

# The organisational commitment of academic personnel during WFH within private higher education, South Africa



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**Orientation:** The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has changed how higher education institutions operate and the work from home (WFH) operating model being widely implemented.

**Research purpose:** This study investigated the organisational commitment of academic personnel working from home within private higher education in South Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Motivation for the study:** While some studies exist to assess employees' organisational commitment levels during the COVID-19 pandemic, no studies have evaluated this phenomenon within private higher education in South Africa.

**Research approach/design and method:** This study adopted a quantitative methodology. The target population comprised of 133 academic personnel employed at a private higher education institution. Data were collected using an online survey with the validated Three-Component Model (TCM) employee commitment questionnaire. A satisfactory response rate of 79% was realised.

**Main findings:** The study found that notwithstanding the struggles and unease brought about by the swift transformations to WFH because of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the organisational commitment levels of academic personnel, specifically affective and normative commitment, were sustained.

**Practical/managerial implications:** Work from home is observed as a feasible and noteworthy work model for the foreseeable future. Therefore, private higher education should consider the findings of this study to manage the levels of organisational commitment from academic staff appropriately.

**Contribution/value-add:** The study contributes to the body of knowledge regarding organisational commitment within a WFH context in private higher education.

**Keywords:** academic personnel; COVID-19 pandemic; organisational commitment; private higher education; remote work; work-from-home.

## Introduction

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has profoundly changed how organisations and employees operate. The most significant and widely accepted change because of the pandemic has been the pervasive implementation of the work-from-home (WFH) model (Ahmed & Singh, 2023; Botha & Coetzee, 2022), which has resulted in a substantial shift in the manner in which employees work (McKinsey Global Institute, 2023). The WFH model has been widely used by organisations that provided financial work, business management, scientific and professional services during the COVID-19 pandemic (Dingel & Neiman, 2020, cited by Vyas & Butakhieo, 2021). Work-from-home refers to employees working remotely and performing their work duties from the vicinity of their homes (e.g. rather than the office, ), utilising an array of information technology such as video conferencing tools and platforms (e.g. zoom, google meet), messaging and chat applications (e.g. WhatsApp, Telegram and Slack), and cloud-based file sharing (e.g. Google Drive) for communication, productivity and business continuity (Benjamin, 2020; ILO, 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, this model intended to prioritise workers' health and well-being by minimising the spread of the virus (via home isolation) while maintaining business continuity (Merrill, 2021). Therefore, most organisations, including those in higher education, were required to adapt to new methods of organising work, and employees were required to

swiftly adjust to working and operating in the new environments (Botha & Coetzee, 2022; Mhlanga et al., 2022).

The lockdowns enforced by governments on a global level forced education institutions, including private institutions, to rethink education delivery methodology and models (World Economic Forum, 2020). Changes such as virtual classrooms, virtual libraries, virtual research space, virtual assessments, virtual student administration, and virtual student consultation replaced the traditional teaching and learning modality, and a strong emphasis on e-learning surfaced (World Economic Forum, 2020). Personnel in higher education entered a steep and sudden learning curve to acquire new skill sets to cope with digital and e-learning demands; various challenges related to the following were documented during this period, among others: university employees were ill-equipped to function in a virtual environment, a lack of technological infrastructure (and support) to support operations in a virtual environment, including instruction, instructors were ill-equipped to administer tests and examinations in a virtual environment (Piotrowski & King, 2020); little (or no) experience in the pedagogy or delivery of online learning (Hedding et al., 2020); increased work–life conflict (Botha et al., 2023; Chanana, 2020; Olawale et al., 2021), lack of concentration (Chanana, 2020, p. 1), increased workload and working hours (Olawale et al., 2021; Pathak & Majumdar, 2020), loneliness because of isolation (Botha et al., 2023; Carnevale & Hatak, 2020; Olawale et al., 2021), increased parental demands because of school closures, a lack of purpose and belonging (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020), health concerns and wellness challenges (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020; Laher et al., 2021; Olawale et al., 2021), feelings of frustration and fatigue (Laher et al., 2021; Paterson et al., 2021; Schulman, 2020), ‘Zoom hangovers’ (Schulman, 2020, p. 384), and job security issues, in particular, pertaining to support staff (Piotrowski & King, 2020).

As a result of the widespread changes in work environments across sectors, including the higher education sector, and the accompanying challenges experienced, it was suggested that organisational commitment might be affected (Anwar et al., 2022; Kramer & Kramer, 2020). Organisational commitment is a multifaceted concept that has been conceptualised in various ways over the years (Serhan et al., 2022). It is defined primarily as a state of mind or a psychological state among employees that assesses the level or the way employees resonate with the organisation, and how dedicated they feel towards their work (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Serhan et al., 2022). It is a psychological state in which employees recognise and feel devoted to their workplace (Meyer & Allen, 1991). It is a state of being in which individuals become tied to their actions and beliefs (Saks, 2006, p. 601). This can either encourage their involvement in organisational activities or decrease their involvement (Saks, 2006, p. 601). Employees who feel less committed to the organisation will feel less satisfied with their work, affecting their engagement, performance and productivity (Ariani, 2013; Chanana & Sangeeta, 2020; Masale et al., 2021).

Although the concept has been widely researched in the academic literature, it has been given little consideration in research during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in private higher education in South Africa. Traditionally, research surrounding organisational commitment has been directed at this construct’s antecedents and related impact and how it varies depending on the context. However, given the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the radical shift to WFH, there has been a budding focus on understanding how WFH influences employee’s organisational commitment (Ahmed & Singh, 2023; Anwar et al., 2022; Ribeiro et al., 2022). If the commitment of employees could be enhanced, it would positively impact employees’ job satisfaction, performance, and retention, and ultimately providing greater chances of business success (Kifor et al., 2022).

## Research purpose and objectives

The objectives of this study were firstly, to ascertain the organisational commitment of academic personnel (managers, lecturers, and academic administrators) working from home in a private higher education sector in South Africa in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic; secondly, to determine the association between selected socio-demographic variables (age, gender, marital status, nature of employment, qualification) and organisational commitment; and thirdly, to draw conclusions and recommendations emanating from the literature review and empirical results to assist higher education institutions, in general, and specifically, in the private space, to improve organisational commitment of academic personnel during the WFH arrangement.

## Literature review

The concept of organisational commitment has been an imperative aspect of business research and organisational and management behaviour, given its psychological nature and related impact on business performance (AL-Jabari & Ghazzawi, 2019). Consequently, this section defines and conceptualises the concept, explains the three-component model (TCM) of commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990), discusses the antecedents and outcomes of organisational commitment, elaborates on organisational commitment during WFH in the COVID-19 context and explains some of the socio-demographic variables associated with it.

