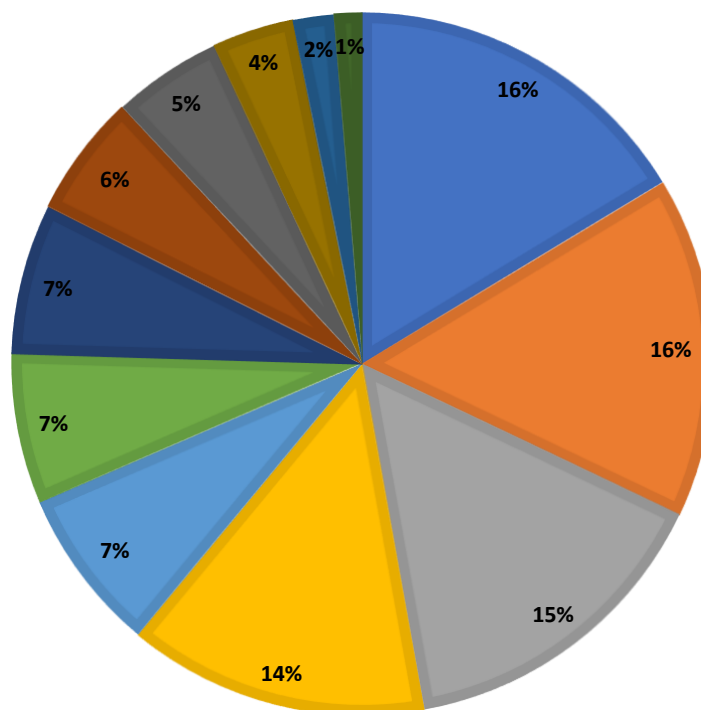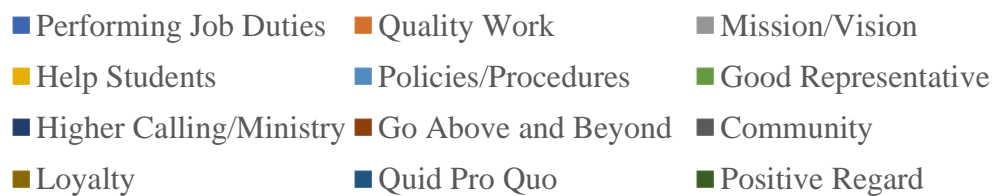
Themes

Research question 7 asked how online faculty describe what it means to be committed to their employing institution. Content analysis identified the above 12 codes, from which the following themes emerged as summations for the principal ideas shared by groupings of these codes. The themes that emerged from the responses to research question 7 include: Job Performance, Transactional, Positive Attitude/Intention, Ideological, and Multifaceted.

Theme 1. Job Performance

The theme of "job performance" emerged from the underpinning messages found in the codes of "help students", "go above and beyond", "quality work", and "performing job duties". All of these codes entailed an actionable work element that the participants were engaged in as a means of expressing their commitment to the university. Their responses were focused on tasks and duties but also shared attitudinal aspects of desire and drive for excellence. One participant offered that "to be committed means to exert my duties and responsibilities with the highest quality possible, serve from the heart to my organization and its stakeholders" as an example of this theme. For the participants identified under this theme it seems that for them to be committed means to show up and perform to the best of their abilities.

Theme 2. Transactional

The theme of "transactional" was derived from the combined codes of "policies/procedures" and "quid pro quo". Of the participants identified under this theme their definition of commitment centered on an equitable exchange of compensation for their services. These participants shared that they engage in their work with the university's standards of education in mind. A desire to obey and comply with university demands was expressed in these responses. One participant stated that commitment means "to abide by their policies and procedures and my own conscience while completing duties" as an example for this theme.

Theme 3. Positive Attitude/Intention

The theme of "positive attitude/intention" emerged from the content analysis of the codes of "positive regard", "community", "loyalty", and "good representative". These codes shared an overall positive stance and affection the participants had toward their

employing institution. The also expressed good will to the institution and a desire to continue in their employment. Participants accounted for under this theme expressed the importance of the sense of belonging and connection to the people of the university as a strong driving force for their commitment. As a representative response for this theme one participant offered that commitment meant "to be concerned with the well-being of the university and its students. To feel like I am part of a team of educators with a common goal."

Theme 4. Ideological

The theme of "ideological" was developed from the combination of shared meanings supporting the codes of "higher calling/ministry" and "mission/vision". These codes highlighted the importance of the shared goals between faculty and university to provide quality education. Many in this theme expressed the significance of their faith and alignment of their faith with the mission statement of the university to "train champions for Christ." Participants organized under this theme shared that their commitment to the university was superseded by their commitment to their Christian worldviews. As a prime example for this theme one participant stated, "I am dedicated to the goals, mission, vision, and culture of the institution. I have a responsibility to those goals, missions, visions, and culture in all that I do for students, curriculum, and administrators. I put a great priority on this dedication and maintaining the reputation of the university through my work and actions."

Theme 5. Multifaceted

The theme "multifaceted" emerge from the presentation of multiple definitions of what it means to be committed to an organization in the same response provided by the

participants. This complex definition of organizational commitment captured the multidimensional nature of how faculty conceptualized their feelings and behaviors that best captured what it means to be committed to their organization. As an example of a response under this theme one participant offered that commitment "means being committed to the mission of the institution, follow the policies of the institution, and be a good representative of the institution." This theme was used to identify groups of participant responses that shared a complex definition of their organizational commitment that highlighted many different concepts in the same definition.

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Theme Frequencies

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As a means of representing the rank importance for the above-defined themes for RQ 7 a frequency pie chart is provided below in Figure 2. The most frequent themes identified in the participants responses were, multifaceted 46%, and job performance 25%, followed by ideological 14%, transaction 8%, and positive attitude/intention 7%. It is important to note that the multifaceted theme was identified when multiple codes were used to organize a single faculty response.

Figure 2

Frequency of RQ7 Themes
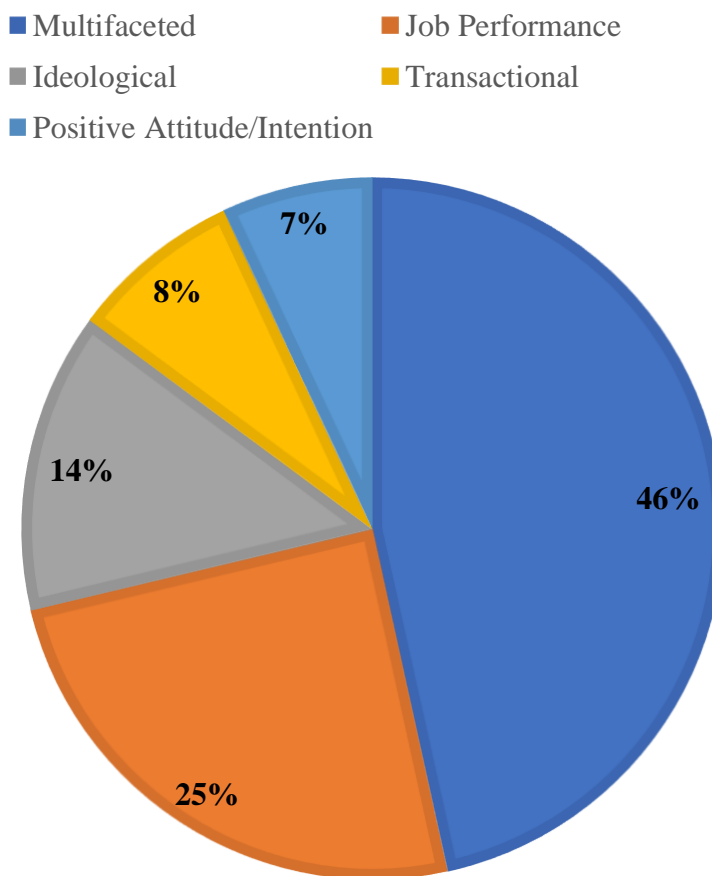
Research Question 8

Research question 8 sought to understand how online faculty describe the factors

that contribute to their commitment to their institution. From their essay responses 13

codes and 6 themes were identified as follows.

Code 1. Personal Faith

The code "personal faith" was used to define participant responses that involved the

identification of their faith, particularly their Christian faith as the main factor that

contributes to their commitment to their institution. An example of this code, "As a

Christian, I believe God has placed me here and it is my responsibility to honor authority

placed over me, and to do my best." Many responses point toward the feeling of being led to teach at this university as stated in the following response to this research question, "A deeply held conviction that God calls us into positions of service and equips us to fulfill His purpose. When He leads an employee into a certain organization, that employee should remain in that position until he/she can no longer philosophically embrace and approve what his/her authority direct."

Code 2. Pay/Income

The code "pay/income" was identified any time a participant listed compensation for their work as the major contributing factor to their commitment to the organization. One participant offered that "Competitive compensation is important since it makes me feel valued and appreciated". Another said that "Adequate compensation for position" was important.

Code 3. Support

The code "support" was used to organize responses that mentioned the care and attention they received from the university. It was an essential element for these faculty that the university provided resources that better equipped them to perform their role as an adjunct. A participant response that was coded as support mentioned the, "Sincere interaction, availability, and resources have contributed to my commitment to my institution."

Code 4. Shared Values

The code "shared values" was used whenever a participant mentioned the alignment with their personal beliefs and values and those of the universities. Participants labeled under this code indicated the importance of the philosophical agreement between employee and

employer as an important factor for organizational commitment. A participant that exemplified this code shared the following response, "Philosophical agreement with the organization is paramount. If there is a dissonance between the vision, values, beliefs, or assumptions - that is the culture - then there will be less of a willingness to be fully engaged and committed to the institution."

