

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FLEXIBLE WORKING  
HOURS, ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT AND  
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AT A SOUTH AFRICAN  
RETAILER**

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## **DECLARATION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

In the twenty first century, the traditional roles in a nuclear family have changed. In the majority of modern families, both partners have careers and full-time jobs. Burnett, Gatrell, Cooper and Sparrow (2010) explain that the approach to working life is changing, both men and women want to find a balance between work, family and caring responsibilities. Guest (2002) also elaborates that work-life balance has always been a concern for those interested in the quality of working life and the relation to broader quality of life. Due to the challenges which employees are currently facing, flexible work arrangements have become an increasingly popular business practice around the globe as a means to reduce work-life conflict. Many organisations offer flexible work arrangements with the goal of facilitating positive outcomes for both organisations and employees (Joiner & Bakalis, 2006). However, other organisations are still resistant to introducing flexible work arrangements as they fear it might impact negatively on productivity (Johnson, 2004; Martinez-Sanchez, Perez-Perez, Jose Vela-Jimenez & de-Luis Carnicer, 2008).

While literature on flexible working hours has increased in recent times, no study has been found on the relationships between flexible working hours, employee engagement and organisational commitment in the retail sector in South Africa. Therefore this study focused on the relationship between flexible working hours, employee engagement and organisational commitment.

The study followed a quantitative approach and the questionnaires were completed by 161 respondents. The two statistical approaches used to draw conclusions for this study are descriptive and inferential statistics. The study found significant relationships between flexible working hours, employee engagement and organisational commitment. The study also found a significant relationship between different age groups and flexible working hours as well as male and female and their use of flexible working hours.

In conclusion, if retailers want to remain competitive in the retail industry where international competition is rife, they will have to ensure that they have the best talent. In order to acquire top talent, they will need to implement policies that will attract and retain them. Based on the findings and results, flexible working hours could substantially assist by increasing their employee engagement and organisational commitment and thereby attracting and retaining the top talent in the South African retail industry.

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

In the twenty first century, the traditional roles in a nuclear family have changed. In the majority of modern families, both partners have careers and full-time jobs. Burnett, Gatrell, Cooper and Sparrow (2010) explain that the approach to working life is changing, both men and women want to find a balance between work, family and caring responsibilities. Guest (2002) also elaborates that work-life balance has always been a concern for those interested in the quality of working life and the relation to broader quality of life. It can therefore be argued that work-life balance has become a challenge for employees in recent times. A key factor to achieving work-life balance in many cases is flexible working hours. Due to the challenges that employees are currently facing, flexible work arrangements have become an increasingly popular business practice around the globe as a means to reduce work-life conflict. Many organisations offer flexible work arrangements with the goal of facilitating positive outcomes for both organisations and employees (Joiner & Bakalis, 2006).

However, organisations still have the perception that if they offer flexible working hours to employees, they will not be able to achieve optimal productivity. Flexible working arrangements are not always viewed as a priority in business (Johnson, 2004; Martinez-Sanchez, Perez-Perez, Jose Vela-Jimenez & de-Luis Carnicer, 2008). The perception exists that those who work flexible hours are not really working hard and a belief exists that it is difficult to manage staff who work flexible hours. This contradicts other studies that have found a positive correlation between work-life balance and employee engagement. Hewett (2014) who studied 2014 Trends in Global Employee Engagement demonstrates that work-life balance was one of the biggest contributors to the positive increase in the employee engagement percentage in Sub-Saharan Africa. This was the third biggest contributor after organisational reputation and senior leadership. It also indicates in the 2014 Trends in Global Employee Engagement studies that previously it was a factor which was lacking but over recent years has increased and contributed positively to employee engagement. In order to establish the importance and impact of flexible working arrangements, this research will examine the relationship between flexible working

hours, employee engagement and organisational commitment. These three drivers are linked to increased organisational performance and productivity.

## **1.2 Significance of the study**

While literature on flexible working hours has increased in recent times, no study has been found on the relationships between flexible working hours, employee engagement and organisational commitment in the retail sector in South Africa. It is essential to understand the impact of flexible working hours in the retail sector given the increase in international competitors entering the local retail market (Douglas, 2016). The pressure on local retailers will ultimately have an effect on their employees. This pressure could come in the form of higher expectations from managers as well as greater efficiencies and productivity expected from employees driven by a desire to achieve targets and make profits. With this increased pressure, the employers' priority may be increasing productivity and profit at the expense of employees' flexible working hours. This could ultimately influence employee engagement and organisational commitment in retail organisations in South Africa.

## **1.3 Objectives of the study**

The primary aim of the study is to understand the relationship that exist between flexible working hours and key variables. More specifically, the objectives are as follows:

- To determine whether a relationship exists between flexible working hours, employee engagement and organisational commitment.
- To determine whether a relationship exists between flexible working hours and employee engagement.
- To determine whether a relationship exists between flexible working hours and organisational commitment.
- To determine whether a relationship exists between organisational commitment and employee engagement.
- To determine whether a relationship exists between flexible working hours and different age groups.

- To determine whether a relationship exists between male, female, and their use of flexible working hours.

#### **1.4 Research questions**

The following research questions be will be answered through this study:

- Is there a significant relationship between flexible working hours, employee engagement and organisational commitment?
- Is there a significant relationship between flexible working hours and employee engagement?
- Is there a significant relationship between flexible working hours and organisational commitment?
- Is there a significant relationship between organisational commitment and employee engagement?
- Is there a significant relationship between different age groups and flexible working hours?
- Is there a significant relationship between male and female and their use of flexible working hours?

#### **1.5 Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were tested:

- There is a significant relationship between employee engagement and flexible working hours amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape;
- There is a significant relationship between organisational commitment and flexible working hours amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape;
- There is a significant relationship between organisational commitment and employee engagement amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape;
- Employee engagement and organisational commitment explain a significant proportion of the variance in flexible working hours, amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape;

- There is a significant relationship between different age groups and flexible working hours amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape;
- There is a significant relationship between male and female and their use of flexible working hours amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape;

## **1.6 Defining key concepts**

Flexible working hours, organisational commitment and employee engagement are concepts often used in organisations. Therefore, it is important that these concepts are defined to illustrate and clarify the study's objectives and hypotheses.

### **1.6.1 Defining flexible working hours**

Work flexibility can be defined as not only variation in time and place of the job, but also sharing of the job, career breaks (maternity/paternity leaves), part-time and term-time working (Shagvaliyeva & Yazdanifard, 2014). It is important to note that while each of the arrangements could be used individually, they are frequently combined to complement each other. Also, work flexibility offers convenience in planning; it does not reduce the working time. Thus, flexibility in work might be summarised as the employee's ability to control the duration of his/her working time and location of work (remotely from office). This ability in scheduling of work is to be offered by the employer in some organisations (Palkisetia & Shah, 2015). Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard (2014) state that evidence suggests that flexible working practices fit women more than men and that flexible working hours are more likely to be employed by women due to the ideology beliefs of motherhood. However, due to the changing family patterns and gender norms and the rise of women in the workforce, flexible employment has slowly started to be utilised by men.

Flexibility has become an important strategy in many organisations; many organisations seek flexible methods in order to be competitive and to try to accommodate demographic changes that have happened in the labour market over the last few decades (Ashoush, Elsayed & Younis, 2015). Employers have introduced flexible working packages (part of work-life policy) in order to attract, recruit, and retain highly qualified staff to their organisations (Palkisetia & Shah, 2015). With the ability to schedule the work himself/herself, employees feel that the employer

cares about their well-being and non-working life. Given these trends, employers who offer flexible work scheduling to support work-life demands may have a competitive advantage in external recruitment and internal retention. Evidence suggests that having flexibility policies does increase the size and quality of the applicant pool (Clifton & Shepard, 2004).

### **1.6.2 Defining employee engagement**

Little and Little (2006) explain that the term employee engagement was developed by the Gallup organisation when they conducted a survey which spanned over 25 years and included interviews and surveys from managers and employees. The intent of their research was to create a measure of workplaces that could be used for comparisons. The survey was titled the Gallup Workplace Audit (GWA) and the outcome of the survey was to measure how employee engagement is related to productivity, profitability, employee retention and customer service level.

Seijs and Crim (2006) define an engaged employee as a person who is fully involved in and enthusiastic about his/her work. Seijs and Crim (2006) then go on to ask a question of whether there is a strong relationship between employee engagement indices and organisational performance. To explore the answer to this question, they examined a case study conducted in the United States of America (U.S.) New Century Financial Corporation and a U.S. speciality mortgage banking company. They found that account executives in the wholesale division who were actively disengaged produced 28 percent less revenue than their colleagues who were engaged. 'Engaged' employees also outperformed the 'not engaged' and 'actively disengaged' employees in other divisions (Seijs & Crim, 2006).

### **1.6.3 Defining Organisational Commitment**

Meyer and Allen (1991) define organisational commitment as a psychological state that describes the relationship the employee has with the organisation. This relationship has an influence over the decision of the employee of whether to stay in or leave the organisation. Randall (1990) explains that working relationships such as relationships between the employee and line manager can affect commitment. In some literatures it is argued that this working relationship can either influence organisational commitment positively or negatively. Therefore, it needs to be taken into account when examining employee engagement in the workplace.

Asiedu, Sarfo and Adjei (2014) state that organisational commitment has drawn a lot of attention in the past decade. They have found that the reason for this is the impact and contribution that organisational commitment has had on employee performance and the profitability of the organisation. Lesabe and Nkosi (2007) argue that no organisation in today's highly competitive world can perform at peak levels unless each and every employee is committed to its objectives and strategic goals. With organisations faced with ever-increasing competition, a focus is required towards developing committed and loyal employees who will hold the promise of financial returns for the organisation.

## **1.7 Research Methodology**

This study was conducted with head office employees of a national retail organisation based in the Western Cape. The sample comprised of 161 head office employees from six divisions selected using the probability sampling technique and simple random sampling technique. The study was conducted using an exploratory approach and a questionnaire was used in order to collect the data for the qualitative research. The research instrument was previously used by Achmad (2013) to investigate the relationship between flexible working hours and motivation. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 was used to analyse the data collected. T-tests and ANOVA were used in order to assess whether there are significant relationships between flexible working hours, employee engagement and organisational commitment. Chi-Square tests were also used in order to assess whether there are significant relationships between flexible working hours, male and female and their use of flexible working hours and different age groups. The dependent variables for this study were employee engagement and organisational commitment, different age groups and male and female and their use of flexible working hours, while the independent variable for this study was flexible working hours.

## **1.8 Ethical Considerations**

The researcher is able to say with confidence that an ethical approach was followed during this research. This will be outlined below.

### **1.8.1 Respect for the dignity, moral and legal rights of people**

Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005) state that underlying 'research ethics' are universal and concern issues such as honesty and respect for the rights of individuals. HPSCA (2008) also states that the core ethical values and standards for good practice for health practitioners include respect for persons, human rights, integrity, truthfulness and compassion. Respect for persons ethics means that practitioners should respect people as persons and acknowledge their intrinsic worth, dignity and sense of value. HPSCA (2008) also specifies that practitioners should recognise the human rights of all individuals. These ethics are all a vital part of research as it is stipulated in the guidelines for good practice in the health care professions guide. The researcher respected all participants during the course of the research by abiding by the guidelines and ethics. The researcher interacted with the participants and allowed them to voluntarily participate in the research or not.

### **1.8.2 Voluntary participation**

A consent form was displayed on the front of the questionnaire which informed the respondents that participation was voluntary and that results of the study would be used for a research project at university. Informed consent is considered the most important of all ethical principles and it is prominent in regulations regarding research. The idea is that it allows the research participant the opportunity to weigh the risks and benefits associated with a particular research and to decide whether to take part or not (Howe & Moses, 1999).

### **1.8.3 Anonymity, privacy and confidentiality**

Confidentiality was ensured; participants were not be asked to provide their names or any other information which revealed their identity thereby ensuring confidentiality. Confidentiality and privacy are overlapping concerns in the conduct of research involving a study participant. Confidentiality is designed to protect the privacy of the study participants (Shank, 2006). The chief way that researchers seek to protect research participants from the accidental breaking of confidentiality is through the process of amonisation, hence the difference between anonymity and confidentiality. Such provisions may include (a) protecting information which might identify the participant (b) ensuring the security of all documents related to the participants, (c) safeguarding the database, (d) ensuring that the destruction of unused data occurs after the

analysis (Shank, 2006). Data was protected while the study was being conducted and kept for an appropriate period of time while the study is being validated. These provisions were meant to ensure that anonymity, privacy and confidentiality were maintained.

#### **1.8.4 Non-maleficence and beneficence**

Non-maleficence means that research conducted which is likely to harm participants is unacceptable. Harm can be physical harm, harm to participants' development or self-esteem, stress, harm to career prospects for future employment, and inducing subjects to perform reprehensible acts (Welman et al., 2014). The HPSCA defines beneficence as acting in the best interests of the individual, even when the latter conflict with their own self-interest. In this study, no foreseen harm has been identified. It is intended that organisations and employees benefit from the study to highlight the relationship between flexible working hours, employee engagement and work commitment.

### **1.9 Research Agenda**

Chapter 1 has provided the background and significance of the study; it provided reasons for the chosen topic. Thereafter it outlines the research objectives and hypotheses for the study. The chapter also provided the definition of the key concepts, namely, flexible working hours, organisational commitment and employee engagement in order to clarify and illustrate the study. It also provided a brief overview of the research methodology along with the ethical issues of the study.

Chapter 2 outlines the literature review which conceptualises flexible working hours, employee engagement and organisational commitment. It also conceptualises the relationship between flexible working hours, employee engagement and organisational commitment.

In Chapter 3, the research methodology is provided in order to further define the key concepts and variables relating to the study. The chapter also outlines the research instrument which was used, sample design, sampling techniques, population and data collection. Lastly, the chapter notes the study's reliability and validity.

Chapter 4 presents the descriptive statistics illustrating the responses from the questionnaires. The chapter then presents inferential statistics where the hypotheses are accepted or rejected



using Pearson's correlation coefficient, T-test, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Chi-Square tests.

Chapter 5 summarises and discusses salient points related to the study conducted. The chapter also links the findings of the study to the literature review in chapter 2 as well as make recommendations to the organisation where the study was conducted for potential future implementation. Lastly, the chapter discusses possible implications of the study for future research.

### **1.10 Conclusion**

This chapter outlines the background and significance of the study conducted as well as highlights the hypotheses and research questions for the study. Lastly it defines the key concepts used and the ethical considerations which were followed. The next chapter will detail the literature review of the study conceptualising and detailing concepts and models in detail.



## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Many definitions can be found for flexible working hours, employee engagement and organisational commitment, therefore, the literature review will be used to conceptualise each variable and a working definition. Thereafter, this chapter will also highlight the benefits linked to each variable as well as the models linked to employee engagement and organisational commitment. As this research was conducted in a South African retailer, literature around flexible working hours in South Africa will also be provided. Lastly, the relationship between flexible working hours, employee engagement and organisational commitment will be explored.

### **2.2 Conceptualising flexible working hours**

The business market has changed and become more complex. Galea, Houkes and De Rijk (2014) state that this is influenced by globalisation and tough competition in the market. It is also influenced by a change in the traditional roles of the family along with a change of work-life patterns. Given this, flexible working hours has become an important topic of research, as companies want to attract the best talent and remain competitive with engaged employees.

Many international studies indicate that work flexibility can be defined as not only a variation in time and place of the job, but also sharing of the job, career breaks (maternity/paternity leaves), part-time and term-time working (Shagvaliyeva & Yazdanifard, 2014). Importantly, while each of the arrangements could be used individually, they are frequently combined to complement each other. Also, work flexibility offers convenience in planning but not reducing the working time. Thus, flexibility in work might be summarised as the ability of the employee to control the duration of his/her working time as well as location of work (PalkiSetia & Shah, 2015). This is the working definition for this study. Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard (2014) confirm that flexible working practices fit women more than men and that it is more likely to be employed by women due to the ideology beliefs of motherhood. However, due to the changing family patterns and gender norms and the rise of women in the workforce, flexible employment has slowly started to be utilised by men.

### **2.3 Benefits of flexible working hours**

International companies have found that flexibility has become an important strategy in many organisations as these organisations seek flexible methods in order to be competitive and to try to accommodate demographic changes that have happened in the labour market over the last few decades (Ashoush, Elsayed & Younis, 2015). Palkisetia and Shah (2015) state that employers have introduced flexible working packages (part of work-life policy) in order to attract, recruit, and retain highly qualified employees to their organisations. Richman, Civian, Shannon, Hill Brennan (2008) also acknowledge that employers have started to recognise the positive impact which flexible working hours have on some of the business objectives such as attracting, motivating and retaining key talent in competitive labour markets. From this change, employers have also seen the increase in employee engagement and satisfaction, as well as an improvement in efficiency and effectiveness.

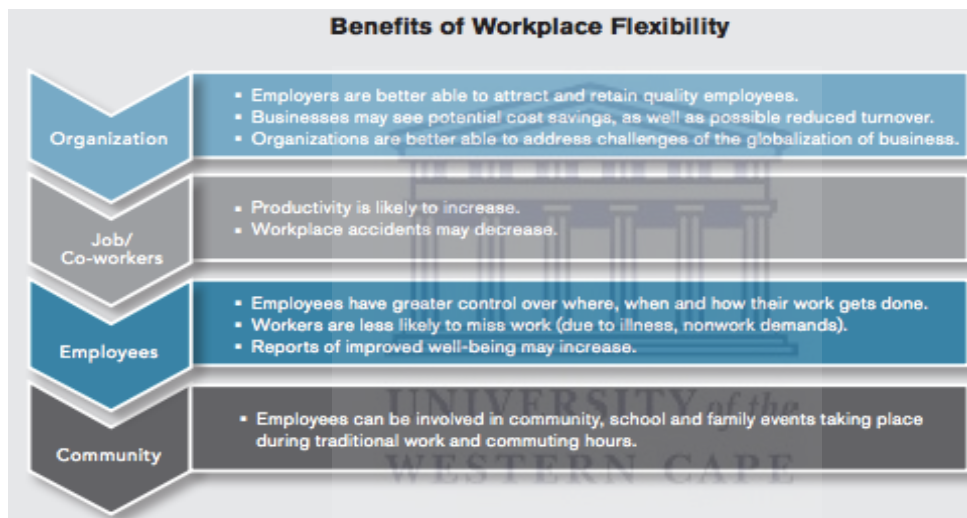
With the ability to schedule the work himself/herself, employees feel that the employer cares about their wellbeing and non-working life. Given these trends, employers who offer flexible work scheduling to support work-life demands may have a competitive advantage in external recruitment and internal retention. Evidence suggest that having flexibility policies increase the size and quality of the applicant pool (Clifton & Shepard, 2004).

