

Title of proposed study:

Psychological contract transition and dedication in hybrid work environments

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ABSTRACT

This study is centred on the extent to which the psychological contract transition impacts the dedication dimension of work engagement in a hybrid work environment. The psychological contract transition is measured using the Psychological Contract Inventory (Scale), and consists of three dimensions: namely, No Trust, Uncertainty, and Erosion. The dedication component of employee engagement was measured using a validated scale, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). The objective of the study is to assess the relationship between the psychological contract transition and employee engagement dedication dimension in a hybrid work environment. Findings from the study will contribute to the literature in Human Resource Management and equip leaders and managers with tools to foster dedication and improve employee engagement levels using evidence-based information. The research took the following path: quantitative design, with correlation, positivist, deductive, mono-method (quantitative), and cross-sectional survey. The study concluded that erosion, as the psychological contract transition dimension, has the greatest impact on employee engagement.

KEYWORDS

Psychological contract, Psychological contract transition, Employee engagement, Dedication, Hybrid work

PLAGIARISM 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.

Londi Nemarumane

03 November 2025

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.1 Introduction

In the year 2020, businesses were significantly impacted by the Coronavirus epidemic (referred to as COVID-19) (Fairlie & Fossen, 2021). Like other nations, South Africa enforced a lockdown and shifted digitally oriented operations countrywide (Lindauer, 2020; Carlitz & Makhura, 2021). Employees immediately started working from home as work-from-home models were necessitated, and this compelled businesses to adjust their practices without guidance (Bick et al., 2023). Pre-pandemic, there were structural issues that existed in remote work readiness; however, COVID-19 induced remote work settings. Subsequently, remote work, defined as a blend of onsite work and remote work, became a feature of modern work environments (Arbter, 2023). The paradigm shifts and transition redefined the psychological contract, which had thrived pre-pandemic on face-to-face engagements, leaving employees and employers with gaps in the new work context (Matli, 2020).

Employee engagement comprises dedication, vigor, and absorption, which are critical in determining organisational success (Schaufeli, 2013). According to Schaufeli (2013), dedication refers to a sense of meaningfulness, enthusiasm and pride in one's work. Vigor refers to high levels of energy and resilience, and absorption is when one is fully immersed in their tasks (Schaufeli, 2013). Further research conducted by Schaufeli (2021) suggests that employees portraying high dedication are excellent in problem-solving, persistence, and more likely to feel organisational support (Schaufeli, 2021; Akgunduz et al., 2023). The psychological contract is referred to as the unwritten, implicit set of expectations between the employee and employer, transitioned in the hybrid work environment engagements (Herrera & De Las Heras-Rosas, 2021). The psychological contract transition changes how employees engage with employers, making engagement brings about motivation, emotional connections and commitment (Coetzee, 2021; Shaik & Makhecha, 2019).

Fulfilling the psychological contract was known to encourage employee dedication in traditional work environments (Foroudi & Fakhreddin, 2025). In contrast, a hybrid work model brings a new workplace dynamic, with limited studies focusing on the dedication dimension of employee engagement (Ngonini, 2025). Therefore, this research concentrates on the psychological contract's impact on the dedication dimension of employee engagement in a hybrid work environment. It will employ a quantitative approach to measure the strength of the relationship.

The research objective of this study is as follows:

- To assess the relationship between the psychological contract transition and employee engagement dedication dimension in a hybrid work environment.

The research sub-objectives are as follows:

- To quantify employees' perception of psychological contract transition utilising the Psychological Contract Inventory Scale (PCI) on a 5-point Likert scale.
- To examine the levels of the dedication dimension of employee engagement in a hybrid work context, utilising the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) on a 5-point Likert scale.
- To determine the influence of the psychological contract transition dimensions on employee engagement's dedication dimension
- To provide organisations with evidence-based information on how to manage the psychological contract transition and enhance employee dedication in hybrid work models.

The study will investigate:

- To what extent does the psychological contract transition impact dedication in a hybrid work environment?

1.2 Background

The study background is rooted in global and local shifts induced by the COVID-19 pandemic. South Africa, like other nations, faced the pandemic, followed by the governments shutting down all economic activities, in nations such as the United States (Choudhury et al., 2021). This era revealed that many businesses can

maintain a work-from-home work model while servicing their customers and clients digitally (Galanti et al., 2021). This was a disruptive period for businesses; however, it also served as an experiment for remote work (Galanti et al., 2021). Remote work, referred to as work that can be performed away from the office or other locations, either than the traditional office setting, became the norm during the pandemic (Angelucci et al., 2020).

However, remote work brought unforeseen significant challenges relating to maintaining meaningful engagements, technological barriers, digital inequities, maintaining effective communication, social support, procrastination, health, work-life balance boundaries, and performance evaluation (Reunamäki & Fey, 2023; Wang et al., 2021). While employers and employees were grappling to learn how to collaborate effectively from different geographical settings, this new work model surfaced deep-rooted issues such as trust and integrity, as oversight was impossible (Lis et al., 2021).

The new reality forced an evolution in leadership capabilities from employers. Amid the pandemic and its aftermath, leaders and managers had to be more adaptive, digitally enabled, and strategically minded, navigating the uncertainty and meeting business needs (Bush, 2021). Scholars at the time noted that significant and urgent adaptation to technology occurred in organisations (Junnaid et al., 2020). Amankwah-Amoah et al. (2021) further noted that this was not a gradual digital transformation, but rather a rapid response to a time of crisis for non-essential workers working from home. On a global scale, work-from-home brought about uncertainties and transitioned employee expectations (psychological contract) and how they engage (Gong & Sims, 2022). To be best effective in today's era, leaders and managers must go beyond the traditional command and control leadership style and educate themselves on the changing psychological contract (Carrington, 2025; Botha & Steyn, 2023).

As the country emerged from the national shutdown periods, tensions between employers and employees arose. Many employers started requesting employees to return to the office with the aim of re-establishing the pre-pandemic norms (Gibson

et al., 2023). The request was met with backlash from employees, who cited that they were more productive with improved work-life balance working from home (Gorjifard & Crawford, 2021). Felstead (2022) states that today's work is remotely performed, which is outside the traditional office setting, full-time or part-time. This study focused on the hybrid work model, which he defines as the ability to split a workweek, performing part of the duties from home and other parts from the office or employer's premises (Felstead, 2022).

It is essential that we ground this study in the psychological contract concept to better understand the employee's perspective in the new work context. Baruch and Rousseau (2019) refer to it as an informal, unwritten, implicit, and intrinsic employee beliefs and expectations held with their employer on reciprocal exchanges. A psychological contract fulfilment occurs when an employee feels and perceives that the employer has sufficiently met the unspoken expectations (Hammouri et al., 2022). In contrast, a psychological contract breach occurs when an employee perceives their expectations as unmet and failed by the employer (Gillani et al., 2021). A psychological contract transition, which is highly relevant to this research, is a point at which there is a shift in employees' expectations due to environmental changes (Sharma & Thakur, 2016).

Similar to the psychological contract, employee engagement shares common features such as intrinsic and motivational features, conceptualised by Kahn (1990). In the early 2000s, Luthans and Peterson (1995) stated that employee engagement should be viewed as an employee's length and extent of involvement in their organisation cognitively, emotionally, and physically. In more recent studies by Baker and Lee (2020), they bring a modern understanding by highlighting that the key features of employee engagement are dedication, vigor and absorption.

It is crucial to differentiate between the traditional and contemporary forms of the psychological contract (Knapp et al., 2024). The traditional or old psychological contract was mostly relational, focused on long-term orientation, based on mutual loyalty, and job security in exchange for commitment and hard work (Frydinger, 2021). The traditional psychological contract was established and applied in an

office-based work model, where there were predominantly bureaucratic structured organisations (Sezginer, 2022). On the contrary, the contemporary psychological contract is increasingly becoming transactional, short-term, focused on personal development and mutual benefits (Santos et al., 2019). It is more fluid and self-directed and exists in remote, hybrid and office-based work environments (Jha et al., 2019). It is furthermore suggested that employees are currently motivated by a sense of purpose, workplace flexibility, sustainable work-life balance, and the possibility of career growth (Maharani et al., 2020; Baruch & Rousseau, 2019). This study focuses on the contemporary psychological contract and employee engagement's dedication dimensions in a hybrid environment.

1.3 Research problem

Hybrid work models are now widely adopted and the norm for many employees post-pandemic, particularly among knowledge workers (Hopkins & Bardoel, 2023). Reddy and Sai (2024) believe that hybrid work model implementation brought challenges, such as a change in employees' perceptions of their employer and levels of engagement. For organisations, there is an increase and pressure to maintain and sustain employee engagement by fulfilling the transitioned psychological contract (Soares & Mosquera, 2019). Scholars have highlighted other concerns that arose from hybrid work models, such as changes in organisational culture, change management processes, and communication barriers (Çitil, 2022).

The problem has become urgent and magnified within South Africa's economic hub – Gauteng Province. Data, recently published, indicates Gauteng Province has the highest adoption rate of hybrid and remote work models in the country post-pandemic, at 54% workforce operating fully remotely or hybrid (Financial Mail, 2024; Mkhize, 2024). With this high number of provincial workforces engaged in a hybrid work model, leaders and managers must understand the psychological and social impact (St-Hilaire & Gilbert, 2019). However, there is a scarcity of research that links the transition of a psychological contract and the dedication dimension of employee engagement in a hybrid work setting.

Researchers emphasise that the hybrid work model has an influence on how employees feel dedicated to their job and organisation at large (Mathebula & Marwa, 2024). However, Walker (2023) elaborated on this view by stating that the extent to which an employee portrays dedication is dependent on how well the organisation manages employee psychological contract transition, post-pandemic.

The core research problem is that there is a lack of understanding of the extent to which the psychological contract transition in hybrid work environments impacts employee dedication, creating a risk of declining engagement and productivity. More specifically, there is a lack of quantifiable evidence of the psychological contract transition's influence on the dedication dimension of employee engagement. Failure and lack of attempt to understand this influence leaves organisations without tools to foster enthusiasm, pride and a sense of meaningfulness which characterise dedication in employees (Gera et al., 2019).

Since hybrid work environments emerged as a result of the pandemic, there was no intentional attention given to employee psychological contract, which led to an unplanned transition of the psychological contract. This study will dive into the evolved psychological contract of hybrid employees' settings and its impact on the dedication dimension of employee engagement. The study will, furthermore, make recommendations to employers on how to facilitate a smoother transition.

1.4 Purpose statement

A leading consultancy, McKinsey & Company (2021), reported that hybrid work has been a contributor to increased employee anxiety, decreased job satisfaction, and reduced employee engagement. Thus, this becomes the core reason why this study will focus on the influence of a psychological contract in a hybrid work setting and its impact on the dedication dimension of employee engagement. Subsequently, organisations will benefit from the research study, which will provide insight into how they can sustain a positive hybrid work environment that supports employee engagement.

By doing so, the research study will contribute to academic literature by analysing the relationship between psychological contract transition and the dedication dimension of employee engagement in a hybrid work environment. It will provide insight into the psychological contract transition dimensions (No Trust, Uncertainty, and Erosion) and the dedication dimension of employee engagement, using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). The psychological contract transition will be measured using the Psychological Contract Inventory scale (PCI). A quantifiable examination of the relationship is necessary as a hybrid environment presents novel challenges and transitions employee expectations (Franken et al., 2021). This research will quantitatively determine the influence of these critical variables.

1.4.1 Theoretical need

This research aims to contribute to the Human Resources Management field by addressing the limited research on psychological contract post-pandemic in a hybrid work environment context, with a specific focus on the dedication facet of employee engagement. The study will also build on the work of well-known scholars in the field of Human Resources Management, such as 'The impact of psychological contracts on employee engagement...' (Abarantyne et al., 2019). Through the quantitative methodology that will be employed, the study will provide empirical data on the relationship of the variables, thus adding a measurable body of knowledge.

1.4.2 Business need

The study findings will equip leaders and managers with insight into developing effective hybrid work model policies, appropriate leadership styles, and communication strategies to manage employee expectations. Equipping leaders and managers with tools to foster dedication will lead to an improvement in overall employee engagement and higher job satisfaction, with an increase in retention rate. Finally, the study will provide evidence-based information for organisations to redefine their hybrid work models to protect organisational health.

1.5 Delimitations of the study

This study's delimitations and boundaries are within the following parameters:

- Geographical: The research will be conducted mostly in Gauteng Province, South Africa, considering its high rate of hybrid work employees (McKinsey & Company, 2021).
- Population: The study targets employees who have currently employed in a hybrid work model for five years or more, thus documenting the transition from the old psychological contract to the new psychological contract.
- Personal perception: The research examines personal perception of hybrid workers; therefore, an individual approach is adopted and does not take the perception of the team or organisation.
- The study focuses on a hybrid work environment, through the view of psychological contract transition (no trust, uncertainty, and erosion).
- Methodology: a quantitative approach is used, which ensures that the research outcomes are objective and standardised.