Code 5. Positive Relationship with Supervisor

Code "positive relationship with supervisor" was used to identify participants who shared that the relationship with their supervisor was the primary factor driving their commitment. The trust between employee and supervisor was also important to this code, with one participant sharing that it was the "guidance from superiors and the believe that they will have your back if needed" as the main factor contributing to their commitment. Many participants commented on the high quality of their relationship with their supervisor and expressed a great deal of appreciation for this factor. As an example, one participant offered that they have "A great boss who supports me and is working to improve our department."

Code 6. Passion for Teaching

The "passion for teaching" code was used to organize participant responses that indicated that their love and enjoyment of the teaching profession was the main factor for their commitment. Many faculty shared that they gained a professional fulfillment from teaching. As an example of this code one participant shared that they had "A love for learning and seeing that education can change lives" is why they have commitment to their institution.

Code 7. Mission/Vision

Code "mission/vision" was used to identify participants that listed the university's

foundational mission and vision as the factor that most contributed to their commitment.

One participant shared the importance of this factor in their response, "I believe in the

mission of this institution to train Champions for Christ. I would likely be committed to

the university for that fact alone."

Code 8. Personal Character

The code "personal character" was used whenever a participant pointed to some aspect of

their individual nature as the factor that drove their commitment. The integrity of the

individual to do a good job and a strong work ethic were shared by many participants.

One participant shared the following explanation for their commitment, "Commitment

stems from character. If I had to boil it down to a single character trait, I would say that

integrity is of supreme importance for any employee, but especially online instructor

commitment. Without integrity (which I will define loosely as the determination to do

what is right all of the time, even when others are not present and will never see what you

do), online instructors will not be committed to performing at a high level and in the

institution's best interest."

Code 9. Positive Experience

Code "positive experience" was used to organize responses that listed a general

enjoyment of their time while serving as an online instructor for this university. One

participant shared the following as the reason for their commitment, "I feel that being

validated and valuable to the institution along with having ideas heard and considered

(and if possible, instituted) makes me feel like I'm a part of the institution and that I'm

willing to commit to the growth of the institution."

Code 10. Consistent Courses

Code "consistent courses" was used whenever a participant indicated that the continued

assignment of classes to their load was the main factor for their commitment. Several

participants shared the value they place on the consistency of the number of courses they

receive each term as vital for their continued commitment. One participant stated, that

"consistent courses to teach each term" was the only factor for their commitment. In

some responses the term contract was used by participants, such as the following, "I have

a contract with LU as an assistant professor. This contract adds to this level of

commitment that possibly was not there as an adjunct. The university appears, through

the contract, to be committed to me so, I am committed to them in return."

Code 11. Relationship with Students

The code "relationship with students" was used to identify responses that indicated their

interaction and commitment to their student's success as an important factor for their

commitment. As a prime example of this code one participant stated that, "The biggest

factor is my students. Sometimes online teaching is tough. But I love seeing my students

"get it". It's so wonderful to see them grow, change, and then share what they have

learned."

Code 12. Flexible/Schedule

The code "flexible/schedule" was used whenever a participant mentioned the convenient

nature of working at a distance. Several participants shared that the flexibility to work

from home allowed online instruction to fit into their lives. As an example of this code

one participant presented that, "Online employment provides flexibility in my schedule

that allows me more time to be home with my family."
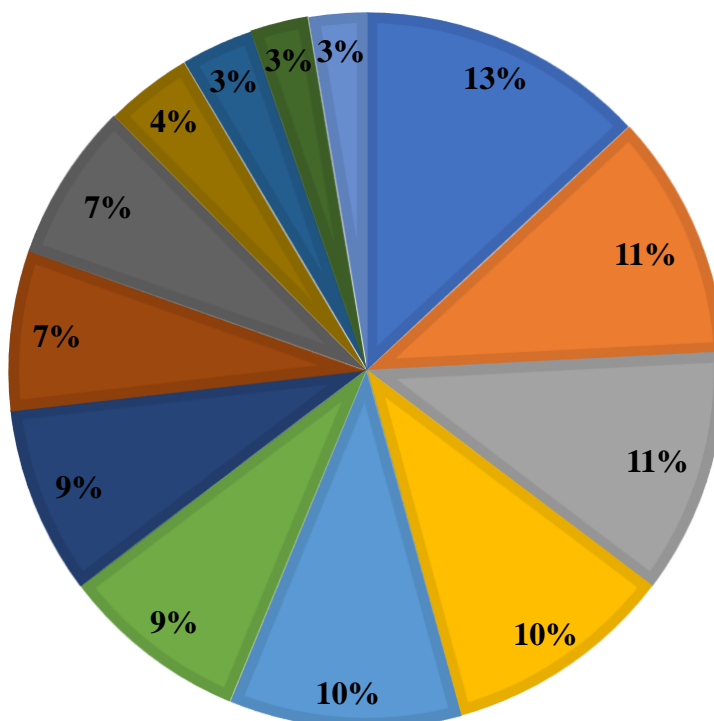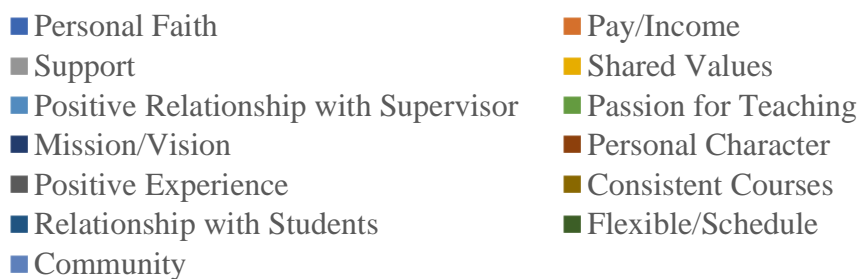
Code 13. Community

Code "community" was used to categorize responses in which the participants placed a high value on the sense of belonging and connection to others as important to their commitment. One participant indicated that connecting with their team was important to them and shared that they "Participate in meetings and collaborations with my group and we share our triumphs and difficulties." Feeling like they are part of a team of like-minded individuals that work together to accomplish their work was a common thread in this code. One participant shared that it was "The collegial atmosphere that originally attracted me to this university through the department chairs and instructional mentors that have guided me for more than ten years" as the major factor driving their commitment.

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Code Frequencies

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As a means of representing the rank importance for the above-defined codes for RQ 8 a frequency pie chart is provided below in Figure 3. The most frequent codes identified in the participant's responses were, personal faith 13%, pay/income 11%, support 11%, and share values and positive relationship with their supervisor both at 10% of the total responses.

Figure 3

Frequency of RQ8 Codes

■ Personal Faith ■ Pay/Income
■ Support ■ Shared Values
■ Positive Relationship with Supervisor ■ Passion for Teaching
■ Mission/Vision ■ Personal Character
■ Positive Experience ■ Consistent Courses
■ Relationship with Students ■ Flexible/Schedule
■ Community

Themes

Research question 8 asked how online faculty to identify what factors contribute to their

commitment to their institution. Content analysis identified the above 13 codes, from

which the following themes emerged as summations for the principal ideas shared by

groupings of these codes. The themes that emerged from the responses to research

question 8 include: Faculty's Personal Characteristics, Alignment with the University,

Supportive Relationships, Enjoying the Job, Financial Reasons, and Combination of Factors.

Theme 1. Faculty's Personal Characteristics

Theme "faculty's personal characteristics" was derived from the shared traits found in codes "personal faith" and "personal character". From these codes the theme of faculty's personal characteristics emerged to identify participant responses that centered on the beliefs, actions, and standards within the faculty. This internal drive was not dependent on outside forces but rather dependent on the participant's convictions and motivation toward their work conduct. As an example of this theme one participant stated, "I always want to do a great job and serve. It is intrinsic to who I am. I will do all I can to make my institution the best it can be." Many faculty pointed toward their Christian worldview as the major factor for their commitment as exemplified by the following statement concerning what factors contributed to their commitment, "As a Christian, I believe God has placed me here and it is my responsibility to honor authority placed over me, and to do my best."

Theme 2. Alignment with the University

Theme "alignment with the university" emerged from the common factors presenting in codes "shared values" and "mission/vision". This theme captured the essence of participant responses that expressed philosophical agreement with the purpose of the university as a Christian higher education institution. Several participants shared that as alumni of the university they are proud of what the institution stands for and they are committed to giving back to the next generation of graduates. One participant shared, "I

believe in the mission of this university. I am an alumnus and have a strong desire to see my students be successful" as an example for this theme.

Theme 3. Supportive Relationships

Theme "supportive relationships" came about as a synthesis of the messages shared in codes "positive relationship with supervisor", "support", and "community". Within these codes a message of the importance of personal and organizational resources that enable faculty to feel supported and valued emerged. Responses organized under this theme consistently mentioned their supervisor and departments as providing a human connection in an online world. Feeling supported and valued by individuals with whom they have a personal relationship was a significant factor for this theme. Having a supportive relationship with their leadership was shared in the following response, "Respect, approachability, consistent positive interactions with the leaders of the department that I report to" for what factors contributed to their commitment.