Flexible working hours have benefits linked to the employee and employer. Kossek and Michel (2010) state that literature suggests that there are two main benefits which have been identified for flexible working hours for employers. The first benefit is linked to change of behaviour in the employee. This has shown to be an increased workforce attraction, retention, effort, quality and productivity, which leads to higher job satisfaction, engagement, extra role effort, commitment, and higher workforce quality from a larger applicant pool, and lower turnover of talent. Kossek and Michel (2010) state that the second main employer benefit is cost savings from the ability to attract and retain a motivated work force, as well as lowering rates of dysfunctional employee behaviours, such as absenteeism, turnover or accidents.

As previously mentioned, there are also benefits linked to the employee. Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard (2014) state that despite apparent advantages of flexible working practices

(employee personal control over work scheduling), some employees, mostly men, think that such practices result in lower income and higher employment insecurity. The same study found that men see flexible working practices as a way to develop their organisational commitment, while women associate flexibility with the work-life balance improvement. Ashoush, Elsayed and Younis, (2015) also mention some benefits to achieving balance between work and family, that is, overall satisfaction, low workload stress, positive morale and quality of work life.

Kossek, Hammer, Thompson and Burke (2014) look at all the benefits relating to the organisation and employee combined in figure 2.1



**Figure 2.1** Benefits of Workplace Flexibility (Kossek et al., 2014)

Stroup and Yoon (2016) note that a strong argument exists for companies to implement flexible working hours; they also state that there are factors which need to be in place in order for it to be successful in the organisation. The first factor is the type of employee, this is where the organisation needs to consider the job, job-type and the employee types carefully as this policy will not necessarily be able to work for all employees. The second factor is work intensity whereby employees might react to flexible working hours by putting in additional work hours and effort in order ‘pay back’ the employer. This could have the consequence of burnout and therefore the workload would need to be carefully managed by the employer and line manager.

Lastly, the organisation must be careful of the impact of inclusiveness; if there is a lack of line manager support and the policy is not applied consistently and fairly, then it could lead to some employees being excluded which could lead to employee's being disengaged.

Kossek et al. (2014) state that organisations are able to utilise the Flexibility Spectrum in order to identify where they currently are and whether they would like to improve and set a goal to achieve in the future. They further state that with training, any organisation, regardless of their size is able to offer some form of variation in their workplace.



**Figure 2.2** Workplace Flexibility Spectrum (Stroup & Yoon, 2016)

There is an alternative to highly formalised flexible policies (Stroup & Yoon, 2016). Informal flexibility has also been proved to be a highly successful method to implement flexible working hours and it has proven to reach a wider population of employees. Stroup and Yoon (2016) indicate that their research shows that this method is most successful when the culture is built on 'as needed' flexibility where there are no perceived consequences for using flexibility and the culture is focused on results rather than visually seeing the employee at work. Perhaps the organisation is able to consider this method as an alternative when looking at flexible work policies.

Many studies have been conducted which reflect the benefits linked to flexible working hours. McNall, Masuda and Nicklin (2009) conducted a study which shows that flexible working hours

demonstrate a relation to job satisfaction, turnover intentions and lower work-family conflict. Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard (2014) elaborate the benefits further when they state that better employee performance, greater organisational commitment, lower employee turnover and absenteeism are also linked to flexible working hours. They also found that flexible working hours relieve stress which helps mitigate some serious mental and physical problems that negatively influence employees' productivity and wellbeing. Observing the extensive list of positive outcomes regarding the availability of flexible work arrangements, it is reasonable to assume that employees generally tend to react positively to flexible work arrangements as they perceive that their organisations care for them which makes them feel more appreciated, and in turn, appreciate their work and organisation more (McNall, Masuda & Nicklin, 2009).

Richman, Johnson and Noble (2011) have found that the best way to put a business case forward for flexibility in an organisation is measurement and data collection. They have found that surveying employees in the organisation with three questions about flexibility in their workplace can provide insight into the perception that employees have around flexibility in the workplace. It also allows insights into the employees' results that do have flexible working hours versus employees who do not have flexible working hours. An organisation can also ascertain the value that employees place on flexible working hours compared to other drivers such as remuneration and career opportunities.

The research by Richman et al. (2011) indicates that Ernest & Young is an example of a firm that utilised its employee survey in order to measure the flexibility within its workplace. From the survey, the organisation found that it has become an essential part of managing their employees at the organisation. Richman et al. (2011) also state that in order to gain the full return and benefit from the survey, the organisation should include questions around productivity and effectiveness relating to personal life and work. From these questions, it has been found that the organisation can generate deeper insights into the employees' perceptions and attitudes around flexibility in the workplace.

## **2.4 Flexible working hours in a South African context**

In South African research, it has become evident that flexible working hours have different definitions depending on which context it is used in. Odendaal and Roodt (2002) found that in

South Africa there is no consistent and uniquely South African approach to flexibility. Whether it occurs or not, or the form it takes and the level at which it is negotiated, varies by sector. It largely depends on the cohesiveness of bargaining structures, union approaches to flexibility, industry structure, labour and product markets.

Dentlinger (2017) reported that The City of Cape Town (local municipality) has urged employers in Cape Town to introduce flexible working hours for employees as part of a solution to reduce congestion on the City's roads. Authorities have named Cape Town the most congested city in South Africa. Dentlinger (2017) indicates that employers who introduce flexible working hours in the workplace, will not only benefit the employee by not sitting in traffic for extensive hours and having more time with their family, but will also be praised for supporting a local government initiative and strengthening their employee value proposition in terms of attracting employees.

An article published in HR Pulse (2017) where Professor Anita Bosch from the University of Stellenbosch states that the suggestion of flexible working hours to alleviate traffic congestion could have a serious impact on employees and organisations. She indicates that research has shown that employees who telecommunicate are often less engaged and also indicates that, on average, a maximum of 20% of the working time should be flexible. She also states that a big challenge which will need to be overcome is the manager's fear that they are not able to manage the employee as they are unable to see them. Performance management then becomes a key requirement for line managers. She also states that not many South African line managers are confident to manage performance and outcomes with the employee not physically being there hence this might affect their performance discussions.

As the focus of the study is on a retail organisation, it is important to give a background on the sector in relation to the latter. Brand-Jonker (2017) has observed that the retail sector within South Africa has recently experienced increased pressure, predominantly from a weaker economic environment coupled with increased competition from international retailers. Major South African clothing retailers have released weak results for the first half of the financial year. Brand-Jonker (2017) reports that international retailers such as H&M and Cotton On are growing

in the South African retail markets which have affected local retailers such as Edcon closing stores and South Africa's oldest luxury brand, Stuttafords permanently shutting down.

Faku (2017) also reports that the clothing sector within South Africa is under severe pressure. The weaker economic environment has impacted on the consumer's discretionary spending, resulting in a decrease in the amount which would have previously been spent on clothing. Coupled with the new international entrants into the retail market, Faku (2017) states that this is the 'new normal' for retail competitors and they will need to offer great value to the customer along with reducing extra operational costs to remain in profitable state.

Goko (2017) reports that the company where the current research has been conducted has performed better than its South African retail competitors after releasing their last financial results. Goko (2017) notes that the CEO attributes a large part of their results to the company's diversification strategy over the past three years.

Cairns (2012) reports that the retailer where the research is being conducted opened its first store in 1925 and was the first South African retail brand to become a public company. This retailer has many different divisions and brands; analysts have indicated that brand diversity is one of this retailer's greatest strengths. This retailer has recently embarked on piloting a work-life integration policy. The pilot is being conducted in two divisions for six months to assess the feasibility of rolling out the work-life integration policy to the rest of the organisation. The pilot is centred around trusting employees and focusing on performance and outputs, and not around the number of hours the employees work at their desk. Employees with laptops will have the opportunity to work remotely and employees without laptops will have flexibility with regards to working hours. All employees at head office are eligible for this policy and need to be a good performer as the focus is on the employee's outputs and delivery. The retailer has recognised that workplace is changing with millennials expected to make up 50% of the workplace by 2020, they have found it to be a key part of looking at their engagement strategy (Deloitte, 2016).

## **2.5 Conceptualising employee engagement**

Employee engagement has had many definitions since it has been developed; Seijs and Crim (2006) defined an engaged employee as a person who is fully involved in and enthusiastic about



his/her work. Sridevi and Markos (2010) state that from their research, employee engagement has no singular definition. This can be seen from the many definitions found relating to employee engagement. Perrin's Global Workforce Study (2003) defines employee engagement as the employee's eagerness and capability to help the organisation be successful over a workable period of time. This will be the working definition for this study but further definitions and models will also be explored. Robinson et al. (2004) define employee engagement as an employee who has an optimistic attitude towards their employer and its worth. Additionally, an engaged employee is generally mindful and interested in the business environment (Robinson et al., 2004). In order to better perform, they will work with their co-workers to ultimately benefit the company. He stresses that the company needs to focus on growing and nurturing engagement as it is both the employee and employer responsibility.

## **2.6 Models of employee engagement**

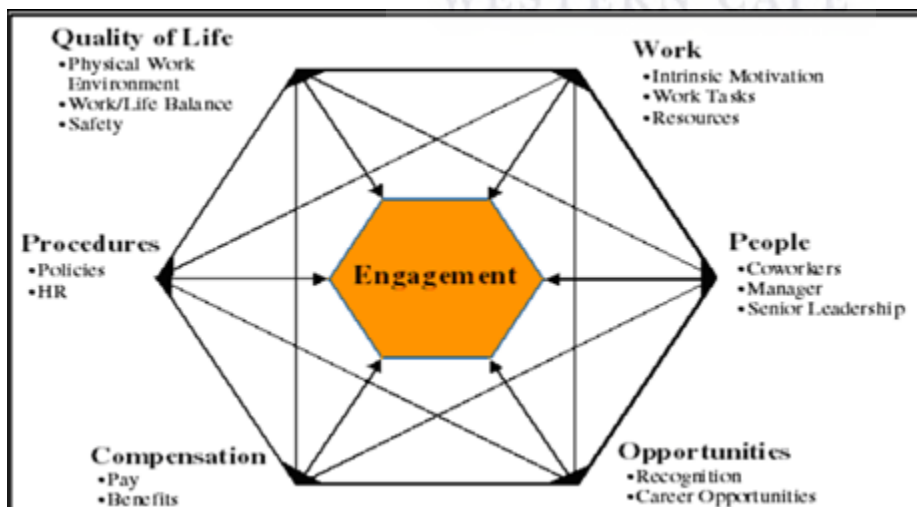
Little and Little (2006) explained that the term employee engagement was developed by the Gallup organisation when they conducted a survey which spanned over 25 years and included interviews and surveys from managers and employees. The intent of their research was to create a measure of workplaces that could be used for comparisons. The survey was titled the Gallup Workplace Audit (GWA) and the outcome of the survey was to measure how employee engagement is related to productivity, profitability, employee retention and customer service level.

Gallup's (2006) research indicates that employee engagement could be separated into three different categories, the categories being engaged, not-engaged and actively disengaged (Figure 2.3). The employees who are actively disengaged should be the largest concern to employers as it is most likely that they will share their discontentment with colleagues.

The Three Types of Employees	
3	<b>ENGAGED</b> employees work with passion and feel a profound connection to their company. They drive innovation and move the organization forward.
2	<b>NOT-ENGAGED</b> employees are essentially 'checked out'. They're sleepwalking through their workday, putting time - but not energy or passion - into their work.
3	<b>ACTIVELY DISENGAGED</b> employees aren't just unhappy at work; they're busy acting out their unhappiness. Every day, these workers undermine what their engaged co-workers accomplish.

**Figure 2.3** The three types of employees (Gallup, 2006)

Hewitt Associates (2004) developed a model (Figure 2.4) whereby they defined employee engagement as the employee being emotionally and intellectually committed to the company or employer. Their model indicates that employee engagement depends on many factors such as people, work, compensation, procedures, quality of work life and opportunities offered by the company.

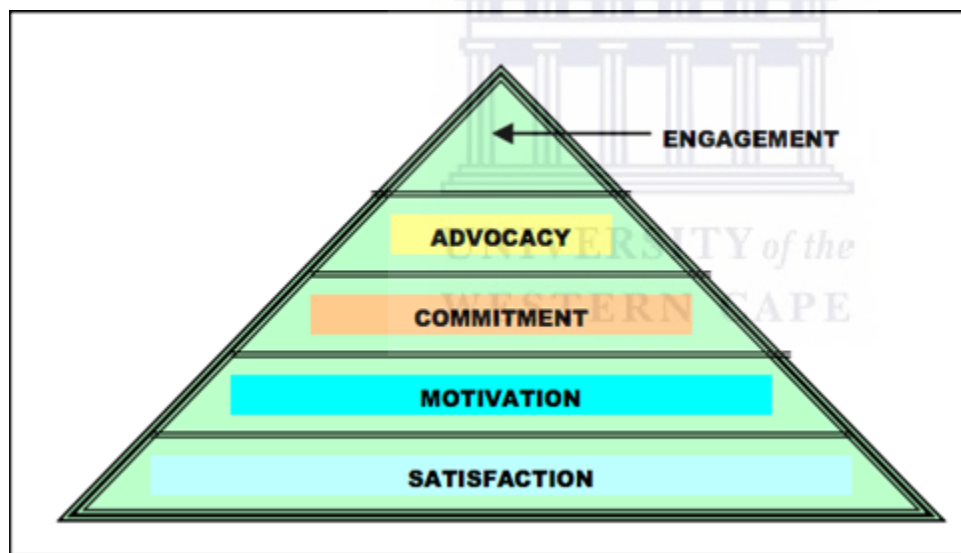


**Figure 2.4** Model of Employee Engagement (Hewitt Associates, 2004)

Hewitt Associates (2004) model further highlights three specific behaviours which engaged employees display. These are namely; Say, Stay and Strive which are generally observed amongst highly engaged employees. The definitions for each of these are as follows:

- 1) Say – this behaviour can be seen where the employee openly promotes the organisation to colleagues as well potential employees and customers.
- 2) Stay – this behaviour can be seen where the employee has a strong yearning to be affiliated with the employer despite options available from other employers.
- 3) Strive – this behaviour can be seen where the employee applies additional time, energy and initiative in order to help the company succeed.

The next model was conceptualised by Brown (2005) who views engagement as a progressive combination of satisfaction, motivation, commitment and advocacy resulting from employees' movement up the engagement pyramid in figure 2.5.



**Figure 2.5** Andrew Brown's engagement pyramid (Brown, 2005)

1. Satisfaction: The most passive of measures, satisfaction is what gets employees to just show up for work. It is the base level of employee contentment whether or not they can do their job, how happy they are with their pay, how well they like their working environment; they have no real desire to go the extra mile.

2. Motivation: The buzz employees feel about their work and a desire to excel in it. A motivated worker will want to go the extra mile in the performance of their work.
3. Commitment: Whereas motivation works at an individual level, commitment is about feeling part of the wider company. Committed workers become positive ambassadors for their companies.
4. Advocacy: The real measure in this instance is how proactive employees are in speaking about the company they work for as well as the products/services they offer. If a company achieves advocacy, it will reap the rewards in both sales and recruitment. Advocacy is a form of free advertising from the most credible of sources (employees).
5. Engagement: Engagement is a combination of all the preceding factors. An engaged worker is satisfied, motivated, committed and is an advocate for the company and what it produces.

Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma and Bakker (2001) define employee engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption. They define vigour as high levels of energy and mental resilience while working. It is the willingness to invest efforts in one's work and persistence even in the face of difficulties. Dedication is characterised by a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge. Lastly, absorption is defined as an individual being fully concentrated and deeply engrossed in their work. Once again, there are different views and definitions of which factors contribute to employee engagement.

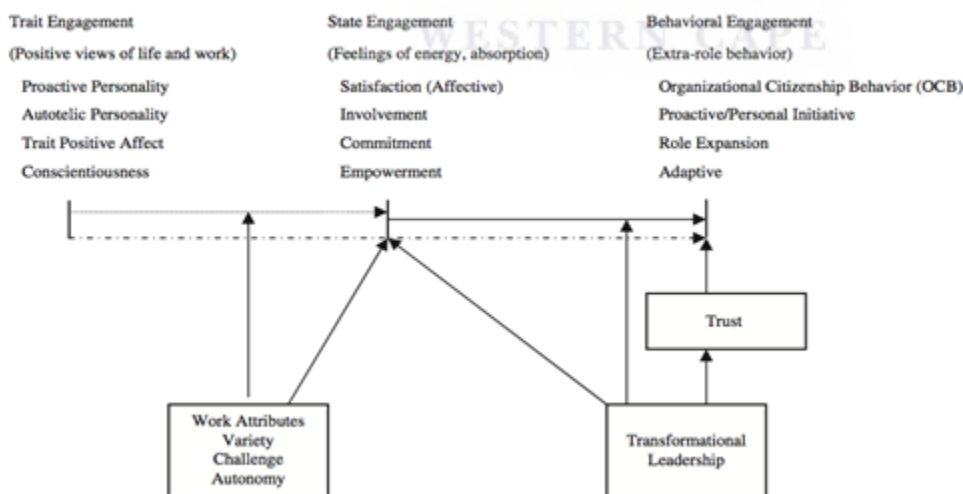
The next employee engagement model was conceptualised by Kahn (1990). He conducted research using two groups of employees, one group being from a summer camp made up of counsellors and the other consisting of employees of an architecture firm. These groups were used to explore and understand how employees engage and express themselves at work. Kahn (1990) developed three psychological conditions linked to employee engagement. They were namely:

- 1) Meaningfulness: where the employee felt that there was a reward or benefit for performance in their role.