1.6 Variables

The following variables are defined for this research:

- Independent Variable: Psychological contract transition, which is measured using the Psychological Contract Inventory Scale (PCI) instrument.
- Dependent Variable: Dedication dimension of employee engagement, which is measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES).
- Demographics and context: the study will also request the number of years of experience with the current employer, geographic location, age group, sex and current work model.

1.7 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter has introduced the study and its focus on the psychological contract transition and dedication dimension of employee engagement in hybrid workers. It has outlined the objectives, sub-objectives and research question of the study. It has provided the background to the study, research problem, and purpose

statement, coupled with the theoretical and business needs for the study. Lastly, the delimitations and variables of the study are outlined. The next chapter will discuss the key concept in depth through a literature review.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provided definitions of key concepts critical to this study, analysis of the literature surrounding these concepts, namely, psychological contract, psychological contract transition, dedication of employee engagement, and hybrid work. The aim was to establish the theory and empirical foundation for examining the extent of the psychological contract impact and dedication in hybrid work environments. It delved into the theory and was followed by an in-depth exploration of concepts and how they are interlinked.

2.2 Definitions of key terms

An understanding of central and key terms was paramount to this research. The terms below are defined as they were operationalised in this study:

Psychological contract: This concept was popularised by Argyris (1960), who termed it and presented the theory associated. The term was later refined and further developed by Rousseau (1989, p.123), who defined it as “an individual's beliefs regarding the terms of conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between the focal person and another party”.

Psychological contract transition: Holland and Scullion (2021) define it as the perceived shift in mutual obligations and expectations, catalysed by a significant change in the workplace between employer and employee.

Employee engagement: A fulfilling and positive state of mind that can be characterised by dedication, vigour and absorption in the workplace. Employees who are highly engaged portray emotional, physical and cognitive positive energy in the work (Turner, 2020).

Dedication: Dedication is a core dimension in employee engagement. It is characterised by a sense of enthusiasm, pride, and challenges in the work. Employees who portray this component have a strong identification and satisfaction with their work (Baran & Sypniewska, 2020).

Hybrid work: A work setting where an employee can split their time, in office-based and home-based capacity, using digital tools for collaboration and communication (Felstead, 2022; Vartiainen & Vanharanta, 2024).

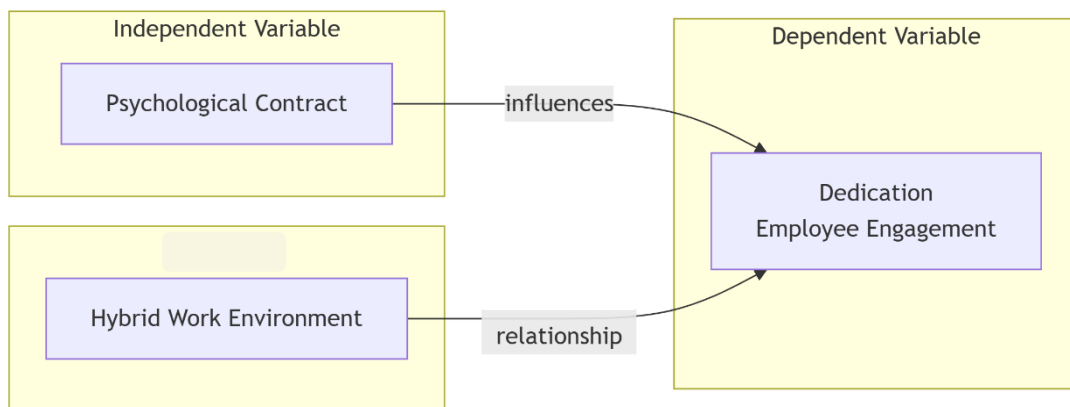
Words used interchangeably:

- Employer and organisation
- Hybrid work settings and hybrid work environment

2.3 Key concepts model

The key concept model visualised crucial concepts that guided this investigation.

Figure 2.3.1: Key conceptual framework



Model components:

- Psychological contract – Psychological contract transition (Independent variable): This is a primary factor influencing or a potential cause. It examined how the shift in expectations affects employee engagement.
- Dedication – Employee engagement (Dependent variable): This is the outcome variable that the study was attempting to explain. The study investigated the extent psychological contract transition impacts on dedication dimension of employee engagement.
- Hybrid work environment: This is the environment that affects the direction of the relationship between dependent and independent variables.

2.4 Theoretical foundation

The argument presented in this review demonstrated academic literature regarding the psychological contract, hybrid work environment and employee engagement. The widespread adoption of hybrid work models, which was induced by the pandemic, portrayed a drastic shift in the employment landscape globally (Jentjens & Cherbib, 2023). The shift was more noticeable in economically dense provinces like Gauteng, South Africa (Maree et al., 2021). At the core of this shift was the employee-employer relationship and psychological contract, which has been defined in section 2.2 (Meyer & Schneider, 2021).

A considerable amount of research exists on psychological contracts and employee engagement as individual and connected concepts in various industries, such as banks and higher education (Ngobeni et al., 2022; Yesufu, 2020). However, there was a lack of research intersecting the context of hybrid work arrangements in Gauteng (Adekoya et al., 2022). The study attempted to argue and present how the transition to hybrid work necessitated a re-evaluation of the employee and employer psychological contract. The study also presented that a psychological contract fulfilment or breach was important in establishing employee levels of engagement in hybrid work settings.

The literature review was structured in the following sequence:

- Psychological contract: evolution, fulfilment, and breach
- Psychological contract transition: No Trust, Uncertainty, and Erosion
- Employee engagement: Dedication, vigor, and absorption
- Hybrid work

2.5 Psychological contract: Evolution, fulfilment and breach

According to Kutaula et al. (2020), a psychological contract was implicit, informal and subjective in nature; most notably, unlike a formal employment contract, it was unwritten and undocumented. Furthermore, it was the base of employment relationships, it governed the perception of fairness, trust and commitment. It has

evolved over the years and most notably, during and post-pandemic (Wonda et al., 2024). Employees and employers could experience a psychological contract fulfilment or breach (Wonda et al., 2024).

2.5.1 Psychological contract evolution

Psychological contracts were not static; they evolved (Tomprou & Lee, 2022; Dhanpat, 2021). Chan (2021) had classified the psychological contract into either transactional or relational streams.

- Transactional contracts were expressed as short-term with a monetary focal point and exchange. They had narrow duties and little personal involvement, with a focus on economic exchanges like remuneration for tasks completed. The terms of employment would be more explicit and could be easily measurable (Handy et al., 2020). These were more prevalent in the old and traditional psychological contracts (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019).
- Relational contracts were characterised by long-term relationships with a socio-economic focal point and exchange. They had a broader and higher personal involvement with elements of commitment, trust and loyalty (Frydinger et al., 2021). These were more identified in the new and contemporary psychological contract (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019).

The shift into hybrid work models induced a re-evaluation of the differences of these psychological contracts (Deas & Coetzee, 2022). Academics argued that the contemporary psychological contract includes components of autonomy and digital capabilities, which were found in transactional contracts, while still needing commitment and mutual trust, which were relational contract components (Franken et al., 2021).

2.5.2 Psychological contract fulfilment

A psychological contract fulfilment was expressed as the extent to which an employee perceived and felt that their promised obligation and expectation were met by their employer (Rao & Kunja, 2019). Fulfilment of the psychological contract was subjective and dynamic in nature; therefore, it directly influenced employee attitudes and demeanour (Hammouri et al., 2022).

There was literature linking psychological contract fulfilment with positive organisational outcomes (Hammouri et al., 2022). It was stated that employees demonstrate a state of higher engagement, performance, and commitment levels when their psychological contract is fulfilled and met (Ruzain, 2024). Scholars further asserted that the drivers of this fulfilment were multifaceted, including organisational practices and leadership (Baruch & Rousseau, 2019). Kerdpitak and Jermstittiparsert (2020) supported this view, expressing that psychological contract fulfilment was best reached when an organisation treats its employees fairly, provides adequate support and communicates transparently.

As the rise of the gig economy was upon many nations, it gave a new and redefined definition to what a fulfilled contract looks like (Yu & Hamid, 2024). Furthermore, non-monetary elements such as job security and employee well-being became pertinent for fulfilling the psychological contract (Griep et al., 2025). It was then concluded that maintaining a positive and fulfilled psychological contract was important to alleviate the potential of a psychological breach (Abarantyne et al., 2019; van Gilst et al., 2020).

2.5.3 Psychological contract breach

A psychological contract breach occurred when an employee's perceived obligations and expectations were not met or fulfilled. Furthermore, there were instances when the perceived obligations were partially met (Gong & Wang, 2022). The terms 'psychological contract breach' or 'psychological contract violation' are used interchangeably in many studies, while some literature distinguishes between the two concepts (Schuster et al., 2022). This study has recognised them as interchangeable concepts; however, it has only referred to and operationalised 'psychological contract breach'.

Henderson and O'Leary-Kelly's (2021) view of psychological contract breach encompassed a perception of a broken promise, whereas psychological contract violation related to feelings of resentment, betrayal and anger. They further alluded

that it seemed like a cognitive assessment where an employee is asked whether their expectations had been fulfilled (Henderson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2021). The consequences of a psychological contract breach were always negative and led to reduced trust, job satisfaction, and a decrease in employee engagement (Topa et al., 2022).

Protsiuk (2019) argued the view of psychological contract breach, stating that literature usually concentrates on the employee's perception and not the view of the employer. In many cases, the employer's view was disregarded, and a one-sided story was told (Protsiuk, 2019). Janssen (2019) asserted that a breach should be viewed as either renegeing or incongruence with the following differences noted:

- Renegeing occurred when an organisation failed to fulfil its obligations and employee expectations knowingly and willingly (Janssen, 2019).
- Incongruence occurred when an employee and employer held divergent and different understandings of the obligations and expectations (Janssen, 2019).

Incongruency was mostly prevalent in hybrid work and remote work models, where expectations on communication and availability were never spoken, thus significantly deviating from employee and employer expectations (Voigtman, 2024; Karadagi, 2023). While this was the case for the former scholar, Meghana and Vijaya (2019) believed that disruptions in communication were common in remote areas, thus leading to a lack of awareness and driving a perception of breach in psychological contract, even when there was no malicious intention. It was concluded that environmental changes, leading to psychological contract transitions, resulted in employees being vulnerable to potential psychological contract breaches, eroded relationships, uncertainty and no trust, as they re-evaluated their expectations post pandemic (Holland & Scullion, 2021; Voigtman, 2024; Sohel-Uz-Zaman et al., 2025).

2.6 Psychological contract transition

As previously mentioned in section 2.5.1, the psychological contract was not a static concept, thus making it dynamic (Tomprou & Lee, 2022). A psychological contract transition was defined as the perceived shift in mutual obligations and expectations, catalysed by a significant change in the workplace between employer and employee

(Duran, 2019). The concept differed from gradual evolution in that it was a disruptive, intense process in nature, and with significant organisational or environmental shocks that trigger the shift (Soares & Mosquera, 2019). Shaikh et al. (2025) supported this view through a study that termed this shift a paradigm-shifting transition, which is affected by economies, subsequently altering the workplace dynamics.

This study measured the psychological contract transition through the Psychological Contract Inventory Scale (PCI) by Rousseau (2001). The scale focused on *mistrust (no trust)*, *uncertainty*, and *erosion*, which highlighted changes in employees' perception of expectation (Rousseau, 2001). Soares and Mosquera (2019) stated that the instrument had been widely used. Yesufu (2020) supported the scale, stating that it is a good instrument for measuring changes in the work environment. The transitional components (no trust, uncertainty, and erosion) were reflective of the weakening bond between employee and employer (Rousseau, 2001).

The 'no trust' dimension was indicative of employees' perception of the employer's unreliability and lack of integrity in fulfilling commitments, thus resulting in a breakdown of the employment relationship (Danilwan et al., 2020). The 'uncertainty' dimension refers to ambiguity in times of change, such as the transition to a hybrid work environment, thus creating flaws in employees' understanding of what is owed to them and what they owe the employer (Abraham et al., 2020). 'Erosion' captured the gradual decline in reciprocity perception, where employees felt that the depth and quality of the psychological contract had shrunk over time (Rousseau, 2001). The three dimensions, collectively, provided an understanding of how the psychological contract transitioned from a place of mutual trust to disengagement and fragility (Rousseau, 2011; Baruch & Rousseau, 2019).

The shift to hybrid work environments had established a period where the traditional psychological contract norms ended, yet the contemporary psychological contract had not become definite (Franken et al., 2021). It was also profound that during this period, both employee and employer had been going through these shifts; therefore, the expectation of organisational support had a different meaning (Ruzain, 2024).