Theme 4. Enjoying the Job

The theme "enjoying the job" was derived from the shared meaning presented in the codes, "passion for teaching", "relationship with students", "flexibility/schedule", and "positive experience". This theme imparted the participant's love for teaching and enjoyment of their interactions with students and their colleagues. This theme also communicated the importance of faculty satisfaction and fit with work life demands as contributing factors for commitment. As an example of this theme, one participant shared, "I want those who take online courses to feel it is an honor to earn a degree from this university. Thus, I work to maintain integrity in the course curricular materials and challenge all my students to do their best."

Theme 5. Financial Reasons

Theme "financial reasons" came about as a result of shared messages in the codes "pay/income" and "consistent courses". Responses organized under this theme shared the necessity of income as the main factor driving commitment. The sentiment of fair compensation was a repeated message in this theme. Faculty expressed the desire to be shown value by receiving competitive compensation for their service. As an example of the financial reasons theme one participant stated, "Being treated and compensated fairly and appreciated for a job well done" was the main factor that contributed to their organizational commitment.

Theme 6. Combination of Factors

The theme "combination of factors" emerged from the multifaceted manner in which participants described the complex combination of factors that contribute to their organizational commitment. Participant responses under this theme shared a multipart definition of their organizational commitment that highlighted many distinct factors. One participant offered that a combination of the following factors contributed to their organizational commitment, "The institution's vision, goals, communication of the role of the employee in those objectives, compensation, colleagues, feeling of belonging and value, a sense of mutual loyalty, evidence of integrity and core principles." Whenever a participant provided a response that was categorized with a combination of distinct factors that contribute to their organizational commitment this theme was used.

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Theme Frequencies

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As a means of representing the rank importance for the above-defined themes for RQ 8 a frequency pie chart is provided below in Figure 4. The most frequent themes

identified in the participant's responses were, combination of factors 44%, faculty's personal characteristics 16%, alignment with the university 15%, and supportive relationship 12%. It is important to note that the multifaceted theme was identified when multiple codes were used to organize a single faculty response.

Figure 4

Frequency of RQ8 Themes
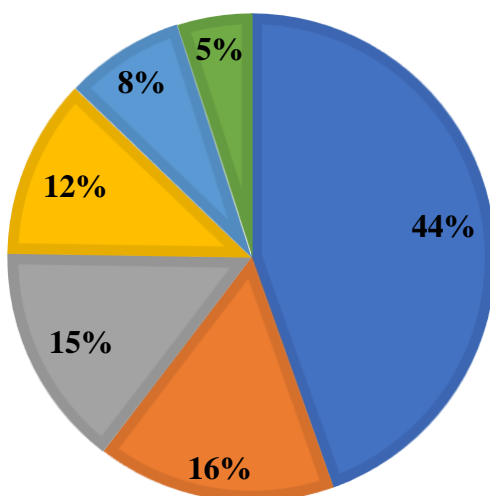
Research Question 9

Research question 9 sought to understand how online faculty describe what their employing institution can do to improve their organizational commitment. From their essay responses 10 codes and 5 themes were identified as follows.

Code 1. No Change/Happy

The code "no change/happy" was used to describe participant responses that expressed overall satisfaction with their job and how the university treats them. One participant

shared, "I cannot imagine a single way in which this university could improve. In fact, the university has made several improvements since I have been employed here. My loyalty and devotion to my job only grows with time." Many under the "no change/happy" code expressed that their satisfaction was due to the personal support they received from their team members, "The group I work with is amazing and makes it easy for me to stay committed."

Code 2. Better Communication

The code "better communication" was used to organize responses that expressed a desire to receive clearer and/or more frequent communication from the university. As an example of this code a participant shared that they would appreciate "More conversations about improvement, openness about decisions and choices by the institution." Some identified the specific need to have better communication surrounding class assignments. One participant offered that the university could provide "More transparency and/or communication in instructional assignments" to increase their commitment.

Code 3. Increase Pay

The code "increase pay" was used whenever a participant mentioned the desire for more competitive financial compensation for their work. As an example of this code one participant stated, "Although the leadership communicates regularly about how much they appreciate my work, I don't think it means much unless they show it by an increase in the salary for adjuncts."

Code 4. Appreciate Me

Code "appreciate me" was used to identify responses that mentioned the need to be seen, heard, and appreciated. Being acknowledged and valued by the institution is mentioned

several times within these responses. One participant offered that they would like for the institution to "respect my time when attending meetings, show interest in feedback given, and demonstrate appreciation for a job well done." One participant simply put, "recognize that I am here."

Code 5. Improve Ethical/Academic Standards

Code "improve ethical/academic standards" was used to identify participant responses when they mentioned the need for raising the standards of decision-making and student processes of the university. One participant clarified that they "Want to see ethical behavior, a desire to treat all teachers equally and not favor one over another when load is distributed." Many mentioned the need for higher standards when it comes to the expectations of students under this code.

Code 6. More Faculty Autonomy/Input

Code "more faculty autonomy/input" was used whenever a participant listed the longing to have more freedom to perform their role as an adjunct under their own discretion. One participant epitomized this code as they shared that they would like "Greater autonomy in my work. Currently the environment is very restrictive. The choices I have in teaching methodology and approach is greatly limited. I view teaching as an art, and my role is 'mechanical' - about as opposite from an art as could be imagined." Several participants listed the specific desire to engage more with course content, one participant offered, that they would like more "Opportunity to contribute to course content."

Code 7: More Benefits

Code "more benefits" was used to organize responses that made specific mention of wanting the opportunity for benefits outside of their normal adjunct pay. One participant

stated that it would be nice for the institution to "Provide health insurance. I often feel that I am helpful to the university in that I can teach many more courses online than a residential instructor could in the in-person setting, which is helpful to the university. However, I am not treated the same in that I am full-time, but I don't receive benefits and do not receive additional compensation for having a doctorate. Private health insurance is so incredibly expensive."

Code 8: Job Security

Code "job security" was used whenever a participant mentioned the desire to have consistent employment or the guarantee of a certain number of courses. One participant shared that the university should "Guaranteed minimum of courses for adjunct online faculty that receive highest faculty and student evaluations."

Code 9: Full-Time Opportunities

Code "full-time opportunities" was used to identify participant responses that specifically asked for the university to offer full-time positions, instead of the standard part-time adjunct status. One response that exemplified this code stated that the university should "Offer full-time posts (I don't even need to be offered one myself. If they simply had full-time, benefitted posts for online professors, it would go a long way in demonstrating their commitment to their faculty-the bottom line for reciprocation of commitment."

**Code 10: Training Opportunities**

Code "training opportunities" was used to whenever a participant mentioned the desire for the university to provide professional development opportunities. One participant stated that "The employing institution can continue offering mentoring and guidance to allow for professional growth" as a means of increasing their organizational commitment.

Code Frequencies

As a means of representing the rank importance for the above defined-codes for RQ 9 a frequency pie chart is provided below in Figure 5. The most frequent codes identified in the participant's responses were no change/happy 22%, better communication 16%, increase pay 12%, and appreciate me 12%, of the total responses.

Figure 5

Frequency of RQ9 Codes
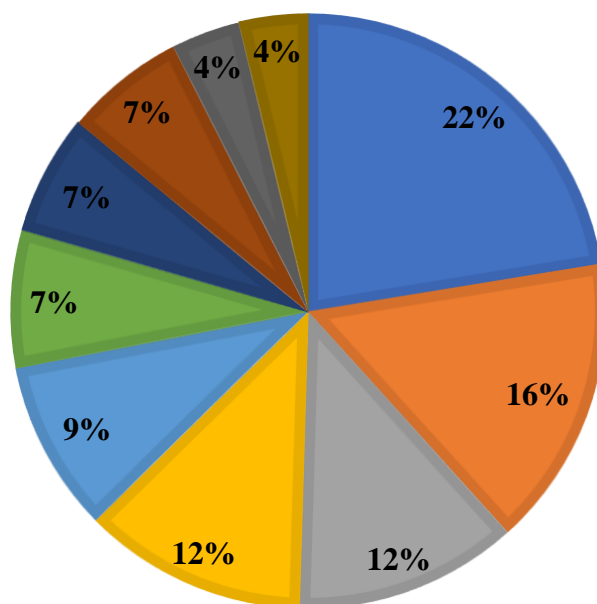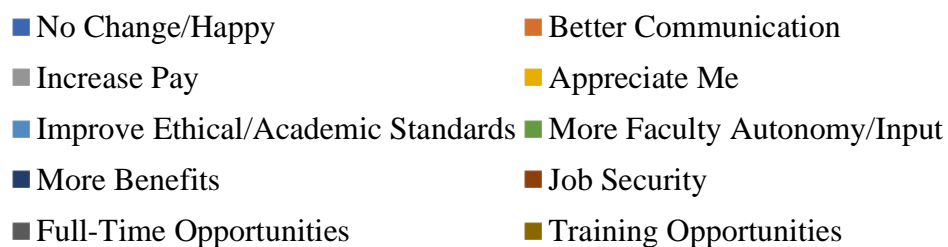
Themes

Research question 9 asked online faculty to describe what their employing institution can do to improve their organizational commitment. Content analysis identified the above 10

codes, from which the following themes emerged as summations for the principal ideas shared by groupings of these codes. The themes that emerged from the responses to research question 9 include: "Committed", "Invest in Me", "Process/Product Improvement", "I Want to be Valued", and "Multiple".