- 2) Safety: where the employee felt that he/she was able to perform and act without fear of a possible negative outcome which could harm their future career or self.
- 3) Availability: where the employee has access to the various resources that they require in order to perform in their job role. These resources could be physical, emotional or psychological.

These psychological conditions were also linked to different types of influences, which could take the form of tasks, roles, work influences or physical energies. Kahn (1990) illustrates the complexity around the factors and influences that contribute to an employee's engagement in different situations and moments during job performance. He states that employee engagement is complex and multidimensional with what is required in the workplace for employees to be engaged.

Macey and Schneider (2008) further developed a framework based on Kahn's employee engagement model whereby they wanted to further understand the various components that engagement might consist of. Macey and Schneider (2008) framework's goal is to show how engagement is experienced from a particular view. Their model consists of the following components in figure 2.6.



**Figure 2.6** Framework for understanding the elements of employee engagement (Macey and Schneider, 2008)

- (1) Trait Engagement; where it is important that the employee has positive outlooks and views of life and work.
- (2) State Engagement; where it is important that the employee has feelings of energy and absorption.
- (3) Behavioural Engagement; these are behaviours and roles that the employee exhibits in addition to their current role.

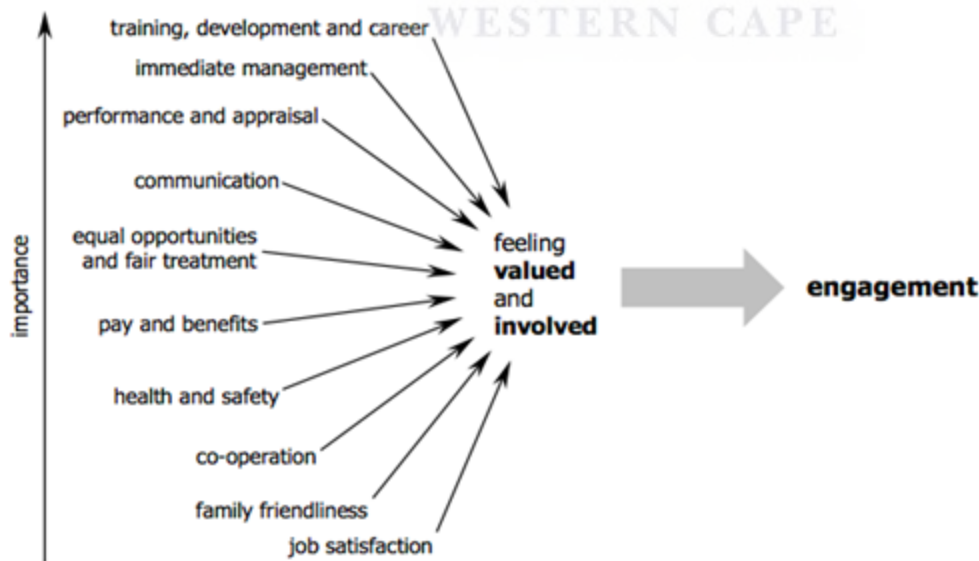
Macey and Schneider (2008) framework also demonstrates that the current state of the workplace has an indirect and direct impact on State and Behavioural engagement. The type of work (e.g. challenge, variety) and type of leadership (in particular transformational leadership) also impacts the different types of engagement and are of particular interest to Macey and Schneider (2008) for this model. The trust element also plays a key role; it has a direct impact on behavioural engagement and indirectly impacts on State and Trait engagement. Macey and Schneider (2008) conclude that having engaged employees provides a competitive advantage but it is key for companies to establish the best conditions for state and behavioural engagement to occur, and that will ultimately be their challenge.

A driver can be defined as something which drives, leads or where the outcome is a specific phenomenon (Ahlowalia et al., 2014). Employee engagement has key drivers which need to be in place in order for an employee to be engaged. Institute for Employee Studies (IES) (Robinson et al., 2004) explored the different drivers (Figure 2.7) which enables behaviours linked to employee engagement. IES did this by conducting an engagement survey and found that the three strongest drivers of employee engagement to be job satisfaction, feeling valued and involved and equality of opportunity



**Figure 2.7** Engagement Drivers Source (Robinson et al., 2004)

Robinson et al. (2004) further concluded that the strongest driver of employee engagement was a sense of feeling valued and involved. Based on this Robinson et al. (2004) developed a model which illustrates the different components of feeling valued and involved in a company. By identifying these drivers, it provides companies with an indication of how to fully develop their human resource and increase their profit. Robinson et al. (2004) note that the strength of these drivers might be different depending on the kind of company and employee groups.



**Figure 2.8** The drivers of employee engagement: a diagnostic tool (Robinson et al., 2004)

## **2.7 Benefits of employee engagement**

Harter, Schmidt and Hayes (2002) published one of the first studies where they looked at the link between employee engagement and business outcomes. They concluded that there was a correlation and that employee engagement can lead to meaningful business outcomes. They went on to define that employee engagement as the employee's involvement and satisfaction as well as their enthusiasm for their work.

Employee engagement has had many definitions over the last few years and several common themes have emerged. In his study, Vance (2006) found that the common trends were employee satisfaction with their work, proud to be associated with their employer, whether employees love and believe in the work they do and the belief that their employer values the contribution which they make. Vance (2006) also found that trends and studies indicated that the more engaged an employee is, the more likely he/she is to put in additional effort into their role and exhibit high performance. It was also found that engaged employees were likely to be more committed to their organisation.

Fernandez (2007) clarifies that employee satisfaction is different to employee engagement. He highlights that managers are not able to depend on employee satisfaction to retain its top employees therefore employee engagement should become a key focus. Fernandez (2007) goes on to elaborate that some research might indicate that employee satisfaction is part of employee engagement but it can also be seen to be a relationship which is not genuine and merely transactional based on the company's last rewarded bonuses and benefits. Where employee engagement is linked to desire and commitment, it is the enthusiasm which the employee has to invest and stretch themselves in order to help the employer thrive. This is more than the simple employee and employer agreement which only requires the minimum amount of loyalty (Blessing, White, 2008; Erickson, 2005; Macey & Schlieder, 2008).

Various studies that have been conducted have found that organisations with high engagement levels amongst employees tend to have lower employee turnover, higher productivity, higher shareholder returns and better financial performance (Baumruk, 2006; Robinson, 2007;



Levinson, 2007; Harter, 2000). Seijs and Crim (2006) also ask the question of whether there is a strong relationship between employee engagement indices and organisational performance. To explore the answer to this question, we are able to examine a case study conducted in the US. New Century Financial Corporation, a US speciality mortgage banking company; the study found that account executives in the wholesale division who were actively disengaged produced 28 percent less revenue than their colleagues who were engaged. Engaged employees also outperformed the not engaged and actively disengaged employees in other divisions (Seijs & Crim, 2006).

Perrin (2007) found that organisations which had the highest percentage of engaged employees had increased their operating income by 19 per cent and their earnings per share by 28 per cent year-to-year. It was also found that organisations with high engaged cultures may also have a strong employer brand, which then attracts and retains the best talent in the market (Martin & Hetrick, 2006). It can therefore be argued that employee engagement is one of the key drivers and contributes to an organisation's success, both from a monetary and employee well-being perspective.

Employee engagement also affects the mind set of employees (Seijs and Crim, 2006). Engaged employees believe that they can make a difference in the organisations they work for. Engaged employees tend to have confidence in the knowledge, skills and abilities that they and other people possess. This is a powerful indicator of behaviour and subsequent performance. Lastly, they summarise their findings by saying that many studies and arguments have indicated that an engaged workforce is able to provide a competitive advantage. This, however, needs to be done by identifying the level of engagement, finding the reasons behind the lack of full engagement, to strive to eliminate those reasons and lastly implement strategies to improve employee engagement in the workplace.

Within the South African context, Rothmann (2003) states that the environment in which employees in South Africa and elsewhere in the world currently work is demanding more of them. This is due to the employment relationship being altered, which affects the work that is performed, when it is performed and how much is performed. Rothmann (2003) later summarises that employees have to deal with many stresses that often involve lack of resources

and control. This needs to be taken into account when looking at the implementation of flexible working hours and the impact on employee engagement.

At a recent forum held at the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS), the President of HilburgMalan, Alan Hilburg, said that a common trial across different industries in South Africa is being able to generate effective teams with engaged employees that are successful in the workplace (Mtongana, 2017). Hillburg also discussed employee engagement trends for 2017. He emphasised the importance of constructing trust, developing a decision-making culture and engagement measurements.

Mtongana (2017) notes that Hillburg highlights the importance of trust between employees, leadership and the organisation and how it is vital to employee engagement. Hillburg also goes on to define trust as when you consistently do what you said you would and the reliability thereof. Lastly, Hillburg highlighted that it is important for organisations to abandon old engagement measures and the objective should not just be to attain employee satisfaction but to strive for employee engagement.

Deloitte published a report around Human Capital Trends for South Africa for 2016. Deloitte (2016) states that engagement is defined by the way which employees feel about the way things are done at their organisation. For 2016, South African respondents ranked employee engagement as the third most important trend, with 89% of respondents ranking it either as important or very important. Deloitte (2016) also predicted that by 2020, millennials are expected to make up 50% of the workforce; therefore they need to be considered when organisations look at their engagement strategies. Millennials value flexibility, creativity and purpose at work.

In order for organisations to manage their workforces with multiple generations (most times there are three generations in the workforce at the same time), organisations need to start building an employee-centric and flexible working environments. Bersin (2014) refers to this as the “Simply Irresistible” Organisation; further detail of this can be seen in figure 2.9. Deloitte (2016) emphasises that this needs to be a clear focus for South African organisations going forward if they are to retain and engage millennial employees.



Meaningful work	Hands-on management	Fantastic environment	Growth opportunity	Trust in leadership
Autonomy	Clear transparent goals	Flexible, humane work environment	Facilitated talent mobility	Mission and purpose
Selection to fit	Coaching & feedback	Recognition rich culture	Career growth in many paths	Investment in people, trust
Small teams	Leadership development	Open flexible workspace	Self and formal development	Transparency and communication
Time for slack	Modern performance management	Inclusive, diverse culture	High-impact learning culture	Inspiration

A focus on simplicity

**Figure 2.9** The Five Characteristics of the “Simply Irresistible” Organisation (Bersin, 2014)

## 2.8 Conceptualising organisational commitment

Meyer and Allen (1991) defined organisational commitment as a psychological state that describes the relationship the employee has with the organisation. This relationship has an influence over the decision of the employee in terms of whether to stay at or leave the organisation. This is the working definition for this study. Randall (1990) explains that working relationships such as relationships between the employee and line manager can affect commitment. In some literature it has been argued that this working relationship can either influence organisational commitment positively or negatively. Therefore, it needs to be taken into account when examining employee engagement in the workplace.

There are further definitions of organisational commitment where Porter et al. (1991) describe it as an employee being part of the organisation and having a desire to stay with the employer, the employee also identifies with the employer's values and vision of the company, therefore there is want to put in additional work. O'Reilly (1989) describes organisational commitment as employee's psychological attachment to the company; this includes a feeling of job involvement, loyalty and belief in the values of the company. Lastly, according to Balay (2000), organisational commitment is a sense of bond and attachment which brings together the employee and company as they connect around a common value and goal.

Northcraft and Neale (1996) suggest that organisational commitment is determined by a number of different factors which include personal factors (e.g., age, tenure in the organisation, disposition, internal or external control attributions) as well as organisational factors (job design and the leadership style of one's supervisor) and non-organisational factors (availability of alternatives). All these factors ultimately have an effect on organisational commitment.

## **2.9 Models of organisational commitment**

In order to further define and understand organisational commitment, models and frameworks will be discussed. Meyer and Allen (1991) differentiate between attitudinal and behavioural commitment. Meyer and Allen (1991) define attitudinal commitment as a process whereby employees reflect about their relationship with the organisation. It is also considered as a way which an employee evaluates whether their values and goals are aligned to those of the organisation. Additionally, Meyer and Allen (1991) define behavioural commitment as the process whereby employees become locked into the organisation and how they then deal with this situation which is most likely a problem.

Meyer and Allen (1991) propose a three component model which conceptualises organisational commitment. This model is underpinned by the view that commitment is a psychological state that describes the employee's relationship with the organisation, and secondly, the consequences for whether the employee chooses to continue their employment with the organisation or not. Meyer and Allen (1991) define their three component model as follows:

*Affective Commitment:* Psychological attachment to organisation, it is characterised by the employees' strength of their identification and involvement in the organisation.

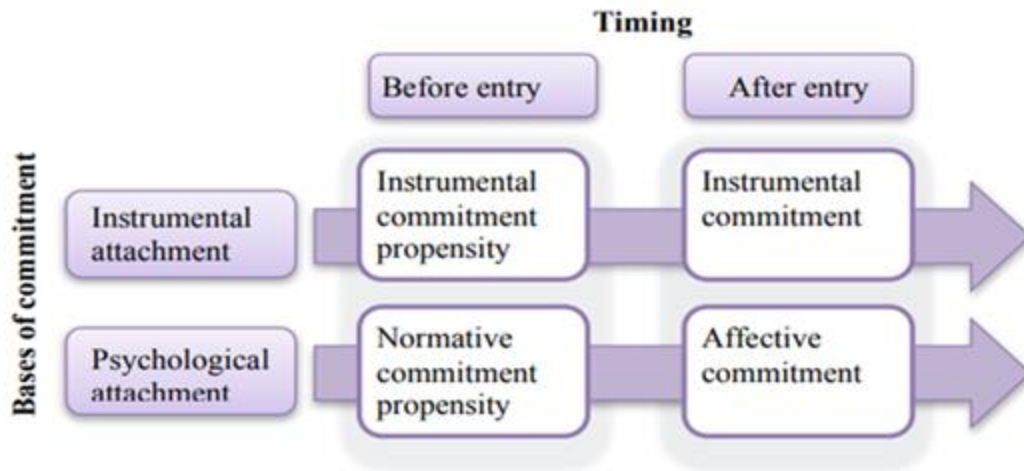
*Continuance Commitment:* Costs associated with leaving the organisation. This is defined as the commitment the employee has towards the organisation because of the investments they have made towards the organisation and the costs associated with leaving.

*Normative Commitment*: Perceived obligation to remain with the organisation. This is where the employee observes their lack of alternatives which therefore increases the cost of leaving the organisation.

Meyer and Allen (1991) also clarify that employees can experience all forms of commitment at different times or at different strengths. An example is that an employee may have a strong attachment and need to stay with the organisation but have little obligation to actually do so.

Desa and Assari (2016) state their research indicates that employees generally develop affective commitment to the employer if both have the same goal at the same time, therefore making the employee willing to help the employer achieve that goal. Desa and Assari (2016) also state that affective commitment is an important factor when examining the relationship between the employee and employer.

There have also been more recent developments of the Meyer and Allen (1991) model. Cohen's (2007) four component commitment model is very similar to Meyer and Allen's model except that it also includes a timeframe and claims to look at organisational commitment in a different way. Cohen's (2007) model looks at commitment compared to when the employee enters the company and commitment when the employee leaves the company. It then also has two bases of commitment, namely, Instrumental and Psychological attachment. When looking at the differences between these two commitments, whereas Instrumental attachment is linked to the factors reflected in the employee/employer relationship such as salary and employee benefits, Psychological attachment is linked to perceptions such as fairness, organisational support and leadership in the company.



**Figure 2.10** A four component model (Cohen 2007)

Cohen (2007) therefore implies that before the employee enters the company, they have instrumental commitment propensity and normative commitment propensity. Propensity can be seen as the employee's tendency. Cohen (2007) describes the employee's journey as one where the employee enters the company with certain expectations around the benefits and rewards being the instrumental attachment. Psychological attachment can be seen as identification with the company and a sense of belonging before the employee enters the company. Cohen's (2007) second differentiation from Meyer and Allen's (1991) model is that he focuses on the benefits of the employee staying which is the instrumental commitment instead of the employee leaving the company.

O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) also developed a theory around organisational commitment. They defined commitment as the psychological attachment felt by the employee to the company, also noting the extent to which the employee internalises or adopts the values and characteristics of the company. O'Reilly and Chatman's (1986) theory indicated that this psychological attachment could be predicted by three factors. These factors being:

- (a) The involvement of and access to the rules and policies around specific extrinsic rewards.
- (b) How the employee identifies or is involved with the company in terms of their affiliation.
- (c) Internalisation and involvement of the employee based on whether the employee's and company's goals are aligned.

O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) make a distinction between the two types of commitment. They state that the instrumental exchange was merely the exchange of work and remuneration between the employee and employer. They regard this to be a shallow attachment to the company. O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) state that the deeper attachment to the company from the employee's side can be seen in the psychological attachment and this would involve identification and internalisation. Another differentiation which O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) make concerns the outcome of organisational commitment. Many other scholars (Becker, 1960; Porter et al., 1974) indicate that commitment can be used as one of the main predictors of employee turnover. While O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) instead state that psychological attachment can result in other behaviours such as Organisational Citizenship Behaviour.

## **2.10 Benefits of organisational commitment**

Asiedu, Sarfo and Adjei (2014) state that organisational commitment has drawn a lot of attention in the past decade. They find that the reason for this is the impact and contribution that organisational commitment has had on employee performance and the profitability of the organisation. Lesabe and Nkosi (2007) state that no organisation in today's highly competitive world can perform at peak levels unless each and every employee is committed to its objectives and strategic goals. With organisations facing ever-increasing competition, a focus is required towards developing committed and loyal employees which will hold the promise of financial returns for the organisation.

Observing South African research, Visagie and Steyn (2011) note that employees who possess a higher degree of affective commitment will remain in the organisation because they want to. Employees demonstrate this type of commitment when their work experiences are aligned to their expectations and basic needs. Employees who possess a higher degree of normative commitment will remain with the organisation because they have to. Such employees may exert considerable effort on behalf of the organisation if they believe that it is required in order for them to continue their employment with the organisation. Lastly, continuance commitment generally occurs because of the investments made such as close working relationships, other employees, retirement and career investments. These differences need to be accounted for as

they demonstrate the different behaviours which can occur from an employee. It also demonstrates the different work experiences which the employee can have and the effect it then has on the commitment thereafter demonstrated.