### Organisational commitment defined and conceptualised

Organisational commitment is a multifaceted concept that has evolved in its definition over time (Cohen, 2007). The earliest understanding of the concept was developed by Porter and Lawler (1968), who viewed organisational commitment as an individual’s willingness to dedicate significant effort to the organisation, a deep inclination to remain with the organisation, and an endorsement of its principal goals and values, emphasising the psychological bond that exists between an organisation and its employees (Bakhsi et al., 2011).

During the 1980s, Meyer and Allen (1984) conceptualised organisational commitment as having two dimensions: affective and continuance. Meyer and Allen (1984, p. 375) viewed affective commitment as 'positive feelings of identification with, attachment to and involvement in the work organisation', and continuance commitment as 'the extent which employees feel committed to their organisation by the costs that they feel are associated with leaving'.

Through further exploration, Allen and Meyer (1990) introduced a third dimension: 'the employee's feelings of obligation to remain with the organisation' (i.e. normative commitment). Consequently, organisational commitment is described as a three-dimensional concept, comprising affective, continuance and normative dimensions (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Meyer and Allen's (1991) conceptualisation of organisational commitment was used for this study.

Employees with higher levels of affective commitment are encouraged by their outlooks of association and connection to their place of work and regard their duties as a critical part of their identity. These employees are more bound to partake in behaviours that benefit the productivity of the organisation, such as going beyond their job scopes for example, and have been found to be less likely to resign from their job (i.e. they are easily retained) (Noraazian & Khalip, 2016). Employees tend to develop stronger affective attachments to the organisation when their experiences are consistent with their expectations and satisfy their basic needs (Meyer et al., 1993). Staff that possess higher levels of continuance commitment remain within the organisation because they believe they have invested considerable time and effort in their work and feel that resigning from their duties would impact the organisation considerably (Georges, 2020). It has been reported that staff with higher levels of normative commitment build a sense of compulsion to the organisation, resulting in remaining within the organisation even if they are dissatisfied with their work or the organisation at large. These individuals often have a sense of loyalty towards the organisation and perceive leaving as a means of betraying the organisation (Inam et al., 2023).

According to Meyer and Allen (2004, p. 2), employees who demonstrate a strong affective commitment stay in the organisation because they want to, those who demonstrate strong normative commitment stay because they feel they ought to, and those who demonstrate strong continuance commitment stay because they must do so. Using the TCM Employee Commitment Survey developed by Meyer and Allen (2004), organisations can be provided with a commitment profile for their organisation, department or unit (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Accordingly, management can devise strategies to enhance their workforce's commitment, resulting in greater employee satisfaction, improved productivity, and enhanced human capital retention as mentioned earlier.

## Antecedents of organisational commitment

Organisational commitment is a vital notion in management and organisational behaviour. Determining the factors that impact organisational commitment is essential for businesses to understand, as this could significantly influence workers' attitudes and behaviours, thereby affecting business performance (Manetje & Martins, 2009). The following factors are antecedents of organisational commitment:

### Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction, briefly defined, describes an employee's perception or subjective experience of their work experience and the contentment they experience within their functions (Aziri, 2011). In simple terms, it refers to how much people are satisfied or dissatisfied with their jobs (Aziri, 2011). When employees are more satisfied in their jobs, they are more likely to show greater levels of commitment to the organisation (Wijaya & Basit, 2024). Factors contributing to job satisfaction such as remuneration, work benefits, conducive working conditions and opportunities for career development, were found to play a significant role in how committed employees are to the organisation (Ismail & Abd Razak, 2016). If employees' jobs are fulfilling, they are more inclined to remain in the organisation and show greater commitment (Ismail & Abd Razak, 2016).

### Organisational culture

Organisational culture is the shared values, beliefs, and practices that nurture workers' behaviour within a work setting (Tran, 2021). Organisations possessing stronger and more positive cultures have more committed employees (Tsai, 2011). When employees feel that they share and can resonate with the organisation's similar values and belief systems, they are more likely to show greater commitment to the organisation (Tran, 2021).

### Leadership

Leadership refers to a process that involves the influence and guidance of groups of employees towards attaining a common goal or objective (Bakti & Hartono, 2022). Transformational leadership, as a leadership style, refers to motivating and inspiring leaders and was established to create environments whereby employees work towards a common mission and vision (Bakti & Hartono, 2022). When employees sense that they are under the supervision of supportive and empowering leaders, they are more likely to be committed to their work and the organisation. It has been observed that a leader who can generate an optimistic and inclusive culture in the organisation will most likely enhance the commitment of employees (Adams et al., 2020). Furthermore, the relationship between supervisor and employee critically influences job satisfaction and commitment (Abun et al., 2023). A positive relationship with a supervisor often results in greater job satisfaction and a greater sense of belonging to the organisation. Conversely, a negative relationship with a supervisor can lead to decreased job satisfaction and a lack of commitment to the organisation (Abun et al., 2023).

### Personal career development opportunities

Organisations that present employees with growth and career advancement opportunities have staff with greater morale and higher levels of organisational commitment (Ferdiana et al., 2023). Furthermore, organisations can retain employees more efficiently if they are given proper training and development opportunities congruent with their personal development plans (Ferdiana et al., 2023). When an employee's development or career plan is clear and known to the employee, they are more likely to remain motivated and grow within the company (Ferdiana et al., 2023).

### Organisational support

Organisational support is defined as the extent to which employees believe that their employer meaningfully considers their well-being and supports their working requisites, such as adequate working infrastructure, conducive working environments, and work-life balance, to mention a few (Bonaiuto et al., 2022). Organisational and management support is important in shaping organisational commitment (Bonaiuto et al., 2022). In a personal capacity, these could also include access to benefits such as hybrid or flexible working arrangements, employee assistance courses, and health and well-being programmes (Hoeven & Zoonen, 2015).

### Outcomes of organisational commitment

Organisational commitment is a critical success factor for organisational productivity (Kumar et al., 2019). Hence, in terms of the outcome of organisational commitment, one should view the overarching objective of organisational commitment as business success (Phuong et al., 2023).

### Enhanced job performance

The most widely accepted outcome of organisational commitment is enhanced job performance. Loan (2020) identified numerous studies (Porter et al., 1974; Bateman & Strasser, 1984; Meyer et al., 2002; Pool & Pool, 2007) that found that employees more committed to the organisation usually display superior productivity and performance than their less committed ones. This can be attributed to the fact that committed employees are more motivated to work hard, are more engaged in their work, and are less likely to experience burnout (Loan, 2020).