The physical workspace had become an option, as opposed to a mandatory venue, whereby presenteeism and daily visibility were central to the employment contract and relationship (Kane et al., 2021). Therefore, an unprecedented demand had emerged from both employees and employers.

The psychological contract transition occurred in stages from the time of lockdown (Ronnie et al., 2022). The initial stage was when the lockdown was initiated, and employees needed to work remotely. At this point, the organisation focused on ensuring that the core business activities were taking place remotely (Ronnie et al., 2022). Employment contractual components were on hold while navigating these uncertain times (Smith, 2021). Post this phase, a renegotiation phase was entered, which was a prolonged phase for many organisations (Deas & Coetzee, 2022). It is important to note that while this applied mostly to knowledge workers, some organisations resumed with an office-based setting once the lockdown restrictions were eased. Barath and Schmidt (2022) reported that the renegotiation stage required organisations to rethink what returning would mean, either from a financial perspective, performance perspective or organisation (Smith, 2021). Employees were reporting that they were expecting higher remuneration for using their home as the office space, which was never spoken or written in plans when these changes were occurring (Robelski et al., 2019).

It was safe to state that many organisations implemented work-from-home policies, some hybrid and for some, fully remote work (Yang et al., 2023). The final stage of this transition was stabilising the workspace and affirming the working conditions going forward; for many organisations, this was between the year 2022 and 2023 (Zicari & Gamble, 2023). The stabilising stage saw new norms established; it was a sensitive and fragile stage as employees were governed by employment contracts entered into prior to the pandemic (Barath & Schmidt, 2022). For employees, this transition was about sense-making, revisiting employment contracts, and leadership behaviour (Gong & Sims, 2023).

Peer-to-peer conversations on the transition were at their peak as some employees had voiced the desire to continue working from home on a full-time basis (Mousa &

Avolio, 2025). It had become clear that employees were at the core of these discussions (Mousa & Avolio, 2025). Employers' requests to return to work were met with backlash (Lee et al., 2024). Atanassova and Bednar (2022) stated that it was also crucial for employees to understand that organisations were also trying to manoeuvre these uncertainties, as there had been no such time in the history of employment in the country and globally.

Psychological contract transition was measured using the Psychological Contract Inventory Scale (Yesufu, 2020). The scale required the researcher to use mistrust erosion and uncertainty, which will be discussed in the methodology. Post the pandemic, employee obligations needed to be revisited as their circumstances and environment had changed (Levy & Savulescu, 2021). Their new expectations included the provision of digital tools, flexible boundaries, and virtual leadership competencies (Zapata et al., 2024). This expanded the perspective and fundamentals of a psychological contract. Flexibility was initially a perk and privilege; it has now become a norm for all employees (Zapata et al., 2024). Chan (2021) noted that this was not only a shift in psychological contract, but it was also a humbling power shift.

The concept of trust had also gone through redefinition during this time (Frydlinger et al., 2021). Trust was initially observable in the office space, and in hybrid environments, it became a component based on outcomes and performance patterns (Badrinarayanan, 2024). Organisations needed to come up with ways of maintaining oversight virtually (Badrinarayanan, 2024). Although some employees viewed this as a sign of distrust and relationship erosion, it was better than fully returning to the office (Lopes, 2021). Some employees voiced frustrations of being in traffic for at least an hour in the morning and risking being late for work; thus, staying home would mean increased performance and immediate presence (Zenkteler et al., 2023). This mistrust was seen as a psychological breach, as trust needed to be something organisations worked on (Lilly, 2020).

Furthermore, this era saw an emergence of employee well-being concerns (Wood et al., 2022). Organisations needed to be more proactive in supporting employees

through this time (Wood et al., 2022). Employees were reporting anxiety, burnout, isolation and blurred boundaries (Gorjifard & Crawford, 2021). This era is still prevalent today in some organisations. Organisations that were not seen or perceived as supportive during the pandemic and post-pandemic were breaching the employee psychological contract (Morsch et al., 2020).

An ideal organisation had 'explicit renegotiation' of the psychological contract. This term was adopted by Baruch and Rousseau (2019), defining it as a structured discussion of mutual expectations in the new work context and environment. This portrays organisations as proactive in mitigating the high risk of miscommunication and misunderstandings in a hybrid work environment (Ngonini, 2025).

Measuring the three dimensions of psychological contract transition was relevant in a hybrid work environment, as the traditional norms of communication and exchanges were disrupted and significantly changed, leading to an altered perception of fairness, commitment and loyalty (Lopez & Fuiks, 2021; Mathebula & Marwa, 2024). Therefore, the PCI was crucial in capturing the significant shifts in the employee psychological contract.

2.7 Employee engagement

Employee engagement, as defined in section 2.2, is crucial in increasing performance, morale, and retention (Ngobeni et al., 2022). It is a fulfilling feeling that represents job satisfaction and a strong organisational identity (Saba et al., 2021). Scholars reported that employee engagement has become part of organisational strategy for many businesses (Nienaber & Martins, 2020). The pandemic had disrupted the foundation of employee engagement, as it needed to be virtual for non-essential workers. Therefore, organisations needed to rapidly find solutions for virtual interactions, without prior training (Shaik & Makhecha, 2019). Actioning this successfully proved organisational resistance, which subsequently would provide a competitive advantage (Kerdpitak & Jermsittiparsert, 2020).

Before the pandemic, organisations relied on physical presence, input and availability to measure engagement. Leaders and managers relied on daily observations and the physical presence of employees to gauge employee engagement (Kundu & Nag, 2021). Corridor conversations, kitchen conversations, and physical presence in meetings were crucial for building credibility (Lemon, 2019). Lemon (2019) states that these were unmeasurable, however, acceptable in assessing levels of engagement in the organisation. Organisations would implement annual surveys to gauge engagement levels from employee perception (Meyer, 2020). Boccoli et al. (2023) argued that this method, stating that employers disregarded productivity in measuring employee engagement and focused solely on those more physically present, but not necessarily productive. The notion was supported by Otieno et al. (2019), who believe charismatic people are usually viewed as most engaged, but this does not fully define engagement. It leaves out crucial points from the definition, such as the cognitive positive energy in the work (Otieno et al., 2019).

During the pandemic, mostly in 2020, the traditional model of employee engagement had become futile (Reddy & Sai, 2024). Organisations had to re-evaluate how employees would connect and engage through technology (Reddy & Sai, 2024). Platforms like Zoom and Microsoft Teams were the go-to software solutions for this problem. The software allowed for engagement to occur within the organisation and with external organisations such as customers, clients, or suppliers (Wood, 2021). Employees were measured through monitoring online presence in routine meetings and response rate to emails. The quality of engagement was measured through video calls and virtual presenteeism, which compromised it (Wood, 2021).

Post the pandemic, hybrid work models were starting to take form (Adekoya et al., 2022). Furthermore, organisations became more aware that they needed to think of non-conventional ways of engaging (Adekoya et al., 2022). It had become clear to employers that relying on online presence through green dots was not a credible and fair measure of engagement or productivity (Wood, 2021). Employees started focusing more on outcomes and presence in meetings through video. Platforms such as WhatsApp, which were previously used for social media and personal tools for

interacting with family and friends, have now been used for work engagements too (Iswanto et al., 2021). Organisations became flexible on communication platforms; WhatsApp was far more accessible and easier to reach employees on it (Iswanto et al., 2021). The response turnaround time was usually shorter as employees had their phones with them. Organisations created WhatsApp groups, where further or focused engagements could take place (Iswanto et al., 2021).

Currently, workplaces continue to be characterised by flexibility, trust, employee wellness, and well-being (Wisseh, 2025). In addition, digital instruments were used, pulse surveys have persisted, and the calibre of outcomes has been scrutinised (Iswanto et al., 2021). The challenges experienced in the current methods of engagement among a geographically dispersed workforce were fostering employee engagement and collaboration (Kundu & Nag, 2021). A hybrid environment made it difficult to foster a sense of belonging and organisational identity (Jeffries, 2024). Coordinating engagement between in-office employees and remote employees was also a challenge (Darlington, 2024). Visibility, recognition, and reward systems needed to be aligned with the hybrid environment (Adesina & Egbuta, 2025). The next section provides theories that explain employee engagement.

2.7.1 Theories related to employee engagement: JD-R model and SET

The two recognised theories in employee engagement are the Job Demands-Resources model and Social Exchange Theory (Simbula et al., 2023). Job Demands-Resources theory was coined by Arnold B. Bakker and Evangelia Demerouti in the early 2000s, as a Human Resources concept (Bakker et al., 2023). The Social Exchange theory was coined in the 1950s, in an attempt to understand how employees sustain social exchanges in the workplace.

Job Demands-Resources Model

The most prominent theoretical framework of employee engagement is the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, which suggests that engagement is a result of balance between job demands and job resources (Lesener et al., 2019). Job demands were physical, social, and organisational aspects that required sustained

efforts (Roskams & Haynes, 2021). Job resources were aspects that assisted in achieving goals by reducing demands and stimulating growth (Radic et al., 2020). In hybrid work environments, demands included things such as digital fatigue, work-life boundary, and increased workload (Coulston et al., 2025). Job resources included autonomy, effective technology, job crafting and leadership support (Hong et al., 2020).

Grobelny (2023) suggests that the JD-R model is applicable across all work environments, including hybrid work environments. It focuses on how employees engage based on the demands they face and resources at their disposal (Kwon & Kim, 2020). Research has proven that employees with limited resources and a stretch or excess of demands would likely experience disengagement and withdrawal from their job (Marathe et al., 2019). The model furthermore states that sufficient job resources buffer the negative effects of job demands (Xu & Payne, 2020). The most frequently reported job demand was an increase in workload, with the same pay (Chowhan & Pike, 2023). Elements such as strong communication tools and leadership style were serving as key components sustaining engagement (Chowhan & Pike, 2023).

The JD-R model was interlinked with the psychological contract, and it was based on employees' perception of the work environment (Naveed & Qamar Zia, 2024). They further stated that these two concepts are interlinked and have an impact on each other. Both (psychological contract and JD-R) concepts have an impact on employee performance and, in many instances, their attitude and how they show up in the workplace (Naveed & Qamar Zia, 2024). Kerdpitak and Jermsittiparsert (2020) posited that the psychological contract can be seen as a resource when employees perceive it as fulfilled. Conversely, when employees deem a psychological contract breach, they are likely to be less engaged in the workplace as their expectations would have been unmet (Abarantyne et al., 2019). Therefore, it can be deduced that in such instances, emotional resources would be diminishing, causing an imbalance, strain, and erosion in the employee-employer relationship (Jones, 2024).

Social Exchange Theory

The second acclaimed theoretical framework for employee engagement was the Social Exchange Theory (SET). The Social Exchange Theory is reliant on reciprocity, whereby an individual enters a relationship with expectations that a good deed will be returned to them (Meira & Hancer, 2021). Meira and Hancer (2021) believed that the Social Exchange Theory is the core reason why employees respond positively to the organisation. They believed that employees perceive themselves as valued when the organisation do good deeds on their behalf, which leads to a sense of motivation to reciprocate the deed (Meira & Hancer, 2021; Tsai & Kang, 2019). Furthermore, feelings of fair treatment, recognition and professional development emerged as a result of this reciprocity (Kim & Qu, 2020).

The theory provided a lens for understanding the reciprocal nature of engagement (Simbula et al., 2023). Scholars suggested that employees reciprocated greater engagement and commitment when they received a good deed from the organisation (Kim & Qu, 2020). Similarly, scholars found that this theory had strong links to the psychological contract theory, which was a set of mutual and unwritten expectations (Memon & Ghani, 2020). Khajuria and Khan (2022) reported that studies indicate employees who experience organisational support and perceived fairness from their employers tend to report feeling heightened work engagement levels.

Components of employee engagement include dedication, vigor, and absorption (Schaufeli, 2021). These components were multidimensional and recommended for deconstructing the employee engagement concept (Schaufeli, 2021). The model was crucial in ascertaining how different aspects of the workplace environment had an impact on employee engagement (Schaufeli, 2021). This study focused on the dedication dimension of employee engagement.

2.7.1 Dedication

According to Baran and Sypniewska (2020), dedication was a representation of a fundamental dimension, encompassing a sense of enthusiasm, pride, and commitment in the work. It was reflective of the emotional investment and intrinsic

motivation. Employees who had this characteristic portrayed a strong organisational identity and job satisfaction (Baran & Sypniewska, 2020). Dedication in this study was measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). Dedicated employees were reporting high levels of enthusiasm and stating that they found their job sufficiently challenging (Gera et al., 2019). Sakthimala and Deepalakshmi (2023) highlighted that these employees were also passionate about their job and looked forward to going to work, with low absenteeism rates recorded among these individuals.