Becker, Billings, Eveleth and Gilbert (1996) conducted research into employee commitment where their results indicate that employees differentiate between commitment to their managers and commitment to the organisation. This was an important finding as it affirms that employees look at different factors when viewing commitment. Becker et al. (1996) also concluded from their research that the commitment to line managers was positive and significantly aligned to performance. Their view post conducting the research was that researchers going forward should focus their studies on commitment to line managers rather than commitment to organisations. Lastly, Becker et al. (1996) hoped that their research would encourage researchers and practitioners to view employee commitment differently going forward. This is an alternative view regarding organisational commitment and affirms the complexity and different factors relating to organisational commitment.

Babalola, Oladipo and Chovwen (2015) found in their research that organisational commitment plays an important role between individuals and organisations. They also found it to be important because a country's national economy is dependent on many factors, two key factors being companies and employment. Babalola et al. (2015) found that with the increase in economic growth and a competitive work environment, employee commitment has been seen as key to achieving high company performance. Babalola et al. (2015) also found that key reasons why economic commitment plays such an important role is that employees who are committed are more likely to put more effort into their work than employees who are less committed. Employees who are committed are also more inclined to notice where the organisation is not doing well and which areas can be improved, rather than the employees who are not as committed. Therefore, the behaviours of committed employees are of great value to an organisation.

Geldenhys and Laba (2014) state that organisational commitment not only has employee and employer benefits but also has strategic importance for employers because of the possible



financial returns in the longer term. Geldenhys and Laba (2014) state that research indicates that dedicated and engaged employees tend to produce high-performance business results which is measured by a rise in sales, productivity, profitability and better employee retention. They also state that by putting strategies in place around commitment in organisations, the desired employee behaviour then has the environment to develop through psychological links between the organisation's and employee's common goals. Thereafter an employee who has a high level of commitment is inclined to put in more effort in order to perform and will also likely invest their resources in the organisation. Geldenhys and Laba (2014) confirm that employees with high affective commitment generally tend to have a higher level of independence.

Saari and Pyöriä (2015) found in their research that stable organisations tend to have employees who display a higher than average commitment to their role. The reasons they found was that when an organisation is stable and performing, they are able to reward employees and improve conditions for on-the-job training and hire competent staff. This will strengthen the organisational culture and commitment. Saari and Pyöriä (2015), however, found that it can also have the opposite and negative effect when an organisation is experiencing financial difficulties as they would generally tend to cut costs and investment in well-being at work which would ultimately have an effect on the employee's well-being.

Another factor which Saari and Pyöriä (2015) found to affect organisational commitment was the organisation's success or lack thereof. This occurs where the organisational success can affirm the stability of the employee's job but when there is uncertainty and lack of success, there is an increased chance of employees intending to change jobs. Saari and Pyöriä (2015) concluded that success and the pursuit of success affects many aspects of employees work, such as their organisational culture, climate in the workplace and the management of the organisation.

## **2.11 The relationship between flexible working hours, employee engagement and organisational commitment**

After conceptualising and gaining greater insights into the three variables of this study, the last section of the literature review will focus on the relationship between flexible working hours, employee engagement and organisational commitment.

Fletcher's (2015) study indicates that flexible work arrangements can lead to desired employee engagement. However, this only occurs when employees perceive the flexible working arrangements in a positive light. Fletcher (2015) states that simply making flexible working arrangements available to employees may not yield the results which the employer seeks. Fletcher's (2015) study also suggests that organisations engage with employees and explore how they experience engagement in their job and organisation. Lastly, Fletcher (2015) suggests that employers should also look at making the employment situation more secure for employees who regularly take up the benefit. He states that this will increase engagement and performance.

Clarke and Holdsworth (2017) hold a slightly different view based on their research. They have found the research between flexible working hours and employee engagement to be mixed where there has been relatively little support for flexible working hours leading to improved work performance through work engagement. Bal and De Lange (2015) found that flexible working hours was not linked to employee engagement. They did, however, find that flexible working hours was related to work performance through employees being able to better manage their worklife balance, but this was not necessarily facilitated by higher employee engagement. However, they did find that flexible working hours was a significant predictor of both employee engagement and performance. They found that this was the case because flexible working hours acts as a sign to employees that they are valued by the organisation and this then also increases their organisational commitment. Another factor is the effect of perceived flexibility on work engagement; this is also influenced by perceptions of supervisor support (Swanberg et al., 2011).

Richman et al (2008) study finds that there is a relationship between perceived workplace flexibility and supportive work-life policies with employee engagement as well as intentions to remain in the organisation. Their studies also reveal that employee engagement facilitates this relationship between perceived flexibility and intention to stay at the organisation. It also mediated the relationship between supportive work-life policies and intentions to stay at the organisation. Richman et al (2008) study lastly reveals that formal and occasional use of flexibility was positively associated with perceived flexibility, employee engagement and intention to stay at the organisation. Ultimately, they conclude that perceived flexibility is able to enhance employee engagement, which can then lead to employees having intentions to stay

longer within the organisation.

Given the positive outcomes listed above and linked to employee engagement, it is not surprising that there is also a positive relationship between flexible working hours and organisational commitment. Glass and Finley's (2002) study concluded that flexible working arrangement does impact positively on organisational commitment. Pierce and Newstrom (1982) compared organisational commitment among those employees with flexible working schedules and those without flexible working schedules and found that the former were more committed. Stroup and Yoon's (2016) study indicates that flexible working hours does produce positive benefits for the organisation and the employee. Their research indicates that after a study of five organisations that implemented flexible working hours, their commitment increased by 55% for employees who had utilised the company's flexible policies, and that stress and burnout amongst employees had decreased by 57%.

Further literature confirms this positive relationship, Schaufeli and Salanova (2007) studied work engagement and found that when engagement level increases the level of organizational commitment increases as well and enhances job satisfaction, higher performance and reveals a greater demonstration of personal ideas, higher attendance and lower turnover rates, improved health and security, proactive behavior and learning motivation. Saks (2006) also conducted an important study among 102 employees working in a variety of jobs and organizations in Canada to test a model of the antecedents and consequences of a job engagement and organizational engagement based. The study found that employee engagement represents a mediating role in the relationship between the precursor (job characteristics, perceived organization support, perceived supervisor support, rewards and recognition, procedural justice, and distributive justice) and consequences of engagement (job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intention to quit, and organizational citizenship and behavior). Additional evidences also were found in the literature concerning the influences of employee engagement and organizational commitment, since engagement is conceptualized as the opposite of job burnout. (Maslach et al., 2001; Gonzalez-Roma et al., 2006).

Choo, Desa and Asaari (2016) also concluded in their research that the relationship between flexible working hours and organisational commitment is significant. Research has shown that there is a link between work engagement and organisational commitment in the workplace (Field & Buitendach, 2011; Van Zyl et al., 2010). Whereas organisational commitment highlights the individual's identification and involvement with an organisation (Mowday et al., 1979), work engagement entails the involvement in the work role or the work itself (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010). Furthermore, employees will be loyal to their organisation if their organisation values and appreciates them (Fuller, Barnett, Hester & Relyea, 2003). Organisations that are devoted to the development of employees, their well-being and their need for actualisation tend to have employees with high levels of commitment (Dessler, 1999).

## **2.12 Conclusion**

This chapter provides a literature review which conceptualises flexible working hours, employee engagement and organisational commitment. What is evident in the research is that definitions and contexts are key when observing and measuring flexible working hours within South Africa. It is also important to note the current pressure that the South African retail sector is facing. This will undoubtedly have an effect on the culture and performance of the retailer and needs to be considered when observing the survey results. It will therefore be imperative to highlight the benefits and links to flexible working hours and how this will benefit the retailer. This is validated based on the above findings and research where we can conclude that there is sufficient research to support the hypothesis of a positive relationship between flexible working hours, employee engagement and organisational commitment.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the key concepts and variables relating to the research design and methodology of the study. The chapter also discuss the research instruments used and the reason for using them. It will also outline the sampling design, techniques, the criteria and size for the chosen sample. The researcher will also provide details around the data collection, data-editing and data-coding procedures. Lastly, the chapter will end with identifying possible limitations and gaps in the data.

### **3.2 Theoretical Framework**

Theoretical framework can be defined as a collection of related concepts which are used in research in order to predict and explain the results of the research (Caliendo & Kyle, 1996; Radhakrishna, Yoder & Ewing, 2007). This study falls under exploratory research. The exploratory research entails having three key variables and hypotheses which will be presented in the next section.

#### **3.2.1 Variables**

There are two types of variables, namely, the dependent and independent variables. The independent variable is the characteristic of the experiment that is manipulated in order to determine if there are significant changes to the dependent variable (Cherry, 2018).

In the study conducted, the independent variable is flexible working hours. The dependent variables are organisational commitment, employee engagement, different age groups, male, female, and their use of flexible working hours.

#### **3.2.2 Research Hypotheses**

According to Allua and Thompson (2009) research hypotheses refer to relationships suspected in the entire population of interest. The study aimed to understand the relationship between flexible working hours, employee engagement and organisational commitment. It also aimed to understand the relationship between flexible working hours, different age groups and male and female and their use of flexible working hours.

As outlined in the literature, we are able to observe that organisations are starting to see the value that flexible working hours can contribute. Previous studies have also indicated that once flexible working hours have been implemented then there is an increase in employee engagement and organisational commitment. Studies in the literature review also indicate that millennials and young females starting a family are seeking the benefit of flexible working hours. Given the evidence of the relationship between the dependent and independent variables of the study, organisations and others researching flexible working hours, this study investigated the relationships between the variables by researching the following hypotheses.

#### Hypothesis 1

There is a significant relationship between employee engagement and flexible working hours amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape;

#### Hypothesis 2

There is a significant relationship between organisational commitment and flexible working hours amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape;

#### Hypothesis 3

There is a significant relationship between organisational commitment and employee engagement amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape;

#### Hypothesis 4

Employee engagement and organisational commitment explain a significant proportion of the variance in flexible working hours, amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape;

#### Hypothesis 5

There is a significant relationship between different age groups and flexible working hours amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape;

## Hypothesis 6

There is a significant relationship between male and female and their use of flexible working hours amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape;

### **3.3 Research Design and Methodology**

De Vaus (2006) defines research design as an overall strategy that the researcher chooses to use in order to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way, thereby, ensuring that the research problem is effectively addressed.

This study followed a quantitative research methodology. Babbie (2010) defines quantitative research as a method where the focus is to use objective measurements using the analysis of data collected through questionnaires, surveys and other techniques; using this research the intent is to then generalise the theory across a population in order to describe a specific phenomenon. Yilmaz (2013) further defines quantitative research where the research is aimed at describing phenomena using the mathematical statistics which have been analysed in order to draw conclusions.

This empirical study uses primary data gathered by means of a survey and the purpose of the study is for exploration. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012) define exploratory research as being used to determine the nature of the problem and have a better understanding of the problem. This study set out to explore the relationship between flexible working hours, employee engagement, organisational commitment, different age groups and male and female and their use of flexible working hours. It anticipated that the results would provide insight and understanding into the impact flexible working hours have on employee engagement, organisational commitment, different age groups and male and female and their use of flexible working hours. This study therefore provides evidence to support this notion or not.

#### **3.3.1 Population and Sample**

Banerjee and Chaudhury (2010) define a population as a complete set of individuals with a specific set of characteristics where a sample would be the subset of the population. Field (2013) further defines a sample as collecting data from a small subset of the population in order to infer and make assumptions about the population as a whole. The population in this study was

identified by observing a group of individuals who could potentially have access and utilise flexible working hours. In a retailer, employees within a store environment would not be able to utilise flexible working hours given the fixed work schedule and specific retail hours. Therefore, the employees in the head office environment would be eligible for flexible working hours which is why this population was chosen. The total population surveyed across the six divisions has a total of 475 employees at head office.

Thereafter, the sample was chosen based on access and permission to sample the specific divisions. Certain Heads of Human Resources (HR) and Heads of Business granted access to sample their specific divisions. Therefore, six divisions in the head office population of the specific retailer made up the sample for this study.

Banerjee and Chaudhury (2010) highlight two methods of sampling which can be used, probability and non-probability sampling. Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005) define probability sampling where any member of the population will be included in the sample. Alvi (2016) highlights some of the advantages and disadvantages of the probability sampling. Advantages being that this technique reduces the chances of systematic errors and minimises the risk of sampling biases. It also proves to be a better representation of the sample and therefore inferences are generalizable to the population. However, the disadvantages are that it requires a lot of effort, time and resources from the researcher in order to use this technique. Alvi (2016) defines non-probability sampling as where every individual in the population does not get an equal opportunity to participate in the survey. The selection of the sample is made using the judgement of the researcher which usually then involves subjectivity.

Alvi (2016) specifies that within probability sampling, there are various methods, namely, simple random sampling, systematic random sampling, stratified random sampling and cluster sampling. Taherdoost (2016) defines simple random sampling where each member of the population has the same opportunity to be included in the sample and each sample has the same probability of being selected. The researcher followed the simple random sampling approach by selecting random samples from each group in order to make up the sample. This type of sampling is also known as chance sampling or probability sampling. Jawale (2012) also describes simple random sampling as a random sample that is chosen in such a way that all individuals in population have



an equal chance of being included in it. Jawale (2012) further goes on to highlight that key advantages to simple random sampling is that all elements in the population have an equal and independent chance of being included. It is also the easiest and simplest type of random sampling. Lastly, it is considered the least biased method of sampling.

With the different sampling techniques and methods available, the researcher made the decision to choose the probability sampling technique and simple random sampling method. The reason this technique and method was chosen was that it would yield a better representation of the sample which can then lead to inferences which can be generalizable to the population. It was also chosen due to limited availability of the population, therefore, the researcher chose to send out an e-mail to all members of the sample where they could then complete the survey when they were available and at their convenience.

The pilot survey was initially sent out to Human Resources employees within the centralised function and therefore they would not be included in the full survey. The full and updated survey was initially sent out to two divisions in order to gain information for the study. The survey was sent out to 119 potential participants of whom 49 responded to the survey. This did not yield enough responses required for meaningful information so the survey was then sent out to another four divisions which resulted in a total number of 161 respondents. There were also limitations as some divisions which the survey was initially sent to did not feel comfortable sending out the survey fearing that it might raise an expectation amongst the employees. This posed a limitation during the sampling procedure but ultimately was overcome as the desired number of respondents of over 150 was achieved. Therefore, data of 161 respondents constitute the sample for the study. Descriptive statistics of the sample are provided in the following figures.

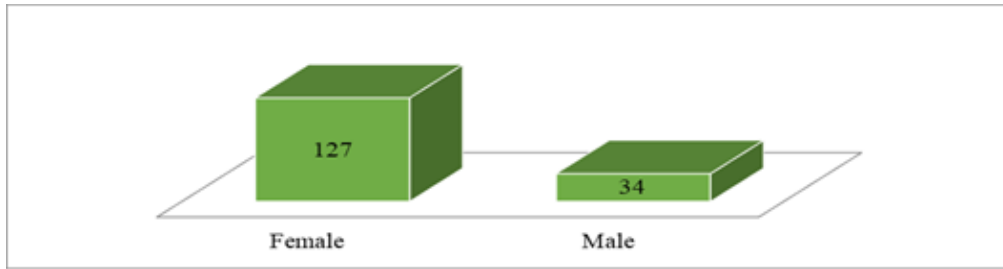


Figure 3.1

*A histogram of the count of gender*

Majority of the sample is female and the minority is male. The histogram indicates the number of females is 127 and number of males is 34.

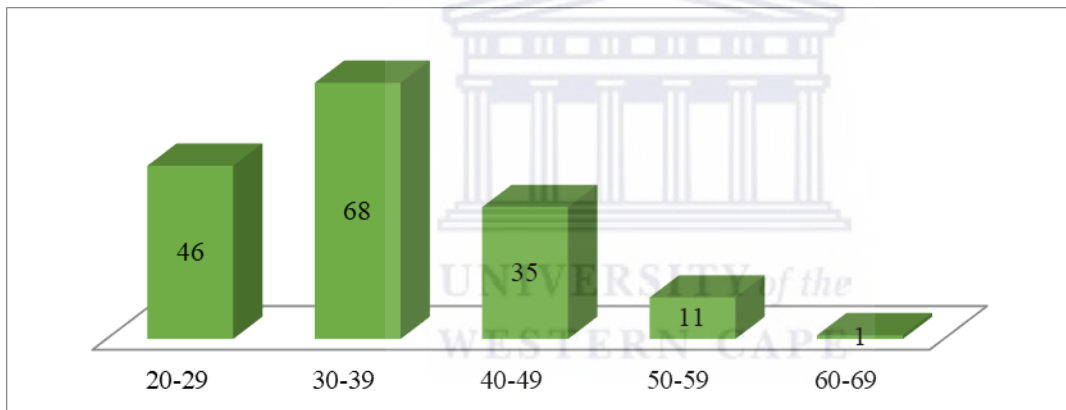


Figure 3.2

*A histogram of the count of age*

Majority of the sample fall between age 30-39 and minority of the sample fall between age 60-69. The histogram indicates the number of employees aged between 20-29 is 46, the number of employees aged between 30-39 is 68, the number of employees aged between 40-49 is 35, the number of employees aged between 50-59 is 11 and the number of employees aged 60-69 is 1.

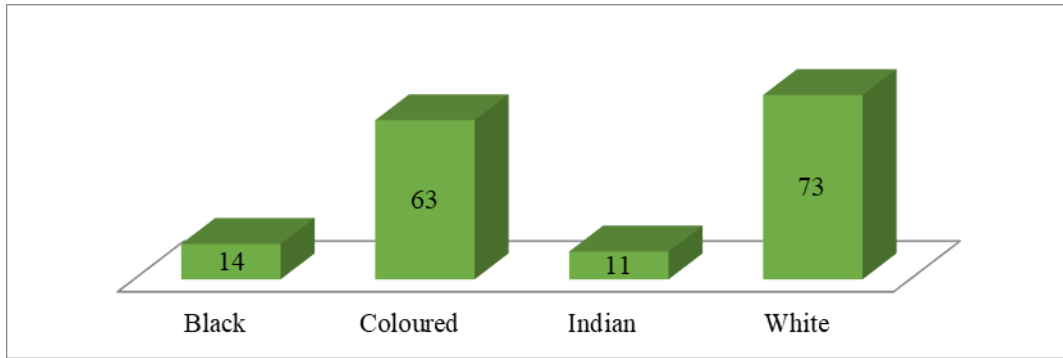


Figure 3.3

*A histogram of the count of race*

Majority of the sample are White and the minority of the sample are Indian. The histogram indicates that the number of Black employees is 14, number of Coloured employees is 63, number of Indian employees is 11 and number of white employees is 73.