### Enhanced job satisfaction

Employees more committed to the organisation are often more satisfied with their duties, thereby enhancing job embeddedness or job satisfaction (Culibrk et al., 2018). This could be attributed to the fact that committed employees are more connected to the organisation and have a greater sense of pride and belonging, thereby possessing greater meaning and value in their work. These optimistic work engagement criteria result in greater work experiences (i.e. greater job satisfaction) (Culibrk et al., 2018).

### Increased employee retention rates

Employees more committed to the organisation are less likely to resign (Zhu et al., 2022). Because of the knowledge economy and the reliance on human capital for the success of organisations, particularly in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), employee retention has been a key focus in organisational and management strategy (Rafique et al., 2021). Hence, it can be observed that organisational commitment is fundamental in the success strategies of modern business. This can also benefit businesses regarding business expenditure, as high turnover rates can be costly, particularly in hiring and training new staff (Kurdi et al., 2020).

### Enhanced organisational citizenship behaviour

Organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB), in essence, refers to a set of behaviour patterns shown by employees that may not be rewarded by the company but are advantageous to colleagues and the organisation at large (Ndoja & Malekar, 2020). Employees who are more committed to the organisation are more engaging in OCB, and partake in activities that benefit the business by, for example, being involved in additional projects that may not directly relate to their stream of work, assisting colleagues with their duties, serving as an ambassador for the company that helps to promote the organisational effectiveness of the company, to mention a few (Ndoja & Malekar, 2020).

### Work from home and organisational commitment in the coronavirus disease 2019 context

Organisations' radical move to remote work, commonly referred to as WFH or telecommuting, has resulted in a series of changes in how businesses operate and how employees engage in their duties (Abilash & Siju, 2021). As a result, WFH has led to positive and negative implications for organisational commitment (Anwar et al., 2022).

On a positive note, WFH offers employees a greater sense of autonomy and control in the duties that they are engaged in. As a result of remote working often taking place within the vicinity of employees' homes, because of the COVID-19 lockdown, employees have created workspaces conducive to their duties, resulting in enhanced productivity (Anwar et al., 2022). This enhances job satisfaction, as staff have tailored their environments to enhance the span of control over their work (Mohammed et al., 2022). The WFH model has also been found to offer employees greater flexibility and the ability to manage a work-life balance, allowing them to manage their personal lives more effectively (Mohammed et al., 2022). This decreases employee stress and burnout, enhancing worker morale and job satisfaction. Hence, in this instance, WFH positively affected organisational commitment (Abilash & Siju, 2021). For example, the academic fraternity of Bangladesh had implemented WFH as a solution to continued teaching and learning among higher education institutions. A study of more than 370 university faculty members of different universities revealed that WFH has

positively impacted organisational commitment (and job satisfaction) as WFH fostered better working environments that resulted in greater attachments to their jobs (Ahmed & Singh, 2023).

However, WFH also harmed organisational commitment. Work from home is often denoted as a model that results in employees' feelings of isolation and disconnection from colleagues and the organisation at large (Yang et al., 2022). Because of WFH, employees are no longer maintaining or having access to the physical relations they once had with colleagues, hence they feel less connected to their peers (Abilash & Siju, 2021). Employees may lose out on the social interactions and camaraderie connected with working in an office environment (Lal et al., 2021), which can also decrease organisational commitment. In addition, because of employees no longer having physical interactions with management, for example, there are often feelings of detachment and alienation from the company's vision and goals (ILO, 2020). This could decrease organisational commitment, as staff feel less invested in company goals and less motivated to meaningfully contribute towards its success (NHS England, 2020).

Work from home has also been notorious for lacking clear directives and communication between employees and their immediate managers (ILO, 2020). Managers have experienced difficulty in communicating with employees remotely (ILO, 2020). Furthermore, employees working from home may be less likely to receive criticism and appreciation for their work, contributing to lower organisational commitment levels (Middleton et al., 2021). To mitigate the negative impacts of WFH, companies should devise deliberate strategies to enhance communication and collaboration among employees working from home (ILO, 2020). This could include, but is not limited to, strategies such as regular virtual meetings, programmes that assist employee collaboration, mechanisms to ensure constant feedback on work, and virtual social events, to mention a few (Abilash & Siju, 2021).

### **Socio-demographic variables and organisational commitment**

The results of previous studies, before the pandemic, have demonstrated that relationships exist between specific socio-demographic variables (gender, age, marital status, and nature of employment, among others) and organisational commitment; therefore, these and other associations were further explored during WFH within the COVID-19 pandemic in this study.

Previous studies showed that gender may affect organisational commitment. For example, studies conducted by Baba (2017), Jena (2015) and Martin and Roodt (2008) revealed that males showed higher organisational commitment levels than females.

Concerning age, a study by Yucel and Bektas (2012) discovered a meaningful relationship between age and organisational commitment. Specifically, their study highlighted that age was positively related to commitment, implying that the older the employees, the more committed they are to their organisation, and this was found to be attributed to factors such as job satisfaction and job security. Older employees believed that they had invested more in their careers and felt more secure in their jobs, making it harder to move to another position (Yucel & Bektas, 2012, p. 1601). Studies conducted by Anthun and Innstrand (2016) and Heymann (2010), confirmed a positive relationship between age and organisational commitment, where older employees demonstrated higher commitment levels. While the study conducted by Baba (2017) revealed that younger employees demonstrated higher commitment levels.

A study by Tikare (2015) found that regarding marital status, employees who were married showed higher levels of commitment than their counterparts. The study concluded that marital status should be regarded as an important factor affecting organisational commitment and further added that married individuals have greater financial burdens because of greater family responsibilities; hence, stability in employment is required. Jena's (2015) research supports Tikare (2015) by indicating that marital status is positively related to commitment. Two years later, a study by Asrar et al. (2017) investigated the impact that managerial levels have on organisational commitment. They found that the managerial level was positively linked to organisational commitment where managers displayed lower levels of organisational commitment than non-managerial staff (Asrar et al., 2017).

In conclusion, the alteration to WFH was found to have both positive and negative effects on employee organisational commitment. On the one hand, WFH has led to heightened worker satisfaction and motivation, as employees have more sovereignty and self-control over their work settings, resulting in increased organisation commitment. On the other hand, WFH has led to feelings of separation and detachment, the absence of clear communication, and a break in trust between employees and their immediate managers, leading to decreased organisational commitment.

