Gordon Institute of Business Science
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# The influence of job candidate's trustworthiness and fit on behavioural uncertainty during candidate selection.

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**Abstract**

A hiring manager in the manufacturing sector grapples with much uncertainty when interviewing external candidates during candidate selection. This uncertainty arises due to the behavioural assumptions of transaction costs; firstly, the hiring manager's cognitive ability is limited by bounded rationality and secondly, the hiring manager is uncertain whether the candidate acted opportunistically to securing the job. To reduce this behavioural uncertainty, hiring managers often incur significant transaction costs to vet candidates. However, trust can also reduce behavioural uncertainty. The objective of this quantitative research was to empirically examine, using transaction cost theory, whether the hiring manager's perception of the candidate's trustworthiness in an interview reduces behavioural uncertainty.

Prior transaction cost research has examined the inverse relationship between trust and behavioural uncertainty. However, there is a paucity of research on whether the antecedent of trust, trustworthiness, also reduces behavioural uncertainty. Moreover, fit is frequently used as a heuristic for candidate assessment, but little was known about whether fit mediates the relationship between trustworthiness and behavioural uncertainty. To test these relationships empirically, survey-based research was done with 318 manufacturing sector hiring managers. Results revealed that two dimensions of trustworthiness (ability and integrity) have a significant influence in reducing behavioural uncertainty. In contrast, the influence of the third dimension of trustworthiness (benevolence) on behavioural uncertainty was insignificant. Furthermore, the result revealed that fit significantly mediates the relationship between all three dimensions of trustworthiness and behavioural uncertainty.

These results contribute theoretically to transaction cost research by highlighting which dimensions of trustworthiness can significantly reduce behavioural uncertainty in a hiring transaction and demonstrates how fit can explain the relationship between trustworthiness and behavioural uncertainty. This research also has managerial implications; managers who align their hiring decisions to the dimensions of trustworthiness and fit can save time and money and reduce the influence of bias during candidate selection.

**Keywords**

Trust, trustworthiness, behavioural uncertainty, transaction cost economics

**Declaration**

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

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## 1. Introduction to the research problem

A hiring manager in the manufacturing sector grapples with much uncertainty when interviewing external candidates during candidate selection. In transaction costs theory, more uncertainty will result in higher transaction costs (Cuypers et al., 2021). This uncertainty is driven by the behavioural assumptions of transaction costs due to the hiring manager's bounded rationality and the candidate's potential to behave opportunistically. As uncertainty increases, significant costs are often incurred on formal governance mechanisms, such as extensive background checks, to screen and verify candidates (Navarra, 2022). However, trust can also reduce uncertainty (Cuypers et al., 2021). This is because trust renders the assumed behaviours of opportunism and bounded rationality less salient (McMackin et al., 2022). Research has demonstrated that trust is a good relational governance mechanism as it acts as an uncertainty mitigator to reduce transaction costs (Connelly et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2019), and if trust is absent, uncertainty and transaction costs will increase (Um & Oh, 2020).

While much research has focused on the relationship between trust and uncertainty (McMackin et al., 2022; Connelly et al., 2018; Cuypers et al., 2021), there is a dearth of research that focuses on the relationship between the antecedent of trust, trustworthiness, and its influences on uncertainty. Furthermore, little research has been done to determine whether candidate fit, a heuristic used by the hiring manager in an interview, can be used as a ‘shift parameter’ to shift from a formal to a relational governance mechanism by mediating the relationship between trustworthiness and uncertainty (Cuypers et al., 2021). This research report addressed these theoretical gaps by answering the research question of whether each dimension of trustworthiness have a significant effect on reducing uncertainty. Additionally, it addressed the second research question of whether candidate fit can mediate the relationship between trustworthiness and uncertainty in a manufacturing sector interview.

### 1.1 Background

Hiring managers is exposed to behavioural uncertainty when interviewing candidates. This behavioural uncertainty arises because the hiring manager is

uncertain whether the candidates are misrepresenting information or behaving opportunistically in the interview to increase their chances of getting hired (Cuypers et al., 2021). For example, candidates may engage in opportunism in the interview by using impression management to increase their social desirability and manipulate the hiring manager to perceive them more favourably (Landers & Sanchez, 2022). Furthermore, once the hiring manager has decided to hire a candidate, there is still uncertainty around whether the candidate would engage in acts of opportunism post-hire (Bai et al., 2024).

As the interview is the first time that the hiring manager meets with the candidate, the hiring manager can reduce behavioural uncertainty by obtaining as much information from the candidate about their character and abilities in the interview. However, given that the hiring manager only has a short time in the interview to engage with the candidate, the hiring manager cannot obtain complete information to reduce behavioural uncertainty. Even if all candidates provided the hiring manager with complete and truthful information in the interview, the cognitive ability of the hiring manager to absorb all available information for decision-making would still be limited by bounded rationality (Simon, 1957). To reduce behavioural uncertainty, hiring managers often employ formal mechanisms, such as extensive background checks, to screen and verify candidates (Navarra, 2022). These checks provide valuable information, but they may also increase the hiring costs to such an extent that the hiring transaction no longer becomes feasible, and no candidate is hired (Batut, 2021). In the UK, the Institute for Personnel has determined that hiring costs can be up to 11.2% of earnings, and in Germany, hiring costs can be equivalent to 8 weeks of earnings (Batut, 2021). These formal mechanisms are expensive, and a cheaper alternative available to the hiring manager is to use trust as a relational mechanism to reduce behavioural uncertainty (Connelly et al., 2018). Heuristics, such as fit, can enable the hiring manager to build trust faster by using mental shortcuts to assess whether the candidate is worthy of trust (Gigenrenzer et al., 2022).

### 1.2 Research problem

While much research has focused broadly on how trust interacts with uncertainty under transaction cost theory (Dirks & de Jong, 2022; McMackin et al., 2022;

Cuypers et al., 2021), there has been a dearth of empirical research on how each dimension of trustworthiness (ability, integrity, and benevolence) interacts with behavioural uncertainty. This is a research gap, and Battista et al. (2020), Lee et al. (2022), and Svare et al. (2020) have called for more studies to understand how each dimension of trustworthiness affects uncertainty in different contexts and conditions.

Trust formed through the dimensions of trustworthiness is essential in developing a bond with the candidate in an interview (Dirks & de Jong, 2022). Trust is 'the willingness to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party' (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 712; Dirks & de Jong, 2022). The hiring manager is vulnerable during the interview as hiring the wrong candidate will reflect poorly on the hiring manager's reputation. However, the hiring manager must be willing to take this risk and invest trust in a candidate who he feels will act with good character and have the ability to perform the job.

To determine who to trust, the hiring manager will evaluate the candidate's trustworthiness because trust is only valuable when placed with trustworthy individuals (O'Neill, 2018; Corbitt et al., 2003). In an interview, the hiring manager's perception of the candidate's ability, integrity, and benevolence will help determine whether the candidate deserves trust (Schultz, 2006; Dirks & de Jong, 2022). If the candidate is unworthy of trust, the hiring manager will be more uncertain of the candidate and will need to incur more transaction costs, in the form of search and information costs, to verify the candidate before the hiring transaction can be concluded (Shabab & Lades, 2021). In contrast, if the hiring manager perceives the candidate is trustworthy, the hiring manager can use trust as a relational governance mechanism instead of an expensive formal governance mechanism to reduce transaction costs and behavioural uncertainty (McMackin et al., 2022).

Transaction costs economics elucidates that the hiring manager uses calculative logic to decides who to hire (Lumineau et al., 2022). The hiring manager not only considers the current costs of the hiring transaction but also all future transactions that the hiring manager has with the candidate once the employment relationship is established (Lumineau et al., 2022). This forward-looking calculation can be explained by game theory, as once the candidate is hired, an infinitely repetitive

game commences between the hiring manager and the candidate (Baye & Prince, 2022). The infinitely repetitive game means that the transaction costs cannot only comprise of the present transaction costs related to the candidate cheating in the current hiring transaction of the interview but must also comprise of the potential future transaction costs from cheating or opportunistic behaviour once the candidate is on the job. Any potential transaction costs from opportunism in the current or future transactions could affect the hiring manager's net payoff in the relationship (Baye & Prince, 2022). A decision to hire the candidate is made if the hiring manager believes that the payoff exceeds the transaction costs from the hiring transaction (Lumineau et al., 2022; Baye & Prince, 2022; Bai et al., 2024).

One of the contributing factors that increases transaction costs is behavioural uncertainty (Cuypers et al., 2021). Transaction cost theory assumes humans will behave opportunistically, and their capacity to process information is limited by bounded rationality (Cuypers et al., 2021; Simon, 1957; Bai et al., 2024). Both these assumptions drive uncertainty resulting from human behaviour, or behavioural uncertainty. In an interview, behavioural uncertainty arises through bounded rationality, as the hiring manager does not possess the cognitive ability to process all available information on the candidates he interviews, and opportunism, as candidates could conceal, fake and misrepresent information in the interview. Opportunistic behaviour frequently occurs during a selection process. In an experiment done by Weiss and Feldman (2006), it was discovered that more than four-fifths of candidates fabricated and told one or more lies during their interviews. The candidate's potential to engage in opportunistic behaviour post-hire also creates behavioural uncertainty for the hiring manager (Lumineau et al., 2022; Baye & Prince, 2022). These opportunistic or cheating behaviours include the potential for employees to engage in counterproductive work behaviours (CWBs) (Kuhn, 2020) or unethical pro-organisational behaviours once on the job (Fehr et al., 2019).

Trust can, however, reduce behavioural uncertainty (Cuypers et al., 2021; McMackin et al., 2022). This is because trust renders the assumed behaviours of transaction costs less salient (McMackin et al., 2022). Trust reduces bounded rationality for the hiring manager as it creates more certainty on how the candidate will behave once hired (McMackin et al., 2022). It also reduces the 'cloud of suspicion associated with beliefs about the potential for opportunistic behaviour', both present and future

(Connelly et al., 2018, p. 925; Bai et al., 2024). While there is much research on trust and uncertainty, the current literature in transaction costs apply a monolithic lens to study trust, which is myopic considering that the concept of trust has multiple dimensions (Connelly et al., 2018; Svare et al., 2020). For example, trust is formed based on the foundation of trustworthiness, and without understanding how behavioural uncertainty is influenced by each dimension of trustworthiness, which is the precursor or antecedent to trust (Mayer et al., 1995), it becomes difficult to understand where and how trust is misplaced (Cuypers et al., 2021).

Moreover, Battista et al. (2020), Lee et al. (2022), and Svare et al. (2020) stated that there is a need for more empirical studies to understand how each dimension of trustworthiness affects uncertainty in different contexts and conditions. Without identifying how each dimension of trustworthiness interacts with behavioural uncertainty, hiring managers cannot truly articulate the basis of their hiring decisions, limiting their responses to general intuition or gut when they explain the underlying rationale for their hiring decisions (Vincent et al., 2019). Research that considers the multidimensionality of trustworthiness can provide insights into explaining how each dimension reduces behavioural uncertainty for hiring managers, enabling them to articulate their decision beyond the narrow confines of a ‘gut phenomenon’.

Fit also plays a vital role in interviews as it helps the hiring manager assess whether the candidate is compatible with the job and the organisation (Vleugels et al., 2018). Fit is a heuristic that helps hiring managers make decisions quickly, such as whether to trust the candidate when faced with behavioural uncertainty (Gigenrenzer et al., 2022; Vluegels et al., 2020). There is, however, very little research on how the use of heuristics, such as fit, can explain whether trust forms (Dirks & de Jong, 2022) and how framing a transaction through the ‘fit’ lens can impact trust (Cuypers et al., 2021). Furthermore, there is scant research into how candidate fit can mediate the relationship between trustworthiness and behavioural uncertainty. Additionally, more research is needed to understand fit’s impact as a shifting parameter to support the use of trust as a relational mechanism in place of formal governance mechanisms in an interview (Cuypers et al., 2021). Without understanding the mediating effect of fit in the trustworthiness-behavioural uncertainty relationship, trust could be misplaced by the hiring manager, leading to adverse selection problems (Rindfleisch & Heide, 1997) and exposing the organisation to significant ex-ante transaction costs due to

increased behavioural uncertainty from hiring a ‘lemon’ instead of a ‘cherry’ (Pavlou et al., 2007).

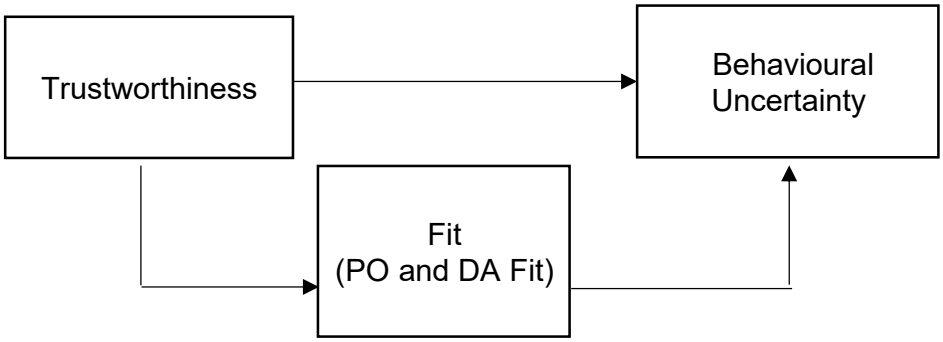
These theoretical gaps described above lead the researcher to explore the following two research questions. Firstly, does each dimension of trustworthiness have a significant negative effect on behavioural uncertainty? The answer to the first question allows the researcher to respond to the proposition by Battista et al. (2020), Lee et al. (2022) and Svare et al. (2020) for more empirical studies to understand the roles that each dimension of trustworthiness plays in different contexts and conditions. Moreover, it has practical implications as it allows the hiring manager to articulate his hiring decision based on the trustworthiness of the candidate instead of gut (Vincent et al., 2019) and prevent trust from being misplaced (Cuypers et al., 2021).

The second research question explores whether fit explains the relationship between the dimensions of trustworthiness and behavioural uncertainty? The answer to the second question allows the researcher to respond to Cuypers et al. (2021) call to understand fit as a shift parameter used in shifting the use of governance mechanisms from the formal to the relational, as well as to understand how framing a candidate’s trustworthiness through fit can affect behavioural uncertainty. Additionally, the answer to the second research question also addresses the research gap identified by Kristof-Brown et al. (2023) to conduct more research into the antecedents of fit. The mediation analysis used to answer this research question provided insights on whether the antecedent of trust, the dimensions of trustworthiness, influences fit.

### 1.3 Scope

This study explores the relationship between trustworthiness and behavioural uncertainty, as perceived in the interview between a manufacturing sector hiring manager and a candidate. The independent variables are benevolence, integrity and ability which are the dimensions of trustworthiness (Dirks & de Jong, 2022), and the dependent variable is behavioural uncertainty (Cuypers et al., 2021). Additionally, the study examines the mediating effect of candidate fit on the relationship between perceived trustworthiness and perceived behavioural uncertainty. The study

evaluates candidate fit under its dimensions of supplementary person-organisation fit (Tomlinson et al., 2020) and demand-ability fit (Lam et al., 2018) to determine if it can mediate the relationship between trustworthiness and behavioural uncertainty. These relationships are depicted in Figure 1 below.




*Note*. PO = Person-organisation fit; DA = Demand-ability fit

**Figure 1: Conceptualisation of research purpose**

### 1.4 Theoretical need

Transaction cost theory has been broadly employed in organisational economics to explain the type of governance structures used for transactions within a firm (Cuypers et al., 2021). However, academics have recently shifted their attention to exploring whether transaction costs theory can also explain the governance structures selected when transactions are conducted between individuals (Rindfleisch, 2019). The renewed focus allows researchers from multiple disciplines to collaborate and build knowledge that extends beyond the boundaries of any one discipline. In particular, it has garnered much interest and fuelled much collaboration between economic and psychology researchers (McMackin et al., 2022) to explore how human traits, like trust, can act as a governance mechanism to reduce transaction costs (Dyer & Chu, 2003; Dirks & de Jong, 2022). Several studies have scrutinised the influence of trust on uncertainty as a dimension of transaction costs (Connelly et al., 2018; Cuypers et al., 2021; McMackin et al., 2022; Um & Oh, 2020). These studies show that trust mitigates uncertainty because it is an effective and reliable governance mechanism (Yang et al., 2019). Without trust, uncertainty and transaction costs will increase (Um & Oh, 2020). Empirical evidence also suggests that trust lessens acts of opportunisms, uncertainty, and reduces transaction costs

between organisational actors (Cuypers et al., 2021), with integrity-based trust being ten times and 1.4 times more potent than trust based on competence at reducing transaction costs incurred ex-post and ex-ante respectively (Connelly et al., 2018).

While trust has gathered much attention in the literature as a governance mechanism to reduce uncertainty in general (McMackin et al., 2022; Connelly et al., 2018; Cuypers et al., 2021), there is much less research on how the antecedent of trust, trustworthiness, influences behavioural uncertainty. As a result, there is a paucity of transaction cost research that goes beyond the monolithic view of trust to examine trustworthiness, one of the fundamental building blocks to the establishment of trust. Furthermore, few studies have determined whether the weights of each dimension of trustworthiness would differ under different contexts (Battista et al., 2020; Svare et al., 2020). For instance, ability judgment happens more quickly when the transaction period is relatively short, such as in an interview context (Battista et al., 2020). In contrast, judgment of the benevolence of the trustee takes longer to develop (Battista et al., 2020). This leads to a theoretical need to extend transaction cost research from the broad concept of trust to the granularity levels to understand whether each dimension of trustworthiness significantly reduces behavioural uncertainty for the hiring manager in the context of the interview in the manufacturing sector (Battista et al., 2020; Svare et al., 2020).

Additionally, several theoretical gaps exist in the literature on how trust and behavioural uncertainty can be mediated, providing further research opportunities. For instance, it is not well understood how and to what extent trust can be misplaced in external candidates due to an incorrect assessment of trustworthiness and how shift parameters, such as fit, could be used to explain the trust-behavioural uncertainty relationship (Cuypers et al., 2021). Furthermore, there is a dearth of research on the mediating effects of candidate fit on the relationship between trust and behavioural uncertainty. While research has determined that a good fit can increase positive reactions from the hiring manager when faced with an uncertain candidate (Kristof-Brown et al., 2023), there is a need for further research to discern whether the positive reactions result in a favourable assessment of trustworthiness and a reduction in behavioural uncertainty. Moreover, the research provides further insight into how the dimensions of trustworthiness may act as the antecedents to the development of good fit. Current studies evaluate high-performance work practices

(Kooji & Boon, 2018) or social culture (Kristof-Brown et al., 2023) as the antecedents for fit. However, the impact of trustworthiness as an antecedent to fit has yet to be explored, and there are calls to research how different antecedents changes fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2023). Suggestions for future research from the literature also include determining how the framing of the transaction, or the perceived fit of the candidate, can influence trust being selected as a governance mechanism (Cuypers et al., 2021) and how heuristics, such as fit, can impact trust (Dirks & de Jong, 2022). This research closed these theoretical gaps by investigating whether fit can mediate the relationship between trustworthiness and behavioural uncertainty.

### 1.5 Business need

Hiring externally is an expensive affair for businesses (Batut, 2021). They can be up to 11.2% of earnings for UK firms or up to 8 weeks of earnings for German firms (Batut, 2021). For small middle enterprises (SMEs), hiring costs might be even higher as lacking a human resource department means they rely on professional services from expensive recruitment firms to find and vet candidates (Batut, 2021). Additionally, a risk premium is added to the ex-ante hiring costs when there is more significant uncertainty surrounding the candidate (Batut, 2021). This is because managers want to avoid hiring a bad candidate because it could lead to substantial future separation costs (Batut, 2021). Furthermore, there are costs involved when hiring managers are pulled away from their regular work functions, where they are focused on productive work, to attend the interviews. It has been estimated that the soft costs or time managers spend on hiring a candidate can be up to 60% of total costs, with the remaining 40% being money spent on hard costs, such as on recruitment and selection (Navarra, 2022).

This research report contributes insights into how firms can reduce the soft and hard transaction costs of hiring to increase their profitability (Batut, 2021). Hiring managers who can identify the dimensions of trustworthiness within a candidate can reduce their behavioural uncertainty without the added expense of using formal governance mechanisms and increase the chances of successful hiring outcomes. In an interview, hiring managers often look for fit as it is a heuristic or a mental shortcut that will enable them to make quick decisions on the trustworthiness of a candidate. The research report also contributes insights on whether the fit used to

assess a candidate can explain the relationship between the hiring manager's assessment of the candidate's trustworthiness and the behavioural uncertainty in the hiring process. If the candidate can demonstrate that his values and abilities are aligned with the organisation during the interview, then fit will be achieved, and behavioural uncertainty will be reduced, providing the candidate with a greater chance of being hired.

### 1.6 Definitions

For ease of reference, definitions for keywords that are frequently used in this research report has been listed below:

**Trust** refers to 'the willingness to be vulnerable to the actions of party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party' (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 712; Dirks & de Jong, 2022).

**Trustworthiness** refers to the perceived attributes of ability, benevolence and integrity possessed by the candidate that deems the candidate deserving of trust (Dirks & de Jong, 2022).

**Ability** refers to the 'group of skills, competencies, and characteristics that enable a party to influence within some specific domain' (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 717).

**Benevolence** refers to 'the assurance that the other will not exploit someone's vulnerability or take excessive advantage of someone, even when the opportunity is available' (Battista et al., 2020, p. 2).

**Integrity** refers to 'the trustor's perception that the trustee adheres to a set of principles that the trustor finds acceptable' and 'the extent to which the party's actions are consistent with his or her words' (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 712).

**Person-Organisation fit** refers to 'the congruence between the norms and values of organisations and the values of persons' (Chatman, 1989, p. 339).