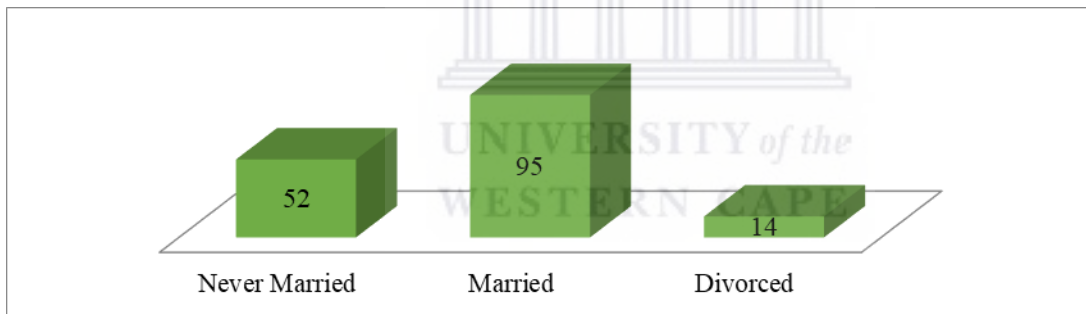


Figure 3.4

*A histogram of the count of Martial Status*

Majority of the sample are married and minority of the sample are divorced. The histogram indicates that the number of employees who have never been married is 52, number of employees who are married is 95, number of employees who are divorced is 14.

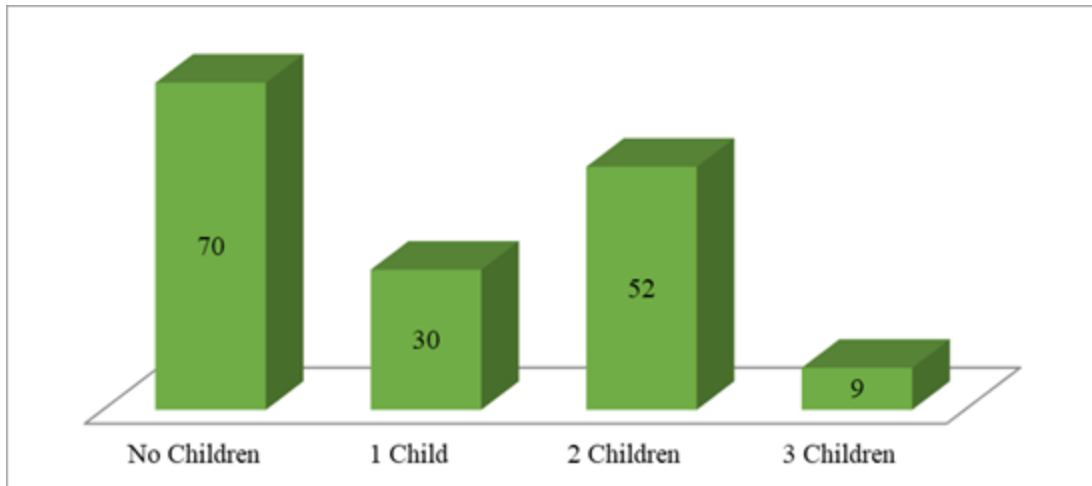


Figure 3.5

*A histogram of the count of Number of Children*

Majority of the sample have no children and minority of the sample have three children. The histogram shows that employees who have no children are 70, employees who have 1 child are 30, employees who have 2 children are 52 and employees who have 3 children are 9.

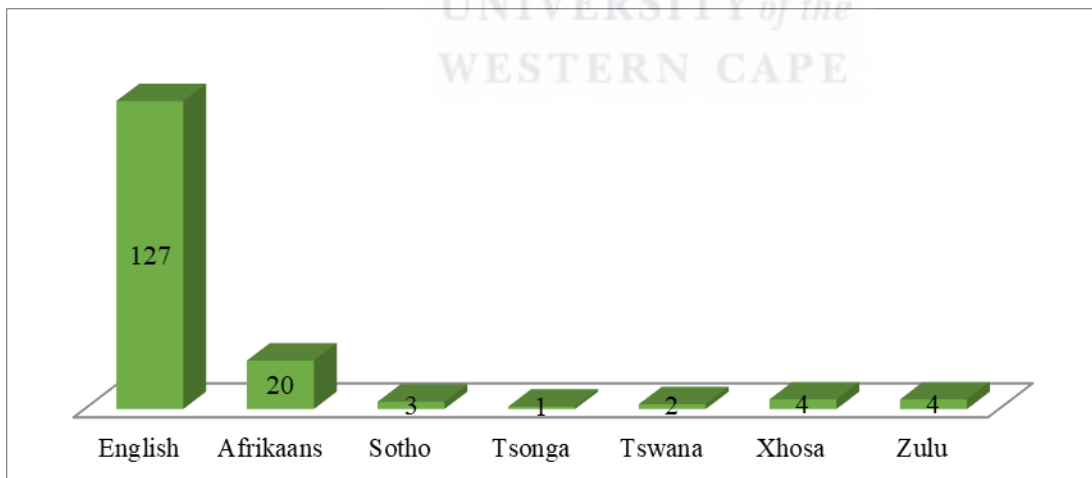


Figure 3.6

*A histogram of the count of Home Language*

Majority of the sample has English as a home language and minority has Tsonga as a home language. The histogram indicates that the number of employees whose home language is English is 127, the number of employees whose home language is Afrikaans is 20, the number of employees whose home language is Sotho is 3, the number of employees whose home language is Tsonga is 1, the number of employees whose home language is Tswana is 2, the number of employees whose home language is Xhosa is 4 and the number of employees whose home language is Zulu is 4.

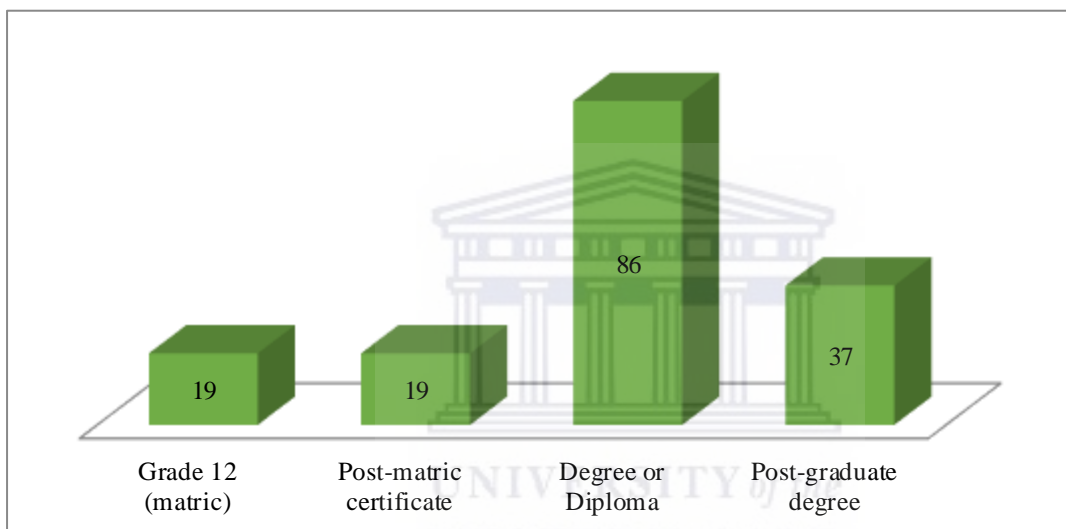


Figure 3.7

*A histogram of the count of highest level of education*

Majority of the sample has a degree or diploma and the minority has either a grade 12 (matric) or a post-matric certificate. The histogram indicates that the number of employees whose highest level of education is Grade 12 (matric) is 19, the number of employees whose highest level of education is Post-matric certificate is 19, the number of employees whose highest level of education is Degree or Diploma is 86 and the number of employees whose highest level of education is Post-graduate degree is 37.

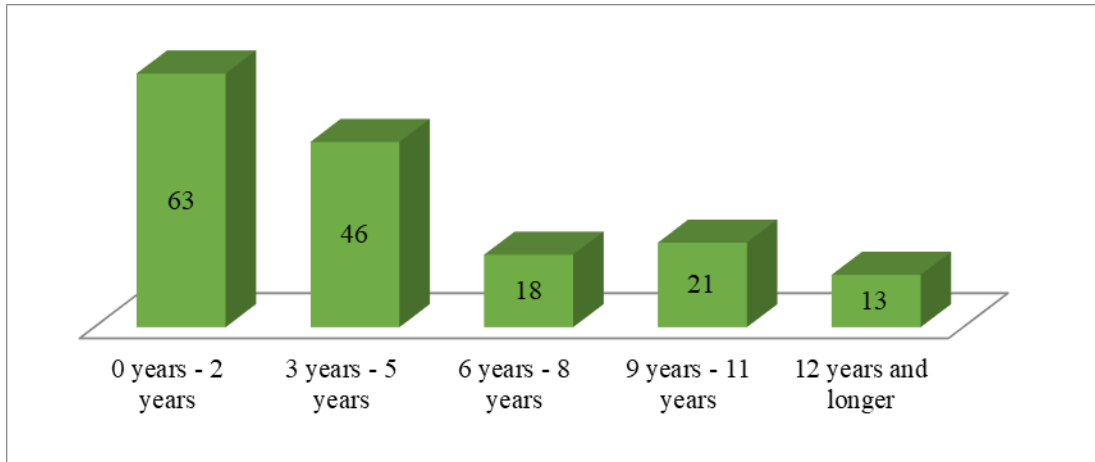


Figure 3.8

*A histogram of the count of tenure*

Majority of the sample has 0 years – 2 years tenure and the minority of the sample has 12 years and longer tenure. The histogram indicates that the number of employees whose Tenure is 0 – 2 years is 63, the number of employees whose Tenure is 3 – 5 years is 46, the number of employees whose Tenure is 6 – 8 years is 18, the number of employees whose Tenure is 9 – 11 years is 21 and number of employees whose Tenure is 12 years and longer is 13.

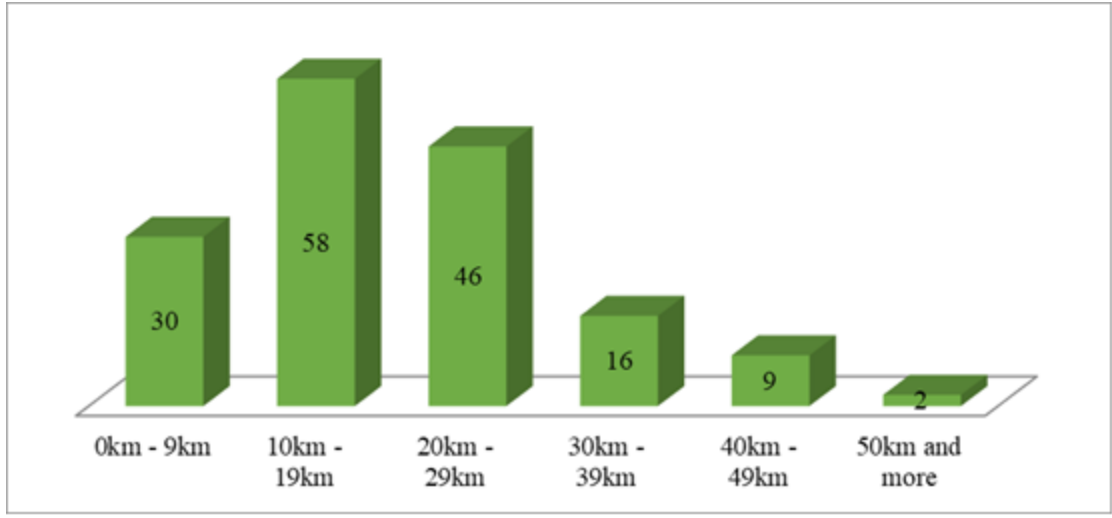


Figure 3.9

*A histogram of the count of Distance from home to work*

Majority of the sample travel 10km – 19km from home to work and the minority of the sample travel 50km and more from home to work. The histogram indicates that the number of employees whose distance from home to work is 0km – 9km is 30, the Distance from home to work is 10km – 19km is 58, the distance from home to work is 20km – 29km is 46, the Distance from home to work is 30km – 39km is 16, the distance from home to work is 40 km – 49km is 9 and the distance from home to work is 50km – 59km is 2.

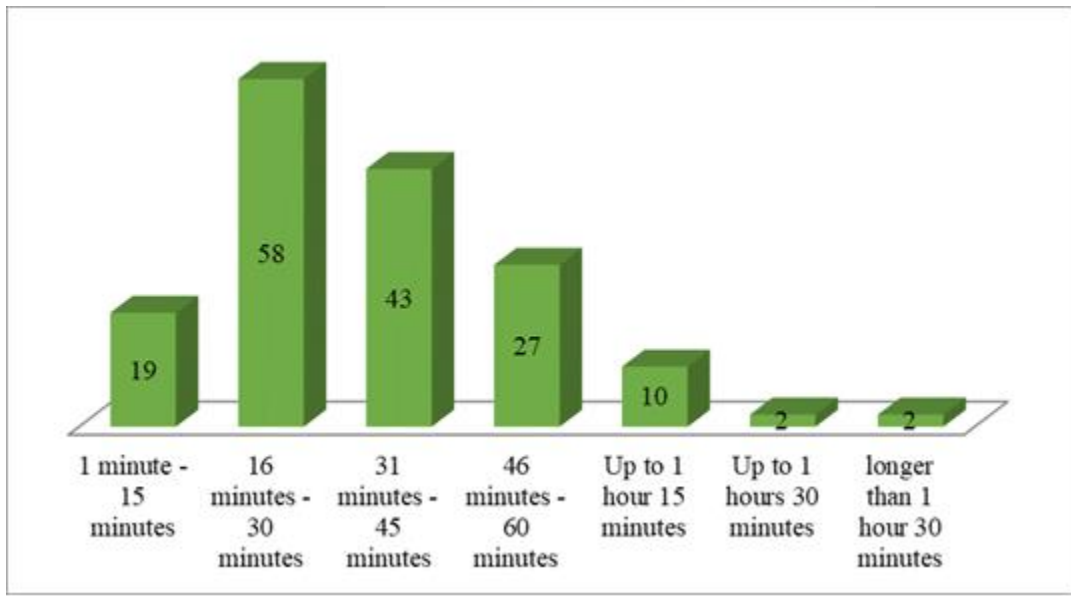


Figure 3.10

*A histogram of the count of Time to travel to work from home in the morning*

The majority of the sample takes between 16 – 30 minutes to travel to work in the morning. The minority of the sample take up to 1 hour 30 minutes and longer than 1 hour 30 minutes to travel to work in the morning. The histogram indicates that the number of employees whose Time to travel to work in the morning is 1 – 15 minutes is 19, Time to travel to work in the morning is 16 – 30 minutes is 58, Time to travel to work in the morning is 31 – 45 minutes is 43, Time to travel to work in the morning is 46 – 60 minutes is 27, Time to travel to work in the morning up to 1 hour 15 minutes is 10, Time to travel to work in the morning up to 1 hour 30 minutes is 2 and Time to travel to work in the morning longer than 1 hour 30 minutes is 2.

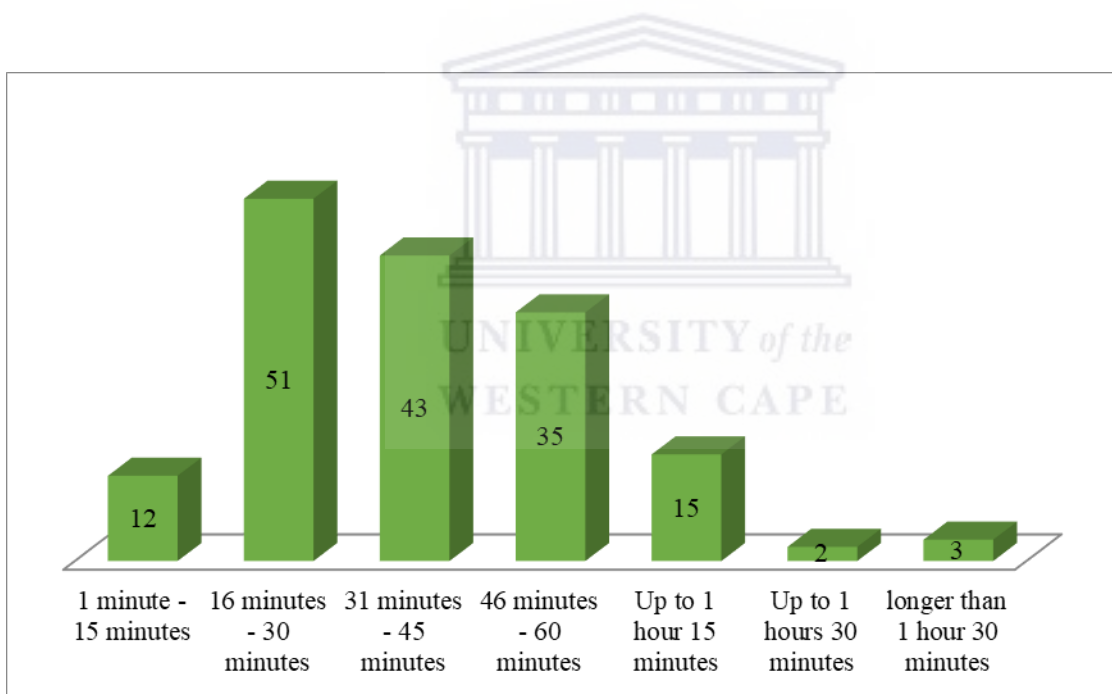


Figure 3.11

*A histogram of the count of Time to travel to work in the afternoon*

Majority of the sample take between 16 – 30 minutes and the minority of the sample take up to 1 hour 30 minutes to travel to work in the afternoon. The histogram indicates that the number of



employees who travel to work in the afternoon is 1 – 15 minutes is 12, Time to travel to work in the afternoon is 16 – 30 minutes is 51, Time to travel to work in the afternoon is 31 – 45 minutes is 43, Time to travel to work in the afternoon is 46 – 60 minutes is 35, Time to travel to work in the afternoon up to 1 hour 15 minutes is 15, Time to travel to work in the afternoon up to 1 hour 30 minutes is 2, Time to travel to work in the afternoon is longer than 1 hour 30 minutes is 3.