Hybrid settings brought a change in perspective in what a dedicated employee looked like. In addition, hybrid work environments threatened dedication among employees who were disconnected from the organisation's mission and goals, or those of their team members (Uru et al., 2022). Nurhidayah and Muliensyah (2024) reported that a lack of digital leadership and communication could deplete emotions of pride and inspiration, which inherently challenge the dedication dimension. This study focused on the dedication dimension as it captured the emotional and cognitive connection employees have with their employer. It has attributes (pride, purpose, and enthusiasm) which are reflective of the fundamentals of understanding engagement in an evolving work context, like a hybrid work environment (Uru et al., 2022). Therefore, as opposed to vigor and absorption, dedication was a reliable indicator of how employees internalise their commitment to employers, and retention, despite the evolving workplace context (Azeez, 2021).

Dedication was a strong predictor of performance and retention, therefore, making it a factor in evaluating the quality of the relationship between the employer and employee (Azeez, 2021). In comparison to vigor and absorption, dedication was more closely linked to psychological contract as employees felt dedicated when their expectations and promises were fulfilled (Naveed & Qamar Zia, 2024; Sandhya & Sulphrey, 2019). Isolating this dimension has provided the study with a deeper and meaningful understanding of how the psychological contract transition influences dedication in hybrid work environments.

2.7.2 Vigor

Vigor was defined as high levels of energy, persistence in challenges, and mental resilience (Decuyper & Schaufeli, 2020). Employees with high levels of vigor were seen approaching their work with stamina and high energy levels (Kara et al., 2019). Olaus et al. (2025) reported that removing commuting stress boosted employee energy levels and subsequently their performance. On the contrary, Zhamshit (2025) suggested that employees with high energy levels were at risk of blurring work-life balance when working from home. Thus, leaders and managers were likely to delegate more work towards these individuals as opposed to those with low energy levels (Zhamshit, 2025). In some instances, it was reported that they were also likely to experience burnout and mental exhaustion quickly than colleagues with lower energy levels, as they would be overworked (Ginoux et al., 2019). Sustaining an employee's vigor level and eudaimonia in the workplace requires deliberate actions from the organisation, such as promoting digital well-being (Pisarska et al., 2025). Therefore, organisations need to initiate awareness and respect for non-working hours or times by encouraging more engagement during working hours and not blurring the lines (Haglund & Svensson, 2024).

2.7.3 Absorption

Decuyper and Schaufeli (2020) asserted that when an employee appears fully concentrated and happily captivated in their work, they portray the absorption dimension of employee engagement. Typically, these employees would find themselves so engaged that time passed quickly, and they found it difficult to detach and disengage from their tasks (Vogel et al., 2022). With this said, the hybrid work environment brought a different dynamic to this absorption effect. Specifically, the home environment needed to replicate the office quietness to allow for focus time (McGee et al., 2023). However, this proved to be a challenge for many employees in times when they were home (McGee et al., 2023). Distractions ranged from staying online on communication channels to domestic distractions (Bissell et al., 2025). Organisations that thrived in this era were those that encouraged asynchronous communication and provided support to those employees struggling with hybrid work dynamics (Zhu, 2025).

2.8 Hybrid work

Hybrid work environments became popular post covid in South Africa, and perhaps in other nations too (Financial Mail, 2024; Hopkins & Bardoel, 2023). They represent a fourth industrial revolution (4th IR) era, where focus was on automation, digitisation, and efficiency heavily driven by Artificial Intelligence (AI) (Gorski et al., 2022). As a result of this evolution, structural shifts such as splitting time between home and the office were mandatory (Gorski et al., 2022; Zhu, 2025).

Although the hybrid work model was born out of necessity, in South Africa, the benefits it holds, such as autonomy and flexibility for employees, sustained its existence in organisations (Meghana & Vijaya, 2019; Dale et al., 2024). Tsipursky (2022) emphasised that it introduced distinctive challenges for employee engagement, like communication barriers and the risk of proximity bias. Furthermore, it is stated that employees who were in the office were more favourable than remote counterparts (Tahlyan et al., 2024). Researchers found that hybrid work models thrived only in organisations that intentionally designed structures to support it and its employees. This included establishing policies and procedures, a humane leadership approach and equitable practices across the organisation (Hopkins & Bardoel, 2023).

2.9 The interplay between psychological contract, employee engagement, and hybrid work

Employees' expectations had evolved due to the shift to a hybrid work environment, therefore, altering the psychological contract (Dale et al., 2024). It was due to a recalibration of the employee and employer relationship and the nature of employee engagement (Zhu, 2025). The transitioning of the psychological contract was motivated by the hybrid work environment, thus changing the employee's unwritten expectations (Deas & Coetzee, 2022). Furthermore, the psychological contract reconfiguration was the primary mechanism which influenced the dedication dimension of employee engagement in hybrid work environments. Once employees perceived the organisation to be fulfilling the expectations, such as flexibility, employees were likely to reciprocate with high levels of engagement through social exchanges (Memon & Ghani, 2020).

Organisations needed to recognise that managing a psychological contract transition required deliberate and intentional efforts to support employees emotionally, digitally, and to have a humane approach to leadership (Gong & Sims, 2023). Therefore, it is crucial to understand how the psychological contract transition functions in hybrid work environments in formulating effective engagement strategies (Gong & Sims, 2023; Abarantyne et al., 2019).

2.10 Contribution to the literature and justification of the study

Literature on the psychological contract and employee engagement was comprehensive and extensive; however, it lacked the intersection of hybrid work environments (Abarantyne et al., 2019; Chan, 2021; Ngobeni et al., 2022; Ruzain, 2024). Furthermore, a deeper lens into the dedication dimension of employee engagement was not included in the literature. Existing studies in remote and hybrid work environments did not address the dedication dimension explicitly. Ngobeni et al.'s (2022) study of the psychological contracts on employee engagement in a South African bank did not focus on hybrid work environments. Kutaula et al. (2020) address the gap in applying Western-centric models in the South African, unique socio-economic environment.

This study was therefore motivated by its need to contribute to the literature. It sought to provide depth and insight into understanding how the transition of a psychological contract in a hybrid work environment influences the dedication dimension of employee engagement. The study findings aimed to contribute to academic theory through evidence-based practical strategies to sustain dedication in hybrid work environments.

2.11 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter has highlighted critical definitions, provided a theory of the psychological contract, psychological contract transition, employee engagement, hybrid work, and the interplay of these concepts. Theory suggested that hybrid work

settings were influenced by multiple aspects. Literature also suggested that research was necessary in the hybrid work setting.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides hypotheses and measuring scales to operationalise constructs. The literature review in Chapter 2 indicated that changes to the hybrid work model had recalibrated the psychological contract, making it crucial in employee engagement. This research will follow a quantitative research design to evaluate the relationship between these constructs. The study has taken into consideration that psychological contract and employee engagement are well-researched constructs; thus, research hypotheses will be utilised. The hypotheses are testable and derived from theory, which was structured using survey instruments. The measuring scales used were Psychological Contract Inventory Scale (PCI) and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), which is a dedication dimension of the employee engagement subscale.

3.2 Research question

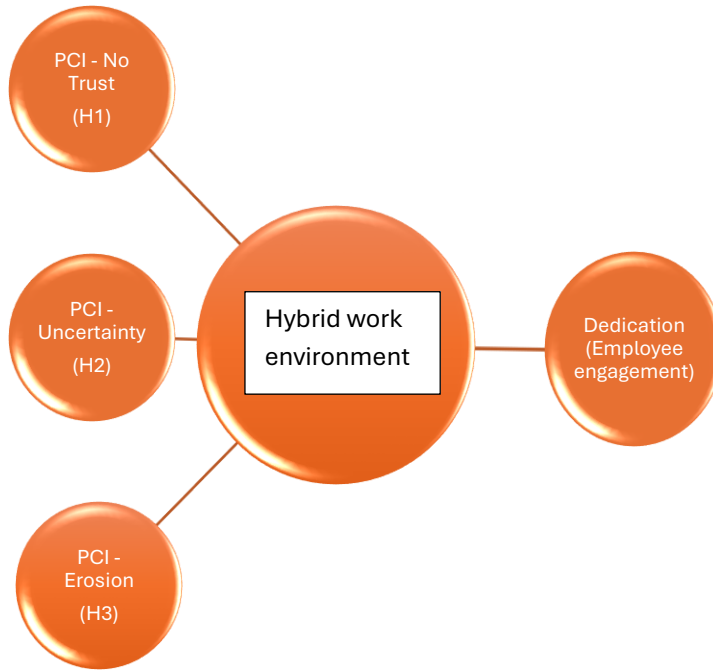
The research question for this study is 'To what extent does the psychological contract transition impact dedication in a hybrid work environment?'

3.3 Hypothesis and the measurements

Instruments were designed to record the constructs at the core of the research problem. Therefore, the following hypotheses are constructed to assess the extent of the impact.

Figure 3.3: Dimensions' hypotheses relationship

Source: Researcher's formation



Hypothesis 1 (H1):

The 'no trust' dimension of the psychological contract will portray a strong negative impact on dedication

Hypothesis 2 (H2):

The 'uncertainty' dimension of the psychological contract will portray a strong negative impact on dedication

Hypothesis 3 (H3):

The 'erosion' dimension of the psychological contract will portray a strong negative impact on dedication

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research question and three hypotheses that collectively structured the framework for the investigation of the central research question.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter justifies the research methodology to investigate the relationship between employee psychological contract transition and dedication dimension in hybrid work environments. The chapter covered the research design, philosophy, approach, methodological choice, strategy and time horizon. Furthermore, it covered the population, unit of analysis, sampling method and size, instruments, data gathering processes, and the planned analysis approach. The methodology was designed to address the research hypotheses through quantitative data collection.

4.2 Research design

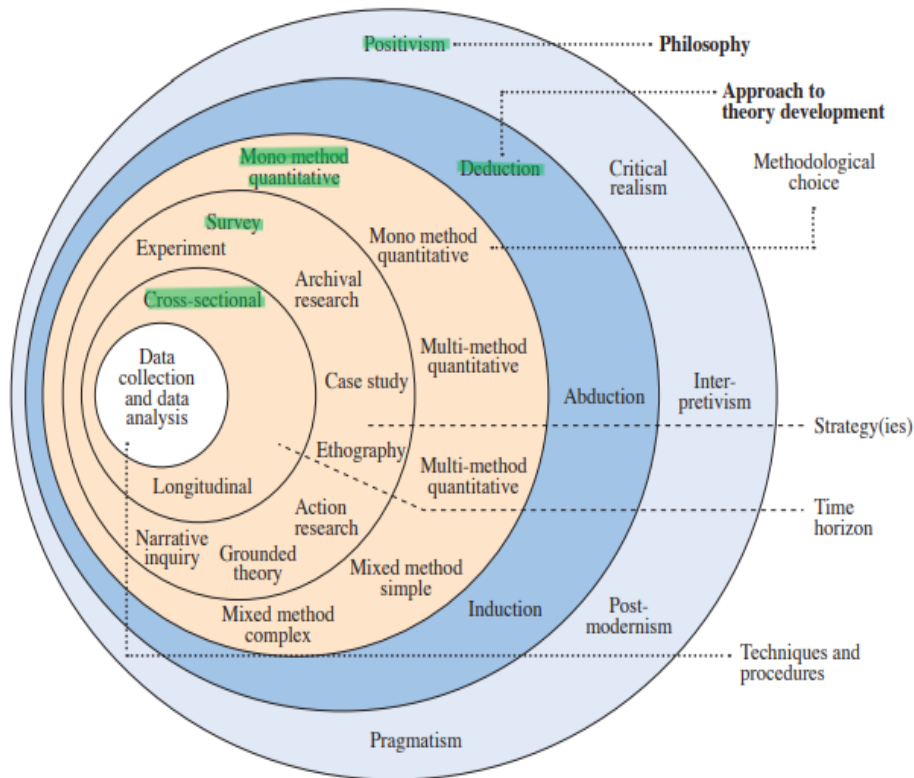
This research adopted a quantitative design. It explored phenomena through the collection of numerical data, which was analysed using mathematical methods (Ahmad et al., 2019). All explanations and results were presented through numerical data, and they provided reasoning and answers to the phenomenon. Two or more variable relationships were examined; this is called correlation research (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). The relationship between the two variables (Psychological contract transition and dedication) was examined. Thereafter, standardised instruments and statistical analysis were used to examine the relationship. A qualitative research study would have provided us with more insight into “how” and “why”; however, it would not have allowed the researcher to quantify the extent (Ahmad et al., 2019).