**Demand-ability fit** refers to as ‘the congruence between the job demands with a person’s KSAs (knowledge, skills and ability)’ (Kakak et al., 2023, p. 76).

**Behavioural uncertainty** is uncertainty stemming from the behavioural assumptions of bounded rationality and opportunism under transaction cost economics.

### 1.7 Conclusion

This chapter concludes by presenting the structure of the report. The research report has the following chapters:

Chapter Two: The literature review explores the theory surrounding the constructs of trustworthiness, uncertainty and fit to understand the current knowledge in the field.
Chapter Three: This hypothesis, built from the literature review, states the relationship between the constructs.
Chapter Four: The research methodology and design provide insight into how the research was conducted.
Chapter Five: The results are analysed using the research methodology so that the researcher may conclude on the research hypothesis.
Chapter Six: The discussion contrasted the results and analysis in Chapter Five with the literature in Chapters One, Two and Three.
Chapter Seven: The chapter concludes the research by discussing the management and theoretical implications. It also discusses the limitations and provides suggestions for future research.

## 2. Literature review

The literature review explores the nature and dimensions of the constructs of trustworthiness, behavioural uncertainty and fit and the relationships between them. This review provides theoretical insights into how the candidate's trustworthiness can reduce behavioural uncertainty during the interview process and how the candidate's fit can explain the relationship between the candidate's trustworthiness and behavioural uncertainty. These insights are used to support the hypothesis in Chapter Three.

### 2.1 Transaction cost theory

Transaction cost theory postulates that when parties transact, various costs are included in the exchange that do not add value to the transaction (Shahab & Lades, 2021). These costs are called transaction costs, and they arise because transaction costs assumes that humans will behave opportunistically and their mental capabilities are limited by bounded rationality (McMackin et al., 2022). When there is more behavioural uncertainty in a transaction due to possible opportunistic behaviour of the candidate and the bounded rationality of the hiring manager, more transaction costs are incurred to reduce the uncertainty. However, trust can reduce behavioural uncertainty because it promotes information sharing, making the assumed behaviours of bounded rationality and opportunism less salient (Cuypers et al., 2021; McMackin et al., 2022).

### 2.2 Behavioural uncertainty

Uncertainty is 'the future states of the environment that cannot be anticipated due to asymmetric information' (Yang et al., 2019, p. 4; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). This definition closely aligns with Knightian uncertainty, which characterises uncertainty as an 'imperfect knowledge of the future, a consequence of change, not change as such' (Knight, 1921, p. 198). Knight further explains that uncertainty arises when individuals make decisions that concern the future, and there is no clarity on how present decisions translate into future outcomes (Knight, 1921). Under conditions of uncertainty, the transacting parties cannot predict future outcomes accurately (Pavlou et al., 2007). This contrasts with certainty, the metacognitive ability to make

judgments involving a ‘subjective sense of conviction, confidence, clarify, or correctness’ (Tormala et al., 2011, p. 422).

Hiring decisions are fraught with uncertainty. The hiring manager must evaluate many candidates with unique abilities and values and judge which candidate is the best fit. During this process, the hiring manager is exposed to uncertainty due to limited knowledge of the candidate (Cuypers et al., 2021). It is impossible to obtain all available information on the candidate as there are limitations on costs and time to collect and analyse information. Even if the hiring manager obtains all the information on the candidate, processing all the data is limited due to the behavioural assumption of bounded rationality, as human beings possess limited neurophysiological capacity (Ketokivi & Mahoney, 2020). The inability of humans to process all available information results in behavioural uncertainty, leading to the hiring manager making decisions that are ‘intendedly rational, but only limited so’ (Simon, 1957: xxiv). Additionally, the hiring manager is also uncertain if the candidate is behaving opportunistically in the interview or the potential of the candidate to behave opportunistically once on the job, such as the candidate not performing to expectations or shirking from his obligations post-hire (Pavlou et al., 2007). The hiring manager uses foresight to assess how potential opportunistic behaviours post-hire might affect transaction costs (Bai et al., 2024; Baye & Prince, 2022).

Opportunism and bounded rationality are behavioural assumptions of transaction cost theory. Firstly, opportunism occurs when self-interested human beings transact with one another (Williamson, 1975). This behavioural assumption suggests that ‘human beings are strategically untrustworthy’ (Cuypers et al., 2021, p. 115) and that they will conceal information and make misrepresentations to maximise payoff in their favour (Cuypers et al., 2021). Since opportunistic behaviour is not predictable, it can create transaction friction when it occurs, such as when one party tries to maximise his self-interest at the other party's expense when the other party does not have complete information to make a prudent decision (Etemad, 2020). If the hiring manager perceives that the candidate behaved opportunistically during the interview by faking or concealing information, or if the hiring manager believes that the candidate could behave opportunistically post-hire, the transaction friction will increase the behavioural uncertainty around the hiring transaction. Secondly, bounded rationality also creates behavioural uncertainty because there is a limitation

placed on the cognitive ability of the hiring manager to process all the ambiguity and complex information sourced from the candidate during an interview to make a decision (Anderson et al., 2019). In the interview, hiring managers are exposed to uncertainty as the complex and ambiguous visual and verbal cues from the candidates make it difficult for them to decide who to hire.

The hiring manager is exposed to behavioural uncertainty due to these two behavioural assumptions of transaction costs (Cuypers et al., 2021). To lessen the impact of behavioural uncertainty, hiring managers can incur transaction costs on formal governance mechanisms to screen and verify candidates. In transaction cost theory, transaction costs are costs that do not add any value and are incurred so that the transaction can take place (Shahab & Lades, 2021). The higher the behavioural uncertainty, the more transaction costs must be incurred to lessen the behavioural uncertainty (Shahab & Lades, 2021). As an alternative to costly formal governance mechanisms, trust can be used as relational governance to reduce behavioural uncertainty and transaction costs during hiring (Connelly et al., 2018).

Trust is defined as 'the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party' (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 712). The trustor is required to conduct a 'cognitive, intentional and emotional evaluation' to determine whether the trustee will fulfil his obligations (Bai et al., 2024, p. 2). Trust reduces behavioural uncertainty through information sharing, which renders bounded rationality and the potential for opportunism less salient (McMackin et al., 2022). Without trust, the hiring manager might be discouraged from hiring because the risk of hiring an untrustworthy candidate is too high (Um & Oh, 2020). When trust is present, behavioural uncertainty is reduced, and parties can use relational governance more than contractual safeguards (Kedharnath et al., 2020; Cuypers et al., 2021). Trust also allows for a smoother information exchange to reduce the behaviour uncertainty of the exchange partners (Bai et al., 2024). The hiring manager forms trust by evaluating the candidate's trustworthiness in an interview (Dirks & de Jong, 2022). Because literature suggests that trust reduces behavioural uncertainty, the notion of the trustworthiness of the job candidate becomes important as trustworthiness is the foundation on which trust forms. Therefore, the following section reviews the literature on trustworthiness.

## 2.3 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is an antecedent of trust (Dirks & de Jong, 2022). While trust is about being willing 'to be vulnerable to the actions of another party' (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 712), trustworthiness is the perception of others as being willing to fulfil their commitments (Lee et al., 2022). To earn the trust of the hiring manager, the candidate should demonstrate three dimensions of trustworthiness in the interview (Dirks & de Jong, 2022). These dimensions comprise of ability, integrity and benevolence (Dirks & de Jong, 2022). Ability is the competence of the candidate in his domain (Lee et al., 2022), benevolence is 'the assurance that the other will not exploit someone's vulnerability or take excessive advantage of someone, even when the opportunity is available' (Battista et al., 2020, p. 2), and integrity is the perception of the candidate to adhere to acceptable principles (Tomlinson et al., 2020). Ability reflects the 'can-do' dimension of trustworthiness, which captures the capability of the candidate to act on the job, while integrity and benevolence reflect the 'will-do' dimensions of trustworthiness, which captures the intention behind the act (Cui & Jiao, 2019; Battista et al., 2020). These three dimensions of trustworthiness are considered 'the most important predictors of trust' (Corbitt & Yi, 2003, p. 210; Tomlinson et al., 2020). Research has found that trust, the dimensions of trustworthiness, and work-related outcomes are positively related to one another (Lee et al., 2022). These three dimensions are also the antecedents to the two main dimensions of trust: 'cognition-based' and 'affect-based' trust, where integrity and ability are strong predictors of 'cognition-based' trust, and integrity and benevolence are strong predictors of 'affect-based' trust (Tomlinson et al., 2020).

While trustworthiness is made up of the dimensions of ability, integrity and benevolence, it is rare for all three dimensions to exert equal influence on the observer's assessment of trustworthiness (Lee et al., 2022). Some of these dimensions might have a heavier influence than others depending on the context and the conditions under which trustworthiness is being assessed (Svare et al., 2020; Battista et al., 2020). For example, Mayer and Gavin (2005) found that all three dimensions were salient when employees assessed their plant manager for trustworthiness but only ability and benevolence were salient when employees

evaluated the trustworthiness of top management. However, Lee et al. (2022) found that least two dimensions must be present to influence work-related outcomes.

The phase and the type of relationship being examined can also affect how trust and its antecedent, trustworthiness, forms (Dirks & Jong, 2022; Mayer et al., 1995). When organisations seek to collaborate with other organisations, perceived ability and integrity is more significant in initiating a collaboration than perceived benevolence (Svare et al., 2020). This is because benevolence only grows in significance over time once the parties get to know one another through a history of exchange transactions (Pollack et al., 2017; Mayer et al., 1995). Furthermore, perceived ability is more important than perceived integrity in the initial phases of the relationship, as ability provides the essential foundation for the partner to cooperate (Svare et al., 2020). Once the collaboration has started, perceived integrity becomes essential as the dimension assists in counteracting operational risks in the relationship, such as reducing the risk that the counterparty will steal intellectual property (Svare et al., 2020). When forming the foundation of trustworthiness in collaborative relationships, perceived ability and perceived integrity are key entry conditions to start the relationship (Svare et al., 2020). Once the relationship is established, perceived benevolence acts as a performance facilitator to enhance and strengthen the perception of trustworthiness in the counterparty (Svare et al., 2020).

The stages of the relationship, therefore, can have an impact on the prominence of each dimension of trust. This is also supported by literature that examines when calculative and relational trust forms in inter-organisational relationships (Bai et al., 2024). In transaction cost economics, trust is calculated by comparing the costs and benefits of an economic transaction (Bai et al., 2024). This cost-benefit calculation often happens at the beginning of the relationship to understand whether the benefits derived from hiring outweigh the cost in the economic exchange (Bai et al., 2024). For example, hiring a candidate deficient in ability and integrity will result in minimal benefit but will cost the hiring manager his reputation; therefore, it will be difficult for calculative trust to form.

While calculative trust is often evaluated at the start of the relationship, in contrast, relational trust is often used in the later stages of the relationship (Bai et al., 2024). This is because relational trust developed from emotional bonds created through

repeated interactions and social exchanges over time (Bai et al., 2024). Relational trust can form through benevolence as it creates an emotional bond over time that can be used to explain current behaviour and predict the trustee's future behaviour (Cui & Jiao, 2019). If the trustee has a history of benevolent behaviour, the past behaviour is expected to continue as current behaviour is ‘based on the shadow of the past’ (Bai et al., 2024, p. 3). Because these shadows need time to develop, relational trusts formed through benevolence only have an opportunity to develop during the mid-to-late stages of the relationship (Bai et al., 2024) and might not have enough time to develop its presence during the short space of an interview.

While this research on the relationship between the dimensions of trustworthiness and the reduction of behavioural uncertainty in employee selection is similar to the research done on trustworthiness in inter-organizational collaboration (Svare et al., 2020), the context of this research differs and might lead to different results; this research is based on the interview transaction in employee selection as examined under transaction cost theory and not on inter-organizational collaboration examined under trust and innovation theory. Additionally, Mayer et al. (1995) proposed that further work can be done to determine how different situations would change the importance of the dimensions, and this was reiterated by Battista et al. (2020), Lee et al. (2022), and Svare et al. (2020) who added that there is a paucity of studies that has examined the dimensions of trustworthiness in different context and conditions. This research, therefore, answered the call to action by conducting the research specifically in the context of employee selection to address this research gap. The following three sections present the literature review for the three dimensions of trustworthiness and its relationship with behavioural uncertainty.

### 2.3.1 Ability

A manager evaluates the ability of the candidate when making the hiring decision. The literature often refers to either ability or competence as the dimension of trustworthiness (Svare et al., 2020). For this research report, the words’ ability and competence are used interchangeably and refer to the same construct. Competence is a prominent dimension of trustworthiness and has been used throughout history by the Chinese emperors, the Romans and the Ottoman Empire as an assessment tool when hiring civil servants to advance their societies and gain a competitive

advantage for their nations (Kruyen & Van Genugten, 2020). Similarly, competence exhibited by a candidate is essential in a hiring transaction, as hiring a competent candidate can improve the organisation's competitive advantage through increased organisational performance (Otoo, 2019). While it is such an important concept, the definition of competence is elusive as scholars from different disciplines and cultures have diverse views on what competence is (Bratianu et al., 2020). In the United States, competence is a personal attribute or behaviour used by an individual to achieve superior results (Škrinjarić, 2022), in the United Kingdom, competence is being able to perform the work to a specific standard (Škrinjarić, 2022) and in Europe, competence is a blend of personal, social and cognitive competence that allows the worker to achieve effective performance (Salman et al., 2020).

Competencies are also domain-specific, and different disciplines have distinct definitions of competence (Škrinjarić, 2022). Scholars from educational sciences contend that competence is not only having the knowledge and skills, but also the right attitude, to complete an assignment to a specific level of quality (Bratianu et al., 2020). In contrast, psychology scholars argue that competence is an individual's personality attributes, such as intelligence, that allow superior results (Salman et al., 2020). While different disciplines and cultures might quarrel on the definition of competence, three dimensions of competence consistently emerge across the literature. These three dimensions are visible performance, a standard quality of output and the presence of individual attributes (Salman et al., 2020). In an interview, competence can be evaluated by testing the candidate's competence to complete a task according to standards or procedures (Otoo, 2019). Candidates may also display their competence by displaying personal attributes, such as the ability to communicate clearly in the interview and demonstrating self-efficacy when performing tasks (Men et al., 2022). Garcia et al. (2022) have found that the personal attribute of good interpersonal skills displayed visually during virtual interviews can positively impact hiring decisions, and Arvidsson & Melander (2020) found that competence in knowledge and skills is key to building interpersonal trust between a supplier and a buyer.

### 2.3.2 Integrity

While the focus of many selection methods is based on the ability to perform the job, hiring managers also pay attention to other attributes of the candidate, such as integrity, when making selections (Potocnik et al., 2021). Integrity involves maintaining character consistency and adhering to acceptable and ethical principles (Tomlinson et al., 2020). The importance of testing for integrity during pre-employment selection cannot be understated (Brown et al., 2019; Fisher et al., 2021) as it is used to reduce the behavioural uncertainty that the candidate might engage in opportunistic behaviours, such as counterproductive work behaviours (CWBs) (Kuhn, 2020) or unethical pro-organisational behaviours (UBPs) post-hire (Fehr et al., 2019). CWB includes all voluntary behaviour that is contrary to the legitimate interest of the company and can have deleterious effects on the organisation and all its stakeholders (Mehmood et al., 2023), and UBPs encompass deliberate anomalous acts that are believed to be good for the organisation, such as staff concealing negative information to protect the reputation of the company (Lau et al., 2023). These UBPs however end up causing more harm to the company in the long term (Lau et al., 2023).

In the manufacturing sector, hiring managers place much importance on the candidate's integrity because deviant workplace behaviours due to a lack of integrity can produce inefficiencies and substandard products (Lau et al., 2023). Additionally, these behaviours can create uncertainty as they can put the company at risk of reputation damage and reduced profits, create corporate scandals, and even put employees' lives in danger (Fisher et al., 2019). To assess the integrity of the candidates, hiring managers can conduct overt tests in the interview by asking questions that examine their integrity-related cognitive ability (Lau et al., 2023). Candidates who make decisions based on integrity are less likely to engage in opportunism, creating less behavioural uncertainty for the hiring manager (Lau et al., 2023). Integrity is also negatively related to faking in interviews, where candidates deceptively alter their answers so that they can paint themselves in a more favourable light in the minds of the hiring manager (Melchers et al., 2020). When hiring leaders, integrity is essential, as leaders who act with integrity can inspire their followers to adhere to their moral principles (Yazdanshenas & Mirzaei, 2023). These ethical leaders also reduce the behavioural uncertainty linked to workplace cheating

as leaders with strong moral identities have a deeper understanding of the consequences of moral and immoral conduct (Yue et al., 2023).

Moreover, the behavioural uncertainty of hiring the wrong candidate is reduced if the hiring manager is satisfied that the candidate possesses integrity. This is because integrity demonstrates character that is generalisable to all acts the candidate performs (Connelly et al., 2018). While the candidate may also reduce behavioural uncertainty and generate trust through demonstrating competence, the effect is smaller than the demonstration of integrity as competence is often domain-specific and is not a broad attestation of the candidate's character (Connelly et al., 2018). Additionally, while competent candidates frequently perform well, there are times when they are expected to perform poorly. Those occasional lapses of competence do not mean the candidate is incompetent or cannot be trusted (Connelly et al., 2018). In contrast, candidates with strong moral character are expected to always behave with integrity without fail, setting the bar much higher for integrity than for competence (Connelly et al., 2018). If a candidate violates integrity by acting dishonestly once, the damage to trust is not easy to repair (Kähkönen et al., 2021), and that act of dishonestly has the potential to taint all subsequent acts of the candidate (Connelly et al., 2018). As the price paid for violations of integrity is higher than competence, more trust is formed through integrity than competence, and therefore, hiring a candidate with integrity provides more behavioural certainty to the hiring manager (Connelly et al., 2018). Empirically, researchers have found that trust formed through integrity is more potent than trust created through demonstrating competence, with integrity-based trust being ten times and 1.4 times more salient than trust based on competence at reducing ex-post and ex-ante transaction costs, respectively (Connelly et al., 2018).

### 2.3.3 Benevolence

To form trust, hiring managers also evaluate the benevolence of the candidate in the interview. Benevolence is the assurance that one will refrain from exploiting another person’s vulnerability even if an opportunity exists to do so (Battista et al., 2020). Defined differently, it is the confidence that the counterparty will do what is best for the other party and not engage in opportunism (Battista et al., 2020). A hiring manager can assess the candidate’s history of prosocial behaviours, which are acts

performed for the benefit of others without expecting to receive a reward for oneself (Pfattheicher et al., 2022). The candidate can provide examples in the interview to reveal his prosocial behaviours, such as when he supported another colleague during a difficult time at work or when he performed charitable work in his community. However, the hiring manager should be cautious as the candidate may also fake these examples of prosocial behaviours, and these past behaviours may have no relationship with future prosocial behaviours (Landers & Sanchez, 2022; Vincent et al., 2019).

Benevolence is not easy to evaluate in the initial phases of the relationship. Pollack et al. (2017) argue theoretically that benevolence would only gain significance over time as the parties get to know each other. This was confirmed empirically by Svare et al. (2020), who found that benevolence grows after the relationship is established, and by Bai et al. (2024), who argued that relational trust grows through the emotional connections formed through repeated exchanges that takes place between the parties in the later stages of the relationship. Nonetheless, the hiring manager can still evaluate the candidate for benevolence by assessing the motive behind the candidate's examples in the interview (Berman & Silver, 2022). The underlying motives reveal the true character of the candidate and allow the hiring manager to determine whether the candidate intended to help others or if the act was opportunistic or done to help oneself (Berman & Silver, 2022). If the hiring manager subjectively judges the candidate to have acted in a selfish manner, such as the candidate acted with the intention of reaping a reward, the hiring manager would perceive the act to be inauthentic and view the candidate as less benevolent (Berman & Silver, 2022; Silver & Silverman, 2022). The candidate can also strengthen his prosocial behavioural signals by using facial and verbal cues in the interview to display his emotions when speaking about his prosocial behaviour (Montealegre et al., 2020; Levine et al., 2018). While integrity is based on rational reasons to trust others, benevolence is based on affects and creating emotional bonds through care and concern (Cui & Jiao, 2019). Candidates who display emotions when describing how they helped others send a stronger signal of benevolence than candidates who use logic and deliberation to defend their prosocial motives to the hiring manager (Montealegre et al., 2020; Berman & Silver, 2022). In the ‘post-truth’ world, emotional appeals are more persuasive than objective facts when building trust (Breakwell, 2020).

Individuals who display benevolence reduce behavioural uncertainty as it increases the predictability of their behaviours at work (Zheng et al., 2021). Workers often form interdependent relationships at work, and introducing a malevolent actor into a working relationship where workers depend on each other to complete tasks can result in behavioural uncertainty if the actor decides to exploit the network (Thielmann et al., 2020; Dirks & Jong, 2022). Exploitation occurs because of conflicts of interest, where the worker is focused on getting short-term rewards instead of building long-term relationships at work (Thielmann et al., 2020). For example, a malevolent actor could act opportunistically by taking credit for his colleague's work to gain a short-term bonus and forfeiting the opportunity to build a long-term relationship at work. The hiring manager should, therefore, focus on examining a candidate's prosocial behaviours as it reduces the behavioural uncertainty that the candidate will engage in exploitative or opportunistic behaviours after being hired. The relationship between benevolence and behavioural uncertainty has found some support in the literature. Zheng et al. (2021) have discovered that when authoritarian leaders practice benevolence and engage in prosocial behaviour, their actions become more predictable, resulting in less behavioural uncertainty for their followers.

