

**JOB INSECURITY, ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT AND WORK  
ENGAGEMENT AMONGST STAFF IN A TERTIARY INSTITUTION**

by

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## **DECLARATION**

I, ABIGAIL NGOKWANA MOSHOEU, student no. 08271445, declare that this dissertation entitled: 'JOB INSECURITY, ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT AND WORK ENGAGEMENT AMONGST STAFF IN A TERTIARY INSTITUTION' is my own work and that all the sources that I have consulted or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of a complete list of references.

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**ABIGAIL N. MOSHOEU**

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**DATE**

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## ABSTRACT

This research explores the relationship between job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement amongst staff in a tertiary institution. The research was conducted through computer-aided telephone interviews and self-completion techniques. Of the total population (N=4460), a proportion of survey participants (n=260) were selected using a two-stage stratified probability sampling technique, proportional to size, across the different departments. Three instruments were administered among the survey participants, namely the Job Insecurity Scale (JIS), the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES).

On the basis of the outcome of the study, a theoretical relationship was determined between job insecurity (JIS), organisational commitment (OCQ) and work engagement (UWES). An empirical study provided evidence on the relationship that exists between the three concepts. The results revealed that a statistically significant relationship exists between JIS and OCQ as well as UWES, although the relationship is positive and weak ( $r=.286^{**}$  for OCQ;  $r=.270^{**}$  for UWES). These results are incongruent with previous studies and might suggest that previous studies failed to examine whether the nature and strength of the relationships between job security and its outcomes are different in situations with different levels of insecurity or threat.

However, further analysis revealed a statistically significant relationship between some of the subscales. For instance, a positive statistically significant relationship was observed between perceived powerlessness and affective commitment ( $r=.304^{**}$ ), vigour ( $r=.346^{**}$ ), dedication ( $r=.350^{**}$ ) and absorption ( $r=.279^{**}$ ). The results imply that as participants feel insecure about the various job features and the job as a whole, they simultaneously express their commitment and energy as well as dedication to their work responsibilities and the organisation.

Key words:

Job insecurity, organisational commitment, work engagement, perceived powerlessness, affective commitment, continuance commitment, normative commitment, vigour, dedication, absorption, job demand, job resources, conservation of resources

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## CHAPTER 1

### **JOB INSECURITY, ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT AND WORK ENGAGEMENT AMONGST EMPLOYEES IN A TERTIARY INSTITUTION**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

This research focuses on the relationship between job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement among employees in a tertiary institution. The aim of this chapter is to provide the background to and rationale for conducting this particular research study.

This chapter will further state the problem statement and the aims of the research study as well as provide the paradigm perspectives that guide principles on which the research will be based. The research design and research method relevant to the research will also be presented. The research chapter will conclude with an outline of how the research will be presented.

#### **1.2 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR UNDERTAKING THE STUDY**

Major changes in the permanence and security of employment have taken place in most South African organisations. Presumably, changes relating to increased globalisation have forced many organisations to reduce their production costs in order to remain competitive in an increasingly inflexible labour market. The evidence and effect of such changes were notable in the period between 1991 and 1992, when most major organisations were involved in restructuring with subsequent job losses across the board in all major sectors of the South African economy (Marais & Scheeper, 1996). Shifts away from the primary sector to the service industry and the rise of capital intensification have left millions of people jobless around the world.

In addition, new technological developments has promoted less labour intensive production methods and reduced alternative employment options for unskilled labour (Bhorat & Hodge, 1999). However, according to Bhorat and Hodge (1999) this form of technological development is the widespread adoption of microelectronics-based production techniques, which favour skilled workers over

unskilled and which have also brought about a new round of significant capital investments. Along these lines, several other studies have also demonstrated that technological advancements have dramatically changed the nature and organisation of work and in the process have prompted feelings of job insecurity (Bosman, Rothmann & Buitendach, 2005; Chirumbolo & Hellgren, 2003; Sverke & Hellgren, 2002). As a result, it could be assumed that changes of this nature and others have pushed secure employment into a precarious situation with losses resulting in higher unemployment rates amongst the active working population (Stats SA, 2009) and/or lowering the employability of people in South Africa. Recent evidence might be sought from the economic downturn which has also heightened feelings of uncertainty amongst employees and has meant job losses for some employees. In the Labour Force Survey of 2009, Statistics South Africa (Stats SA, 2009) reported that jobs were lost across many sectors as a result of the effect of the economic downturn.

Other changes include the increased utilisation of casual employment and restructuring such as privatisation, outsourcing, mergers, acquisitions and downsizing as well as rightsizing, all of which suggest a decline in job stability. As stated in Chirumbolo and Hellgren (2003, p. 218) any form of restructuring and change in an organisation often result in large-scale reductions in permanent staff, who are replaced by fixed-term employment contractors.

Due to changes and restructuring in the organisation, job security has become an important aspect in the quality of life among individual employees, and being unemployed might be detrimental to the general well-being of ex-employees, especially those who still have capabilities and need to continue working. In the latent deprivation model, Jahoda (1982) explicitly illustrates that employment satisfies a number of needs such as earning income, establishing social contacts outside the family and most importantly the need for personal and social development. According to Jahoda (1982) as well as Buitendach and De Witte (2005) the possibility of being unemployed represents a major source of income

uncertainty which could result in frustration of the satisfaction of other needs related to being employed.

Against this background, the situation prevailing in tertiary institutions is not unique from common experiences happening in organisations within South Africa and elsewhere. Over the past few years, universities and technikons have been through major restructuring and transformation which was promulgated by the South African government in early 1997. The rationale for such restructuring and transformation was to forcefully remove the legacy of apartheid in higher education (Chipunza & Gwarinda, 2010; Jansen, 2002; Rothmann & Pieterse, 2007; Van der Westhuizen, 2004). This restructuring was aimed at ensuring greater accessibility to, and equity in the provision of higher education for all South Africans.

Most importantly, the major rationale for the restructuring was to determine 'the shape of the higher education system ... in terms of the types of institutions' and 'what the size of the higher education system should be' (National Council of Higher Education (NCHE) 1996 in Jansen, 2002, p. 3). This rationalisation was achieved by the reduction of 36 universities and technikons to 23, through mergers and incorporations of institutions (Chipunza & Gwarinda, 2010; Jansen, 2002). This in essence entailed a reduction in costs and an increase in efficiency through the 'shape and size' of higher education (Hay, Fourie & Hay, 2001, p. 102).

The meta-analytic study of Sverke and Hellgren (2002, p. 26) reports that any attempt to improve organisational effectiveness and reduce labour costs has profound negative effects on the well-being of employees. In addition, Hay *et al.* (2001) note that the reduction of labour costs and commitment to reduce public spending in higher education have two serious implications for the labour market. Firstly, the implication inherent in the reduction of public expenditure might suggest that jobs in the state sector will soon come under threat. This implies that lifelong employment where employees continue working until they reach retirement is no longer guaranteed. The second implication relates to a reduction in welfare and unemployment benefits which makes unemployment even less



attractive, thus exacerbating a feeling of insecurity for those already employed and unemployed.

Along the same line Johnson (2000) accentuates that the situation in higher education could inflict the application of the principles, practices and ethos of the corporate sectors. He reiterates that a decline in state subsidies could give rise to the notion of a "Market University", which has as a key component reduced costs in payroll and institutional staff.

It can thus be assumed that employees will react differently to unpleasant organisational situations which threaten their employment and/or the conditions of their employment. According to Sverke and Hellgren (2002, p. 26) employees' reactions to organisational situations often depends on a number of factors, such as the characteristics of the labour market, employability, personal characteristics and family responsibilities.

Consequently Hirschman (1970, p. 15) contends that the most obvious reaction that employees often utilise to overcome an unpleasant organisation varies between the exit, voice and loyalty. He explains that disgruntled employees with better opportunity to find a job elsewhere would normally quit the organisation (exit), some might work to improve their situation (voice), or some might stay and support the organisation (loyalty).

The concept job insecurity entails employees' subjective feelings that they might lose their job and become unemployed with the advent of changes in their organisation. That is, job insecurity is a subjective feeling based on how employees interpret their job situation in relation to objective threats and their continued employment in the organisation (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Jacobson, 1991).

Consistent with Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984, p. 438), job insecurity is defined as "the perceived powerlessness (lack of control) to maintain desired continuity in a threatened job situation". They classify job insecurity into two distinctive dimensions, namely severity of the threat and powerlessness to counteract the

threat. The severity of the threat entails the scope and importance of the potential loss as well as the likelihood of the loss, while powerlessness occurs as a result of employees not knowing which corrective measures to take to avoid the perceived threat. More importantly, they emphasise that employees can only feel insecure about their jobs if either of the two dimensions is feasible (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984, p. 438). This suggests that job insecurity is experienced from either the severity of the threat and/or failure to counteract the threat.

Meyer and Allen (1997, p. 67) define organisational commitment as a psychological state that is characterised by employees' relationships with the organisation, and the implications of the decision to continue membership of the organisation. The importance of organisational commitment is to identify factors that induce employees' decision to stay with or leave the organisation in terms of unpleasant organisational situations. Organisational commitment is viewed as an important variable in facilitating the understanding of an employee's attitudes and behaviour in the workplace (Hui & Lee, 2000, p. 216). It is, however, an important tool to determine employees' attitudes and behaviour as well as setting up blueprints for the existence and success of the organisation during unpleasant organisational situations. According to Salami (2008, p. 31) the concept organisational commitment has the potential to cultivate a healthy organisational climate, increase morale and motivate employees as well as increase productivity. Salami (2008) envisages the need for employees to be committed to the success and effectiveness of the organisation.

Work engagement is considered as the direct opposite of burnout, defined as the erosion of engagement reflecting the negative side of employee well-being and work engagement the positive side (Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001, p. 399). The concept work engagement is important in this study because it is associated with positive organisational outcomes such as increased job satisfaction, organisational commitment, motivation and low turnover intention while it improves the health and well-being of employees (Bakker, Demerouti & Schaufeli, 2003; Chughtai & Buckley, 2008; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004a). More

importantly, employees who are engaged in their work roles are likely to be committed to the organisation, while those who are disengaged are more likely to demonstrate less commitment and intention to leave the organisation (Saks, 2006). Chughtai and Buckley (2008) maintain that investing in conditions which foster work engagement among employees is vital for the growth and profitability of the organisation.

In essence, employees who are engaged possess high levels of energy and are enthusiastic about their work and time becomes insignificant to them when performing the required duties. Luthans and Church (2002) maintain that employees who are engaged possess personal resources, which include optimism, self-efficacy, self-esteem, resilience and an active coping style, that helps them to control and impact upon their work environment successfully, and to achieve career success.

This, however, suggests that employees who perceive their employment situation and/or employment conditions to be threatened are likely to express less commitment to the organisation (Ashford, Lee & Bobko, 1989; Buitendach & De Witte, 2005; Davy, Kinicki & Scheck, 1997) and be less enthusiastic about their job and less willing to expend time and energy (Roskies & Louis-Guerin, 1990) on their organisation. This implies that job insecurity can have a profound negative influence in terms of employees' loyalty and attachment to the organisation as well as their work engagement.

Previous findings suggest that employees experiencing uncertainty about the future of their jobs or job features are generally less committed to the organisation (Ashford *et al.*, 1989; Buitendach & De Witte, 2005; Sverke & Hellgren, 2002; Yousef, 1998). In addition, perceived job insecurity can also disconnect employees and lead them to hide their true identity, thoughts and feelings while performing their job roles (work engagement).

The concept job insecurity can however be positively related to organisational commitment and work engagement. For instance, Sverke and Hellgren (2001) posit

that employees who perceive possible threats to their jobs and/or job features may increase their commitment and work effort in order to be more valuable to the organisation. In addition, according to Hirschman (1970) loyalty, which could be manifested in high levels of organisational commitment, might be the reaction of employees to redress job insecurity in the organisation. This suggests that employees might attempt to save off the likelihood of job loss or job features by demonstrating their willingness to remain with the organisation.

Hirschman (1970) argues that loyalty is the product of various factors that bind employees to the organisation, which could in turn make exit costly and voice troublesome. The theoretical framework derived by Hirschman (1970) suggests that high insecurity could lead to enhanced loyalty in order to redress one's attractiveness to the organisation (thereby possibly remedying insecurity). The issue of impaired loyalty as an inherent consequence of job insecurity or enhanced loyalty as a manifestation of attempts to redress uncertainty therefore require further empirical scrutiny.

Though, less is known about the various alternatives employees may use in coping with perceived job insecurity, this study seeks to explore the two job related constructs, namely organisational commitment and work engagement.

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Against the above background, it is clear that feelings of job insecurity can enhance either positive or negative job-related attitudes depending on how employees interpret their objective situation.

While previous research has focused on each of the concepts (job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement) separately or in relation to each other, there is a need to further study and explore the relationship that could exist between these variables in higher education. This study aims to benefit the institution in relation to its *Strategic Plan*, and more specifically the objective that aims:

*To foster a healthy, secure and stimulating environment for (amongst others) staff.*

This strategic objective was further reformulated in 2009 as follows:

*Goal 7: Redesign organisational architecture in line with institutional strategy and the ODL model*

*Strategy 4: Foster a culture of continuous improvement in all institutional processes and systems through a learning organisation paradigm*

Previous research could not be found that indicates the relationship between the three constructs, namely job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement particularly in higher education system. Scientific research on the constructs is somewhat limited in South Africa. This suggests that South Africa has had fairly little exposure to the understanding and consequences of the constructs when compared to other countries such as those in Europe and the United Kingdom (De Witte, 2005a), Israel (Rosenblatt & Ruvio, 1996), as well as China and the USA (Lee, Bobko & Chen, 2006). Buitendach, Rothmann and De Witte (2005, p. 7) reiterate that the construct job insecurity is a highly sensitive topic and articulate that it is this sensitivity that has precluded most organisations and higher education institutions from involving themselves in investigating the construct in South Africa.

The present study seeks to explore the relationship between job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement in an attempt to improve the organisational behavioural processes. On the basis of the background supplied above, the following research questions are formulated:

- What is job insecurity?
- What is organisational commitment?
- What is work engagement?
- What are the levels of job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement in this specific tertiary institution?

- Is there a relationship between job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement?
- Can job insecurity and work engagement predict organisational commitment?
- Can significant differences in job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement levels be identified on the basis of the biographical variables?
- What are the implications of the study and what recommendation can be made for further research?

#### **1.4 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH**

From the above research questions, the following general aims are formulated:

The general aim of this research is to determine the relationship between job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement amongst staff in a tertiary institution.

Specific aims in terms of the literature review are the following:

- To conceptualise job insecurity.
- To conceptualise organisational commitment.
- To conceptualise work engagement.
- To determine the theoretical relationship between job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement in the organisational context.

Specific aims in terms of the empirical study are as follows:

- To determine the reliability and validity of the three measuring instruments, namely those for job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement.
- To determine the confirmatory factor analysis for the three measuring instruments.
- To determine the level of job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement amongst employees in a tertiary institution.
- To determine the relationship between job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement in a tertiary institution.
- To determine whether job insecurity and work engagement can be used to predict the level of organisational commitment among employees.
- To determine whether the various demographic characteristics correlate with job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement among employees.
- To formulate implications in terms of the construct job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement with specific reference to existing literature on the concepts within the framework of Organisational Psychology.

## **1.5 RESEARCH MODEL**

The research model of Mouton and Marais (1990, pp. 7-26) serves as a framework for this research. The model attempts to systematise five dimensions of social science. These dimensions are sociology, ontology, teleology, epistemology and methodology.

The model of social science research can best be described as a system of theoretical sub-models composed of three interrelated subsystems and with the research domain defined in a specific discipline. These subsystems are (1)

intellectual climate, (2) market of intellectual resources and (3) the research process. Figure 1 depicts the integrated model of social sciences research according to Mouton and Marais (1990, p. 22).

Mouton and Marais (1990, p. 20) conceptualise the term 'intellectual climate' to refer to the variety of meta-theoretical values or beliefs related to a particular research project. These beliefs, values and assumptions can be traced to non-scientific contexts. The 'market of intellectual resources' refers to the collection of beliefs that has a direct bearing upon the epistemic states of scientific statements (ie to their status as knowledge-claims). There are two major types of beliefs involved in understanding the 'market of intellectual resources', namely theoretical beliefs about the nature and structure of phenomena and methodological beliefs concerning the nature and structure of the research process (Mouton & Marais, 1990, p. 21).

In terms of the aims of the proposed research, the study will be conducted within the framework of the theoretical model or theories and will include a conceptual description for job insecurity and organisational commitment as well as work engagement.

According to the research process, outlined by Mouton and Marais (1990, p. 23), the researcher internalises specific inputs from the paradigm(s) to which he/she subscribes in a selective manner, in order to enable him/her to interact with the research domain in a fruitful manner and to produce scientifically valid research. They also distinguish between the determinants of the research decision on the one hand and the decision-making process on the other.

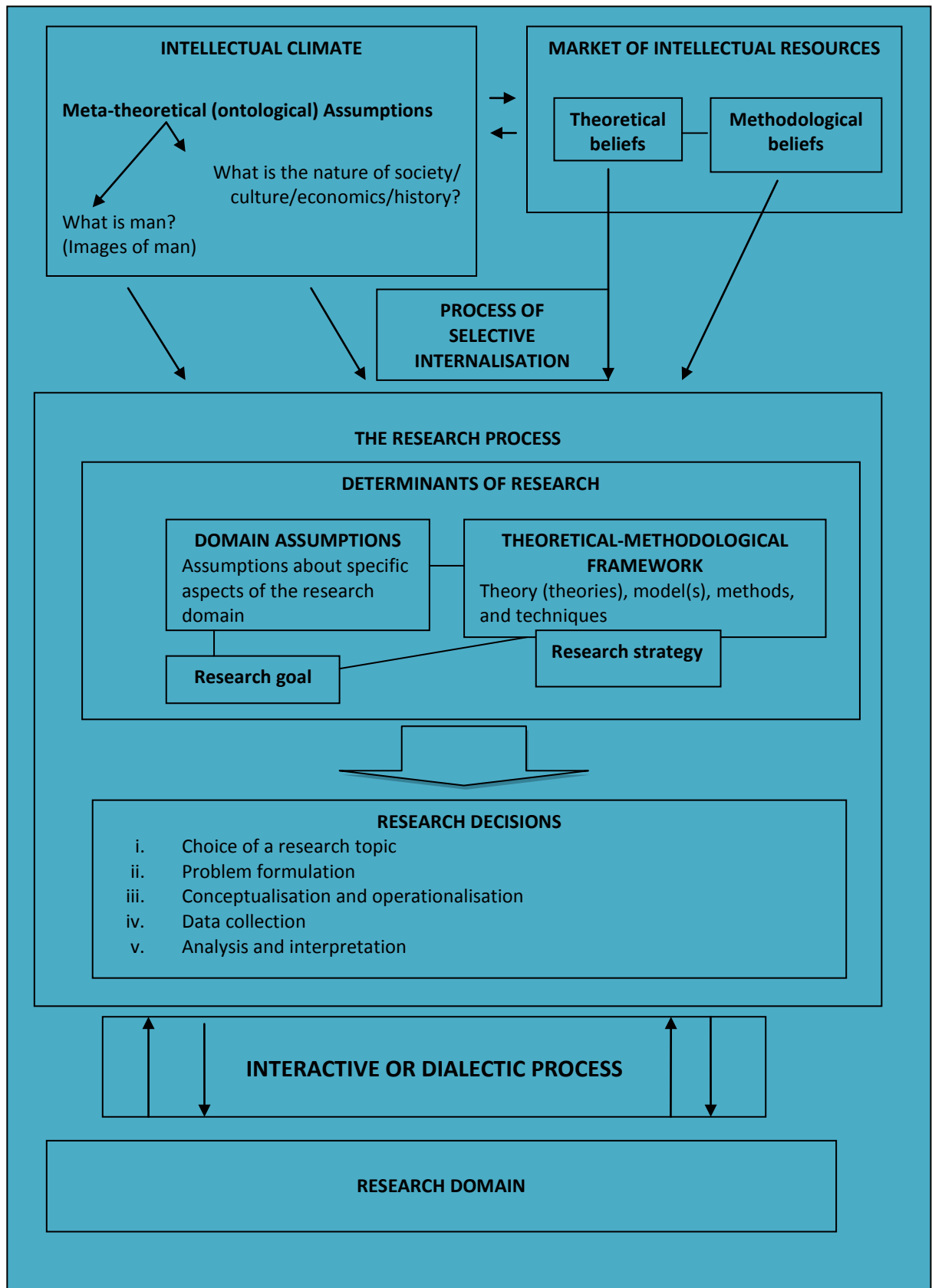
The aims of the proposed research are formulated in accordance with two phases, namely the literature review and the empirical study. The theoretical methodological framework will be dealt with in phase one, with the investigation of job insecurity, followed by an investigation of organisational commitment and work engagement. With regard to the decision-making process, phase two will



emphasise the entire procedure of the research method and describe each step with its specificity to this research together with findings and conclusions.

FIGURE 1.1

AN INTEGRATED MODEL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH BY MOUTON AND MARIAS 1990



## 1.6 PARADIGM PERSPECTIVES

Based on the model of Mouton and Marais (1990 p. 9), the following serves as boundary conditions for this research project:

The research falls within the field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology, and more specifically the sub-discipline of Organisational Psychology.

Thematically the literature review will centre on three constructs, namely job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement.

On the meta-level, the organisation and its behaviour are seen from a systems viewpoint. Ritzer and Goodman (2004, p. 134) emphasise that real systems are open to, and interact with their environments, and that they can acquire new properties qualitatively through emergence, resulting in continual evolution. Thus, institutions can be seen as open systems that interact with their environment. A change in the environment could have a profound impact on an open system. The following basic assumptions of systems theory will apply in considering the research design, method and interpretation of the results:

- Systems have the property of order and interdependence of parts.
- The nature of one part of the system has an impact on the form that the other parts can take.
- Systems maintain boundaries with their environments.
- Allocation and integration are two fundamental processes necessary for a given state of equilibrium of a system.
- Systems tend toward self-maintenance to restore the boundaries and the relationships of the parts with the whole, to control the environmental variations and to control tendencies to change the systems from within (Brown, 1966).

The literature review on job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement will be presented from a behaviouristic viewpoint. Behaviourism is the field of study concerned with human behaviour. The behaviourism is based on the importance of focussing on observable and measurable human actions. Behaviourism has become influential in industrial psychology and the emphasis on learning, for example, it has become the basis of personnel and management training. The following are the basic assumptions of the behaviouristic paradigm according to Bergh (2006):

- An individual's behaviour is controlled exclusively by the external environment, where humans and animals learn through conditioning and observation.
- Human behaviour is related to events and stimuli that occur in the environment.
- Behaviour can be controlled and predicted, take for example consumer behaviour.

The empirical study will be presented from a functionalistic paradigm. The following are the basic assumptions of the functionalistic paradigm according to Morgan (1980, p. 608):

- Functionalism encourages an approach to social theory that focuses upon understanding the role of human beings in society.
- Behaviour is always seen as being contextually bound in a real world of concrete and tangible social relationships.
- Functionalism is concerned with understanding society in a way that generates useful empirical knowledge.
- The functionalistic perspective is primarily regulative and pragmatic in its basic orientation.
- Society has a concrete, oriented, real existence, and a systemic character oriented towards producing an ordered and regulated state of affairs.

Thematically the empirical study will focus on job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement.

### *Meta-theoretical statements*

A meta-theoretical assumption represents an important category of assumptions underlying the theories, models, and paradigms that form the definitive context of the research. Meta-theoretical values and/or beliefs have become part and parcel of the intellectual climate of particular disciplines in the social sciences (Mouton & Marais, 1990). In terms of this research, meta-theoretical statements are presented as follows:

#### 1. Industrial and Organisational Psychology

This research is undertaken within the context of the Industrial and Organisational Psychology (IOP) discipline. The basic tenet of the field of IOP is on increasing workplace productivity and related issues such as the physical and mental well-being of employees (Bergh, 2006). According to Robbins, Odendaal and Roodt (2009), IOP has expanded its focus to include learning, perception, personality, emotions, training, leadership effectiveness, needs and motivational forces, job satisfaction, decision-making processes, performance appraisals, attitude measurement, employee selection techniques, work design and job stress.

#### 2. Organisational Psychology

Organisational Psychology is the systematic study of human behaviour at the individual and group level as well as the study of the structure and dynamics of organisations (Bergh, 2006). It begins with a focus on the individual analysis of behaviour characterised by factors such as perception, attitudes, personality, learning, stress and motivation. The analysis of behaviour at the group level examines culture, leadership, the dynamics of group processes, and communication. Finally, this sub-discipline covers topics that include the distribution of power, the impact of politics and conflict management and the processes involved in organisational change and development at an organisational level.

The construct job insecurity will be discussed using the theories of Ashford *et al.* (1989), Buitendach and De Witte (2005), Cheng *et al.* (2010), Davy *et al.* (1997), De Cuyper and De Witte (2005), De Witte (1999, 2005), De Witte and Näswell (2003), Hay *et al.* (2001), Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984), King (2000), Näswell and De Witte (2003), Probst (2003), Rosenblatt and Ruvio (1996), Roskies and Louise-Guerin (1990) and Sverke and Hellgren, (2002).

Organisational commitment will be discussed using the models of Allen and Meyer (1990), Bagram (2003), Buitendach and De Witte (2005), Lord and Hartley (1998), Mathieu and Zajac (1990) Meyer and Allen (1991 & 1997), Meyer and Herscovitch (2001), Mowday *et al.* (1979), Randall (1990), Roodt (2004a) and Suliman & Iles (2000).

Work engagement will be discussed from the point of view of Bakker and Schaufeli (2008), Bakker *et al.* (2009) Demerouti *et al.* (2001), Luthans and Church (1993), May *et al.* (2004), Maslach *et al.* (1996 & 2001), Rothmann and Jordaan (2006), Schaufeli and Bakker (2003), Schaufeli *et al.* (2002a & b), Storm and Rothmann (2003), Bosman *et al.* (2005), Schaufeli *et al.* (2006), and Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti and Schaufeli (2007).

## **1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The overall research design follows a typical quantitative approach. The research design will be constructed within the framework of an exploratory research design. According to Bergh and Theron (1999) the research design refers to a specific, purposeful and coherent strategic plan to execute a particular research project in order to render the research findings relevant and valid. In other words, research design involves the whole planning of the research project, including the broad relationships of the variables generated from the basic question, and methods of collecting data and analysing data.

In this study, the independent variables are job insecurity and work engagement because they influence employees' reaction, while organisational commitment is the dependent variable.

For the purpose of this study, a cross-sectional time dimension will be used to gather insight into the phenomena at present. Mouton and Marais (1990) describe cross-sectional studies as those in which a given phenomenon is studied at a specific point in time.

### **1.7.1 Unit of analysis**

The objects of the investigation according to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002a) are known as the unit of analysis. In the present study the units of analysis are individual employees employed permanently at a particular tertiary institution. In this study fixed contract employees are excluded. The relationship between job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement are examined on an individual basis and in biographical groups to establish the relationship between them.

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

#### *1.7.2.1 Reliability*

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002a) define reliability as the degree to which the research findings are repeatable which is applicable to both the subjects' scores on the measures and the outcomes of the study as a whole. In this study, the internal consistencies of all the instruments will be computed to determine the reliability of the scales. The guideline of 0.70 as set by the Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) will be used to determine the acceptability of the instruments

#### *1.7.2.2 Validity*

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002a) define validity as the degree to which the specific concepts and research conclusions accurately reflect the intended design. According to Carmines and Zeller as cited in Durrheim and Painter (2006), the measure of validity should provide a good degree of fit between the conceptual and

operational definitions of the construct and that the instrument should be usable for the particular purposes for which it was designed. The validity constitutes the internal and external validity, measurement and interpretative and statistical validity. In this study the factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis will be computed to determine the construct validity of the instruments.

## **1.8 RESEARCH METHOD**

The research will be conducted in two phases, each with its subjacent steps.

### **Phase 1 Literature review**

#### *Step 1: Job insecurity*

Job insecurity will be conceptualised. The dimensions inherent in job insecurity will be discussed. Moreover, the antecedents and consequences of job insecurity will also be presented and discussed.

#### *Step 2: Organisational commitment*

Organisational commitment will be conceptualised. The dimensions of organisational commitment will be presented and discussed. Moreover, the antecedents and consequences of organisational commitment will also be presented and discussed.

#### *Step 3: Work engagement*

Work engagement will be conceptualised. The different component relating to engagement will be discussed. Moreover, the antecedents and consequences of work engagement will also be presented and discussed.

#### *Step 4: Integration of job insecurity and organisational commitment as well as work engagement*

A theoretical integration of job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement follows in order to determine the relationship between them.



## **Phase 2: Empirical study**

### *Step 1: Population and sample*

According to Babbie (1989), a population is the theoretically specified aggregation of the study elements from which the sample is selected. The first step in any research is to identify the population of interest. In the present study the population of interest are all permanent employees in a tertiary institution.

The entire population constitutes approximately 4460 employees. However, since it is impossible to interview all employees, a stratified sampling method will be used for the selection of sample units.

A sample of 260 employees will be drawn across different departments for the purpose of this study to facilitate accurate representative views of the population. A sample is simply the units or elements that are included into a study (Durrheim & Painter, 2006). Employees in support services such as gardening and security services, excluding outsourced services, will also be included in the sample frame.

The biographical characteristics of the sample participants cover age, gender, level of education, tenure, and current position in the institution.

Stratified sampling was used for the selection of the sample units/elements (participants). Stratified sampling is a method of a probability sample that accords all employees a non-zero probability of being included in the sample (Tustin, Ligthelm, Martins & Van Wyk, 2005, p. 344). According to Durrheim and Painter (2006), stratified sampling is used to establish a greater degree of representativeness in situations where the population is composed of subgroups or strata. The sample units/elements were drawn from each strata (department) independently to give a general spread of the information.