The study particularly adopted the correlation aspect to focus on the extent and direction between the variables without manipulation (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). The design was chosen to test the research hypotheses by looking into the strengths of the relationships. Therefore, it was attempting to answer the primary research question. Quantitative data were collected using a 5-point Likert scale, where participants would select either 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 from the Likert scale (Alabi & Jelili, 2023). Likert scales are common in quantitative research and are easier to understand (Alabi & Jelili, 2023). Asenahabi (2019) had stated that a research study must adhere to certain norms in ensuring that it is valid and reliable. Furthermore, it

must also be systematic and methodological to comply with research standards. The research onion below, adapted from Melnikovas (2018, p.33), visually illustrates the research design.

Figure 4.2: Research onion

Source: Adapted from Melnikovas (2018, p.33)



4.3 Research Philosophy

The study was anchored in a positivist research philosophy. The positivist paradigm stated that social reality was measurable facts, observable, and objective (Maksimovic & Evtimov, 2023). The philosophical approach was regarded as relevant due to the researcher's aim to determine the relationship between the variables, which was free from the researcher's bias (Ali, 2024). Although it is also crucial to note that positivist studies do not capture subjective experiences and the cultural context of the phenomenon, which is more aligned with the interpretivism approach (Maksimovic & Evtimov, 2023). A structured methodology was used with a proposed sample size, and analytical tools were used to test the hypothesis from section 3.3.

The purpose was to establish generalisable results which could attempt to explain the extent of the relationship between the variables.

4.4 Research Approach

The research approach that was applied was deductive. The approach had involved the development of a theoretical hypothesis from literature, then advancing to collecting data to test the hypothesis (Kumar & Ujire, 2024). This study began with a literature review providing theories such as the Social Exchange Theory and Job Demands-Resources theory, in which three hypotheses were established. The research process then involved data collection, which was centred around surveys to assess the three hypotheses. The testing process was leading to support of the hypotheses, a decline or a refinement.

This approach was suitable for this research as it was consistent with Maksimovic and Evtimov's (2023) view of a quantitative data collection with a positivist nature. This approach ensures that the general theoretical principles move to observable data and are theory-driven (Kozlowski, 2022). Finally, the approach also allows for a causal relationship between variables to be examined (Park et al., 2020). An inductive study would not have been suitable, as it requires the researcher to have observations as a starting point. It also works best with qualitative and exploratory approaches, which was not the case in this study (Kumar & Ujire, 2024).

4.5 Methodological choice

Based on chapter 3 of this study, the study followed a mono-method quantitative methodological choice. The mono-method involved the use of a singular data collection method or technique (Saunders & Darabi, 2024). In this study, it was an online survey, which was self-administered, which means participants did not need supervision or sit-down sessions to go through surveys and fill them in (Leon et al., 2022). The aim in collecting the data from participants was to gather numerical data that can be statistically tested to measure the relationship between variables previously mentioned.

The choice of method was well justified – it was to ensure that a deep dive into the relationship can be measurable and focused (Saunders & Darabi, 2024). Secondly, it was to ensure that the data is objective and maintain the research quality by minimising the researcher’s bias (Maksimovic & Evtimov, 2023). Furthermore, it was noted that research in employee psychological contract was heavily reliant on a mono-method quantitative approach through surveys or questionnaires (Naidoo, 2021; Kaerner, 2022). The notion is supported by Alharahsheh and Pius (2020), who stated that a positivist approach was justifiable because it mostly depended on quantitative approaches to perform statistical analysis. It is important to note that a mixed methods approach would have provided more data; however, this approach was to ensure that the study could fully focus on measuring the ‘extent’ (Pierce, 2023).

4.6 Research Strategy

The strategy employed was surveys, which were self-administered online, as data collection (Leon, 2022). The reasoning behind the strategy was to allow accessibility to a widely geographically dispersed group of people across the province (Nayak & Narayan, 2019). This strategy was quantifiable, cost-effective and efficient for the study (Yaddanapudi & Yaddanapudi, 2019). The online platform allowed for anonymity of participants, which was important in acquiring truthful and honest responses on employee perceptions of their employer (Ball, 2019). They are also suitable for this topic as it is sensitive, thus anonymity is supportive of this strategy. Surveys are usually easily understandable and are used in business research (Sallis et al., 2021). Other methods, such as in-person surveys, would have risked more bias, such as providing more socially desirable answers based on the existing relationships with the researcher (Ball, 2019).

The survey made use of closed-ended questions on a 5-point Likert scale with standardised responses. The standardised responses facilitated coding the data collected and were useful for statistical analysis of the hypothesis. Therefore, this method was consistent with this study’s intentions of data collection approach;

moreover, the approach was consistent with similar studies relating to psychological contract and employee engagement in hybrid work environments.

4.7 Time Horizon

Surveys are convenient for participants with a limited amount of time to gather data, often for scholars with academic year time constraints, which was applicable in this study (Ball, 2019). A cross-sectional design was permitted for these time constraints (Wang & Cheng, 2020). The survey was sent out for a duration of approximately two weeks in September 2025. Therefore, the data was collected at a single period. Scholars refer to this as a “snapshot”, as it permits the same data to be collected in multiple settings from different people (Wang & Cheng, 2020). In this study, the snapshot represented the relationship between variables. A longitudinal study would have provided the same data; however, over time and not at a specific timeframe, this would pose a problem in the research, as there were time constraints (Kim & Chang, 2019). The study had the advantage of taking place post-pandemic, which allowed for a unique and relevant sample of participants at a point in time.

4.8 Population and unit of analysis

The target population in the study were hybrid employees in and outside of South Africa, and who were employed post-pandemic. From the data collected, it was noted that the population was mostly from Gauteng. This could be due to what was established in Chapter 1, that Gauteng experienced the highest concentration of hybrid environment employees in the country (Financial Mail, 2024).

The targeted population were from various organisations; however, the survey did not give room to question the name of the organisation or the nature of work conducted by the participant. Therefore, the organisations in which participants are employed were local and multinational corporations. While the study would have benefited from data acquired from employers, it was rather more useful in this study to acquire data from employees only.

The unit of analysis for the study was an individual employee in hybrid work environments. The unit of analysis was relevant to the study as the proposition was for individual-level perceptions of the psychological contract and dedication. The study did not take the perception of a team or organisational level into consideration, as aforementioned.

4.9 Sampling method and size

The study employed a non-probability sampling method, with a purposive and convenience technique. According to Stratton (2023), a purposive sampling technique is commonly used with a non-probability sampling technique, and it requires the researcher to select individuals who best fit the research objectives (Stratton, 2023). The purposive sampling technique was heterogeneous purposive sampling, which assumed that the sample would have various characteristics and provide maximum variations (Adeoye, 2023). Therefore, it is observable in the results that the samples were from various organisations with varying demographics.

A non-probability sampling technique was relevant in this study, given the constraint of reaching the total population of hybrid workers in South Africa (Stratton, 2023). Furthermore, the study did not need to acquire the total list of the population to make a random selection of the participants. Scholars have also noted that a probability sample is costly and time-consuming for academics (Bhardwaj, 2019).

The intended sample size was 150 participants; however, the study only managed to get to 121 participants. The sample size was in alignment with Mweshi and Sakyi's (2020) views that a quantitative study must have a minimum of 100 participants to conduct data analysis. The sample size provided a meaningful analysis of the study while it was still manageable for the researcher. This sample size is adequate and suitable for establishing the extent of the influence of the variables in a heterogeneous pool; thus, the findings would be robust and meaningful.

4.10. Measurement instrument

According to Sharma (2020), a measuring instrument is a tool that could be used to collect, interpret and analyse data and the different variables. This study employed mainly the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) for the dedication dimension of employee engagement, and the Psychological Contract Inventory (PCI) for psychological contract.

A structured online questionnaire divided into three segments was used as the measuring instrument, namely, psychological contract transition, employee dedication, and demographical information.

Psychological contract transition: This section of the questionnaire utilised the Psychological Contract Inventory Scale (PCI), with 10 items, sub-categorised into three sections:

- The first sub-category was **No Trust**, which comprised 4 items, asking questions such as “To what extent do the items below describe your employer’s relationship to you, withholds information from its employees?”.
- The second sub-category was **Uncertainty**, which comprised 3 items, asking questions such as “To what extent do the items below describe your employer’s relationship to you, an uncertain future regarding its relations with me? “.
- Lastly, the third sub-category was **Erosion**, which comprised 3 items, asking questions such as “To what extent do the items below describe your employer’s relationship to you, I get more and more work for less pay?”.

All responses were scaled on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 was an indication of ‘*not at all*’, and 5 was an indication of ‘*to a great extent*’. In this section of the survey, a higher score was indicative of a negative psychological contract transition perception of the employee. Contrary, a lower score, was indicative of a positive psychological contract transition perception of the employee.

Dedication dimension of employee engagement: This section of the questionnaire utilised the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) with 5 items. The dedication dimension is a sub-category of the employee engagement scale by Schaufeli in the

early 2000s (Schaufeli, 2012). The instrument was measuring a dependent variable that included items such as “I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose” and “I am enthusiastic about my job” (Chaudhary et al., 2022, p. 572). As aligned to the Psychological Contract Inventory scale, the items were also scaled on a 5-point frequency-based Likert scale, where 1 was ‘*not at all*’ and 5 was ‘*to a great extent*’. However, the scale interpretation differed from the psychological contract transition scale in that a higher score on this scale indicated higher dedication levels, and a lower score indicated lower levels of dedication.

Demographic information: This section of the questionnaire collected the following data from the participants:

- Age group (18-25, 25-35, and +35)
- Sex (Female, Male, and Prefer not to say)
- Province (Gauteng, KZN, Limpopo, Northwest, Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, Western Cape, Mpumalanga, Free State, and None)
- Work model (Hybrid, fully office-based, and fully remote)
- Years of work experience - tenure (0-5, 5-10, and +10 years)

The demographic data was important for compiling information and describing the sample and conducting subgroup analysis, by eliminating false positives and over- or under-representation of subgroups (Ray & Fellow, 2020).

4.11 Data gathering process

The data gathering process in this study relied on primary data acquired from participants via the online survey. It was developed through Google Forms. The link was then distributed via professional social media, such as LinkedIn and distributed via email. A snowballing effect was utilised, although it is argued that it is best in attaining sensitive data from participants (Parker et al., 2019). A cover letter accompanied the survey, which explained the research purpose, assured anonymity and secured informed consent. The data collection process took place over a two-week period to reach the targeted number of respondents.

4.12 Pilot testing

Post ethical clearance from the institution, the survey was pre-tested with a group of ten (10) participants before full distribution. The process of piloting was to ensure that the researcher identifies and rectifies issues such as clarity or wording (Aziz & Khan, 2020). The survey link was shared with the respondents via WhatsApp and email, accessed on the Google Forms link, and all respondents completed the survey.

In pilot testing the survey to establish the appropriateness, respondents were picking up the following issues that were potentially confusing and required clarity (Wadood et al., 2021):

- Some questions were similar and thus made it confusing for the respondent to establish what the difference was. For example, “Difficult to predict the future direction of its relations with me” and “An uncertain future regarding its relations with me”.
- The pilot respondents noted that the survey allowed for some questions to be skipped, therefore, leaving room for unanswered questions and empty values. The questions then needed to be changed to be compulsory for respondents prior to progressing to the next question.

Once pilot testing was completed, the adjustments were made and then fully distributed to social networks.

4.13 Analysis approach

The data analysis approach for this study was through the software, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software (Rahman & Muktadir, 2021). The analysis process was in the following stages:

- Data cleaning: The data collected was checked for completeness of the survey for all participants (Sharifnia et al., 2025). The results of this process confirmed that all data was filled in completely by all participants. The data was also checked for outlying data responses.

- Descriptive statistics: The mean, frequency and standard deviation statistical information were calculated for demographic data collected (McCarthy, et al., 2022). This was also completed for the variables as the core concepts of this study.
- Reliability and validity analysis: The Cronbach's Alpha was computed for both scales (PCI and UWES) for consistency and reliability of the sample of the study (Schrepp, 2020).
- Inferential Statistics:
 - Pearson's Correlation Coefficient – It was utilised to examine the direction of and strength of the relationship of the variables (Garg et al., 2020).
 - Standard Multiple Regression – It was utilised to examine the regression of dedication and the three PCI dimensions (No Trust, Uncertainty, and Erosion).
 - Inter-item correlation matrix – It was utilised to show the correlation between variables and to assess internal consistency (Garg et al., 2020).

Fadele and Rocha (2025) stated that data analysis requires the researcher to ensure data is cleaned and statistically analysed. Descriptive statistics are utilised to organise the features are characteristics of data by quantifying it (McCarthy et al., 2022). Reliability and validity are relevant and important for ensuring trustworthiness and credibility of a study's findings (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Inferential statistics assist the researcher in drawing conclusions and predictions from a large population and testing hypotheses (Garg et al., 2020).