## **Research design**

### **Research approach**

Four main research approaches are used in academic research: positivism, postpositivism, interpretivism, and critical theory. These approaches serve as an array of beliefs and ideas that shape the study process and advise on experiences and events on how the business world can be observed, measured, and understood (Bryman & Bell, 2018). This study utilised the positivistic research approach, which is based on the use of measurable data that allows researchers to analyse and categorise the information obtained through statistical methods and to search for patterns in the collected

data and make generalisations about the sample under study (Bryman et al., 2021). This study employed a quantitative research methodology.

## Research method

### Research participants

This study's participants comprised of employees from a South African private higher education institution with different employment levels, including managers, faculty, academic and support staff. These personnel were all considered academic personnel as they were directly involved in the academic operations of the institution. Consequently, the target population comprised of 133 academic personnel, 16 managers, 27 faculty members, and 90 support staff. The study employed total population sampling and surveyed the full population based on identified criteria (in this case, academic personnel) (Morse, 1991). A response rate of 79% ( $N = 105$ ) was achieved. The socio-demographic information of the sample is displayed in Table 1 and discussed in the section on empirical results.

### Measuring instruments

Data from respondents were collected using an online survey instrument. The data collection occurred during the COVID-19 lockdown in late 2021 following the first hard lockdown and when the institution implemented a WFH model that required most personnel to work remotely from their homes (although all staff worked from home during the initial stages of the lockdown, some key personnel had already returned to their offices when the data were collected). The survey instrument consisted of two sections, with the first part including 11 questions on participants' demographics such as gender, age, department, years of experience at the organisation, highest education, place of residence, nationality, marital status, employment type, length of time working from home because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and WFH scenario at the time of data collection (see Table 1 for the categories used in each variable). To determine employees' organisational commitment levels during the WFH period, the revised version of the TCM employee commitment survey (developed and validated by Meyer et al. in 1993) was used as Section B. Section B, therefore, comprised of 18 questions or items, with 6 that determine affective commitment, 6 that determine the continuance commitment of respondents, and 6 items that measure normative commitment. A seven-point Likert scale was used for this section to collect ordinal data (i.e., strongly disagree [1] to strongly agree [7]). All three scales measured inferred Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeding 0.7, indicating exceptional reliability and internal consistency (Field, 2017).

### Data analysis

The data analysis techniques involved analysing data using an array of descriptive, inferential, and multivariate statistical methods using International Business Machine's Statistical

Package for the Social Sciences AMOS (version 27) as the statistical software (IBM SPSS, 2022). A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) assessed the variables' validity and representation of the constructs measuring employee commitment. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used to determine the internal reliability and consistency of the scale used. Descriptive statistics calculated the biographical characteristics of the data. Independent samples  $t$ -tests and one-way analysis of variance

**TABLE 1:** Socio-demographic information.

Question	Category	<i>N</i>	%
<b>Biographical information</b>			
Gender	Female	66	62.9
	Male	38	36.2
	Prefer not to answer	1	1.0
Country of residence	South Africa	102	97.0
	Other	3	3.0
Nationality	South African	99	94.3
	Other	6	5.7
Age (in years)	20–29	26	24.8
	30–39	52	49.5
	40–49	16	15.2
	50–59	8	7.6
	60 and older	3	2.9
Marital status	Single or not in a relationship	25	25.3
	Unmarried and in a relationship	21	21.2
	Widowed	4	4.0
	Married	47	47.5
	Divorced/separated	2	2.0
Highest qualification	High (secondary) school graduate	23	22.3
	Completed technical/vocational training	6	5.8
	College/University degree	43	41.7
	Postgraduate degree	26	25.2
Tenure at the institution	PhD	5	4.9
	0–6 months	16	15.2
	7–12 months	6	5.7
	1–2 years	14	13.3
	3–5 years	33	31.4
	6–10 years	24	22.9
Nature of employment at the institution	More than 10 years	12	11.4
	Management	18	17.1
	Academic (i.e., teacher, lecturer, researcher, postdoctoral fellow, etc.)	20	19.0
	Support (i.e., administrative, technical)	49	46.7
Duration working from home since the COVID-19 pandemic started in 2020	Other	18	17.2
	0–3 months	24	25.0
	4–7 months	37	38.5
	8–11 months	25	26.0
Scenario best describes respondents' current work situation since the COVID-19 pandemic started in 2020	12 months and longer	10	10.4
	I have been working from home since the beginning of the pandemic, but come to the office occasionally (i.e. to attend a meeting and at my own discretion).	11	10.8
	I currently work remotely a few days a week as directed by management.	16	15.7
	I am currently working from the office most of the time.	30	29.4
I am currently working from the office all the time.	45	44.1	

Source: Adapted from Cassim, N. (2024). *A work-from-home framework for the South African private higher education institutions*. PhD thesis. North-West University; Cassim, N., Botha, C.J., Botha, D., & Bisschoff, C. (2024). Employee engagement at a private higher education institution during the COVID-19 pandemic. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management/SA*, 22, a2300. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v22i0.2300>  
 COVID-19, coronavirus disease 2019.

(ANOVA) tests compared the mean scores of the categories for gender, marital status, nature of employment, and WFH scenario) to determine any significant statistical differences between groups ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). Effect sizes measured the magnitude of the differences to determine whether the results were practically significant. Cohen's  $d$  values measured the effect size:  $d = 0.2$  represented a small effect,  $d = 0.5$  represented a medium effect, and  $d = 0.8$  represented a large effect (Cohen, 1988; Field, 2017). Lastly, Spearman's rank-order correlations evaluated the ordinal scales (age, highest qualification, tenure at the institution, and duration working from home) regarding strength and direction to determine the relationship between the variables and organisational commitment. In addition, the correlations between affective, normative and continuous commitment were measured.

### Research procedure

All the ethical considerations of research were given due diligence in this study, and the study was categorised as a low-risk study. Institutional approval was formally granted by the institution under study, advising the researcher of permission to conduct the study. Each respondent granted informed consent, as the survey requested the informed consent of respondents before the collection of data. Participants were advised on the study's objective and their rights within the study. In addition, the anonymity and confidentiality of respondents were protected during data collection, analysis of data, and the reporting of findings.

### Ethical considerations

An application for full ethical approval was made to the Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC) on 25 February 2022. The ethics approval number is NWU-01253-21-A4.

## Results

The following results are derived from descriptive, inferential, and multivariate analyses.

### Socio-demographic information

Table 1 displays the socio-demographic information of the participants gathered through the survey.