### *Step 2: Research instrument*

As mentioned earlier, the aim of this research is to determine the level of job insecurity and organisational commitment as well as work engagement amongst

employees. For optimal measurement, various measuring instruments will be considered in terms of their applicability to the research and their reliability and validity. The following instruments will be considered as potential measuring instruments, for the three variables, namely job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement on the bases of their reliability and validity in previous studies:

- A Job Insecurity Scale (JIS) developed by Ashford *et al.* (1984) will be used to measure the levels of job insecurity with respect to the importance of job features, importance of possible changes in total job and powerlessness. The JIS consists of 30 items measuring the characteristics of job insecurity. Ashford *et al.* (1994, p. 811) reports an alpha coefficient of 0.78, 0.74 and 0.83 on each of the dimensions of job insecurity.
- An Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) developed by Allen and Meyer (1990) will be used to measure the affective commitment, normative commitment and continuous commitment of the participants. This measurement consists of 24 items. According to Meyer and Allen (1997, p. 120) the number of estimates obtained for the three scales range from a low 20 for the normative commitment scale to a high 40 for the affective commitment scale. The reliability for the affective, normative and continuous commitment is 0.85; 0.79; 0.73 respectively.
- Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) was developed by Schaufeli *et al.* (2002a) as well as Schaufeli and Bakker (2003) to assess employees work engagement. The UWES consists of three dimensions, namely vigour, dedication and absorption. The original scale is comprise of 24 items which were put through a process of psychometric evaluation, and 7 unsound items were eliminated resulting in three subscales and running to a total of 17 items (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003, p. 7). The reliability of the three subscales of the UWES varies from 0.80 to 0.91. In the study conducted by Storm and Rothmann (2003), amongst South African Police Officers, alpha coefficients for the UWES were obtained, vigour was 0.78, dedication 0.89 and absorption 0.69.

➤ Demographic characteristics, namely age, gender, educational qualification and tenure will be used as the control variables testing the hypothesised relationships between job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement.

Each instrument was scored according to the instruction of the developer of the instruments. For instance, a five-point Likert scale ranging from '1' strongly disagree, '2' disagree, '3' neither agree or disagree, '4' agree and '5' strongly agree will be used to measure the instruments. Furthermore, an option of 'Not applicable' will also be included in the scale.

#### *Step 3: Data collection*

A web-based survey, namely computer-aided telephone interview (CATI) will be designed for the purposes of collecting the data. CATI entails the uploading of the web-based questionnaire on a Web-server. Trained and experienced fieldworkers will be contracted to conduct telephone interviews amongst selected sample units/elements.

The methods and procedures for data collection and the process of scoring through the coding of the answer sheets in preparation for statistical analysis will be discussed in greater detail in the dissertation.

#### *Step 4: Data processing*

The questionnaires will be collected, captured electronically and transformed through coding into a meaningful, useable format. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (PASW SPSS, 2009) software programme will be used to capture the data and perform the required statistical analysis.

Cronbach alpha coefficients ( $\alpha$ ) will be determined to assess the internal consistency of the three measuring instruments.

Validity will be assessed by means of factor analysis to determine the properties of job insecurity. Furthermore, the confirmatory factor analysis will be assessed for the three instruments by means of structural equation modelling (SEM) methods implemented by the AMOS programme (Arbuckle, 2010). According to Schumacker and Lomax (2004) SEM uses various types of models to describe relationships among observed variables with the same basic goal of providing a quantitative test of a theoretical model. The aim of SEM analysis is to determine the extent to which the theoretical model is supported by sample data. SEM analysis is interpreted and explained by the latent variable (ie the variables that are not directly observable or measured) and observed variables (ie a set of variables that is used to infer the latent variable (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004). The confirmatory factor analysis will be utilised to determine whether the variables identified conformed to the theory.

Descriptive statistics (arithmetic mean and standard deviation) will be used to determine the levels of job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement.

Pearson-product moment correlation coefficients will be used to specify the relationship between variables. Based on Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002a), the Pearson product moment correlation coefficients measure the degree of the relationship or correlation between variables. In other words, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient will measure the relationship between job insecurity and organisational commitment and work engagement, as well as the relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment.

A multiple linear regression analysis, controlling for the influence of demographic variables, will be conducted to determine the proportion of the total variance of the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variable. Thus, a multiple linear regression analysis will be conducted to determine whether organisational commitment can be predicted by job insecurity and work engagement, as well as whether organisational commitment as the dependent variable can be predicted by work engagement as the independent variable.

The statistical analysis of variance (f-test) was used to determine the significant differences in job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement on the various biographical variables.

*Step 5: Formulation of hypotheses*

The research hypotheses were formulated in terms of the empirical study.

*Step 6: Results*

Results were reported in table format and will be interpreted for each dimension.

*Steps 7: Conclusion/limitations/recommendations*

These were formulated in relation to the results.

## **1.9 ETHICAL PROCEDURES**

The Ethical Committee of the institution will be approached to obtain permission to conduct the study among employees. The employees will be briefed concerning the nature of the study and allowed to give their verbal informed consent to indicate their willingness to participate in the study. All ethical guidelines applicable to the treatment of human subjects in research will be observed in all the steps of the study.

The Bureau of Market Research (BMR) will also be approached for the utilisation of their central office and facilities for the computer aided telephone interview (CATI).

The participants will complete the questionnaire anonymously. The fieldworkers will be advised to explain to the employees that their responses will be treated confidentially.

## **1.10 CHAPTER DIVISION**

The research chapters will be presented in the following manner:

Chapter 1 will cover the scientific background to and motivation for the proposed research leading to the problem statement and objectives and scope of the research.

Chapter 2 will define and describe the construct job insecurity and its related dimensions. The antecedents and consequences of job insecurity will also be presented and discussed. The chapter will end with a chapter summary.

Chapter 3 will define and describe the construct organisational commitment and its multifaceted dimensions. The antecedents and consequences of organisational commitment will also be presented and discussed. The chapter will end with a chapter summary.

Chapter 4 will define and describe the construct work engagement and its related dimensions. The antecedents and consequences of work engagement will also be presented and discussed. More importantly, the theoretical integration between the variables will be presented in this chapter. The chapter will end with a chapter summary.

Chapter 5 will present a detailed empirical outline of the research instruments and research design to be used.

Chapter 6 will discuss the research results. The results will be presented in table format and discussed. In addition, the research hypothesis will be tested to arrive at a final conclusion. Descriptive statistics in the form of frequency tables will also be presented.

Chapter 7 will summarises the research findings and provide implications of the study. The limitations of the study will be presented in this chapter. The chapter will also outline the recommendations for possible further studies on the relationship between job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement.

### **1.11 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER**

This chapter presented an introduction in terms of a scientific review of this dissertation, including background to the research, the problem statement, research aims, research model, paradigm perspectives, research design, research method and chapter division.

The next chapter will focus on the construct job insecurity and its related dimensions.

## CHAPTER 2

### JOB INSECURITY

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter dealt with the background, the motivation for undertaking the study and the problem statement as well as the aims of the research. The present chapter intends to explore the concept of job insecurity. The chapter aims to define the concept job insecurity from the viewpoint of existing literature and thereafter describe the dimensions of job insecurity. The chapter will also describe the antecedents and consequences of job insecurity and conclude with a summary.

#### 2.2 DEFINITION OF JOB INSECURITY

Job insecurity has been defined and described in many ways by various researchers, yet a consensual definition has not yet been reached (De Witte, 1999, p. 156). Based on the literature review, two distinct perspectives on the definition of job insecurity are presented, namely the global and the multidimensional perspectives (Ashford *et al.*, 1984; De Witte, 2005; Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Sverke & Hellgren, 2002).

With respect to the global perspective, job insecurity represents the threat of job loss or imminent job continuity (Bosman, Buitendach & Laba, 2005; De Witte, 1999; Hartley, Jacobson, Klanderman & Van Vuuren, 1991). According to De Witte (1999, p. 159), job insecurity is based on the notion of job loss and is often applicable to a situation where the organisation is undergoing change or in crisis, where job insecurity is considered the first phase of job loss.

Furthermore De Witte (1999) reports that feelings of job insecurity are only relevant to employees who are currently employed and fear that they might lose their job and become unemployed. Most importantly, De Witte (1999) argues that job insecurity does not necessarily lead to unemployment and he indicates that the proportion of employees who might feel insecurity is larger than the proportion that could actually lose their jobs.



Moreover, De Witte (2005) explains that the definition of job insecurity must also include the notion that job insecurity as a work stressor, made up of cognitive and affective job insecurity. Cognitive job insecurity entails the perceived likelihood of job loss, whereas affective job insecurity represents the actual fear of job loss. According to De Witte (2005), the perception of job insecurity begins with a cognitive appraisal of the future situation, which triggers emotions based on the meaning connected to the potential job loss.

According to Jacobson and Hartley (1991), job insecurity can be seen as a differentiation between the level of security an employee experiences and the level she or he prefers. As a result, job insecurity is not only independent of any crisis context, but may appear in seemingly 'safe' employment arrangements, such as tenured full-time positions.

Näsweil and De Witte (2003), in addition define job insecurity as the experience of a threat of involuntary job loss, implying that employees who do not care about losing their job will, by this definition, not experience job insecurity nor suffer its consequences. This implies that if an employee decides to leave his/her job voluntarily, feelings of insecurity do not apply, as compared to if an employee were to lose their job involuntarily or be made redundant.

In a similar vein Sverke, Hellgren and Näsweil (2002, p. 243) define job insecurity as the subjective experience of a fundamental and involuntary event related to job loss and it is associated with feelings of powerlessness and helplessness on the part of the individual employee. For them, job insecurity involves both the threat of discontinuation of employment and the threat of losing desirable or important dimensions of the job.

Van Vuuren, as cited in Buitendach and De Witte (2005), describes job insecurity as the concern felt by employees for the continued existence of their job and identifies three components which are central to job insecurity, namely that job insecurity is a

subjective experience or perception, that it involves uncertainty about the future as well as doubts concerning the continuation of the job.

In contrast to the global perspective, Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984, p. 440), strongly criticise studies that focus on the perceived likelihood of job loss and/or imminent job loss. For them job insecurity is considered as a multifaceted concept which consists of various dimensions of the job, together with the dimensions included in the global perspectives. They describe job insecurity from a holistic point of view, which includes not only the job itself but also the job features/dimensions.

In the multidimensional perspective, Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984, p. 438) define job insecurity as “the perceived powerlessness to maintain the desired continuity in a threatened job situation”. Their definition serves as a starting point for understanding the concept of job insecurity as represented by two core dimensions namely, the severity of the threat, or the importance and likelihood of losing the job and/or job features, and the extent of powerlessness to counteract the threat. In other words, they maintain that employees can only feel insecure about their job if they perceive the threat to their job to be severe and feel powerless to do anything about their situation.

Based on a review of the literature, job insecurity is considered as a subjective phenomenon, based on the individual’s perceptions and interpretations of his/her immediate work situation (Ashford *et al.*, 1989; Chirumbolo & Hellgren, 2003; Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Sverke & Hellgren, 2002). Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) argue that these subjective elements preclude a consensus definition of job insecurity. Similarly Sverke, Hellgren and Näswell (2006) articulate that a subjective perception such as job insecurity is likely to be interpreted differently by different people, implying that employees in the same objective job situation will experience different levels of job insecurity, depending on their interpretation of the situation.

As noted by Rosenblatt and Ruvio (1996, p. 587), the experience of job insecurity is relevant whether or not an objective threat exists (ie changes in the organisation), given that feelings of job insecurity depend on individuals' perceptions and interpretations of their work situation. According to the authors, the perception and interpretation process varies, on the one hand, as a function of objective circumstances and, on the other hand, as a function of personal attributes, and these differences occur widely amongst individuals in any particular organisation.

Job insecurity can further be viewed as an objective and/or subjective phenomenon (Chirombolo & Hellgren, 2003), reflecting changes within the organisation and subjective experiences based on individual perceptions of uncertainty. This implies that individuals exposed to the same objective situation, experience the effect of job insecurity totally differently from one another (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984).

However, Ashford *et al.* (1989) base their measure on Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt's (1984) conceptual framework of job insecurity and underpin that job insecurity can only exist when people detect a threat of overall job loss, loss of any dimension of their job and/or the erosion of any conditions of employment such as loss of income, promotion opportunities, location and colleagues. In this line of reasoning, job insecurity can possibly be envisaged as any loss of condition of service (employment), not just the total loss of employment. Therefore, it is adequate to consider job insecurity as a multifaceted concept consisting of various dimensions of work (Rosenblatt & Ruvio, 1996).

In general, studies that have adopted the multidimensional definition of job insecurity describe it as the amount of uncertainty employees experience about their job, and also about certain dimensions of the job itself, such as promotional advancement, benefits, career advancement and employment conditions (Ashford *et al.*, 1989; Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Rosenblatt & Ruvio, 1996).

Reisel and Banai (2002) define job insecurity as resulting from a threat to one's job continuity, implying that job insecurity is an internal experience of the individual employee that is characterised by uncertainty in the face of job threats.

Other distinctions with regard to job insecurity relate to quantitative job insecurity and qualitative job insecurity, which correspond to a large extent with the global and multidimensional definitions of job insecurity respectively (Hellgren, Sverke & Isaksson, 1999). The quantitative aspects of job insecurity are related to work and organisational attitudes such as job satisfaction and turnover intention, specifically the perceived threats of impaired quality in the employment relationship, whilst the qualitative aspects of job insecurity entail concerns for the future existence of valuable job-related attributes such as pay, promotion and job content (Hellgren *et al.*, 1999).

Reisel and Banai (2002, p. 89) offer a brief summary of different assumptions and underlying theories guiding the conceptualisation of job insecurity. Table 2.1 represents the adopted approaches to the conceptual framework, operationalisation and measures of job insecurity.

TABLE 2.1

*SUMMARY OF APPROACHES TO JOB INSECURITY (adopted from REISEL AND BANAI, 2002)*

Author (s)	Date	Conceptual framework	Operationalisation	Scale
Caplan <i>et al.</i>	1975	Psychological cognitive	Cognitive Additive	4- item Global
Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt	1984	Expectancy	Cognitive Multiplicative	None
Johnson <i>et al.</i>	1984	Psychological Affective	Affective Additive	7- item Global
Ashford <i>et al.</i>	1989	Expectancy	Cognitive Multiplicative	60-item Multiplicative subscales
Hartley <i>et al.</i>	1991	Expectancy, Stress/Coping, Role Theory	Cognitive Multiplicative	3- item Global
Hellgren <i>et al.</i>	1999	Expectancy	Cognitive Multiplicative	100-item Multiplicative scales
De Witte	2000	Psychological cognitive	Cognitive/Affective	11-items Global
Sverke <i>et al.</i>	2002	Expectancy Theory	Multidimensional definition	4-item Global

It appears from the table that job insecurity can be understood from various conceptual frameworks and furthermore, that operationalisation differs between cognitive and affective (global perspective) and cognitive multiplicative (multidimensional perspective). However, common to all the definition of job insecurity is that it is a subjective phenomenon. However, these two different facets of job insecurity have in common the underlying assumption that job insecurity is meant to be a subjective experience, based on individual perception and understanding of the environment and the situation, and refers to the anticipation of the stressful event of losing the job itself (Sverke & Hellgren, 2002).

In this study, the multidimensional perspective of job insecurity developed by Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) and later expanded by Ashford *et al.* (1989) will be adopted. This perspective views job insecurity as encompassing various dimensions of the job and not just the worry or perceive likelihood of losing the job as compare to other studies, but also takes into account the various features of the job, amongst others, geographical location, promotional advancement and regular salary. Furthermore, the multidimensional perspective takes into cognisance that the experience of job insecurity occurs regardless of whether or not an objective threat exists in the organisation (Jacobson & Hartley, 1991; Rosenblatt & Ruvio, 1996).

Several studies (Ashford *et al.*, 1989; Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Roskies & Louis-Guerin, 1990) indicate that the definition and measurement of job insecurity should incorporate both concerns about deteriorated employment conditions and career opportunities in addition to threats of imminent job loss.

In this study, job insecurity is defined as a fear experienced by employees that they are going to lose their job, position and/or other employment benefits. That is, the feeling of job insecurity could also be exacerbated by the loss of any conditions of employment from which employees previously benefitted.

## **2.3 DIMENSIONS OF JOB INSECURITY**

The dimensions of job insecurity are based on Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt's (1984) as well as Ashford *et al.*'s (1989) theoretical model of job insecurity. That is, the dimensions encompass five related components, namely importance and likelihood of job feature loss, importance and likelihood of job loss and perceived powerlessness.

According to Ashford *et al.* (1989) as well as Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) feelings of job insecurity reside in the severity of the threat (ie the importance and the likelihood of losing both job features and the job itself) and the relative inability to control threats related the job situation. Thus, each dimension represents a different facet of job insecurity.

### **2.3.1 Importance of job feature**

The first dimension pertains to the importance of the job aspects such as schedule, work, pay and promotional opportunities. According to Ashford *et al.* (1989) the more features employees perceive to be threatened the greater the feeling of job insecurity. In addition Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984, p. 441) note that the loss of any valuable job features is an important aspect of job insecurity which is often overlooked. They maintained that the phenomenon is experienced as a type of job loss inasmuch as it involves losing the job as the affected employees currently know it, but the authors articulate that the threat is less severe, because organisational membership is not lost. Roskies and Louis-Guerin (1990) examine the relative importance of the various aspects of job insecurity and find that the working conditions of the job features are more strongly related to the outcome as compared to insecurity about demotion and termination of the job.

### **2.3.2 Likelihood of loss of job features**

The second dimension reflects the weight of the importance of job features achieved by multiplying the perceived threat to each job feature by its importance and then summing the score for each feature to obtain an overall severity rating for the importance and likelihood of job features (Ashford *et al.*, 1989; Cheng, Huang,

Lee & Ren, 2010; Lee, Bobko & Chen, 2006). That is, this dimension relies on the assumptions that a threat to an important job feature will contribute more to job insecurity reactions than will a threat to a minor feature.

### **2.3.3 Importance of job loss**

The third dimension relates to the perceived threat of the occurrence of various events that would negatively affect the employee's entire job, such as being laid off or fired, that is, the importance of job loss. Riesel and Banai (2002) in a study amongst lower, middle and senior managers, report that the job loss component of job insecurity explains more of the variance in perceived job insecurity than the job features loss component. Their findings indicate that a threat to the job in itself is a statistically significant component of job insecurity, at least to a sample of managers. The importance of job loss is similar to De Witte's (2005) definition of affective job insecurity, in that the focus is on losing the job itself. According to Probst (2003) an employee experiences job insecurity only if he/she desires continuity in the organisation. More specifically, he maintains that employees can experience job insecurity irrespective of the importance of job features or the total job.

### **2.3.4 Likelihood of job loss**

The likelihood of job loss consists of the importance attached to each of these potentialities. That is, the subjective likelihood of the loss depends on the nature and number of sources of threat to continuity. In order to determine the severity of the threat, the first four dimensions have to be multiplied and summed to get a weighted rating of the severity of the threat to the entire job (Ashford *et al.*, 1989). The likelihood of job loss is similar to De Witte's (2005) definition of cognitive job insecurity which is the subjective probabilities of job loss. According to Mauno and Kinnunen (2002, p. 297), the likelihood of various changes that may occur at an employee's work encompasses primarily a cognitive or rational aspect of job insecurity. In their previous studies they report that the likelihood of various changes have more predictive validity as compared to the other dimensions.

### **2.3.5 Perceived powerlessness**

Perceived powerlessness entails the employee's relative inability to control threats related to his or her job (Ashford *et al.*, 1989; Rosenblatt & Ruvio, 1996). Ashford *et al.* (1989) maintain that even if employees could perceive a threat to their job or job features, those who have the power to counteract the threats would not experience job insecurity compared to those who are unable to do anything to correct the threat.

The sense of powerlessness is an important element of job insecurity, because it exacerbates the experienced threat (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Probst, 2003). In addition, the authors identify the basic forms that exacerbate job insecurity, such as lack of protection and unclear expectations. With respect to unclear expectations, the lack of an adequate performance appraisal system has been classified as a specific cause of job insecurity (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984).

Moreover, perceived powerlessness is a form of perceived control (Lee *et al.*, 2006). Perceived control is defined as the belief that an individual has at his/her disposal a response that can influence the evasiveness of an event. Powerlessness can either intensify or lessen the severity of the threat of losing one's job.

## **2.4 ANTECEDENTS OF JOB INSECURITY**

The antecedents of job insecurity have been categorised into three groups, namely environmental and organisational conditions (organisational change and communication), personal characteristics (age, gender, tenure, occupation and level of education) and personality characteristics (locus of control, self-esteem, sense of coherence) (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Hartley *et al.*, 1991; Klandermans, Van Vuuren & Jacobson, 1991).

In this study the antecedents of job insecurity will be limited to personal characteristics and organisational change, because personal characteristics are widely studied in the literature and are also found to produce significant correlations, whereas organisational change is significantly related to multiplicative



job insecurity as measured by Ashford *et al.* (1989). Personality characteristics have been excluded, because the relative impact of insecurity on the effects of mood disposition is unclear. For instance, individuals high on any personality traits have the tendency to accentuate negative appraisals of themselves and others as well as society in general. Furthermore, such individuals also usually experience high chronic levels of distress. Roskies, Louis-Guerin and Fournier (1993) find that individuals high on negative affectivity do not always perceive the outcomes of job insecurity as more severe than those measuring low on trait, but may report lower wellbeing as a result of their elevated initial values.

#### **2.4.1 Personal characteristics**

Jacobson (1991, p. 23) argues that job insecurity has its own antecedents and manifests itself in certain actions and attitudes. According to De Witte and Näswell (2003) the most common personal characteristics investigated in job insecurity are age and gender, although these moderator variables differ across studies as well as countries.

This study will, however, replicate the work of previous studies that use personal characteristics as an indicator of job insecurity as well as organisational change. The present study will describe age, gender, level of education, tenure and occupation as personal characteristics. It is worth noting, that there are conflicting and inconsistent views in previous studies as far as how each of the personal characteristics moderates the effects of job insecurity.

##### *2.4.1.1 Age*

The rise in perceived job insecurity is linked to an employee's age. Sverke *et al.* (2002) report that older employees experience higher levels of job insecurity as a result of difficulties in finding new employment elsewhere, should they be retrenched or lose their jobs and also as a result of lower employability in the labour market. In a study conducted by Heymans (2002), among maintenance workers in parastatal organisations, it was found that older employees experience higher levels of job insecurity compared to younger employees in similar work

situations, especially when the organisation adheres to personnel reduction strategies such as early retirement incentives.

Thus, in an attempt to reduce the number of employees, organisations may introduce early retirement incentives for employees who are 55 years and older. Such early retirement can be interpreted as discrimination against older employees, particularly those who still feel the need to continue working (Armstrong-Stassen, 2001). Hartley *et al.* (1991) note that the effect of early retirement faced by older people is attributed to the fact that they find it more difficult to find new employment, which leaves them more vulnerable to job insecurity.

There is strong evidence that older employees feel that their psychological contract has been violated, and they subsequently lose trust in management (De Witte, 2005). The term 'psychological contract' is used as an indicator for describing employment relationships (Rousseau, 1995) and it is defined as an individual's beliefs regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between himself/herself and an employer. For instance, Buitendach *et al.* (2005, p. 9) note that younger employees have more alternatives, because organisations are more interested in them due to their competencies and skills as compared to older employees in the labour market, irrespective of older employees' expertise and skills and their loyalty in the organisation.

Similarly, Labuschagne, Bosman & Buitendach (2005) posit that younger employees have less financial responsibilities compared to older employees, and that younger employees are have better prospects of finding a job elsewhere in the labour market in the future. This implies that feelings of insecurity are lower amongst younger employees as they are favoured in the labour market over older employees.

#### 2.4.1.2 Gender

Gender also plays a role in how employees prepare for different occurrences throughout their lives. There are, however some inconsistencies in the literature regarding which gender category is more affected by job insecurity. According to

Hartley *et al.* (1991), most of the studies that have investigated the effects of job insecurity were exclusively focussed on male employees. This relates back to traditional values which require the men to be the main breadwinners of the household, whereas women are considered housekeepers. As a result, men are more vulnerable to the threat of job loss as it not only threatens their source of income, but also their identity to a higher degree than it would women (De Witte, 1999).

The present study makes an effort to evaluate gender differences in relation to the experience of job insecurity, particularly when looking at the new socio-political dispensation in South Africa, which gives women priority as compared to men, and as a result leaves men more vulnerable to the effect of job insecurity than women. According to Buitendach *et al.* (2005), employees who feel the least advantaged will experience higher levels of job insecurity than those who benefit from the new labour dispensation such as women and people with disabilities.

#### 2.4.1.3 Tenure

The number of years (tenure) an employee has been in the same organisation is an important variable in determining the effect of job insecurity. According to Adkins, Werbel and Farh (2001, p. 462), tenure in the academic setting represents a long-term employment contract that is generally believed to be inviolable except for cases of gross misconduct. This implies that employees consider their employment as life-long.

It is assumed that employees with a longer tenure will experience lower levels of job insecurity than those with a shorter tenure, especially when applying the policy of 'last in, first out' (Buitendach, Oosthuyzen & van Wyk, 2005a). Similarly, Hellgren and Sverke (2003) argue that employees with shorter tenure are more likely to experience higher levels of job insecurity, because newcomers to an organisation are less stable in their role as employees and hence are more eager to survive in the organisation.

On the contrary, employees with longer tenure might experience higher level of job insecurity and it was found that older employees experience higher levels of job insecurity compared to younger employees, if the organisation adheres to personnel reduction strategies such as early retirement packages/policy (Buitendach *et al.*, 2005a; Heymans, 2002). Job insecurity can be viewed as a situation in which an employer violates the long-term obligation of providing stable and continuous employment to employees.

#### *2.4.1.4 Level of education*

The educational level of an employee is also an important indicator of job insecurity, in that it can influence the number of choices available to employees in the labour market. It is assumed that employees with lower levels of education and inadequate skills for the labour market are more vulnerable to feelings of job insecurity (Buitendach *et al.*, 2005a, p. 72).

In line with the above, Schaufeli (1992, p. 257) asserts that unemployment is less problematic for employees with a higher level of education, since they can counteract the adversity of unemployment. In addition, Hellgren and Sverk (2003, p. 219) illustrate that employees with higher educational achievement tend to experience less job insecurity than their counterparts with less education, who are more vulnerable to threats of job loss, because they lack the skills and knowledge required to enable them to make a choice in the labour market. Cited in De Witte (2005a, p. 4) is the notion that the best qualified employees resign as they are able to find more gainful employment elsewhere.

#### *2.4.1.5 Position in the organisation*

Roskies and Louis-Guerin (1990, p. 346) posit that employees in higher positions in the organisation might react more strongly to threats of job loss, because they believe in 'meritocratic individualism', that is, that people get what they deserve. Thus, any career setback would lead to guilt, self doubt, and despair and thus to decreased well-being.

### 2.4.2 Organisational change

Ashford *et al.* (1984) postulate that one frequently named threat to employees' sense of control is organisational change. Organisational change has been defined as alterations to the organisation's structure, its processes, or its social system, as well as a variety of more local changes (moving offices, changes in supervisor, or a new performance pay plan) (Chirumbolo & Hellgren, 2003). They maintain that change can alter a situation of secure employment to one which is more precarious.

Consequently, Davy *et al.* (1997) as well as Lee *et al.* (2006) argue that organisational changes such as mergers, reorganisations, new technology as well as layoffs are some of the sources of threat that create uncertainty and insecurity amongst employees in the working environment. Similarly, Klanderman and Van Vuuren (1999) note that even in organisations with little objective job insecurity and few negative organisational changes, employees may still experience subjective job insecurity.

Subsequently, Tilakdharee, Ramidial and Parumasur (2010, p. 256) argue that job insecurity usually predominates during mergers and takeovers as well as restructuring as a result of redundancy of certain jobs, while certain other jobs change. They emphasise that if the organisation does not inform its employees about the status of their jobs, they might start feeling uncertain about their future in the organisation. In essence, changes of this nature could violate employees' psychological contracts with the organisation and elicit a lack of control amongst them (Ashford *et al.*, 1984). The changes could also threaten a set of employees' expectation of job security which is positively related to job satisfaction and organisational commitment and could thus lower these factors (Davy *et al.*, 1979).

## 2.5 CONSEQUENCES OF JOB INSECURITY

The experience of job insecurity affects employees in a number of ways and is considered a work stressor in a large part of the literature. The experience of job insecurity as a stressor appears to be related to employees' negative reactions (Cheng & Chan, 2008; De Cuyper & De Witte, 2005; Mauno, Leskinen & Kinnunen,

2001). Thus, in the literature it is documented that the negative effects of job insecurity affect individuals and organisational well-being (Adkins *et al.*, 2001; Ashford *et al.*, 1984; Davy *et al.*, 1997; De Witte, 1999; Kinnunen, Mauno, Nätti & Happonen, 2000). These authors maintain that job insecurity has often been reported to result in reduced psychological well-being characterised by phenomena such as anxiety, depression, irritation and well as attitudinal reactions.

This section describes the individual and organisational consequences of job insecurity.

### **2.5.1 Consequences of job insecurity for the individual**

Employment, in accordance to Jahoda's (1982) latent deprivation model, constitutes one of the key elements of social participation and recognition. That is, being employed provides employees with a means to earn income, create a social network and the opportunity for personal growth and development. In line with Jahoda's (1982) model, employees develop deep-seated needs for structuring their time and perspective, for enlarging their social horizon/network, for participating in collective enterprises, where they can feel useful for knowing they are recognised in society for being active contributors.

Thus, the perception of losing certain attributes of the job or the job itself is likely to have severe implications for employees' overall life situation where their economic status and other valuable aspects of their life are perceived to be threatened (Ashford *et al.*, 1989; Hartley *et al.*, 1991). In addition, De Witte (1999, p. 159) explicitly argues that whenever employees feel that their needs have been threatened by a perceived insecure job situation, they will, in turn, also experience a threat to their economy, social contact as well as personal growth and development. That is, when employees can no longer expect lifelong job security (De Witte, 2005a) and because the labour market has been gradually individualised, their focus is directed away from the organisation towards their own career development (King, 2000).

When served with a notification of possible retrenchment employees are confronted with a stressful environment and they may struggle to cope with uncertainties surrounding the security of their job within the organisation (De Witte, 2005a). Simultaneously, they are expected to work productively in this unpredictable and uncertain working environment, amidst changes to organisational culture, organisational structures, work roles and responsibilities. Consequently De Witte (2005a) reiterates that employees who feel insecure and uncertain after receiving information of possible retrenchment cannot adequately prepare themselves for the future, because they have no clarity about which actions should be undertaken.