Theme 1. Committed

The theme "committed" was used for the code "no change/happy" to describe the responses that indicated that the participant was fully committed to their job and/or institution. With this theme there is an underlying message that the participant's needs are being met by the employing institution. One participant offered the following response that exemplifies this theme, "I believe I have a strong commitment to my employing institution and don't know that there is anything to be done to improve it. I especially appreciate their attention to rising costs of living and their adjustment of our salaries and bonuses to address these rising costs. That helps my sense of commitment because it demonstrates care for us as employees."

Theme 2. Invest in Me

The theme "invest in me" was derived from the shared traits found in codes "increased pay", "more benefits", "full-time opportunities" and "job security". The messages shared in these codes all point to the desire of the participant to receive as much as they give to the university. The desire for more equitability of their return on investment for these participants was a common thread linking these codes. One participant stated that the university could "Offer full-time permanent employment status" to increase their organizational commitment. Similarly, benefits were consistently mentioned as exemplified by the following statements, "Offer more benefit options to adjuncts", and

"Provide health insurance." Participants identified under this theme wanted more security in their employment status with the university.

Theme 3. Process/Product Improvement

The theme "process/product improvement" emerged from the shared traits found in codes "improve ethical/academic standards" and "better communication". The unifying message communicated in these codes was the participant's desire for higher quality choices by management and to rise the standards for education. One participant shared that they desired for the university to "Hold students to a higher standard", another offered that they desired "A little more communication with the online faculty, there are many changes frequently that are not well communicated to the adjunct faculty." Participants under this theme wanted to be more informed and considered with large and small university decisions.

Theme 4. I Want to be Valued

The theme "I want to be valued" was derived from the shared meaning in codes "more faculty autonomy/input", "training opportunities", and "appreciate me". The emerging essence of this theme was the desire for the university to show that they value their adjuncts. As an example of this theme, one participant stated that the university could do better to "Let employees know they are valued and make them feel valued, even if they may not be on campus." Another offered specific request in their response, "It may seem silly, but little tokens of appreciation, outside of salary/payment, helps to build that sense of identity and belonging with an organization. For example, providing adjunct instructors with swag or tchotchke items with the institution logo helps to build that connectedness with the institution." Participants also listed actionable items for the

university that included guidance and professional development as well as the ability to influence the courses the university offers.

Theme 5. Multiple

The theme "multiple" emerged from the participant's use of multiple ways in which the university could improve their organizational commitment. Participant responses under this theme shared a complex description of the multiple actions the institution could take to improve their organizational commitment. One participant offered the following response as an example of the multiple things the university could do to improve their organizational commitment that included more "conversations about improvement, openness about decisions and choices by the institution, and competitive financial compensation." Whenever a participant provided a response that was categorized with a multifaceted concept of what the university could do to improve their organizational this theme was used.

<div align="center">

Theme Frequencies

</div>

As a means of representing the rank importance for the above-defined themes for RQ 9 a frequency pie chart is provided below in Figure 6. The themes identified in the participant's responses were, "committed" 23%, "invest in me" 24%, "process/product improvement" 23%, "I want to be valued" 21%, and "multiple" 9%. It is important to note that the multiple themes were identified when multiple codes were used to organize a single faculty response.

Figure 6

Frequency of RQ9 Themes

■ Committed   ■ Invest in Me

■ Process/Product Improvement   ■ I Want to be Valued

■ Multiple
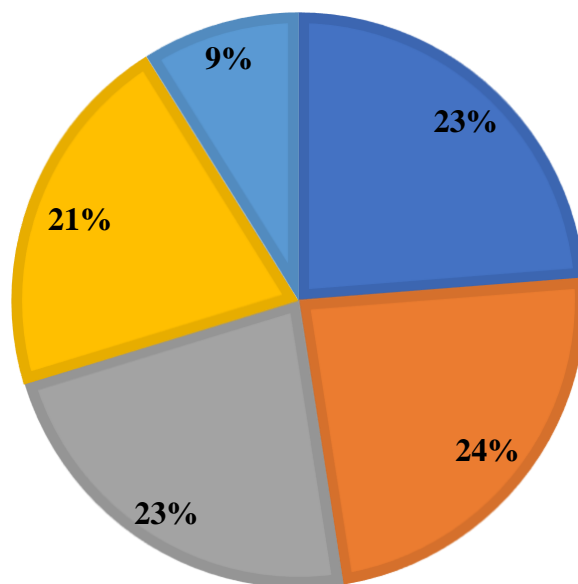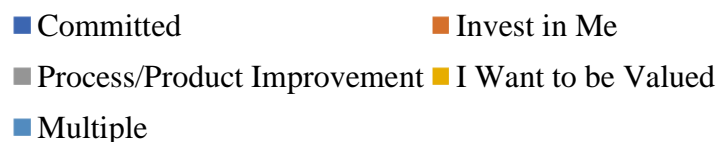
Summary

Key findings in this study include a significant relationship between perceived organizational support and overall, affective, and normative organizational commitment. Perceived organizational support has the strongest relationship with affective organizational commitment in this population, while continuance organizational commitment did not have a significant relationship. Similarly, a significant relationship was found between leader member exchange and overall, affective and normative commitment, while no relationship was found with continuance commitment. When perceived organizational support and leader member exchange are correlated under a hierarchical model, it is shown that the driving force in overall, affective, and normative organizational commitment is largely due to perceived organizational support; leader member exchange added very little to the model. This study did not find a significant

relationship between the delivery method of faculty's previous educational experience as a student, their highest earned degree, or their employee status and their organizational commitment.

The qualitative research questions revevaled several themes in how faculty describe what organizational commitment is, what contributes to it, and what the institution can do to improve it. Faculty reported a largely complex definition for commitment with many sharing multiple aspects that define their commitment. Other common definitions centered on their job performance, ideological alignment, transactional relationship with the institution, and their positive attitude or intention toward the university. As for what factors contribute to their organizational commitment many faculty again shared a complex response listing a multitude of factors ranging from their personal characteristics, alignment with the university, enjoyment of the job, and financial reasons. Faculty also reported that nearly one fourth were currently happy and fully committed to their institution, while others shared a desire for improvements to the institutions processes and product, as well as a collective need to be valued and invested in as an asset to the institution. The next chapter will focus on a summary of the findings, then a discussion of what the findings mean and possible implications. Limitations and recommendations for future research on online faculty's organizational commitment will also be explored.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Overview

This mixed methods study aimed to investigate the predictors of online faculty's organizational commitment. Previous research has identified common predictors of organizational commitment across industry types, which informed the selection of this study's predictor variables to include the delivery method of faculty's previous educational experience as a student, their highest earned degree, employee status, length of employment, perceived organizational support, and leader member exchange. Literature also presented a gap in how these variables impact the role of the online adjunct as much of the existent research has been conducted on residential faculty members.

As this was a mixed methods design, this study was set up to collect online faculty survey data centered on 6 quantitative research questions seeking to examine the relationship, if any, between online faculty members and these predictor variables as well as 3 opened ended qualitative questions aimed at understanding how online faculty express the factors that contribute to their organizational commitment. Data gathered from the participants were analyzed using 1-way ANOVA for RQ1-RQ3 and a Pearson's *r* correlation analysis for R4-R6. A follow up stepwise multiple regression analysis was used to evaluate the relationship between leader member exchange and perceived organizational support as predictors of organizational commitment. The qualitative RQ7-RQ9 were analyzed through the process of coding to identify emergent themes and patterns in the faculty's responses. Findings from this study contribute to the literature on organizational commitment in online faculty, specifically the importance of good leader

member exchange and perceived organizational support as significant predictors of online faculty's organizational commitment.

This chapter will begin with a summary of the study findings. Then, a discussion will emphasize the significant results of the findings and their contribution to the field of online higher education as well as the biblical foundations appertaining to this study. Next, the study's implications for online higher education theory and practice revolving around the hiring, training, and support for online faculty will be offered. Finally, this chapter will end with a discussion of the limitations of this study and recommendations for future research on the predictors of online faculty's organizational commitment.

Summary of Findings

This mixed methods study aimed to explore the factors contributing to online faculty's organizational commitment. Specifically, this study examined the delivery method of faculty's previous educational experience as a student, their highest earned degree, employee status, length of employment, perceived organizational support, and leader member exchange as they relate to their organizational commitment. There were 9 research questions: 6 quantitative and 3 qualitative.

RQ 1: What is the relationship between the delivery method of faculty's previous educational experience as a student (online/residential/mixed) and reported organizational commitment in online faculty?

Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between faculty's previous educational experience as a student (online/residential/mixed) and reported organizational commitment in online faculty?

RQ 2: What is the relationship between faculty's personal highest education level (Doctorate/Specialist/Masters/Bachelors) and reported organizational commitment in online faculty?

Hypothesis 2: There is a relationship between faculty's personal highest education level (Doctorate/Specialist/Masters/Bachelors) and reported organizational commitment in online faculty.

RQ 3: What is the relationship between employee status (benefited/non-benefited) and reported organizational commitment in online faculty?

Hypothesis 3: There is a relationship between employee status (benefited/ non-benefited) and reported organizational commitment in online faculty.

RQ 4: What is the relationship between faculty's length of employment and reported organizational commitment in online faculty?

Hypothesis 4: There is a relationship between faculty's length of employment and reported organizational commitment in online faculty.

RQ 5: What is the relationship between faculty's perception of organizational support and reported organizational commitment in online faculty?

Hypothesis 5: There is a relationship between faculty's perception of organizational support and reported organizational commitment in online faculty.

RQ 6: What is the relationship between faculty's reported leader member exchange and reported organizational commitment in online faculty?