The descriptive analysis revealed that all the respondents are South Africans. The respondents constituted a young working adult population, where more than 65% of respondents were between 20 and 39 years of age. In addition, all personnel surveyed have worked at varying lengths of service at the institution, ranging from 6 months to over 10 years, and most respondents were female (62.9%). The sample also represented all employment levels, including managers, academic faculty, and administrative and support staff. The demographic analysis showed that more support than academic staff responded. This could be attributed to South Africa's higher education obligation to maintain a student-to-support staff

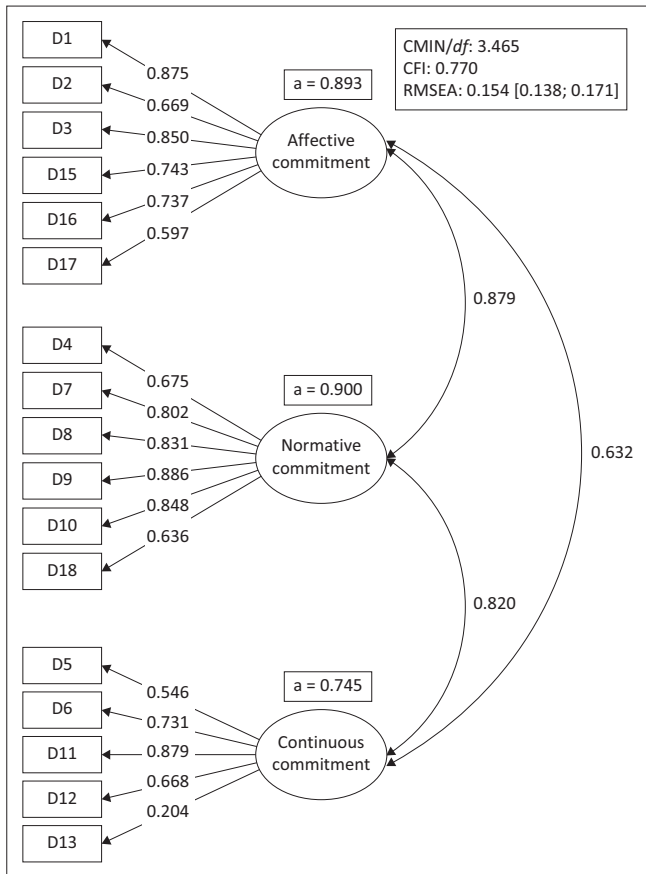
ratio of 30:1 (Kosie, 2022). Most respondents held a first university or postgraduate degree (72%), and just under half (47%) were married. All respondents indicated that they had been working from home during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and although some staff (45) had returned to the office all the time, and others (30) partially returned to the office by the time the data were collected, they were still excellently positioned to provide valuable information about their work from home experience. There were no statistical differences ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) between the respondent groups who returned to their offices earlier and those who were still working from home (see Table 5).

### Confirmatory factor analyses results of the Three-Component Model of employee commitment

Multivariate statistical analysis, such as CFA, is best suited when the number of factors is known, the data are not overly skewed or subject to kurtosis (preferably below  $\pm 2$ ; but below  $\pm 4$ ) and reliable ( $\geq 0.70$ ), the sample is adequate ( $\geq 0.70$ ), and suitable sphericity exists ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) (Field, 2017). The data are reliable (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.789$ ) and have acceptable normality statistics (almost all the variables have skewness values above  $-2$ ; three are above  $-2.8$ ). The data are marginally negatively skewed at  $-0.58$ . All the variables are kurtosed less than  $+2$ . The sample is adequate per Kaiser's criterion (KMO = 0.847) and significant as measured by Bartlett's sphericity test. As these conditions were met, this study used CFA to validate the organisational commitment construct's factor structure (affective, normative and continuous commitment) while also determining the model fit of three factors.

In addressing the aim of this study (to measure employees' organisational commitment during working from home), this study reports explicitly on the commitment of private higher education employees during working from home. In this regard, the CFA results on the TCM of employee commitment showed that the  $p$ -value of one of the items in the continuance commitment scale, 'One of the few negative consequences of leaving this organisation would be the scarcity of available alternatives', was not significant. The item was removed and the CFA was repeated. The results revealed that the three-factor structure (affective, normative and continuous commitment) had a good fit with the data collected from the respondents, as shown in Figure 1. Six items loaded on affective commitment (ranging from 0.597 to 0.875), six items on normative commitment (ranging from 0.636 to 0.886) and five items on continuous commitment (ranging from 0.204 to 0.879). All of the factor loadings were observed to be statistically meaningful at the 0.05 level.

It should be observed that item Q13, 'If I had not already put so much of myself into this organisation, I might consider working elsewhere', had a low factor loading of 0.204. However, the item was retained because of its theoretical importance. Field (2017, p. 644) recommended that a factor loading of 0.3 is considered significant. In addition, for a sample size of 100



Source: Cassim, N. (2024). *A work-from-home framework for the South African private higher education institutions*. PhD thesis. North-West University  
 CMIN/df, Chi-square statistic divided by degrees of freedom; CFI, comparative fit index; RMSEA, root mean square error of approximation.

**FIGURE 1:** Confirmatory factor analysis results of the three-component model of employee commitment.

**TABLE 2:** Descriptive statistics of three-component model of employee commitment.

Factor	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
<b>Descriptive statistics</b>					
Affective commitment	104	1.33	7.00	5.1958	1.35743
Normative commitment	104	1.00	7.00	5.0590	1.42049
Continuous commitment	104	2.00	5.00	3.8593	0.60093

Source: Cassim, N. (2024). *A work-from-home framework for the South African private higher education institutions*. PhD thesis. North-West University  
 SD, standard deviation.

**TABLE 3:** Goodness-of-model-fit indices for three-component model of employee commitment.

Index	Decision rule	Author	Model score	Outcome
<b>Goodness-of-model-fit indices</b>				
CMIN/df	Close to 1; 3–5 still satisfactory	Mueller (1996) Paswan (cited by Shadfar and Malekmohammadi, 2013, p. 585) Bollen and Jackman (1993) Kline (1998)	3.465	Acceptable fit
CFI	≥ 0.9 (good fit)	Hair et al. (2010) Mueller (1996) Bentler (1990)	0.770	Close fit
RMSEA	0.01 (excellent) 0.05 (good) 0.08 (mediocre) ≤ 0.10 (still satisfactory)	Hu and Bentler (1999, p. 1) Blunch (2008) Steiger (1990) Bentler (1990)	0.154 [0.138; 0.171]	Not good fit

Source: Cassim, N. (2024). *A work-from-home framework for the South African private higher education institutions*. PhD thesis. North-West University  
 CMIN/df, Chi-square statistic divided by degrees of freedom; CFI, comparative fit index; RMSEA, root mean square error of approximation.

respondents, factor loadings ought to be greater than 0.5 for it to be meaningful. This item is suggested to be omitted from future studies if the factor loading remains below 0.3.

The Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of the three scales showed excellent reliability and internal consistency (affective commitment:  $\alpha = 0.893$ ; normative commitment:  $\alpha = 0.900$ ; continuous commitment:  $\alpha = 0.745$ ). Field (2017) suggests that Cronbach’s alpha coefficient should ideally exceed 0.7. The descriptive statistics revealed that the highest mean score was obtained for affective commitment ( $M = 5.19$ ), followed by normative commitment ( $M = 5.05$ ) and continuous commitment ( $M = 3.85$ ) – see Table 2.

Three goodness-of-model-fit indices evaluated how well the sample data of the study fits the measurement model, namely the Chi-square statistic divided by degrees of freedom (CMIN/df), the comparative fit index (CFI), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). A CMIN/df ratio close to 1 is expected for accurate models (Bollen & Jackman, 1993). Scores below 1 indicate a poor fit between the sample data and the hypothetical model used (Shadfar & Malekmohammadi, 2013). Kline (1998) suggests that a CMIN/df ratio smaller than 3 indicates an acceptable fit, and values closer to 2 are considered a good fit. Shadfar and Malekmohammadi (2013) also notice that scores between 2 and 5 would be considered an appropriate fit. According to Bentler (1990), a CFI score of 1 represents a perfect fit, while scores below 0.95 typically indicate a poor fit. Bentler (1990) and Hair et al. (2010) suggest that a CFI score greater than 0.9 is a good fit between the sample data and the measurement model. For the RMSEA, a value of 0 indicates a perfect fit, whereas a value less than 0.05 is generally regarded as a good fit. Steiger (1990) stated that values between 0.05 and 0.08 are acceptable, while values above 0.10 indicate a poor fit. Table 3 shows the results of the goodness-of-model-fit indices. From the results, it is evident that the CMIN/df (3.465) indicates an acceptable fit, the CFI (0.770) a close fit and the RMSEA (0.154; 0.138 [low]; 0.171 [high]), not a good fit.

### Socio-demographic variables and organisational commitment

The association between the socio-demographic variables (gender, marital status, nature of employment, WFH

**TABLE 4:** Association between gender and organisational commitment.

Factor	Gender	Group statistics		SD	Independent sample t-test	
		N	Mean		p	Effect size
Affective commitment	Male	38	5.28	1.29	0.776	0.06
	Female	65	5.21			
Normative commitment	Male	38	5.18	1.40	0.476	0.15
	Female	65	4.97			
Continuous commitment	Male	37	3.96	0.53	0.302	0.21
	Female	66	3.83			

Source: Cassim, N. (2024). *A work-from-home framework for the South African private higher education institutions*. PhD thesis. North-West University  
 Note:  $d = 0.2$ : small effect size;  $d = 0.5$ : medium effect size;  $d = 0.8$ : large effect size.  
 SD, standard deviation.



**TABLE 5:** Association between marital status, nature of employment and work-from-home scenario, and organisational commitment.

Group statistics	Marital status	ANOVA				Effect sizes	
		N	Mean	SD	p	A with B and C	B with C
Affective commitment	A: Single or not in a relationship	24	5.03	1.38	0.664	-	-
	B: Unmarried and in a relationship/ Widowed/Divorced/ Separated	27	5.32	1.34	-	0.20	-
	C: Married	47	5.32	1.30	-	0.21	0.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>5.25</b>	<b>1.32</b>	-	-	-
Normative commitment	A: Single or not in a relationship	24	4.81	1.40	0.604	-	-
	B: Unmarried and in a relationship/ Widowed/Divorced/ Separated	27	4.98	1.43	-	0.12	-
	C: Married	47	5.17	1.49	-	0.24	0.12
	<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>5.03</b>	<b>1.45</b>	-	-	-
Continuous commitment	A: Single or not in a relationship	24	3.64	0.53	0.009	-	-
	B: Unmarried and in a relationship/ Widowed/Divorced/ Separated	27	3.78	0.53	-	0.26	-
	C: Married	47	4.05	0.58	-	0.71	0.48
	<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>3.88</b>	<b>0.58</b>	-	-	-
<b>Nature of employment</b>							
Affective commitment	A: Management	18	5.62	1.10	0.116	-	-
	B: Academic	20	4.71	1.37	-	0.67	-
	C: Support	64	5.23	1.41	-	0.28	0.37
	<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>5.20</b>	<b>1.37</b>	-	-	-
Normative commitment	A: Management	18	5.50	1.26	0.035	-	-
	B: Academic	20	4.40	1.47	-	0.75	-
	C: Support	64	5.19	1.39	-	0.22	0.54
	<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>5.09</b>	<b>1.41</b>	-	-	-
Continuous commitment	A: Management	18	4.04	0.37	0.046	-	-
	B: Academic	20	4.04	0.53	-	0.00	-
	C: Support	64	3.74	0.65	-	0.47	0.47
	<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>3.85</b>	<b>0.60</b>	-	-	-
<b>WFH scenario</b>							
Affective commitment	A: I have been working from home since the pandemic's beginning, but I come to the office occasionally./I work a few days a week remotely as directed by management.	27	5.32	1.17	0.938	-	-
	B: I am working from the office most of the time.	30	5.27	1.40	-	0.04	-
	C: I am working from the office all the time.	44	5.20	1.40	-	0.08	0.05
	<b>Total</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>5.25</b>	<b>1.33</b>	-	-	-
Normative commitment	A: I have been working from home since the pandemic's beginning, but I come to the office occasionally./I work a few days a week remotely as directed by management.	27	5.14	1.19	0.869	-	-
	B: I am working from the office most of the time.	30	5.00	1.66	-	0.08	-
	C: I am working from the office all the time.	44	5.18	1.33	-	0.03	0.10
	<b>Total</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>5.12</b>	<b>1.39</b>	-	-	-
Continuous commitment	A: I have been working from home since the pandemic's beginning, but I come to the office occasionally./I work a few days a week remotely as directed by management.	27	4.01	0.56	0.245	-	-
	B: I am currently working from the office most of the time.	30	3.75	0.59	-	0.44	-
	C: I am currently working from the office all the time.	44	3.90	0.61	-	0.17	0.26
	<b>Total</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>3.88</b>	<b>0.59</b>	-	-	-

Source: Cassim, N. (2024). *A work-from-home framework for the South African private higher education institutions*. PhD thesis. North-West University

\*SD, Standard deviation; ANOVA, analysis of variance;  $d = 0.2$ : small effect size;  $d = 0.5$ : medium effect size;  $d = 0.8$ : large effect size.