Furthermore, employees may perceive a threat to their work environment when they are reassigned to a lower job position or are transferred to another position with less promotional opportunities (Roskies & Louis-Guerin, 1990). In a study conducted amongst managers, Roskies and Louis-Guerin (1990) report that the prospect of demotion, deterioration in working conditions, or even the long-term prospect of eventual job loss is associated with decreased well-being and work commitment.

Other consequences on the individual level include the possibility of finding another job and the general economic climate of the broader environment in which the individual lives, as well as the level of unemployment in the country (De Witte, 2005b). It could be argued that depending on employability, employees respond differently to negative experiences like job insecurity (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2005; De Cuyper, Bernhard-Oettel, Berntson, De Witte & Alarco, 2008). According to Berntson, Sverke and Marklund (2006, p. 225) the concept employability is concerned with viability in the labour market and is defined as "the individual's perception of his/her possibilities to achieve (sic.) a new job." It refers to the subjective phenomenon regarding people's perception of their possibilities of gaining new employment. Employable individuals perceive themselves to have more opportunities in the labour market, which makes it more likely that they

detach themselves from the organisation more quickly than individuals who do not feel employable.

De Cuyper *et al.* (2008) adopt the definition of employability formulated by Bernston *et al.* (2006) and assert that employability may promote feelings of being in control of one's career, which, in turn relate to well-being. They contemplate that employability may reduce the fear of becoming unemployed with likely favourable results implying that employability provides employees with choices and alternatives that make them less vulnerable in times of threatening situations.

### **2.5.2 Consequences of job insecurity for the organisation**

Several studies have examined the organisational consequences of job insecurity (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Lim, 1997). For instance De Witte (2005) notes that job insecurity influences various organisational attitudes and behaviours that have profound negative and positive consequences for the organisation. In addition Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) posit that the attitudinal and behavioural consequences of job insecurity threaten the survival of the organisation, in the form of impaired productivity, increased turnover and barriers to adaption which according to them reduce organisational effectiveness.

The most commonly researched consequences of job insecurity to the organisation are reduced job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Ashford *et al.*, 1989; Sverke *et al.*, 2006), distrust in management (Ashford *et al.*, 1989), higher levels of burnout (Dekker & Schaufeli, 1995) and decreased performance (De Witte, 2005a) as well as intention to quit (De Witte, 1999). According to Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979) as well as Buitendach *et al.* (2005), individual employees develop affective and attitudinal attachment to their employing organisation over time, which shows as high levels of commitment, satisfaction and trust. Thus feelings of job insecurity may threaten this basic attachment to the organisation.

Ashford *et al.* (1989, p. 808) define job satisfaction as "the emotional state resulting from the evaluation or appraisal of one's job experience". That is, people respond affectively to jobs in terms of how they cognitively represent or perceive their



situations. These authors posit that employees who often feel insecure about their future job situation are generally very dissatisfied with their jobs, and have the propensity to leave the organisation as compared to employees who perceive their future job situation as more secure. Sverke *et al.* (2002) have consistently shown that job satisfaction is negatively related to job insecurity.

According to Hartley (1991, p. 137) trust in management is significant, in that low trust can be associated with not believing communication from management about the reasons for job insecurity in the organisation. This can in turn affect the employee's interpretation of the external environment, the actions within the organisation and the effects of their own actions on the degree of job insecurity.

The effect of job insecurity has negative consequences on the individual's well-being in the organisation. In the case of job insecurity, these negative well-being effects are related to event uncertainty about job loss or job continuity (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Jacobson, 1991). The negative consequences of job insecurity are more closely related to poor job attitudes such as reduced organisational commitment than to poor mental health and well-being such as distress and burnout (De Cuyper *et al.*, 2008; Mauno, Kinnunen & Ruokolainen, 2007). Since job insecurity is experienced as a threat which implies uncertainty, it has been described as a job stressor which is often associated with being powerless (De Witte, 1999; De Cuyper & De Witte, 2005; Näswell, Sverke & Hellgren, 2005). Thus employee perceptions of job insecurity might cause organisations to suffer financially, due to the associated costs of absenteeism and lowered employee well-being.

Other organisational concerns caused by perceived job insecurity include increased turnover of employees, a decrease in worker productivity, and lower levels of commitment, employee engagement, satisfaction, loyalty, and trust in employers (De Cuyper *et al.*, 2008). These outcomes cover the four major categories of potential outcomes of job insecurity as identified by Sverke *et al.* (2002). In a study conducted on the mediation between type of contract and the outcomes of job insecurity, De Cuyper and De Witte (2005) find that the effects of job insecurity are

non-significant for general health, performance and positive work-home interference, and they are in the opposite direction for satisfaction, engagement, organisational commitment, trust, irritation and turnover intention.

## **2.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In this chapter, the construct job insecurity was defined and described in terms of both its global and multidimensional definitions. In addition, a brief summary of the different approaches underlying theories guiding the conceptualisation of job insecurity were presented. The antecedents of job insecurity with specific reference to personal characteristics, namely age, gender, education and tenure were described and also the consequences of job insecurity from both the individual and organisational levels were highlighted.

In chapter 3 the construct organisational commitment will be described.

## CHAPTER 3

### ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter dealt with job insecurity. The present chapter intends to explore the concept organisational commitment. The chapter aims to define the concept organisational commitment from the viewpoint of existing literature, thereafter describing the dimensions of organisational commitment as presented by Meyer and Allen (1991; 1997). The chapter will also describe the antecedents and consequences of organisational commitment.

#### 3.2 DEFINITION OF ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

Organisational commitment has been defined in a wide variety of ways and yet no consensus in defining commitment has been made over the past years (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Furthermore, the concept has also attracted considerable attention in the field of organisational behaviour (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990, p. 171) and most importantly, has demonstrated its predictive power regarding various important work-related attitudes such as job satisfaction and turnover as well as non-work behaviour such as organisational citizenship behaviour (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Randall, Fedor & Longenecker, 1990, Roodt, 2004a).

Therefore, earlier studies have defined the concept commitment as a unidimensional construct based on employees' emotional attachment to the organisation (attitudinal perspective) (Mowday *et al.*, 1979; Porter, Steers, Mowday & Boulian, 1974) while others define it in relation to the costs associated with leaving the organisation (behavioural perspective) (Becker as cited in Meyer & Allen, 1991; 1997; Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010; Powell & Meyer, 2004; Wasti, 2005). These two perspectives of commitment differ tremendously in terms of what motivates consistency.

In the attitudinal perspective, research has been directed largely at identification of the antecedent conditions that contribute to the development of commitment and

at the behavioural consequences of this commitment. The attitudinal perspective of commitment focuses on the process by which people come to think about their relationship with the organisation. Therefore, numerous studies have described commitment as an attitudinal perspective based on the relative strength of employee's identification with and involvement in the organisation (Buitendach & De Witte, 2005; Beck & Wilson, 2000; Mowday *et al.*, 1979). Based on the work of Porter *et al.*'s (1974) theoretical framework of commitment, Mowday, Porter and Steers (1982, p. 27) classify commitment into three interrelated attributes, namely:

- ❖ A strong belief in and acceptance of the organisation's goals and values;
- ❖ A willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organisation; and
- ❖ A strong desire to maintain membership in the organisation.

Thus, according to Mowday *et al.* (1979) an employee can only express his or her commitment to the organisation provided he/she has the ability to exhibit all three attributes. Furthermore, an employee who exhibits high commitment is someone who is happier at work and who spends less time away from work, and, in turn is less likely to leave the organisation. On the contrary, employees who are not committed to the organisation will unfortunately be unable to display all three attributes, and as a result, the organisation will be able to predict turnover intention based on employees' attitudes (Zangaro, 2001, p. 15).

More importantly, Mowday *et al.* (1982, p. 47) describe commitment as a series of "self reinforcing cycles of attitudes and behaviours that evolve on the job and over time strengthen employee commitment to the organisation". It follows from this, that commitment as an attitude develops as a result of some combination of work experiences, perceptions of the organisation and personal characteristics which lead to positive feelings about the organisation which, in turn, become commitment.

Later, Mowday *et al.* (1982) expanded and refined the conceptualisation of commitment and consider it as an attitude that reflects the nature and quality of the linkage between employees and the organisation. According to them,

commitment is a state with which employees associate themselves with a particular organisation and its mission and values to maintain membership in order to facilitate organisational goals. That is, commitment is thought of as a mindset where individuals consider the extent to which their own values and goals are congruent with those of the organisation. This suggests that commitment based on the attitudinal perspective is formed during the stage when a new entrant to the organisation as an individual employee comes to realise that his/her goals and values are congruent to those of the organisation

Additionally, Meyer, Irving and Allen (1998) emphasise that the absence of a strong association between personal characteristic and commitment does not necessarily imply, that these characteristics do not play a role in the development of commitment. Along these lines, Johnson and Chang (2006, p. 550) argue that although employees may be oriented toward specific types of commitment, organisations must endeavour to cultivate commitment by focussing on those specific types that fit well with employees' personal characteristics. They indicated that knowledge of what type of commitment is salient to employees would help the organisation to identify the work-related variables deemed most important by employees.

In terms of Meyer and Allen (1997, p. 67) the concept commitment is regarded "as the psychological state that characterises the employee's relationship with the organisation", and further has the implication for their decision to continue or discontinue membership of the organisation, however, the nature of the psychological state differs. In other words, they regard a committed employee as someone who stays with the organisation through favourable or unfavourable conditions, attends to work regularly, puts in a full day and shares organisational goals and values as well as mission. Previous studies maintain that what differs in the three components of commitment is the "mind-set", suggesting that employees who are committed primarily out of desire might be more likely to follow through on their commitment as compared to employees who are committed out of avoidance of costs and obligations (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Wasti, 2005).

In the view of Rashid, Sambasivan and Johari (2003) organisational commitment is defined as the willingness of social actors to give their energy and loyalty to a social system or an effective attachment to the organisation apart from the purely instrumental worth of the relationship. They believed that commitment is developed through the process of identification in which a person experiences some idea as an extension of the self.

Similarly, Newstrom and Davies (2007, p. 112) define commitment as the degree to which employees identify with the organisation and want to continue actively participating in its successes. They pointed out that organisational commitment often reflects the employee's beliefs in the mission and goals of the organisation, willingness to expend effort in their accomplishment and intentions to continue working in the organisation.

Roodt (2004a) expands the work of Kanungo's (1982) motivational approach which focuses on the state of commitment in a particular focus and defines organisational commitment as a "cognitive predisposition towards a particular focus, insofar as the focus has the potential to satisfy needs, realise values and achieve goals". The motivational approach of Kanungo (1982) is based on the needs, values and goals which according to (Roodt, 2004a) provide the basis for the comparisons between different commitment foci. However, the different foci of commitment were discussed extensively by Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) as well as Wasti (2008).

Consistent with Mowday *et al.* (1982), a considerable number of studies have also conceptualised organisational commitment as the psychological attachment formed by employees in relation to their identification and involvement with their employing organisation (Buitendach & De Witte, 2005; Chang, Chin & Miao, 2007; Johnson & Chang, 2006; Meyer & Allen, 1991; 1997).

In general the kind of commitment involved in the attitudinal perspective is similar to the social exchange theory where employees attach themselves to the organisation in exchange for certain rewards from the organisation. The attitudinal

perspective acknowledges the relationship between employer and employees and identifies the reasons for this relationship. In other words, individual employees come to the organisation with predetermined needs, skills and expectations, with the hope of finding a workplace where they can utilise their abilities and satisfy their needs. Several studies have demonstrated that when the organisation is able to provide these kinds of opportunities for individual employees to enhance their skills and expertise, the likelihood of increased commitment is imminent (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Mowday *et al.*, 1979; Shore & Wayne, 1993).

The above discussion demonstrates that individual employees who perceive that they are valued and respected are likely to reciprocate with trust and emotional engagement in exchange for rewards. Simultaneously, when organisations demonstrate care and support for employees by promising them favourable or satisfying contract deals, employees are likely to reciprocate with stronger affective feelings toward the organisations (Mowday *et al.*, 1979). This however suggests that highly committed employees remain with the organisation and advance its goals and values, and at the same time become less likely to leave the organisation, as compared to less committed employees.

On the contrary, when individual employees perceive that the organisation is only minimally interested in meeting its own needs, they are more likely to respond with lower loyalty and trust and fewer contributions to the organisation effectiveness. It is suggested in the literature that within the social exchange theory, perception of psychological contracts will directly affect employees' organisational commitment (McDonald & Makin, 2000; Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010).

Consequently, Schmitt, Oswald, Friede, Imus and Merritt, (2008) show that the attitudinal perspective can be linked to the person-environment fit, with specific reference to the complementary fit. The complementary fit entails a reciprocal relationship (two-way procedure) where employee and employer have something of value to offer to one another in their relationship. In other words, Schmitt *et al.* (2008) assert that the individual employee possesses the mechanical skills that are required by the organisation and, in return, the organisation must provide him/her

with some kind of reward such as salary, job autonomy and security. Kristof-Brown *et al.* as cited in Schmitt *et al.* (2008, p. 318) define the person-environment fit (P-E-fit) as “the compatibility between an individual and work environment that occurs when their characteristics are well matched”.

Another unidimensional construct is the behavioural perspective, which focuses primarily on identifying conditions under which behaviour, once exhibited, tends to be repeated, as well as on the effects of such behaviour on attitude change. In this perspective, commitment is describe as a “consistent line of activity” resulting from the accumulation of “side-bets” which could be lost if such activity were terminated (Becker as cited in Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010). According to Meyer and Allen (1991) commitment as a side-bet exists the moment when something significant to individual employees, such as pension and seniority, becomes contingent upon continued employment in the organisation. That is, the effect of making side-bets is generally to increase the costs of failing to continue working. Furthermore, commitment as a side-bet is considered as the “process by which individual becomes locked into certain organisation” (Meyer & Allen, 1991, p. 62) based on the costs associated with leaving the organisation.

The behavioural approach of commitment relates to processes by which employees feel trapped into a certain organisation (Mowday *et al.*, 1982; Jaros, 1997). In a similar view Zangaro (2001, p. 15) as well as Mowday *et al.* (1982) assert that employees become committed to the organisation because of ‘sunk costs’ (fringe benefits, salary as a function of age or tenure), which are too costly for them to leave or look for alternative work elsewhere. Thus, employees who remain with the organisation primarily to avoid costs associated with leaving have little incentive to do more than is required of them, and they can easily reduce their work effort as a result of resentment of feeling trapped in the organisation (Jaros, 1997; Zangaro, 2001; Mowday *et al.*, 1982).

In addition Bar-Haim (2007, p. 205) considers organisational commitment as a behavioural choice instead of a mindset. He emphasises that commitment stems from the unequivocal behaviour of being obligated to perform certain activities that



identify commitment, particularly in the worst conditions when the organisation is unable to reward it. More specifically, he argues that commitment should be the readiness to stay for as long as possible with the employing organisation and contribute as energetically as possible, even during unpleasant organisational situations. Furthermore, he argues the opinion that the old definition of OC simply cannot work in the new world of work and also in non-western world of work (Bar-Haim, 2007) and refers to organisational commitment in terms of Hirschman's (1970) categories of organisational commitment.

According to Roodt (2004a), the behavioural approach is particularly problematic in the sense that behaviour is multi-deterministic, that is, predictors related to a particular behaviour can also predict other behaviours. Antecedent and consequential behaviours of commitment can also be related to other determinants or ensuing conditions such as job satisfaction, morale or the intention to stay or leave the organisation.

Several studies have noted that the concept commitment has been characterised by various and conflicting views of the unidimensional concept that have promoted confusion in the precise definition of commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Mowday *et al.*, 1982). Allen and Meyer (1990) as well as Meyer and Allen, (1991; 1997) based on Becker's side-bet theory, introduce the dimension of continuance commitment to the already existing affective commitment. As a result, commitment is thus considered as a bi-dimensional perspective representing the attitudinal component and behavioural component.

Therefore, as the work in this area progresses and commitment gains popularity in the field of organisational behaviour and industrial and organisational psychology, a new multidimensional framework has been produced, representing both the attitudinal (affective) and behavioural (continuance) (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Buitendach & De Witte, 2005; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991; 1997, Mowday *et al.*, 1982) as well as a new dimension namely normative commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991; 1997).

Although many definitions of commitment have been presented since the work of Mowday *et al.* (1979), it is the conceptual framework of Allen and Meyer (1990), as well as Meyer and Allen (1991; 1997), that identified the three distinctive components of commitment, namely affective, continuance and normative commitment. According to them the three components presents commitment from three different perspectives, namely attachment, necessity and obligation, respectively. In addition, the components of commitment are distinguishable from other familiar concepts such as job satisfaction, job involvement, occupational commitment and turnover intention. This will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

For the reasons above, Meyer and Allen (1991), emphasise that it is vitally important to consider affective, continuance and normative commitment as components, rather than as types of commitment, because the employee's relationship with the organisation might reflect varying degrees of all three components. They posit that the three components of commitment presumably would increase the likelihood of employees remaining with the organisation, and the motive for such decision would vary considerably with desire, need and obligation. However, Meyer and Herscovitch (2001), accentuate that employees who are committed primarily out of desire might have a strong inclination to remain with the organisation as compared to employees who are committed primarily out of obligation or to avoid costs.

Despite the fact that the components of commitment might be different, previous studies have shown that there are commonalities within the component (Jaros, 1997; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch & Topolnytsky, 2002). Thus, one commonality inherent in the component lies with the effect each component has on the employee's decision, to continue to remain a member of the organisation. Based on Meyer *et al.* (1993, p 539), employees with "a strong affective commitment will remain with the organisation because they want to, those with a strong continuance commitment

remain because they need to, and those with a strong normative commitment remain because they feel they ought to do so”.

The second commonality implies that employees can experience more than one mindset simultaneously (Jaros, 1997; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Meyer *et al.*, 2002). For example, previous studies have consistently shown that it is possible for employees to feel both a desire and an obligation to remain with the organisation. In this instance, Meyer and Allen (1997), suggest that it is best to consider each employee as having a commitment profile reflecting the relative strength of the affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment components.

O’Reilly and Chatman (1986), as discussed in Mowday *et al.* (1982), as well as Meyer and Herscovitch (2001), also support the idea that organisational commitment should be considered as a multidimensional construct based on the assumption that commitment represents an attitude toward the organisation, and that there are various mechanisms for the development of such attitudes in the organisation. Based on Kelma’s (1985) work on attitude and behaviour change, O’Reilly and Chatman (1986), also formulated the three forms that capture commitment, namely compliance, identification, and internalisation forms of work commitment.

Meyer and Herscovitch (2001, p. 301) in addition also consider organisational commitment as a multidimensionality of work attitudes and argue that commitment influences behaviour independently of other motives or attitudes, and as a result could lead to a persistent course of action even in the face of conflicting motives and attitudes. They also acknowledge that there are different targets that employees might commit to and define commitment as a stabilising force that binds individuals to the organisation relevant to a particular target (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001, p. 308).

Subsequently, Herscovitch and Meyer (2002), indicate that commitment directed to a specific target is a better predictor of behaviour relevant to that target than is more general commitment. In addition, they suggest that it is best to consider each

employee as having a commitment profile reflecting the relative strengths of affective, continuance and normative commitment.

Other theorists within the multidimensional construct tend to view organisational commitment as the psychological state that binds an individual to the organisation (Allen & Meyer, 1990, p. 14; Mathieu & Zajac 1990, p. 171). This psychological state, according to them, reflects a desire, a need, and/or an obligation to maintain membership in the organisation, thus alleviating the employee from voluntarily leaving the organisation.

In this study, the definition advocated by Allen and Meyer (1990), as well as Meyer and Allen (1991; 1997), will be adopted, because it reflects on employees' attitudes towards organisational goals and values, a desire to stay with the organisation and willingness to exert effort on its behalf. The changing nature of employment relationships has heightened the importance of understanding the dynamics of commitment in South African organisations. Consequently, Rothmann (2003) argues that tracking employees' effectiveness in coping with demands of the new world of work and stimulating their growth in areas that could possibly impact on their well-being and organisational efficiency and effectiveness is crucial in any organisation.

In this study, organisational commitment will be defined as the congruence between the goals of the employee and the organisation whereby employees identify themselves with and extend effort on behalf of the general goals of the organisation. For Meyer and Allen (1991; 1997), organisational commitment is a psychological state that is characterised by the relationship between employees and the organisation, and it has implications for the decision to continue membership in the organisation.

### **3.3 DIMENSIONS OF ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT**

Several dimensions of organisational commitment have been identified in the literature, for instance O'Reilly and Chatman (1986), as discussed in Mowday *et al.* (1982), as well as Meyer and Herscovitch (2001), identify three distinct dimensions

underlying an employee's psychological commitment to an organisation, namely the compliance, identification, and internalisation forms of work commitment.

Compliance occurs when attitudes and corresponding behaviours are adopted in order to gain specific rewards. Compliance is also associated with continuance commitment where the employee is calculative with the need to stay in the organisation when evaluating the rewards (Bar-Haim, 2007; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001).

Identification occurs when individuals accept influence to establish or maintain a satisfying relationship. According to Meyer and Allen (1997), organisational commitment in the identification is based on the affective commitment which posits that employees stay with the organisation because of a sense of duty and loyalty.

Internalisation occurs when influence is accepted, because the attitudes and behaviours one is being encouraged to adopt are congruent with existing values. Internalisation of organisational commitment is based on normative commitment. According to Meyer and Allen (1991, p. 76), the internalisation perspective implies that employees become committed to organisations with which they share values. Moreover, they work toward the success of these organisations, because in doing so they are behaving in a manner consistent with their own values.

Jaros, Jermier, Koehler and Sincich (1993) as well as O'Reilly and Chatman (1986), assess that there are more than three component scales that measure organisational commitment, and Meyer and Allen (1991), are the only researchers to publish a theoretical model that contains the antecedents and consequences of a three-component model of commitment. Therefore, in an effort to ascertain the status of commitment research, Meyer and Allen (1991; 1997) conducted comprehensive analytical reviews on commitment and considered it as a multidimensional concept, which constitutes a three-component model, namely affective, normative and continuance commitment.

### 3.3.1 Affective dimension of commitment

Affective commitment refers to emotional attachment to the organisation, characterised by acceptance of the organisational culture, values and willingness to remain with the organisation (Mowday *et al.*, 1982; Buitendach & De Witte, 2005). Furthermore Meyer *et al.* (1998), refer to affective commitment as a response to positive work experiences perceived as being offered by the organisation. Nonetheless, Meyer *et al.* (1993), suggest that an employee whose work experience is consistent with his/her expectations and satisfies his/her basic needs, tends to develop stronger affective attachment to the organisation. Likewise, Riketta (2002, p. 257), proposes that employees who feel attached to and identify themselves with the organisation and work harder, may provide the basis for many organisational attempts to foster employees' organisational commitment or identification.

Allen and Meyer's (1990) affective commitment is similar to Etzioni's (1961; 1975) notion of moral involvement and very closely related to Mowday *et al.*'s (1982) general concept of organisational commitment measured by the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (Angle & Lawson, 1993).

In the opinions of McDonald and Makin (2000) affective commitment is affected by the extent to which the individual's needs and expectations of the organisation are matched by their actual experiences, which links with the perceived reciprocal obligations of the psychological contract. They identify two distinct employee obligations, namely relational (reciprocal relationship between employer and employee) and transactional (based on economics where employees are willing to work overtime, to provide high levels of performance for contingent pay).

Similarly, Van Knippenberg and Schie (2000) argue that it is through identity that employees define themselves as members of a particular social category and thus ascribe characteristics that are typical of that social category to themselves. Furthermore, they maintain that identification can lead employees to perceive themselves not only in terms of idiosyncratic characteristics, but also in terms of the characteristics that promote shared feelings with other members of in-groups.

The review of the literature indicates that affective commitment is the most frequently used and has been validated and is considered as more reliable than the other dimensions of commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Beck & Wilson, 2000; Buitendach & De Witte, 2005; Meyer *et al.*, 1993; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Meyer *et al.*, 2002; Somers, 1995). The reason for the extensive and long-lasting research interest is the fact that affective commitment is assumed to influence almost any behaviour that is beneficial to the organisation such as performance, attendance, and staying with the organisation (Buitendach & De Witte, 2005; Cooper-Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Mowday *et al.*, 1982; Randall, 1990).

It is assumed that employees with affective commitment are inclined to work for the benefit of the organisation. This form of commitment is attributed to factors intrinsic to employees and a strong personal desire to remain with the organisation, likely owing to the identification and internalisation bases of commitment (Johnson & Chang, 2004; Meyer, Becker & Vandenberghe, 2004)

### **3.3.2 Continuance dimension of commitment**

According to Allen and Meyer (1990), as well as Meyer and Allen (1991; 1997), continuance commitment is conceived as a tendency to engage in consistent lines of activity based on the individual's recognition of the costs associated with discontinuing the activity and limited employment alternatives. Continuance commitment is thus the extent to which employees perceive that they have to stay with the organisation, because the costs of leaving are too high.

According to Allen and Meyer (1990, p. 1) the costs associated with leaving are manifested in two distinct ways. The first manifestation results from employees' decision to remain employed in the organisation because of personal investments (retirement benefits, seniority status, access to social network, specialised and untransferable job skills, familial ties, etc) that they have made as a result of the number of years they have been employed in a particular organisation. The second manifestation emanates from the perceived difficulty in finding a comparable job

elsewhere. Thus, Meyer and Allen (1991) propose that because of side-bets and a lack of job alternatives elsewhere, employees with a strong continuance commitment remain with the organisation because it provides them with desirable personal outcomes and benefits that they are unwilling to sacrifice.

Continuance commitment (need to remain) evolves from Becker's (1960) side-bet theory, which proposes that employees maintain membership with their organisation in order to preserve accumulated side-bets such as benefits, pension, and seniority (Angle & Lawson, 1993, Powell & Meyer, 2004; Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010; Wasti, 2005). This extrinsic form of commitment derives from economic and instrumental principles that are based on compliance, such as people remain committed in order to obtain specific rewards or to avoid specific punishment (Meyer *et al.*, 2004; Randall *et al.*, 1990). That is, continuance commitment involves social roles or positions from which individuals derive their perception of the cost associated with leaving the organisation and the rewards related to participation in the organisation.

A considerable number of studies suggest that continuance commitment consist of two separate dimensions, namely the perceived sacrifice associated with leaving and the perceived lack of employment alternatives (Johnson & Chang, 2004; Panacio & Vandenberghe, 2009, p. 225), although their viability and dimensionality are inconclusive in the empirical studies tested. Both personal sacrifice and perceived lack of employment alternatives increase the costs associated with leaving the organisation.

Thus, continuance commitment is based on expectations of immediate or future rewards and cost contingencies in comparison to available alternatives (Randall *et al.*, 1990). In order words, employees with high continuance commitment engage in certain behaviours, not because they feel that it is the right thing to do or because they want to do it, but because they believe that they will derive some reward(s) or minimise some cost(s) from doing so.

### **3.3.3 Normative dimension commitment**



Based on Allen and Meyer (1990), as well as Meyer and Allen (1991; 1997), normative commitment refers to employees' feelings of obligation and loyalty to the organisation. As noted by Mowday *et al.* (1979), normative commitment reflects an individual's generalised value loyalty as a result of primary socialisation in a culture that emphasises loyalty to institutions, including organisations. That simply indicates that normative commitment reflects the notion that individuals incorporate the organisational goals and values as well as mission into their own identities. This implies that normative commitment is the congruence between individual and organisational goals and values as well as mission.

The basic tenet of normative commitment is the internalisation of norms and values as well as the inner feelings that employees learnt from their cultural background prior to becoming members of a certain organisation. Normative commitment is viewed as a belief about the employee's formal and informal responsibility to the organisation and a perceived duty to work for the organisation and its functions. As a result employees feel that they are morally obliged to remain with the organisation (Meyer *et al.*, 1993) despite better work opportunities elsewhere in the labour market. Hence it could be assumed that employees with high levels of normative commitment feel that they ought to continue their association with the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991). As documented in several studies, a sense of loyalty and duty underlying an employee's normative commitment influences employees' decision to remain with the employing organisation because they feel they ought to do so (Bagraim, 2003; Meyer *et al.*, 1993).

Normative commitment might develop based on socialisation experiences in the family and culture and from early socialisation in the employing organisation. For instance, culturally based norms towards the meaning of work as an obligation could have an influence on normative commitment. According to Meyer *et al.* (2004), instances when employees feel an obligation toward their employers are strengthened by the cultural values of loyalty and receipt of benefits, and they are then more willing to stay with the organisation and repay their perceived debt.

It is believed that employees who have been led to consider via various organisational practices, early socialisation efforts, or their own personal history, that the organisation deserves their loyalty will be likely to have a strong normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Therefore, employees who are committed to their organisation on a normative basis engage in work activities on the basis of a sense of duty. They behave in accordance with organisational goals because 'they believe it is the 'right' and moral thing to do' (Wiener as cited in Stallworth, 2004, p. 946). For instance, if the organisation is loyal to employees, in turn, they will exhibit a high degree of normative commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Bagraim, 2003; Meyer & Allen, 1991; 1997; Meyer *et al.*, 2002).

Consequently, employees with low levels of normative commitment might not feel any obligation to support the organisation, unless motivated. Furthermore, non-committed employees might describe the organisation in negative ways to outsiders thereby inhibiting the organisation from recruiting highly qualified employees (Chughtai & Zafar, 2006; Mowday *et al.*, 1982).

Several studies have demonstrated that normative commitment is distinguishable from affective and continuance commitment, because it does not reject a need to associate with the organisation's goals or missions, and that there is also no explicit extrinsic exchange involved in the relationship (Jaros *et al.*, 1993; Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010). Furthermore, normative commitment is different from the affective and continuance commitment solely because it does not include intrinsic exchange in its relationship (Angle & Lawson, 1993). On the contrary, Meyer *et al.* (2002) find that normative commitment is strongly correlated with affective commitment, and thus shares some of the antecedents and consequences as compared to continuance commitment.