### 2.4 Trustworthiness and behavioural uncertainty

As trustworthiness is an antecedent to trust (Dirks & de Jong, 2022) and trust has a salient impact on behavioural uncertainty through the literature on transaction cost (McMackin et al., 2022; Connelly et al., 2018; Cuypers et al., 2021), it follows that perceived dimensions of trustworthiness should also have a salient impact on reducing perceived behavioural uncertainty. This study extended the existing body of research under transaction cost theory from the relationship between trust and behavioural uncertainty by taking one step back to understand the relationship between trustworthiness and behavioural uncertainty. This allowed the researcher to tackle the research question of how the candidate's ability, integrity and benevolence, which comprise of the three dimensions of trustworthiness, affect the perceived behavioural uncertainty when conducting the hiring transaction. The results of the hypothesis testing also allowed the researcher to identify the salient of each dimension of trustworthiness on behavioural uncertainty in an interview to reduce the chances of trust being misplaced. The research therefore postulates that:

*H1: A significant negative relationship exists between perceived trustworthiness and perceived behavioural uncertainty.*

The main hypothesis can be broken down into sub-hypothesis as follows:

H1a: A significant negative relationship exists between perceived ability and perceived behavioural uncertainty.
H1b: A significant negative relationship exists between perceived integrity and perceived behavioural uncertainty.
H1c: A significant negative relationship exists between perceived benevolence and perceived behavioural uncertainty.

In these hypotheses, ability, integrity, and benevolence refer to the perception of trustworthiness of the job candidate, whereas perceived behavioural uncertainty refers to the hiring manager's own sense of behavioural uncertainty.

### 2.5 Candidate fit

During an interview, the hiring manager assesses the candidate for fit based on the exchange of information in a process guided by the signalling theory (Charbonneau et al., 2021). Signalling is a process for indirectly sharing information in situations of uncertainty, where obtaining perfect information about the parties involved is impossible (Charbonneau et al., 2021). As the hiring manager cannot get perfect information on the candidate during the interview, the hiring manager relies heavily on signals from the candidate to assess for candidate fit. For example, the candidate could signal that he has a university degree, which shows that he has the knowhow and competence to do the job, and the signal would contribute to demand-ability fit. The candidate could also share how he overcame several ethical dilemmas in the interview to signal his integrity, contributing to the person-organisation fit. These signals are interpreted by the hiring managers using heuristics to evaluate fit (Huber, 2018). Humans use heuristics to make decisions when facing uncertainty or imperfect information. It is based on automated processes, similar to System 1 thinking in Dual Process Theory, where the hiring manager makes decisions based on what a good fit should look like (Huber, 2018). These heuristics are split-second

judgements which enable the hiring manager to infer the values and abilities of candidates and assess candidate fit quickly, rendering the situation less uncertain and more predictable (FeldmanHall & Shenhav, 2019).

While the literature identified various types of fit, such as person-group fit, person-mentor fit or person-supervisor fit (Chi et al., 2019), the research focused only on the person-organisation and person-job fit as they are most frequently used to assess fit by the hiring manager for employee selection (Sylva et al., 2019; Hu et al., 2020). Firstly, person-organisation fit is described as 'the congruence between the norms and values of organisations and the values of persons' (Chatman, 1989, p. 339). There will be higher employee commitment and productivity when there are similarities between the candidate and the organisation (Gal, 2023). The research only considers supplementary person-organisation fit, which occurs when the candidate 'supplements, embellishes or possesses characteristics which are similar to other individuals' in the organisation (Pattnaik et al., 2020, p. 4). In contrast, a complementary person-organisation fit is when the candidate has a unique characteristic that does not exist in the organisation, and that characteristic is desired to make the organisation whole (Pattnaik et al., 2020). The research only considers supplementary fit, as hiring managers often assess supplementary fit in interviews because they subconsciously favour candidates like themselves (Huber, 2018). The homophily between the hiring manager and the candidate allows for a better fit as in-group traits will enable them to share a common language (Wuryaningrat et al., 2019) and reduce the perception of behavioural uncertainty during the hiring process (Cuypers et al., 2021).

Secondly, person-job fit describes how compatible the candidate is for the job at hand (Kim et al., 2020). Specifically, the research narrowed the focus on a dimension of person-job fit which is demand-ability fit. Demand-ability fit is described as 'the congruence between the job demands with a person's KSAs (knowledge, skills and ability)' (Kakak et al., 2023, p. 76). When there is a good person-job fit, the organisation can work more efficiently and productively (van der Velden & Bijlsma, 2019; Gal, 2023). Both demand-abilities fit and supplementary person-organisation fit are key criteria used by the hiring manager for employee selection, as a good fit can result in enhanced employee outcomes, such as the employee being more satisfied at work and the employee displaying increased levels of employee

commitment (Sylva et al., 2019; Hu et al., 2020). Hiring a candidate with a poor fit places undue stress on the candidate to perform to the job's demands and conform to the organisation's norms, which may cause more behavioural uncertainty post-hire (Beier et al., 2020; Park, 2019).

The subsequent section addresses the mediating influences of candidate fit on the relationship between the three dimensions of perceived trustworthiness and perceived behavioural uncertainty.

### 2.6 The mediation of perceived fit in the perceived trustworthiness and behavioural uncertainty relationship

There is a dearth of literature on the mediating effects of fit on the relationship between the dimensions of trustworthiness and behavioural uncertainty. Hamstra et al. (2019) have found that low supplementary person-organisation fit due to differences in values will result in more uncertainty in the organisation. However, the existing research focused on general organisational values that contributed to person-organisation fit and did not focus specifically on the values embodied in trustworthiness. Kristof-Brown et al. (2023) also found that a good fit can increase positive reactions from the hiring manager when faced with an uncertain candidate. However, further research is needed to evaluate whether the positive reactions result in a favourable assessment of trustworthiness and a corresponding reduction in behavioural uncertainty. For demand-ability fit, Chi et al. (2019) have found that if the candidate’s ability does not match the job requirements, the person-job misfit will result in unexpected challenges in the performance of the candidate post-hire. However, this research did not address whether these challenges result in more behavioural uncertainty.

This research extended the current knowledge of transaction cost economics to explain whether fit can act as a shift parameter by understanding its impact on the trustworthiness-behavioural uncertainty relationship and how fit can frame the candidate’s trustworthiness to reduce behavioural uncertainty (Cuypers et al., 2021). It also closed the theoretical gap by conducting empirical testing to answer the research question of whether fit mediates the relationship between the dimensions

of trustworthiness and behavioural uncertainty as postulated in the main hypothesis below.

H2: *Perceived fit significantly mediates the relationship between perceived trustworthiness and perceived behavioural uncertainty*

The main hypotheses can also be broken down into sub-hypothesis which determines whether demand-ability fit mediate the relationship between perceived ability and perceived behavioural uncertainty, and whether supplementary person-organisation fit mediates the relationship between perceived integrity and benevolence, and perceived behavioural uncertainty. The section below discusses the literature to support each sub-hypothesis.

### 2.6.1 The mediating influence of demand-ability fit on perceived ability and perceived behavioural uncertainty.

For the hiring manager to assess demand-ability fit, the candidate can demonstrate the ability dimension of trustworthiness. There will be a poor demand-ability fit or a demand-ability misfit if the hiring manager considers that the candidate cannot meet the job's demand (Tomlinson et al., 2020). To achieve a demand-ability fit, the candidate's ability must be congruent with the job's demands (Sylva et al., 2019; Park, 2019). Ability is referred to as the 'group of skills, competencies, and characteristics that enable a party to influence within some specific domain' (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 717), while demand reflects the requirements of the job imposed onto the candidate (Sylva et al., 2019; Park, 2019). It is essential for hiring managers to find a good demand-ability fit as it can result in better outcomes, such as greater satisfaction at work, higher organisational performance and enhanced levels of employee commitment (Sylva et al., 2019; Hu et al., 2020). It has also been found that productivity is at its highest when the worker's educational levels match the job's demands (van der Velden & Bijlsma, 2019). Therefore, hiring managers emphasise finding a candidate with a good fit, as hiring a misfit candidate can stifle performance for the organisation and cause behavioural uncertainty related to work-related stress, burnout and depression for the candidate (Beier et al., 2020; Park, 2019).

A poor demand-ability fit can also occur when the candidate is overqualified, or his ability exceeds the job demands (Khan et al., 2022). An overqualified candidate might start to feel that the job is beneath him once hired, and this can result in the candidate expressing negative emotions at work like anger and resentment (Erdogan & Bauer, 2021). Boredom also set in due to being under-stimulated because the candidate is not able to utilise his full abilities, and this provides him with an opportunity to engage in CWBs, which could have damaging consequences for the performance of the organisation (Khan et al., 2022; Erdogan & Bauer, 2021). Despite the negative impact of hiring an overqualified candidate, some studies have found that, in some cases, hiring an overqualified candidate may lead to a performance increase. Van Dijk et al. (2020) reason that overqualified candidates may increase workplace performance as their higher status gives them a greater ability to influence others once hired.

The hiring manager assesses the perceived levels of demand-ability fit when the candidate demonstrates or signals his ability to meet the job demands in the interview (Charbonneau et al., 2021). The relationship between ability and demand-ability fit has some support in the literature. Still, there is a need for more research to determine whether demand-ability fit mediates the relationship between ability and behavioural uncertainty. Many studies have explored the consequences of the misfit when the candidate may either lack the ability (underqualified) or have too much ability (overqualified). Andel et al. (2022) found that after hiring a candidate, a poor demand-ability fit due to an excess of ability results in boredom, which mediates the relationship between perceived overqualification and slacking behaviours at work, and anger, which mediates the relationship between perceived overqualification and interpersonal abuse. Slacking and interpersonal abuse are deviant workplace behaviours that create more behavioural uncertainty in the workplace. Chi et al. (2019) found that a demand-ability misfit resulted in unexpected challenges in the performance of the individual post-hire. Furthermore, Charbonneau et al. (2021) found that candidates who lacked ability but engaged with deceptive impression management to obtain demand-ability fit experienced job stress and reduced well-being after being hired. Irfan et al. (2023) found that when work uncertainty is high, employees tend to use job crafting to change the nature of their work which helps improve their person-job fit and enhance their competence to meet the job demands. In addition, Kim et al. (2020) found that the ability of the employees to communicate

and interact competently resulted in increased demand-ability fit over time. While these studies do not deal directly with behavioural uncertainty, they suggest an indirect relationship where the hiring manager's assessment of the candidate's demand-ability fit may mediate the inverse relationship between the perceived ability of the candidate and perceived behavioural uncertainty of the hiring manager, and therefore, the research postulate that:

H2a: Perceived demand-ability fit mediates the relationship between perceived ability and perceived behavioural uncertainty.

### 2.6.2 The mediating influence of supplementary person-organisation fit on perceived integrity and perceived behavioural uncertainty

In ethical organisations, the hiring manager pays close attention to the perceived integrity of the candidate to evaluate supplementary person-organisation fit in an interview (Roulin & Krings, 2020). Person-organisation fit is more important for selection than person-job fit, as the hiring manager may teach a candidate to do a job to attain person-job fit post-hire. However, the hiring manager cannot teach the candidate to act with integrity, and the value must already be ingrained in the candidate at the time he is hired (Roulin & Krings, 2020). Many organisations test for integrity in candidate selection to avoid the risk of CWB, UPBs, and other problems arising from a lack of integrity (Lau et al., 2023). For ethical organisations, any perceived unethical behaviour signalled by the candidate in the interview could suggest a lack of integrity and violate widely accepted moral standards that the organisation adheres to, which would sow doubt over the candidate's supplementary person-organisation fit (Cialdini et al., 2021). When interviewing for a senior management position, signals demonstrating the candidate lacks integrity would be particularly disconcerting because an unethical leader can negatively influence the organisational culture and create more behavioural uncertainty for the entire organisation once hired (Cialdini et al., 2021). Integrity can be evaluated by asking ethical questions in the interview to reveal the candidate's values (Villegas et al., 2019) and hiring managers often use person-organisation fit to select candidates with ethical values that align with the organisation's ethical climate (Villegas et al., 2019; Yandanshenas & Mirzaei, 2023).

In trust literature, the definition of integrity is ‘the trustor's perception that the trustee adheres to a set of principles that the trustor finds acceptable’ and ‘the extent to which the party's actions are consistent with his or her words’ (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 719). There are two parts to this definition of integrity: the first part is the value congruency (Halbusi et al., 2020), and the second part is the demonstration of behavioural integrity through the alignment of words with actions (Tomlinson et al., 2020). The first part of the integrity definition is aligned with supplementary person-organisation fit, described as ‘the congruence between the norms and values of organisations and the values of persons’ (Chatman, 1989, p. 339). Therefore, the alignment between the definition of integrity and person-organisation fit suggests a positive relationship exists between perceived integrity and perceived supplementary person-organisation fit in ethical organisations. This relationship is reinforced by Schwepker (2019), who found that ethical values, such as integrity, have a positive relationship to supplementary person-organisation fit, with greater levels of integrity resulting in greater levels of trustworthiness and supplementary person-organisation fit. Moreover, Halbusi et al. (2020) discovered that a higher person-organisation fit strengthens the relationship between prevailing ethical values in the organisation and employees' ethical behaviours, creating more certainty at work (Halbusi et al., 2020). Additionally, Zheng et al. (2022) and Yazdanshenas and Mirzaei (2023) found that ethical leaders who demonstrate integrity in their behaviours will inspire followers to demonstrate integrity and reduce uncertainty in the organisation. Furthermore, Yue et al. (2023) also discovered that a strong sense of morals explains the inverse relationship between the ethical behaviours of leadership and instances of dishonest behaviours from followers, provided that the leader-follower’s value congruency is strong. Therefore, the research postulates that supplementary person-organisation fit may explain the inverse relationship between perceived integrity and perceived behavioural uncertainty:

H2b: Perceived supplementary person-organisation fit mediates the relationship between perceived integrity and perceived behavioural uncertainty.

### 2.6.3 The mediating influence of supplementary person-organisation fit on perceived benevolence and perceived behavioural uncertainty

Benevolence is defined as the care and concern one demonstrates towards others (Mercier & Deslandes, 2020). It also assures that one will not take advantage of others or act opportunistically in one's favour, even when the opportunity presents itself to do so (Battista et al., 2020). It is a relational virtue that builds and strengthens individual relationships (Mercier & Deslandes, 2020). While benevolence is relevant in psychology, economic theory often questions whether benevolence is relevant for a profit-focused manufacturing firm (Mercier & Deslandes, 2020). Even the economist Adam Smith discounts benevolence in favour of self-interest when explaining the nature of economic activities: 'It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest' (Smith, 1970, p. 119).

However, benevolence is a key virtue that modern-day profit-making organisations are expected to embrace (Mercier & Deslandes, 2020). Many modern-day corporate failures and scandals, such as corruption and exploitation, have created a void of trust that corporations are expected to fill using formal and informal benevolence. Companies can use formal benevolence to repair their tarnished reputation by using organisational processes to encourage benevolence in the workplace (Mercier & Deslandes, 2020). Formal benevolence guides employees to express benevolence while still meeting the goal of organisational performance, for example, by encouraging employee feedback to inspire career growth and infuse benevolent behaviour into the rewards and punishment system (Mercier & Deslandes, 2020). In addition, managers can encourage informal benevolent behaviour among employees by expressing genuine concern and care for others without considering self-interest or performance motives (Mercier & Deslandes, 2020).

The rise of benevolence has given way to a benevolent ethical climate as a new organisational culture (Mercier & Deslandes, 2020). A benevolence ethical climate is a unique set of internal practices that guides employees to act benevolently in the workplace (Wagstaff et al., 2021). This climate creates a caring work environment and encourages positive affects among workers (Vilas-Boas, 2019). Given the prominence of benevolence qualities in the workplace, it is reasonable for the

candidate to be assessed for benevolence as it is a characteristic that hiring managers look for when determining person-organisation fit. The hiring manager can assess for benevolence-based person-organisation fit by evaluating whether the candidate's prosocial identity matches the organisation's prosocial identity (Rani & Samuel, 2019). Hiring managers recognise the importance of a good prosocial person-organisation fit as a good fit can improve the candidate's work attitude and behaviour, providing the candidate with a sense of pride towards their organisation and reduce behavioural uncertainty (Rani & Samuel, 2019).

Little is known about the relationship between benevolence, supplementary person-organisation fit and behavioural uncertainty. However, Rani and Samuel (2019) have found that when there was a good fit between personal and organisational prosocial identities in Gen Y, affective commitment was also high which reduces uncertainty of worker's behaviours. Chung et al. (2019) found that when employees share similar prosocial values to the organisation, the higher person-organisation fit reduces uncertainty. In a Canadian study, it was found that teachers with higher levels of benevolence had a better person-organisation fit at their schools (Wang & Klassen, 2023). While Adam Smith suggests that the primary motive for corporates is not benevolence in the external economic marketplace, benevolence still plays a central role in forming bonds inside corporations as benevolence is part of the human spirit (Mercier & Deslandes, 2020). Therefore, the research postulates that supplementary person-organisation fit may explain the inverse relationship between perceived benevolence and perceived behavioural uncertainty:

H2c: Perceived supplementary person-organisation fit mediates the relationship between perceived benevolence and perceived behavioural uncertainty.

## 2.7 Conclusion

The literature review highlights that the relationship between the dimensions of trustworthiness, fit and behavioural uncertainty has not yet been fully explored. These research gaps allowed the researcher to develop the research questions in this research report. The next chapter, Chapter Three, presents the conceptual and theoretical frameworks that explain the relationship between the three constructs and proposed hypotheses for testing.

## 3. Hypothesis

### 3.1 Conceptual and theoretical frameworks

The chapter depicts the conceptual and theoretical framework and discusses the hypotheses used for the research. The researcher used the theory from Chapter Two to establish the conceptual framework below. This conceptual framework forms the foundation for the study (Varpio et al., 2020), and the theoretical framework is the scaffolding built on top of this foundation to allow for the theory to be operationalised into constructs (Varpio et al., 2020). The hypotheses are built on the conceptual and theoretical framework and state the relationships between the constructs.

Figure 2 and 3 below depict the conceptual and theoretical framework, respectively. The theoretical framework is depicted by three separate diagrams, which show how each of the dimensions of trustworthiness interacts with perceived fit and perceived behavioural uncertainty. In this research framework, the independent variable is perceived trustworthiness and the dependent variable is perceived behavioural uncertainty. Perceived fit is the independent mediating variable between perceived trustworthiness and perceived behavioural uncertainty.

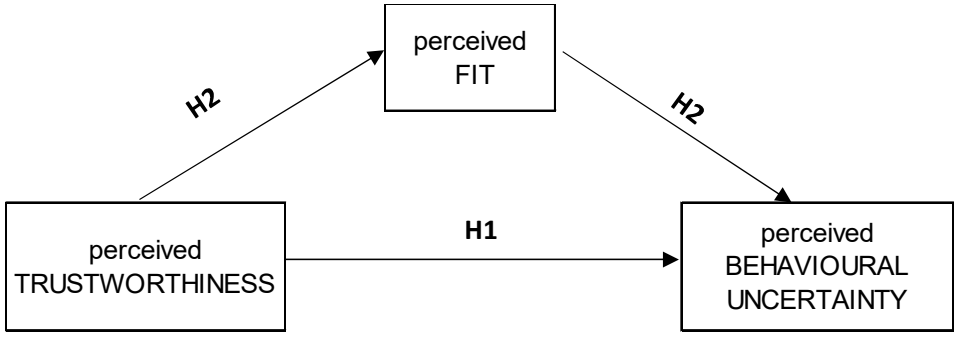



**Figure 2: Conceptual framework**

Perceived trustworthiness is broken down into its three dimensions, made up of ability, integrity, and benevolence. The researcher used three theoretical models to measure each dimension independently.

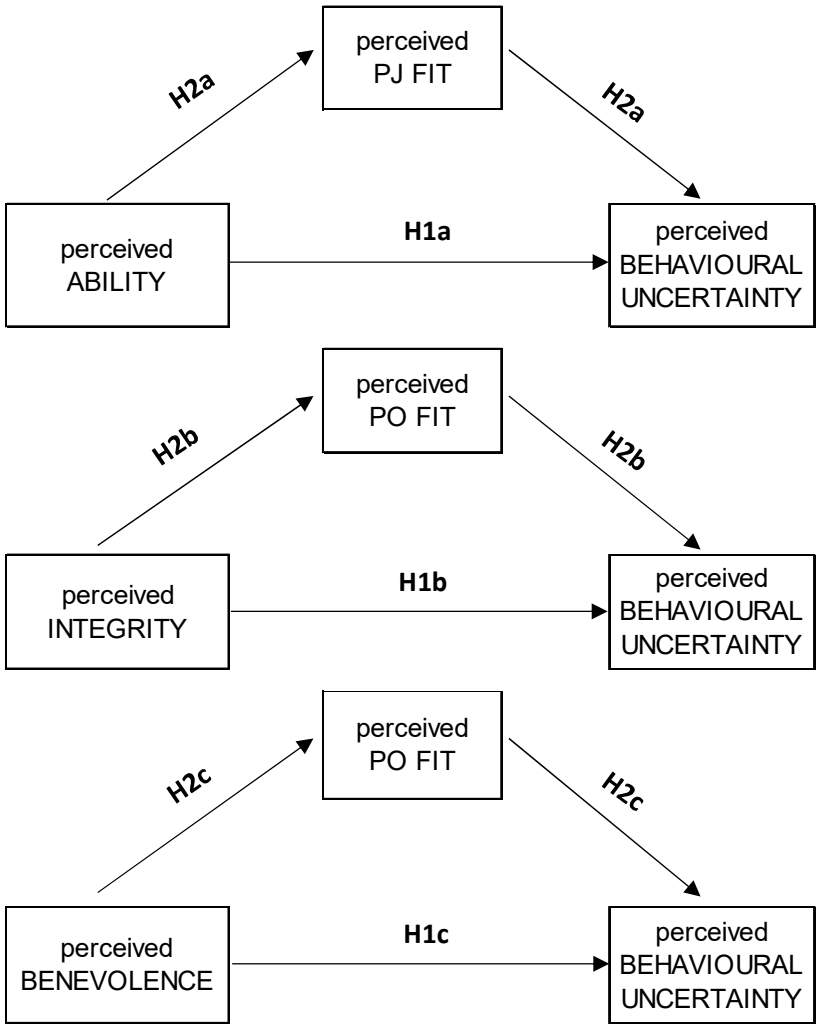



**Figure 3: Theoretical framework**

### 3.2 Research questions

The researcher posed two research questions that were addressed in this research report:

1. Does each dimension of trustworthiness have a significant negative effect on behavioural uncertainty?
2. Does fit explain the relationship between the dimensions of trustworthiness and behavioural uncertainty?