WFH, work from home.

scenario, age, highest qualification, tenure at the institution, and period working from home) and organisational commitment were explored to provide an understanding of how these variables might have influenced employees' organisational commitment during WFH. It is postulated that strong associations could add more value in understanding the employees' WFH leadership experience. An independent sample *t*-test was used to determine gender differences in organisational commitment (see Table 4). It is noteworthy that only one respondent preferred not to disclose his or her gender. This response was excluded from

the analysis. (It was not analysed individually because it would be impractical to do so.)

The results revealed no significant differences in the mean scores of male and female respondents for affective commitment ( $p = 0.776$ ;  $d = 0.41$ ), normative commitment ( $p = 0.476$ ;  $d = 0.15$ ), and continuous commitment ( $p = 0.302$ ;  $d = 0.21$ ); the effect sizes ranged from small to negligible.

One-way ANOVAs determined significant differences between the population's means of marital status, nature of employment,

and WFH scenario on organisational commitment. Effect sizes indicated how meaningful the differences were. The results are reported in Table 5.

The results of the ANOVA revealed significant differences between the marital status categories for continuous commitment ( $p = 0.009$ ), where the respondents that were Married ( $M = 4.05$ ) scored higher on continuous commitment than the respondents that were Single or not in a relationship ( $M = 3.64$ ;  $d = 0.71$ ) and that are unmarried and in a relationship/Widowed/Divorced/Separated ( $M = 3.78$ ;  $d = 0.48$ ); the effect was medium to large.

Regarding the nature of employment, the ANOVA revealed significant differences between the categories for normative ( $p = 0.35$ ) and continuous commitment ( $p = 0.046$ ). The management ( $M = 5.50$ ) respondents scored higher on normative commitment than the academic ( $M = 4.40$ ;  $d = 0.75$ ) and support ( $M = 5.19$ ;  $d = 0.22$ ) staff respondents; the effects were large and small, respectively. Furthermore, the support staff ( $M = 3.74$ ) respondents scored lower on continuous commitment than the management ( $M = 4.04$ ;  $d = 0.047$ ) and academic ( $M = 4.04$ ;  $d = 0.47$ ) staff respondents; the effects were medium.

The ANOVA results indicated no significant differences between the categories of WFH situation; the p-values for all three factors were above 0.05. However, for continuous commitment, Cohen's d-value showed a difference between respondents working a few days remotely ( $M = 4.01$ ) and

those working at the office most of the time ( $M = 3.75$ ;  $d = 0.44$ ); the effect was medium. A small difference was also evident between respondents working from the office all the time ( $M = 3.90$ ) and those working at the office most of the time ( $M = 3.75$ ;  $d = 0.26$ ); the effect was small.

Table 6 presents Spearman's rank-order correlation test results to determine the monotonic relationship between organisational commitment and age, highest qualification, years working at the university, and duration of working from home. Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient (or Spearman's rho) is a non-parametric statistic used when there is doubt that the data are not normally distributed (Field, 2017). In addition, it 'can be used for ordinal data, and is relatively robust to outliers' (Schober et al., 2018, p. 1763).

The results of Spearman's rank-order correlation test revealed a medium positive correlation between age and continuous commitment ( $p = 0.00$ ,  $r = 0.411$ ), indicating that the older the employees, the greater they displayed a continuous commitment to the organisation.

### Correlations between affective, normative and continuous commitment

Table 7 displays the results of Spearman's rank order correlation test to establish the monotonic relationship between affective, normative, and continuous commitment.

The Spearman's rank order correlation revealed significant medium to large positive correlations between affective

**TABLE 6:** Correlation of age, highest qualification, years working at the university and duration working from home with organisational commitment.

Factor	Correlation statistics	Age	Highest qualification	Years working at the university	Duration working from home since the COVID-19 pandemic started in 2020
Affective commitment	Correlation coefficient	0.14	0.06	-0.021	-0.046
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.17	0.57	0.834	0.657
	<i>N</i>	104.00	103.00	104	95
Normative commitment	Correlation coefficient	0.12	-0.03	-0.036	-0.025
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.23	0.76	0.716	0.811
	<i>N</i>	104.00	103.00	104	95
Continuous commitment	Correlation coefficient	0.411**	0.11	0.160	-0.020
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00	0.26	0.105	0.844
	<i>N</i>	104.00	102.00	104	95

Source: Cassim, N. (2024). *A work-from-home framework for the South African private higher education institutions*. PhD thesis. North-West University COVID-19, coronavirus disease 2019.

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

(a) small effect:  $r = 0.1$ , (b) medium effect:  $r = 0.3$  and (c) large effect:  $r > 0.5$ .

**TABLE 7:** Correlation between affective, normative and continuous commitment.

Factor	Correlation statistics	Affective commitment	Normative commitment	Continuous commitment
Affective commitment	Correlation coefficient	1.000	0.802**	0.444**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	-	0.000	0.000
	<i>N</i>	104	104	103
Normative commitment	Correlation coefficient	0.802**	1.000	0.380**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	-	0.000
	<i>N</i>	104	104	103
Continuous commitment	Correlation coefficient	0.444**	0.380**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	-
	<i>N</i>	103	103	104

Source: Cassim, N. (2024). *A work-from-home framework for the South African private higher education institutions*. PhD thesis. North-West University

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

(a) small effect:  $r = 0.1$ , (b) medium effect:  $r = 0.3$  and (c) large effect:  $r > 0.5$ .

commitment and normative ( $p = 0.00$ ;  $r = 0.802$ ) and continuous ( $p = 0.00$ ;  $r = 0.444$ ) commitment. This means that as employees displayed more affective commitment to their organisation (i.e., employees stay because they want to), they tended to stay longer within their jobs because of the associated cost of leaving (i.e., continuous commitment) as well as because it was believed to be the morally correct thing to do (i.e., normative commitment). In addition, a medium positive correlation was found between continuous commitment and normative commitment ( $p = 0.00$ ;  $r = 0.380$ ), indicating that as employees remained in their jobs because of the associated cost of leaving, they also remained in their portfolios because they felt they ought to.

## Discussion

### Outline of the results

The study set out to determine the influence of WFH on the organisational commitment of academic personnel within private higher education in South Africa.

The CFA confirmed the three-factor structure of the TCM of employee commitment. The goodness-of-fit indices suggested that the measurement model fit the sample data reasonably well (CMIN/ $df$  = Acceptable Fit, CFI = Close Fit, RMSEA = Not good fit). The Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the three scales showed excellent reliability and internal consistency.