Meyer and Parfyonova (2010) propose that normative commitment constitutes moral duty and indebted obligation. Drawing from the psychological contracts perspective, they argue that employees who accept the norm of lifetime commitment consider such commitment to be morally right for their determination

to want to stay with the organisation, regardless of how much status enhancement or satisfaction the organisation gives over the years.

Similarly, Weiner as cited in Stallworth (2004) defines commitment as reflecting “the totality of internalised normative pressures to act in a way that meets organisational goals and interests” and argues that committed employees are willing to make personal sacrifices for the sake of the organisation, because they “believe it is the right and moral thing to do”. This, however, contradicts the instrumental motivation which holds that behaviour is guided by an evaluation of personal costs and benefits instead of moral obligation.

### **3.4 ANTECEDENTS OF ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT**

Many different variables have been examined as potential antecedents of commitment, categorised in terms of the three dimensions of organisational commitment, namely affective, continuance and normative commitment.

#### **3.4.1 Antecedents of affective commitment**

There are many different moderators to examine the antecedents or factors constituting affective commitment. Several studies have identified four general antecedents involved in affective commitment, namely personal characteristics, job characteristics, work experience and role-related characteristics (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Mowday *et al.*, 1982; Zangaro, 2001). Personal characteristics are those variables that define the individual, such as age, gender, education, and need for achievement.

##### *3.4.1.1 Personal characteristics*

Personal characteristics are the most commonly tested antecedents of affective commitment. The personal characteristics found to affect affective commitment are age, gender, education and organisational tenure (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Mathieu and Zajac (1990) note that employees’ perceptions of their own competence play an important role in their development of affective commitment. However, Meyer and Allen (1997), as well as Angle and Perry (1981) reveal that the

relationship between personal characteristics and affective commitment are unclear, implying that the relationship between personal characteristics and organisational commitment are neither consistent nor inconsistent.

There are inconsistencies in the literature as far as the relationship between age and organisational commitment is concerned. A meta-analytic study by Mathieu and Zajac (1990), involving 41 samples and 10 335 subjects shows that a statistically significant positive relationship exists between age and affective organisational commitment. They maintain that older employees become more attitudinally committed to the organisation for a variety of reasons, including greater satisfaction with their jobs, having received better positions and having "cognitively justified" their continuance in the organisation.

In addition Allen and Meyer (1991), in their investigation of the role of personal characteristics have found a positive relationship between employees' ages and their level of commitment. Mowday *et al.* (1982) also find a positive association between affective commitment and age, with significant increases in commitment across three age groupings (less than 31, 32-44 and 44 years and older). Researchers such as Newstrom and Davies (2007) suggest that older workers are likely to experience higher level of commitment based on the fact that they have lowered their expectations to more realistic levels and adjusted better to their work situation.

Several other studies have consistently found positive a relationship between organisational tenure and the organisation (Mathieu & Zajar, 1990; Meyer *et al.*, 2002; Mowday *et al.*, 1982; Newstrom & Davies, 2007; Salami, 2008). They associate organisational tenure with Becker's side-bets theory based on the conception that the longer employees stay with the employing organisation the more likely they are to acquire greater investment.

Similarly, Meyer and Allen (1991), as well as Mowday *et al.* (1982) posit that as individuals get older and remain with the employing organisation longer, alternative employment opportunities tend to decrease and personal investment in the

organisation tends to increase, thus enhancing employees' commitment to the organisation. These studies suggest that employees' tenures show that they have embraced and accepted the values and mission of the organisation as their own as well as a sense of belonging and loyalty with the organisation.

With regard to the relationship between gender and organisational commitment, Joiner and Bakalis (1990) report that gender has always produced inconsistent results, because it is difficult to distinguish whether males or females are committed. For instance, in the meta-analysis study conducted by Mathieu and Zajac (1990), among 14 studies with 7420 subjects, the results found that women are more affectively committed to the organisation than men. The distinction between gender and organisational commitment depends to a large extent on how different countries adhere to gender roles.

Previous studies (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Mowday *et al.*, 1982) have found education to be negatively related to continuance commitment. These implies that highly educated employees might be more committed to their profession and careers than being committed to the organisation (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Newstrom & Davie, 2007), because they have greater employment opportunities elsewhere, than less educated employees who might not have skills transferable to other organisational settings (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Moreover, highly educated employees are likely to have higher expectations that the organisation might be unable to meet, thereby reducing affective commitment.

#### *3.4.1.2 Work experience*

In contrast to personal characteristics, there has been a considerable amount of research examining the links between work experience and affective commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). For example, Allen and Meyer (1990) describe work experience as those experiences that satisfy employee's needs to feel comfortable in their relationship with the organisation and also to feel competent in the work-role. Similarly, Zangaro (2001, p. 18) describes work experience as the experience

related to group attitudes and perceptions of personal investment in and worth to an organisation.

Previous studies have indicated that the desire to maintain membership in an organisation is largely the result of work experiences (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991). Presumably, employees want to remain with the organisations that provide them with positive work experiences, because they value their experiences and expect to continue their membership. This is because employees are likely to exert effort and contribute to organisational effectiveness, as a means of maintaining equity in their relationship with the organisation.

#### *3.4.1.3 Role-related characteristics*

The role-related characteristics as affective antecedents of commitment refer to practices used by the employer to assist the employee in understanding the job or work role (Joiner & Bakalis, 2006). These authors identify four job-related characteristics consisting of supervisor support, colleague support, role clarity and access to resources. Employees are more likely to feel an obligation to remain with the organisation, because of the supportive behaviour received in the organisation. Strong support from supervisors and colleagues not only enhances clarity of the job but also represents care and support, in that the employee is looked after by the organisation.

### **3.4.2 Antecedents of continuance commitment**

The most frequently studied antecedents of continuance commitment have been side-bets or investments and the availability of alternatives. According to Allen and Meyer (1990), as well as Meyer and Allen (1991), anything that increases the cost associated with leaving the organisation has the potential to create continuance commitment. Becker, as cited in Mowday *et al.* (1982) postulates that commitment to a course of action develops as one makes side-bets that would be lost if the action were to be discontinued. This implies that if employees realise that quitting their job to a new organisation would result in them losing all their benefits, they might decide to stay within the current organisation rather than losing their

investment. In this regard, investment can take different forms, such as the time spent acquiring non-transferable skills, losing the benefits, seniority and rewards.

However, Meyer and Allen (1991) maintain that positive work experiences that guide employees to become affectively attached to the organisation might be perceived as investments that employees should pay back to the organisation. That is, positive experiences serve as side-bets that employees are obliged to repay.

Other potential costs accumulate over time without employees being aware, such as the market value of their skills may gradually deteriorate without their knowledge (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991). The latter authors suggest that employees' perception of the availability of alternatives will be negatively correlated with continuance commitment. Employees whose skills are becoming less marketable might not experience continuance commitment unless they start looking for alternative jobs elsewhere in the market. Therefore, it is through the recognition of losing the costs that continuance commitment develops.

In summary it seems that employees want to remain and are willing to exert effort on behalf of the organisation, because of the benefits they derive from the relationship. Moreover, they work toward the success of the organisation, because in doing so they are behaving in a manner consistent with their own values.

### **3.4.3 Antecedents of normative commitment**

The antecedent of normative commitment lies with feelings of obligation to remain with the organisation and how employees internalise these normative pressures. The socialisation experiences that lead to this felt obligation might begin with observation of role models and/or with the contingent use of rewards and punishment (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

In addition to the subtleties of the socialisation process, a more specific reciprocity mechanism that could also be operative in the development of normative commitment is the psychological contract (Meyer & Allen, 1997). The motive arising from affective commitment might best be described as a desire to contribute

to the well-being of the organisation in order to maintain equity in a mutually beneficial association.

### **3.5 CONSEQUENCES OF ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT**

The relationship between organisational commitment and various consequences has been well established in the literature. Several consequences of organisational commitment have gained popularity in the organisational behaviour field, namely turnover intention, performance, organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) and attendance (Jaros, 1997).

#### **3.5.1 Turnover intention**

Several studies have documented that all three components of commitment correlate negatively with turnover intentions among a variety of employees (Allen & Meyer 1996; Beck & Wilson, 2000; Cooper-Hakim & Viswawesvaran, 2005; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Meyer *et al.*, 2002; Powell & Meyer, 2004) with affective commitment correlating most strongly, followed by normative and continuance commitment (Meyer *et al.*, 2002). Employees' retention in the organisation appears to be one of the most studied consequences of organisational commitment, because when employees resign they take with them their research, skills and experiences and this has cost implications for the organisation in terms of recruitment, selection and training procedures.

As noted by Zangaro (2001), the inability to retain highly qualified staff has an adverse effect on organisational effectiveness and the costs thereof. As a result, Johnson and Chang (2006) maintain that organisations must adopt practices and procedures that will be valued by employees in order to ensure their commitment and retention. These findings suggest that improving organisational commitment may be beneficial not only for employees themselves but also for the productivity of the organisation.

#### **3.5.2 Job performance**



Meyer and Allen (1997) argue that affective commitment and normative commitment relate positively to job performance and discretionary citizenship behaviour. That is, employees who want to maintain membership in the organisation will also do what it takes to make the organisation successful. This will also be true for employees who feel a sense of obligation to remain with the organisation, although the willingness to do more than is required might not be quite as strong as for affective commitment.

Organisational commitment has been identified as a useful measure of organisational effectiveness, because high levels of commitment can lead to several favourable organisational outcomes. Suliman and Iles (2000) identify the following important aspects of organisational commitment:

- ❖ It fosters better superior-subordinate relationships;
- ❖ It enhances organisational development, growth and survival;
- ❖ It improves the work environment;
- ❖ It negatively influences withdrawal behaviour such as turnover, lateness and absenteeism; and
- ❖ It has a positive impact on employees' readiness to innovate and create.

Other aspects that can cultivate and foster commitment in the organisation are internal promotion policies and job security; performance based reward policies and job challenge and autonomy might bolster perceptions of personal competence (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). In addition, studies have shown that fostering commitment among the employees in the organisation is important because, as previously mentioned, employees that are highly committed stay longer, perform better, miss less work and engage in organisational citizenship behaviours (Chang *et al.*, 2007; Chughtai & Zafar, 2006; Hui & Lee, 2000; Jaros, 1997; Salami, 2008; Suliman & Iles, 2000). Consequently, Rothmann (2003) maintains that it is crucially important for any organisation to streamline employees' effectiveness in coping with the demands of the new world of work as well as stimulating their growth in areas that could possibly impact on their well-being and organisational efficiency and effectiveness.

### **3.5.3 Organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB)**

Organisational citizenship behaviour also known as extra-role behaviour is generally not considered a requirement of the work role in the organisation (Shore & Wayne, 1993). Basically, OCB includes behaviours that employees choose to offer to the organisation without concern for immediate formal rewards. In this instance Meyer and Allen (1997) note that employees with strong affective commitment are more likely to engage in organisational citizenship behaviour in order to foster better interpersonal relationship between themselves and especially to support the overall organisational functioning as compared to employees with either continuance or normative commitment.

## **3.6 SUMMARY**

In this chapter, the concept organisational commitment was defined and described in terms of its unidimensionality, reflecting attitudinal and/or behavioural commitment. Furthermore commitment as a multidimensional construct, and the three components model of organisational commitment (affective, continuance, and normative) were presented. The antecedents of organisational commitment with specific reference to the three components of commitment were also described as were the consequences thereof.

The next chapter will discuss work engagement as a concept. The chapter will also describe the relationship between job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement.

## CHAPTER 4

### WORK ENGAGEMENT

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter dealt with organisational commitment. The present chapter intends to explore work engagement. The aim in this chapter is to define work engagement from the existing literature, thereafter describing the three dimensions of work engagement as outlined from the perspective of Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá and Bakker, (2002a). It will also describe the antecedents as well as consequences of work engagement.

#### 4.2 DEFINITION OF WORK ENGAGEMENT

The concept engagement has been defined in many diverse ways, although the concept has not attracted much empirical research, despite being a topic that has become so popular in recent times (Robinson, Perryman & Hayday, 2004). No consensus has been reached in the literature, in terms of what engagement entails (Saks, 2008, p. 601; Mostert & Rothmann, 2006). Furthermore, Robinson *et al.* (2004, p. 8) indicate that the definitions of engagement have often sounded similar to other well known and established concepts such as organisational commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour.

Review of the literature identified a considerable number of definitions of engagement. In this regard, the earliest definition of engagement is based on the work of Kahn (1990) which involves the expression of the self through work and other employee-role activities. According to Kahn (1990), engagement entails the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's preferred self in task behaviours that promote connections to work and to others.

He stated this as follows: "People use varying degrees of their selves, physically, cognitively and emotionally, in the roles they perform, even as they maintain the integrity of the boundaries between who they are and the roles they occupy. Presumably, the more people draw on themselves to perform their roles within

those boundaries, the more stirring are their performances and the more content they are with the fit of the costumes they don" (Kahn, 1990, p. 692).

Kahn (1990, p. 694) defines engagement as "the harnessing of organisation members' selves to their work roles by which they employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances". In other words, he contends that engaged employees are physically involved in their tasks, cognitively alert, and emotionally connected to others when performing their jobs.

Kahn (1990) describes engagement as a multidimensional construct, in the sense that employees are either emotionally, cognitively, or physically engaged in their work activities. Therefore, the more engaged they are in each dimension, the higher their overall personal engagement in work activities.

In contrast to engagement, Kahn (1990, p. 701) defines disengagement as the uncoupling of selves from work roles, which involves people withdrawing and defending themselves physically, cognitively, or emotionally during role performance. Disengaged employees become disconnected from their jobs and hide their true identity, thoughts and feelings when performing their roles (Olivier & Rothmann, 2007).

In essence, the definition of engagement formulated by Kahn takes into consideration a person's physical, emotional and cognitive aspects as relevant, and further gives reasons with specific reference to factors that could contribute to engagement and disengagement at work. Furthermore, his framework of engagement is based on the degree to which a person brings himself/herself to his/her role within the organisation.

Research on the concept of work engagement has taken two different but related approaches (Rothmann, 2003; Storm & Rothmann, 2003). The first approach is that of Maslach and Leiter (1997), who define engagement as the opposite or positive antithesis of burnout. They maintain that focusing on work engagement is like focusing on the energy, involvement and effectiveness that employees bring to the

job and develop through their job activities. They consistently rephrase the definition of burnout as erosion of work engagement with the job. They consider engagement as characterised by energy, involvement, and efficacy, which are the direct opposites of the three burnout dimensions namely exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy. In other words, Maslach and Leiter (1997) maintain that when employees are engaged, they have a sense of energetic and effective connection with their work activities (energy, involvement) and they see themselves as able to deal with the demands of their work (professional efficacy).

Based on the literature review, Schaufeli *et al.* (2002a, p. 74) take a different approach and criticise Maslach *et al.* (2001) for incorporating and operationalising engagement with the same instrument as burnout. Although they acknowledge that burnout is the positive antithesis of engagement, they argue that engagement cannot be assessed by the opposite profile of burnout namely the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) scores, but rather should be operationalised in its own right (independently with different instruments).

In this regard, Schaufeli *et al.* (2002a, p. 74), as well as Schaufeli and Bakker (2003) defined engagement "as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by three interrelated dimensions, namely vigour, dedication, and absorption". They assert that engagement does not refer to a momentary and specific state, but rather is a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual or behaviour (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002a; Schaufeli, Martinez, Marques-Pinto, Salanova & Bakker, 2002b).

Previous studies have shown that the dimensions of vigour and dedication represent the core function of work engagement. More specifically, vigour and dedication are considered the opposite poles of the two burnout dimensions, namely exhaustion and cynicism respectively. That is, vigour and exhaustion are classified as the energy continuum and dedication and cynicism as the identification continuum (Coetzee & de Villiers, 2010; González-Romá, Schaufeli, Bakker & Lloret, 2006; Mostert & Rothmann, 2006). Thus, based on the theoretical analysis, burnout

and work engagement are conceptually related to each other, resulting in two work-related dimensions of well-being, namely activation, consisting of exhaustion and energy, and identification, representing cynicism and dedication (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004a).

Other researchers, such as Roberts and Davenport (2002, p. 21) also define work engagement as a person's enthusiasm and involvement in his or her job. They maintain that people who are highly engaged in their work activity and identify personally with it are often motivated by the work itself. They further maintain that such people tend to work harder and more productively and are more likely to produce the results needed for organisational attainment as compared to people that are extrinsically motivated. According to them, engaged employees constantly report that their work makes good use of their skills and abilities, is challenging and stimulating, and provides them with a sense of personal accomplishment.

However, Harter, Schmidt and Hayes (2002, p. 269) maintain that engagement is not something that occurs once in a while, but rather should occur on a regular, day-to-day basis, and should be actively applied in the employee's work behaviour. They further maintain that work engagement refers to the individual's involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work roles/activities.

Like Kahn (1990), Harter *et al.* (2002, p. 269) also emphasise that employees are emotionally and cognitively engaged when they know what is expected of them, have what they need to perform their work activities while also having the opportunity to feel an impact and fulfilment in their work, perceive that they are part of something significant with their colleagues, whom they trust, and have the chance to improve and develop.

In a similar vein May, Gilson and Harter (2004, p. 13) also describe engagement in terms of the importance of people bringing their physical, emotional and cognitive resources, which sustain role-related tasks when they engage themselves in work activities. For them, engagement is concerned with how individuals employ themselves during the performance of their work activities. They maintain that

most jobs entail some level of physical exertion and challenges, as well as emotional (exhaustion) and cognitive demands which differ from job to job as well as from employee to employee. Furthermore, they maintain that engagement entails the active use of emotions and behaviours, which are separate from cognition.

Stander and Rothmann (2010) note that the three dimensions of work engagement identified by Schaufeli *et al.* (2002a, 2002b) overlap conceptually with the three dimension of engagement formulated by Kahn (1960) as well as May *et al.* (2004), namely the physical dimension (vigour), the cognitive dimension (dedication) and the emotional dimension (absorption).

With regard to Robinson *et al.* (2004, p. 9), engagement is defined “as a positive attitude held by the employee toward the organisation and its values”. They state that:

“... engagement contains many of the elements of both commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB), but is by no means a perfect match with either. In addition, neither commitment nor OCB reflect sufficiently two aspects of engagement-its two-way nature, and the extent to which engaged employees are expected to have an element of business awareness” (Robinson *et al.*, 2004, p. 8).

In this instance, engaged employees are, however, aware of their business context and conduct/perform their work in a competent manner, with their colleagues, to improve performance and productivity for the benefit of the organisation. More importantly, the organisation must create a caring environment and cultivate and maintain engagement, which requires a two-way relationship between the employer and employee.

Macey and Schneider (2008) conceptualise work engagement as a relatively stable variable, because of the continued presence of specific job and organisational characteristics. They do however acknowledge that there are short-term fluctuations in the experience of work engagement within an individual employee.

Bakker and Demerouti (2007, p. 210), maintain that engaged employees are not superhuman and nor are they addicted to their work, given that they do feel tired after a long day of hard work, and these authors state that such employees ascribe their tiredness to positive accomplishments. They maintain that engaged employees have activities that they enjoy outside their working environment and, unlike workaholics, they do not work hard because of a strong and irresistible inner drive, but because working is fun to them. In other words, engaged employees report that their jobs make good use of their skills and abilities, are challenging and stimulating, and provide them with a sense of personal accomplishment.

Schutte, Toppinen, Kalimo and Schaufeli, (2000, p. 54) define engagement as an energetic state in which the employee is dedicated to excellent performance at work and is confident of his or her effectiveness.

Coetzee and de Villiers (2010) describe engaged employees as typically characterised by the willingness to take initiative and as people who generate their own positive feedback as well as encourage themselves in their work role. The authors state that such employees are also engaged outside their employment, and their values and norms are congruent to those of the organisation for which they work.

In this study, the definition advocated by Schaufeli *et al.* (2002a; 2002b) will be adopted, because it separates engagement from the related concept of burnout, and further positions engagement as an independent construct which is important in its own right. Furthermore, this definition (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002a, 2002b) encompasses both the affective and cognitive aspects of work engagement. This implies that in addition to cognitions, engagement also involves an active utilisation of emotions and feelings (Salanova & Schaufeli, 2008). The definition specified by Schaufeli consists of three dimensions, namely vigour, dedication and absorption. These components can be analysed separately to accurately detect the strengths and weaknesses that exist in terms of each dimension of work engagement.



In this study, work engagement is defined as feeling a sense of responsibility for and commitment to performance of tasks in a particular organisation. Engaged employees often experience positive emotions, including happiness, joy and enthusiasm, and better health, and they create their own job and personal resources as well as transfer their engagement to others (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

### **4.3 DIMENSIONS OF WORK ENGAGEMENT**

Several studies have identified possible contributors to employee engagement in work roles. For instance, building on the earlier ethnographic work of Kahn (1990), May *et al.* (2004) explore the determinants of three psychological conditions and find that they contribute to individuals' engaging in their work roles, namely meaningfulness, safety and availability. These correspond to Schaufeli and Bakker's (2004) as well as Schaufeli *et al.*'s, (2002a; 2002b) dimensions of vigour, dedication and absorption, respectively.

Psychological meaningfulness is defined as "feeling that one is receiving a return on investment of one's self in a currency of physical, cognitive, or emotional energy" (Kahn, 1990, pp. 703-704). According to Kahn (1990, p. 704), individuals experience such meaningfulness when they feel worthwhile, useful and valuable, and that they make a difference and are not being taken for granted in their organisation. In this regard, Stander and Rothmann (2010) accentuate that people are self-expressive and creative and therefore they are willing to seek out work roles that allow them to behave in ways that express their self- concepts.

Therefore, psychological meaningfulness occurs when individuals feel useful and valuable, and is influenced by their job characteristics such as variety, learning opportunities and autonomy, work-role fit and rewarding interpersonal interactions with co-workers. Thus lack of meaning in employees' work could lead to disengagement from work.

Psychological safety entails feeling able to employ one's self without fear of negative consequences to status or career (Kahn, 1990; May *et al.*, 2004). For

instance, support and trust in supervisor and co-worker relationships lead to feelings of psychological safety, and unsafe conditions exist when situations are ambiguous, unpredictable and threatening.

Psychological availability relates to individuals' belief that they have the physical, emotional or cognitive resources to engage themselves at work (Kahn, 1990; May *et al.*, 2004). Psychological availability is influenced by physical energy, emotional energy and insecurity (eg lack of self-confidence, heightened self-consciousness and ambivalence about fit with the organisation) and non-work events.

In addition, Stander and Rothmann (2010) also identify four dimensions of psychological empowerment, namely meaning, competence, self-determination and impact as possible conditions that contribute to individuals engaging themselves in their work roles.

Schaufeli and Bakker (2004a), as well as Schaufeli *et al.* (2002a; 2002b) identify three dimensions of work engagement, namely vigour, dedication and absorption. Although previous studies have indicated vigour and dedication as the core dimensions of work engagement, this study intends to describe all dimensions of work engagement as previously identified by Schaufeli and colleagues.

#### **4.3.1 Vigour**

The dimension vigour refers to high levels of energy, resilience regarding work activities, investing effort in one's work and persistence in difficult circumstances (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004a; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002a, 2002b; Stander & Rothmann, 2007). This dimension is characterised by employees' willingness to invest effort in their work, not easily becoming fatigued and persistence even in the face of difficulties at work. Employees who feel great vigour at work are highly motivated by their work role and also likely to remain persistent when encountering difficulties at work.

Based on the literature review, the dimension "vigour" is considered similar to the concept motivation, in particular intrinsic motivation. The latter refers to an

individual's need to perform a certain activity at work because this activity gives inherent pleasure and satisfaction and does not contain extrinsic good such as better salary and/or promotion (Mauno *et al.*, 2007; Salanova, Agute & Peiro, 2005). In their attempt to define motivation, Steers, Mowday and Shapiro (2004, p. 379) use Atkinson's definition of motivation as "the contemporary influence on direction, vigour and persistence of action". They maintain that motivation is basically concerned with factors that energise, channel and sustain human behaviour over time.

Like other researchers, Chughtai and Buckley (2008) also describe vigour as the readiness to devote effort in one's work, an exhibition of high levels of energy while working and the tendency to remain resolute in the face of difficulty.

#### **4.3.2 Dedication**

The dimension dedication refers to a strong psychological involvement in work, combined with a sense of significance, enthusiasm, pride and feeling inspired as well as challenged by the work (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002a; 2002b; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004a).

This dimension shares some conceptual similarity with the concept job involvement (or commitment) which has been define as the degree to which an employee psychologically relates to his or her job and to the work performed (Cooper-Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005). Job involvement is also considered a function of how well the job satisfies an employee's present needs (Mauno & Kinnunen, 2000).

According to Mauno *et al.* (2007), both dedication and job involvement are considered as stable phenomena, however, the differences between them have not been reported. Dedication appears to be a broader phenomenon with respect to its operationalisation than job involvement is. As previously indicated, dedication is characterised by feelings of enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge, while job involvement focuses on the psychological importance of the job in the employee's life (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004a).

### 4.3.3 Absorption

The dimension absorption refers to full concentration on and immersion in work, and is characterised by time passing quickly, with the employee finding it difficult to detach from work activities (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002a & 2002b; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004a). It entails a pleasant state in which employees are totally immersed in their work, forgetting about everything else.

Several studies have conceived that absorption shares some similarities with the concept flow, which represents a state of optimal experience that is characterised by focused attention, clear mind and body, unison, effortless concentration, complete control, loss of self consciousness, distortion of time and intrinsic enjoyment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Langelaan, Bakker, Van Doornen & Schaufeli, 2006, p. 522; Salanova, Bakker & Llorens, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003, p. 63). They maintain that flow consists of different elements such as clear goals in every step and balance between challenges and skills.

As noted by Csikszentmihalyi (1990, p. 4) the concept flow experience can be defined as a state of mind in which people are so intensely involved in their activities, that nothing else seems to matter, because the experience itself is so enjoyable, and they would even do it at greater cost, purely for the sake of doing it. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004a, p. 295) maintain that the concept flow is more complex and includes many aspects that refer in particular to short-term peak experiences, instead of a more pervasive and persistent state of mind, as is the case with engagement.

Based on the literature review, Bakker, Demerouti and Euwema (2005) also apply the concept of flow to the work situation, and describe it as a short-term peak experience at work that is characterised by absorption, work enjoyment and intrinsic work motivation. That is, employees who enjoy their work and feel happy, make a very positive judgement about the quality of their working life. The authors illustrate that employees who feel intrinsic motivation need to perform a certain work related activity with the aim of experiencing the inherent pleasure and

satisfaction in the activity. However, Csikszentmihalyi (1997) asserts that employees who are motivated by the intrinsic aspects of their work tasks want to continue their work, because they are fascinated by the tasks they perform.

However, there are generally two types of flow or peak experiences for employees in their everyday life (Bakker *et al.*, 2005). That is, flow or peak experiences by employees can occur outside the working environment and are normally associated with leisure activities or hobbies, which are possible in any domain of life. Moreover, flows or peaks experienced in the working environment are likely to occur when an employee experiences a good balance between job demands or challenges of the job and his or her professional skills (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

The main difference between the concepts flow and absorption lies with the fact that absorption is presumed to be a more persistent state of mind, which takes place specifically at work, whilst flow is similar to a short-term peak experience which might occur in any sphere of life (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Mauno *et al.*, 2007).

#### **4.4 ANTECEDENTS OF WORK ENGAGEMENT**

The antecedents of work engagement are basically contextualised from the viewpoint of occupational stress models (Mauno *et al.*, 2007, p. 152), based on the assumption that while people work in different environments, the characteristics of their environment can be classified into two broad theoretical categories, namely the job demands and job resources model (JD-R model) (Bakker, Demerouti & Schaufeli, 2003; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001) and the conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989).

As noted by Demerouti *et al.* (2001) and Schaufeli, Bakker and Rhenen (2009) these two broad categories can be classified in terms of negative (burnout/strain) and positive (work engagement) aspects of well-being by linking them to strain and motivation processes respectively. In general, job demands and job resources are negatively related in the sense that job demands, such as a high work pressure and emotionally demanding interactions with others, preclude the mobilisation of job

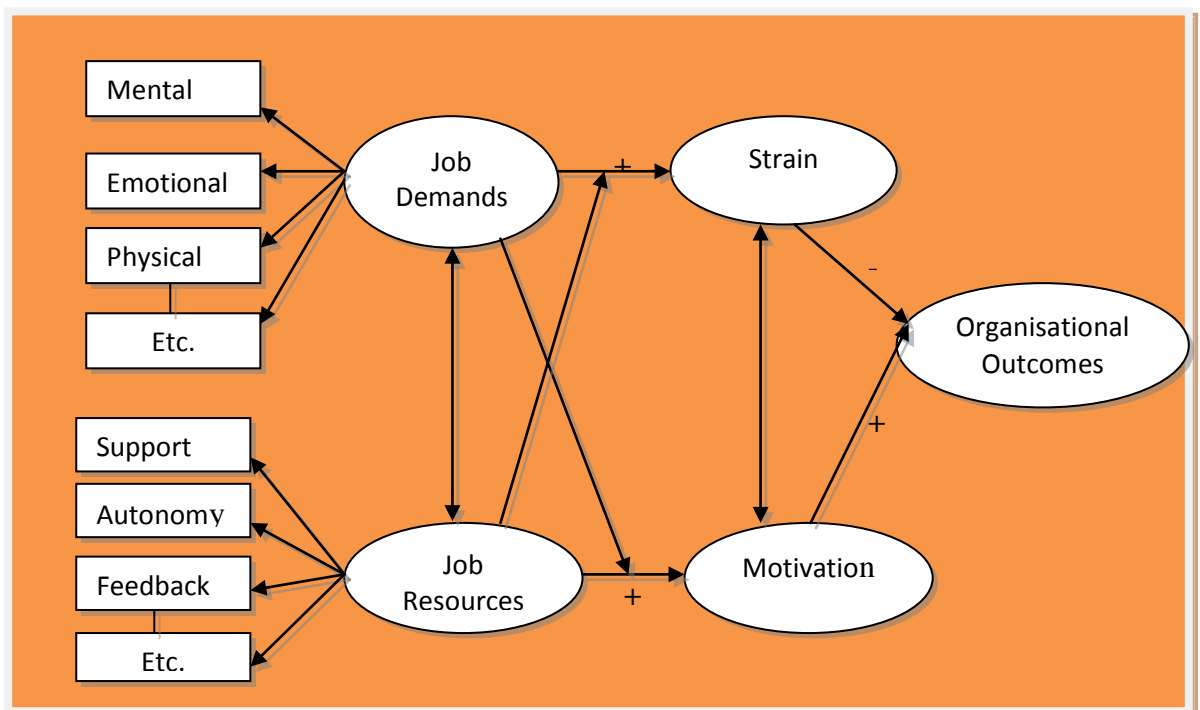
resources (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001). That is, higher job resources, such as social support and feedback, have the propensity to reduce the effects of job demands.