Hypothesis 6: There is a relationship between faculty's leader member exchange and reported organizational commitment in online faculty?

RQ 7: How do online faculty describe what it means to be committed to their employing institution?

RQ 8: How do online faculty describe the factors that contribute to their commitment to their institution?

RQ 9: How do online faculty describe what their employing institution can do to improve their organizational commitment?

After participants provided self-report answers for each of the variables, the responses were analyzed with 1-way ANOVA for RQ 1-RQ 3, Pearson's *r* correlation for RQ4-RQ6, and coding and theming for RQ 7-9. This study did not find a significant relationship between the delivery method of faculty's previous educational experience as a student in RQ 1, education level in RQ 2, or their employee status in RQ 3. However, length of employment was found to have a significant relationship with overall and continuance organizational commitment for RQ 4. These results also indicated that there was a significant relationship between perceived organizational support and overall, affective, and normative organizational commitment for RQ 5. Perceived organizational support had the strongest relationship with affective organizational commitment in this population, while continuance organizational commitment did not have a significant relationship.

A significant relationship was also found between leader member exchange and overall, affective, and normative commitment, while no relationship was found with continuance commitment for RQ 6. A stepwise multiple regression analysis revealed that the significant relationship that leader member exchange and perceived organizational

support had with organizational commitment was largely driven by perceived organizational support, leader member exchange did not add much to the model.

Analysis of the participant's qualitative data revelated several themes in how faculty describe what organizational commitment is, what contributes to it, and what the institution can do to improve it. Answering RQ 7, participants reported a complex definition for commitment with many sharing multiple aspects that define their commitment with common threads of job performance, ideological alignment, transactional relationship with the institution, and their positive attitude or intention toward the university as definitions of their commitment. Emerging themes from RQ 8 included a combination of factors with their personal characteristics, alignment with the university, enjoyment of the job, and financial reasons as factors that are important to their commitment. Responses for RQ 9 revealed that nearly one fourth of participants were currently happy and fully committed to their institution, while others shared a desire for improvements to the institutions processes and product, as well as a collective need to be valued and invested in as an asset to the institution.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal both consistency and divergence from existing literature on organizational commitment. For RQ 1 the method of online faculty's previous educational experience as a student (online/residential/mixed) and their reported organizational commitment did not show a significant predictive relationship. Previous research suggests that faculty teach in the manner in which they have been taught (Borup & Evmenova, 2019). Luna's (2018) research suggested that variables such as these are largely unknown in the population of online faculty. However, it has been theorized that

if faculty have realistic expectations for online teaching, their overall experience would be positive, thereby leading to greater organizational commitment (Borup & Evmenova, 2019). This did not appear to be the case base on this sample. However, this sample is skewed, with an overwhelming percentage having both online and residential experience as a student (75.2%). The disproportional representation of this category of past education could contribute to the results. Faculty report that it is more difficult to teach online courses and it has been proposed that without the experiences of being an online student themselves, faculty struggle to adapt to online teaching methods (Rhode et al., 2017). Based on this sample of online faculty it appears that an overwhelming majority have experience as a student in both the online and residential platforms, adding to the understanding of the population of online faculty.

Based on the same assumptions of past experience and expertise as predictors of organizational commitment, it was hypothesized that online faculty would have different levels of organizational commitment based on the level of their highest earned degree for RQ 2. The results of this study did not show a significant relationship between online faculty's highest earned degree and their organizational commitment. Again, the results of this sample were highly skewed, with 71.3% of online faculty holding a terminal doctoral degree, 25.7% holding a master's degree, and 3% holding a specialist degree. No participants reported holding a bachelor's degree. Accreditation standards are likely the cause for no bachelor level degrees in this sample; therefore it confounds the ability of this study to determine if a relationship existed between these different levels of education and online faculty's organizational commitment, albeit no relationship was present given the level of degrees present in this sample.

As the foundational rationale for the inclusion of employee status (benefited/non-benefited) and reported organizational commitment in online faculty the assumptions of the social exchange theory and perceived organizational support did not seem to apply for this sample of online faculty based on the results from the 1-way ANOVA for RQ 3 (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Zoller at al., 2018).This study showed no relationship between employee status (benefited/non-benefited) and online faculty's organizational commitment. However, only 15 participants reported having benefits making this a highly underrepresented percentage of the population. When this result is taken into consideration with the results of the open-ended qualitative questions faculty do report the importance of employment status and benefits as predictors of their organizational commitment. It could be that the non-benefited faculty actually desire benefits that would impact their organizational commitment as reflected in the results from RQ 9; however, there were so few having benefits in the sample it was missed by the quantitative analysis of RQ 3.

The first significant finding in this study was for RQ 4 which explored the relationship between online faculty's length of employment and reported organizational commitment. It can be assumed that the percentage of influence in overall organizational commitment was driven by continuance commitment, given the lack of relationship between this variable and the other subscales of organizational commitment. Given the understanding of continuance commitment as the employee's "need" or "have to" stay with the organization due to the evaluation of the cost of leaving, it is logical for this variable to have a positive correlation with length of employment given the behavioral nature of this form of commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990). As explained by the social

exchange theory, the length of employee time spent at an organization is an investment. The more time the individual has invested in the organization the more committed they will be (Jaiswal et al., 2020). It is important to note that over half, 53.5% of the sample only have 1-5 years of employment. Taking into account that RQ 9 revealed that almost 25% of this sample report being fully committed to the institution, it is not surprising to see a significant relationship between the length of employment and continuance commitment. A theme of financial reasons for the factors that contribute to their organizational commitment was also noted in RQ 8, paralleling the suppositions behind the "have to" definition of continuance commitment explaining this result.

Further significant results were obtained for RQ 5 which explored the relationship between faculty's perception of organizational support and reported organizational commitment in online faculty. The Pearson's r correlation analysis showed a significant relationship between online faculty's perceived organizational support and their overall, affective, and normative organizational commitment. The strength of the Pearson's r correlation showed a relatively strong relationship with overall organizational commitment with $r = .43$, affective with $r = .62$, and normative with $r = .47$. Affective organizational commitment seemed to drive the overall organizational commitment correlation with perceived organizational support explaining 38.69% of the variance in affective organizational commitment and 21.9% of the variance in normative organizational commitment explained by this sample's perceived organizational support.

Understanding perceived organizational support as the degree to which an employee believes their organization is ready to meet their needs, values their contributions, and cares about their well-being, it is easy to understand why this variable

has been linked to important outcome variables such as organizational commitment (Eisenberger et al., 2016). Based on the principle of reciprocity, affective organizational commitment should positively correlate with perceived organizational support (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Reeder, 2020). Reciprocity dictates that when an organization treats an employee well, it obligates them to return the favorable treatment (Quratulain et al., 2018). Seen across industry types, organizational commitment is reached when employees trade their effort and loyalty and receive tangible benefits in return in a reliable and predictable manner. When considering employee organizational commitment, the social exchange theory aids in the understanding of the predictive economic balance between employee and organizational factors (Zoller et al., 2018). This reciprocal exchange of commitment for support highlights the foundational assumptions of the social exchange theory. Results from the qualitative portion of this study further illuminate the importance of perceived organizational support for online faculty's organizational commitment and will be discussed further in this chapter.

A similar significant relationship was found between online faculty's leader member exchange and reported organizational commitment in RQ 6. Representing the two-way relationship between leaders and followers, leader member exchange is determined by the quality of the interpersonal exchanges between the dyad (Graen & Uhl-Blen, 1995). The results of the Pearson's *r* correlation coefficient show that leader member exchange accounted for 12.25% of the variance in overall organizational commitment, 27.98% of the variance in affective organizational commitment, and 16.73% of the variance in normative organizational commitment. Again, affective organizational commitment was shown to have the strongest relationship with leader

member exchange with $r = .53$. Leader member exchange has been shown to be a powerful predictor of performance, job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior, and organizational commitment across industry types (Martin et al., 2018). The importance of the supportive relationship between a leader and their subordinates was also communicated through the participant's qualitative responses; however, it was first pertinent to see how the variables of perceived organizational support and leader member exchange predicted organizational commitment with a stepwise multiple regression analysis.

The stepwise multiple regression analysis comparing perceived organizational support and leader member exchange as predictors of organizational commitment revealed a significant relationship that further explained the degree of impact of these predictive variables. Perceived organizational support explained 17% of the variance of overall organizational commitment, 38% of affective organizational commitment, and 21% normative organizational commitment. When leader member exchange was added to the model it did not contribute much to the model. In fact, leader member exchange was excluded from overall organizational commitment model, but accounted for only 6% increase in affective organizational commitment and 3% increase in normative organizational commitment. The underwhelming impact of leader member exchange as a predictor of organizational commitment was surprising as leaders are often seen as an extension of the organization and serve as the main mechanism by which an employee develops their feelings toward their organization (Eisenberger et al., 2016). As an agent of the organization, supervisors engage in direct communication, training, and evaluation of their employee. It is the nature and quality of their orientation toward the employee

that informs the employee of how the organization feels about them by extension of their supervisorial role (Kurtessis et al., 2017). However, the results of this study showed that it was actually perceived organizational support, not leader member exchange, that was the main predictor of their organizational commitment. The importance of perceived organizational support over leader member exchange suggests that online faculty can distinguish between how they feel about the larger organization and their direct supervisor. However, the lack of influence of leader member exchange had on predicting online faculty's organizational commitment as compared to other populations leaves room for further investigation. It could be that the less frequent contact and distance created by the online environment influences online faculty's ability to form a strong relationship with their supervisor, leaving perceptions of the larger organization as the greater influence.