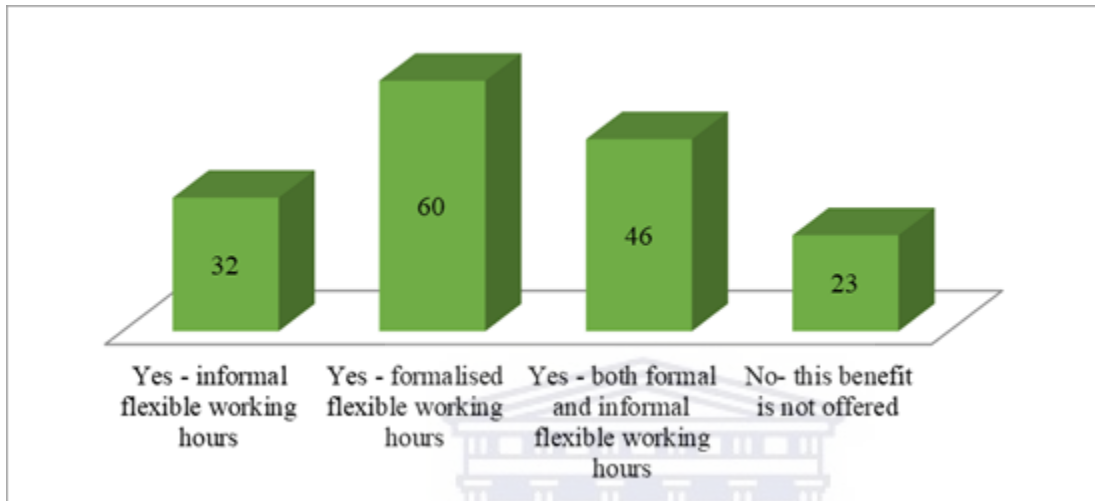


Figure 3.12

*A histogram of the count of Division offers flexible working hours*

Majority of the sample's division offers formalised flexible working hours and minority of the sample does not offer the benefit. The histogram indicates the number of employees whose Division offers flexible working hours – Yes – informal flexible working hours is 32, Division offers flexible working hours – Yes – formalised flexible working hours is 60, Division offers flexible working hours – Yes – both formal and informal flexible working hours are offered is 46, Division offers flexible working hours – No – this benefit is not offered is 23.

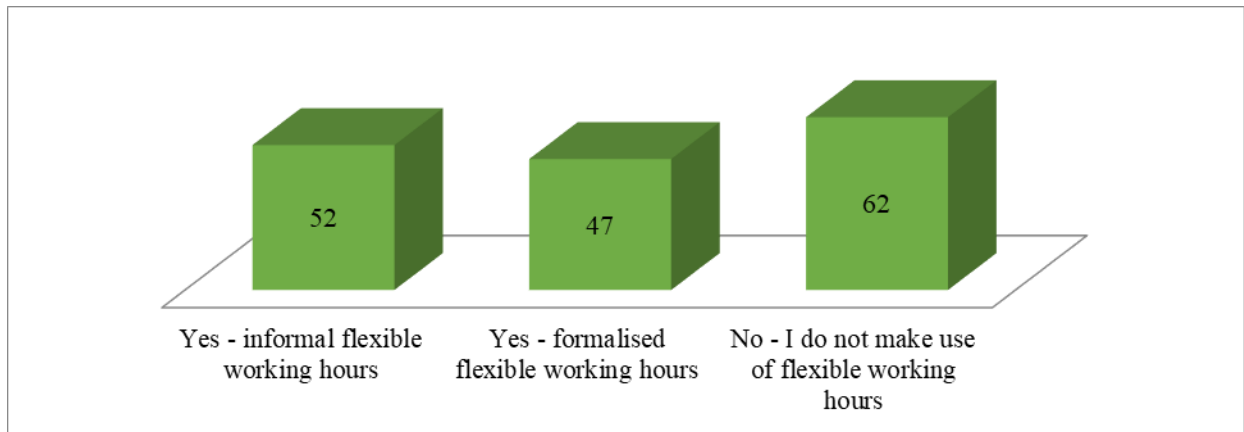


Figure 3.13

*A histogram of the count of Makes use of flexible working hours*

Majority of the sample does not make use of flexible working hours while the minority of the sample make use of formalised flexible working hours. The histogram indicates that the number of employees who make use of flexible working hours - Yes - informal flexible working hours is 52. Employees who make use of flexible working hours -Yes - formalised flexible working hours is 47, employees who make use of flexible working hours – No – I do not make use of flexible working hours is 62.

### 3.3.2 Research instrument

A questionnaire is used to collect the data in order to conduct the research. Mathers, Fox and Hunn (2009) define questionnaires as a traditional way of collecting research; it is often used to collect information regarding attitudes and behaviours of a sample. They recommend using questionnaires when there are many participants involved as it is a more effective way of collecting data. There was a large number of participants and therefore a questionnaire was used. An electronic questionnaire was e-mailed to participants as the potential participants had access to a computer and e-mail. Also, the participants often travel and are away from their desks at different times, therefore, handing out manual questionnaires would have potentially been a limitation and yielded a low response rate.

The questionnaire used for this study was previously used by Achmad (2013), where he conducted a study around flexible working hours and motivation. The survey can be found under

Appendix A. As Achmad (2013) distributed his questionnaire to a population in Malaysia therefore pilot testing was conducted on a small sample population in the South African retailer with HR employees in the centralised function in order for the questionnaire to be validated for use in South Africa. Content validation was conducted and slight changes to the wording of the questionnaire were made in order for the South African population to relate and understand the different terms. Achmed (2013) found that after conducting the pilot study, they found the reliability of the questionnaire to be 0.7. Field (2010) states that a Cronbach alpha value of  $\alpha = 0.8$  is ideal, but anything between 0.7 and 0.8 would also be acceptable.

### **3.3.2.1 Questionnaire**

The questionnaire consisted of three (3) sections with 35 items in total (appendix A). The different sections included in the questionnaire were as follows:

Section A: Biographical Information (Items 2 – 14)

This section required respondents to provide personal information regarding age, race, gender, marital status, number of children, home language, highest level of education, length of service in current division, how far you live from work, how long it takes to get to work in the morning, how long it takes to get home in the afternoon, indicate if the organisation offers flexible working hours and indicate if the employee makes use of flexible working hours.

Section B: Flexible working hours, employee engagement and organisational commitment survey (Items 15 – 28)

This section elicited responses from the respondents relating to flexible working hours, employee engagement and organisational commitment. Respondents were asked to complete this section if they were utilizing flexible working hours.

Section C: Employee engagement and organisational commitment (Items 29 – 35)

This section elicited responses from the respondents relating to employee engagement and organisational commitment. Respondents were asked to complete this section if they were not currently utilizing flexible working hours.

### 3.3.2.2 Scoring of the questionnaire

The items in the questionnaire were based on a Likert scale and are multiple choice questions in order to facilitate the data collection. Joshi, Kale, Chandel and Pal (2015) define the Likert scale as a set of items where participants are asked to indicate how much they agree or disagree with a particular statement relating to a theoretical or an actual experience. The respondent is provided with a scale of possible responses, usually up to five responses that range from ‘strongly disagree’; to the polar opposite measure of ‘strongly agree’.

### 3.3.2.3 Reliability

Field (2013) defines reliability as a scale that should consistently reflect what it is meant to measure. Before processing the information, questions 5 and 7 were reverse scored. Field (2010) states that a Cronbach alpha value of  $\alpha = 0.8$  is ideal, but anything between 0.7 and 0.8 would also be acceptable.

The reliability analysis was conducted on the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 and the summary below was produced. The scales were divided into the different variables used in order to assess the relationship and hypothesis of the study. The three scales were employee engagement, organisational commitment and flexible working hours. Only 11 items were reflected below out of the 20 items in the questionnaire, as the other 9 items were used for descriptive statistics as they relate to biological information about the respondents.

**Table 3.1:** Reliability Statistics

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha		
	Cronbach's Alpha	based on standardised items	Number of items
Flexible working hours	0.843	0.845	5
Employee engagement	0.846	0.847	3

<b>Organisational commitment</b>	0.699	0.715	3
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### **3.3.2.4 Validity**

The pilot survey was distributed to 44 potential participants. Of these potential participants, 30 completed the survey which indicates a completion rate of 68%. This was a big enough sample size in order to gain valuable insights, using the content validity approach. Rossiter (2011) defines content validity as the extent to which items in an instrument reflect the content. It therefore validates the measure. Zamanzadeh, Ghaharamanian, Rassouli, Abbaszadeh, Alavi-Maid and Nikanfar (2015) also advise that content validity should be the prerequisite for any validity and should receive the highest priority during the process of developing an instrument. Therefore, content validity should be obtained on every study where an instrument is used.

When evaluating the content validity for the study, it was found that a few questions had to be reworked because a few respondents answered questions inconsistently and which were not applicable to them based on their previous answers. With this insight gained, the questionnaire was adjusted so that the problems with certain questions could be rectified, and it was more understandable for the respondents.

## **3.4 Method of Data Collection**

### **3.4.1 Procedure**

In order for the survey to be sent out, permission had to be obtained from the Head of Human Resources Operations for the retailer as well as the Head of Human Resources and Head of Business for each division within the retailer. This was a limitation as the individuals' calendars were busy and it took some time before a response or permission was obtained.

Once permission was obtained, the questionnaires were sent via an online link on Google forms by the researcher to the employees of six divisions. This ensured that the entire sample was targeted and probability sampling occurred. Participants received the questionnaire that consisted of a covering letter, a biographical section and an item questionnaire. In line with ethical

considerations, the covering letter stated the justification and reasoning for the study, instructions on how to complete the questionnaire as well as the ethical rights which the participant were entitled to. There was also a question asking the participant whether they would like to complete the survey or not before starting the survey. If they answered 'no' they were taken to the end of the survey. If they answered 'yes' then they were taken to the start of the survey.

Two reminders were e-mailed to the potential respondents to complete the survey. All results were collated through google forms. This resulted in a response rate of 161 respondents to the survey sent out.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 was used to analyse the data obtained from the questionnaires. In order to conduct the statistical analysis, the data were coded. The two statistical methods used to draw conclusions for this study are descriptive and inferential statistics. The analysis of the descriptive statistics includes reporting on the responses from the flexible working hour's questionnaire.

The following analyses were done to test the hypotheses of the study: Pearson's correlation coefficient, T-test for the comparison of the difference between two groups. Another analysis technique used was Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for the comparison of the difference between the means of more than two groups. Lastly Chi-Square tests were used in order to test two categorical variables, namely different age groups and male and female and their use of flexible working hours in order to assess the relationship with flexible working hours.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

This chapter outlined the research design and methodology which were used to conduct this research. Thus far the limitations and challenges have mostly been experienced in the data collection but this was overcome as the number of respondents ended at 161 which is an acceptable amount. Additional limitations of the study will be outlined in the last chapter. The next chapter will present the results of the data analysis.

# CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study conducted and the data collected during the research. The findings of the study are presented in the form of descriptive and inferential statistics.

Descriptive statistics are presented by using the statistical dimensions of the three key variables, namely, flexible working hours, employee engagement and organisational commitment. This is described using measures of central location, measures of dispersion as well as skewness and Kurtosis' peakedness. Lastly, the inferential statistics are used to determine the relationships between the key variables and accept or reject the hypotheses. This is be done using Pearson's correlation coefficient, T-tests and Chi-square tests.

## 4.2 Presentation of results

### 4.2.1 Descriptive statistics for the variables in the study

The following section provides insight into the information gathered through the survey that was distributed. It presents the mean, standard deviation, measures of central tendency and the measures of dispersion. This is done for both the dependent and independent variables. The calculated skewness and kurtosis values will assist in understanding the distribution of responses in the study in relation to flexible working hours, employee engagement and organisational commitment.

#### 4.2.1.1 Descriptive statistics for flexible working hours

There were 5 items in the scale flexible working hours. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, based on standardised items was 0.845, suggesting that the items for this scale have a more than acceptable internal consistency. Of the 161 respondents, 99 people were included in the statistics for this scale, 62 respondents were excluded due to them selecting 'No' to question 14 when asked to indicate whether they make use of flexible working hours or not. Therefore, the information in this section is based on 61.4% of the respondents of the sample. The accumulated mean of the flexible working hours scale was 21.71 with a standard deviation of 3.69. Therefore,

the average mean of scores in this section for flexible working hours is 4.34 which is above the median of the flexible working hours scale. This indicates that most people agreed with the statements around flexible working hours. The range in the flexible working hours scale was 20, with a minimum score of 7 and a maximum score of 27.

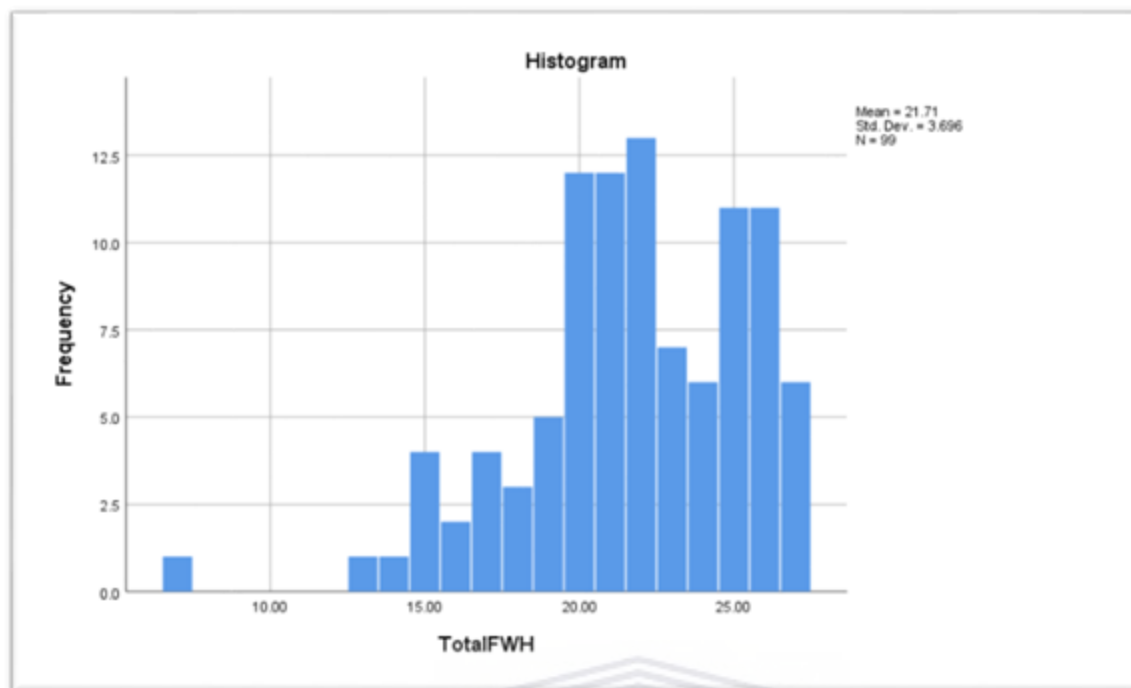
The skewness for flexible working hours was -.902 indicating a slight deviation from the normal distribution curve ( $sk=0$ ). The negative skewness value indicates a cluster of scores at the high end (right-hand side of the graph). This indicates that most people answered “strongly agree” or “agree” to the questions in the flexible working hours section. The kurtosis of the flexible working hours scale had a higher peak than normal distribution of 1.51. The histogram in Figure 4.1 is a graphic representation of the distribution of the scores of the flexible working hours scale. This histogram indicates the number of observations in each category and the extent of the dispersion of the flexible working hours scale.

**Table 4.1:** Descriptive statistics for flexible working hours scale

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of items
21.7071	13.658	3.69570	5

Attitude	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic
	99	20.00	7.00	27.00
	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
	-.902	.243	1.506	.481





**Figure 4.1:** Descriptive statistics and histogram for flexible working hours scale

#### 4.2.1.2 Descriptive statistics for employee engagement scale

There were 3 items in the scale employee engagement. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, based on standardised items was 0.847, suggesting that the items for this scale have a more than acceptable internal consistency. Of the 161 respondents, 161 people were included in the statistics for this scale. Therefore, the information in this section is based on 100% of the respondents of the sample. The accumulated mean of the employee engagement scale was 12.39 with a standard deviation of 2.21. Therefore, the average mean of scores in this section for flexible working hours is 4.13 which are above the median of the employee engagement scale. This would indicate that most people agreed with the statements around employee engagement. The range in the employee engagement scale was 12, with a minimum score of 3 and a maximum score of 15.