The JD-R model, however assumes two processes, namely an energetic as well as a motivational process. An energetic process refers to overtaxing and wearing out in which high job demands exhaust the employee's energy support, while a motivational process refers to a lack of resources which prevents the employee from effectively dealing with high job demands and fosters mental withdrawal or disengagement (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004b). According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2004b), the motivational process is linked to job resources through work engagement with organisational outcomes such as turnover intention, seemingly because it is highly unlikely that engaged employees would leave the organisation. The energetic process is linked to health problems via burnout, whereas the motivational process is linked to job resources via engagement with organisational outcomes.

Figure 4.1 present schematic components the job demands-resources model as illustrated by Bakker and Demerouti (2007).

Figure 4.1

*JOB DEMANDS-RESOURCES MODEL BY BAKKER AND DEMEROUTI 2007*



*Figure 4.1*, Represents a summary of the different components of the job demands-resources model. As can be seen from figure 4.1 the interaction between job demands and job resources is important for the development of the strain and motivation. According to Bakker and Demerouti (2007, p. 314) job resources may buffer the impact of the job demands on stress-reactions. At the same time, job resources have a motivational potential when job demands are high. They further accentuate that a high quality relationship between the supervisor and the subordinate may alleviate the influence of job demands on job strain, based on the social support the subordinate receives from the supervisor.

#### **4.4.1 Job demands model**

Job demands are defined by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004b, p. 296) as the degree to which the environment contains stimuli that peremptorily require attention and resources. These authors maintain that demands are the “things that have to be done”. Job demands are activities that employees have to perform in their organisation. They therefore refer to those physical, psychological, social or organisational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological (cognitive and emotional) effort and are thus associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs (Babakus, Yavas & Karatepe, 2008; Bakker, Demerouti, Taris, Schaufeli & Schreurs., 2003; Bakker *et al.*, 2005; Mauno *et al.*, 2005; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Some of the examples of job demands include workload, role ambiguity, role conflict, job insecurity and stressful events.

Several studies have shown that job demands might become stressors in situations that require high effort to sustain an expected performance level, consequently eliciting negative responses, including burnout (Hakanen, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2006, p. 497). This means that job demands constitute high pressure, an unfavourable environment as well as emotionally demanding interactions with other people. However, Schaufeli and Bakker (2004b) accentuate that job demands are not necessarily negative, but might turn into job stressors when meeting these

demands requires high effort. They are therefore associated with high costs that elicit negative responses such as depression, anxiety and/or burnout.

Like other studies, Babakus *et al.* (2008, p. 387) also identify two widely used indicators of job demands, namely role conflict and role ambiguity. They maintain that role ambiguity and role conflict are positively associated with emotional exhaustion and act as an indicator of employees' turnover intentions. As stated in Maslach *et al.* (2001), role conflict and ambiguity have consistently shown a moderate to high correlation with burnout. Role conflict occurs when an individual receives incompatible job demands from his/her role, co-workers and/or line managers and cannot satisfy all these demands simultaneously. On the other hand, role ambiguity occurs when an individual lacks information about his/her job and experiences a great deal of uncertainty about how to perform job-related tasks (Babakus *et al.*, 2008, p. 387).

#### **4.4.2 Job resources model**

Job resources refer to those physical, psychological, social or organisational aspects of the job that may be functional in achieving work goals, reducing job demands and associated physiological and psychological costs and stimulate personal growth and development as well as a positive state of work engagement (Bakker *et al.*, 2003; Demerouti *et al.*, 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Thus, employees' drive, perseverance, and interest in work depend on the extent to which their organisations provide them with the job resources they need to perform their work roles.

Job resources can be located at various levels, such as the organisation (eg salary, career opportunities, job security), interpersonal and social relations (eg supervisor and co-worker support, team climate), organisation of work (eg role clarity, participation in decision-making) and task (eg performance feedback, skill variety, task significance, task identity, autonomy) which are positively associated with work engagement (Babakus *et al.*, 2008; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker *et al.*, 2003; Demerouti *et al.*, 2001; Korunka *et al.*, 2009; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004b; Schaufeli &



Salanova, 2007). This means that employees with a better work life, who experience particularly higher levels of control, reward, recognition and value-fit are more engaged in their work activities.

However, Babakus *et al.* (2008) identify four job resources that are widely recognised as crucial to any organisational success and effectiveness, namely supervisory support, job control, performance feedback and social support. They maintain that job resources such as social support, performance feedback and supervisory support from either an intrinsic motivation with aspects that foster employee's growth, learning and development, or an extrinsic motivation such as being instrumental in achieving work goal (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Chughtai & Buckley, 2008). More importantly, these resources have motivational properties, because they make employees' work meaningful, hold them responsible for work processes and outcomes and provide them with information about the actual results of their work activities (Bakker *et al.*, 2003).

Intrinsic motivation is based on the assumption that effective training and development strategies have the propensity to enhance job competence, whilst job control and social support satisfy the need for autonomy and belonging. Extrinsic motivation is based on the notion that job resources should inspire employees to exert effort in their work and as a result increase the chances that they will be able to complete their tasks successfully and consequently attain work goals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004b).

The study by Naudé and Rothmann (2006) reports that the availability of job resources (when distress regarding job resources is low) and personal resources (when the sense of coherence is strong) enhances work engagement levels. Moreover, Mauno *et al.* (2007), as well as Saks (2006), in their empirical studies, find that job resources correlate with work engagement, particularly when high job demands are present.

The study by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) also highlights that job resources are the most important predictors of work engagement. For instance, work engagement

has been found to be positively related to job resources such as social support from colleagues and supervisors, performance feedback, job control, coaching, task variety and training facilities (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007). Similarly, Bakker *et al.* (2005) find that specified job resources such as social support at work, supervisory support and coaching were associated with high work engagement experiences in their longitudinal study among Finnish health care personnel at Time 1.

Like others, Salanova *et al.* (2003) also show that organisational resources are important predictors of work engagement, which, in turn, can be predictive of important organisational outcomes including organisational climate and group performance.

In contrast, lack of organisational resources can have detrimental effects on individual's motivation and performance, since it precludes actual goal accomplishment and undermines learning opportunities for the individual.

#### **4.4.3 Personal resources model**

In expanding the JD-R model, Xanthopoulou *et al.* (2007) included personal resources. In this regard, Schaufeli & Bakker (2004b) describe personal resources as positive self-evaluations that are linked to resiliency, and refer to the individual's sense of his/her ability to control and impact upon the environment successfully. The study by Chughtai and Buckley (2008) finds that personal resources partially mediate the effects of job resources on work engagement, suggesting that job resources promote the development of personal resources, which in turn augment employee's work engagement.

Several authors have investigated the relationships between personal resources and work engagement. For example, Storm and Rothmann (2003) conducted a large cross-sectional study among 1910 South African police officers, and found that engaged police officers use an active coping style. They are problem-focused, and take active steps to attempt to remove or rearrange stressors.

Further, in their study among highly skilled Dutch technicians, Xanthopoulou *et al.* (2007) examine the role of three personal resources (self-efficacy, organisational-based self-esteem, and optimism) in predicting work engagement. The results show that engaged employees are highly self-efficacious and they believe they are able to meet the demands they face in a broad array of contexts. In addition, engaged workers have the tendency to believe that they will generally experience good outcomes in life (optimistic), and believe they can satisfy their needs by participating in roles within the organisation (organisational-based self-esteem). Thus, employees who are high on optimism, self-efficacy, resilience and self-esteem are well able to mobilise their job resources, and generally are more engaged in their work role/activities.

#### **4.4.4 Conservation of resources theory**

The conservation of resources theory (COR) (Hobfoll, 1989) is a relevant theory for understanding the effects of job resources (or the lack thereof) on employees. The COR theory's central tenet is that people strive to obtain, retain and protect what they value (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 516). In other words, they protect their resources, which are personal energies and characteristics, objects and conditions, which are valued serve as a means for the attainment of other objects, personal characteristics, conditions or energies (Hobfoll, 1989). This theory implies that individuals must endeavour or strive to acquire and maintain their resources, which is similar to mastery-oriented strategies (mastery and control) as identified by Sonnentag and Fritz (2007).

Mastery experiences refer to pursuing mastery-related off-job activities that offer an individual challenges or opportunities to learn new skills (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). These experiences are expected to enhance recovery, because they help to build up new internal resources, such as skills, competencies, self-efficacy and positive mood. Control applied to leisure time refers to control over such decisions as to which activity to pursue, and when and how to pursue the chosen activity. According to Sonnentag and Fritz (2007), the experience of control during leisure

time may increase self-efficacy and feelings of competence; therefore it may be an external resource that promotes recovery from job strain.

According to Mauno *et al.* (2007), the main assumption in the COR theory is that positive experiences or resources are likely to accumulate, creating a positive spiral of resources, which, in turn, is likely to have positive health-promoting effects. This suggests that people who have some important resources are often able to gain other resources. The opposite also holds, and losing an important resource causes a loss of other resources, yielding finally a negative spiral of resource loss. Consequently, work engagement as a positive resource may result in a positive spiral of resources as well as in positive health effects.

Thus, previous studies have indicated that there are two principle types of resources that have been examined within the COR theory, namely personal resources and psychological resources (Hobfoll, 1989). Personal resources have received considerable research attention compared to psychological resources. As a result, a brief overview of the correlation between personal resources and engagement will be presented.

In terms of the COR theory, personal resources affect every individual and exist as a resource pool, and an expansion of one is often associated with the other being augmented (Hobfoll, 1998). When the external environment lacks resources, individuals cannot reduce the potentially negative influence of high job demands and they cannot achieve their work goals.

The COR theory predicts that in such a situation employees will experience a loss of resources or failure to gain an investment (Hobfoll, 1989). Moreover, in order to reduce this discomfort or job stress, employees will have to minimise their losses with the intention of achieving equity without suffering further negative, personal consequences.

Similarly, Xanthopoulou *et al.* (2007) expand the job demands and resources model by including personal resources. They find that three personal resources are

significantly related to work engagement, namely self efficacy, organisation based self-esteem and optimism. Thus, employees who score high on optimism, self-efficacy, resilience and self-esteem are well able to mobilise their job resources, and are generally more engaged in their work.

#### **4.4.5 Personal characteristics**

Previous studies that link personal characteristics such as age, gender, qualification, tenure and occupational position with work engagement are very limited. In the studies conducted by Schaufeli and Bakker (2003; 2004a) it is reported that work engagement correlates weakly and positively with age, implying that older employees feel slightly more engaged than younger employees. Furthermore, men are reported to be slightly more engaged than women although the difference is very small and not significant. Moreover, employees in higher occupational positions are relatively more engaged than employees in lower occupational positions. This result is aligned with the notion that engagement is related to being proactive and showing initiative and commitment.

It is hoped that this study will add to the work engagement concept as well as to industrial and organisational psychology by fostering an understanding of which personal characteristics make a person more likely to engage in their work activities in terms of threats within the organisation.

#### **4.5 CONSEQUENCES OF WORK ENGAGEMENT**

The possible consequences of work engagement relate to positive attitudes for the individual and within the organisation, such as job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and low turnover intention (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004b; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2003), as well as to positive organisational behaviour, such as personal initiative and learning motivation (Sonnentag, 2003), extra-role behaviour and proactive behaviour (Salanova *et al.*, 2003).

#### 4.5.1 Consequences of work engagement for employees

There are a number of reasons to expect engagement to be related to work outcomes. For instance, the experience of engagement has been described as a fulfilling, positive, work-related experience and state of mind and has been found to be related to good health and positive work affect (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004b). Work engagement at the individual level is associated with health (low levels of depression and distress) as well as higher performance and a greater exhibition of personal initiative, proactive behaviour and learning motivations (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007).

More importantly, Schaufeli *et al.* (2002a; 2002b), as well as Schaufeli and Bakker, (2003; 2004b) have explicitly stated the positive outcomes of work engagement through three components, namely vigour, dedication and absorption at the individual level. That is, work engagement at the individual level is linked to energy, mental resilience, sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration and challenges as well as being happily engrossed in work activities (Langelaan *et al.*, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003; 2004b; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002a; 2002b).

Roberts and Davenport (2002) find that career development and a rewarding work environment also increase the level of work engagement among employees. In this instance, Schaufeli and Bakker (2004a) argue that if employees are provided with a variety of tasks in their work roles, such as learning opportunities and autonomy, they will be more likely to engage in activities at work. Furthermore, social support from colleagues and superiors, performance feedback, coaching, job control and training facilities will enhance engagement amongst employees (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007) and, in turn, employees will feel more secure and safe in their work.

Schaufeli and Salanova (2007) maintain that a positive interplay between work and home is associated with work engagement. For instance, employees who take positive experiences from home to work (or vice versa) exhibit higher levels of engagement compared to those for whom no positive transmission exists.

#### 4.5.2 Consequences of work engagement to the organisation

Work engagement at the organisational level has positive consequences for the organisation. Several studies have demonstrated that high levels of engagement lead to increased organisational commitment, increased job satisfaction, lower absenteeism and turnover as well as increased extra role behaviour (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004b; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007). Consequently, Harter *et al.* (2002) assume that there is a connection between employee engagement and the performance of business unit (overall job performance).

Hakanen *et al.* (2006) report that job resources in the form of job control, information, supervisory support, innovative climate and social climate, are positively related to work engagement. In addition, they observe that work engagement mediates the relationship between job resources and organisational commitment. Furthermore, job resources have been found to have an important correlation with work engagement (Llorens, Bakker, Salanova & Schaufeli, 2006; Mauno *et al.*, 2007; Saks, 2008). This is because job resources cover the basic dimensions of intrinsic motivation, which ensures goal-oriented behaviour and persistence in attaining objectives along with levels of activation (vigour) as well as feeling enthusiastic, and identifying with and being proud of one's job (dedication) (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007). Therefore, employees' drive, perseverance, and interest in work depend on the extent to which the organisation provides them with the job resources they need to perform their work roles. As noted in the work, contexts that support psychological autonomy, competence and relatedness, enhance intrinsic motivation and increase well-being.

## **4.6 THEORETICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOB INSECURITY, ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT AND WORK ENGAGEMENT**

This section addresses step 4 of the literature review by integrating the theoretical concepts of job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement. The purpose of this section is to explore the relationship between job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement. Figure 6.2 in chapter 6 illustrates the theoretical relationship between the concepts as discussed below.

### **4.6.1 The relationship between job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement**

Based on the theoretical model of job insecurity (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984), an interdependent relationship between job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement is possible. The model implicitly and explicitly is based on employees' feelings of job insecurity and is derived from both the subjective and objective threat (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984). That is, job insecurity is a subjective feeling based on how employees perceive and interpret their immediate work situations. As such, job insecurity implies uncontrollability and feelings of powerlessness, which are known to be related to poor well-being. Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984), as well as Probst (2003) regard perceived powerlessness as the most important variable in the study of job insecurity.

Numerous studies have shown that subjective feelings of job insecurity are not the same for all employees exposed to similar work situations (De Witte, 1999; 2005; Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Rosenblatt & Ruvio, 1996; Sverke *et al.*, 2002), because employees do not necessarily respond in the same way to uncertainty. Moreover, Maslach *et al.* (2001) maintain that people vary in the expectations that they bring to their job. That is, high expectations could lead people to work harder, thus leading to exhaustion and cynicism when increased effort does not yield the expected results.

Employees develop affective and attitudinal attachments toward their organisation over time, which is evident in high levels of commitment, satisfaction and trust (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Bosman *et al.*, 2005; De Witte, 1999; Mowday *et al.*, 1979;



Rosenblatt & Ruvio, 1996). The authors maintain that feelings of job insecurity may threaten these basic attachments, such as commitment, satisfaction and trust.

More specifically, subjective feelings of job insecurity have the propensity to influence job related attitudes such as organisational commitment and work engagement. Job insecurity is mostly interpreted as a work stressor or strain for the individual involved (De Witte, 1999; De Cuyper & De Witte, 2005) with negative job-related attitudes such as decreased levels of organisational commitment (Ashford *et al.*, 1984; Buitendach & De Witte, 2005; Chang & Chan, 2008; Davy *et al.*, 1997; Sverke & Hellgren, 2002; Sverke *et al.*, 2002) and disengagement of employees in their work roles (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2005; Maslach *et al.*, 2001; Mauno *et al.*, 2007). Although, in the meta-analyses conducted by Sverke and Hellgren (2002), such negative job-related attitudes are insignificant because employees are unique and they interpret their situation differently from one another.

Theoretically, the negative job-related attitudes related to feelings of job insecurity can be described by the social exchange theory (Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010) as well as the psychological contract theory (De Witte, 1999; Buitendach & De Witte, 2005). These theories are useful in better understanding the negative relationship associated with job insecurity and job-related attitudes, namely organisational commitment and work engagement. Furthermore, Saks (2008) uses the social exchange theory to explain why employees would choose to become more or less engaged in their work as well as the organisation.

The basic tenets of the social exchange theory are the relationship between employees and the organisation which evolve over time into trust, loyalty and mutual commitment (Saks, 2008). Therefore, when employees perceive that their employment relationships are stable, they are likely to go beyond their prescribed contractual agreement in performing their work role in the organisation, because of the economic and the socio-emotional exchange between two parties. The social exchange theory is conceptually consistent with Robinson *et al.*'s (2004) description of engagement as a two-way relationship between the employees and the organisation.

Therefore, when employees receive these resources from their organisation, they feel obliged to repay the organisation with greater levels of engagement. On the contrary, when the organisation fails to provide these resources, employees are more likely to withdraw and disengage themselves from their work roles (Saks, 2008). This failure could emanate to the psychological contract with a resultant decrease in organisational commitment (McDonald & Makin, 2000; Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010) and lowered work engagement (Mauno *et al.*, 2005).

According to Demerouti *et al.* (2001) as well as Hakanen *et al.* (2005) work strain occurs when employees face high demands together with low control, with this condition being shaped by the employment relationship and by employment conditions rather than by the job. Therefore, the combination of high job insecurity, which involves high demands, and low perceived employability leads to employment strain.

Several studies have indicated that strong perceptions of job insecurity predict lower organisational commitment (Cheng & Chan, 2008; De Cuyper & De Witte, 2005; Sverke & Hellgren, 2001; Sverke *et al.*, 2002) suggesting that commitment levels decline during uncertainty about future employment and about depleted resources (Mauno *et al.*, 2007). That is, employees' reaction to job insecurity includes reduced work effort (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984), implying that their level of work engagement and performance is affected by job insecurity.

In the case of job insecurity, people feel a threat to their highly valued resource of employment and therefore might withdraw from activities that further demand their resources (Maslach *et al.*, 2001). This behaviour might affect their job performance. As a result, employees might attempt to minimise effort investment in their work roles/activities and rather switch to activities that are less demanding on their resources. In addition, if people reduce their efforts in their regular work behaviour, they are very likely to also reduce investments in any type of contextual performance, such as OCB.

Other researchers have argued that the fear of losing their jobs may motivate employees to engage in individual action to actively cope with the threat (Hirschman, 1970; Sverke & Hellgren, 2002). For example, employees might think that by increasing their performance effort they might lower the possibility of losing their job. It is further assumed that if employees are engaged, their subjective assessment of the objective threat will be affected in such a way that they do not experience job insecurity to a larger extent (Mauno *et al.*, 2005).

In addition, Sverke and Hellgren (2002) note that even though findings could be similar, the magnitude of the relationship differs substantially between studies. This implies that the extent to which employees feel that they possess the necessary resources for handling the consequences of a realised threat differs from employee to employee as well as from country to country.

According to May *et al.* (2004), individuals who feel psychologically safe are likely to engage themselves more fully in their work activities. Thus it could be assumed that a person in a psychologically unsafe situation (job insecure) would mostly likely be less engaged in their work activities. In addition, Bakker and Demerouti (2007) explain that engaged employees perform better than those who are not engaged, because they are emotionally more positive (happy, joyful and enthusiastic) and enjoy better health. More importantly, engaged employees have the personal and job resources to motivate them to perform.

However, Luthans and Youssef (2007) note that when employees are concerned about the possibility of losing their job, they might initially tend to respond by working harder and longer to show value to their organisation in the hopes of securing their employment. They further state that if such extraordinary work efforts persist for too long, they might have unintended negative consequences, such as work performance quality deficits, job burnout and health problems such as increased stress, anxiety and depression. Some employees with very low levels of engagement, who may be defined as having active disengagement, may match what highly engaged colleagues are trying to accomplish. Therefore, encouraging work engagement is especially needed during uncertainty or threat of job loss.

#### 4.6.2 The relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment

With regard to the relationship between organisational commitment and work engagement, there are divergent and conflicting views of the relationship between job related attitudes, although some studies maintain that work engagement is not an attitude (Maslach *et al.*, 2001; Saks, 2008).

Nonetheless Maslach *et al.* (2001) explicitly state that work engagement is different from concepts such as organisational commitment, job satisfaction and job involvement as well as other job-related attitudes such as organisational citizenship behaviour. They regard work engagement as behaviour which focuses on how employees internalise their behaviour in the organisation.

Furthermore, organisational commitment differs from engagement in that it refers to an employees' identification with and attachment to the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991; 1997; Mowday *et al.*, 1979) whereas work engagement refers to the degree to which employees are attentive and absorbed in the performance of their work roles/activities. The experience of engagement has been described as a fulfilling, positive, work-related experience and state of mind (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004b) and has been found to be related to good health and positive work experience.

More specifically, engagement has been found to be positively related to organisational commitment and negatively related to intention to quit, and is believed to also be related to job performance and extra-role behaviour (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004b). In this regard, Schaufeli and Bakker (2004b) note that engaged employees are likely to have a greater attachment to their organisation and a lower tendency to leave their organisation, and thus employees who continue to engage themselves do so because of the continuation of favourable reciprocal exchanges.

On the contrary Roberts and Davenport (2002) state that work engagement and organisational commitment are closely related, and often to such an extent that it makes sense to talk about a more general outcome, that is, organisational

engagement, which combines key elements of work engagement and organisational commitment. They maintain that although the two concepts are related, they are not identical, because employees can be engaged in their work roles/activities, but not committed to their organisations, or committed to their organisations, but not engaged in their work roles/activities.

Luthans and Youssef (2007) describe work engagement as the extent to which employees are involved with, committed to and passionate about their work. As a result employees who continue to engage themselves with the organisation do so because of the continuation of favourable reciprocal exchanges. Furthermore, employees who are more engaged are likely to be in more trusting and high-quality relationships in their organisation and will, therefore, be more likely to report more positive attitudes and intentions toward the organisation (Luthans & Youssef, 2007).

The decline in commitment has also been associated with low levels of staff morale. In this regard Mowday *et al.* (1982) assert that generally non-committed employees have a tendency to describe the organisation in negative terms particularly to outsiders, thereby inhibiting the organisation's ability to recruit highly qualified employees.

#### **4.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In this chapter, the concept work engagement was defined and described with respect to Maslach *et al.* (2001), as well as Schaufeli *et al.* (2002a;2002b) reflecting the multidimensionality of engagement. Furthermore, the three components of work engagement (vigour, dedication and absorption) were presented. The antecedents of work engagement with specific reference to the JD-R model and COR theory were also described, with a discussion of the positive consequences of engagement.

The next chapter presents the empirical design.

## CHAPTER 5

### EMPIRICAL STUDY

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will address the research methodology to be used in this study. The issues that will be dealt with include the research design, participants, research instruments and the rationale thereof, reliability and validity of the research instruments, scoring techniques, data collection procedures and the method of statistical analysis.

#### 5.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design, according to Tustin *et al.* (2005, p. 82), is the plan that is followed to realise the research objectives or hypotheses. The research design represents the master plan that specifies the methods and procedures for collecting and analysing the required information.

An exploratory research design is normally used when searching for insights into the general nature of the research problem, as well as possible alternatives and variables that need to be considered for resolving the research problem under investigation. Typically an exploratory approach relies on literature reviews and/or unstructured interviews with either individuals and/or focus groups to learn more about the nature of the problem.

For the purpose of this study, an exploratory research design will be used based on the already-known focus area of the research. This design encompasses a quantitative research approach of which a representation can be established among the general population under study.

#### 5.3 POPULATION AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE

The compilation and characteristics of the population and sampling procedures are discussed in the sections that follow.

### **5.3.1 Population**

The research population refers to the total group of people or entities from which information is required (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002a). For the purpose of this study, the research population consists of the academic and professional/administrative employees, as well as support staff composed of computer technicians, librarians and administrative support staff employed permanently. That is, the entire population consists of approximately 4460 employees. The organisational database of all employees disaggregated by college, department and staff position will be used as a sampling frame. In this study, a comprehensive electronic list of all employees employed permanently was requested from the tertiary institution's Department of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

Employees who are involved in the non-core work of the institution, such as cleaners, contracted security and contracted gardeners, as well as those doing maintenance work were excluded.

### **5.3.2 Sampling procedure**

A two-stage stratified probability proportional to size (PPS) sampling process will be adopted for the purpose of the study to ensure that sample results are representative of the population. Stratified sampling is a method of a probability sample technique that accords all employees a non-zero probability of being included in the sample (Tustin *et al.*, 2005 p. 344). According to Durrheim and Painter (2006), a stratified sampling is used to establish a greater degree of representativeness in situations where populations consist of subgroups or strata. That is the sample units/elements will be drawn from each strata (department) independently.

Thus, the first stratum that was taken into consideration in the sampling process was the college which was followed by the employee's position. The final sampling process involved was a systematic random sampling for selecting employees to participate in the study.

Because it was impossible to include all employees in the study, a sample of 250 employees was drawn from the entire population. A sample is simply the units or elements that are included in a study (Durrheim & Painter, 2006).

A pre-test of the instrument was conducted involving 10 employees. The results from the pre-test were combined with those of the main study. This increased the sample size to 260 employees, which represents a response rate of 100 %.

#### **5.4 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS**

Three standardised measuring instruments were used in the empirical study namely, the job insecurity scales (JIS) developed by Ashford *et al.* (1989, p. 827), the organisational commitment questionnaire (OCQ) developed by Allen and Meyer (1990, p. 118) and the Utrecht work engagement scale (UWES) developed by Schaufeli *et al.* (2002b) as well as Schaufeli and Bakker (2004a).

A biographical questionnaire was also included in the measuring instrument regarding respondents' age, gender, educational qualification and tenure.

##### **5.4.1 The Job Insecurity Scale**

The job insecurity scale (JIS) will be discussed in terms of its rationale, aims, dimensions, administration, reliability and validity as well as justification for inclusion.

###### *5.4.1.1 Development*

Ashford *et al.* (1989) developed a measure of job insecurity scale based on Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt's (1984) theoretical model of job insecurity. They constructed a multi-faceted measure of job insecurity that consists of several components, namely job features (importance and likelihood of losing job features) total job (importance and likelihood of losing the total job) and powerlessness. It is reiterated in Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt's (1984) theoretical model that job insecurity should best be measured as the interaction of several components.



#### 5.4.1.2 *Rationale*

The importance of including the measure of job insecurity scale is that the scale not only assesses job features, but also incorporates features associated with the job itself. The subscale items reflect the possible occurrence of various events that could negatively affect individual employees' total job or job features and whether the employees are able to counteract the threat.

#### 5.4.1.3 *Aims of instrument*

The aim of the instrument is to measure job features (importance and likelihood of losing job features), the total job (importance and likelihood of losing the total job) and powerlessness (Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt, 1984; Ashford *et al.*, 1989). The aim of the job insecurity scale in this study was to measure the level of severity of threat and powerlessness, and also to make inferences from the data in comparison with organisational commitment and work engagement.

#### 5.4.1.4 *Dimensions*

The dimension of the job insecurity scale is 54 items. A 16-item subscale was constructed to include a comprehensive list of relevant job features. The items included are concerns over promotional opportunities, freedom to schedule work, quality of supervision, access to organisational resources, task variety, etc. The subscale was constructed to assess the importance and likelihood of losing one or all of the job features. Each item was rated on a five-point Likert scale. Included in the scale was a 'not applicable' option.

Subscales measuring both the importance and likelihood of change affecting the total job were also developed based of the recommendation by Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984). The components were measured using 10 items, each using different stems and response categories to reflect importance and likelihood on a five-point Likert scale. Included in the scale is a 'not applicable' option.

Two items were devised for measuring powerlessness. Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) emphasise the importance of considering powerlessness by explaining that the sense of powerlessness experienced by employees intensifies the experienced threat. A 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was applied. Included in the scale is a 'not applicable' option.

Three-items were eliminated from the survey due to the sensitivity of the questions.

#### 5.4.1.5 *Administration*

The job insecurity scale can be administered individually or among groups of people (Ashford *et al.*, 1984). In this study, job insecurity was administered individually amongst employees. An employee was required to respond to questions/statements based on the extent to which each of the statements captured their importance and perceived threats. Job insecurity was assessed in terms of the severity to the threat (ie loss of job features, likelihood of losing job features, total job loss, likelihood of job loss) and powerlessness to counteract the threat. The questions consist of both positive and negative questions.

#### 5.4.1.6 *Reliability and validity*

In the study conducted by Ashford *et al.* (1989, p. 810) amongst professional colleagues, operating room nurses, employees of a legal firm and employees of a public university in the eastern United States, it was revealed that an estimated alpha ranging from 0.74 to 0.92 was achieved. In this study, a reliability coefficient (Cronbach alpha) was calculated for the scales, measuring each of the dimensions of job insecurity and for the job insecurity scale as a whole. That is, a reliability coefficient for each dimension was calculated to determine the reliability of the scale for the survey participants.

Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984, p. 443) maintain that the content validity of the measure of JIS should encompass both the severity of the threat (job features and total job) and the employee's sense of powerlessness to counteract the anticipated

loss. However, Van Vuuren, Klandermans, Jacobson and Hartley (1991, p. 72) confirm the content validity of job features. They find a significant correlation between fear of losing job features and feelings of job insecurity. Ashford *et al.* (1989) argue that their multidimensional measure of job insecurity explains greater variance than a one-dimensional measure of job insecurity. In the same vein, Sverke *et al.* (2002) argued that measures consisting of multiple items encompass more of the job insecurity experience and generate a higher degree of content validity as compared to single item measures.

#### 5.4.1.7 *Interpretation*

For each item, respondents were required to indicate the extent to which each of the job features and the total job itself are important to them, and also the possibility that change could occur and negatively affect each of the job features as well as the total job. The subscale item scores were a product of the importance and the likelihood components and perceive powerlessness. In order to determine the degree of experienced job insecurity, participants have to score on either the severity of threat and/or perceive powerlessness to counteract the threat. According to the different studies, the total job insecurity scale could range from 5 (5x1) to 25 (5x5) (Ashford *et al.*, 1989; Rosenblatt & Ruvio, 1996). This implies that a low score should be indicative that the respondent experiences low job insecurity, whilst a high score would indicate that he/she experiences high job insecurity.

#### 5.4.1.8 *Justification for inclusion*

The justification for the inclusion of the job insecurity scale is that the instrument measure encompasses both the severity of the threat (importance and likelihood of job loss and/or job features loss) and employee's sense of powerlessness to counteract the threat. The relationship is multiplicative in the sense that if either of the two factors is insignificant, the degree of job insecurity is insignificant. Other instruments, such as the one developed by De Witte (2005), only focus on cognitive and affective job loss without taking into cognisance the job attributes which are as important as the job itself.

## 5.4.2 The Organisational Commitment Questionnaire

The organisational commitment questionnaire (OCQ) will be discussed in terms of its rationale, aims, dimensions, administration, reliability and validity as well as the justification for its use.

### 5.4.2.1 *Development*

The organisational commitment questionnaire emerged as an essential instrument in organisational research due to its association with important work-related constructs such as absenteeism, job involvement and leadership (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

Initially, Meyer and Allen (1984) proposed that a distinction be made between affective and continuance commitment, with affective commitment denoting an emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organisation, while continuance commitment denotes the perceived costs associated with leaving the organisation. They subsequently included a third component of commitment namely, normative commitment, which reflects a perceived obligation to remain in the organisation.

For affective commitment, the statements dealt with a sense of belonging to the organisation, emotional attachment to the organisation, willingness to spend the rest of one's career with the organisation, the feeling that the organisation's problems are those of employees, the meaning the organisation has for the employee, and a feeling of being a part of the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991; 1997).

The continuance commitment statements included the feeling of having few alternative employment opportunities if one leaves the organisation, the feeling that it is a necessity to remain with the organisation, the difficulty of leaving, and lifestyle disruption from leaving the organisation, as well as too much investment in the organisation to leave (Meyer & Allen, 1991; 1997).

The normative commitment statements dealt with a feeling of an obligation to remain with the organisation, and a feeling that leaving the organisation is not the right thing to do. Other statements dealt with loyalty, feelings of guilt if one left, feelings that one owes the organisation something, and sense of obligation to the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991; 1997).

#### 5.4.2.2 *Rationale*

The rationale for the scale is that it measures organisational commitment on three different subscales (employee's affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment) and the total commitment as a whole (Meyer & Allen, 1991; 1997). Organisational commitment describes the influence of an employee's psychological attachments to the organisation regarding his/her intentions to remain with or leave the organisation. The theories underlining the principles of commitment are accurate predictors of certain behavioural aspects such as staff turnover (Meyer & Allen, 1991; 1997).

Mowday *et al.* (1982) maintain that organisational commitment is important for the organisation as it is an indication of the relevance that organisational variables such as tardiness, staff turnover and absenteeism have on productivity. In essence, organisational commitment is indicative of the efficiency of an organisation. In this regard construct commitment assists in placing the psychological processes of employees in perspective.

#### 5.4.2.3 *Aim of instrument*

The aim of the organisational commitment scale is to measure affective, continuance and normative commitment in order to determine how employees view their jobs and what their reactions to work are (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer *et al.*, 1993).

#### 5.4.2.4 *Dimensions*

The 24-item organisational commitment questionnaire, developed by Allen and Meyer (1990, p. 118), will be used to measure employees' organisational

commitment. The item statements for the organisational commitment questionnaire are from Allen and Meyer (1990). Each type of commitment (ie affective, normative and continuance) is measured using a scale containing eight statements.

The scale items for measuring affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment were selected for inclusion in the scales on the basis of a series of decision rules that took into consideration the distribution of responses on a 7-point agree-disagree scale for each item, item-scale correlations, content redundancy, and the preference to include both positively and negatively keyed items.

Both negative and positive items therefore will be selected. That is, several items were negatively phrased and reverse scored in an attempt to reduce response bias. The letter 'R' in certain statements indicates a reverse-keyed item (scoring is reversed). Following the application of the rules, Allen and Meyer (1990) selected eight items for inclusion in each of the scales.

Although the original organisational commitment questionnaire was applied in this study, the response format employed will be on a 5-point Likert scale with the following anchors labelled 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neither agree nor disagree), 4 agree and 5 strongly agree. Included in the scale is a 'not applicable' option.

#### 5.4.2.5 *Administration*

The organisational commitment questionnaire can be administered individually or among groups of people (Allen & Meyer, 1990). In this study, the relevant questionnaire was administered individually amongst employees of a tertiary institution. The items were answered according to the extent to which respondents agree or disagree with each of the statements and the scores in the affective, continuance and normative commitment were thus measured.

#### 5.4.2.6 *Reliability and validity*

The reliability of the measurements was assessed by calculating the reliability coefficient, Cronbach's  $\alpha$ , for the scales measuring each of the components of commitment, and for the organisational commitment scale as a whole. Generally, the reliability of the various scales is relatively high with  $\alpha$  ranging from 0.75 to 0.84. Allen and Meyer (1990) report the reliability of the affective commitment scale as 0.87, that of the continuance commitment scale as 0.75 and of the normative commitment scale as 0.79. Their results show that the three commitment constructs can be measured reliably.

Previous studies (Porter *et al.*, 1974; Mowday *et al.*, 1979) demonstrate that this scale has adequate psychometric properties, and the data pertaining to its reliability and validity are generally positive.

#### 5.4.2.7 *Interpretation*

The score of each of the eight-items provides a total and an average score in each scale. The total score in each scale indicates the employee's level of affective, continuance and normative commitment. In this respect, the higher the level of commitment on each scale, the more committed employees are relative to their organisation. The scales of organisational commitment were also used to determine the correlations with other variables and to indicate the levels of organisational commitment. The average score of the 24 items will be an indication of the general commitment of the participants.

#### 5.4.2.8 *Justification for inclusion*

The organisational commitment questionnaire is used in the present study as it fits and supports the operational concepts. Furthermore, the instrument is used because of its ability to produce reliability and the fact that it is easier to administer. In this study, the overall commitment is taken into consideration with the aim of exploring the relationship between job insecurity and organisational commitment as well as the relationship between organisational commitment and work engagement. This scale is appropriate because it has been widely used to measure

organisational commitment (Angle & Perry, 1981; Beck & Wilson, 2000). According to Mowday *et al.*, (1979) the measure of organisational commitment provides the acceptable level of convergent, discriminant and predictive validity.

### **5.4.3 The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale**

Work engagement will be measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). The UWES will be discussed in terms of its development, rationale, aims, dimensions, administration, reliability and validity as well as justification for inclusion.

#### *5.4.3.1 Development*

Schaufeli *et al.* (2002b) introduced the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) after opposing the measure for burnout developed by Maslach *et al.* (2001), which was exclusively preoccupied with negative results. Specifically, work engagement seeks to reveal the positive, fulfilling, affective-cognitive, work-related state of mind that is persistent and pervasive (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002b), and it thus focuses on human strengths and optimal functioning (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

#### *5.4.3.2 Rationale*

The rationale of the instrument is that it reflects the respondent's engagement to the organisation through scientifically formulated questions that indicate levels of vigour, dedication and absorption. Storm and Rothmann (2003) point out that the UWES can be used as an unbiased instrument to measure work engagement, because its equivalence is acceptable for different racial group.

Not only is work engagement personally valued and motivating for workers, it also is important for driving positive business processes and outcomes. Comparing highly engaged employees with less engaged workers provides some insights into how engagement can affect business outcomes.



#### 5.4.3.3 *Aim of instrument*

The Utrecht work engagement scales is based on the notion that engaged employees characteristically have high levels of energy and effective connection to work-related activities, furthermore, employees believe in their ability to cope well with the demands of their job (Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova 2006). Thus the aim of the scale is to measure the work-related state of mind of employees which is characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002b).

#### 5.4.3.4 *Dimensions*

The 17-items reversed measure of the UWES was used to assess the level of employees' engagement. The UWES includes three dimensions, namely vigour, dedication and absorption, which are conceptually regarded as the opposite of burnout (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002b).

The first dimension of work engagement is vigour and refers to high levels of energy and resilience while working, an employee's willingness to make appreciable efforts in his/her job and persistence in the face of difficulties (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002b). Thus an employee who feels great vigour at work is highly motivated with his/her job and is likely to remain very persistent when encountering difficulties or hassles at work.

The second dimension of work engagement is dedication which is characterised by a strong sense of involvement in one's job, combined with a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002b). This dimension shares some conceptual similarity with the concept job involvement.

The last dimension, absorption, refers specifically to total concentration on and immersion in work characterised by time passing quickly and finding it difficult to detach oneself from one's job (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002b). This dimension shares some conceptual similarity with the concept flow.

The response format employed will be on a 6-point frequency rating scale with the following anchors labelled 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neither agree nor disagree), 4 (agree), 5 (strongly agree) and 6 (not applicable).

#### *5.4.3.5 Administration*

Most efforts to measure work engagement have been through self-report surveys of individual workers (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). The person-level scores are usually then aggregated to measure engagement at the organisational and/or workgroup level. The UWES can be administered individually as well as group-wise. The UWES may be used for individual assessment as well as for group assessment, for instance as part of an employee satisfaction survey (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003).

#### *5.4.3.6 Reliability and validity*

The UWES was found to yield acceptable reliability. Schaufeli *et al.* (2002b) revealed internally consistent results for the three scales of the UWES. The reverse UWES 17-item has encouraging psychometric features for its score. In accordance to Demerouti *et al.* (2001) the scales have internal consistencies (Cronbach's alpha) typically ranging from between 0.80 to 0.90. However, Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) argue that a value of Cronbach's alpha exceeding the value of 0.70 is actually the rule of thumb and is considered a generally accepted standard.

In support of the reliability of the UWES, Schaufeli *et al.* (2002a), in addition calculated the confirmatory factor analyses of the three-factor structure of the UWES to show the fit of the scales. The UWES has been validated in several countries, including South Africa, and the internal consistency of the subscales has proven to be sufficient in those countries (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2006). Taken together this means that work engagement is a construct that consists of three closely related aspects that can be measured by three consistent scales.

#### 5.4.3.7 Interpretation

The mean scale score of the three UWES subscales is computed by adding the scores on the particular scale and dividing the sum by the number of items of the subscale involved. A similar procedure is followed for the total score. Hence, the UWES yields three subscale scores and/or a total score that ranges between 1 and 6.

Employees who score high on vigour have much energy and stamina when working, whereas those who score low have less energy as far as their work is concerned. This, however, applies to employees who score high on dedication strongly, as they identify themselves with their work because it is perceived as meaningful, inspiring, and challenging, and they usually feel enthusiastic about and proud of their work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). On the contrary, employees who score low do not identify themselves with their work, because they do not see it as meaningful, inspiring, or challenging. Moreover, they feel neither enthusiastic about nor proud of their work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003).

Those who score high on absorption feel that they usually are happily engrossed in their work, they feel immersed in their work and have difficulties detaching from it, because it carries them away. As a consequence, everything else around them is forgotten and time seems to fly. Those who score low on absorption do not feel engrossed or immersed in their work, they do have no difficulty detaching from it, nor do they forget everything around them, including time (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003).

#### 5.4.3.8 Justification for inclusion

The justification for inclusion of the work engagement is the potential positive consequences for both the organisation and the individual employee. From the individual employees' perspective, high levels of engagement have the tendency to enhance organisational commitment and increase job satisfaction as well as lower turnover rates (Robinson *et al.*, 2004).

The scale was chosen for this study, because it reflects how people view, feel about and react to their work activities and will therefore improve our understanding of employees' emotional and personal experience of their work. According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2003), engaged employees often experience positive emotions including happiness, joy and enthusiasm, create their own job and personal resources as well as transfer their engagement to others. The UWES can be regarded as a valid and reliable indicator of work engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003), because it has been used and assessed extensively internationally and nationally.

#### **5.4.4 Demographic details**

Data measuring several demographic variables were also obtained. These variables include age, gender, educational level and job tenure, which will, however, be controlled when performing analysis of variance.

### **5.5 DATA COLLECTION**

The method of data collection used was a combination of a computer-aided telephone interview (CATI) technique and a self-administrated paper-based technique. The CATI entails the designing and uploading of the questionnaire on a Web-server, where telephone interviewing takes place aided by a computer between the fieldworker and the participant. A self-administrated paper-based technique implies that participants complete the questionnaire themselves without the help of the fieldworker. This method was suggested by the participants who were unable to complete the questionnaire telephonically.

The selection of the CATI and self-administrated paper-based technique was based on time and cost, and most importantly on the high response rates the techniques could yield.

#### **5.5.1 Fieldwork management and administration**

Four trained and experienced fieldworkers from a reputable research institution were recruited to conduct telephonic interviews with selected participants. The

CATI and self-administrated paper-based survey were administrated at the institution's offices using its equipment.

The fieldworkers were recruited, trained and managed by the researcher. Using students in research initiatives of this nature aligns well with community engagement programmes.

Debriefing sessions were held on a continuous basis, deliberating on any problems experienced and also to answer any queries related to the study.

The CATI and self-administrated paper-based interviews started on 4 October 2010 and concluded on 20 October 2010.

#### **5.5.2 Data capturing, editing, cleaning and verification**

The CATI and web-based survey allowed for electronic data capturing. With respect to the self-administrated paper-based survey, the data capturing was carried out by the fieldworkers. This was, however, followed by data editing and cleaning, and the incomplete questionnaires were discarded in the final datasets. A verification process was also conducted prior to storing the data for analysis and interpretation.

### **5.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethical considerations were taken into account prior to applying the research instruments. The procedure entailed a letter of permission and the necessary documentation as well as the application form submitted to the Ethical Committee requesting permission to a conduct survey among employees. The research proposal, which included the background and scope of the study, objectives/aims and the research methodology were submitted to the Ethical Committee. The participants were assured of confidentiality and told that participation was voluntary. Furthermore, verbal consent was required from participants prior to the interviews.

## 5.7 DATA ANALYSIS

The nature of online Web interviews resulted in responses being captured in electronic format. Statistical analysis was carried out with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, (PASW SPSS 2006) software programme as well as AMOS program (Arbuckle, 2010). All responses transferred to the e-database were edited, coded and verified. The entire dataset was cleaned prior to analysis and interpretation.

### 5.7.1 Descriptive statistics

The term descriptive statistics entails ordering and summarising the data by means of tabulation and graphic representation and the calculation of descriptive measures (Steyn, Smit, Du Toit & Strasheim, 2003). In the present study, descriptive statistics such as the arithmetic mean, standard deviations and the alpha coefficient were used to analyse the data.

#### 5.7.1.1 Cronbach's alpha coefficients

According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2000a) the reliability of an instrument can be defined in terms of internal consistency, where each item in a scale correlates with each item, ensuring that a test that measures the same thing more than once has the same outcome results. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for each of the measuring instruments to test for the reliability of the scales. That is, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients ( $\alpha$ ) were used to assess the internal consistency of the three measuring instruments.

#### 5.7.1.2 Validity

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2000a) define validity as the extent to which specific concepts and conclusion are sound. In assessing the validity of the research instruments, factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis were used, as well as structural equation modelling (SEM) methods implemented by the AMOS programme (Arbuckle, 2010).

### 5.7.1.3 *Arithmetic mean and standard deviations*

The arithmetic mean is the most widely used measure of central tendency, and is defined by Diamantopoulos and Schlegelmilch (2006, p. 97) as the sum of a set of values divided by their number. Thus, the arithmetic mean provides an average for a set of scores, whereas the standard deviation gives an approximate picture of the average distance of each number in a set from the centre value. It reflects the distance of all the individual values from the arithmetic mean.

## 5.7.2 **Pearson-product correlation moment coefficient**

Pearson product moment correlation is symbolised by the small letter ( $r$ ) and used to calculate the direction and strength of the relationship between variables. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient indicates the strength and direction of the correlations between item scores on the various scales (Tredoux & Durrheim, 2002). The relationship between variables can be positive correlation (change in one variable leads to similar change in the other variable) and negative correlation (change in one variable leads to the opposite change in the other variables) (Tredoux & Durrheim, 2002).

The product moment correlation coefficient varies between  $-1.00$  and  $+1.00$ . The closer the value of a correlation coefficient is to  $-1.00$  (negative correlation) or to  $+1.00$  (positive correlation) the more accurate the prediction is that one variable relates to the other (Tredoux & Durrheim, 2002). A cut-off of  $0.30$  (medium effect Cohen, 1988) is set for the practically significant correlation coefficient, and in addition, values exceeding  $0.50$  denote large effect. In this study, the Pearson-product correlation moment was used to test the hypotheses regarding positive or negative relationships that exist between the scores on the JIS, OCQ or UWES.

## 5.7.3 **Inferential statistics**

Apart from descriptive statistic and correlation, inferential statistics were also performed to make inferences about the data.

### 5.7.3.1 *Multiple regressions*

In order to determine the contribution of the five dimensions of job insecurity and three dimensions of work engagement as predictors of organisational commitment, a multiple linear regression analysis was computed. A multiple linear regression analysis ( $r^2$ ) was used to determine the proportion of the total variance of one variable that is explained by another variable. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2000a) state that multiple regression analysis is one of the most commonly used multivariate methods used to study the separate and collective contributions of several independent variables to the variance of a dependent variable.

In essence, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether job insecurity and work engagement as the independent variables can predict organisational commitment as the dependent variable. In turn, a multiple linear regression was also conducted to determine whether work engagement can predict organisational commitment.

### 5.7.3.2 *Analysis of variance (ANOVA)*

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) is the statistical technique used to determine differences in means of several groups. In this study the Kruskal-Wallis (K-W) one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine whether job insecurity, organisational commitment or work engagement will be different for the biographical variables. The Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA is a non-parametric analysis, which is equivalent to a one-way ANOVA. The Kruskal-Wallis test can be used as a distribution-free test if the normality assumptions are not justified (Steyn *et al.*, 2003, p 603). This implies that if the normality assumptions are met, the Kruskal-Wallis test is not as powerful as a measure of ANOVA.

## **5.8 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

Based on the research problem indicated in chapter 1, the following research hypotheses are proposed:



- H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant relationship between job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement.
- H<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment.
- H<sub>3</sub>: Job insecurity and work engagement predict organisational commitment.
- H<sub>4</sub>: Work engagement predicts organisational commitment.
- H<sub>5</sub>: A statistically significant difference exists between job insecurity and the various biographical variables.
- H<sub>6</sub>: A statistically significant difference exists between organisational commitment and the various biographical variables.
- H<sub>7</sub>: A statistically significant difference exists between work engagement and the various biographical variables.

## **5.12 SUMMARY**

In this chapter, detailed discussions of the research instruments were presented. The chapter outlined the multiple measures for examining job insecurity and organisational commitment. These multiple measures make it possible to capture the many different aspects of job insecurity, organisational commitment, and work engagement to analyse them separately and then determine the relationships between them.

The next chapter will focus on the research results.

## CHAPTER 6

### RESULTS

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter addressed the research methodology. This chapter presents the statistical results of the empirical study. The statistical results are reported in terms of the description of the survey participants, descriptive statistics (reliability of each of the three measuring instruments, arithmetic mean and standard deviation), correlation (Pearson-product moment coefficient) and inferential statistics (multiple linear regression analysis).

#### 6.2 DESCRIPTION OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

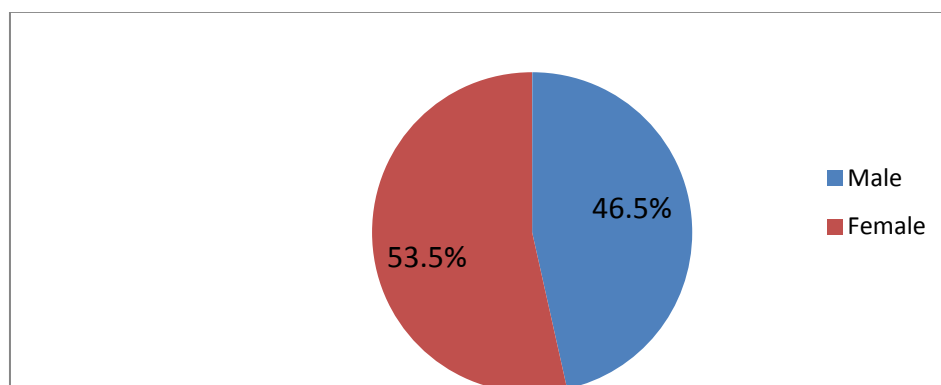
Employees were telephonically approached to participate in this study. A total of 260 questionnaires were completed and used for analysis, whilst 11 of the questionnaires were excluded from the analysis because they were incomplete.

The participants were requested to indicate their personal details in terms of gender, age group, highest level of education, tenure and position in the organisation as well as post grades.

##### 6.2.1 Gender

Figure 6.1 depicts the gender distribution of staff who participated in the survey.

Figure 6.1  
*Distribution of participants by gender category*



It is clear from figure 6.1 that over half of the staff members who participated in the survey were females (53.5 %), while the percentage of males was 46.5. The gender distribution of participants was more or less even.

### 6.2.2 Age group

Table 6.1 depicts the age distribution of the staff who participated in the survey.

Table 6.1  
*Distribution of participants by age category*

Age category	<i>n</i>	%
21 to 34 years	40	15.4
35 to 44 years	84	32.3
45 to 54 years	78	30.0
55 years or older	58	22.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100.0</b>

It is clear from the table that one in four of the staff who participated are between the ages of 35 and 44 years, while a further 30 % are between 45 and 54 years, followed by 22.3% of the participants in the category 55 years and older.

### 6.2.3 Highest level of education

Table 6.2 illustrates participants' highest level of education.

Table 6.2  
*Distribution of participants by highest level of education*

Highest level of education	<i>n</i>	%
Matric or lower	49	18.8
Matric and certificate/diploma	53	20.4
Bachelor's degree	30	11.5
BA(Hons) degree (or equivalent)	40	15.4
Master's degree	46	17.7
Doctorate	42	16.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100.0</b>

A low proportion (20.4 %) of the participants indicated that their highest level of qualification is matric or certificate/diploma, followed by 18.8% who possess matric

or lower education and 17.7% who possess a master's degree and 16.2% who possess a doctorate. This reflects highly educated participants, which is to be expected for the staff of a tertiary institution.

#### 6.2.4 Tenure

Table 6.3 illustrates participant's tenure with the organisation.

Table 6.3  
*Distribution of participants by tenure*

<b>Tenure</b>	<b><i>n</i></b>	<b>%</b>
Less than a year	5	1.9
One year to less than two years	24	9.2
Two years to less than five years	34	13.1
Five years to less than ten years	41	15.8
Ten years or more	156	60.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100.0</b>

It is clear from table 6.3 that the majority of the participants (60.0 %) have been employed in the organisation for over ten years, whereas 15.8 % of the participants have been in organisation for five years to less than ten years, and 13.1 % have been with the organisation for two years to less than five years. This reflects that over two thirds of the participants have been with the organisation for long periods suggesting that they have a sense of loyalty towards the organisation.

### 6.2.5 Occupation in the organisation

Table 6.4 represents the participant's position in the organisation.

Table 6.4

*Distribution of participants by job level in the organisation*

<b>Job Level</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Middle management	3	1.2
Supervisory	2	0.8
HOD/COD	3	1.2
Professor	17	6.5
Associate Professor	8	3.1
Senior Lecturer	31	11.9
Lecturer	31	11.9
Junior Lecturer	5	1.9
Manager of division (post grade 6)	16	6.2
Supervisor and specialist (post grade 7)	23	8.8
Officer and specialist (post grade 8/9)	77	29.6
Highly skilled clerk (post grade 10/11/12)	29	11.2
Lower skilled clerk (post grade 13/14/15/16)	15	5.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Approximately a third of the participants indicated that their job levels were officer and specialist (post grade 8/9). Approximately a quarter of the participants consisted of senior lecturers, lecturers and junior lecturer. Over 10 % of the survey participants were employees in the designated of highly skilled clerk category (post grade 10/11/12).

In sum, the survey participants show an almost equal distribution between female (53.5 %) and male (46.5 %). The majority of the participants were between the ages of 35 and 54. The level of education is spread according to different levels of highest education, with 20.4 % of the participants who held either a grade 12 or certificate/diploma and 18.8 % with grade 12 and lower. The majority of the participants (60 %) reported that they have been with the organisation for 10 years or more. Almost a third of the participants were on a professional/administrative level with specific reference to officer and specialist position.

### 6.3 RELIABILITY OF MEASURING INSTRUMENTS

The Cronbach alpha coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) was used to determine the internal consistency of the various instruments and the results thereof are reported and discussed. According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002a), internal consistency is determined by the degree to which an item in a scale correlates with other items in the scale. Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) in addition indicated that inter-item correlations of above 0.70 are considered acceptable.

#### 6.3.1 Reliability of the job insecurity scale

The Cronbach alpha coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) of the job insecurity scale and its subscales are given in table 6.5 and discussed.

Table 6.5  
*Alpha coefficients of the job insecurity scale*

Subscale	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items and response format
<b>Job insecurity scale</b>	<b>0.91</b>	<b>54 items, 5-point</b>
Importance of Job Feature	0.90	16 items, 5-point
Likelihood of losing Job Feature	0.95	16 items, 5-point
Importance of Job Loss	0.90	10 items, 5-point
Likelihood of Job Loss	0.90	10 items, 5-point
Perceived Powerlessness	0.66	2 items, 5-point

Table 6.5 demonstrates that a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.91 was obtained for total job insecurity, which complies with the acceptable guidelines of 0.70 as set by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). This suggests that the items have relatively high internal consistency and implies that the items are measuring the same thing, and correlated with one another.

Furthermore, a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.90 was notable for the importance of job features, 0.95 for the likelihood of losing job features, 0.90 for the importance of job loss and 0.90 for the likelihood of job loss. These findings compare favourably with the norm of ( $\alpha$ ) > 0.70 according to the guidelines set by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). As a result, the items measuring the importance and likelihood of job loss itself and job features respectively are reliable. More

specifically, these results are consistent with the findings of Ashford *et al.* (1989, p. 811) as well as Lee *et al.* (2006) in a study conducted in both China and USA with similar reliability of the job insecurity subscales.

However, Sverke and Hellgren (2001, p. 173) assessed job insecurity based on Ashford *et al.*'s (1989) scale reflecting perceived threat to total job loss only, and their result reveal adequate internal consistency with a Cronbach alpha of 0.83 for total job loss. Additionally, Rosenblatt and Ruvio (1996, p. 595) obtain similar reliability coefficients which correspond to those of Ashford *et al.* (1989). Their coefficients for the job insecurity subscales range from 0.67 to 0.91, and perceived powerless was eliminated based on the different connotation, which resulted in the total job insecurity scales with coefficient reliability of 0.90.

It is further notable in table 6.5 that the Cronbach alpha for perceived powerlessness items is 0.66, which is below the acceptable standard, but is still acceptable for further analysis. This implies that the two items are too low to yield reliable measures for perceived powerlessness. However, based on Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black (1998, p. 118) the generally agreed lower limit for Cronbach's alpha is 0.70, although a decrease to 0.60 in exploratory research is acceptable.

Conversely, Lee *et al.* (2006) conducted a study amongst four samples from the United States and China to address concerns over the length of the original item scales and included three items of perceived powerlessness in their abridged job insecurity measure. Based on the results of their study, a Cronbach alpha of 0.80 and 0.77 was obtain from a sample in the United States and China respectively.

Rosenblatt and Ruvio (1996) were among those who raised concerns about the inclusion of perceived powerlessness in the job insecurity scale. In their study among Israeli teachers they found that items measuring perceived powerlessness were not correlated with any of the job insecurity composite scales. As a result Cronbach alpha for perceive powerlessness was not computed.

### 6.3.2 Reliability of the organisational commitment questionnaire

The Cronbach alpha coefficients ( $\alpha$ ) for organisational commitment and its subscales are given in table 6.6 and discussed.

Table 6.6

*Alpha coefficients of organisational commitment questionnaire*

Subscales	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items and response format
<b>Organisational Commitment Questionnaire</b>	<b>0.78</b>	<b>22 items, 5-point</b>
Affective Commitment	0.74	8 items, 5-point
Continuance Commitment	0.83	6 items, 5-point
Normative Commitment	0.55	8 items, 5-point

As can be seen a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.78 was obtained for organisational commitment, which shows reliability of the instrument and that the instrument complies with the acceptable guidelines of 0.70 as set by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). Consequently, the alpha coefficients support the internal consistency and construct validity of the Organisational Commitment Questionnaires. These results also conform to the findings of Suliman and Iles (2002a) who reported a Cronbach alpha coefficient of above 0.80 for organisational commitment.

Analysis of the values in table 6.6 also indicates that alpha the coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) for affective commitment was 0.74. These findings depict that the alpha coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) for affective commitment is acceptable based on the guideline set by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) of  $\alpha > 0.70$  with the exception of normative commitment which had a reliability below the acceptable guideline, but acceptable for analysis. This result is consistent with the findings of Suliman and Iles (2002a) who obtained a reliability of 0.73 for affective commitment.

With respect continuance commitment, a factor analysis was computed to determine the homogeneity of the items. The result of the factor analysis indicated two factors (one factor with six items and the other factor with two items) implying



that the items measured two different components. As a result, two items were removed from the analysis and the alpha coefficient was improved to 0.83.