Qualitative Discussion

When asked to provide a definition of what it means to be committed to their employing institution, online faculty provided a complex and multifaceted response. A total of 47 of the 101 responses provided a theme of "multifaceted", meaning that they listed several distinct variables that together informed what it means for them to be committed to their organization. This is in line with existing literature that affirms that commitment is complex and linked to many predictive components and outcomes (Kaplan & Kaplan, 2018; Kawiana et al., 2018; Li et al., 2017; Loan, 2020; Mohamed et al., 2021).

Of the other themes that emerged from RQ 7 the presence of "job performance" and "positive attitude/intention" themes affirm the attitude-behavioral spectrum of the three-

component model (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Understanding these themes through this model, behaviors and attitudes impact each other over time in a reciprocal relationship. Both attitudes toward a target (job performance) and attitudes toward a behavior (positive attitude/intention) are part of an overall commitment profile (Allen & Herscovitch, 2001). Of notable influence to this research question the theme of "ideological" representing the importance of the shared goals and mission between employee and their organization. Research on perceived organizational fit has demonstrated that employees with higher levels of organizational fit often have better job satisfaction, longer tenure, and higher levels of organizational commitment and citizenship behavior (Chhabra, 2021). The benefits of ideological alignment between employee and employer are well documented in research and sustained by these results (Oo, 2018; Sørlie, 2022).

The theme of "transactional" is best explained through the lens of the social exchange theory as faculty described an equitable exchange of compensation for their services. This theme also shares similarities with continuance commitment in that their relationship with the university was sterile and only met their lower-level needs of employment. When comparing this theme to the quantitative RQ 5 and RQ 6, continuance commitment was excluded from both correlations between perceived organizational support and leader member exchange. Neither of these predictive variables correlated to a feeling of having to stay for the faculty, represented partly by the theme "transactional" in RQ 7. However, this theme was one of the less frequent themes for this question, with the majority expressing a complex definition of their organizational commitment that highlighted the importance of their job performance and ideological alignment with the university.

Providing further insight into how online faculty experience their work, RQ 8 sought to understand how online faculty describe the factors that contribute to their commitment to their institution. Again, the majority of faculty (45 responses out of 101) provided a list of distinct factors that when taken together, provide a multipart description of the contributing components of their organizational commitment. Other emerging themes for this research question such as "faculty's personal characteristics", "alignment with the university", "supportive relationships", "enjoying the job, and "financial reasons" are in line with existing literature on organizational commitment and are affirmed by the quantitative portion of this study.

Similar to RQ 7, research on person-organization fit stresses the importance of the messages expressed in theme "alignment with the university" which also confirms the importance of ideological/psychological contract fulfillment in other populations (Hanaysha & Majid, 2018; Miller & Youngs, 2021). Theme "faculty's personal characteristics" emerged as an interesting theme expressing the importance of the faculty's internal beliefs, actions, and standards that are not dependent on outside forces but rather dependent on the participant's convictions and motivation toward their work conduct. Research on callings and motivational aspects of employee commitment help interpret this theme (Kemsley, 2018; Kim et al., 2018). To describe and understand motivation, various humanist theories such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Herzberg's two-factor theory, and Self-Determination Theory have been used (Velmurugan & Sankar, 2017). Employees that express a sense of being called to their work, as expressed in this theme, often have better work outcomes, including a heightened commitment to their work (Kim et al., 2018). Participants responded to this research question with a

common sense of meaning-making for their employment that reflected the belief that their "career is a central part of a broader sense of purpose and meaning in life and is used to help others or advance the greater good in some fashion" (Kemsley, 2018). The theme "enjoying the job" can also be understood through the concepts of motivation and callings.

The theme of "supportive relationship" shares commonality with the quantitative results of RQ 5 and RQ 6 on perceived organizational support and leader member exchange. This theme centered on the expressed importance of interpersonal and organizational resources that enable faculty to feel supported and valued by their organization. Responses to this theme were nearly a verbatim mirror to the operational definition of perceived organizational support and leader member exchange. Responses organized under this theme consistently mentioned their supervisor and departments as providing a human connection in an online world as the main factors contributing to their organizational commitment. It was of paramount importance for this sample of online faculty to feel supported and valued by the individuals they work with as well as the larger presence of their organization. The last theme for RQ 8 was "financial reasons" which drew many comparable core principles of the social exchange theory. The social exchange theory posits that employees will remain in a relationship so long as they are in a state of profit. Responses organized under this theme shared the necessity of fair, competitive compensation as the main factor driving commitment and also speak to the presence of continuance commitment for these faculty.

The additional knowledge gained by RQ 9, which asked the online faculty what their employing institution could do to improve their organizational commitment, seemed

to bridge the gap between the "what is" and "what could be" notions behind their organizational commitment. Definitions and factors in RQ 7 and RQ 8 encompassed current conditions, while RQ 9 allowed the online faculty to provide actions and ideas that were often not part of their current work experience. While 23% of this sample reported being happy and committed with no recommendations for improvement, others desired for the institution to make efforts to show them that they are valued and that their institution cares about their well-being and acknowledges their accomplishments in the themes "invest in me" and "I want to be valued". These themes express the fundamental premise behind perceived organizational support theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

One of the psychological mechanisms that explain the outcomes of perceived organizational support is the process in which the socioemotional needs of the employee are met by the esteem, approval, and affiliation with the organization (Eisenberger et al., 2020). Common factors that have been identified to enhance employee commitment include promotions, job security, fair wages, and bonuses (Zameer et al., 2014). Themes for this research question follow suit with the literature mentioned above and the result of the quantitative portion of this study, with faculty calling for more secure class assignments, increased wages, full-time opportunities, employee benefits, and appreciation for a job well done. Interestingly, quantitative RQ 3 did not show a significant relationship between employee benefits and online faculty's organizational commitment. This seems to be incongruent with the findings from RQ 9. This disparity could be partly due to the few online faculty holding benefited positions in this sample and the difference between "what is" and "what could be" if given the choice. Despite the lack of significance in RQ 3, RQ 9 does impart the importance of tangible investments in

the faculty on the part of the institution in the form of benefits. The desire for more job

security can be seen as a product of the trend in contingent working conditions in higher

education, which has created insecure employees who want to be invested in and valued

in tangible ways (Luna, 2018; Moustafa et al., 2019; Sabir & Bhutta, 2018).

The last significant theme that emerged from RQ 9 was "process/product

improvement" and emphasized the desire of faculty for the institution to have better

communication with them and support them through improved ethical and academic

standards. In the responses under this theme, the second most frequent code was

"communication." Online faculty often felt out of the loop and disconnected from the

happenings of the institution. As an area of improvement, online faculty desire for the

institution to make efforts to engage with them in such a way as to help them feel

included and that their contributions make a difference. Online faculty desire to have a

discernable voice at their institution, even while working at a distance. As a second

component to this theme, online faculty mentioned the desire for improved ethical and

academic standards enforced by the institution. Online faculty care about the quality

standards and integrity of their institution, which shares the same foundation as research

on justice in the workplace. Research has shown that perceptions of justice are vastly

important to the perception of organizational support (Novitasari et al., 2020). In this

study, online faculty expressed a need for improvement in the fairness of the processes

used to make workplace decisions. This is best described as the desire for procedural

justice, emphasizing the structural process by which their institution deals with the formal

rules and policies that affect their sense of fairness.

Biblical Integration of Findings

Due to the university's faith-based affiliation, the faculty reported many themes related to their personal faith, alignment with the Christian philosophy of the university, and dedication to the mission/vision of the university as a leader in Christian higher education. The overwhelming narrative of this sample of online faculty as Christian educators aligns with the biblical imperative for the hierarchy of allegiance to God first. As a reflection of God's design, man functions best when he operates under the protective hierarchy of allegiance to serve the Lord above self and others (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Colossians 3:23-24). From a research perspective, this imperative is also supported by literature on person-organization fit. In contrast to the underpinning self-motivations of the social exchange theory, the faith-based definitions of and factors that contribute to commitment shared by this sample of online faculty point to the commitment of the believer to serve the Lord above all else as the primary motivation for their organizational commitment. Where the social exchange theory imparts that commitment will be achieved if the individual is in a state of profit, these findings suggest that there are more valuable motivators for online faculty of faith, namely their service to their Lord.

Similarly, the findings of this study pertaining to the importance of psychological/ideological contract fulfilment align with scripture that describes conditions that promote healthy work circumstances and outcomes. God prescribes honest work, fair treatment, and dedication to Him as optimal working conditions (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Ephesians 4:28; Matthew 6:24; Proverbs 27:17). The importance of the online faculty's perceptions of organizational support and healthy leader member exchange is supported by scripture affirming that when there is a healthy

relationship between the employee and the employer both benefit (Eisenberger et al., 2016; *King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Ecclesiastes 4:9; Proverbs 27:17). Man was not designed to be alone; he is a communal creature and needs others to accomplish his purpose. In this case, online faculty need a supportive institute and supervisor to live out their occupation as an online educator.

Scripture holds that man was created in God's imagine, and therefore inherited God's ability and desire to create and have relationships. In one of the first recorded interactions between God and man, God gave man a purpose, or job, to name the animals and be a caretaker of the garden (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Genesis 2:19). Clearly there is a Biblical imperative for man to engage with purposeful work alongside of each other to produce a desired outcome and that the fair and equitable working conditions are an important part of God's design for work. Man's work is best achieved when his relationship with the Lord is the basis for his work motivations and rewards.