Based on the descriptive statistical analysis, it was observed that the respondents demonstrated relatively high levels of affective ( $M = 5.19$ ) and normative ( $M = 5.05$ ) commitment during the WFH period; the mean scores were above the scale midpoint. This implies that, on average, all academic personnel feel a sense of moral obligation towards the organisation as they believe that remaining in their post is the right thing to do (i.e., normative commitment). They possess an emotional attachment to the institution as they are encouraged by their role within the institution (i.e. affective commitment). However, they were neutral on continuous commitment ( $M = 3.85$ ), implying that they do not strongly believe their resignation would negatively affect the institution. Generally, the results showed that the respondents could adapt to the changes brought about by the WFH model, despite the significant and sudden disruptions in their usual work environment. The results suggest that the respondents could thrive and maintain acceptable levels of commitment despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and the anxiety surrounding the WFH model. This view was also supported by recent studies conducted by Anwar et al. (2022, p. 195), Abilash and Siju (2021, p. 5) and Ahmed and Singh (2023) during the COVID-19 pandemic among employees working in higher education as referred to in the literature review. Additionally, Javadian et al. (2019) conducted a study among new mothers in the United States (US), Australia and the United Kingdom (UK) who worked from home during the COVID-19 pandemic and found that there is a direct relationship

between WFH and their organisational commitment, as WFH has played a mediating role in occupational stress and job satisfaction (Javadian et al., 2019, pp. 24–26). Their study concludes that mothers, particularly new mothers, will remain committed to their roles within organisations during WFH and display effort towards achieving the organisation's goals (Javadian et al., 2019, pp. 24–26).

The comparative statistical tests including  $t$ -tests, ANOVAs, effect sizes and Spearman's rank-order correlation, showed that the organisational commitment levels of academic personnel were influenced by age, marital status and nature of employment.

Regarding age, the results found a medium positive correlation between age and continuous commitment. This means that the older the employees, the more they remain within the organisation as they believe they have invested considerable time and energy. Their resignation would be a significant cost to the company. Yucel and Bektas (2012) also found a strong relationship between age and organisational commitment. Specifically, age was positively related to commitment, where older employees displayed higher levels of commitment than younger employees. These researchers emphasised that the relationship between age and commitment was mediated by job satisfaction and job security, proposing that older employees felt more supported and secure in their jobs, felt more invested as they have served longer tenures and believed it would be difficult to move to another job, resulting in higher levels of organisational commitment (Yucel & Bektas, 2012, p. 1601). The results were also supported by Anthun and Innstrand (2016) and Heymann (2010).

Concerning marital status, the study results indicated that the married respondents scored higher on continuous commitment than those who belonged to the other marital status categories. This means that married academic personnel, like older employees discussed above, were more inclined to remain within their jobs as they believed their resignation would impact the organisation considerably. This result concurs with a study conducted by Tikare (2015), which discovered that employees in a marriage displayed higher levels of commitment than their unmarried colleagues and emphasised that marital status should be considered as a consistent predictor of organisational commitment (Tikare, 2015, p. 21). Tikare (2015) explained that this could be attributed to the fact that those who are in marriage show greater degrees of work maturity as they may have greater financial burdens because of greater family responsibilities. Hence, employment stability is required, thereby enhancing employees' organisational commitment (Tikare, 2015, p. 21).

With regard to the nature of employment, the management staff scored higher on normative and continuous commitment than the academic and support staff, implying that management staff have a perceived responsibility as they believe that leaving the organisation would negatively impact the organisation

(i.e., continuous commitment), as well as remain within their portfolios because they think it is the morally correct thing to do as they have built a sense of compulsion towards the organisation (i.e., normative commitment). While no study could be found to support this result specifically, a study conducted by Asrar et al. (2017) explored the effect that different job positions have on organisational commitment and found that managers showed lower levels of organisational commitment than non-managerial staff, indicating that job positions (managerial position specifically), is negatively correlated to organisational commitment, which opposes the finding of this study (Asrar et al., 2017, p. 61).

In conclusion, the empirical results of this study revealed that all academic personnel displayed acceptable levels of affective and normative commitment while being more neutral on their levels of continuous commitment. Generally, the results indicated that academic personnel could adapt to the radical change by WFH and maintain their commitment to the institution. The comparison tests, however, did reveal differences among the various demographics, particularly age, marital status and nature of employment regarding the commitment of academic personnel.

### Practical implications

The study contributes to the body of knowledge regarding organisational commitment within a WFH context in private higher education by understanding how flexible work arrangements such as WFH may affect employees' commitment. The study's findings can be used, in particular, by the private higher education institution under investigation to inform workplace policies to support organisational commitment.

### Limitations

The study is focussed on a single private higher education institution within South Africa. While the findings could indicate how WFH affects organisational commitment within private higher education in South Africa, the study cannot be expanded to higher education in South Africa, nor can it be generalised to higher education globally.

### Recommendations

Based on the literature review and empirical findings, the following recommendations are suggested:

- The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly changed workplace arrangements and practices globally to allow for remote and hybrid work models and flexible schedules. Therefore, it is recommended that research be expanded to include other local and global private higher educational institutions to allow for comparisons between the different institutions regarding WFH (and/or remote and/or hybrid work) and organisational commitment.
- Future research can explore the relationship between additional variables, such as organisational support, job

satisfaction, employee well-being, and organisational commitment, during flexible workplace arrangements and practices such as WFH.

- A mixed-methods approach can be explored to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the variables influencing organisational commitment during flexible workplace arrangements and practices such as WFH.
- The literature review found that leadership, organisational support, and job satisfaction, among other factors, are critical in enhancing organisational commitment.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about many challenges to the workplace, with the WFH model being one of the most significant changes for academic personnel working in the private higher education space in South Africa. However, while studies have shown that WFH has created a series of challenges, thus impacting aspects of work dynamics of employees, this study has shown that the organisational commitment levels of academic personnel were sustained, specifically affective (thus, they want to stay in the organisation) and normative (because they feel they ought to stay in the organisation) commitment, even during the WFH arrangement implemented by private higher education. Based on the literature review, it might be attributed to the support received by the institution, such as social support, job resources, job satisfaction, communication, and other organisational support.

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### Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

### Authors' contributions

N.C. performed the literature review, empirical study and article write-up. C.J.B., D.B. and C.B. supervised the study and contributed towards the article's study design and reviewed the article.

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## Data availability

The data supporting this study's results are available on request from the author, C. Bisschoff.

## Disclaimer

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