The reliability for normative commitment reflects a lower alpha coefficient of 0.55, which is below the acceptable guidelines. This implies that the participants were not consistent when answering items relating to normative commitment. To determine the underlying dimensions of the items and to improve the Cronbach alpha, a factor analysis was computed and the result did not yield any improvement. For this reason, as well as in order to secure comparability between participants, the scales were not changed.

In the study conducted by Bagrami (2003) an alpha coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) of 0.87 was obtained for affective commitment, which is higher, and similar findings were visible in the low score obtained for continuance commitment (0.68) and normative commitment (0.55). In addition, Suliman and Iles (2000), in a study conducted in Arabic, reported reliabilities of 0.73 for affective commitment, 0.60 for continuance commitment and a somewhat weaker 0.47 for normative commitment.

This however, suggests that the measurement of affective commitment is more reliable than the other dimensions. More importantly, the findings confirmed that affective commitment as described by numerous researchers is more superior to the other two components.

### **6.3.3 Reliability of the Utrecht work engagement scale (UWES)**

The Cronbach alpha coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) of the Utrecht work engagement scale as well as its subscales are given in table 6.7 and discussed.

Table 6.7  
*Alpha coefficients of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale*

Subscales	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items and response format
<b>Utrecht Work Engagement Scale</b>	<b>0.93</b>	<b>17 items, 5-point</b>
Vigour	0.77	6 items, 5-point
Dedication	0.87	5 items, 5-point
Absorption	0.83	6 items, 5-point

Table 6.7 shows that a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.93 was obtained for the work engagement scale, showing that the values are comparable with guidelines of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Analysis of the values in table 6.7 also demonstrates that the alpha coefficients ( $\alpha$ ) for vigour, dedication and absorption are 0.77, 0.87 and 0.83 respectively. This result further demonstrates that the alpha coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) are acceptable based on the guideline set by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) of  $\alpha > 0.70$ .

These results also indicate high reliability, which is consistent with the study conducted by Storm and Rothmann (2003b), amongst a stratified sample of police members in South Africa, where the internal consistencies for the three subscales were 0.78 (vigour), 0.89 (dedication) and 0.78 (absorption). However, only one-factor internal consistency was obtained after four items were deleted when determining the goodness of fit indices (Storm & Rothmann, 2003). Using two components of the Utrecht work engagement scale, Rothmann and Pieterse (2007) reported internal consistencies of 0.62 (vigour) and 0.82 (dedicated). In a study amongst employees in a South African financial institution, Coetzee and De Villiers (2010) reported a reliability of 0.77, 0.88 and 0.83 in vigour, dedication and absorption respectively. In addition, Schaufeli *et al.* (2002), as well as Schaufeli and Bakker (2004b) found a reliability of 0.72 (vigour), 0.88 (dedication) and 0.74 (absorption). In essence the reliability of the Utrecht work engagement is acceptable in comparison to other previous studies.

## 6.4 VALIDITY OF MEARSURING INSTRUMENTS

The validity was constructed in the form of factor analysis for the job insecurity scale. Furthermore, confirmatory factor analysis was also constructed to validate the three instruments.

### 6.4.1 Factor analysis for JIS

A diagnostic measure such as factor analysis was performed to determine if the items measuring the different components of the job insecurity scale as articulated by Ashford *et al.* (1989) are significant. Tables 6.8 and 6.9 present the outcome of the factor analysis and the total variance for the JIS respectively.

Table 6.8  
*Factor analysis for job insecurity scale*

	Factor
	1
Perceived Powerlessness	0.43
Importance of Job feature*Likelihood	0.74
*I 'Importance of Job Loss * Likelihood'	0.63

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis  
1 Component extracted

The result of the factor analysis shows that the components of the job insecurity scale are loaded on one factor as reflected in table 6.8, which implies that the components are highly correlated with factor one which indicates that they are measuring job insecurity. It is also clear from the table that importance and likelihood of job features are highly loaded as compared to the other two components.

Table 6.9  
Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	1.138	37.934	37.934	1.138	37.934	37.934
2	0.99	33.047	70.981			
3	0.87	29.019	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Furthermore, as reflected in table 6.9 the total variance of the three components is explained by 37.9 %. This shows that the job insecurity scales are co-integrated which implies that one or more of the items are integrated. However, the level of the co-integration is not that strong.

In short the job insecurity scales as formulated by Ashford *et al.* (1989) is computed as follows: job insecurity =  $[\sum (\text{importance of job features} \times \text{likelihood of losing job features}) - \sum (\text{importance of job loss} \times \text{likelihood of job loss})]$  perceived powerlessness to resist threat. According to Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) separate scores have to be calculated for each dimension in order to determine the significance of job insecurity amongst employees.

This implies that an index of each of the dimensions of job insecurity has to be constructed then multiplied with the total for the dimensions. By merely computing the job insecurity scale from its index, it could be assumed that the job insecurity scales is calculated more than once, which could in turn, imply that there is a co-integration in terms of job insecurity.

#### 6.4.2 Confirmatory factor analysis

A confirmatory factor analysis was computed for validation of the three instruments. Table 6.10 represents the validity of the three instruments. The results represent the fit between the theoretical model and the empirical findings for this study (see figure 6.2 below). The theoretical model of job insecurity as

described by Ashford *et al.* (1989), as well as Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) was used as a reference. The results of the four measures are displayed below.

Table 6.10  
*Validity of the JIS, OCQ and UWES*

<b>Model fit</b>	<b>Default model</b>
Normed Fit Index (NFI) Delta1	0.903
Incremental Fit Index (IFI) Delta2	0.937
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) rho2	0.904
Comparative fit index (CFI)	0.936
RMSEA	0.080

The model fit test indicates that the model fit is adequate. Hair *et al.* (1998) reported that if the value of the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and Normed Fit Index (NFI) are greater or equal to 0.90 then the model is acceptable. The table reflects that the value of the incremental fit index (IFI) and the comparative fit index (CFI) lies between 0 and 1.0, and it is accepted that larger values indicate higher levels of goodness-of-fit. As can be seen from table 6.10 both the IFI and CFI values are close to 1.0

FIGURE 6.2

*Confirmatory factor analysis model for job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement*

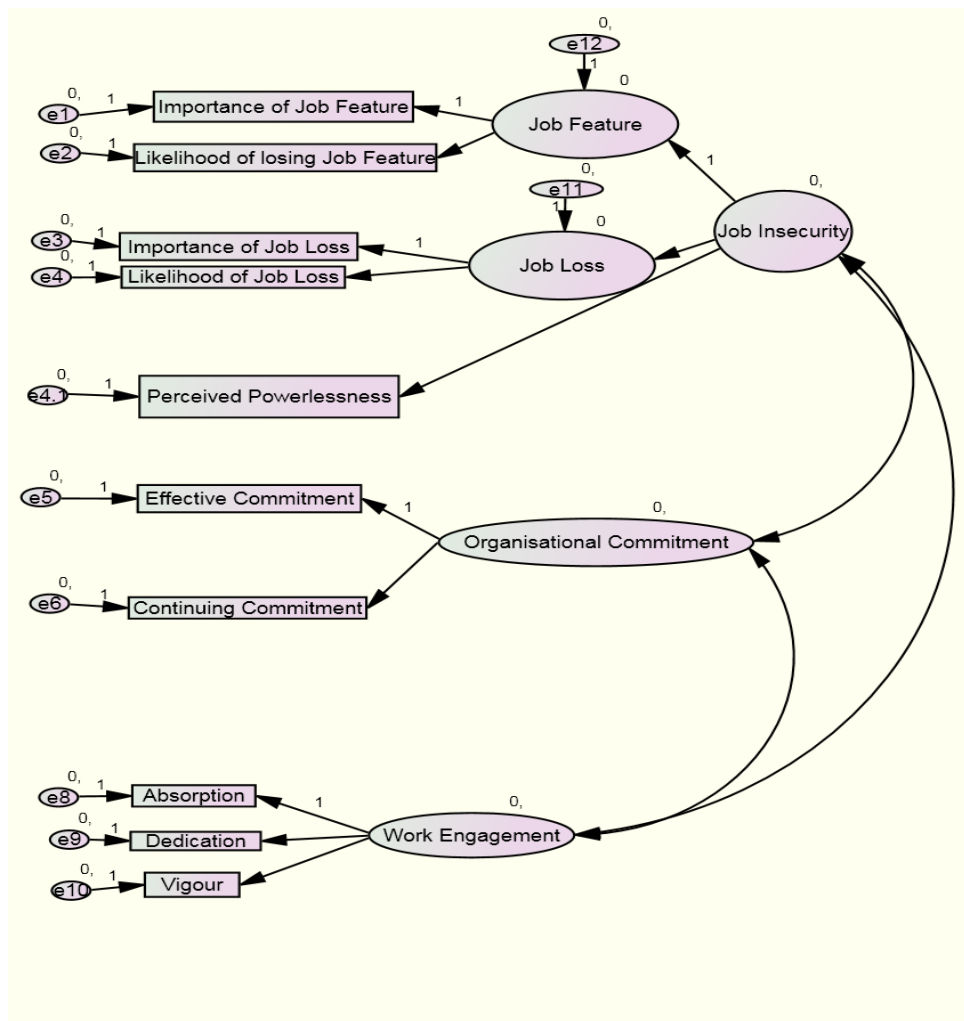


Figure 6.2, It is clear that there is a relationship between job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement. More specifically, the model depicts that job insecurity as a latent variable consists of five dimensions as formulated by Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) and later expanded by Ashford *et al.* (1989), namely importance and likelihood of job features, importance and likelihood of job loss and perceived powerlessness, organisational commitment as a latent variable consists of affective and continuance commitment, and work engagement as a latent variable consists of vigour, dedication and absorption.

A thorough confirmatory factor analysis of job insecurity, in which various different statistical measures were used, provides moderate support for the job insecurity

scales as described by Ashford *et al.* (1989). This implies that psychometric evidence was found that job insecurity is indeed measured by all five components. In addition, Lee *et al.* (2006) also conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) amongst the Chinese and USA sample in validating the job insecurity construct. The resulting factor structures for both samples showed a reasonable five-factor structure and correlated all the items with their underlying dimensions. Their study provided evidence that both Chinese and USA employees could clearly distinguish the five dimensions of job insecurity.

## 6.5 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Descriptive statistics in the form of arithmetic means and standard deviations (SD) were computed for the various dimensions assessed by the Job Insecurity Scale (JIS), the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). The results are presented in the tables that follow.

### 6.5.1 Descriptive statistics for the job insecurity scale

Table 6.11 presents the descriptive statistics results for the job insecurity scale.

Table 6.11  
*Descriptive statistics for job insecurity*

Subscales	<i>n</i>	Mean	Standard deviation (SD)
<b>Total Job Insecurity Scale</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>3.63</b>	<b>0.58</b>
Importance of job feature	229	4.27	0.19
Likelihood of job feature	214	3.35	0.14
Importance of job loss	200	3.99	0.13
Likelihood of job loss	224	2.59	0.33
Perceived powerlessness	260	3.51	0.05

The Likert-type scale was used to record participants' responses regarding job insecurity and its subscales questions, with the scale ranging from 1 to 5 depending on the importance and likelihood as well as their agreement. That is, participants reporting higher levels were coded as high in job insecurity while those scoring below the mean were treated as low in job insecurity.

The result indicates that a mean score of 3.63 with a standard deviation of 0.58 was obtained for total job insecurity. The arithmetic means for the importance of job feature, the likelihood of job feature loss, importance of job loss and perceived powerlessness are to some extent higher than the likelihood of job loss.

The overall results suggest that participants experience above average levels of job insecurity. This, however, implies that participants seem to feel insecure with regard to the importance and probability of their job features and total job itself because they have scored above the average on those items. This could have resulted from the past mergers and acquisitions and also from the new conditions of employment undergone in the institutions.

The results further indicate that participants scored above the midpoint of 5 on the subscale importance of job feature ( $M = 4.26$ ,  $SD = 0.19$ ), likelihood of job feature loss ( $M = 3.35$ ,  $SD = 0.14$ ), importance of job loss ( $M = 3.98$ ,  $SD = 0.13$ ) and perceived powerlessness ( $M = 3.5$ ,  $SD = 0.05$ ) as compare to the likelihood of job loss ( $M = 2.59$ ,  $SD = 0.33$ ) which scored the least. The results show that participants are more concerned about the importance of job features as compared to the likelihood of losing their job, and they are also feeling uncertain about how to counteract threats. This is consistent with what Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) promulgated that if either the perceived severity of the threat and/or lack of power to counteract are present, then, job insecurity is significant.

Overall, participants are uncertain about what their job features pertaining to job characteristics and factors related to job satisfaction such as promotional opportunities and increase salary development are. However, they do not anticipate the probability of losing their job in the near future because the score is below the midpoint. A number of studies have found that feelings relating to uncertain employment conditions reduce the levels of work effort amongst the employees (Ashford *et al.*, 1998, Davy *et al.*, 1997, Rosenblatt & Ruvio, 1996). Although, Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) argued that investigating job insecurity and work effort have shown mixed results, they suggest that future research should



be undertaken to identify conditions under which work effort is reduced as a result of perceived job insecurity.

### 6.5.2 Descriptive statistics for organisational commitment

Table 6.12 depicts the arithmetic mean and standard deviation for the organisational commitment among a sample of 260 participants.

Table 6.12  
*Descriptive statistics for organisational commitment*

Subscales	<i>n</i>	Mean	Standard deviation (SD)
<b>Total Organisational Commitment</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>3.38</b>	<b>0.30</b>
Affective commitment	260	3.46	0.26
Continuance commitment	260	3.45	0.23
Normative commitment	260	3.26	0.37

The Likert-type scale was used to capture the participant's responses regarding organisational commitment and its subscales, with the scale ranging from '1' denoting strongly disagree to '5' denoting strongly agree. The subscales for organisational commitment were affective, continuance and normative commitment. This implies that participants who score higher levels were coded as high in organisational commitment while those scoring below the mean were treated as low in organisational commitment.

Table 6.12 depicts the results for the total organisational commitment as well as the dimensions of organisational commitment. The results indicate that the arithmetic mean score of 3.38 and standard deviation 0.30 were obtained for total organisational commitment.

The arithmetic mean scores and standard deviation for the dimensions of organisational commitment vary between  $M = 3.46$ ;  $SD = 0.26$  for affective,  $M = 3.45$ ;  $SD = 0.23$  for continuance and  $M = 3.25$ ;  $SD = 0.37$  and normative commitment. The mean score are almost above the midpoint of the 5-point Likert scale for affective and continuance commitment. This implies that participants are

moderately attached and involved in their organisation, and they also feel less inclined to leave the organisation based on the costs involved as well as future employability in the labour market.

The result implies that participants have demonstrated a moderate desire to remain with the organisation because of the costs involved when they leave (Meyer *et al.*, 1993). They feel emotional attachment to, involvement in, and identification with the organisation (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991; 1997). According to Meyer *et al.* (1993, p. 539) employees with a strong affective commitment remain with the organisation because they want to.

Subsequently, participants feel committed to stay (continuance commitment) because of the perceived costs associated with leaving the organisation. This implies that participants feel persistent need to remain with the employed organisation based on the costs implication associated with leaving the organisation (Allen & Meyer 1990; Meyer & Allen 1991; 1997). According to Meyer *et al.* (1993, p. 539) employees with a strong continuance commitment remain because they need to.

It can be concluded that the participants tend to stay with the organisation because they want to (affective) and because they need to (continuance) and this leads to an increase in total organisational commitment. Furthermore, the results compare well with Mowday *et al.* (1979) who indicated that committed employees are happier, spend less time away from work and are less likely to leave the organisation as compared to less committed employees

### **6.5.3 Descriptive statistics for work engagement**

Table 6.13 depicts the arithmetic mean and standard deviation for the work engagement among a sample of 260 participants.

Table 6.13  
*Descriptive statistics for work engagement*

Subscales	<i>n</i>	Mean	Standard deviation (SD)
<b>Total Work Engagement</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>3.79</b>	<b>0.23</b>
Vigour	260	3.79	0.18
Dedication	260	3.95	0.16
Absorption	260	3.71	0.27

The Likert-type scale was used to capture the participants' responses regarding work engagement and its subscales, with the scale ranging from '1' denoting strongly disagree to '5' denoting strongly agree. The subscales for work engagement were vigour, dedication and absorption. This implies that participants who score higher levels were coded as high in work engagement while those scoring below the mean were treated as low in work engagement.

As indicated in table 6.13 the arithmetic mean score and standard deviation of  $M = 3.79$  and  $SD = 0.23$  were obtained for the total level of work engagement. The mean scores for the subscale of work engagement vary between vigour ( $M = 3.79$ ;  $SD = 0.18$ ), dedication ( $M = 3.95$ ;  $SD = 0.16$ ) and absorption ( $M = 3.71$ ;  $SD = 0.27$ ). The mean scores are above the midpoint of the 5-point Likert scale. These scores imply that a fairly high score was obtained on the total score as well as on the three subscales of the UWES. This suggests that participants have an energetic and affective connection with their work roles/activities and see themselves as able to deal completely with the demands of their jobs even when faced with difficulty and uncertainty.

The results further suggest that participants were generally energetic, mentally resilient, strongly involve in their jobs, enthusiastic, proud, inspired and happily engrossed in their jobs. Moreover the results suggest that they have strong psychological involvement in their work activities, and feel inspired as well as challenged by the work (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002a; 2002b). Moreover, participants feel interested in their work activities to the extent that time passes quickly (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002a; 2002b).

In general, and as noted by Schaufeli and Bakker (2001), work engagement and in particular vigour, is characterise by mental resilience and the willingness to invest more effort in work roles/activities and implies that even in difficult situations, employees are mentally resilient to score above the average scores of work engagement. Such employees find pleasure in dealing with challenges within their working environment.

## **6.6 PEARSON-PRODUCT MOMENT COEFFICIENT**

The Pearson product moment coefficient ( $r$ ) is used to ascertain the correlation between job insecurity and organisational commitment as well as work engagement, and the correlation between engagement and organisational commitment work as well as correlation between biographical variables and job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient is the most frequently used statistical method of expressing the relationship between two variables (Cohen, 1988, p. 75).

The Pearson product moment correlation coefficient varies between -1.00 and + 1.00. The closer the value of a correlation coefficient is to -1.00 (negative correlation) or to + 1.00 (positive correlation) the more accurate the prediction is that one variable relates to the other (Tredoux & Durrheim, 2002). The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient is symbolised by the small letter 'r'.

### **6.6.1 The relationship between job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement**

Tables 6.14 and 6.15 illustrate a summary of the relationship between job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement. The Pearson product-moment correlation is the most frequent statistical method used to express the relationship between more than two variables (Cohen, 1988, p. 75).

Table 6.14

*Product-moment correlation coefficient between total JIS, total OCQ and total UWES*

		Job Insecurity
Job Insecurity	Pearson correlation	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	
Organisational commitment	Pearson correlation	.286**
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000
Work engagement	Pearson correlation	.270**
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000

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

The cut-off point for practical significance of correlation between variables is set accordingly to guidelines by Cohen (1988, p 83), meaning correlation is practically significant if  $r = 0.10$  (small effect),  $r = 0.30$  (medium effect) and  $r = 0.50$  (large effect). In this study a cut-off point of  $r = 0.30$  (medium effect) is used to establish the practical significance of the correlation.

It is evident from table 6.14 that there is a statistically significant relationship between job insecurity and organisational commitment ( $p < 0.01$ ). The Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) for this statistical relationship is below 0.30 (medium effect) which shows a small effect of the relationship between job insecurity and organisational commitment. It also indicates a weak positive relationship between job insecurity and organisational commitment (that is, as the one increases the other also increases). This implies that within the participants, an employee with high levels of job insecurity will at the same time express high levels of organisational commitment ( $r = 0.286$ ).

Although, the Pearson correlation coefficient relationship shows small effect, this suggests that when employees perceive uncertainty towards their job existence, they in turn, feel an attachment and involvement towards their organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1997). This could be due to the fact that the costs of being unemployed are high, particularly if employees do not anticipate alternative employment elsewhere in the labour market (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2005). Furthermore, it should be noted that employment provides a means to various basic needs such as

earning income, creating social networks and opportunities for personal growth and development.

As a result, being unemployed could be detrimental to the overall life situation in view of the fact that economic status and other valuable aspects of the life are perceived to be threatened (Ashford *et al.*, 1989; De Witte, 1999; Hartley *et al.*, 1991). Therefore, in as much as organisational commitment is driven by remuneration ties it could thus be difficult for employees to leave their organisation if future employment is nonexistent. This is aligned with Hirschman's (1970) description of voice (where employees stay and work to improve their situation in the organisation) as well as loyalty (where employees stay and support organisational changes).

In a similar vein, Meyer & Allen, (1997) articulate that higher organisational commitment does not only reduce employee turnover, but also increases employee loyalty and performance, as well as reducing work stress. They further note that employees with strong psychological ties such as investment and seniority are likely to remain with their respective organisations irrespective of what might happen to their job in future.

This result suggests that employees who feel insecure may consider their chances for job security as higher if they stay with the organisation rather than losing their jobs by looking elsewhere for new jobs. More importantly, employees could interpret their insecurity as challenging rather than threatening, and in turn it support what Hirschman (1970) terms loyalty, which entail that employees remain loyal to the organisation irrespective of the turbulent experience within the working environment. Bernston *et al.* (2010) define loyalty as the level of attachment employees have for an organisation, which implies that the dissatisfied employees would choose to be loyal to management and adhere to what management considers to be the best for the organisation. Further research is needed to understand the potentially differential effects of various dimensions of job insecurity, particularly within the labour market dynamics present in South Africa.

However, the research findings in this study are inconsistent with those in previous studies (Ashford *et al.*, 1989; Buitendach & De Witte, 2005; Sverke & Hellgren, 2002) that report a negative relationship between job insecurity and organisational commitment as well as work engagement (Mauno *et al.*, 2005). Mauno *et al.* (2005), in a study of subjective job insecurity among either permanent or fixed-term employees, reported lower work engagement among permanent staff. In the meta-analytical study conducted by Sverke and Hellgren (2002) it was reported that not all studies have reported that job insecurity negatively impaired job related attitudes, because employees do not necessarily respond in the same way to uncertainty.

In essence these findings suggest that employees who feel insecure might consider their chances for future job security to be higher if they stay with the organisation and work harder and regularly attend to their work roles/activities, rather than leaving/quitting in search of alternative job elsewhere in the labour market. Further research investigation is needed to understand the potentially differential effects of various dimensions of job insecurity in the South African context.

It can be further observed from table 6.14 that there is also a statistically significant relationship between job insecurity and work engagement ( $p < 0.01$ ). The Pearson correlation coefficients ( $r$ ) for these statistical relationships is below 0.30 (medium effect) signifying a small effect of the positive relationship between job insecurity and work engagement. The Pearson correlation coefficient indicates a weak positive relationship between job insecurity and work engagement (that is, as the one increases the other also increases). This implies that within the survey participants, an employee with higher levels of job insecurity will exhibit higher levels of work engagement ( $r = 0.270$ ).

These could imply that without the possibility of future employability, employees feel that they are trapped in their organisation to the extent that they would only perform the required work task, solely for the psychological ties (remuneration) with the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1997). In other instances, employees might stay with the organisation because they are committed and dedicated to their

profession and career as compared to the organisation. According to King (2000) employees in a precarious and dynamic labour market are directed away from the organisation towards their own career development, as well as towards possibilities to enhance their knowledge and skills. Moreover, Rothmann and Jordaan (2006) indicate that engaged employees report that their jobs make good use of their skills and abilities, are challenging and stimulating, and provide them with a sense of personal accomplishment.

In support of this research finding, Mauno *et al.* (2007, p. 182) argues that employees who have well-functioning recovery experiences are likely to increase their resources (that is, their energy, competence and self-esteem) through resource cycles or spirals, which in turn help them to encounter job insecurity experiences. As a result, such employees might experience fewer negative attitudes related to insecure job situations. Although, job insecurity is described as a difficult stressor to cope with, the recovery experiences might play a significant role in helping to replenish resources in an insecure job situation.

According to Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzáles-Romá and Bakker (2002a), engaged employees have a sense of energetic and effective connection with their work activities and see themselves as able to deal completely with the demands of their jobs such as job insecurity.

Table 6.15 below represents a comprehensive detail of the relationship between job insecurity and organisational commitment as well as work engagement with specific reference to their subscales.



TABLE 6.15

*Product-moment correlation coefficient between subscales JIS, OCQ and UWES*

		JOB INSECURITY SCALE				
		Importance of job features	Likelihood of job features	Importance of job loss	Likelihood of job loss	Perceived powerlessness
<b>OCQ</b>	Pearson correlation	.124*	.214**	.005	.006	.266**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.046	.001	.933	.923	.000
Affective commitment	Pearson correlation	.131*	.096	-.035	-.089	.304**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.035	.124	.578	.158	.000
Continuance commitment	Pearson correlation	0.52	.232**	.046	.106	.088
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.399	.000	.463	.092	.158
<b>UWES</b>	Pearson correlation	.090	.105	.131*	.087	.357**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.146	.092	.037	.165	.000
Vigour	Pearson correlation	.119	.091	.123*	.107	.346**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.055	.142	.050	.089	.000
Dedication	Pearson correlation	.100	.084	.087	.039	.350**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.108	.179	.166	.539	.000
Absorption	Pearson correlation	.045	.106	.153*	.087	.279**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.469	.087	.015	.165	.000

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

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

The cut-off point for practical significance of correlation between variables is set according to guidelines by Cohen (1988, p. 83), meaning correlation is practically significant if  $r = 0.10$  (small effect),  $r = 0.30$  (medium effect) and  $r = 0.50$  (large effect). In this study a cut-off point of  $r = 0.30$  (medium effect) is used to establish the practical significance of the correlation.

It is clear from table 6.15 that there is statistically significant relationship between affective commitment and the importance of job features as well as perceived powerlessness. This implies that participants want to remain with organisations that provide them with positive work experiences because they value these experiences and expect the organisation to continue. The participants feel emotional attachment or identification with the organisation, regardless of whether they might lose certain job features such as promotional advancement and increase salary development. In the study conducted by Roskies and Louis-Guerin (1990),

using one component of Ashford *et al.* (1998), it was found that insecurity about future working conditions excluding insecurity relating to demotion and termination were more strongly related to affective organisational commitment.

Furthermore a negative relationship is observable between affective commitment and importance as well as likelihood of job loss. This suggests that when participants feel that they are going to lose their job in the near future, their attitudes to the organisation also change. According to Mauno and Kinnunen (2000) the likelihood of job loss has more predictive validity in comparison to the other dimensions of job insecurity. This suggests that perceived insecurity concerning future job existence in the organisation could also result for employee less inclined to remain with the organisation.

This result is consistent with previous studies which reported a practically statistically significant relationship (-0.44\*) between affective job insecurity (importance of job loss) and affective commitment (Adkins *et al.*, 2001; Bosman *et al.*, 2005; King, 2000; Kinnunen *et al.*, 2000). Similarly, Ashford *et al.* (1989, p. 815) reported negatively significant correlation (-0.47\*\*) between job insecurity and affective commitment. This implies that the higher levels of job insecurity experienced by the participants the lower the level of attachment and involvement (affective commitment) they feel towards their organisation. This finding compares well with previous studies that found a negative relationship between job insecurity and affective commitment.

In terms of the relationship between affective and perceived powerlessness, previous studies could not be found that reported practically significant correlations between perceived powerless and affective commitment, although the correlation has medium effect which shows an acceptable practically significant correlation.

Furthermore, a statistically significant relationship is also observable between continuance commitment and likelihood of job features loss. This implies that within the survey participants, an employee with high levels of job insecurity will at the same time exhibit high levels of the need to remain with the organisation. In

this instance, continuance commitment is produced by the benefits accrued from working for the organisation over a longer period and also by the lack of available alternative jobs. That is, continuance commitment creates a mindset of perceived costs which compels the participant to stay in the organisation despite the uncertainty concerning existence of his/her job. However, no significant relationship was reported between continuance commitment and job insecurity in previous studies.

A statistically significant relationship was observable between work engagement and importance of job loss. De Cuyper *et al.* (2008) find job insecurity to be a statistically significant factor that is negatively related to engagement ( $r = -0.18$ ). They also suggest that job insecurity might lead to feelings of uncontrollability and unpredictability. Previous studies could not be found on the relationship between engagement and perceived powerlessness, although the correlation has medium effect which shows an acceptable practically significant correlation.

A notable statistically significant relationship was found between vigour and importance of job loss. This implies that even though employees are feeling insecure about their continued existence, they at the same time feel more energetic and resilient in performing their work role. One explanation for this reaction might be that the employees are more engaged in their profession and career as compared to the work per se. However, this finding is inconsistent with the findings of Rothman and Jordaan (2006, p. 91), who found that vigour is negatively related to affective job insecurity (importance of job loss) ( $r = -0.13$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Previous studies could not be found on the relationship between vigour and perceived powerlessness, although the correlation has medium effect which shows an acceptable practically significant correlation.

Furthermore, a statistically significant relationship is notable between dedication and perceived powerlessness. Although, the relationship is positive, it implies that a feeling of insecurity does not interfere with employees work activities at work and time passes quickly. Previous studies could not be found on the relationship

between dedication and perceived powerlessness, although the correlation has medium effect which shows an acceptable practically significant correlation.

A statistically significant relationship is observable between absorption and importance of job loss. This suggests that within the survey participants, irrespective of the perceived uncertainty employees are still immersed in work roles/activities and find it difficult to detach themselves from their work activities. This in essence could imply that participants are more engaged with their profession and career than what might happen to the organisation in the future. Previous studies could not be found on the relationship between absorption and perceived powerlessness, although the correlation has medium effect which shows an acceptable practically significant correlation.

#### 6.6.2 The relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment

The correlations between organisational commitment and work engagement are given in Table 6.16.