Implications

This study sought to investigate the applicability of existing knowledge on employee organizational commitment as it applies to the under-studied population of online faculty. As many of the theoretical understandings and practices of online education have been adopted from residential settings, there existed possible ill-fitting assumptions and applications of these theories in the online environment. One such assumption is that length of employment would be positively correlated with organizational commitment. Historically traditional residential faculty enjoyed the benefits of tenure and often had long academic careers (Huang et al., 2020). As noted by

Huang et al. (2020), the field of higher education has seen major shifts in management styles and models that challenge the perceived organizational support for faculty.

As an increasingly concerning trend, many faculty now struggle to find secure tenured positions (Lovakov, 2016). By repeated requests for benefits, full-time positions, fair compensation, and the desire to be appreciated in tangible ways, this sample of online faculty seems to be experiencing the impact of this larger trend in higher education. As more higher education positions are moving to a contingent contracted employment structure, this has major implications for the field of higher education, with specific trends in the lowered sense of connection, security, and commitment between institutions and their faculty members.

As most online faculty are employed on a contingent basis, they often move from school to school to find consistent income (Lovakov, 2016). With a more insecure and truncated employment at a single institution it may be hard for online faculty to see the same levels of affective and normative commitment as seen in other populations as noted in the lack of relationship between these subtypes of organizational commitment with employee length of employment in this sample. Perhaps this working arrangement has been accepted as the norm for online higher education; however, the results of the qualitative faculty responses indicate a greater desire for a secure and more connected relationship with their institution.

The stepwise multiple regression analysis results revealed a surprising relationship between online faculty's organizational commitment and their perceived organizational support which exceeded the degree of impact over their leader member exchange. As perceived organizational support was shown to be the dominating predictor

in this model, there are significant implications for the institutional human resource policies and procedures and their ability to shape online faculty's organizational commitment. In evaluating the questions included in the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support Section (University of Delaware, 1984), the importance of how the organization appreciates their employees, values their well-being, values the contributions they make to the organization, cares about their satisfaction at work, and is ready to support them in times of need points toward actionable items institutions should consider when developing and implementing their standards for relating to their online faculty. Gestures of appreciation, whether in the form of acknowledging a job well done, involving them in decisions, or sensitively communicating these decisions, to larger forms of support such as offering benefits could significantly impact online faculty's commitment to their institution.

Of further significance is the importance of evaluating person-organization fit and the intrinsic personal characteristics of the individual during the hiring process for online faculty. As a strong theme that emerged from the qualitative portion of this study, the alignment with the missions and vision of the university served as one of the primary factors used to describe and moderate online faculty's organizational commitment. Screening for person-organization fit and asking specific questions about the candidate's alignment with the institution's vision and goals could prevent turnover, frustration, and valuable time loss for both faculty and management. Also, screening for individuals who show a passion for education and the ability to achieve prior work-related tasks with excellence could capture individuals whose personal characteristics predispose them for greater organizational commitment. However, individuals of this character often consider

themselves as having a calling for their work and are more sensitive to failures of the institution to live up to their psychological contract (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019).

Consistency and dependability of the institution in how they ethically manage their online faculty was shown to be a significant desire for this sample. While perceived organizational support was shown to be the main contributor to online faculty's organizational commitment, the results of RQ 9 that asked what their employing institution can do to improve their commitment showed the value these faculty place on the supportive relationships with leadership as one of the main factors that contribute to their organizational commitment. In asking for more communication and faculty involvement in RQ 9, faculty could be pointing to an area of the desired improvement for their leader member exchange. It would seem that the main factor supporting online student success, namely a human connection, is also of high value to faculty working in the online environment (Protopsaltis & Baum, 2019).

With a greater understanding of the contributing factors of online faculty's organizational commitment, institutions can implement this knowledge into their hiring practices, training, and management of their faculty. Training and professional development techniques that are specific to the need of online faculty to be valued and invested in can impact their commitment to the organization. The success of organizations is largely derived from the quality of its human resources; therefore, organizations need to care about how their employees are supported and how their employees feel about their organization (Dias & Silva, 2016; Fako et al., 2018; Putri & Setianan, 2019). Universities can best utilize time and resources spent gaining and retaining quality online faculty if they focus on the ideological alignment with the

institution and the personal characteristics of the faculty member while also ensuring the quality of their human resources policies and procedures.

Limitations

Limitations of this study resulted from the unique nature of the population being recruited. Since the university where the faculty were recruited is a private evangelical institution, the findings may not be easily generalizable to the larger field of higher education. The rationale for limiting the population of this study to this university is for the convenience of sampling and to establish a baseline for future research on the predictors of organizational commitment in other populations. Additionally, due to the recruitment process occurring from their employing university faculty may have been fearful of answering questions about their job and their commitment to their university, which may dissuade them from providing authentic responses. Over 50 online faculty did not fully complete the survey once they started. This could have been the result of survey fatigue, but it could have also been influenced by the faculty not feeling comfortable with answering certain questions on the survey.

Of additional concern was the researcher's personal role as a member of the online faculty community. Even though the researcher disclosed their potential conflict of interest to the faculty and ensured that recruitment was only performed with departments outside of their influence, their own experience as an adjunct instructor will have undoubtedly given them preconceived theories and beliefs about this topic. These biases likely influenced the interpretation of the findings, particularly the open-ended qualitative questions. However, not all insights and previous experiences of the researcher confound qualitative analysis, but it is an important consideration to mention.

Recommendations for Future Research

In light of the limitations of this study, it is recommended that these predictor variables be researched in different populations of online faculty. Given the distinction of this university as a private evangelical higher education institution and the responses of faculty that highlighted the importance of their personal faith and faith alignment with the institution, the mechanism by which their organizational commitment is fostered could be unique and not applicable to non-faith-based institutions. Also, recruiting a population more representative of the larger population by race is another need for future investigation.

Further research could also benefit by investigating the potential relationship between these predictor variables and the outcome of job performance possibly mediated by organizational commitment. With organizational commitment being linked to outcome variables such as job performance in other populations, it would be pertinent to investigate if this applies to online faculty. Lastly, based on the consistent theme of alignment with the organization and the ideological basis of this theme, future research that teases out the possible conflation of organizational identity and affective organizational commitment would be beneficial. In many of the faculty responses, they mention identifying with the university. It is important to note that affective commitment and organizational identity are often conflated in literature, however, they represent empirically different constructs. While affective commitment represents the emotional attachment and sense of belonging with an organization, organizational identity implies the linking between the employee's cognitive and/or emotional self-concept (Dávila & García, 2012). Both terms describe the employee's psychological attachment to their

organization but are linked to different outcomes (Ashforth et al, 2008). Affective

commitment is based on the premise of an exchange of resources between the employee

and the organization, while organizational identity is based on the perceived similarity

between the employee and the organization (Dávila & García, 2012). This study focused

on affective commitment; however, themes from the qualitative responses suggest the

importance of organizational identity for online faculty. Clarifying the impact these

related but distinct variables have on online faculty's organizational commitment will

further advance the understanding of how online faculty develop their sense of

commitment to their intuition.

Summary

This mixed methods study aimed to explore the factors that contribute to online

faculty's organizational commitment. Key results included the finding that online

faculty's length of employment had a slightly positive relationship with their continuance

commitment. The central finding of this study was the results of the leader member

exchange and perceived organizational support correlations and follow-up stepwise

multiple regression analysis. While both leader member exchange and perceived

organizational support showed a relatively strong correlation with their overall, affective,

and normative organizational commitment, it was shown in the stepwise multiple

regression analysis that perceived organizational support was the main contributor to

online faculty's organizational commitment. Many of the quantitative findings were

supported and elaborated upon by the qualitative findings. When asked to describe what

it means to be committed to their institution, this sample of online faculty shared a

complex definition with themes of job performance, ideological alignment with the

university, and transactional messages to define their commitment. Similarly, when online faculty were asked what specific factors contribute to their commitment to their institution, a complex list was provided with common themes of the importance of their personal character, alignment with the university, supportive relationships, enjoyment of the job, and financial reasons.

The last qualitative question asked online faculty what their employing institution could do to improve their organizational commitment. Online faculty reported that while many were happy and committed, the institution could improve their policies and procedures and make greater efforts to show that they value their online faculty with tangible investments such as increased pay, full-time positions, and greater job security. Many of these findings are supported by a Biblical understanding of man and the conditions best suited for a healthy relationship with work and others. While many of the findings can be understood through the theoretical principles of the social exchange theory, these findings suggest that there are more valuable motivators for online faculty of faith, namely their service to their Lord. In this case, online faculty need a supportive institution and supervisor to live out their occupation as an online educator. This study confirms that man is designed to have a purpose and industry in his relationship with work, which is best achieved through a desire to serve the Lord under fair and equitable working conditions.

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APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear Faculty Member,

As a student in the School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to gain a better understanding the factors that contribute to online faculty's organizational commitment and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study. The goal of my study is to give online faculty an opportunity to share what factors contribute to their commitment for the purposes of improving the relationship they have with their employing institution.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older and serve as an online adjunct instructor for Liberty University. Residential faculty members are excluded from participation in this study. Participants, if willing, will be asked to take an online survey on organizational commitment. It should take approximately 30 minutes to complete the survey. Participation in the online survey will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

In order to participate, please click here.

Participants will be entered into raffle with a chance to win one of two $100 gift cards.