### 3.3 Hypotheses

The main and sub-hypotheses are stated below. All hypotheses were tested at a 95% confidence interval.

#### 3.3.1 Main hypothesis H1: A significant negative relationship exists between perceived trustworthiness and perceived behavioural uncertainty.

The sub-hypotheses restate the main hypothesis, broken down into each dimension of trustworthiness.

<u>For the dimension of ability:</u>

**$H_0$1a:** No significant negative relationship exists between perceived ability and perceived behavioural uncertainty.

**$H_1$1a:** A significant negative relationship exists between perceived ability and perceived behavioural uncertainty.

<u>For the dimension of integrity:</u>

**$H_0$1b:** No significant negative relationship exists between perceived integrity and perceived behavioural uncertainty.

**$H_1$1b:** A significant negative relationship exists between perceived integrity and perceived behavioural uncertainty.

<u>For the dimension of benevolence:</u>

**$H_0$1c:** No significant negative relationship exists between perceived benevolence and perceived behavioural uncertainty.

**$H_1$1c:** A significant negative relationship exists between perceived benevolence and perceived behavioural uncertainty.

### 3.3.2 Main hypothesis H2: Perceived fit significantly mediates the relationship between perceived trustworthiness and perceived behavioural uncertainty

The sub-hypotheses below are drawn from the main hypotheses above, where perceived fit is broken down into perceived demand-ability fit and supplementary person-organisation fit, and trustworthiness is broken down into its three dimensions.

For the dimension of ability:

**$H_0$2a:** Perceived demand-ability fit does not significantly mediate the relationship between perceived ability and perceived behavioural uncertainty.

**$H_1$2a:** Perceived demand-ability fit significantly mediates the relationship between perceived ability and perceived behavioural uncertainty.

For the dimension of integrity:

**$H_0$2b:** Perceived supplementary person-organisation fit does not significantly mediate the relationship between perceived integrity and perceived behavioural uncertainty.

**$H_1$2b:** Perceived supplementary person-organisation fit significantly mediates the relationship between perceived integrity and perceived behavioural uncertainty.

For the dimension of benevolence:

**$H_0$2c:** Perceived supplementary person-organisation fit does not significantly mediate the relationship between perceived benevolence and perceived behavioural uncertainty.

**$H_1$2c:** Perceived supplementary person-organisation fit significantly mediates the relationship between perceived benevolence and perceived behavioural uncertainty.

### 3.4 Conclusion

An overview of the frameworks, summarising the proposed relationships between the constructs from the literature review, was given in this chapter. The next chapter, Chapter Four, explains the research methodology for testing the hypotheses at a 95% confidence interval. Chapter Five presents the results of the tests.

# 4. Research Design and Methodology

## 4.1 Research Design

### 4.1.1 Philosophy

A positivist philosophy was used for this research. Positivism adopts the views of the scientist who observes behaviour in social realities to find relationships between constructs (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). The positivist identifies patterns in the data to produce generalisations that explain observed phenomena (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The researcher employed a positivist philosophy as trustworthiness, fit, and behavioural uncertainty can be observed or perceived in society. These constructs were measured through a Likert scale based on established measuring instruments – please see Appendix A. Once the constructs were quantified, the researcher answered the research questions by analysing the relationship between the variables using path analysis in SPSS Amos.

### 4.1.2 Approach

Since the theory of transaction cost economics is well-developed, the researcher used a deductive approach to conduct theory testing instead of an inductive approach, which is used for theory building (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The researcher completed a literature review to understand the theory and how transaction cost interacts with the construct found in the trust and fit theory. Subsequently, the researcher moved from the ‘general to the particular’ (Woiceshyn & Daellenbach, 2018) and created hypotheses to test the relationships between the constructs from the general theory. A consistency matrix was used to ensure alignment between theory and testing, which has been included in Appendix B.

### 4.1.3 Methodology choice

A mono-method quantitative research methodology was used for this research. A mono-method only requires one research technique (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). It was selected because multi-method and mixed-method methodologies require more time to conduct and was not feasible given that the researcher has a short time frame and limited resources available to complete the research.

### 4.1.4 Purpose of the research design

The research applied a descripto-explanatory research design to describe the relationship between perceived trustworthiness, behavioural uncertainty, and fit. It also explained how the variables interact with each other through discussing the results of the hypothesis testing (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

### 4.1.5 Research strategy

The research employed a survey strategy. Surveys help the researcher gather quantitative data for hypothesis testing. There was limited time and resources to complete the research report, so online surveys were administered as they are cheaper and quicker to administer than paper-based surveys (Nayak & Narayan, 2019).

### 4.1.6 Time horizon

The researcher selected a cross-sectional time horizon because there were limitations placed in terms of time and resources available to complete this research report. A cross-sectional time horizon provided the researcher with measurements based on a snapshot at a specific time (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

## 4.2 Research Methodology

### 4.2.1 Population

A population is a complete set of individuals from which to draw the sample (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The research will focus on a population of worldwide manufacturing sector hiring managers who interviewed an external candidate within the last two years. Hiring managers are defined as any staff members whose assessment of the candidate in an interview contributes to the hiring decision. For instance, in a panel or multi-stage interview, this would include all the staff members involved in the panel or stages of the interview who assessed the candidate and contributed to the hiring decision. Hiring managers were selected as they are

responsible for assessing the candidate for trustworthiness and fit during the interview process. The population will be narrowly defined to manufacturing sector hiring managers to ensure homogeneity in the sample, increasing the data's reliability and comparability.

The population focuses on hiring managers who hire externally because hiring external candidates exposes hiring managers to more behavioural uncertainty when compared to hiring candidates internally. This is because the hiring manager's assessment of fit or trustworthiness would be limited as they have little prior history with the candidate. Since there are no or limited prior interactions between the hiring manager and the candidate before the interview, the constructs of trustworthiness and fit will have less chance of being distorted by pre-existing biases, which increases the validity and reliability of the results.

The population also focused on hiring managers in the manufacturing sector as the manufacturing sector presents an interesting space for research due to two distinct categories of workers hired in manufacturing organisations: blue-collar and white-collar staff. Blue-collar staff mainly perform manual low-skill tasks, while white-collar staff perform cognitive or decision-making work using higher-level skills (Waschull et al., 2022). The two types of workers are exposed to different risks and interdependent relationships at work that could affect how trust develops (Thielmann et al., 2020). No current studies exist to understand how trust develops between white-and blue-collared workers and the hiring manager (Vanhala & Tzafrir, 2021), and this diverse population provides the rich environment on which to examine the interactions between trust, fit and behavioural uncertainty.

### 4.2.2 Unit of analysis

In transaction cost economics literature, the transaction is the unit of analysis (Shabab & Lades, 2021). However, a transaction involves two or more parties, so it is essential to identify the exact party from which the data is collected to answer the research questions (Kumar, 2018). In this research, the transaction is the interview conducted during candidate selection between the hiring manager and the candidate. As this is a dyad relationship with two different perceptions of trustworthiness, fit and behavioural uncertainty, the researcher chose to only collect

data from the manufacturing sector hiring manager's perspective. No data was collected from the candidate's perspective. This choice was made because the relationship between trustworthiness and behavioural uncertainty is theorised under transaction costs, and the effect will be more salient for the hiring manager as he will have to bear higher transaction costs should trust not be formed in the interview.

### 4.2.3 Sampling method

As it was not possible to test the full population of manufacturing sector hiring managers that hire externally, the researcher used sampling techniques to select a sample from the population for analysis (Taherdoost, 2016). Of the two sampling techniques that exist, non-probability sampling was selected. Probability sampling requires a sampling frame or a full population list from which a sample is drawn (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Since it is not feasible to list all the hiring managers in our population to generate a sampling frame, probability sampling was not used.

Saunders and Lewis (2012) elaborated on four non-probability sampling techniques that can be used. Firstly, quota sampling uses quotas to ensure that the sample is similar to the population, to faithfully represents the population. This sampling technique is suitable to a heterogeneous population (Taherdoost, 2016) and is not ideal when the population comprises a homogeneous hiring manager population; therefore, quota sampling was not appropriate for this research. Secondly, volunteer sampling occurs when the researcher allows volunteers to participate in the research and is used mainly in cases where access to the participants is difficult (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Since access to participants for this research is not restricted or difficult to source, volunteer sampling is unsuitable; the researcher can use professional trade organisations or professional networks to source the participants for the survey. Thirdly, convenience sampling focuses on selecting participants who are easily accessible and available. The downside of convenience sampling is that not all accessible and available participants selected might fit all the criteria to take part in the research and might negatively impact the integrity of the research results (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Convenience sampling is, therefore, not appropriate for this research. Finally, purposive sampling allows the researcher to apply his mind and use subjective judgment to determine whom to include in their sample (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The researcher chose a purposive homogenous sampling method

for this research and sampled individuals from his professional networks, provided that those individuals were part of his targeted population. To increase the response rate, the researcher also snowballed his survey by asking purposively selected participants to forward it to others they felt would qualify to participate (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

### 4.2.4 Sample size

An appropriate sample size for quantitative research was determined through a power analysis (Shabab & Lades, 2021; Hair et al., 2018). The a-priori sample size was estimated using the statistical software, G*power, to determine an appropriate sample size for linear multiple regression. The researcher determines the number of predictors by evaluating the maximum number of arrows pointing to one construct in the theoretical framework under Figure 3 (Memon et al., 2020). The maximum number of arrows for each of the three models is two, pointing to behavioural uncertainty. The research specified the effect size to be 0.15, the significance level to be 0.05 and the power to be 0.9 based on guidance from the literature (Memon et al., 2020). Based on this input, G*Power suggests a sample size of 88 – please see Appendix D. The researcher also used Soper (2023) a-priori sample size calculator for the path analysis, which is based on power analysis literature from Cohen (1998) and Westland (2010). The ability-behavioural uncertainty, integrity–behavioural uncertainty and benevolence–behavioural uncertainty model all required at least a sample size of 161 based on a probability level of 0.01, an anticipated effect size of 0.3, and a desired statistical power level of 0.

The researcher also considered similar quantitative studies on trust, fit and transaction costs to guide appropriate sample sizes. The study by Hu et al. (2020) on how trust mediates the relationship between the person-organisation fit and the performance of teams used a sample size of 384. In Lam et al. (2018), in the study of person-job fit and person-organisation fit on customer service performance, a sample size of 312 was used. Gulati and Nickerson’s (2008) used a sample size of 222 to study the relationship between exchange performance, trust between organisations and choices around governance mechanisms. Therefore, the literature and power analysis suggested a sample size range of 88 to 384. The researcher

took guidance from past published literature and obtained a sample size of 318, which is towards the higher end of the sample size range.

### 4.2.5 Survey design and measurement instrument

The literature was used as a guide to select the most appropriate measurement instrument for this research. From evaluating the literature on trustworthiness, fit and uncertainty, the researcher determined that surveys were predominantly used as a measurement instrument (Gulati & Nickerson, 2008; Hu et al., 2020; Shabab & Lades, 2021). A seven-page English survey was used to collect data. The first page introduced the survey participants to the research, highlighted that participation is voluntary, and displayed the informed consent form. The second page contained a qualifying question that asked the survey participants to confirm that they had acted as an interviewer who had assessed an external candidate in an interview within the last two years. If they answered “No”, the survey would end. If they answered “Yes”, the survey moved to page three, which contains control questions that measure the participants' demographic details and characteristics. These control questions were used in section 5.3 descriptive statistics to describe the sample. Control variables consist of the organisational level of the candidate, the familiarity of the hiring manager with the candidate, the recency of the interview conducted, the gender similarity between the hiring manager and the candidate, the level of dispositional trust of the hiring manager, the manufacturing sector of employment, the geographical location, and the age of the participant. Pages four, five and six contained questions on trustworthiness and behavioural uncertainty, and page seven contained questions on person-organisation and demand-ability fit. The researcher was also cognisant that survey participants could also be influenced to answer the questions by the way the questions were presented in the survey instead of answering the questions based on their lived experiences, which subjects the research to common method variance bias (CMV) (Gorrell et al., 2011). The researcher, therefore, used randomised survey questions on pages five and six to counteract CMV.

The literature also guides the researcher on operationalising the constructs into variables that can be measured using surveys. For instance, fit was measured through person-organisation fit and demand-ability fit (Higgins & Judge, 2004), and

trustworthiness was operationalised by measuring its dimensions, which are ability, integrity, and benevolence (Dirks & de Jong, 2022). Survey questions were sourced and adapted from the literature for the research. Existing scales were used wherever possible before scales were adapted (Lew & Combrink, 2023). Below is a summary of each variable, with their scale and a sample question.

Trustworthiness was measured on a 5-point Likert scale sourced and adapted from Lester and Brower (2003). Ability was measured using six survey questions; a sample of one question is 'I believe the candidate is well qualified' (Lester & Brower, 2003, p. 33). Benevolence was measured using five questions; a sample of one question is 'I think the candidate is concerned about my welfare' (Lester & Brower, 2003, p. 33). Integrity was measured using six questions; a sample of one question is 'I like the candidate's values' (Lester & Brower, 2003, p. 33). The Cronbach's alpha from prior research was 0.94, showing that these survey questions have high reliability, and this scale was measured on a range from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The complete set of survey questions can be found in Appendix A.

Candidate fit was measured on a 7-point Likert scale on two dimensions: person-organisation fit and demand-ability fit. Person-organisation fit questions were sourced and adapted from Higgins and Judge (2004). A sample of a person-organisation fit question is 'This applicant's values reflect the values of my organisation' (Higgins & Judge, 2004, p. 626). Demand-ability fit questions were also sourced and adapted by Higgins and Judge (2004), who provided person-job fit questions. However, these questions measured the demand and ability of the candidate, similar to the questions posed by Cable and Judge (1996), and these person-job fit questions were used in this research to measure demand-ability fit. A sample of a demand-ability fit question is 'The applicant possesses the knowledge, skills and ability necessary to perform the duties of this specific job' (Higgins & Judge, 2004, p. 626). Prior research has shown the reliability of the questions, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.86 for the person-organisation fit and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89 for the person-job fit. These scales were measured on a range from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The complete set of survey questions can be found in Appendix A.

Behavioural uncertainty was measured on a 5-point Likert scale, with the range being Strongly disagree to Strongly agree, as adapted from Pavlou et al. (2007). A sample of an behavioural uncertainty question is ‘I feel that hiring the candidate involves a high degree of uncertainty’ (Pavlou et al., 2007, p. i) The survey questions have a high degree of reliability as prior research has shown a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.95, and this scale was measured on a range from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The complete set of survey questions can be found in Appendix A.

### 4.2.6 Pre-testing of survey

The pre-test allowed the researcher to determine whether ambiguous or unclear questions could confuse participants and negatively impact the survey response rate (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The researcher completed the survey pre-testing with three individuals who were part of the target population and two outside the target population. These individuals were all within the researcher’s network and were selected through convenient sampling. The individuals provide detailed feedback after completing the survey. The feedback included the addition of a progress bar and the correction of spelling errors on the survey. Individuals also expressed that the survey questions were straightforward to understand and that the survey was quick to complete. All feedback was considered, and the survey was adjusted before it was launched.

### 4.2.7 Ethical considerations

The researcher was cognisant of research ethics to protect survey participants from harm (Bos, 2020). Therefore, the survey was only launched after obtaining ethical clearance from the University of Pretoria. The first page introduces the survey participants to the survey (See Appendix F). It includes informed consent, which elaborates on the purpose of the survey so that survey participants can decide whether to partake in the survey. The introduction also highlights that participation is voluntary, and the participant may stop completing the survey at any time without being penalised. Survey participants were also notified that only aggregated data would be reported, and their responses would be anonymised with no personal information captured. If the survey participants had any concerns about their

participation, they could get in touch with either the researcher or the research supervisor, whose details were also provided to the survey participants.

### 4.2.8 Data gathering process

Surveys can be administered in many ways. The mixed-mode method is optimal for administering surveys as it can reduce coverage bias and non-response issues (de Leeuw, 2005). However, the mixed-mode method is more expensive and time-consuming to administer as the researcher must set up multiple channels for the respondent to respond (de Leeuw, 2005). This was not feasible as the resources and time of the researcher was limited, therefore the researcher used self-completed surveys to gather the data and took steps to mitigate coverage bias and non-response. The researcher mitigated the risk of non-response by followed up and reminding the respondents to complete the survey. Additionally, the researcher asked respondents for referrals to extend the survey's reach. Furthermore, as the target population is employed in the manufacturing sector, most survey participants have access to technology through their work laptops or work phones for self-completed surveys, which mitigated coverage bias (de Leeuw, 2005).

The researcher also examined prior academic papers to determine how self-completed surveys were administered to gather data. Prior research shows that the predominant method for administering self-completed surveys was online survey tools, such as Google Forms or Qualtrics (Torrentira, 2020). The researcher selected Qualtrics to administer the survey. Qualtrics is preferred over other online survey tools as it can screen out participants who are ineligible to complete the survey (Qualtrics, n.d.-a). It also allows surveys to be distributed to survey participants through Qualtrics Mailer, increasing the chance of the email reaching the participant's inbox instead of being placed into a spam folder (Qualtrics, n.d.-b).

The researcher used three channels to generate responses. Firstly, the researcher approached manufacturing trade associations, such as the Manufacturing Circle, to distribute the survey through email to all their members. The researcher found a list of manufacturing trade associations on Manufacturing Indaba's website (Manufacturing Indaba, n.d.). Secondly, the researcher also purposively selected participants from his networks, such as the MBA cohorts at GIBS and Toyota

Wessels Institute for Manufacturing Studies (TWIMS) and LinkedIn contacts that fell into the target population. These individuals were contacted through WhatsApp, Telegram, email and Linkedin. Finally, the researcher also placed the survey as posts on Linkedin, a social media network for professionals. to maximise the reach and diversity of the survey respondents.

#### 4.2.8.1 Manufacturing associations

Firstly, the researcher contacted the manufacturing associations to assist with distributing the survey to all their members in their directory through email. However, most manufacturing associations were unwilling to assist or ignored the request. For instance, the Manufacturing Circle declined the request to distribute the survey as their members suffer from survey fatigue, and the Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services SETA (merSETA) will not distribute surveys to their stakeholders unless it is a merSETA initiative. In sum, none of the 16 manufacturing associations the researcher engaged with assisted in distributing the survey. The researcher, therefore, sourced freely available email addresses from members' directories on manufacturing associations' websites, such as from the Southern Africa Stainless Steel Development Association (SASSDA) or the Plastics Machinery Manufacturers Association of India (PMMAI) for email distribution of the survey. These directories were copied from their websites into Excel to extract email addresses, and the researcher mailed these manufacturers through Qualtrics Mailer.

#### 4.2.8.2 The researcher’s networks

Secondly, the researcher distributed the anonymous survey link with his networks in the manufacturing sector through WhatsApp, Telegram and emails. The networks included the MBA cohorts at TWIMS through the cohort's Whatsapp groups, which comprise 36 individuals, and the GIBS Buddies’ Telegram group, which comprises 559 individuals. The researcher also asked survey participants to distribute the survey further to those in their network that they felt would qualify for the survey, creating a snowball effect. Additionally, the researcher built new networks at manufacturing events, such as at the Manufacturing Indaba, the AMCHAM (American Chamber of Commerce) Thanksgiving dinner and the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) forum’s Made in Africa exhibition. The researcher explained

the research to each manufacturer he met at these events and asked probing questions to ensure that the manufacturer was part of the target population before asking for their contact details to share the survey. Survey participants who were uncomfortable sharing their phone numbers were willing to share their email addresses.

#### 4.2.8.3 Social networks

Finally, the researcher distributed the anonymous link on Linkedin. LinkedIn posts containing a short introduction to the research and a call-to-action to complete the survey were created and placed on the researcher's LinkedIn page. The researcher also joined multiple LinkedIn groups with a specific focus on manufacturing, such as the Australian Manufacturing Forum and Global Manufacturing Executive Forum, to solicit respondents for the survey. The researcher posted a short introduction and a survey link to the groups. The researcher revisited the groups one week after the first post and submitted another post as a reminder to group members to complete the survey. Additionally, the researcher also directly messaged LinkedIn members within the groups and connected with LinkedIn members working within the manufacturing sector that he felt would qualify to take part in the survey. Each connection request was personalised, and a sample of the LinkedIn message can be found in Appendix E.

### 4.2.9 Data analysis approach

Once the researcher obtained a suitable sample size, the survey was closed, and the data were analysed to conclude on the research hypotheses. There was no need to code the data as coded data can be extracted from Qualtrics. The coded data was cleansed in Excel before statistical tests could be performed to verify the validity and reliability of the data and complete the path analysis. The section below outlines the steps taken to analyse the data.

### 4.2.10 Data cleaning and missing values

The data extracted from Qualtrics required cleaning as the survey data contained ignorable missing data. Ignorable missing data was expected to occur because of

the research collection instrument design (Hair et al., 2010). The survey was designed such that survey participants were required to confirm they had acted as an interviewer who had assessed an external candidate in an interview within the last two years. This ensures that only survey participants who fit into the target population completed the survey. If survey participants responded “No”, Qualtrics will end the survey and disallow the participant from participating further. This generated ignorable missing data, which was deleted in Excel.