Table 6.16

*Product-moment correlation coefficient between work engagement and organisational commitment*

		Organisational commitment	Work engagement
Organisational commitment	Pearson correlation	1	.480**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
Work engagement	Pearson correlation	.480**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000

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

As reflected in table 6.16 there is a statistically significant relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment ( $p=0.01$ ). The Pearson's correlation coefficient reported a proportionally larger positive relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment (that is, as the one increases the other also increases) meaning that within the survey participants, an employee with higher levels of work engagement will have higher levels of organisational commitment ( $r=0.480$ ). The Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) for

this statistical relationship is below 0.50, which implies a medium effect between the relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment.

Previous empirical studies on work engagement found that high levels of engagement lead to enhanced, amongst other organisational outcomes, organisational commitment (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007). Thus investing in conditions, which foster work engagement among employees, is vital for the growth and development of the organisation.

The positive relationship observed between organisational commitment and work engagement suggests that the higher levels of organisational commitment subscales are associated with the higher levels of work engagement subscales. Thus participants with high energy, mental resilience and perseverance, who are motivated, challenged and immersed in their activities identify with and experience emotional attachment to their employing organisation thus encouraging them to remain with the organisation, because they want to. Inversely participants stay with the organisation because they feel trapped or the costs of leaving are too high, or they stay based on moral obligations (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

TABLE 6.17

*Product-moment correlation coefficient between subscales of UWES and OCQ*

		<b>Affective commitment</b>	<b>Continuance commitment</b>
Vigour	Pearson correlation	.333**	.305**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
Dedication	Pearson correlation	.415**	.242**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
Absorption	Pearson correlation	.441**	.243**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000

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

As reflected in table 6.17 the specific relationships between UWES subscales and the OCQ subscales can be derived. A positive relationship is observed between the UWES subscales and affective commitment variable, which is above the medium effect and suggests that participants are energetic and have mental resilience to

perform the required work roles, they are also enthusiasm, proud as well as engrossed in their work roles/activities.

Similarly, the positive relationship is observed between UWES subscales and the continuance commitment variable with a medium effect for vigour suggesting that a practically significant exists between the constructs. Furthermore, the relationship between vigour and continuance commitment suggests that the survey participants are willing to invest more effort into their work and that they are persistent in their work because of the derived costs (earning income). However, no significant relationship was reported between continuance commitment and the UWES subscales in previous studies.

## **6.7 INFERENCE STATISTICS**

The research hypotheses were tested using linear multiple regression analysis. According to Tredoux and Durrheim (2002) linear multiple regression analysis ( $r^2$ ) is used to determine the combination of independent variables that maximally predict or explain a dependent variable. Multiple regressions are explained by the adjusted R square. In this section two linear multiple regression analyses were constructed. In the first analysis, organisational commitment was regressed against job insecurity and work engagement. In the second analysis, organisational commitment was regressed against work engagement.

### **6.7.1 Multiple regression analysis between job insecurity and work engagement and organisational commitment**

The results of a linear multiple regression analysis, with job insecurity and work engagement as the independent variable and organisational commitment (affective and continuance) as dependent variable are reported in table 6.18.

Table 6.18  
*Linear multiple regression results for JIS, UWES and OCQ*

Model	Variables	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	Constant	22.530	3.751		6.007	.000
	Importance of job feature	.031	.045	.040	.686	.493
	Likelihood of job feature	.097	.030	.184*	3.187	.002*
	Importance of job loss	-.029	.040	-.43	-.738	.461
	Likelihood of job loss	-.056	.050	-.065	-1.119	.264
	Perceived powerlessness	.337	.224	.090	1.504	.134
	Vigour	.536	.247	.242*	2.169	.031*
	Dedication	.215	.207	.106	1.038	.300
	Absorption	.198	.169	.115	1.169	.243

a. Dependent Variable: Organisational commitment

Table 6.19  
*Model summary of linear multiple regression analysis for JIS, OCQ and UWES*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	Sig.
1	.525 <sup>a</sup>	.275	.251	11.534	.000 <sup>a</sup>

a. Predictors: (constant), importance of job feature, likelihood of job features, importance of job loss, likelihood of job lose, perceived powerlessness, vigour, dedication, absorption

It can be seen from the table 6.19 that job insecurity and work engagement explain 25 % of the variation in organisational commitment and the remaining 75 % can be attributed to factors that were beyond the scope of this study. Furthermore, the standardised beta for vigour ( $\beta=.242$ ) explains more variance of the dependent variable as compared to the standardised beta for likelihood of loss of job features ( $\beta=.184$ ). This result suggests that the linear multiple regressions are significant ( $F=11.534, p < 0.01$ ) implying that the model fits the data (regression coefficients). Thus, the hypothesis that job insecurity and work engagement predicts organisational commitment is supported.

The result suggests that participants' level of job uncertainty and energetic effective connection towards their work roles are significant in terms of predicting or explaining their overall commitment to the organisation. It appears that participants who feel energised in their work roles and at the same time worry and fear about their job existence have a desire to remain with the employing

organisation. Previous studies could not be found that investigated job insecurity and work engagement as the variance that explained organisational commitment.

### 6.7.2 Multiple regression analysis between work engagement and organisational commitment

The results of a linear multiple regression analysis, with work engagement as the independent variable, and organisational commitment as the dependent variable, are reported in Table 6.20 below.

Table 6.20

*Multiple regression results for work engagement and organisational commitment*

Model		Unstandardised		Standardised	t	Sig.
		Coefficients		Coefficients		
		$\beta$	Std Error	Beta		
1	Constant	27.918	2.367		11.795	.000
	Work engagement	.318	.036	.480	8.792	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Organisational commitment

Table 6.21

*Model summary of multiple regression analysis for organisational commitment and work engagement*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	Sig.
1	.480 <sup>a</sup>	.231	.228	72.301	.000 <sup>a</sup>

a. Dependent Variable: Organisational commitment

It can be seen from the table 6.20 that work engagement explains 22 % of the variation of organisational commitment and the remaining 78 % can be attributed to factors that were beyond the scope of this study. Furthermore, the standardised beta for work engagement ( $\beta=.318$ ) explains more variance of the dependent variable. These results suggest that the linear multiple regressions are significant ( $F=72.301, p < 0.01$ ) implying that the model fits the data (regression coefficients). Thus, the hypothesis that work engagement predicts organisational commitment is supported.



This suggests that engaged employees are committed to the organisation and remain with their current employer because the organisation provides them with the resources needed not only to achieve work goals but also to experience growth and development. That is, when employees feel vigorous, involved, and happy in the work activities, they may feel the need to remain with the organisation. Furthermore, organisational commitment is used as a positive influence by work engagement through the motivation process. Engaged employees report that their jobs make good use of their skills and abilities, are challenging and stimulating, and provide them with a sense of personal accomplishment (Roberts & Davenport, 2002).

Meyer and Allen (1991) provide evidence to suggest that commitment is associated with positive organisational behaviour including work engagement. Roberts & Davenport (2002) maintain that work engagement and organisational commitment are also closely related, often to such an extent that it makes sense to refer to them as organisational engagement.

Further support can be sought from the empirical research of Schaufeli and Salanova (2007), who report that high levels of engagement lead to enhanced organisational commitment, increased job satisfaction, lower absenteeism and turnover rates, improved health and well-being, more extra role behaviours, higher performance and a greater exhibition of personal initiative, proactive behaviour and learning motivation.

## **6.8 ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE**

As stated in the literature, demographic variables are considered as positional variables, because they determine the position of the employees in a given organisation (Buitendach *et al.*, 2005). The identification of demographical variables that correlate with the experience of job insecurity is of practical relevance, because it helps to identify specific risk groups amongst employees (Näswell & De Witte, 2003).

### 6.8.1 Effect sizes for demographical groups on job insecurity scale

Table 6.22 below depicts the means, standard deviation, number of responses and effect sizes of demographic groups on the job insecurity scale.

Table 6.22

*Means, standard deviation, number of responses and effect sizes of demographic groups and job insecurity*

Job Insecurity						
Demography	Mean	Std. DV	n	F	Sig	Effect size (Eta Squared)
<b>Highest level of education</b>	<b>2040.03</b>	<b>1010.82</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>2.498</b>	<b>.032*</b>	<b>.019</b>
Matric or lower	2514.68	888.06	49			
Matric and post-matric certificate/diploma	2086.65	1086.64	53			
Bachelors degree	1846.16	823.87	30			
B(Hons) degree (or equivalent)	1879.66	981.52	40			
Masters degree	1923.33	1000.20	46			
Doctorate	1904.22	1070.69	42			
<b>Administrative/Professional</b>	<b>2084.80</b>	<b>999.86</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>2.127</b>	<b>.081**</b>	<b>.058</b>
Manager of division (post grade 6)	1618.06	915.52	16			
Supervisor and specialist (post grade 7)	1939.59	995.08	22			
Officer and specialist (post grade 8/9)	2060.51	961.24	69			
Highly skilled clerk (post grade 10/11/12)	2466.74	1086.79	23			
*Lower level skilled clerk (post grade 13/14/15/16)	2338.64	981.78	14			

\* Significant at 0.05

\*\*Significant at 0.1

According to table 6.22, the following statistically significant differences (0.032\*) reporting participants highest level of education and job insecurity do exist. This implies that participants with Bachelor's degrees, with mean scores of  $m=1846.16$  feel less insecure as compared to participants with matric or lower who had a mean score of  $m=2514.68$  which is above the average mean score of 2040.03. This result is consistent with findings of Labuschagne *et al.* (2005, p. 27) who reported that threat to job loss is less problematic for employees who are highly educated

because they possess more resources to counteract the adverse consequences of unemployment and as a result could easily find another job elsewhere in the labour market.

Furthermore table 6.22 shows that the statistically significant differences (0.081\*\*) reporting participants' occupation in the organisation and job insecurity do exist.  $H_5$  is supported, stating that participants in highly skilled clerk positions would perceive higher levels of job insecurity as compared to participants in the manager positions. This finding depicts that participants with a highly skilled clerk job have a mean score ( $m=2466.74$ ) which is above the average mean score for professional and administrative staff. It is further notable that participants in highly skilled clerk positions feel more insecure as compared to participants with lower level skilled clerk jobs because of the uncertainty of finding similar jobs elsewhere.

No statistically significant differences were found between gender, age groups and number of years with the organisation and job insecurity. This entails that the levels of perceived job insecurity do not differ amongst the participants.

### **6.8.2 Effect sizes for demographical groups and organisational commitment**

Table 6.23 depicts the means, standard deviations, number of responses and effect sizes of demographic groups and organisational commitment.

Table 6.23

*Means, standard deviations, number of responses and effect sizes of demographic groups and organisational commitment*

Demography	Organisational Commitment					
	Mean	Std DV	N	F	Sig	Effect size (Eta Squared)
<b>Years at Unisa</b>	<b>74.47</b>	<b>10.52</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>2.98</b>	<b>.020*</b>	<b>.045</b>
Less than a year	64.60	19.96	5			
One year to less than two years	70.96	9.43	24			
Two years to less than five years	72.00	12.61	34			
Five years to less than ten years	74.59	7.54	41			
Ten years or more	75.83	10.22	156			
<b>Highest level of education</b>	<b>74.47</b>	<b>10.52</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>2.700</b>	<b>.021*</b>	<b>0.05</b>
Matric or lower	78.06	9.13	49			
Matric and post-matric certificate/diploma	76.23	9.50	53			
Bachelors degree	72.10	13.29	30			
B(Hons) degree (or equivalent)	71.65	10.48	40			
Masters degree	72.59	10.84	46			
Doctorate	74.48	9.64	42			
<b>Gender</b>	<b>74.47</b>	<b>10.52</b>	<b>260</b>		<b>.014*^</b>	<b>.023</b>
Male	76.17	10.40	121			
Female	72.98	10.42	139			
<b>Administrative/Professional</b>	<b>75.21</b>	<b>10.87</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>2.177</b>	<b>.074**</b>	<b>0.05</b>
Manager of division (post grade 6)	70.88	12.22	16			
Supervisor and specialist (post grade 7)	73.52	12.59	23			
Officer and specialist (post grade 8/9)	74.51	10.17	77			
Highly skilled clerk (post grade 10/11/12)	78.93	10.63	29			
Lower level skilled clerk (post grade 13/14/15/16)	78.80	8.58	15			

\*Significant at 0.05

\*\* Significant at 0.1

^ T-test was used

According to table 6.23 there is a statistically significant difference (0.020\*) between participants tenure with respect to their commitment in the organisation. It is evident from the table that participants with the longest tenure exhibit higher levels of commitment as compared to participants with fewer years in the organisation. That is, employees with more than ten years experience with the

organisation scored significantly higher (practically significant difference) than those with less than five years experience when indicating their commitment in the organisation.

This finding is consistent with previous findings which found that organisational tenure is positively related to organisational commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). This suggests that employees with longer tenure are typically more committed to their organisations, and are identified more with and invest more in their jobs than employees with shorter tenure.

A further statistically significant difference (0.021\*) is notable regarding highest level of education amongst participants with respect to organisational commitment. The result is consistent with previous findings that report that employees in highest educational achievement and with rare skills as well as those who are knowledgeable about their expertise would easily find a job because they see themselves as employable (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2005).

A nonparametric measure, namely the Mann-Whitney Test was used to compute the difference between gender and organisational commitment. The nonparametric measure is often used in situations where the assumption of normality has been violated (Tustin *et al.*, 2005). A one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was performed to determine the normal distribution of organisational commitment, and the result shows that normative commitment was not normally distributed and significant ( $0.02 < p < 0.05$ ), hence the decision to use a nonparametric test. The analysis of variance depicts a statistically significant differences ( $0.014^{*^{\wedge}}$ ) between the male and female levels of commitment.

This finding is consistent with studies that have reported similar findings on gender-roles (De Witte, 1999). On the contrary a meta-analysis conducted by Mathieu and Zajac (1990, p. 177) reports that females tend to be less committed to the organisation as compared to their male counterparts, although the magnitude of the effect of the difference was smaller.

Table 6.23 also shows a statistically significant difference (0.074\*\*) between participants current designation with respect to organisational commitment. The hypothesis that states that participants in higher position (designation) will express less commitment as compare to participants in lower position is supported.

No statistical significant differences were found between age groups and employees expression of organisation commitment. This implies that participants do not differ in their expression of organisational commitment.

### 6.8.3 Effect sizes for demographical groups and work engagement

Table 6.24 displays the means, standard deviations and effect sizes of demographic groups for work engagement.

Table 6.24

*Means, number of responses and effect sizes of demographic groups on Utrecht Work Engagement Scale*

Demographic	Work Engagement					
	Mean	Std	n	Chi-square	Sig	Effect size (Eta Squared)
<b>Gender</b>	<b>64.46</b>	<b>11.61</b>	<b>260</b>		<b>.020<sup>^</sup></b>	<b>.015</b>
Male	65.97	11.46	121			
Female	63.15	11.62	139			
<b>Administrative/Professional</b>	<b>63.36</b>	<b>12.38</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>8.761</b>	<b>.067**</b>	<b>0.06</b>
Manager of division (post grade 6)	67.06	9.61	16			
Supervisor and specialist (post grade 7)	62.91	12.04	23			
Officer and specialist (post grade 8/9)	60.53	12.96	77			
Highly skilled clerk (post grade 10/11/12)	67.07	9.87	29			
Lower level skilled clerk (post grade 13/14/15/16)	67.47	14.17	15			

\*Significant at 0.05

\*\* Significant at 0.1

<sup>^</sup> Mann-Whitney Test was used

According to Table 6.24, a practically significant difference does exist between work engagement and gender as well as Professional/Administrative position.

A nonparametric measure, namely the Mann-Whitney Test was used to compute the difference between gender and work engagement. The nonparametric measure is often used in situations where the assumption of normality has been violated (Tustin *et al.*, 2005). For this reason, a one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was conducted to determine the normal distribution of work engagement, and the result revealed that all three components of work engagements were not normally distributed and significant at  $0.09 < p < 0.05$  for vigour,  $0.00 < p < 0.05$  (dedicated) and  $0.06 < p < 0.05$  (absorption) hence the decision to use a nonparametric test.

A statistically significant difference ( $0.020^{*^{\wedge}}$ ) is observable which entails that the mean score for male participants was slightly higher (65.97) than for female participants (63.15), implying that males seems to be engaged in their work roles/activities as compared to females. Previous study could not be found between gender-based roles and the level of work engagement.

The Kruskal-Wallis (K-W) one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was constructed to determine the difference between work engagement and participants' occupation in the organisation. As reflected in table 6.24 a statistically significant difference ( $0.067^{**}$ ) is observable showing a difference between the mean score ( $m=60.53$ ) of participants' in the officer and specialist occupation (post grade 8/9) with lower levels of engagement in their work roles/activities as compared to participants in lower-skilled clerk positions (post grade 13/14/15/16).

## 6.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the research results of the empirical study were reported and discussed. The reliability coefficient of each research instruments was reported and discussed. The descriptive statistics were presented to indicate the level of job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement experienced by the participants. The Pearson product-moments correlation coefficients were used to determine the multiple linear regressions between job insecurity, organisational commitment, and also between job insecurity and work engagement. The multiple

regression analyses were computed to determine whether job insecurity can predict organisational commitment and/or work engagement. The effect size for biographical data was used to determine their significant relationships with job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement.

The next chapter presents the conclusions on the basis of the literature review and the empirical findings. The limitations and implications will be formulated in relation to the research results.



## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

#### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the research results were reported, interpreted and discussed. The purpose of this chapter is to provide conclusions about the literature review and the results of the empirical study. The limitations of the present study and the recommendations for future research are presented.

#### 7.2 CONCLUSIONS

This study was aimed at exploring the relationship between job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement amongst staff in a certain tertiary institution. The research conclusions that can be made from the literature and empirical study are formulated.

##### 7.2.1 Conclusions with respect to literature findings

The following conclusions are made with specific reference to the literature findings and empirical study:

The first aim was achieved in chapter 2 of this study by conceptualising job insecurity. The literature has shown that job insecurity can be conceptualised from either the global or multidimensional perspectives. With regard to the global perspectives, job insecurity represents the threat of job loss or imminent job continuity (Bosman *et al.*, 2005; De Witte, 1991; Hartley *et al.*, 1991). In contrast, the multidimensional perspectives define job insecurity “as perceived powerlessness to maintain the desired continuity in a threatened job situation” (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984). Common to both the global and multidimensional perspectives is that they both regard job insecurity as a subjective phenomenon depending on how individual employees perceive and interpret their immediate job situation.

Based on the theoretical framework of Greenhalgh and Rossenblatt (1984) employees can only feel/experience insecurity about their future job continuity if they perceive the threat to be severe and feel powerless to do anything about their situation. Similarly, Ashford *et al.* (1989) assert that job insecurity can only exist when employees detect a threat to their overall job loss or loss of any conditions of employment. They formulated five dimensions of job insecurity which are the importance and likelihood of job features, importance and likelihood of job loss and perceived powerlessness. Of these dimensions, the importance and likelihood of job loss are similar to De Witte's (2005) cognitive and affective job insecurity.

The experiences of job insecurity are noticeable during organisational restructuring or when the organisational is in crisis (De Witte, 1997) or any changes in organisational policies and procedures take place (Davy *et al.*, 1997). On the contrary, Rosenblatt and Ruvio (1996) argue that the experience of job insecurity is relevant whether or not an objective threat exists, because feelings of job insecurity depend on the perception and interpretation of the employees. Feelings of job insecurity are prevalent in personal characteristics such as age, gender education, occupation and tenure as well as organisational changes. Furthermore, feelings of job insecurity can affect the job related outcomes such as organisational commitment, job satisfaction and turnover intention as well as work engagement.

The second aim was achieved in chapter 3 of this study by conceptualising the concept organisational commitment. Mowday *et al.* (1982, p. 27) define commitment as the relative strength of employee's identification with and involvement in a particular organisation. It is viewed as the employee's feelings about change in terms of acceptance of organisational goals, demonstrable effort on behalf of the organisation and a desire to maintain membership.

Although many definitions of commitment have been presented since Mowday *et al.* (1979), it is the conceptual framework of Meyer and Allen (1991; 1997), that actually identifies the three dimensions in the commitment construct, namely affective, continuance and normative commitment. The three dimensions present

commitment from the perspectives of attachment, necessity and obligation, respectively.

Meyer and Allen (1997) posit that employees can experience more than one mindset simultaneously. For example, they emphasise the possibility for employees to feel both a desire and an obligation to remain with the organisation. In addition, they suggested that it is best to consider each employee as having a commitment profile reflecting the relative strength of affective, continuance and normative commitment.

The third aim was achieved in chapter 4 of this study by conceptualising the concept work engagement. Work engagement is as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by three interrelated dimensions, namely vigour, dedication, and absorption. Vigour is characterised by high levels of energy and mental resilience that are accompanied by a willingness to persevere even when confronted with challenges. Dedication refers to a strong psychological involvement in one's work, combined with a sense of significance, enthusiasm, pride and feeling inspired as well as challenged by the work (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002a; 2002b). Absorption is refers to full concentration on and immersion in work characterised by time passing quickly and finding it difficult to detach oneself from one's work activities (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002a; 2002b).

Based on Schaufeli *et al.* (2002a; 2002b) engagement is not a momentary and specific state, but rather is a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual or behaviour.

The fourth aim namely the theoretical relationship between job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement was also achieved. The literature review showed that a theoretical relationship does exist between job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement. Previous findings suggest that employees experiencing uncertainty about their future job or job features generally are less committed to their organisation (Ashford *et al.*, 1989; Buitendach & De Witte, 2005; Davy *et al.*, 1997; Sverke & Hellgren, 2002). In

addition, high levels of perceived job insecurity were also assumed to relate to a decrease in the employees level of work engagement (Bosman, 2005; De Witte, 2005; Mauno *et al.*, 2001).

On the contrary, other studies documented that employees who perceive possible threats to their job and/or job features may increase their work effort and commitment in order to be more valuable to the organisation (Sverke & Hellgren, 2001). In addition, according to Hirschman (1970) loyalty which could be manifested by high levels of organisational commitment might be the reaction of employees to redress job insecurity in the organisation. This suggests that employees might attempt to save off the likelihood of job lose or job features by demonstrating their worthiness to remain with the organisation. The theoretical framework derived from Hirschman (1970) suggests that high insecurity could lead to enhanced loyalty reactions in order to redress one's attractiveness in the organisation (thereby possibly remedying insecurity).

### **7.2.2 Conclusions with respect to empirical findings**

The conclusions are set with the specific aims of the empirical findings.

The first specific aim in terms of the empirical study was to determine the reliability and validity of the three measuring instruments, namely job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement. This aim was achieved and the results are comparable against previous studies as shown in chapter 6. In this study, the Cronbach Alpha coefficients for the JIS, OCQ and UWES were 0.90, 0.78 and 0.93 respectively, implying that the internal consistencies for the measuring instruments are acceptable, based on the guidelines set by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994).

The Cronbach coefficient alpha ( $\alpha$ ) was used to determine the internal consistency of the various instruments. The Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.91 was achieved from the total job insecurity, and the subscale range from 0.65 to 0.95. This study compares favourably with other studies in terms of descriptive analysis. The total mean score of 3.63 observable for job insecurity is similar to that reported by

Ashford *et al.* (1989), Lee *et al.* (2006) and Rosenblatt and Ruvio (1996), which implies that a perception of job insecurity is notable amongst the survey participants.

The Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.78 was achieved from the total organisational commitment, and the subscale range from 0.55 to 0.83. Similarly, Suliman and Iles (2000a) in a study conducted in Arabic reported reliabilities of 0.73 for affective commitment, 0.60 for continuance commitment and a somewhat weaker 0.47 for normative commitment. In terms of organisational commitment, the highest mean score was reported for affective commitment (3.46) and the lowest for normative commitment (3.25). The result suggests that the participants have a strong desire to remain with the organisation because they want to (Meyer *et al.*, 1997) and also because of the attachment to and loyalty for their organisation. The level of normative commitment reflects a sense of obligation to remain with the organisation, because they feel that they ought to (Meyer *et al.* (1997) was fairly weak. This shows that moral obligation and duty to remain with the organisation were insignificant amongst survey participants.

The Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.934 was achieved from the total work engagement, and the subscale range from 0.77 to 0.87. In terms of work engagement, the highest mean scores were reported for dedication (3.95) and the lowest for absorption (3.70). This implies that the participants are more inclined to exhibit high level of energy and mental resilience in their work activities. They feel energised, motivated and excited about their work as well as strong identification with their work. Because of their involvement, they are committed to performing at a high quality level when performing their work activities.

The second specific aim of this study was to determine the level of job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement among employees in a tertiary institution. This aim was achieved and the results are comparable to previous studies as shown in chapter 6. The empirical results have shown that the survey participants have on average above the mid-point 5 on the level of job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement. That is, the mean value for the

levels of job insecurity was  $M=3.63$ , organisational commitment was  $M = 3.38$  and work engagement was  $M = 3.97$ . This however, suggests that as employees feel a threat to their future job continuity they at the same time feel the need to exhibit high commitment to the organisation as well as be persistent in their work engagement in order to retain their jobs/employment.

To a certain extent, the reliability of the instruments and the arithmetic mean of the different instruments in this study resonate many of the findings of previous studies.

The third specific aim of this study was to determine the relationship between job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement. The relationship between job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement was achieved. A statistically significant relationship was observable, although the relationship has a weak and small effect. That is, a positive relationship between job insecurity and organisational commitment was ( $r=0.286$ ), and work engagement ( $r=0.270$ ). This implies that higher levels of job insecurity lead to both higher levels of organisational commitment and work engagement. This suggests that employees who feel insecure may consider their chances for security are higher if they stay with the organisation rather than losing their job by looking elsewhere for a new job. Further research is needed to understand the potentially differential effects of various dimensions of job insecurity.

The research findings revealed that there was a statistically significant relationship between job insecurity and organisational commitment ( $p=0.001$ ), and further, between job insecurity and work engagement ( $p=0.001$ ). The statistically significant relationship is comparable to other previous studies, for instance, Bosman *et al.* (2005), who reported a negative significant relationship between job insecurity and affective organisational commitment ( $-0.44^*$ ). In addition Ashford *et al.* (1989, p 815) reported negative significant correlation ( $-0.47^{**}$ ), Rothmann and Jordaan (2006, p 91) found negative relationship between job insecurity and vigour ( $r = -0.13, p < 0.01$ ).

The fourth specific aim of this study was to determine the relationship between work engagement and organisational commitment. Based on the literature review, there seems to be an overlap amongst various studies as far as the relationship between job insecurity as an impaired job related attitude is concerned. There are studies that document that job insecurity as an impaired job related attitude which will result in decreased organisational commitment (Ashford *et al.*, 1989) and work engagement.

The fifth specific aim was to determine whether job insecurity and work engagement can predict organisational commitment. The research findings reveal that job insecurity and work engagement explain 25 % of the total variance of the dependent variable (organisational commitment) and that 75 % of the variance is attributed to factors beyond the scope of this study. The hypothesis that job insecurity and work engagement can predict organisational commitment is supported.

The sixth specific aim was to determine whether work engagement can be used to predict organisational commitment. The research findings reveal that work engagement explains 22 % of the total variance of organisational commitment, and that 78 % of the variance is attributed to factors beyond the scope of this study. As a result the hypothesis that work engagement can predict organisational commitment is supported.

The seventh specific aim was to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the various demographic variables and job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement.

A statistically significant difference (0.032\*) was reported between participants' highest level of education and job insecurity. This implies that participants with Bachelors degrees obtain lower mean scores (1846.16) as compared to participants with matric or lower education (2514.68) with the average mean score of 2040.03. The result is consistent with findings of Labuschagne *et al.* (2005, p 27) who reported that threat to job loss is less problematic for more highly educated people.

A statistically significant difference (0.058\*) was reported between participants' position in the organisation and job insecurity. This implies that participants with higher positions have a lower mean score (1618.06) as compared to participants with lower positions who have a mean score of 2338.64.

There is a statistically significant difference (0.020\*) between participants' tenure with respect to their commitment to the organisation. It is evident from the table that participants with the longest tenure will express more commitment as compared to participants with fewer years in the organisation. That is, employees with more than ten years experience with the organisation scored significantly higher (75.83) than those with less than five years experience, who scored lower (65.60) when indicating their commitment in the organisation.

A statistically significant differences (0.021\*) was reported regarding highest level of education amongst participants with respect to organisational commitment. The result is consistent with previous findings that reported that employees with highest educational achievement and with rare skills as well as knowledgeable about their expertise would easily find a job, because of their employability (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2005).

A nonparametric measure, namely the Mann-Whitney Test was used to measure the difference between gender and organisational commitment. The analysis of variance indicates statistically significant differences (0.014\*) between male and female levels of commitment to the organisation.

### **7.3 LIMITATIONS**

This study has some limitations. Firstly, all data were collected using self-report questionnaires which might raise the possibility of responses being affected by a common method. Secondly, the data were collected at one point in time making it difficult to assess causal relationship. As a result, longitudinal research is recommended to establish whether causal relationships exist among job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement. This means that very little is



known about the long-term effects of job insecurity and the related job attitudes. Thirdly, a few of the subscales had a level of internal consistency reliability which was below the acceptable level of 0.70. This study cannot be compared to other studies, which examined the effects of perceived job insecurity, because the supporting mechanism such as continuous communication and feedback, etc were taken into account during a process of change.

#### **7.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STUDY**

The implication that can be made in this study is that employees expect a fair income, a secure job in a safe environment and jobs that allow them to fulfil their needs as human beings, while fulfilling their obligations towards their organisation. Further implications relate to whether a strong communication and consultation mechanism between employees and the institution should be devised to keep employees on all levels informed. This would serve to 'buffer' feelings of uncertainty regarding job continuity and/or discontinuity, and further to establish a favourable working environment as well as to enhance employee loyalty and commitment.

This study would benefit the industrial and organisational psychology, human resource practitioners and organisational development as a whole in understanding the ramification of job insecurity in enhancing positive outcomes amongst employees in the South African context.

#### **7.5 RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The focus of this research was to explore the relationship between job insecurity, organisational commitment and work engagement amongst employees in a certain tertiary institution. It is recommended that further research be investigated on the potential differential effects of various dimensions of job insecurity on organisational commitment and work engagement as well as other related job attitudes such as turnover intention and job performance.

**7.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The chapter presents the conclusions in terms of the literature review as well as the empirical study. The chapter also highlights some of the shortcomings of the study and the implications as well as recommendation for future research.

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