The skewness for employee engagement was -1.116 indicating a slight deviation from the normal distribution curve ( $sk=0$ ). The negative skewness value indicates a cluster of scores at the high end (right-hand side of the graph). This indicates that most people answered "strongly agree" or

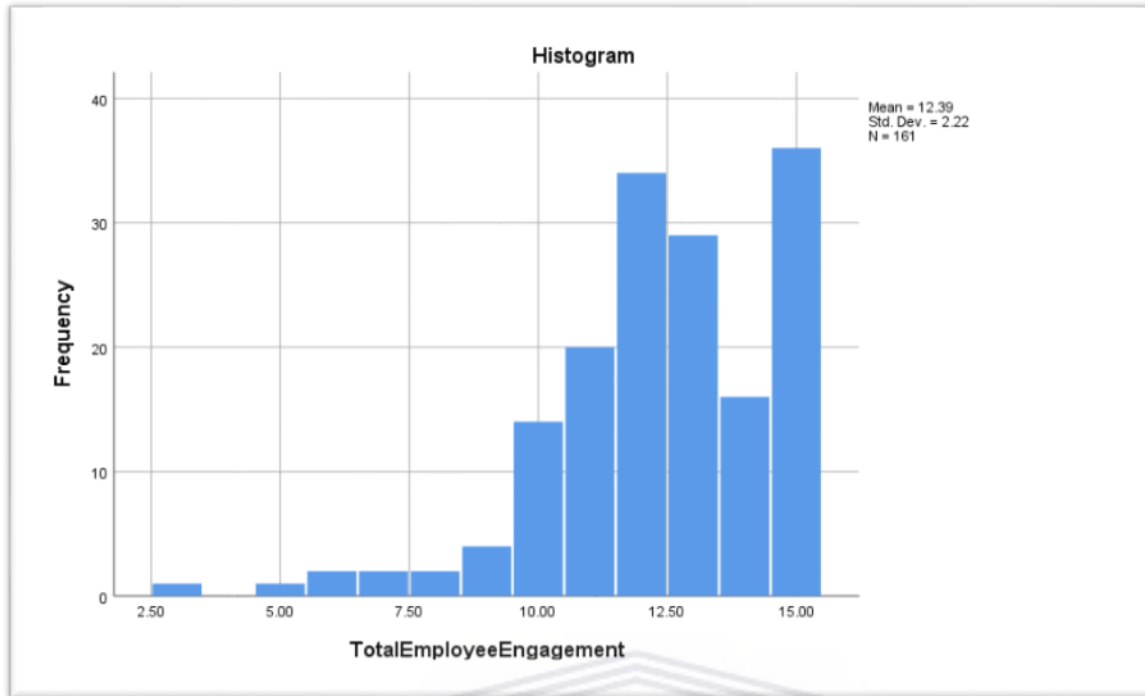
“agree” to the questions in the employee engagement section. The kurtosis of the employee engagement scale had a higher peak than normal distribution of 2.12. The histogram in Figure 4.2 is a graphic representation of the distribution of the scores of the employee engagement scale. This histogram indicates the number of observations in each category and the extent of the dispersion of the employee engagement scale.

**Table 4.2:** Descriptive statistics for employee engagement scale

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of items
<b>12.3913</b>	4.927	2.21972	3

Attitude	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic
	161	12.00	3.00	15.00
Attitude	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
	-1.116	.191	2.121	.380





**Figure 4.2:** Descriptive statistics and histogram for employee engagement scale

#### 4.2.1.3 Descriptive statistics for organisational commitment scale

There were 3 items in the scale organisational commitment. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, based on standardised items was 0.715, suggesting that the items for this scale have a more than acceptable internal consistency. Of the 161 respondents, 161 people were included in the statistics for this scale. Therefore, the information in this section is based on 100% of the respondents of the sample. The accumulated mean of the organisational commitment scale was 11.72 with a standard deviation of 1.83. Therefore, the average mean of scores in this section for flexible working hours is 3.91 which are above the median of organisational commitment scale. This would indicate that most people agreed with the statements around organisational commitment. The range in the organisational commitment scale was 12, with a minimum score of 3 and a maximum score of 15.

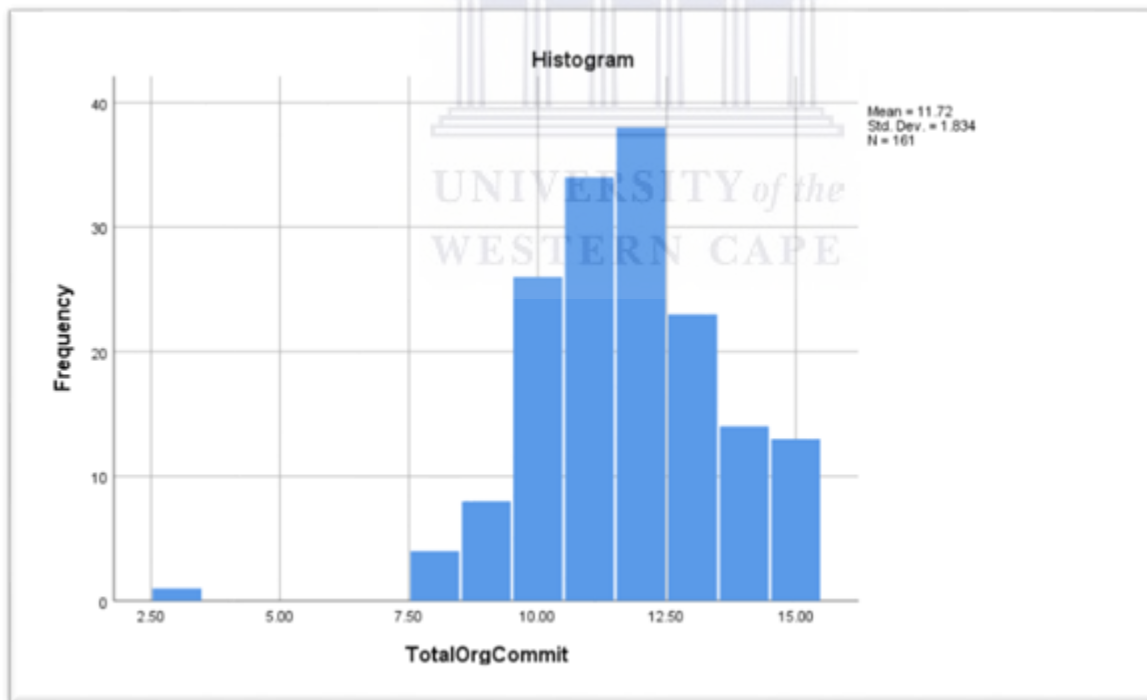
The skewness for organisational commitment was -.515 indicating a slight deviation from the normal distribution curve ( $sk=0$ ). The negative skewness value indicates a cluster of scores at the high end (right-hand side of the graph). This indicates that most people answered "strongly agree" or "agree" to the questions in the organisational commitment section. The kurtosis of the

organisational commitment scale had a higher peak than normal distribution of 2.19. The histogram in Figure 4.3 is a graphic representation of the distribution of the scores of the organisational commitment scale. This histogram indicates the number of observations in each category and the extent of the dispersion of the organisational commitment scale.

**Table 4.3:** Descriptive statistics for organisational commitment scale

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of items
<b>11.7205</b>	3.365	1.83443	3

Attitude	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic
	161	12.00	3.00	15.00
	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
	-.515	.191	2.196	.380



**Figure 4.3:** Descriptive statistics and histogram for organisational commitment scale

## 4.2.2 Inferential Statistics

### 4.2.2.1 Correlations

Pearson Correlation coefficient was used in order to ascertain whether there is a relationship between the variables of the study. Field (2013) defines Pearson's correlation coefficient as a measurement used to assess strength of the relationship between two variables.

#### Hypothesis 1

There is a significant relationship between employee engagement and flexible working hours amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape;

#### Hypothesis 2

There is a significant relationship between organisational commitment and flexible working hours amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape;

#### Hypothesis 3

There is a significant relationship between organisational commitment and employee engagement amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape;

**Table 4.4:** Correlations between the variables of the study

		Flexible working hours	Employee Engagement	Organisational Commitment
Flexible working hours	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (1-tailed)			
	N	99		
Employee Engagement	Pearson Correlation	.604**	1	
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000		

<b>Organisational Commitment</b>	N	161	161	
	Pearson Correlation	.591**	.363**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	161	161	161

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

The significant relationships that exist between the variables are depicted in Table 4.1.

Based on the findings presented in Table 4.4, Hypothesis 1 is accepted as it indicates a significant relationship between flexible working hours and employee engagement amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape.

Hypothesis 2 is accepted based on the results, which indicate that there is a significant relationship between flexible working hours and organisational commitment amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape.

Hypothesis 3 is accepted based on the results that indicate that there is a significant relationship between organisational commitment and employee engagement amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape,

Hypothesis 4 which states Employee engagement and organisational commitment explain a significant proportion of the variance in flexible working hours, amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape is accepted. The result of the ANOVA depicted in Table 4.5 and 4.6 indicates that there is a significant relationship between organisational commitment, employee engagement and flexible working hours.

**Table 4.5:** ANOVA – Relationship between organisational commitment, employee engagement and flexible working hours

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std.Error of the Estimate
<b>1</b>	.704 <sup>a</sup>	.495	.485	2.65320

a. Predictors: (Constant), TotalOrgCommit, TotalEmployeeEngagement

**Table 4.6:** ANOVA – Relationship between organisational commitment, employee engagement and flexible working hours

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
1					
Regression	662.716	2	331.358	47.071	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	675.789	96	7.039		
Total	1338.505	98			

a. Independent Variable: TotalFWH

b. Predictors: (Constant), TotalOrgCommit, TotalEmployeeEngagement

The ANOVA analysis indicates that there is a proportion of the variance between the three variables – flexible working hours, organisational commitment and employee engagement. If we look in the Model Summary box and look at the R-squared value, this value indicates the variance in the independent variable, which in this case is flexible working hours. In this analysis, the value is 0.495, which when expressed in percentage form is 49.5%. This explains that there is 49.5% of the variance in flexible working hours. This is, therefore, an acceptable result. In order to observe the statistical significance of the result, we are able to look at the ANOVA result. In order to achieve statistical significance, the number has to be 0, in this instance the ANOVA result is 0.00 showing a statistical significance.

Hypothesis 5 which states that there is a significant relationship between different age groups and flexible working hours amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape is accepted.

Table 4.7 and Table 4.8 show chi-square tests; these show that there is enough evidence to suggest a relationship between age and flexible working hours.

Hypothesis 6 which states that there is a significant relationship between male and female and their use of flexible working hours amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape is accepted.

Tables 4.9 and 4.10 present's chi-square tests which show that there is enough evidence to suggest a relationship between male and female and their use of flexible working hours.

**Table 4.7:** Chi-Square Tests – relationship between age and flexible working hours

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	53.279 <sup>a</sup>	60	.718
Likelihood Ratio	48.790	60	.849
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.809	1	.179
N of Valid Cases	99		

.77 cells (96.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .01.



**Table 4.8:** Chi-Square Tests – relationship between age and flexible working hours

	Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.734
	Cramer's V	.367
N of Valid Cases	99	

Since the p-value is greater than our chosen significance level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ), we do not reject the null hypothesis. Rather, we conclude that there is enough evidence to suggest an association between different age groups and flexible working hours.

**Table 4.9:** Chi-Square Tests – relationship between gender and flexible working hours

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	24.438 <sup>a</sup>	15	.058
Likelihood Ratio	27.758	15	.023
Linear-by-Linear Association	.861	1	.354
N of Valid Cases	99		

a. 26 cells (81.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .19.

**Table 4.10:** Chi-Square Tests – relationship between gender and flexible working hours

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.497	.058
	Cramer's V	.497	.058
N of Valid Cases		99	

Since the p-value is greater than our chosen significance level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ), we do not reject the null hypothesis. Rather, we conclude that there is enough evidence to suggest an association between male and female and their use of flexible working hours.

### 4.3 Conclusion

From the presentation of the results in this chapter, it is shown that the hypotheses 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 are accepted as follows:

- There is a significant relationship between employee engagement and flexible working hours amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape.
- There is a significant relationship between organisational commitment and flexible working hours amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape.
- There is a significant relationship between organisational commitment and employee engagement amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape.
- There is a significant relationship between employee engagement, organisational commitment and flexible working hours amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape.
- There is a significant relationship between different age groups amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape.

- There is a significant relationship between male and female and their use of flexible working hours amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape.

The next chapter will summarise and discuss salient points as well as make recommendations for further studies.



# CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.1 Introduction

Flexible working hours is a topic with growing interest in South Africa as the competition for talent intensifies amongst employers. Employees are starting to seek this benefit when joining organisations as their family lives evolve and require it. Therefore, it is not surprising that organisations are starting to pilot and implement policies around flexible working hours. This chapter discusses the results from the descriptive and inferential statistics found in the study. Thereafter, the chapter discusses the hypotheses presented in chapter four and whether they were accepted or rejected. It also observes the limitations of the study. Lastly, it presents the recommendations for future studies, recommendations towards organisations and industry and general recommendations.

## 5.2 Results

The focus of this study was to investigate whether there was a relationship between flexible working hours, employee engagement and organisational commitment.

### 5.2.1 Results of descriptive analysis

#### 5.2.1.1 Flexible working hours

In terms of the study, all of the variables, flexible working hours, employee engagement and organisational commitment scales proved to be reliable as they all had more than average internal consistencies. The study found that respondents who completed the questionnaire understood the flexible working hours policy and agreed that there were positive outcomes to flexible working hours. The questionnaire covered flexible working hours and how it is linked to spending more time with your family, being able to attend to personal matters at home, increasing the quality of service to the customer and assisting in not being late to the office. The majority of respondents seemed to strongly agree that these benefits are linked to flexible working hours. This finding was consistent with a study conducted by McNall, Masuda and Nicklin (2009) indicating that it is reasonable to assume that respondents generally tend to react positively to flexible work arrangements as they perceive that their organisations care for them

and this situation makes them feel more appreciated, and in turn, they appreciate their work and organisation more. The finding can also be linked to Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard (2014) study which elaborates on the benefits to the employee such as better employee performance, greater organisational commitment; lower employee turnover and absenteeism are also linked to flexible working hours.

When Saks (2006) researched employee engagement, it revealed that traditional household roles have had a “role reversal” especially among working couples with children. This occurs when the parents have to take turns to manage the household in general and children in particular. Given these new roles and responsibilities in both cases, the parents have been seen to yearn work flexibility more than anything else. Čiarnienė, Vienažindienė and Adamonienė (2018) conducted studies which concluded that when flexible working hours arrangements are implemented within an organisation with preparation and consideration, have the right intention in order to meet the needs of the employees and objectives of the organisation, and ultimately still benefits society, this will lead to a sustainable model for all stakeholders.

### **5.2.1.2 Employee Engagement**

The study found that respondents who completed the questionnaire agreed that their engagement levels can be increased through flexible working hours and the implementation of a new flexible working hours policy. The study also found that the opinion of the respondents indicated that if more time was spent with their family, it would increase their engagement at work. The majority of respondents seemed to agree or strongly agree that employee engagement can be increased through flexible working hours and the implementation of a new flexible working hours policy. This is consistent with Fletcher’s (2015) study that indicates that flexible work arrangements can lead to desired employee engagement. However, this only occurs when employees perceive the flexible working arrangements in a positive light. Fletcher (2015) states that simply making flexible working arrangements available to employees may not yield the results which the employer seeks. This could provide insight and reason as to why respondents selected ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ to both questions in the questionnaire around flexible working hours as well as the implementation of a new flexible working hours policy.

The majority of respondents also ‘strongly agreed’ and ‘agreed’ that spending more time with their family would increase their engagement at work. This is also consistent with Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard’s (2014) study which found that men see flexible working practices as a way to develop their organisational commitment, while women associate flexibility with the work-life balance improvement. Ashoush, Elsayed and Younis, (2015) also mention some benefits to achieving balance between work and family to be overall work satisfaction, low workload stress, positive morale and quality of work life.

### **5.2.1.2 Organisational commitment**

The study found that respondents who completed the questionnaire agreed that tardiness could be reduced and organisational commitment could be increased through the implementation of flexible working hours. Respondents also agreed that high commitment is important in strengthening the organisation. The majority of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that tardiness could be reduced and organisational commitment could be increased with the implementation of flexible working hours. This is not surprising as there are a number of studies which confirm that there is a positive link between flexible working hours and organisational commitment. Glass and Finley’s (2002) study concluded that flexible working arrangement does impact positively on organisational commitment.

Pierce and Newstrom (1982) compared organisational commitment amongst those employees with flexible working schedules and those without flexible working schedules and found that the employees with flexible working hours were more committed. When Stroup and Yoon (2016) conducted their study, the results indicated that flexible working hours does produce positive benefits for the organisation and the employee. Their research used a study which included five organisations that implemented flexible working hours, it indicated that the employee’s commitment had increased by 55% for employees who had utilised the company’s flexible policies. They further found that stress and burnout amongst employees had decreased by 57%. Lastly Choo, Desa and Asaari (2016) also concluded in their research that the relationship between flexible working hours and organisational commitment is significant.

## **5.2.2 Results of inferential analysis**

*5.2.2.1 Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between employee engagement and flexible working hours amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape.*

Hypothesis one is accepted as there was found to be a significant relationship between employee engagement and flexible working hours. This is aligned to the study conducted by Fletcher (2015) which indicates that flexible work arrangements can lead to desired employee engagement. Fletcher does however stipulate that this only occurs when employees perceive the flexible working arrangements in a positive light. Lastly, Fletcher (2015) suggests that employers should also look at making the employment situation more secure for employees who regularly take up the benefit; he states that this will increase engagement and performance.

The result of this study is different to Clarke and Holdsworth's study (2017) which holds a slightly different view based on their research. They have found that their research showed the relationship between flexible working hours and employee engagement to be mixed where there has been relatively little support for flexible working hours leading to improved work performance through work engagement. Bal and De Lange (2014) found that flexible working hours was not linked to employee engagement.

*5.2.2.2 Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between organisational commitment and flexible working hours amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape.*

In the current study, hypothesis two was found to be accepted as the results indicated a significant relationship between organisational commitment and flexible working hours. There have been quite a few studies which have also concluded a significant relationship between these two variables. Choo, Desa and Asaari (2016) concluded in their research that the relationship between flexible working hours and organisational commitment is significant.

Whereas organisational commitment highlights the individual's identification and involvement with an organisation (Mowday et al., 1979), work engagement entails the involvement in the

work role or the work itself (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010). Furthermore, employees will be loyal to their organisation if their organisation values and appreciates them (Fuller, Barnett, Hester & Relyea, 2003). Organisations that are devoted to the development of employees, their well-being and their need for actualisation tend to have employees with high levels of commitment (Dessler, 1999).

*5.2.2.3 Hypothesis 3: There is a significant relationship between organisational commitment and employee engagement amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape;*

The study found a significant relationship between organisational commitment and employee engagement. As a result, hypothesis three was accepted. To support the findings of the study, Geldenhys and Laba (2014) state that their research also indicated that dedicated and engaged employees tend to produce high-performance business results which is measured by a rise in sales, productivity, profitability and better employee retention. They also state that by putting strategies in place around commitment in organisations, the desired employee behaviour then has the environment to develop through psychological links between the organisation and employee common goals. Thereafter, an employee who has a high level of commitment is inclined to put in more effort in order to perform and will also invest their resources in the organisation. Thus providing evidence that there is a relationship between organisational commitment and employee engagement.