KMO refers to the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy. It is used to establish the suitability for factor analysis in research (Shrestha, 2021). The Bartlett's test is also a statistical test for checking if the variances are equal across multiple samples (Shrestha, 2021). The Bartlett's test is a requirement for the ANOVA test, which measures the variance amount between groups and within the group (Goldberg & Scheiner, 2020). Normality testing, tests for skewness or kurtosis, which assess whether data follows a normal distribution (Demir, 2022).

4.14 Research Ethics

The study overall adhered to research ethical standards. As suggested by O'Sullivan et al. (2021), respondents were required to provide informed consent before participation, in which the details of the study's purpose were provided. Respondents were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw at any given time. They were also assured of measures put in place to maintain anonymity and confidentiality, which is advocated for by scholars (Hoft, 2021). Information containing personally identifiable information was not collected. In addition, all data collected would be stored safely on a password-protected Google Drive, thus restricting access to unauthorised people. Respondents were informed that data would be shared with the institution (Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria). Therefore, Google Forms served a dual role: one to access the link for respondents, and to maintain the integrity and quality of the data, thus ensuring security assurance. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the institution.

4.15 Quality controls

There were several quality control measures in place to ensure reliability, validity, and accuracy. Peer-reviewed scales (PCI and UWES) were used to ensure validity (Schaufeli, 2012; Rousseau, 2001). Reliability was examined statistically through Cronbach's Alpha (Schrepp, 2020). For accuracy, a pre-test or piloting of the study was conducted to identify any confusing questions or clarifications required. The usage of an online standardised survey minimised any administrative bias in data collection (Meyer, 2020; Nayak & Narayan, 2019). Data was screened for completeness and outliers.

4.16 Limitations

The study had several limitations. The survey, as is inherent with surveys, is subject to participants' bias (Elston, 2021). Participants could provide socially desirable answers to the questions. Non-probability sampling method limits the generalisability of the results beyond the hybrid worker context (Shamsudin et al, 2024). Capturing data at a specific point in time prevents causal inferences, where the relationship

between variables is considered at a different point in time (Runge et al., 2023). Wand and Cheng (2020) stated that cross-sectional studies are common in quantitative research; thus, a longitudinal design would not have served this study well, even though they are often used in quantitative research. The concepts were of a Human Resources Management nature; thus, it was expected that not all participants understood the concepts or understood them differently. Dedication can be defined differently in other disciplines.

It is also noted that of the 121 respondents, 103 reported working in a hybrid environment. Thus, the 18 respondents were excluded from the study. This indicated a misunderstanding of the concept of 'hybrid work' in South Africa. There could have been room for the researcher to include the number of working days or weeks to provide clarity on the hybrid worker.

4.17 Conclusion

This chapter outlined a detailed description of the research methodology utilised throughout the study. A quantitative, positivist paradigm with a deductive approach was adopted. Data was collected via an online survey using Google Forms from 121 respondents, of whom 103 were operationalised. Validated scales were used to measure variables. The study included descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, Pearson's correlation, and regression analysis. Quality controls were assured to maintain ethical standards and the integrity of the research. The following chapter will present the results of the study.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the research quantitative results by starting with the descriptive statistics, followed by results on reliability and validity, and statistical results per hypothesis as outlined in Chapter 3. The research question was 'To what extent does the psychological contract transition impact dedication in a hybrid work environment?'. The presentation of these results will be factual with no interpretation provided.

5.2 Descriptive characteristics of the sample

5.2.1 Sample obtained

As outlined in Table 5.2.1, the sample is obtained from the data collection process. It shows the number of people who had originally completed the survey, and the number of people who were screened out post-completion of the survey. The total percentage is rounded off as the data was counting individual human beings.

Table 5.2.1: Sample obtained

Source: Researcher's formation

Description	Frequency	Percentage obtained%
<i>Original Sample</i>	121	100%
<i>Screened out respondents</i>	-18	14.88% (15%)
<i>Final Sample Size</i>	103	85.12% (85%)

5.2.2 Descriptive Statistics

The following data will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6, where meaningful connections between demographics and variables will be drawn. The demographics were as follows: age group, sex, location, work model, and tenure.

5.2.2.1 Age group

The respondents' age groups are presented in Table 5.2.2.1. A total of 8 respondents were aged between 18-25 years old, accounting for 8% of the sample. 44 respondents reported the 25-35 years age group, which accounted for 43% of the sample. Lastly, 51 respondents reported the +35 years old age group, which accounted for 49% of the sample, totalling 100%. This item was compulsory for respondents to answer.

Table 5.2.2.1: Descriptive statistics – age group

Source: Researcher's formation

Category	Frequency	Percentage%
18-25	8	8%
25-35	44	43%
+35	51	49%
Total	103	100%

5.2.2.2 Sex

The respondent's sex is presented in table 5.2.2.2. A total of 59 respondents were females, and 44 were males. Females represented 57%, and 43% males. Participants were allowed to not disclose their sex by selecting 'prefer not to say'. It was therefore recorded that 0% of the participants selected 'prefer not to say'.

Table 5.2.2.2: Descriptive statistics - sex

Source: Researcher's formation

Category	Frequency	Percentage%
<i>Female</i>	59	57%
<i>Male</i>	44	43%
Total	103	100%

5.2.2.3 Province – location

The respondent's location (province) is presented in table 5.2.2.3. the following number of respondents was recorded per province; Gauteng (73), KZN (8), Limpopo (5), Northwest (0), Eastern Cape (15), Western Cape (0), Northern Cape (0), Mpumalanga (0), and Free State (0). Participants were allowed to select 'none' (2), which meant that the respondent does not reside in South Africa, or the respondent would prefer not to disclose their location.

Table 5.2.2.3: Descriptive statistics - province

Source: Researcher's formation

Category	Frequency	Percentage%
<i>Gauteng</i>	73	71%
<i>KZN</i>	8	8%
<i>Limpopo</i>	5	5%
<i>Northwest</i>	0	0%
<i>Eastern Cape</i>	15	14%
<i>Western Cape</i>	0	0%
<i>Northern Cape</i>	0	0%
<i>Mpumalanga</i>	0	0%
<i>Free State</i>	0	0%
<i>None</i>	2	2%
Total	103	100%

5.2.2.4 Work model

The respondent's work model is presented in Table 5.2.2.4. A total of 103 respondents reported as hybrid workers (I work both from home and the office).

Table 5.2.2.4: Descriptive statistics – work model

Source: Researcher's formation

Category	Frequency	Percentage%
<i>Hybrid (I work both from home and the office)</i>	103	100%
<i>Fully office-based (I work only from the office)</i>	0	0%
<i>Fully remote (work outside of the office only)</i>	0	0%
Total	103	100%

5.2.2.5 Tenure

The respondent's tenure is the total years of work experience, which was presented in Table 5.2.2.5. A total of 14 respondents had 0-5 years of work experience, 36 respondents had 5-10 years' work experience, and 53 respondents had over 10 years of work experience.

Table 5.2.2.5: Descriptive statistics - tenure

Source: Researcher's formation

Category	Frequency	Percentage%
<i>0-5 years</i>	14	14%
<i>5-10 years</i>	36	35%
<i>10+ years</i>	53	51%
Total	103	100%

5.2.3 Descriptive statistics for constructs

Descriptive statistics for constructs will be outlined in this sub-section. The constructs are Psychological Contract Transition's sub dimensions 'No Trust', 'Uncertainty', 'Erosion', and the dedication dimension of employee engagement. The data was collected from 103 valid responses with no missing values for the items.

5.2.3.1 Psychological Contract Transition - No Trust

This sub-dimension received all responses from the sample. The 'No Trust' sub-dimension consisted of **four items** as stated in Table 5.2.3.1:

Table 5.2.3.1: Descriptive statistics – No Trust

Source: Researcher's formation

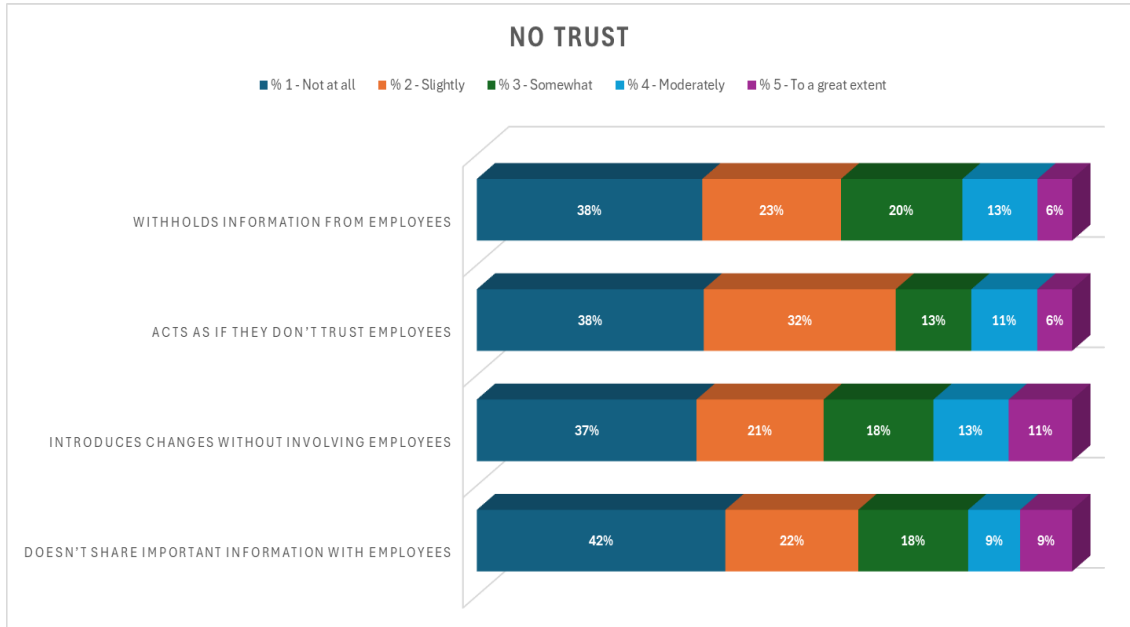
Items

To what extent do the following statements describe your employer's relationship with you in terms of trust?	1-Not at all	2-Slightly	3-Somewhat	4-Moderately	5-To a great extent
<i>Withholds information from their employees</i>	39 (38%)	24 (23%)	21 (20%)	13 (13%)	6 (6%)
<i>Acts as if they don't trust employees</i>	39 (38%)	33 (32%)	13 (13%)	12 (11%)	6 (6%)
<i>Introduces changes without involving employees</i>	38 (37%)	22 (21%)	19 (18%)	13 (13%)	11 (11%)
<i>Doesn't share important information with employees</i>	43 (42%)	23 (22%)	19 (18%)	9 (9%)	9 (9%)

All the items had a 5-point Likert Scale, ranging from 'not at all' to 'To a great extent' options. The results below, illustrated on a stacked bar graph, were reported by respondents on these four items:

Figure 5.2.3.1: Descriptive construct - Psychological Contract Transition - No Trust

Source: Researcher's formation



5.2.3.2 Psychological Contract Transition - Uncertainty

This sub-dimension received all responses from the sample. The 'Uncertainty' sub-dimension consisted of **three items** as stated Table 5.2.3.2:

Table 5.2.3.2: Descriptive statistics – Uncertainty

Source: Researcher's formation

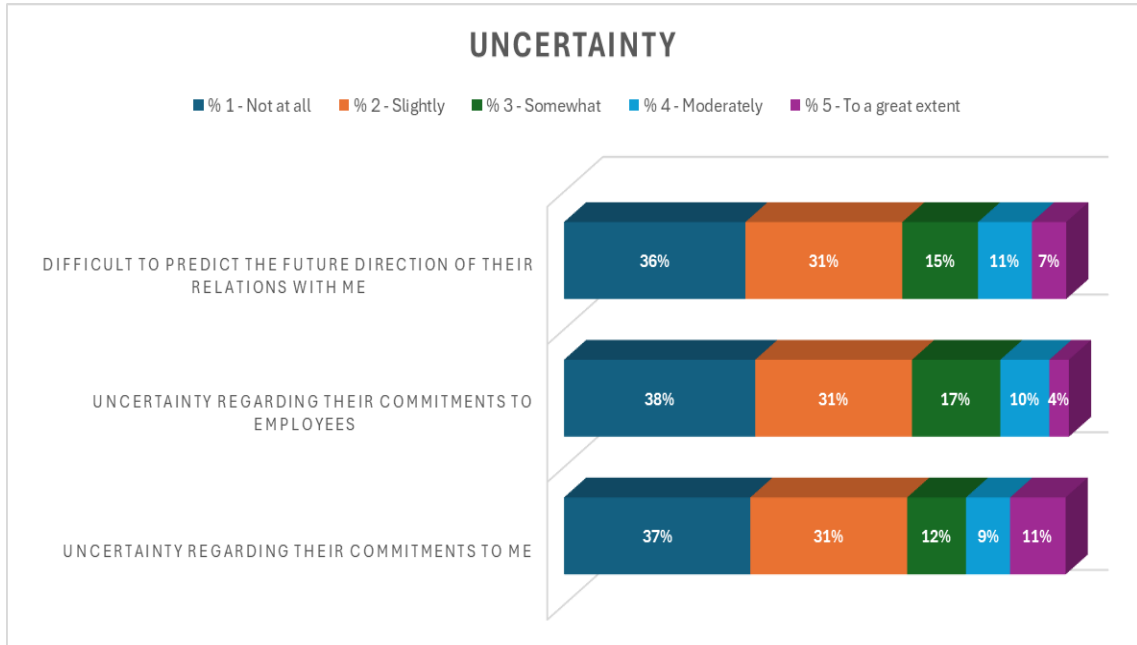
Items

To what extent do the following statements describe your employer's relationship with you in terms of uncertainty?	1-Not at all	2-Slightly	3-Somewhat	4-Moderately	5-To a great extent
<i>Difficult to predict the future direction of their relations with me</i>	37 (36%)	32 (31%)	16 (15%)	11 (11%)	7 (7%)
<i>Uncertainty regarding their commitments to employees</i>	39 (38%)	33 (31%)	18 (17%)	10 (10%)	4 (4%)
<i>Uncertainty regarding their commitments to me</i>	38 (37%)	32 (31%)	12 (12%)	9 (9%)	12 (11%)