The data also contained non-ignorable missing data, which is the remaining missing data after removing the ignorable missing data (Hair et al., 2010). The non-ignorable missing data have an unknown cause, as respondents might have refused to continue with the survey, they might have been distracted and closed the survey instead of completing it, or there was an internet connection problem on the respondent’s device that prevented the respondent from completing the survey. The treatment of this missing data was determined by examining the patterns in the data. A case-wise missing data analysis was done to understand the extent of the missing data. Any cases missing dependent variables (behavioural uncertainty) were deleted as data imputed for dependent variables can distort results (Hair et al., 2010).

Furthermore, a standard deviation was done in Excel to determine if there was any respondent misconduct, which occurred when the respondent selected the same value throughout the survey. If the standard deviation was low, the respondent was disengaged, and the case was deleted to prevent the results from being distorted.

### 4.2.11 Normality testing

A normal distribution is a requirement for a confirmatory factor analysis and path analysis (Wah et al., 2023; Sovey et al., 2022). The research analysed the skewness and the kurtosis values of the data to assess whether the data was normally distributed. Kline (2011) mentioned that skewness should be between +3 and -3, and kurtosis should be between +10 and -10. Hair et al. (2010) indicated that skewness should be between +2 and -2, and kurtosis should be between +7 and -7. Additionally, Hair et al. (2010) mentioned that the increase in statistical power in large sample sizes can reduce the effects of non-normal data. For sample sizes above

200, like the sample used for this research, the effects of non-normal data become negligible (Hair et al., 2010).

### 4.2.12 Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics enabled the data to be summarised and understood meaningfully (Mishra et al., 2019). The frequency of the control variables was determined to describe the sample, and these frequencies were interpreted to draw meaning from the data.

### 4.2.13 Measurement model

Three measurement models were created based on the three conceptual frameworks for factor analysis, as per Figure 3. The factor analysis allows the researcher to identify the constructs (latent variables or factors) measured by the survey items or indicators (Brown & Moore, 2012). The relationship between the factors and indicators was known since the researcher sourced and adapted the factors from existing literature. Therefore, the researcher seeked only to confirm the relationship through a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in SPSS Amos to ensure that the indicators measure the underlying factors for each of the three measurement models (Brown & Moore, 2012). The CFA uses factor loadings to describe the relationship between the factors and the indicators. These factor loadings are the regression slopes that show to what extent the observed variable contributes to the change in the factor (Brown & Moore, 2012).

The CFA also measures unique variances, or measurement errors per indicator, which are the variances detected in the indicator that do not contribute to the changes in the factor. Standardised factor loadings above 0.708 are recommended as these indicators explain half of the variance in the factor (Hair et al., 2021). However, studies in social sciences frequently achieve factor loadings below 0.708 (Hair et al., 2022). While evaluating whether to remove indicators with low factor loadings less than 0.708, the researcher considered whether deleting the indicator would affect the content validity of the study, which is whether the remaining indicators will still be representative of the factor. Due to the limited number of indicators per factor, indicators with low factor loadings were retained, as removing them would violate

content validity. However, indicators with factor loadings that were very low (below 0.4), were considered insignificant and were removed (Hair et al., 2022). There were three indicators with low factor loadings, and these were removed and reported in Chapter Five.

### 4.2.14 Model fit

The model fit determines how well the data fits the model so that the research can understand whether the model is well-formed (Alavi et al., 2020). Each of the three measurement and path models was assessed for model fit using global absolute and incremental fit indices. Firstly, global absolute fit indices apply a holistic assessment of whether the entire model aligns with the data and includes measures such as chi-square ($\chi^2$), goodness-of-fit (GFI) index, adjusted GFI, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) (Alavi et al., 2020). However, the Chi-square test is might not provide accurate results when the sample size is large, and the chi-square test relative to the degrees of freedom (CMIN/df) is a preferred test in research when the sample size is large (Alavi et al., 2020). Secondly, global incremental fit indices determine whether there is an alignment between the proposed model and the data and compare it to a null model, where no relationships are defined between the variables (Alavi et al., 2020). The global incremental fit indices comprised the comparative fit index (CFI), normed-fit index (NFI), and non-normed fit index (NNFI) (Alavi et al., 2020). Multiple fit indices were examined to gather a complete view of fit for the models used in the research.

**Table 1: Model fit indices and thresholds**

| Type | Measures | Good fit if: |
|---|---|---|
| Global absolute fit indices | Chi-square ($\chi^2$) | $p < 0.05$ |
| | Chi-square relative to degrees of freedom (CMIN/df) | < 3 (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004) |
| | Goodness of Fit (GFI) | ≥ 0.90 (Hair et al., 2010) |
| | Adjusted Goodness of Fit (AGFI) | ≥ 0.90 (Kline, 2011) |
| | Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) | < 0.08 (Kline, 2011) |
| | Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) | < 0.08 (Kline, 2011) |
| Global incremental fit indices | Normed Fit Index (NFI) | ≥ 0.90 (Hair et al., 2010) |
| | Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI) / Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) | ≥ 0.90 (Hair et al., 2010) |
| | Comparative Fit Index (CFI) | ≥ 0.90 (Kline, 2011) |

### 4.2.15 Validity

The survey items were assessed for construct validity for each of the three measurement models to see whether the survey items accurately represented the underlying construct (Hair et al., 2010). The researcher used convergent and discriminant validity to measure construct validity. Firstly, convergent validity is evaluated per construct and measures the correlation between the survey items for each construct (Hair et al., 2010). High correlation means that there is uni-dimensionality as the survey items are converging to measure the same construct (Hair et al., 2010). The researcher evaluated the average variance extracted (AVE) when determining convergent validity. An AVE greater than 0.5 suggests convergent validity (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988), as the construct can explain over fifty percent of the variability in the survey items. Secondly, discriminant validity measures how distinct one set of survey items is from another set of survey items used to measure the constructs under examination. Discriminant validity tests that these sets of survey items are not correlated and that it is possible to differentiate between the construct

it measures and other unrelated constructs (Hair et al., 2010). The researcher used Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio to analyse discriminant validity, where a HTMT ratio below 0.9 implies the presence of discriminant validity in the model (Henseler et al., 2015).

### 4.2.16 Reliability

Reliability refers to the quality of the survey and its ability to achieve consistent results (Hair et al., 2010). Internal consistency reliability was determined to see if items within the survey consistently measured the same construct (Hair et al., 2010). The researcher used the composite reliability scores to measure internal consistency reliability for each construct in the three measurement models. Higher composite reliability scores indicate higher levels of reliability, with scores below 0.6 being considered problematic, scores between 0.6 and 0.7 being considered acceptable, and scores between 0.7 and 0.9 being considered satisfactory to good (Hair et al., 2021).

### 4.2.17 Computed variables

The researcher used the mean of the observed variables for each construct to create the computed variables. The path analysis used these computed variables to identify the relationship between the constructs.

### 4.2.18 Path analysis

Once the three measurement models were determined to be valid, three path models were created in SPSS Amos, and they were used to test the hypotheses (Hayes, 2017). The path models used linear regression to test the relationship between ability, integrity and benevolence (IV) and behavioural uncertainty (DV) to satisfy Hypothesis 1. Additionally, the path models examined the mediation effect to determine if person-organisation fit and demand-ability fit mediate the relationship between trustworthiness, ability, integrity, benevolence, and behavioural uncertainty under Hypothesis 2. A p-value $< 0.05$ or a 95% confidence interval was used for all tests to identify whether the independent and the dependent variables had significant relationships.

### 4.2.19 Limitations

The research choices had several limitations. Firstly, trustworthiness, fit and behavioural uncertainty are elements of social science, and these fields will experience change as society evolves. Additionally, trustworthiness is a state, not a trait, and it is expected to fluctuate and change over time (Dirks & Jong, 2022). Due to the limitation on time and resources for the MBA research report, the researcher used a cross-sectional time horizon to measure these constructs by sending out surveys at a point in time. Therefore, the insights gained were limited, and a longitudinal study will provide more insight into how the relationship between these constructs evolves through time (Holtz et al., 2020).

Secondly, the low external population validity means that the results are not generalisable (Findley et al., 2021). This is because the research does not use a sampling frame, as it was impossible to obtain a list of all manufacturing sector hiring managers to sample from (Taherdoost, 2016). Caution is warranted when applying the findings beyond the specific context of this research.

Thirdly, the surveys were self-completed by the survey participants and were only available in English. This could have unintentionally resulted in sampling bias as hiring managers from across the world who are not educated enough or fluent in English could have been excluded from participating in the survey (Conway et al., 2022). This might explain why only a small percentage of general workers (6.9%) participated in the survey, as shown in the descriptive statistics in Table 2. Therefore, using English-only self-completed surveys limits who could participate in this research.

Finally, the research used non-probability purposive sampling that relies on judgment when selecting samples. This judgement could be subjected to unconscious biases on whom to include and exclude from the sample, distorting the results. Additionally, a homogenous population of hiring managers was selected for the sampling, which limited the insights that could be gleaned. The research could be expanded to a heterogeneous population of stakeholders, such as the recruitment agencies involved in the hiring process.

## 4.3 Conclusion

An outline of the research methodology and design used to examine the hypotheses from Chapter Three was provided in this chapter. The chapter also highlights some research limitations. The following chapter, Chapter Five, applies these research choices to the data and these results are discussed in Chapter Six.

# 5. Results

The chapter begins by discussing the survey response rate and the descriptive statistics. It then presents the inferential statistics, including the construct validity and reliability test results, the linear regression, and the mediation analysis in each of the three path models. The chapter concludes by determining whether the statistical results support the hypotheses proposed in this research report.

## 5.1 Survey response rate

The data collection period spans three months, from the 6th of September 2023 till the 5th of December 2023. The response rates were calculated for each digital channel the researcher used to source survey participants, and they are discussed separately below.

### 5.1.1 Manufacturing associations

A response rate of 1% was achieved from the manufacturing association email directories. 3023 email addresses were sourced from freely available members' directories on manufacturing associations' websites. These email addresses were uploaded onto Qualtrics Mailer, with 25 surveys started and ten surveys finished, ending up with a response rate of 1%. This low response rate aligns with the research done by Ali et al. (2020) which shows that surveys distributed through emails typically have the lowest response rates.

### 5.1.2 Researcher's networks

A low response rate of 1.2% was achieved from the researcher's networks. Each of the 660 manufacturers from the researcher's networks was sent either an email or a WhatsApp with an anonymous link to complete the survey. As these anonymous links cannot be tracked, it was impossible to determine the exact response rate for the distribution through the researcher's networks. However, the response rate can be approximated by counting the number of confirmations the researcher received from survey participants on WhatsApp, Telegram, and email. The number of confirmations from WhatsApp and Telegram was five, and the number of

confirmations by email was three, resulting in eight confirmations out of 660, or a response rate of 1.2%. Ali et al. (2020) explains that soliciting responses through email and Whatsapp results in the lowest response rates out of all distribution methods. It should be noted that survey participants could also complete the survey without sending back a confirmation. Therefore, the response rate for distribution through the researcher's network could be understated.

### 5.1.3 Social media

A response rate of 6% was achieved through social networks. In total, 51 LinkedIn posts were placed inside LinkedIn groups that contained a total of 1.6 million members, with the combined number of impressions, or the number of times it was displayed to members within the group, being only 14,729. The researcher received zero confirmations from LinkedIn group members to confirm they had completed the survey from these LinkedIn posts. For LinkedIn members who were sent the survey through direct messaging, the exact response rate from LinkedIn participants cannot be determined as an anonymous link was used. However, the response rate can be approximated by counting the number of confirmations of survey completed received from LinkedIn survey participants in the LinkedIn inbox. An extract of all the messages sent on LinkedIn shows that 1134 messages were sent to LinkedIn members, with only 68 confirmations received back, which suggests an approximate response rate of 6%. This aligns with Ali et al. (2020) where soliciting responses from social media tend to generate a higher response rate. It should also be noted that LinkedIn members could also complete the survey without sending a confirmation. Hence, this response rate may be understated.

### 5.1.4 Total response rates

The total number of known potential survey participants is 4817, comprising 3023 from email, 660 from the researcher's networks and 1134 from LinkedIn. The total number of completed surveys was 510; therefore, the approximate response rate was 10.5% based on known potential survey participants and ignoring unknown potential survey participants from snowballing. Since it is unknown how many potential survey participants were snowballed and how many of these snowballed participants completed the survey, it is not possible to include them in the response

rate calculation. However, if the snowballing effects were included in the calculation, the approximate response rate would likely be lower than the 10.5% calculated.

### 5.2 Preparing the data

Before analysing the data, the data was examined for missing data points and checked for respondent misconduct. Out of 510 surveys received, the survey participants did not fully complete 190 surveys, and there were two cases of respondent misconduct, leaving 318 fully completed surveys. The subsections below show the steps the researcher took to address missing data and the respondent misconduct detected in the data.

#### 5.2.1 Missing data

The researcher applied Hair et al. (2010) process to address missing data in this survey. Firstly, the type and the extent of the missing data were determined. The survey design required participants to fully complete the questions on each page before moving on to the next page. The second page of the survey relates to a qualifying question that must be answered before participants can continue with the survey. 145 participants were disqualified by the qualifying question, which required participants to confirm if they had acted as an interviewer who had assessed an external candidate in an interview within the last two years. If they answered “No”, the survey would end, but Qualtrics would still record the survey as completed. These 145 responses were ignorable as they were due to the survey design. The third page collects the answers related to the control variables, such as age or geographical region. 21 respondents, representing 4.1% of total respondents, only answered the control questions on the third page but did not continue to answer any of the 25 survey questions related to the Likert scales that measure the constructs, making these responses unusable and the missing data ignorable. A total of 166 responses were, therefore, ignorable and were deleted in Excel before the data was analysed further.

Secondly, the cases of non-ignorable missing data were analysed to see if they contained high levels of non-ignorable missing data to justify their deletion. The researcher used case-wise missing data analysis tables (See Appendix C) to

complete this analysis. The researcher deleted cases that had greater than 50% of missing data (Hair et al., 2010). If less than 50% of the data is missing, then a data imputation method may be applied to impute the data (Hair et al., 2010). The remaining four pages contained Likert scale questions that measured the constructs. As mentioned, the survey was designed such that all questions must be completed per page before the survey participant can continue to the following page. This resulted in the missing data pattern where there were blocks of unanswered questions in the latter parts of the survey compared to the earlier parts.

Lastly, the researcher determined whether the missing data could be imputed by examining the randomness of the missing data. The researcher determined if the missing data was Missing at Random (MAR) or Missing Completely at Random (MCAR) by running Little's MCAR test. If missing MCAR, there is a possibility of inferring values into the missing data using imputation. The results show a p-value < 0.05, which means that the missing data is MAR (Chi-Square = 314.333, df = 87, Sig. = .000). However, as all cases with missing data contained missing data related to the DV (behavioural uncertainty), imputation methods cannot be used as inferring values for the DV can distort the relationship between the DV and the IV (Hair et al., 2010), therefore a complete case approach was selected, and only complete data was used. All 24 cases containing non-ignorable data were deleted, leaving 320 completed cases.

### 5.2.2 Data cleaning

The researcher ran a standard deviation across the complete cases to determine if there were any cases of respondent misconduct. Since the survey measured the constructs on different scales (a 5-point Likert scale for the construct of ability, integrity, benevolence, and behavioural uncertainty on 21 survey questions and a 7-point Likert scale for the construct of PO and PJ fit on four survey questions), the researcher was unable to run a standard deviation across all 25 items. Therefore, the researcher only ran a standard deviation on the 5-point scale where variances in responses were expected as the constructs differed, unlike the 7-point Likert scale that measured fit where the responses are expected to be similar. Two cases were detected with zero standard deviation, and these two cases were deleted, resulting in 318 completed cases used for analysis.

### 5.3 Descriptive statistics

The survey asked eight control questions describing the sample's characteristics drawn from the target population. The frequency of the responses is presented below to glean insights into the backgrounds of the survey participants.

**Table 2: Descriptive statistics**

| Variable | Characteristics | N | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Recency of interview | 0 - 6 months ago | 170 | 53.5 |
| | 7 - 12 months ago | 81 | 25.5 |
| | 1 - 2 years ago | 67 | 21.1 |
| Role distinction | Manager (white-collar) | 191 | 60.1 |
| | Director (white-collar) | 75 | 23.6 |
| | Manager (blue-collar) | 30 | 9.4 |
| | General worker (white-collar) | 16 | 5.0 |
| | General worker (blue-collar) | 6 | 1.9 |
| Manufacturing sector industry | Manufacturing activities, not elsewhere classified | 105 | 33.0 |
| | Metal and metal products | 39 | 12.3 |
| | Food processing | 35 | 11.0 |
| | Other chemicals, rubber and plastics | 32 | 10.1 |
| | Basic chemicals and petroleum refineries | 30 | 9.4 |
| | Beverages | 21 | 6.6 |
| | Wood and paper | 14 | 4.4 |
| | Electronics and appliances | 12 | 3.8 |
| | Capital equipment | 8 | 2.5 |
| | Transport equipment | 7 | 2.2 |
| | Clothing, leather, footwear and textiles | 6 | 1.9 |
| | Glass and non-metallic minerals | 4 | 1.3 |
| | Furniture | 3 | 0.9 |
| | Printing and publishing | 2 | 0.6 |
| Geographical location | Africa | 258 | 81.1 |
| | North America | 23 | 7.2 |
| | Europe | 20 | 6.3 |
| | Asia | 13 | 4.1 |
| | Australia | 4 | 1.3 |
| Age | 36 - 45 years old | 132 | 41.5 |
| | 46 - 55 years old | 78 | 24.5 |
| | 26 - 35 years old | 77 | 24.2 |
| | 56 - 65 years old | 25 | 7.9 |
| | 18 - 25 years old | 6 | 1.9 |
| History with interviewee | No | 288 | 90.6 |
| | Yes | 30 | 9.4 |
| Gender similarity | Yes | 187 | 58.8 |
| | No | 131 | 41.2 |
| Propensity to trust | No | 163 | 51.3 |
| | Yes | 155 | 48.7 |

### 5.3.1 Recency of interview

Most respondents conducted the interview within the last year, with 170 interviews (53.5% of the sample) conducted within the last six months and 81 interviews between 7 and 12 months ago (25.5% of the sample). Only 67 interviews (21%) were conducted more than one year ago but less than two years ago. The participants' memories are subjected to recall decay as they might not be able to remember events far in the past to complete the survey (Bell et al., 2019). Nonetheless, recall bias was reduced as 78% of the interviews were recent and were conducted within one year, and only 21% were conducted within the second year.

### 5.3.2 Role distinction

The role and level of the survey participants are described below. A white-collar worker works in an office, whereas a blue-collar worker performs manual labour tasks on the factory floor. Most survey participants were managers or directors (93.1%), with 60.1% white-collar managers, 23.6% directors, and 9.4% blue-collar managers. Only a small percentage of survey participants are general workers (6.9%), comprising 5% white-collar general workers and 1.9% blue-collar general workers. The small number of general workers in the sample might be attributable to the fact that general workers might not be senior enough to interview others, so they would have been disqualified by the qualifying question at the beginning of the survey. These general workers might also not be educated enough to self-complete the survey, which limited their participation.

### 5.3.3 Manufacturing sector industry

The manufacturing sector that the survey participant worked in was also captured. The manufacturing sectors were obtained from the South African Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies (TIPS) classification as found on their website (TIPS, n.d.). The results show that the participants work in a large spectrum of different manufacturing sectors, and the category with the most participants was ‘manufacturing activities not elsewhere classified’ at 33%. As the manufacturing classifications were based on the manufacturing industries that are mainly dominant in South Africa and this was a global survey, global participants who operate in

manufacturing industries that do not exist in South Africa, such as the semiconductors or aerospace industries, would have to default to the 'manufacturing activities not elsewhere classified' option. Besides participants who selected 'manufacturing activities not elsewhere classified', the top three manufacturing sectors were metals and metal products (12.3%), food processing (11%) and other chemicals, rubber and plastics (10.1%).

### 5.3.4 Geographical location

The geographical location of the survey participants was captured in the survey. Most of the survey participants originate from the African continent (81.1%), with the remaining split across North America (7.2%), Europe (6.3%), Asia (4.1%) and Australia (1.3%). The lack of survey participants from all other continents besides Africa can be explained by the approach used for sample collection. The researcher has an established network of peers and colleagues in Africa, and he used his credibility as a student at GIBS to obtain most of the surveys. Furthermore, these statistics also reflected that attempts to get survey participants outside of Africa were mainly unsuccessful. While GIBS is a leading business school in Africa, the GIBS brand and credentials remain relatively unknown outside the continent, leading to lower engagement and survey response rates when the researcher contacted survey participants outside of Africa.

### 5.3.5 Age

Most of the survey participants were between 36 – 45 years old (41.5%), 26 – 35 years old (24.5%), 45 – 55 years old (24.2%) and 56 – 65 years old (7.9%). This suggests that most survey participants had several years of work experience to reflect on when making their hiring decisions, which would increase the accuracy of the survey responses. The remaining survey participants between 18 and 25 years old only comprised 1.9% of the data collected.

### 5.3.6 History with the Interviewee

While the survey is only targeted at interviewers who interviewed external candidates, there is also a possibility that the interviewer might know the external

candidate being interviewed. For instance, the external candidate could be an ex-colleague or a family member. When the interviewer has a prior history with the interviewee, trustworthiness might have been assessed pre-interview instead of during the interview. As the survey measures the candidate's trustworthiness during the interview, trustworthiness formed pre-interview might distort the survey results as they might have stronger views than those meeting the external candidate for the first time. This can result in extreme response bias when the survey participant selects the highest or the lowest values in the Likert scale, distorting the true distribution of opinion in the results (Zhang et al., 2022). The descriptive statistics show that 90.6% of the survey participants did not know the external candidate being interviewed, and only 9.4% knew the candidate before the interview, so the exposure to extreme response bias is low.