Schaufeli and Salanova (2007) study indicates that when the employee engagement level increases, the organisational commitment level increases as well. This also heightens job satisfaction, higher performance, higher attendance, lower employee turnover rates and better learning motivation. Yang (2005) agrees as his studies confirm that compared to employees who are not engaged, engaged employees gain more satisfaction from work, higher organisational commitment and more likely to stay with the organisation. Swarnalatha and Prasanna (2012) found in their study that organisational commitment is formed through goal-setting, employee engagement and optimism. All three of these elements, however, need to be implemented in order to achieve employee engagement.



*5.2.2.4 Hypothesis 4: Employee engagement and organisational commitment explain a significant proportion of the variance in flexible working hours, amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape;*

After analysing the results from the study conducted, hypothesis four is accepted. Looking at other studies conducted, Richman et al. (2008) found that there is a significant proportion of variance between perceived workplace flexibility and supportive work-life policies with employee engagement as well as intentions to remain in the organisation. Their studies also reveal that employee engagement facilitates a significant proportion between perceived flexibility and intention to stay at the organisation. It also mediated the relationship between supportive work-life policies and intentions to stay at the organisation.

Richman et al (2008) study reveals that formal and occasional use of flexibility was positively associated with perceived flexibility, employee engagement and intention to stay at the organisation. Richman et al. (2008) mention formal and occasional use of flexibility. This would make an interesting topic to assess whether there are any significant relationships and differences when analysing employee engagement and organisational commitment. Behson's (2005) study shows that when an organisation focuses on creating a supportive environment, it is compensated by an increase in employee engagement, decreased employee stress and lower labour turnover. There have been further studies conducted which also indicate a positive proportion between flexible working hours and employee engagement (Pitt-Catsoupes & Matz Costa, 2008; Richman et al., 2008).

*5.2.2.5 Hypothesis 5: There is a significant relationship between different age groups amongst and flexible working hours amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape;*

Hypothesis five was accepted as the results indicated that there is a significant relationship between different age groups and flexible working hours. Based on research, Deloitte (2016) predicts that by 2020, millennials are expected to make up 50% of the workforce; therefore they need to be considered when organisations look at their engagement strategies. Millennials value flexibility, creativity and purpose at work. Based on the demographically information gathered,

the majority of the respondents in the study were between the ages of 30 – 39. Kaifi et al. (2012) define Millennials as the most recent generation to enter the workforce, individuals born between 1980 and 2000. Andert (2011) further defines Millennials as the generation which is closest to the new millennium and being raised in a more digital age. This is the generation that was influenced by computers and a greater acceptance of non-traditional families and values (Andert, 2011). Therefore, we are able to confirm that the majority of the respondents to this study were millennials as the respondents ranged between the ages of 30 -39 years old. These respondents make up 42% of the response rate. Further evidence is also provided in the chi-square tests which indicate that those aged between 30 – 39 years old responded positively to the questions around flexible working hours.

Given this insight and research, it is important for organisations to manage their workforces with multiple generations (most times there are three generations in the workforce at the same time), organisations need to start building an employee-centric and flexible working environments. Bersin (2014) refers to this as the “Simply Irresistible” Organisation which indicates that a fantastic environment which is flexible and humane is key to retaining and engaging with millennials. This study supports the acceptance of the hypothesis which indicates a significant relationship between different age groups and flexible working hours.

*5.2.2.6 Hypothesis 6: There is a significant relationship between male and female and their use of flexible working hours amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape;*

The last hypothesis which predicted a significant relationship between male and female and their use of flexible working hours was also accepted. In the beginning of the study, it was stated that in the twenty first century, the traditional roles in a nuclear family have changed. In the majority of modern families, both partners have careers and full-time jobs. Burnett, Gatrell, Cooper and Sparrow (2010) agree when they explain that the approach to working life is changing. Both men and women want to find a balance between work, family and caring responsibilities. This provides important context in terms of the role of gender when observing the relationship with flexible working hours. Observing the demographics of this study, we are able to see that the majority of the respondents were female which totalled 127 female respondents compared to 34

male respondents. The results of the study indicate that females responded more positively to the questions around flexible working hours, this can be observed in the chi-square tests conducted as well as the responses given by females versus male.

Looking at the context and other studies, Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard (2014) state that flexible working practice fit women more than men and that it is more likely to be employed by women due to the ideology beliefs of motherhood. However, due to the changing family patterns and gender norms, as well as the rise of women in the workforce, flexible employment has slowly started to be utilised by men. Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard (2014) state that despite apparent advantages of flexible working practices (employee personal control over work scheduling), some employees, mostly men, think that such practices result in lower income and higher employment insecurity. According to the same findings, men see flexible working practices as a way to develop their organisational commitment, while women associate flexibility with the work-life balance improvement. Ashoush, Elsayed and Younis, (2015) also mention some benefits to achieving balance between work and family, overall satisfaction, low workload stress, positive morale and quality of work life. All of these studies support the hypothesis of male and female and their use of flexible working hours having a significant relationship with flexible working hours.

### **5.3 Summary of findings**

The discussion of the results has shown the following findings:

- A significant relationship was found between employee engagement and flexible working hours.
- A significant relationship was found between organisational commitment and flexible working hours.
- A significant relationship was found between employee engagement and organisational commitment.
- Employee engagement and organisational commitment explain a significant proportion of the variance in flexible working hours, amongst head office employees in a retail organisation in the Western Cape;

- There is a significant relationship between different age groups and flexible working hours.
- There is a significant relationship between male and female and their use of flexible working hours.

Overall, the dependent variables of employee engagement, organisational commitment, different age groups and male and female and their use of flexible working hours were found to be influenced and affected by the independent variable of flexible working hours.

#### **5.4 Limitations of the current study**

- The sample of the study came from six out of twenty-two divisions across the retail organisation, which may cause the results not to be generalisable across other divisions in the retailers.
- Some of the results pertaining to the flexible working hour policy of this retailer may not be applicable to other retailers in South Africa as they may have different flexible working hour's policies.
- The results of the study may not be applicable to the majority of the employee population in this retailer which reside in stores and are situated all around South Africa as the population only consisted of head office employees.
- There is no standardised definition of flexible working hours in the retailer where the study was conducted therefore respondents could have had different understandings and perceptions of flexible working hours which would influence their responses.
- This quantitative study involved a structured questionnaire which leads to limited outcomes outlined in the research proposal, this is due to respondents having limited options of responses based on the closed questions available (Almeida, Faria, & Queirós, 2017).
- Due to lack of resources and available time, only 161 respondents' data was gathered for this study.

- Another limitation of conducting a quantitative study is that the variables measured are at a specific point in time, where potential future changes can not necessarily be anticipated due to the lack of qualitative data (Schofield, 2007).

## **5.5 Recommendations**

In observing recommendations made from this study, there are three types of recommendations that are provided. Firstly, recommendations pertaining to ways to improve future research, secondly recommendations for organisations within South Africa and, lastly, general recommendations for flexible working hours within South Africa.

### **5.5.1 Future research**

- The issue around including more variables about employee engagement and organisational commitment has previously been discussed and therefore it is not necessary to repeat but these variables should be given more focus in future research.
- Based on the limitation of this study of only having closed structured questions, future research should include qualitative data in order to gain further depth and understanding into the relationship between the various variables.
- Based on the outcome of this study and other studies conducted, qualitative studies into how employees perceive flexible working hours in their organisation would be an interesting topic for further investigation. (Stefanos & Dimitrios, 2011)
- Another interesting topic could be whether an employee, feeling secure and safe in their role, has a positive or negative effect on the flexible working hours benefit. (Eaton, 2001)
- Work flexibility has many other facets besides variation in time and location. This includes sharing of the job, career breaks (maternity/paternity leave), part-time and term-time working. These facets could be further explored and researched in future studies (Shagvaliyeva & Yazdanifard, 2014).
- Including a qualitative dimension in future research on flexible working hours would allow for respondents to provide a more in-depth insight into their perceptions and views on the current policy for flexible working hours and what could be improved upon for the future.

- It would be useful to further explore and research marital status and number children in terms of how these variables influence flexible working hours and whether there is positive correlation.
- With traffic worsening in the Western Cape Province, further research into the factors employees take into account where they live and where their potential employer is situated when selecting an employer (Dentlinger, 2017).

### **5.5.2 Organisational and social perspective**

The recommendations below do not only apply to the retailer where this research was conducted but are general enough to be applied to other retailers and organisations. These recommendations are based on observations from the retailer where the study took place.

- The respondents of this study had a positive perspective on flexible working hours in this study, based on these results, other retailers and organisations should explore a flexible working hours policy, if they do not currently have one in place.
- Retailers and organisations who implement a new flexible working hours policy will need to be open to innovating and reviewing current processes in order to allow employees to be more flexible in their working.
- Retailers and organisations who implement a new flexible working hours policy also need to be willing to provide employees with the appropriate IT resources in order to enable the employee to work flexibly and remotely.
- It is critical that senior leadership support and buy-in to the implementation of a flexible working hours policy in order for it to be successful and employees to feel comfortable enough to utilise it.
- There needs to be a culture of open and honest communication in the retailer or organisation in order for the flexible working hours policy to be successful.
- The flexible working hours policy should be included as part of the employer value proposition when it comes to advertising roles in the external market. (Aida, 2014)
- Once a flexible working hour's policy is implemented, it should be reviewed at least annually in order to elicit feedback from the employees and enquire whether it is having the intended benefit. (Richman et al, 2011)

- The retailer or organisation should have an efficient and solid performance management process in place in order to ensure that employees are aware and understand the outputs which need to be delivered and what they will be measured against. This will also encourage the focus to move from the time employees spend at work to the outputs and deliverables they are being measured against. (HR Pulse, 2017)

### **5.5.3 General recommendations**

- Organisations situated in areas with high traffic congestion should particularly investigate implementing a flexible working hour policy. The City of Cape Town has urged employers to consider flexible working hours to help elevate the serious traffic problem being experienced in Cape Town (Dentlinger, 2017).
- Internationally, flexible working hours has already been implemented in many innovative organisations. It is important to take into account South Africa's unique culture and that it may take longer for the culture to be shifted and changed in order to achieve a more flexible working environment (Odendaal & Roodt, 2002).
- It is important to note that employees might have different needs and that flexible working hours might not necessarily be a benefit to all employees when implemented. Older generations might particularly not see the benefit of flexible working hours given their years of working a particular set of hours.
- It is vital that up skilling and supporting line managers in dealing with employees who are not performing is implemented. This will assist in ensuring that line managers' focus on performance rather than the time spent at work (HR Pulse, 2017).
- By implementing flexible working hours in more organisations, employees will not only see benefit of work life balance but might also see a reduction in transport costs due to spending less time in daily traffic. This could greatly benefit the employee given the increasing price of petrol and living expenses in South Africa.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the findings of the current study in relation to previous research conducted around flexible working hours, employee engagement and organisational commitment. The outcome of this study did coincide with previous studies in that there were

positive relationships found amongst all of the variables, being flexible working hours, employee engagement, organisational commitment, age and gender.

As shown in the review of the literature, flexible working hours is an employee benefit which has many positive aspects; the results of the study have confirmed this when observing employee engagement and organisational commitment. However, as stipulated in the recommendations, there are certain criterion and principles that need to be in place in order to ensure the successful implementation of a flexible working hours policy which will likely benefit the employee and employer. In conclusion, if retailers want to remain competitive in the retail industry with international competition approaching, they will have to ensure that they have the best talent. In order to acquire top talent, they will need to implement policies that will attract and retain them. Based on the findings and results, flexible working hours could substantially assist by increasing their employee engagement and organisational commitment and thereby attracting and retaining the top talent in the South African retail industry.





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# APPENDICES

## Annexure 1 – Questionnaire

### Research Survey

#### Information sheet for Research Participants

Dear participant,

I'm currently completing my Masters in Industrial Psychology at UWC and as part of the requirements and the objective of the below study, I require participants to complete a short survey please.

#### RESEARCH TITLE:

The relationship between flexible working hours, organisational commitment and employee engagement at a South African retailer.

Please take time to read through the consent form carefully. As a participant who gives consent of your participation in this study, you will be required to complete a questionnaire where you will be asked questions about your experiences and view of flexible working hours in the workplace relating to organisational commitment and employee engagement.

Your participation in this research project is voluntary and your responses will be treated as confidential.

Should you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact me at: [2800687@myuwc.ac.za](mailto:2800687@myuwc.ac.za) or my supervisor at [fabrahams@uwc.ac.za](mailto:fabrahams@uwc.ac.za) or my Head of Department at [bmahembe@uwc.ac.za](mailto:bmahembe@uwc.ac.za).

Kind regards,

Robyn Jansen (née Huckle)

#### Consent to participate in study

- I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet explaining the research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question(s), I am free to decline. If I wish to withdraw I may contact the lead researcher at any time.
- I understand my responses and personal data will be kept strictly confidential. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses.
- I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the reports or publications that result from the research.

- I agree that the data collected can be used in future research.
- I agree to take part in this research project.

1.

**I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study \***

Yes

No

### **Biographical Information**

2.

**Please indicate your age \***

20 - 29

30 - 39

40 - 49

50 - 59

60 – 69

3.

**Please indicate your race \***

Black

Coloured

White

Indian

Other



4.

**Please indicate your gender \***

Female

Male

5.

**Please indicate your marital status \***

Never Married

Married

Divorced

6.

**Please indicate how many children you have \***

- No children
- 1 child
- 2 children
- 3 children
- 4 or more children

7.

**Please indicate your home language \***

- English
- Afrikaans
- Xhosa
- Zulu
- Tswana
- Ndebele
- Northern Sotho
- Sotho
- Swazi
- Tsonga
- Venda
- Other



8.

**Please indicate your highest level of education \***

- Below Grade 12
- Grade 12 (Matric)
- Post-matric certificate
- Degree or Diploma
- Post - graduate degree

9.

**Please indicate your length of service in your current division \***

- 0 years - 2 years
- 3 years - 5 years
- 6 years - 8 years
- 9 years- 11 years
- 12 years and longer

10.

**Please indicate how far away you live from work? \***

- 0km - 9km
- 10km - 19km
- 20km - 29km
- 30km - 39km
- 40km - 49km
- 50km and more

11.

**Please indicate how long it normally takes you to get to work in the morning? \***

- 1 minutes - 15 minutes
- 16 minutes - 30 minutes
- 31 minutes - 45 minutes
- 46 minutes - 60 minutes
- up to 1 hour 15 minutes
- up to 1 hour 30 minutes
- longer than 1 hour 30 minutes

12.

**Please indicate how long it normally takes you to get home in the afternoon \***

- 1 minutes - 15 minutes
- 16 minutes - 30 minutes
- 31 minutes - 45 minutes
- 46 minutes - 60 minutes
- up to 1 hour 15 minutes
- up to 1 hour 30 minutes
- longer than 1 hour 30 minutes

13.

**Please indicate if your division offers flexible working hours \***

- Yes - formalised flexible working hours
- Yes - informal flexible working hours
- Yes - both formal and informal flexible working hours are offered
- No - this benefit is not offered

14.

**Please indicate if you make use of flexible working hours? \***

- Yes - formalised flexible working hours *Skip to question 15.*



Yes - informal flexible working hours *Skip to question 15.*  
No - I do not make use of flexible working hours *Skip to question 29.*

### **Flexible working hours survey**

The following section applies only to employees who are currently using flexible working hours

15.

**I feel comfortable with the flexible working hours policy \***

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Neutral  
Agree  
Strongly Agree

16.

**By adopting Flexible Working Hours, it allows me to spend more time with my family \***

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Neutral  
Agree  
Strongly Agree

17.

**By adopting Flexible Working Hours, it allows me to sort out my personal matters at home without interrupting work hours \***

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Neutral  
Agree  
Strongly Agree

18.

**By adopting Flexible Working Hours, I am able to increase the quality of service to the customer \***

Strongly disagree  
Disagree  
Neutral  
Agree  
Strongly agree



19.

**I feel stressed at work when my responsibilities and my children's welfare are neglected \***

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

20.

**By adopting Flexible Working Hours, it helps me in not being late to the office \***

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

21.

**I feel that the delivery to the customer will be affected if employees are late to work \***

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

22.

**I feel that tardiness can be reduced through the implementation of flexible working hours \***

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

23.

**By adopting Flexible Working Hours, I have high commitment to come to work because of the benefit \***

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

24.

**In my opinion, high commitment among employees is important in strengthening the organisation \***

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

25.

**My engagement level can be increased at work through flexible working hours \***

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

26.

**Employee engagement can be increased through the implementation of a new flexible working hours policy \***

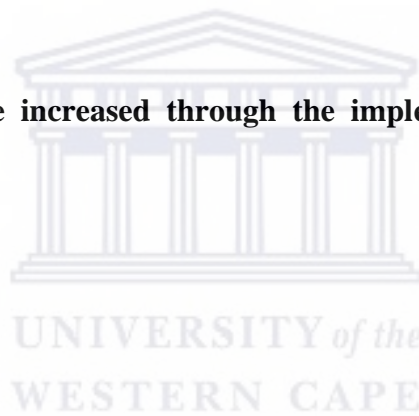
Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree



27.

**In my opinion, more time spent with the family may increase my engagement at work \***

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

28.

**By adopting Flexible Working Hours, it provides more time for me to deliver to the customer. \***

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree  
Strongly agree

### **Employee Engagement and Commitment**

29.

**I feel stressed at work when my responsibilities and my children's welfare are neglected \***

Strongly disagree  
Disagree  
Neutral  
Agree  
Strongly agree

30.

**I feel that the delivery to the customer will be affected if employees are late to work \***

Strongly disagree  
Disagree  
Neutral  
Agree  
Strongly agree

31.

**I feel that tardiness can be reduced through the implementation of flexible working hours \***

Strongly disagree  
Disagree  
Neutral  
Agree  
Strongly agree

32.

**In my opinion, high commitment among employees is important in strengthening the organisation \***

Strongly disagree  
Disagree  
Neutral  
Agree  
Strongly agree





33.

**My engagement level can be increased at work through flexible working hours \***

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

34.

**Employee engagement can be increased through the implementation of a new flexible working hours policy \***

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

35.

**In my opinion, more time spent with the family may increase my engagement at work \***

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