All the items had a 5-point Likert Scale, ranging from 'not at all' to 'To a great extent' options. The results illustrated on a stacked bar graph were reported by respondents on these four items:

Table 5.2.3.2: Descriptive construct - Psychological Contract Transition - Uncertainty

Source: Researcher's formation



5.2.3.3 Psychological Contract Transition - Erosion

This sub-dimension received all responses from the sample. The 'Erosion' sub-dimension consisted of **three items** as stated in Table 5.2.3.3:

Table 5.2.3.3: Descriptive statistics – Erosion

Source: Researcher’s formation

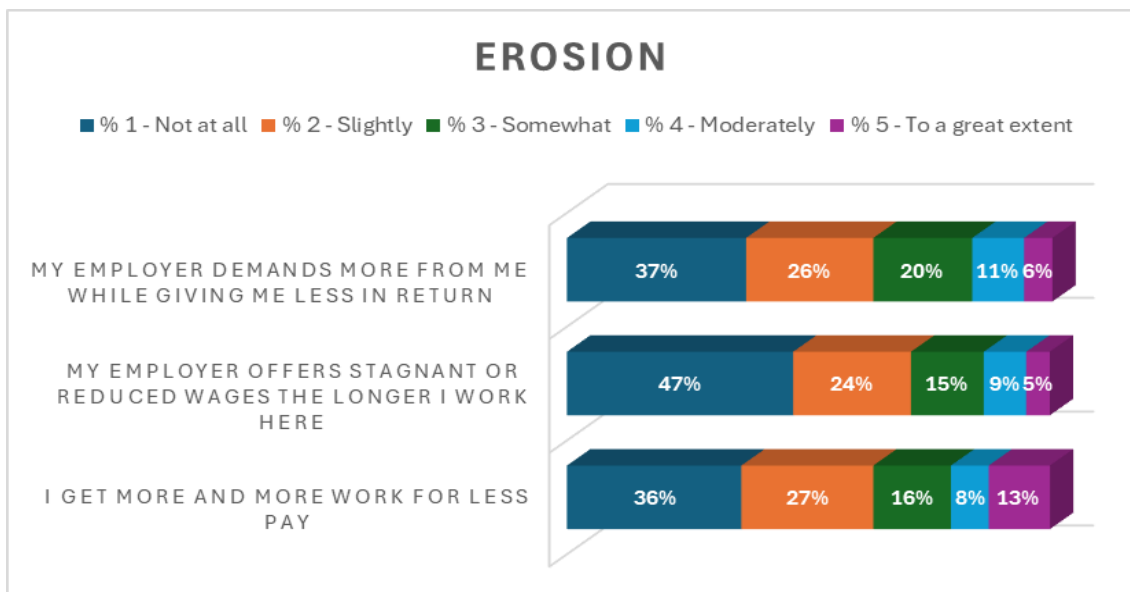
Items

To what extent do the following statements describe your employer’s relationship with you in terms of erosion?	1-Not at all	2-Slightly	3-Somewhat	4-Moderately	5-To a great extent
<i>My employer demands more from me while giving me less in return</i>	38 (37%)	27 (26%)	21 (20%)	11 (11%)	6 (6%)
<i>My employer offers stagnant or reduced wages the longer I work here</i>	48 (47%)	25 (24%)	16 (15%)	9 (9%)	5 (5%)
<i>I get more and more work for less pay</i>	37 (36%)	28 (27%)	17 (16%)	8 (8%)	13 (13%)

All the items had a 5-point Likert Scale, ranging from ‘not at all’ to ‘To a great extent’ options. The results below, illustrated on a stacked bar graph, were reported by respondents on these four items:

Table 5.2.3.4: Descriptive construct - Psychological Contract Transition - Erosion

Source: Researcher’s formation



5.2.3.4 Employee engagement - Dedication

This sub-dimension received all responses from the sample. The ‘Dedication’ sub-dimension of employee engagement consisted of **five items** as stated in Table 5.2.3.4:

Table 5.2.3.4: Descriptive statistics – Dedication

Source: Researcher’s formation

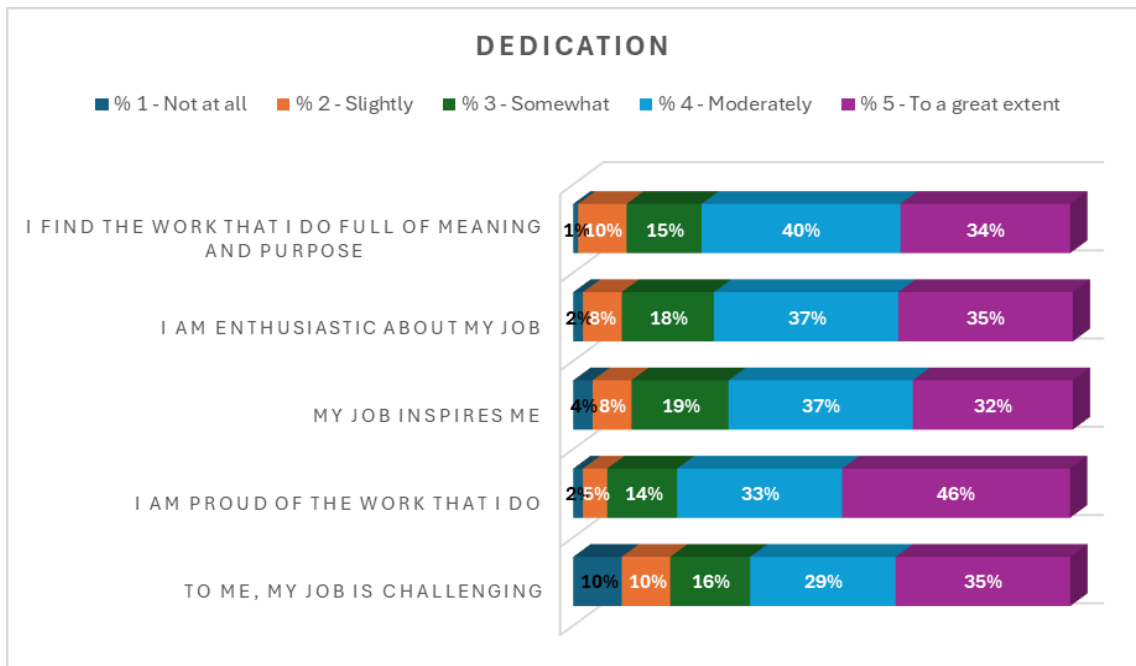
Items

To what extent do the following statements describe how you feel about your job?	1-Not at all	2-Slightly	3-Somewhat	4-Moderately	5-To a great extent
<i>I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose</i>	1 (1%)	10 (10%)	16 (15%)	41 (40%)	35 (34%)
<i>I am enthusiastic about my job</i>	2 (2%)	8 (8%)	19 (18%)	38 (37%)	36 (35%)
<i>My job inspires me</i>	4 (4%)	8 (8%)	20 (19%)	38 (37%)	33 (32%)
<i>I am proud of the work that I do</i>	2 (2%)	5 (5%)	15 (14%)	34 (33%)	47 (46%)
<i>To me, my job is challenging</i>	10 (10%)	10 (10%)	17 (16%)	30 (29%)	36 (35%)

All the items had a 5-point Likert Scale, ranging from ‘not at all’ to ‘To a great extent’ options. The results below, illustrated on a stacked bar graph, were reported by respondents on these five items:

Table 5.2.3.4: Descriptive construct - Employee engagement - Dedication

Source: Researcher’s formation



5.3 Reliability testing

The table below illustrates the Cronbach's Alpha values, which show internal consistency per construct. The values range from 0.845 to 0.883, which suggests that the items within the scale measured the constructs intended.

Table 5.3: Reliability testing

Source: Researcher's formation

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Items
<i>PCI - No Trust</i>	0.883	4
<i>PCI - Uncertainty</i>	0.869	3
<i>PCI - Erosion</i>	0.845	3
<i>Dedication</i>	0.876	5

5.4 Validity testing

The KMO threshold is 0.5, and in this study, the KMO was significantly higher than 0.5. This suggested that the factors were best suited for factor analysis (Shrestha, 2021). The KMO ranged between 0.720 and 0.843, which signifies a good and high level of sampling validity (Shrestha, 2021). The Barlett's Test below reflects p-values of constructs that were below 0.05, which signifies a very good validity (Goldberg & Scheiner, 2020).

Table 5.4: Validity testing

Source: Researcher's formation

Construct	KMO>0.5	Barlett's Test<0.05	Factors extracted	Variance %
<i>PCI - No Trust</i>	0.807	0.000	1	65.579%
<i>PCI - Uncertainty</i>	0.725	0.000	1	69.767%
<i>PCI - Erosion</i>	0.720	0.000	1	64.979%
<i>Dedication</i>	0.843	0.000	1	63.483%

5.5 Normality testing

The tables below (table 5.5.1 and 5.5.2) represent a normality test to determine if the data adhered to normal distribution. The data has been provided with Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk testing statistics. The p-value is less than 0.05; thus, the data deviated from the normal distribution. Visuals are also provided to illustrate the tables below, in the following appendices: 1, 2, 6, 9, 10, and 13, on a histogram and Q-Q plot.

Table 5.5.1: Normality testing*Source: Researcher's formation*

Construct	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistics	df	Sig.	Statistics	df	Sig.
<i>PCI - No Trust</i>	0,169	103	0.000	0,900	103	0.000
<i>PCI - Uncertainty</i>	0,163	103	0.000	0,893	103	0.000
<i>PCI - Erosion</i>	0,167	103	0.000	0,881	103	0.000
<i>Dedication</i>	0,146	103	0.000	0,918	103	0.000

Table 5.5.2: Normality testing*Source: Researcher's formation*

Construct	N	Min	Max	Mean	Skewness			Kurtosis	
					Std. Dev	Stats	Std Erro	Stats	Std Error
<i>PCI - No Trust</i>	103	1.00	5.00	2.2500	1.10868	0.816	0.238	-0.218	0.472
<i>PCI - Uncertainty</i>	103	1.00	5.00	2.1974	1.10729	0.840	0.238	-0.176	0.472
<i>PCI - Erosion</i>	103	1.00	5.00	2.1907	1.10359	0.964	0.238	0.054	0.472
<i>Dedication</i>	103	1.20	5.00	3.9243	0.88256	0.849	0.238	0.062	0.472

5.6 Correlation analysis

The table below exhibits the correlation analysis. Correlation analysis facilitates establishing the extent of the relation that exists between the constructs (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). It also portrays the linearity of the variables. The sub-dimensions have a strong positive correlation.

Table 5.6: Correlation analysis

Source: Researcher's formation

		PCI – No Trust	PCI - Uncertainty	PCI - Erosion	Dedication
<i>PCI - No Trust</i>	Pearson Correlation	1	.784**	.739**	-.391**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0,000	0,000	0,000
	N	103	103	103	103
<i>PCI - Uncertainty</i>	Pearson Correlation	.784**	1	.723**	-.360**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000		0,000	0,000
	N	103	103	103	103
<i>PCI - Erosion</i>	Pearson Correlation	.739**	.723**	1	-.449**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,000		0,000
	N	103	103	103	103
<i>Dedication</i>	Pearson Correlation	-.391**	-.360**	-.449**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,000	0,000	
	N	103	103	103	103

5.7 Coefficients Analysis and Collinearity Diagnostics

The tables below illustrate the coefficients and collinearity diagnostics of the results.