### 5.3.7 Gender similarity

The descriptive statistics show that 187 survey participants (58.8%) interviewed external candidates of the same gender as them. The remaining 131 survey participants (41.2%) interviewed external candidates of a gender different from theirs.

### 5.3.8 Propensity to trust

This final control question measures the propensity to trust of survey participants, which is the individual's inherent predisposition to trust others, even strangers, with whom the individual had no prior experience (Patent & Searle, 2019). The control questions reveal that 163 survey participants (51.3%) do not generally trust others they meet for the first time, with 155 survey participants (48.7%) who displayed a propensity to trust those they meet for the first time.

## 5.4 Model fit statistics

A Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) in SPSS Amos was completed for each of the three models to test the model fit. The factor loadings per item in each of the three models were also analysed to understand how well these items explained their associated constructs. Based on the factor loadings, three items (Q14_3, Q13_2,

Q13_6) were removed due to low factor loadings. The model fit was also examined using these fit measures ($\chi^2$, CMIN/df, GFI, AGFI, RMSEA, SRMR, NFI, TFL, CFI CFI). Only the Chi-Square ($\chi^2$) implied that the model was not well-fitted; however, this is because of the large sample size (318 samples) involved in this study. All values were within their respective acceptance levels, and therefore, the researcher concluded that all three models were well-fitted. Tables 3, 4, and 5 below present the standardised factor loading and model fit.

**Table 3: Model fit, Standardised factor loading and Composite Reliability for the ability – demand-ability fit – behavioural uncertainty model**

| Constructs | Standardised factor loading | t-value |
|---|---|---|
| **Trustworthiness: Ability (Adapted from Lester and Brower (2003))** | (C.R. = .861) | |
| Q11_1: I felt that the candidate is very capable of performing his/her job. | 0.800 | 11.043 |
| Q11_2: I felt that the candidate will be successful at the things he/she tries to do. | 0.702 | 10.107 |
| Q11_3: I believed that the candidate has much knowledge about the work that needs done. | 0.658 | 9.637 |
| Q11_4: I felt very confident about the candidate's skills. | 0.808 | 11.116 |
| Q11_5: I believed that the candidate has specialized capabilities that can increase our performance. | 0.697 | 10.053 |
| Q11_6: I believed that the candidate is well qualified. | 0.604 | ** |
| **Demand-Ability fit (Higgins and Judge, 2004)** | (C.R. = .873) | |
| Q15_3: This applicant possessed the knowledge, skills and ability necessary to perform the duties of this specific job. | 0.888 | ** |
| Q15_4: I believed this applicant can achieve a high level of performance in this particular job. | 0.825 | 18.009 |
| **Uncertainty (Adapted from Pavlou et al (2007))** | (C.R. = .847) | |
| Q11_7: I felt that hiring the candidate involves a high degree of uncertainty. | 0.725 | ** |
| Q14_6: I felt the uncertainty associated with hiring the candidate is high. | 0.812 | 13.568 |
| Q14_7: I am exposed to uncertainty if I hire this candidate. | 0.810 | 13.55 |
| Q13_7: There was a high degree of uncertainty when hiring this candidate. | 0.832 | 13.863 |
| **Model fit statistics** (X2 = 0.000, CMIN/df = 2.712, GFI = 0.934, AGFI = 0.900, RMSEA = 0.073, SRMR = 0.040, NFI = 0.936, TFL = 0.946, CFI = 0.958) | | |

** = Items constrained for identification purposes.
C.R. = Composite Reliability

**Table 4: Model fit, Standardised factor loading and Composite Reliability for integrity – person-organisation fit – behavioural uncertainty model**

| Constructs | Standardised factor loading | t-value |
|---|---|---|
| **Trustworthiness: Integrity (Adapted from Lester and Brower (2003))** | (C.R. = .800) | |
| Q13_1: I thought the candidate has a strong sense of justice. | 0.642 | ** |
| Q13_3: I thought that the candidate will try hard to be fair in his/her dealings with others. | 0.729 | 10.409 |
| Q13_4: I thought that the candidate's actions and behaviours are very consistent. | 0.728 | 10.396 |
| Q13_5: I liked the candidate's values. | 0.729 | 10.408 |
| **Person-Organisation fit (Higgins and Judge, 2004)** | (C.R. = .827) | |
| Q15_1: This applicant was a good match or fit with my organization and its current employees. | 0.789 | ** |
| Q15_2: This applicant's values reflected the values of my organization. | 0.889 | 14.688 |
| **Uncertainty (Adapted from Pavlou et al (2007))** | (C.R. = .873) | |
| Q11_7: I felt that hiring the candidate involves a high degree of uncertainty. | 0.728 | ** |
| Q14_6: I felt the uncertainty associated with hiring the candidate is high. | 0.810 | 13.573 |
| Q14_7: I am exposed to uncertainty if I hire this candidate. | 0.810 | 13.583 |
| Q13_7: There was a high degree of uncertainty when hiring this candidate. | 0.832 | 13.889 |
| **Model fit statistics** (X2 = 0.001, CMIN/df = 1.965, GFI = 0.964, AGFI = 0.937, RMSEA = 0.055, SRMR = 0.036, NFI = 0.959, TFL = 0.971, CFI = 0.979) | | |

** = Items constrained for identification purposes.
C.R. = Composite Reliability

**Table 5: Model fit, standardised factor loadings and Composite Reliability for the benevolence – person-organisation fit – behavioural uncertainty model**

| Constructs | Standardised factor loading | t-value |
|---|---|---|
| **Trustworthiness: Benevolence (Adapted from Lester and Brower (2003))** | (C.R. = .805) | |
| Q14_1: I thought the candidate is very concerned about my welfare. | 0.767 | ** |
| Q14_2: My needs and desires are very important to the candidate. | 0.711 | 9.567 |
| Q14_4: I believed that the candidate will really look out for what is important to me. | 0.741 | 9.445 |
| Q14_5: I believed that the candidate will go out of their way to help | 0.628 | 8.962 |
| **Person-Organisation fit (Higgins and Judge, 2004)** | (C.R. = .825) | |
| Q15_1: This applicant was a good match or fit with my organization and its current employees. | 0.857 | ** |
| Q15_2: This applicant's values reflected the values of my organization. | 0.818 | 10.681 |
| **Uncertainty (Adapted from Pavlou et al (2007))** | (C.R. = .864) | |
| Q11_7: I felt that hiring the candidate involves a high degree of uncertainty. | 0.731 | 12.474 |
| Q14_6: I felt the uncertainty associated with hiring the candidate is high. | 0.763 | ** |
| Q14_7: I am exposed to uncertainty if I hire this candidate. | 0.769 | 15.637 |
| Q13_7: There was a high degree of uncertainty when hiring this candidate. | 0.866 | 13.95 |
| **Model fit statistics** (X2 = 0.000, CMIN/df = 2.814, GFI = 0.949, AGFI = 0.907, RMSEA = 0.076, SRMR = 0.057, NFI = 0.938, TFL = 0.938, CFI = 0.959) | | |

** = Items constrained for identification purposes.
C.R. = Composite Reliability

### 5.5 Construct reliability

Construct Reliability was assessed using composite reliability (CR). Composite reliabilities ranged from 0.800 to 0.873. As all composite reliability scores were above the 0.70 benchmark (Hair et al., 2010), the constructs in the study were reliable. See Tables 6, 7 and 8 below for CR related to each model.

### 5.6 Validity

Convergent validity was established for the data used in this research as the average variance extracted all three models were greater than 0.50 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988).

The researcher also used the HTMT Ratio to determine whether there is discriminant validity in the models. All ratios were less than 0.9, except for demand-ability fit and ability, which was 0.922. This is because ability is a component of demand-ability fit; they are not distinct constructs from each other, and some overlaps are expected to occur. Caution must, therefore, be taken when drawing insights from the mediation analysis related to the ability, demand-ability fit and behavioural uncertainty model. Tables 6, 7 and 8 below display the convergent and discriminant validity for each of the three models.

**Table 6: Reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity for the ability – demand-ability fit – behavioural uncertainty model**

| | CR | AVE | A | DA | BU |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A** | 0.861 | 0.512 | 1 | | |
| **DA** | 0.847 | 0.735 | **0.922** | 1 | |
| **BU** | 0.873 | 0.633 | -0.549 | -0.557 | 1 |

*Note.* A = Ability; DA = Demand-ability fit; BU = Behavioural Uncertainty; CR = Composite reliability; AVE = Average variance extracted.

**Table 7: Reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity for the integrity – person-organisation fit – behavioural uncertainty model**

| | CR | AVE | I | PO | BU |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **I** | 0.800 | 0.501 | 1 | | |
| **PO** | 0.827 | 0.706 | 0.829 | 1 | |
| **BU** | 0.873 | 0.634 | 0.448 | -0.506 | 1 |

*Note.* I = Integrity; DA = Person-organisation fit; BU = Behavioural Uncertainty; CR = Composite reliability; AVE = Average variance extracted.

**Table 8: Reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity for the benevolence – person-organisation fit – behavioural uncertainty model**

| | CR | AVE | B | PO | BU |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **B** | 0.805 | 0.509 | 1 | | |
| **PO** | 0.825 | 0.702 | 0.336 | 1 | |
| **BU** | 0.864 | 0.614 | 0.216 | -0.544 | 1 |

*Note.* B = Benevolence; DA = Person-organisation fit; BU = Behavioural Uncertainty; CR = Composite reliability; AVE = Average variance extracted.

### 5.7 Normality

The researcher judged whether the data was normally distributed by evaluating the skewness and kurtosis scores. For normal distributions, Hair et al. (2010) mentioned that skewness should be between +2 and -2 and kurtosis should be between +7 and -7. Kline (2011) also mentioned that skewness should be between +3 and -3, and kurtosis should be between +10 and -10. The observed variables show a skewness of between -1.821 and 0.240 and a Kurtosis of between -1.066 and 3.760; therefore, the data is normally distributed.

### 5.8 Path analysis results

A path analysis was built for the three models using the computed variables to test the relationships between the variables. The researcher cannot run fit indices on these models as the models are just-identified models or saturated models with zero degrees of freedom for all three models (Kelly et al., 2008)**.** However, the parameters from the model are the same as a linear or multiple regression analysis (Byrne, 1994), and these results were used to address the main and sub-hypotheses stemming from the research questions in Chapter 3. The statistical results for the main and sub-hypotheses are shown in Table 9 and Table 10 below, respectively. Table 11 below also provides a summary of the hypothesis testing results.

**Table 9: Test results for Hypothesis 1 – Linear regression with a 95% confidence interval**

| *Relationships* | *b* | *t* | *p-value* | *Conclusion* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Perceived ability -> Perceived behavioural uncertainty | -0.372 * | -2.988 | 0.003 | Supported |
| Perceived integrity -> Perceived behavioural uncertainty | -0.261 * | -2.125 | 0.034 | Supported |
| Perceived benevolence -> Perceived behavioural uncertainty | -0.102 | -1.396 | 0.163 | Not Supported |

*Note.* b = Unstandardised coefficients. t = t-values. * = $p < 0.05$.
Bootstrap sample = 5,000 with replacement.

### 5.8.1 Hypothesis 1: The dimensions of trustworthiness have a significant negative relationship with perceived behavioural uncertainty

The results from Table 9 are discussed below:

For the dimension of ability: The results confirmed a significant negative relationship between perceived ability and perceived behavioural uncertainty (b = -0.372, t = -2.988, p = 0.003); therefore, the null hypothesis $H_0$1a was rejected.

For the dimension of integrity: A significant negative relationship exists between perceived integrity and perceived behavioural uncertainty (b = -.0.261, t = -2.125, p = 0.034). Therefore, the null hypothesis $H_0$1b was rejected.

For the dimension of benevolence: The relationship between perceived benevolence and perceived behavioural uncertainty was insignificant (b = -0.102, t = -1.396, p = 0.163). Therefore, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis $H_0$1c.

**Table 10: Test results for Hypothesis 2 - Mediation using a bootstrap analysis with a 95% confidence interval**

| *Relationships* | *Direct Effect* | *Indirect Effect* | *Confidence Interval* | | *p-value* | *Conclusion* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | *Low* | *High* | | |
| Perceived ability -> Perceived Demand-Ability fit -> Perceived behavioural uncertainty | -0.372 * | -0.356 (0.098) | -0.552 | -0.174 | < 0.001 | Partial mediation |
| Perceived integrity -> Perceived Person-Organisation fit -> Perceived behavioural uncertainty | -0.261 * | -0.423 (0.085) | -0.599 | -0.268 | < 0.001 | Partial mediation |
| Perceived benevolence -> Perceived Person-Organisation fit -> Perceived behavioural uncertainty | -0.102 | -0.170 (0.038) | -0.254 | -0.104 | <0.001 | Full Mediation |

*Note.* Unstandardised coefficients reported. Value in parentheses are standard errors.
* = p < 0.05. Bootstrap sample = 5,000 with replacement.

### 5.8.2 Hypothesis 2: Candidate fit mediates the relationship between the dimensions of trustworthiness and perceived behavioural uncertainty

The results from Table 10 are discussed below. Since the three models are saturated models, the direct effects are equal to the linear regression results performed in Table 9 above.

For the dimension of ability: The test found that demand-ability fit has a significant indirect effect on the relationship between perceived ability and perceived behavioural uncertainty (b = -0.356, t = -3.632, p < 0.001). Furthermore, the direct effect of the perceived ability on perceived behavioural uncertainty in the presence of the demand-ability fit was also significant (b = -0.372, t = -2.988, p = 0.003). Therefore, demand-ability fit has a significant complementary partial mediation effect on the relationship between perceived ability and perceived behavioural uncertainty, and $H_0$2a was rejected.

For the dimension of integrity: The test found that person-organisation fit has a significant indirect effect on the relationship between perceived integrity and perceived behavioural uncertainty (b = -0.423, t = -4.976, p < 0.001). Furthermore,

the direct effect of the perceived integrity on perceived behavioural uncertainty in the presence of the person-organisation fit was also significant (b = -.0.261, t = -2.125, p = 0.034). Therefore, person-organisation fit has a significant complementary partial mediation effect on the relationship between perceived integrity and perceived behavioural uncertainty, and $H_0$2b was rejected.

For the dimension of benevolence: The test found that person-organisation fit has a significant indirect effect on the relationship between perceived benevolence and perceived behavioural uncertainty (b = -0.170, t = -4.473, p < 0.001). However, the direct effect of the perceived benevolence on perceived behavioural uncertainty in the presence of the person-organisation fit was found to be insignificant (b = -.0.261, t = -2.125, p = 0.034). Therefore, person-organisation fit has a significant complementary full mediation effect on the relationship between perceived benevolence and perceived behavioural uncertainty, and $H_0$2c was rejected.

### 5.9 Conclusion

The chapter shows the steps taken to obtain the results. It begins by describing the response rate of the surveys, the process of preparing the data, the descriptive statistics, the model fit, validity and reliability statistics and concludes with the results of the path analysis. Table 11 below provides a summary of the hypothesis testing results, which will be compared to existing literature in the discussion in Chapter Six.

**Table 11: Summary of hypothesis testing**

| Hypotheses | Results |
|---|---|
| **H1a:** A significant negative relationship exists between perceived ability and perceived behavioural uncertainty. | Supported |
| **H1b:** A significant negative relationship exists between perceived integrity and perceived behavioural uncertainty. | Supported |
| **H1c:** A significant negative relationship exists between perceived benevolence and perceived behavioural uncertainty. | Not Supported |
| **H2a:** Perceived demand-ability fit significantly mediates the relationship between perceived ability and perceived behavioural uncertainty. | Supported |
| **H2b:** Perceived supplementary person-organisation fit significantly mediates the relationship between perceived integrity and perceived behavioural uncertainty. | Supported |
| **H2c:** Perceived supplementary person-organisation fit significantly mediates the relationship between perceived benevolence and perceived behavioural uncertainty. | Supported |

## 6. Discussions

The research questions from Chapter Three are addressed in this chapter. This chapter also compares the results against the literature review in Chapter Two to determine whether the result contrasts, extends, or confirms the literature. The chapter concludes with three diagrams showing the results per the theoretical framework.

### 6.1 Research Question 1: Does each dimension of trustworthiness have a significant negative effect on behavioural uncertainty?

To answer this research question, the researcher drew on the results of the three hypotheses from Chapter Five. These results were compared to the literature review discussed in Chapter Two, allowing the researcher to conclude on the research question.

#### 6.1.1 - H1a: A significant negative relationship exists between perceived ability and perceived behavioural uncertainty.

The results show a significant negative relationship between perceived ability and perceived behavioural uncertainty (See Table 9). In other words, when the candidate demonstrates his ability in an interview, it significantly reduces the behavioural uncertainty of the hiring decision for the hiring manager, which increases the chances of the candidate being hired. This result supported the finding by Otoo (2019) that hiring managers reduce behavioural uncertainty by seeking out competent candidates who can meet the demands of the job. A hiring manager is more certain in his hiring decision if he perceives the candidate's ability in the interview as it reduces the risk of hiring a ‘lemon’ who cannot perform post-hire (Pavlou et al., 2007). This result also aligns with transaction cost literature from Cuypers et al. (2021), where uncertainty can arise through information asymmetry. Information comes at a cost, which reduces its accessibility, and therefore, different parties have access to dissimilar sets of information when making decisions in a transaction (Cuypers et al., 2021). During the interview, the hiring manager gathers information by perceiving the candidate’s ability at no cost. This removes the cost barrier to information, and the additional information gained on the candidate’s ability would

reduce the impact of bounded rationality, rendering behavioural uncertainty of the hiring transaction less salient. These results also align with Arvidsson & Melander (2020), who used transaction cost theory to explain that information gained on supplier competence can reduce uncertainty for the buyer by reducing the effects of bounded rationality.

The results extend the literature by Garcia et al. (2022), who found that perceived interpersonal and leadership competence can lead to positive hiring outcomes in virtual interviews. While Garcia et al. (2022) mapped the relationship between the two constructs, the theoretical mechanisms behind why the relationship exists were not explored. The result of this research report allows the phenomenon to be explained through transaction cost theory. The perceived abilities can reduce the impact of bounded rationality and behavioural uncertainty, reducing transaction costs and improving hiring outcomes.

Surprisingly, the results in Chapter Five found that competence-based trust ($p = 0.003$) is more salient than integrity-based trust ($p = 0.034$) in reducing behavioural uncertainty. These findings contradict Connelly et al. (2018), who stated that trust formed through integrity is more salient in lessening transaction costs than trust formed through competence in inter-organisational relationships. Their empirical testing found that integrity-based trust was ten times and 1.4 times more salient than trust based on competency at reducing ex-post and ex-ante transaction costs, respectively (Connelly et al., 2018). This is because trust formed through integrity is more valuable as it can be generalised across all aspects of the relationship, whereas trust based on competency is domain-specific (Connelly et al., 2018). When trust is formed through integrity, it pervades throughout the relationship so that the impact from the behavioural assumptions underpinning transaction cost theory is reduced; the candidates are less inclined to act opportunistically and more inclined to share information, which reduces the impact of bound rationality (Connelly et al., 2018). Competence-based trust, on the other hand, does not have the same effects; it does not prohibit the other party from engaging in opportunism or concealing information (Connelly et al., 2018). The conflicting results can, however, be attributed to the scope differences between this research and the research conducted by Connelly et al. (2018). Connelly et al. (2018) considered all three dimensions of transaction costs: uncertainty, frequency, and asset specificity. Whereas this

research only considered the dimension of uncertainty because the interview as the hiring transaction has a frequency of one, and the researcher chose not to examine asset specificity as human asset specificity is a broad construct and challenging to measure.

Furthermore, Connelly et al. (2018) did not consider the different risks and the roles that competence, integrity and benevolence play in each phase of the relationship (Bai et al., 2024). For example, Svare et al. (2020) determined that perceived ability is more important in the initial stages of a collaboration because if there is low ability, there is a higher risk that the collaboration will fail before it even starts. A low ability also means that calculative trust is low, as the cost of entering the relationship outweighs the benefit (Bai et al., 2024). After the collaboration has started, integrity would play a more prominent role in addressing the risk of the counterparty behaving unethically (Svare et al., 2020). It is also expected that integrity would only gain prominence in the mid-to-late stages of the relationship when forming relational trust as the perception of integrity develops over time through repeated interactions and social exchanges (Bai et al., 2024). As this research only examines the initial stage and not the mid-to-late stages of the relationship with the candidate, ability is expected to be more prominent than integrity when assessing for trustworthiness in the interview. Therefore, these results align with the studies done by Svare et al. (2020) and Bai et al. (2024).

### 6.1.2 - H1b: A significant negative relationship exists between perceived integrity and perceived behavioural uncertainty.

The results show a significant negative relationship between perceived integrity and perceived behavioural uncertainty (See Table 9). In other words, when a hiring manager perceives the candidate as possessing integrity in the interview, the behavioural uncertainty in the hiring transaction reduces significantly for the hiring manager, which would increase the chances of the candidate being hired. The results support the findings from Fehr et al. (2019), Cialdini et al. (2021), Kuhn (2020) and Melchers et al. (2020) that integrity can lessen the behavioural uncertainty of the candidate.

Fehr et al. (2019) reasoned that unethical behaviour occurs when an employee selfishly wants to obtain a better outcome for himself at the expense of subjecting others to uncertainty. In a manufacturing context, these risks can include placing employee's lives in danger due to unethical work practices on the factory floor (Lau et al., 2023; Fisher et al., 2019). The research done by Fehr et al. (2019) based on social learning theory found that UBPs committed by a supervisor due to a lack of integrity can significantly influence a follower's engagement in UBPs. Similarly, Cialdini et al. (2021) applied the social learning theory and found that unethical leaders lacking in integrity can also influence their followers to behave unethically. Additionally, Yue et al. (2023) used the social learning theory and discovered that leaders who demonstrate integrity could reduce workplace cheating behaviours and uncertainty. In summary, the results from Cialdini et al. (2021), Yue et al. (2023) and Fehr et al. (2019) discovered an inverse relationship between perceived integrity and perceived behavioural uncertainty in leaders. The result of this research, therefore, extends the literature by confirming that the same inverse relationship exists in employee selection outside of the context of leadership.