A consent document is provided as the first page of the survey. The consent document contains additional information about my research. After you have read the consent form, please click the link to proceed to the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the survey.

Sincerely,

Anna Stevens

APPENDIX B: REQUEST FOR RECRUITMENT

Dear Department Chair,

As a student in the School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The title of my research project is Predictors of Online Faculty's Organizational Commitment and the purpose of my research is to gain a better understanding the factors that contribute to organizational commitment in the online adjunct population.

I am writing to request your permission to contact individuals who serve as online adjuncts in your school to invite them to participate in my research study.

Participants will be asked to go to a Qualtrics webpage and click on the link provided to complete the attached survey. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.
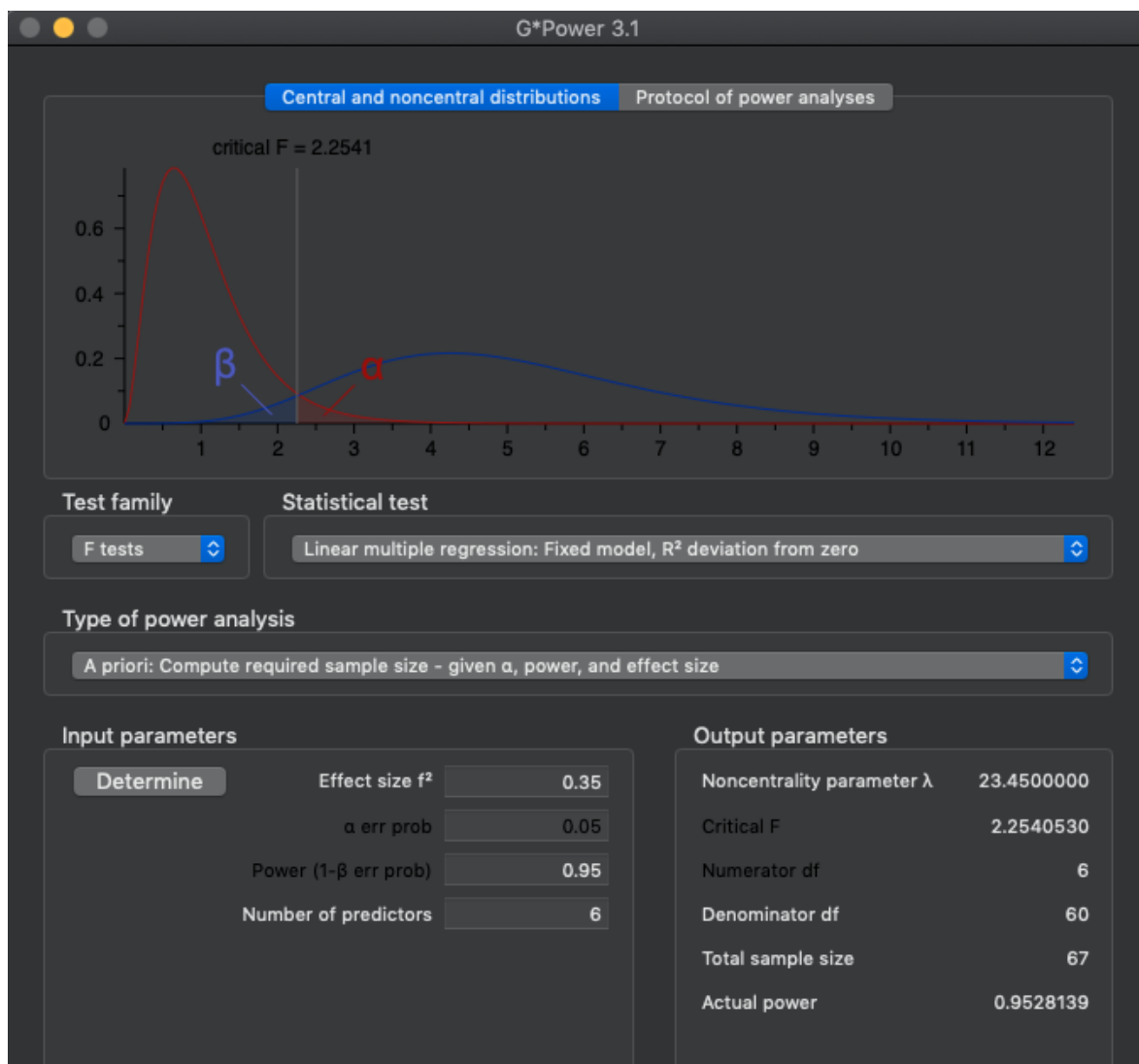
Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission respond by email to ____.

Sincerely,

Anna Stevens
Department Chair

APPENDIX C: POWER ANALYSIS

APPENDIX D: QUALTRICS SURVEY

Predictors of Online Faculty's Organizational Commitment Qualtrics Survey

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender?
    a. Male b. Female
3. What is your race?
    a. American Indian or Alaska Native b. Asian c. Black or African American
    d. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacifica Islander e. White
4. What is your highest earned degree?
    a. Doctorate b. Specialist c. Masters d. Bachelors
5. What method of delivery have you experienced as a student?
    a. Online b. Residential c. Both Online and Residential
6. What is your current employment status with this institution?
    (Benefited employees receive forms of non-wage compensation outside of their normal wages or salary such as medical insurance, life insurance, disability, retirement, and paid time off).
    a. Benefited b. Non-benefited
7. How long have you been employed as an online instructor for your institution?

Qualitative Section

Instructions: For this portion of the survey please utilize all your past and current online instructional experience at Liberty University.

Commitment to your institution can be defined as the psychological state and feelings of connection you have toward your organization.

9. Please describe what it means for you to be committed to your employing institution(s)?

10. Please describe the factors you believe contribute to your commitment to your employing institution(s)?

11. What could your employing institution(s) do to improve your commitment to them?

Survey of Perceived Organizational Support Section (University of Delaware, 1984).

For the following section below are statements that represent possible opinions that YOU may have about working at Liberty University. Please indicate the degree of your agreement or disagreement with each statement by filling in the circle on your answer sheet that best represents your point of view about Liberty University. Please choose from the following answers:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

12. The organization values my contribution to its well-being.
13. The organization fails to appreciate any extra effort from me. (R)
14. The organization would ignore any complaint from me. (R)
15. The organization really cares about my well-being.
16. Even if I did the best job possible, the organization would fail to notice. (R)
17. The organization cares about my general satisfaction at work.
18. The organization shows very little concern for me. (R)
19. The organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work.

Organizational Commitment Section

Three component commitment revised questionnaire (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993)

Instructions

Listed below is a series of statements that represent feelings that individuals might have about the company or organization for which they work. With respect to your own feelings about Liberty University, please indicate the degree of your agreement or disagreement with each statement by circling a number from 1 to 7 using the scale below.

1 = strongly disagree
2 = disagree
3 = slightly disagree
4= undecided
5 = slightly agree
6 = agree
7 = strongly agree

Affective Commitment Scale
20. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.
21. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.
22. I do not feel a strong sense of "belonging" to my organization. (R)
23. I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this organization. (R)
24. I do not feel like "part of the family" at my organization. (R)
25. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.

Continuance Commitment Scale

26. Right now, staying with my organization is a matter of necessity as much as desire.
27. It would be very hard for me to leave my organization right now, even if I wanted to.
28. Too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organization now.
29. I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization.
30. If I had not already put so much of myself into this organization, I might consider working elsewhere.
31. One of the few negative consequences of leaving this organization would be the scarcity of available alternatives.

Normative Commitment Scale

32. I do not feel any obligation to remain with my current employer. (R)
33. Even if it were to my advantage, I do not feel it would be right to leave my organization now.
34. I would feel guilty if I left my organization now.
35. This organization deserves my loyalty.
36. I would not leave my organization right now because I have a sense of obligation to the people in it.
37. I owe a great deal to my organization.

LMX-7

Leader Member Exchange Scale Source: Graen and Uhl-Blen (1995). Modification for the words "leader (follower)" to "immediate supervisor" to serve the purpose of this study and unique population.

Instructions: This questionnaire contains items that ask you to describe your relationship with your immediate supervisor. An immediate supervisor is who you receive instructions from and provides feedback and evaluations to support your role as an online instructor. For each of the items, indicate the degree to which you think the item is true for you by circling one of the responses that appear below the item.

38. Do you know where you stand with your immediate supervisor… [and] do you usually know how satisfied your immediate supervisor is with what you do?

Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Very Often
1	2	3	4	5

39. How well does your immediate supervisor understand your job problems and needs?

Not a Bit   A Little   A Fair Amount   Quite a Bit   A Great Deal

1	2	3	4	5

40. How well does your immediate supervisor recognize your potential?

Not at all	A little	Moderately	Mostly	Fully
1	2	3	4	5

41. Regardless of how much formal authority your immediate supervisor has built into his other position, what are the chances that your immediate supervisor would use his or her power to help you solve problems in your work?

None	Small	Moderate	High	Very high
1	2	3	4	5

42. Again, regardless of the amount of formal authority your immediate supervisor has, what are the chances that he or she would "bail you out" at his or her expense?

None	Small	Moderate	High	Very high
1	2	3	4	5

43. I have enough confidence in my immediate supervisor that I would defend and justify his or her decision if he or she were not present to do so.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

44. How would you characterize your working relationship with your immediate supervisor?

Extremely Ineffective	Worse Average Than Average	Average	Better Than Average	Extremely Effective
1	2	3	4	5