Additionally, Kuhn (2020) used the regulatory focus theory and found that hiring managers perceived the candidates as untrustworthy or lacking integrity if they had criminal backgrounds. This negative perception of the candidate's character increases the risk of the candidate engaging in opportunistic behaviour post-hire and creates more behavioural uncertainty. It reduces the chances of the candidate being hired, as this one act of dishonesty is generalised to all the other present and future acts performed by the candidate (Connelly et al., 2018). The regulatory focus theory states that a hiring manager will either use a promotion focus to hire the best candidate to achieve a desirable outcome or a prevention focus where the hiring manager will only hire safe candidates to minimise undesirable outcomes. Kuhn (2020) explained that prevention-focused hiring managers are less likely to interview candidates with felony records to avoid behavioural uncertainty. Therefore, the results confirm the findings of Kuhn (2020), who found that a lack of perceived integrity results in higher behavioural uncertainty. In addition to confirming the findings of Kuhn (2020), Cialdini et al. (2021) and Fehr et al. (2019), the results also extend the literature by testing the inverse relationship using economics. All three authors used psychology theories as the foundation for their research. However, this

research extends the existing literature by using transaction cost to explain the relationship between perceived integrity and behavioural uncertainty.

The results also validate the findings by Melchers et al. (2020), who found that a candidate with low integrity was likelier to fake in interviews. This is because there is a relationship between faking and the dark triads of psychopathy, narcissism and Machiavellianism, traits that are associated with a lack of integrity (Melchers et al., 2020). A candidate could engage in faking where he lies in the interview to form a positive impression with the hiring manager (Melchers et al., 2020). The lies told by a candidate with low integrity represent opportunistic behaviours that can contribute to higher levels of perceived behavioural uncertainty.

### 6.1.3 - H1c: A significant negative relationship exists between perceived benevolence and perceived behavioural uncertainty.

The results showed an insignificant negative relationship between perceived benevolence and perceived behavioural uncertainty (See Table 9). In other words, there is no significant impact on the behavioural uncertainty of the hiring transaction if the hiring manager perceives the candidate as benevolent in the interview. This result aligns with Svare et al. (2020), who found that the way trust forms differ depending on the risks in each distinct phase of the relationship. Mayer et al. (1995) first proposed that the significance of each dimension of trustworthiness would evolve with time. This is because as more time passes, more information is available for the trustor to evaluate the risk associated with engaging with the trustee. For the beginning stages of the relationship, when the hiring manager meets the candidate for the first time, perceived ability and perceived integrity are essential to develop trust as they help reduce risks that the hiring manager is exposed to (Svare et al., 2020). Perceived ability counteracts the risks of low-quality deliverables by ensuring the candidate can perform the job, and perceived integrity reduces the risk of damage to the company's reputation (Svare et al., 2020). These two dimensions initiate the relationship. Once the relationship has begun, benevolence becomes a performance facilitator to enhance the relationship created on the foundation of ability and integrity (Svare et al., 2020). As this research only examined trustworthiness in the initial stages, where the parties meet for the first time in the interview, and not subsequently after the relationship is established, it is expected

that perceived benevolence would be less pronounced than perceived integrity and ability, and the results validate the literature from Mayer et al. (1995) and Svare et al. (2020).

The result also supports the theoretical argument by Pollack et al. (2017), where benevolence only gains significance in the later part of the relationship. The theoretical argument by Pollack et al. (2017) is confirmed by the empirical research done by Bai et al. (2024) on how relational trust affects organisational performance. At the beginning of the relationship, it is difficult for relational trust to develop because insufficient time has passed for the parties to engage in social exchange and develop emotional bonds. The emotional bonds of caring and concern at the heart of benevolence are 'based on the shadow of the past' (Bai et al., 2024, p. 3; Mercier & Deslandes, 2020), and without the history of past behaviours, the hiring manager is unable to predict the future behaviour of the candidate which renders benevolence as a dimension of trustworthiness less salient (Cui & Jiao, 2019).

In contrast, the results contradict the research done by Zheng et al. (2021) and Thielmann et al. (2020). Firstly, Zheng et al. (2021) found that benevolent behaviour from leaders leads to a significant reduction in uncertainty in their followers. Secondly, Thielmann et al. (2020) found a significant relationship between actors who behave malevolently by exploiting their networks and the amount of uncertainty in the network. Conversely, this research shows an insignificant relationship between perceived benevolence and behavioural uncertainty. The difference in findings can be explained by the context being examined between the studies. This research deals with a transaction at the start of the relationship and is dissimilar to Zheng et al. (2021) and Thielmann et al. (2020), who explored how benevolence impacts uncertainty in situations where interdependent relationships have already been formed over time. Therefore, the results are expected to differ because time has allowed the trustor to gather information on the trustee to make the benevolence dimension prominent (Mayer et al., 1995), whereas this research examines benevolence at time zero or the inception of the relationship.

### 6.1.4 Conclusion for research question one

To address the research question, the results indicate that in an interview between a hiring manager and a candidate, only the dimensions of ability and integrity in trustworthiness significantly reduce behavioural uncertainty. The benevolence dimension of trustworthiness does not significantly reduce behavioural uncertainty in an interview. This conclusion aligns with the literature from Battista et al. (2020), Svare et al. (2020) and the theoretical argument by Pollack et al. (2017) and Mayer et al. (1995). Not every dimension of trustworthiness is relevant, and the dimensions of trustworthiness can be influenced by the context and the nature of the trust relationship under examination (Battista et al., 2020). The manufacturing sector hiring manager should look for the ability and integrity dimensions of trustworthiness during the interview to place trust in those who deserve trust. The research by Battista et al. (2020) also mentioned a dearth of empirical studies on how context and different conditions can affect the weighing of the different trustworthiness dimensions. This research question and the results obtained address this research gap and contribute empirically to the study of trustworthiness and transaction cost theory.

## 6.2 Research Question 2: Does fit explain the relationship between the dimensions of trustworthiness and behavioural uncertainty?

To answer this research question, the researcher drew on the results of these three hypotheses from Chapter Five. These results were compared to the literature review discussed in Chapter Two, allowing the researcher to conclude on the research question.

### 6.2.1 - H2a: Perceived demand-ability fit significantly mediates the relationship between perceived ability and perceived behavioural uncertainty.

The results show that the effect of the partial mediation of perceived demand-ability fit in the relationship between perceived ability and perceived behavioural uncertainty is significant (See Table 10). The partial mediation is also complementary, as the effect of the indirect path is in the same direction as the direct path. In other words, the indirect and direct paths show significant negative relationships. This means that demand-ability fit plays a significant role in explaining the negative relationship

between perceived ability and perceived behavioural uncertainty in the interview. This supports the research by Irfan et al. (2023), which discovered that employees use job crafting to mitigate the effects of work uncertainty. Job crafting is how employees alter their jobs or use upskilling to enrich their competencies so that the job aligns best with their knowledge, skills and abilities. In other words, job crafting allows employees to tailor their jobs to match their abilities to achieve a better demand-ability fit and minimise work uncertainty. This is similar to the findings by Erdogan and Bauer (2021), where person-job misfit due to overqualification may lead to CWBs that increase uncertainty, and Khan et al. (2022), where job crafting reduces boredom and CWBs for workers who perceived themselves as being overqualified. Overqualified workers suffer from job boredom as their ability exceeds the demands of the job, which causes a demand-ability misfit. Therefore, out of frustration of not being able to use their full range of skills, they engage in opportunistic behaviours like CWBs whereby they engage in cyberloafing or interpersonal abuse (Khan et al., 2022; Andel et al., 2022), which results in more behavioural uncertainty. Therefore, hiring candidates who fit the job's demands is essential as this can reduce behavioural uncertainty post-hire.

The results also validate the research done by Sylva et al. (2019), who determined that individuals tend to proactively develop their ability to achieve a better demand-ability fit to cope with a work environment that is increasingly becoming more dynamic and uncertain. Additionally, it supports the results from Beier et al. (2020) and Chi et al. (2019). Beier et al. (2020) discovered that as workers age, they experience cognitive decline, which affects their ability to complete tasks. If the cognitive decline is severe enough, it can result in incongruency between the worker’s ability and the job demands. This demand-ability misfit creates stress and strain at work, leading to burnout (Park, 2019) and increasing behavioural uncertainty in the workplace. Chi et al. (2019) found that demand-ability misfit may reduce task performance and create behavioural uncertainty, but a good person-mentor fit significantly weakens this relationship. A good person-mentor fit suggests the worker is seeking advice from his mentor to improve his ability to correct the misfit, which will enhance task performance and reduce behavioural uncertainty.

This result also extends the transaction cost literature on how trust can be used as a shifting parameter to shift from formal to relational governance mechanisms

because trust reduces the risk of opportunism (Cuypers et al., 2021). The results show that the hiring manager's behavioural uncertainty reduces if he perceives the candidate has a good demand-ability fit. The hiring manager may then choose to reduce formal mechanisms, like further screening tests and extensive legal contracting, as trust through the ability dimension of trustworthiness has reduced behavioural uncertainty to the point that formal governance mechanisms are no longer necessary. However, the study by Connelly et al. (2018) contradicts this view by proposing that trust formed in relationships with high competence but low integrity can result in higher transactional costs, hindering the shifting of governance mechanisms. When operating in a relationship with low integrity, the competent transaction parties contract more extensively as they have the knowledge and skills to cover every possible scenario under a formal contract, which increases transaction costs. Therefore, demand-ability fit can only be a shifting parameter when a relationship has both good demand-ability fit and high integrity (Connelly et al., 2018).

### 6.2.2 - H2b: Perceived supplementary person-organisation fit significantly mediates the relationship between perceived integrity and perceived behavioural uncertainty.

The results show a significant partial mediation effect of perceived person-organisation fit in the relationship between perceived integrity and perceived behavioural uncertainty (See Table 10). The partial mediation is also complementary, as the effect of the indirect path is in the same direction as the direct path. In other words, both the indirect and direct paths significantly and negatively impact the relationship between perceived integrity and behavioural uncertainty. This means that person-organisation fit plays a significant role in explaining the negative relationship between perceived integrity and perceived behavioural uncertainty in an interview. This result supports the theoretical proposal of Melchers et al. (2020), who stated that candidates might engage in faking or deceptive impression management, such as lying in the interview to get the job. Faking is a common practice, and a study done by Weiss and Feldman (2006) discovered that more than four-fifths of candidates told one or more lies during their interview. Candidates often fake to achieve fit in the interview by pretending their values are aligned to the organisation's values (Melchers et al., 2020) to reduce the interviewer's behavioural uncertainty and

increase their chances of being hired. However, if a candidate is caught lying, it shows that he lacks integrity by violating widely accepted moral standards of the organisation, which reduces the person-organisation fit and increases behavioural uncertainty.

The results also support the findings from Cialdini et al. (2021), Yandanshenas and Mirzaei (2023) and Yue et al. (2023). Cialdini et al. (2021) explored the effect of unethical leaders and malfeasance in their teams and found that employees who felt uncomfortable with the leader's unethical behaviour were more prone to turnover. This is because the mismatch between the employees and the leader's values causes cognitive dissonance and discomfort. On the other hand, employees who felt comfortable with the unethical behaviour tended to stay. These employees have a good person-organisation fit as they share similar values to their unethical leaders, which makes them more likely to participate and perpetuate the malfeasance and opportunism in the organisation. This effect creates a deficit of ethical employees in favour of a surplus of unethical employees in the organisation, creating more behavioural uncertainty. Moreover, Yandanshenas and Mirzaei (2023) found that leaders who display ethical behaviour can inspire their followers to behave ethically through social learning. The social learning theory proposes that employees with high-value congruence with their leaders tend to learn behaviours from their leaders (Yue et al., 2023). These ethical leaders can shape their employee's moral identity by distinguishing which behaviours are desirable or undesirable to reduce behavioural uncertainty. Additionally, Yue et al. (2023) found that ethical leadership significantly reduced workplace cheating and that a moral identity congruent with an ethical identity mediates the relationship between the ethical behaviours of leaders and workplace cheating. Ethical behaviour provides more certainty for businesses as the employees are more focused on the longevity of the business instead of focusing on short-term gains from engaging in opportunistic behaviour (Yandanshenas & Mirzaei, 2023).

The results also validate the findings from Halbusi et al. (2020) and Schwepker (2019). Halbusi et al. (2020) used social learning and social exchange theory to understand how person-organisation fit can moderate the inverse relationship between ethical climate and conduct. Social learning theory proposes that employees pay close attention to the conduct of their ethical role models so that they

may emulate these behaviours. Social exchange theory suggests that when ethical leaders behave with integrity, others feel more committed to reciprocate with ethical conduct. A leader creates an ethical climate by expecting employees to act with integrity. This ethical climate reflects the organisation's underlying values, which are used to assess the person-organisation fit. A misalignment of these values between the employee and the leader can produce dissonance within the employee that results in negative behaviour and more behavioural uncertainty in the organisation (Halbusi et al., 2020; Schwepker, 2019). Schwepker (2019) also used the social learning and social exchange theory and found a positive relationship between good ethical value, person-organisation fit, employee commitment and trust. Employees with high ethical value person-organisation fit develop stronger bonds with their workplaces. They tend to trust their managers more and strive to emulate their ethical behaviour as they see them as ethical role models of the organisation. Employees are also more committed if they have a high ethical value person-organisation fit as they are more willing to go the extra mile in exchange for being provided with the ethical environment that fits their needs. In summary, the result supports the literature by validating that a good integrity-based person-organisation fit can significantly mediate the negative relationship between perceived integrity and perceived behavioural uncertainty.

### 6.2.3 - H2c: Perceived supplementary person-organisation fit significantly mediates the relationship between perceived benevolence and perceived behavioural uncertainty.

The results show a significant mediating effect of perceived person-organisation fit in the relationship between perceived benevolence and perceived behavioural uncertainty (See Table 10). As previously discussed in H1c, the effect of the relationship on the direct path between perceived benevolence and perceived behavioural uncertainty was insignificant. Therefore, perceived person-organisation fit fully mediates the relationship. This means that person-organisation fit plays a significant role in explaining why there is an insignificant negative relationship between perceived benevolence and perceived behavioural uncertainty in an interview.

Mercier and Deslandes (2020) argued for the importance of benevolence in a profit-making context. They suggest that the deficiencies in trust between companies and their employees, created through modern-day corporate scandals and failures, can be filled by the company embracing a benevolent ethical climate. The company can create a benevolent ethical climate by using a unique set of internal practices to guide employees on how to act with benevolence in the workplace (Wagstaff et al., 2021). Benevolence, as part of relational trust, however, only develops through repeat social exchanges taking place over some time long enough for the partners to develop emotional bonds, which are then used to assess for benevolence (Bai et al., 2024). There must be a sufficient history of past behaviours to assess future benevolent behaviour (Cui & Jiao, 2019).

The unit of analysis used in this research is the hiring transaction in the form of an interview. The interview provides a short period for the hiring manager to interact with the candidate. During this time, the hiring manager assesses the candidate's benevolence to see whether it matches the internal ethical climate for a benevolence-based person-organisation fit. It is difficult to assess the candidate for benevolence-based person-organisation fit as the hiring manager does not have a prior history of the candidate's behaviour. The candidate can also not fake benevolence to achieve a good person-organisation fit as he cannot easily access information on the benevolent ethical climate of the organisation as the unique institutional practices differ from company to company (Wagstaff et al., 2021). The difficulty of assessing for benevolence-based person-organisation fit may explain the weak relationship between perceived benevolence and perceived behavioural uncertainty. While Rani and Samuel (2019) advocate for organisations that value benevolence to screen their candidate for benevolence during the employee selection process, this research extends their findings by suggesting that screening candidates for benevolence is not an easy task because the perception of benevolence can only grow in significance over time and cannot be easily faked (Pollack et al., 2017).

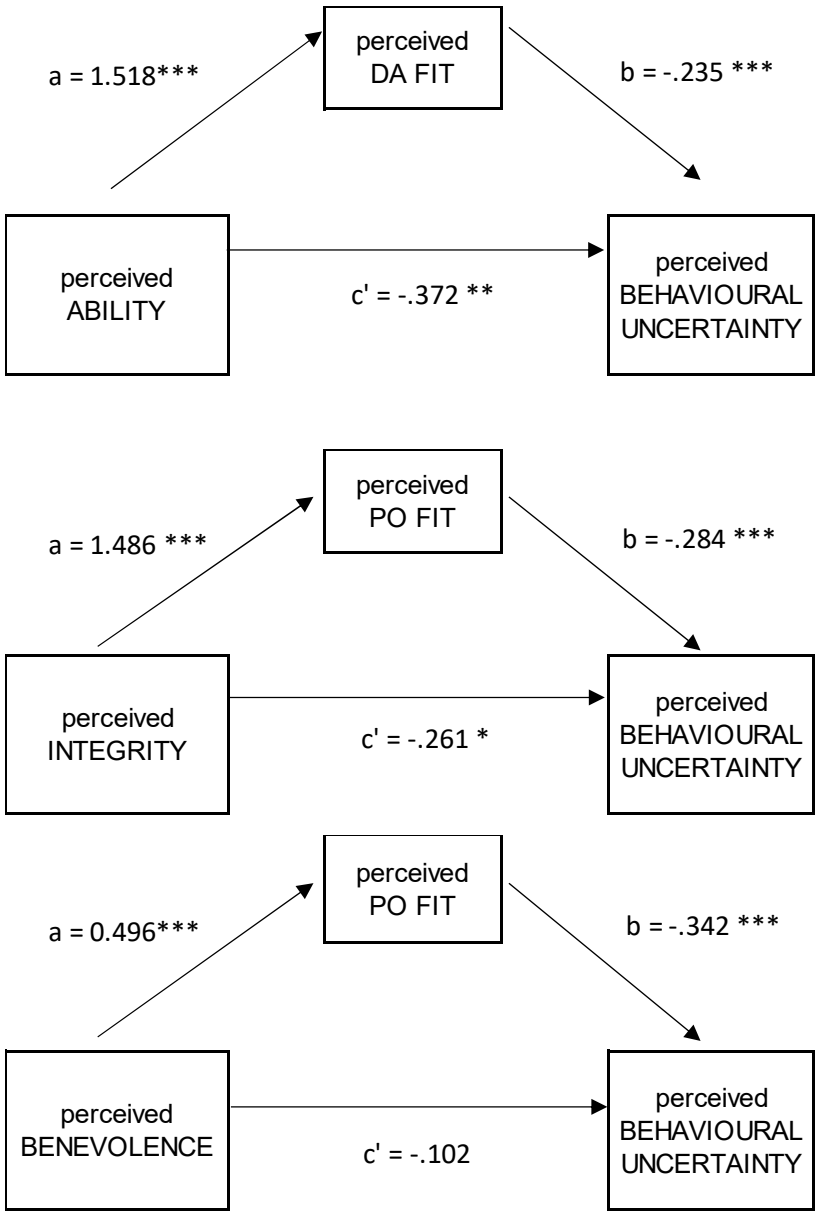
### 6.2.4 Conclusion for research question two

To answer the research question, the mediating effect of fit is significant between all three dimensions of trustworthiness and behavioural uncertainty. This suggests that the hiring manager must not only perceive ability but also perceive the candidate's demand-ability fit to reduce behavioural uncertainty. Similarly, the hiring manager must not only perceive integrity and benevolence, but these values must match the organisation's values to reduce behavioural uncertainty. A candidate demonstrating a lack of integrity or benevolence could also achieve a good person-organisation fit, provided that the candidate's values are congruent with the organisation's values (Cialdini et al., 2021).

The answer to this research question contributes to the proposal by Cuypers et al. (2021) on whether fit can act as a shift parameter to move from formal to relational governance mechanisms and how framing the candidate's trustworthiness through fit can affect behavioural uncertainty. The results demonstrate that fit significantly influences the inverse relationship between the dimensions of trustworthiness and behavioural uncertainty. Decrease in behavioural uncertainty can encourage the hiring manager to shift to less costly governance mechanisms to minimise transaction costs. For example, if the candidate can demonstrate that his abilities and values fit the demands of a job and the values of the organisation, the hiring manager can shift to using trust instead of formal mechanisms, like further screening, to reduce his behavioural uncertainty and transaction costs. The actual shift was not empirically tested in this research report. However, the significant mediating effect of fit on trustworthiness and uncertainty suggests that fit may be used as a shift parameter and provide additional support to Cuypers et al. (2021) argument.

## 6.3 Conclusion

The chapter discusses the research results to determine whether they contradict, confirm, or extend the literature review in Chapter Two. This chapter concludes with three models summarising the results per the theoretical framework from Chapter Three. These three models contribute insights to the theoretical contributions and management implications as discussed in Chapter Seven.




*Note.* *** = p < 0.001; ** = p < 0.01; * = p < 0.05.; DA = Demand-ability fit; PO = Person-organisation fit.

**Figure 4: Results depicted on the theoretical framework**

# 7. Conclusion

This final chapter discusses the principal conclusions and considers their theoretical contributions and management implications. The theoretical contributions discuss how the findings contribute further knowledge to transaction cost theory. The management implication provides practical recommendations and actionable insights for hiring managers to improve their hiring decisions. This chapter concludes by highlighting the research limitations and provides suggestions for further research.

## 7.1 Principal conclusions

In summary, this research report addressed the research questions and found the following:

### 7.1.1 Research Question 1: Does each dimension of trustworthiness have a significant negative effect on behavioural uncertainty?

The results shows that only two dimensions of trustworthiness (ability and integrity) have a significant negative effect on behavioural uncertainty, with the third dimension (benevolence) having an insignificant effect on behavioural uncertainty.

### 7.1.2 Research Question 2: Does fit explain the relationship between the dimensions of trustworthiness and behavioural uncertainty?

The results shows that demand-ability fit significantly mediates the relationship between ability and behavioural uncertainty. Therefore, demand-ability fit and person-organisation fit partially mediates the relationship between ability and behavioural uncertainty. Additionally, it shows that person-organisation fit significantly mediates the relationship between the two dimensions of trustworthiness (integrity and benevolence) and behavioural uncertainty. Person-organisation fit partially mediates the relationship between integrity and behavioural

uncertainty and fully mediates the relationship between benevolence and behavioural uncertainty.

### 7.2 Theoretical contributions

This research contributes theoretically to deepening the knowledge of transaction cost theory. Firstly, while trust has been studied monolithically as a governance mechanism that can reduce uncertainty under transaction costs (McMackin et al., 2022; Connelly et al., 2018; Cuypers et al., 2021), much less research has taken place to study how the building blocks of trust, or trustworthiness, influences behavioural uncertainty. To the researcher's knowledge, this is the first time that empirical research has been conducted to determine the effect of the three dimensions of trustworthiness and its influence on behavioural uncertainty. The results found that not all three dimensions of trustworthiness exert equal influence over uncertainty for this sample. This aligned with the literature by Mayer et al. (1995), Battista et al. (2020) and Svare et al. (2020), who stated that external conditions could influence how trust forms and, therefore, the dimensions of trustworthiness could also weigh differently in different contexts and conditions. Lee et al. (2022) also elucidate that it is rare for all three dimensions of trustworthiness to be present in a transaction, but at least two dimensions should be present. In the context of a manufacturing sector hiring transaction, the two dimensions of trustworthiness identified as having a significant influence on behavioural uncertainty were the candidate's ability and integrity. The result contributes to understanding how trust is formed in an interview by going beyond the unidimensional view of trust to the multidimensional view of trustworthiness to avoid trust being misplaced.

Secondly, the research examines, on a theoretical basis, whether fit can be used as a shifting parameter to shift from a formal to a relational governance mechanism so that transaction costs can be reduced (Cuypers et al., 2021). Again, according to the researcher's knowledge, this is the first time that empirical research has been conducted to show the mediating influence of fit on the perceived trustworthiness-behavioural uncertainty relationship. The results show that fit significantly mediates the relationships between all three dimensions of trustworthiness and behavioural uncertainty. This suggests that framing a candidate's trustworthiness through fit can

reduce behavioural uncertainty for hiring managers. If behavioural uncertainty decreases, it reduces the need for formal governance mechanisms so that less costly relational mechanisms like trust can be used. The results, however, did not test the shift empirically. No tests were done to determine the impact of perceived trustworthiness on transaction costs and whether the hiring manager shifted governance mechanisms based on this relationship. The results, however, contribute theoretical support to the proposal by Cuypers et al. (2021) to unpack the 'black box' on whether fit can act as a shift parameter and provide an opportunity for future research.

### 7.3 Management implications

The research has practical implications for hiring managers. Firstly, hiring managers often attribute their hiring decisions to gut or intuition because they have difficulty articulating the basis of their hiring decisions (Vincent et al., 2019). This research allows hiring managers to understand the nuance of how trust impacts behavioural uncertainty in a hiring decision and enables hiring managers to attribute their decision to something other than their gut. In other words, it allows hiring managers to go beyond general intuition to explain precisely the rationale for hiring the candidate because their perceptions of the candidate's trustworthiness reduced their behavioural uncertainty. This has practical implications for the hiring manager as it can improve the fairness in the selection procedure when hiring an employee (Wang et al., 2020). Organisations do not teach their hiring managers what to look out for when hiring, and by aligning the hiring decision to the dimensions of trustworthiness, the hiring decision becomes more structured, reducing the influences of bias in employee selection decisions and ensuring that trust is well-placed (Wei, 2023; Dirks & de Jong, 2022). Additionally, it allows the hiring manager to be more alert to the prominent dimensions of trustworthiness that can significantly reduce behavioural uncertainty when interviewing candidates. For instance, a manufacturing sector hiring manager should look for evidence related to ability and integrity in the interview to reduce behavioural uncertainty and increase the chances of hiring a 'cherry' instead of a 'lemon' (Pavlou et al., 2007). Organisations can educate their hiring managers on how to hire by highlighting the importance of assessing for ability and integrity when making a hiring decision. Moreover, organisation would benefit by

saving hard costs when hiring managers use trust in lieu of expensive governance mechanism to reduce behavioural uncertainty.

Secondly, while much is known about trustworthiness as the antecedent of trust, very little is known about trustworthiness as the antecedent of candidate fit. While research on the antecedents of fit has focused on social culture (Kristof-Brown et al., 2023) and high-performance work practices (Kooji & Boon, 2018), it is puzzling why there is a lack of research on trustworthiness as an antecedent of fit. Trust in a hiring transaction is essential as it can start the relationship between the hiring manager and the candidate on a good note. Therefore, the hiring manager should also consider the dimensions of trustworthiness when assessing for person-organisation fit and demand-ability fit analysis. The result has practical implications for hiring managers because the results show that the relationship between the dimensions of trustworthiness and behavioural uncertainty can be explained by fit. Trustworthiness acts as the antecedent to a fit, and hiring managers should remain alert for signals from the candidate related to their trustworthiness when assessing candidate fit. This could also assist in formalising the informal employee fit assessment system, as hiring managers are often not taught how to assess fit in their organisations (Wei, 2023). Hiring managers would benefit from using standardised criteria to assess fit to reduce bias and select better-performing employees (Wei, 2023). Additionally, a standardised fit assessment system would make the hiring transaction more efficient and allow the hiring manager to reduce the time, or soft cost, expended on the hiring process and focus more time on their work responsibilities instead (Navarra, 2022).

### 7.4 Limitations

Firstly, the research did not aim to determine causation and only determined correlations through regression. Since correlation is not the same as causation (Holland, 1986), only inferences can be made through inferential statistics on the relationships, and the researcher cannot conclude on the causes of the relationships. Future research should aim to determine the causes of the relationships.

Secondly, trust and the perception of trustworthiness differ in different cultural contexts (Bedford, 2021). This study, however, applied a Western model of trustworthiness from Mayer et al. (1995) to a global context of the international

population of hiring managers. Western models tend to incorporate an individualistic culture that might not fit non-Western societies with a collectivist culture (Bedford, 2021). For example, in the East, Thai employees tend to place more weight on benevolence in the workplace in building trust (Gaung & Charoensukmongkol, 2020), and in China, trustworthiness is built using the cultural tool of guanxi, which is based on the norms of reciprocity (Charoensukmongkol, 2021). In this research, only 13.5% of survey participants were from the West (North America and Europe), with the majority of 86.5% from non-Western societies. While the concept of trustworthiness is universal (Bedford, 2021), it must be acknowledged that culture influences how trust and the perception of trustworthiness form in non-Western societies. Future research should consider culture in trust formation to glean more insight.

Thirdly, there are two antecedents of trust, they are trustworthiness and the individual's propensity to trust (Mayer et al., 1995). This research has only considered trustworthiness and did not examine the hiring manager's propensity to trust and its influence in reducing behavioural uncertainty in an interview. The researcher chose not to focus on the propensity to trust because this is a trait embedded inside the hiring manager's personality (Patent & Searle, 2019) that the candidate cannot change in the hiring transaction. This contrasts with the perception of trustworthiness, which the candidate can influence by demonstrating the dimensions of trustworthiness in the interview. While propensity to trust was used in descriptive statistics to describe the population, it was not used as a construct in the hypothesis, nor was it tested as it did not form part of the research question. Future research should consider the effects of the hiring manager's propensity to trust on behavioural uncertainty.

Finally, this research determined whether fit is a mediating variable that would influence the trustworthiness-behavioural uncertainty relationship. The results show that fit is a good mediator in the relationship, but the extent to which fit causes the shift from formal to relational governance was not tested empirically in this study, and this limits the research result to providing theoretical support to the proposal by Cuypers et al. (2021). Testing empirically whether fit can be used as a shift parameter remains an opportunity for future research.

## 7.5 Recommendations for future research

The impact of trust (and, by extension, trustworthiness) on transaction costs is a growing field, and there are many opportunities to conduct further research by examining how, why, and when trust is built. Researchers can answer these questions by extending the nomological networks related to trustworthiness (the 'How'), expanding the understanding of the underlying theoretical mechanisms behind the relationship between trustworthiness-uncertainty (the 'Why') and exploring the boundary conditions that underpin the trustworthiness-uncertainty relationship (the 'When') (Dirks & Jong, 2022).

### 7.5.1 Nomological network

Firstly, the nomological network depicts the relationships between the construct of trustworthiness and other constructs of interest and explains ***how*** the relationship works in a hiring transaction. While this research report explored trustworthiness as one of the antecedents of trust and its interactions with behavioural uncertainty and fit, many other constructs remain where the relationship between construct and behavioural uncertainty has not been established. Dirks and Jong (2022) have identified more than 40 antecedents besides trustworthiness that can impact behavioural uncertainty. Examples of such antecedents are transformational, transactional, and paternalistic leadership (Legood et al., 2020), destructive leadership (Mackey et al., 2021), leader humour expression (Kong et al., 2019) and negative emotion expression (Sharma et al., 2020). Future research should determine how these antecedents can impact behavioural uncertainty and whether fit mediates the relationship between these antecedents and behavioural uncertainty. By studying these relationships, further knowledge can be added to how different antecedents may impact transaction costs through the dimension of behavioural uncertainty.

### 7.5.2 Theoretical mechanisms

Secondly, the theoretical mechanisms explain ***why*** bonds of trust are formed in a hiring transaction. The theoretical mechanism underpinning this research was based on the economics theory of transaction cost, which reasoned that trust is necessary as it reduces the behavioural assumptions of bounded rationality and opportunisms, reducing uncertainty and transaction costs. However, many other theoretical mechanisms, such as social exchange, attribution theory, signalling theory and uncertainty reduction theory (Dirks & Jong, 2022), can provide alternative reasoning on the impact of trust in a hiring transaction. A suggestion for future studies is to view the relationship between trustworthiness, fit and behavioural uncertainty by complementing these other theories with transaction cost theory to explain the mechanics that govern the relationships.

### 7.5.3 Boundary conditions

Finally, there is a dearth of research on the boundary conditions explaining ***when*** the dimensions of trustworthiness become more salient in a hiring transaction (Dirks & Jong, 2022). This research has only examined the condition in the initial stages of the relationship between a hiring manager and a candidate in a manufacturing sector interview. Future research could narrow the conditions under which the interview took place (virtual or a physical in-person interview) to determine the impact of trustworthiness on fit and behavioural uncertainty. Another suggestion is to distinguish between different referents of trust to determine when trustworthiness becomes more salient when evaluated against behavioural uncertainty. For example, trustworthiness could be more salient when hiring a candidate for a top management position versus a candidate for the factory floor, as the risks and dependencies for these two roles are significantly different.

## 7.6 Conclusion

There is a paucity of research in understanding the perception of trustworthiness and its relationship to behavioural uncertainty under transaction cost theory. This research contributes theoretical insights by examining the relationship between the dimensions of trustworthiness and behavioural uncertainty and whether fit has a mediating influence on this relationship. The results show that only ability and integrity significantly influence behavioural uncertainty, while the influence of benevolence on behavioural uncertainty is insignificant. The dimensions of trustworthiness also do not have equal influence; the influence of ability is more salient than the influence of integrity on behavioural uncertainty. Additionally, fit significantly influences the relationship between all three dimensions of trustworthiness and behavioural uncertainty. This result provides essential managerial implications to hiring managers, enabling them to save costs and make better hiring decisions by ensuring their trust is well placed.

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## Appendix A: Construct and measuring items

**Trustworthiness (Adapted from Lester and Brower (2003, p. 33) - Cronbach's Alpha = 0.94, 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 – Disagree Strongly, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Neither Disagree or Agree, 4 – Agree, 5 – Agree Strongly)**

### Trustworthiness (Ability)

1. I feel that the candidate is very capable of performing his/her job.
2. I feel that the candidate will be successful at the things he/she tries to do.
3. I believe that the candidate has much knowledge about the work that needs done.
4. I feel very confident about the candidate's skills.
5. I believe that the candidate has specialized capabilities that can increase our performance.
6. I believe that the candidate is well qualified.

### Trustworthiness (Benevolence)

1. I think that the candidate is very concerned about my welfare.
2. My needs and desires are very important to the candidate.
3. I believe that the candidate would not knowingly do anything to hurt me.
4. I believe that the candidate will really look out for what is important to me.
5. I believe that the candidate will go out of their way to help me.

### Trustworthiness (Integrity)

1. I think the candidate has a strong sense of justice.
2. I never have to wonder whether the candidate will stick to his/her word.
3. I think the candidate will try hard to be fair in his/her dealings with others.
4. I think that the candidate's actions and behaviours are very consistent.
5. I like the candidate's values.
6. I believe that sound principles seem to guide the candidate's behaviour.

**Candidate Fit (Higgins and Judge, 2004, p. 626)**

**Person-Organisation (PO) Fit (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.86, 7-point likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree)**

1. This applicant is a good match or fit with my organization and its current employees.
2. This applicant's values reflect the values of my organization.

**Person-Job Fit (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.89, 7-point likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree)**

1. This applicant possesses the knowledge, skills and ability necessary to perform the duties of this specific job.
2. I believe this applicant can achieve a high level of performance in this particular job.

**Uncertainty (Adapted from Pavlou et al. (2007, p. i) – Cronbach's alpha = 0.95, 5-point Likert scale)**

1. I feel that it hiring the candidate involves a high degree of uncertainty.
2. I feel the uncertainty associated with hiring the candidate is high.
3. I am exposed to uncertainty if I hire this candidate.
4. There is a high degree of uncertainty when hiring this candidate.

## Appendix B: Consistency matrix

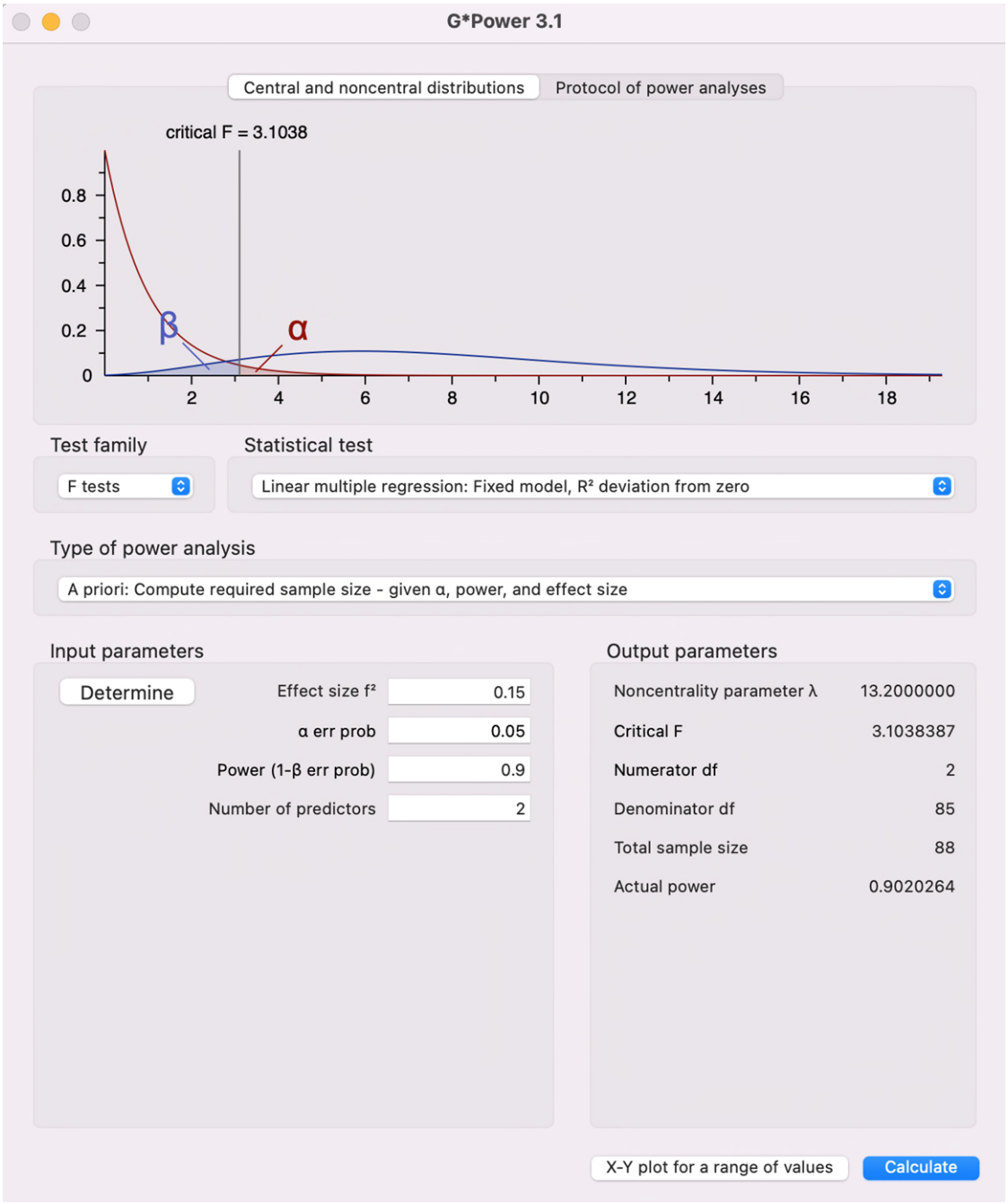
| Hypothesis | Literature Review | Data Collection Tool | Analysis |
|---|---|---|---|
| H1a: Perceived ability is negatively related to perceived behavioural uncertainty. | Cuypers et al., 2021; Kedharnath et al., 2020; McMackin et al., 2022; Um & Oh, 2020 | Trustworthiness & uncertainty survey questions | Path analysis |
| H1b: Perceived integrity is negatively related to perceived behavioural uncertainty. | Cuypers et al., 2021; Kedharnath et al., 2020; McMackin et al., 2022; Um & Oh, 2020 | Trustworthiness & uncertainty survey questions | Path analysis |
| H1c: Perceived benevolence is negatively related to perceived behavioural uncertainty. | Cuypers et al., 2021; Kedharnath et al., 2020; McMackin et al., 2022; Um & Oh, 2020 | Trustworthiness & uncertainty survey questions | Path analysis |
| H2a: Perceived demand-ability fit mediates the relationship between perceived ability and perceived behavioural uncertainty. | Kristof-Brown, 2023 | Trustworthiness, demand-ability fit & Uncertainty survey questions | Path analysis |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| H2b: Perceived supplementary person-organisation fit mediates the relationship between perceived integrity and perceived behavioural uncertainty. | Kristof-Brown, 2023 | Trustworthiness, person-organisation fit & Uncertainty survey questions | Path analysis |
| H2c: Perceived person-organisation fit mediates the relationship between perceived benevolence and perceived behavioural uncertainty. | Kristof-Brown, 2023 | Trustworthiness, person-organisation fit & Uncertainty survey questions | Path analysis |

**Appendix C: Case-wise missing data**

| No. of missing responses | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | 320 | 62.7 |
| 4 | 6 | 1.2 |
| 11 | 7 | 1.4 |
| 18 | 11 | 2.2 |
| 25 | 21 | 4.1 |
| 26 | 2 | 0.4 |
| 33 | 106 | 20.8 |
| 34 | 37 | 7.3 |
| **Total** | **510** | **100** |

## Appendix D: G*Power analysis



**Appendix E: LinkedIn message sample**

*“Hello <participants name>, I'm doing a GIBS MBA where I'm researching the influence of trust on uncertainty in the manufacturing sector. I would like to connect as I consider you to be a manufacturing leader with key insights into my research topic.”*

Once the connection request was accepted, the researcher shared a short description of the survey together with the anonymous survey link and a request to snowball the message to the new connection:

*“Hi <participant name>, thanks for connecting! As a leader in manufacturing, I would like to invite you to complete my survey that I'm currently running for my GIBS MBA on how trust develops in interviews in the manufacturing sector to see whether trust reduces uncertainty when making a hiring decision, and how trust can lead to more successful hiring outcomes. The results from the research will be used to grow the manufacturing sector. In order to collect data for my research, can I please may I ask you to complete a 5 minute survey? This survey is anonymous, and confidential and only contains 25 multiple-choice questions (no typing / text input is required). To qualify for this survey, you will need to have interviewed an external candidate within the last 2 years. You could have interviewed the candidate by yourself, or have been part of a panel of people who interviewed the candidate. All questions measure your personal views as an interviewer and you can work in any function, from a head office role to the factory floor, to participate in this survey. Link to survey: https://pretoria.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3fpODkbWUlnkzLE*
*Thanks so much in advance and please feel free to pass this survey on to anyone else you feel would qualify to take this survey.”*

**Appendix F: Survey introduction page**

I am currently a student at the University of Pretoria's Gordon Institute of Business Science and completing my research in partial fulfilment of an MBA.

I am conducting research in the manufacturing sector to determine how trust develops in an interview with an external candidate, and if trust and fit of the candidate contributes to the hiring decision. An external candidate is someone in the manufacturing sector from outside the interviewer's organisation who has been selected to participate as an interviewee in an interview. Any interviewer in the manufacturing sector who has assessed an external candidate (interviewee) in an interview can take part in this survey. I am therefore pleased to invite you to participate.

This survey should take less than 6 minutes to complete. Please complete this survey with reference to the last external candidate you have interviewed within the last 2 years. Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time without penalty. Your responses are anonymous and only aggregated data will be reported. By completing the survey, you indicate that you voluntarily participate in this research. If you have any concerns, please contact my supervisor or me. Our details are provided below.

Researcher name: XXX
Email: XXX
Phone: XXX

Research Supervisor: XXX
Email: XXX

*Note*. XXX – deleted names and details for anonymity.