Table 5.7.1 Coefficients analysis

Source: Source: Researcher's formation

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-value	Sig. (p-value)	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics		
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF	
1	(Constant)	4,777	0,190		25,153	0,000	4,400	5,154		
	NO_TRUST	-0,101	0,125	-0,127	-0,810	0,420	-0,349	0,147	0,324	3,089
	UNCERTAINTY	-0,006	0,122	-0,008	-0,049	0,961	-0,248	0,236	0,340	2,940
	EROSION	-0,279	0,113	-0,349	-2,469	0,015	-0,503	-0,055	0,400	2,502

Table 5.7.2 Collinearity Diagnostics

Source: Source: Researcher's formation

Model	Eigenvalue	Condition Index	Variance Proportions				
			(Constant)	NO_TRUST	UNCERTAINTY	EROSION	
1	1	3,769	1,000	0,01	0,00	0,00	0,01
	2	0,132	5,351	0,99	0,04	0,05	0,04
	3	0,057	8,099	0,00	0,09	0,31	0,92
	4	0,042	9,433	0,00	0,87	0,64	0,03

The coefficient table is utilised for determining the variable with the most statistically significant impact on the model.

5.8 ANOVA

The ANOVA (Analysis of variance) table below portrays the regression model as statistically significant. These results were derived from the regression results above. The below signifies that the amount of variance is significantly powerful.

Table 5.8.1 Anova

Source: Source: Researcher's formation

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	16,616	3	5,539	8,726	.000 ^b
Residual	62,834	99	0,635		
Total	79,449	102			

Table 5.8.2 Model Summary

Source: Researcher's formation

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.457 ^a	0,209	0,185	0,79667	1,826
a. Predictors: (Constant), EROSION, UNCERTAINTY, NO_TRUST					
b. Dependent Variable: DEDICATION					

Table 5.8.3 Residual Statistics

Source: Researcher's formation

Residuals Statistics					
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	2,8445	4,3905	3,9243	0,40361	103
Residual	-1,98792	2,15554	0,00000	0,78487	103
Std. Predicted Value	-2,675	1,155	0,000	1,000	103
Std. Residual	-2,495	2,706	0,000	0,985	103
a. Dependent Variable: DEDICATION					

5.9 Hypothesis Testing and Summary of Results

The hypothesis testing below refers to the coefficients table above.

Hypothesis 1 (H1):

The 'no trust' dimension of the psychological contract will portray a strong negative impact on dedication

Results: 'no trust' variable has a standardised beta of 0.127 and the significance value (p) of 0.420. This can be interpreted as not statistically significant, as the p-value is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the first hypothesis 1 is **not supported**

Hypothesis 2 (H2):

The 'uncertainty' dimension of the psychological contract will portray a strong negative impact on dedication

Results: 'uncertainty' variable has a standardised beta of 0.008 and the significance value (p) of 0.961. This means that there is no statistical significance, as the p-value is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the second hypothesis 2 is **not supported**.

Hypothesis 3 (H3):

The 'erosion' dimension of the psychological contract will portray a strong negative impact on dedication

Results: 'erosion' variable has a standardised beta of -0.349 and the significance value (p) of 0.015. This indicates that the relationship is negative as predicted, therefore, the third hypothesis 3 is **supported**.

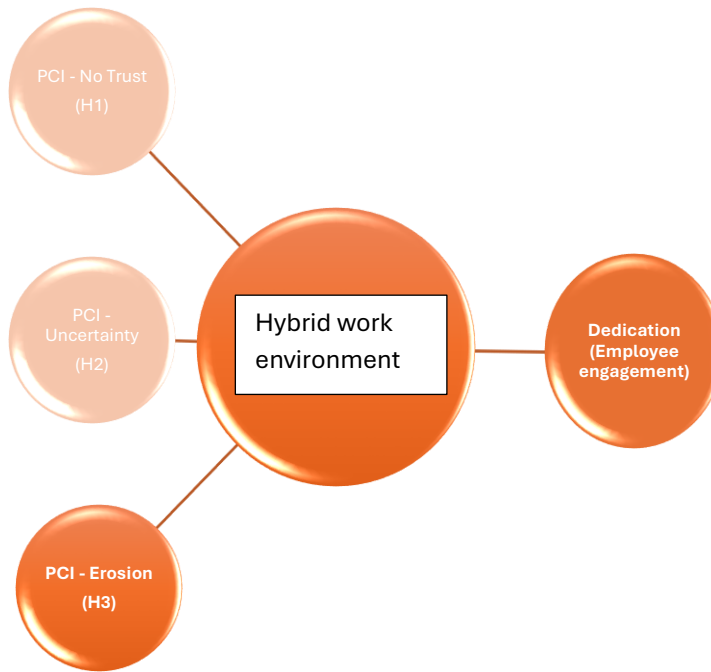
The following results can be deduced from the data shared above:

- No Trust: The significance is $p = 0.233$. This value is greater than 0.05; therefore, it does not make a significant contribution to dedication
- Uncertainty: The significance is $p = 0.566$. This value is also greater than 0.05; therefore, it does not make a significant contribution to dedication
- Erosion: The significance is $p = 0.033$. This value makes a significant and unique contribution to the prediction of dedication.

Furthermore, the standardised Coefficient (Beta) for erosion is a negative number (-0.349). This is an indication that as erosion increases, Dedication tends to decrease (when the two other variables are controlled). The below figure 5.9.1 illustrates the relationship above.

Figure 5.9.1 Summary of results

Source: Researcher's formation



5.10 Conclusion

This chapter has provided the results for various analyses per hypothesis. Quality data was established by the validity, reliability and normality of the constructs to the hypotheses. Hypotheses 1 and 2 did not have a strong significance in predicting dedication. The study concluded with hypothesis 3, 'The erosion dimension of psychological contract will portray a strong negative impact on dedication', which means it has a unique contribution to the prediction of dedication. Chapter 6 will discuss these findings in detail, linking them to the literature review.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1 Introduction

The sole goal of this chapter is to provide a discussion of Chapter 5 results, with context to the literature review. Understanding employee engagement in hybrid work environments has become crucial in the current times. It has been exacerbated by the growing number of hybrid and remote work models. Furthermore, employees continue to carry out their work tasks from home today (Dale et al., 2024).

The literature review, in Chapter 2, highlighted the challenges that come with shifting workplace dynamics (Felstead, 2022). These challenges are particularly significant in this study of hybrid workers (Vartiainen & Vanharanta, 2024). The discussions in this chapter will annotate the extent to which the findings confirm or contradict the established theories.

6.2 Descriptive properties of the sample

Scholars stress the importance of having demographic measures in a study, such as sex, age, and location (Ray & Fellow, 2020). This study also collected work model and years of work experience per participant who consented to complete the survey. The demographics were important for understanding factors that influence dedication in hybrid work environments.

Respondents' gender distribution, as indicated in Figure 5.2.2.2, is 57% females and 43% males. This suggests that the sample had a higher proportion of females. The age group of participants with more than 35 years of age was higher than other age groups, at 49%. This age group was found to have more work experience than other age groups (18-25 and 25-35).

The prevalent work model was hybrid work, reporting 103 participants. From the initial sample of 121 participants, 14 reported being fully office-based, and 4 reported

as fully remote. This left the researcher with 85% of the initial sample to analyse. Mweshi and Sakyi (2020) stated that a good sample size for a heterogeneous quantitative study is 100. Hybrid work was defined as a work setting where an employee can split their time, in office-based and home-based capacity, using digital tools for collaboration and communication (Felstead, 2022; Vartiainen & Vanharanta, 2024).

Many respondents reported living in Gauteng, amounting to 71% of the total sample. This is aligned with Hopkins and Bardoel's (2023) report stipulating that hybrid has become more prevalent post-pandemic. Financial Mail (2024) further suggested that the high number of hybrid and remote workers was concentrated in Gauteng; this proves to be correct, as most of the respondents were from Gauteng. However, it is also important to note that the samples are also a reflection of the researcher's network and not of the South African population holistically. Eastern Cape province had the second-highest number of hybrid employees, at 14%, followed by KZN, Limpopo, and none. The remainder of the provinces were recorded at 0%.

Respondents reported a tenure of over 10 years (51%); this is consistent with the respondents' age of +35. The data is crucial for this study as it provides a sample of employees who were employed pre-pandemic, during the pandemic, and post-pandemic. This is supported by Reddy and Sai's (2024) study, stating that the pandemic occurred in the year 2020. At 5-10 years of experience, the sample had 35% of participants, and 14% had 0-5 years of work experience.

Lastly, the varying work experience reported by participants showed that hybrid work environments continue to grow, as some participants were employed post-pandemic, with less than 5 years' work experience. The survey did not request information on the type of company or industry in which the participant is employed, and therefore, it suggests that employees were from various industries unstipulated.

6.3 Descriptive properties of the constructs

The constructs were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, with '1 – not at all' to '5-To a great extent'.

6.3.1 No Trust

This construct had four items measuring the 'no trust' dimension. The descriptive results for this construct indicated that the most common response for the item 'Withholds information from their employees' was '1-Not at all' at 38%. It measured employees' perception of trust through information keeping. The cumulative findings were reported, with the majority of 61% stating this behaviour occurs 'Slightly' or 'Not at all'. In this item, the perception of 'No trust' is low, as 39% of the sample felt their employer withheld information. They recorded their answers between 'Somewhat', 'Moderate', and 'To a great extent'. These findings are in alignment with Meghana and Vijaya's (2019) view of employee perception, which stipulated that employees felt their employers generally communicate and do not withhold information from employees.

The second item of this construct is 'Acts as if they don't trust employees. The most frequent response was '1-Not at all' at 38%. The cumulative findings show a strong skew towards trust, with a large majority (70%) reporting '2-Slightly' and 'Not at all', thus showing that they feel their employer trusts them. Frydinger et al. (2021) had stated that the concept of trust had gone through redefinition during the pandemic. Therefore, it became a component based on outcomes and performance patterns in the hybrid work environment (Badrinarayanan, 2024).

The third item, 'Introduces changes without involving employees' responses were 'Not at all' at 37%. The cumulative findings of '1-Not at all' and '2-Slightly' were 58%, which reflects the lower end of the scale. 42% felt this occurred '3-Somewhat' or more often. This item also had the highest 'no trust' scores, with 11% of respondents reporting 'To a great extent'. Zapata et al. (2024) align with this response, stating that employees in hybrid environments have different needs, such as inclusivity in decision making and flexible boundaries.

The fourth item, 'Doesn't share important information with employees.'. Although this item shares similarities with the first item, it's distinguished by its focus on 'important' information. The dominant response from this item was '1-Not at all' with 42% of respondents selecting this option. 64% of the respondents accounted for the cumulative finding with 'Slightly' and 'Not at all' selected. This confirms findings from the first item where employees believe that employers generally share important information (Meghana & Vijaya, 2019).

Notably, across all four items, the modal response was '1- Not at all', indicating a relatively high level of trust in employers from the sample. This skewing of the data is only different in the 'Introduces changes without involving employees' item, where 42% of the respondents selected 'Somewhat 'or a higher response.

6.3.2 Uncertainty

The 'Uncertainty' dimension has three items measuring 'uncertainty'. The first item, 'Difficult to predict the future direction of their relations with me', measures the perceived predictability of the employment relationship. '1-Not at all' was the most common response at 36%, with 67% cumulative findings of '1-Not at all' and '2-Slightly'. Respondents felt that they could pre-empt the direction of their employer-employee relationship, which implies that uncertainty for this item was low. This does not support Smith's (2021) view, stating that employment contractual components were on hold to allow navigation through uncertain times, with a strong focus on the present.

The second item, 'Uncertainty regarding their commitments to employees', measures the level of uncertainty of the employer's commitment to their staff members collectively. The dominant response in this item is '1- Not at all', with 38% of the respondents selecting this option. The cumulative findings at 69% indicate generally low uncertainty with the respondents selecting 'Slightly' or 'Not at all'. This implies that most respondents feel certain about their employers' commitments towards

them. This is supported by Deas and Coetzee's (2022) study, stating that post-pandemic, organisations entered a renegotiation phase.

The third item, 'Uncertainty regarding their commitments to me,' measures employers' commitments to their employees at an individual rather than a collective level. The dominant response is '1-Not all' at 37%, which is aligned to the first two items. Low uncertainty is supported once again in the cumulative finding, with 68% of respondents selecting 'Slightly' or 'Not at all'. Interestingly, this item had significantly more responses of '5- To a great extent' than the second item, indicating more uncertainty in item three than two. This depicts that employees had differing views about their personal relationship with the organisation, as opposed to how they see the organisation interacting with their colleagues. As per the literature review, some employees expected remuneration for using their home space for work (Robelski et al., 2019).

In conclusion, the most frequently selected response is '1-Not at all'. The cumulative findings are consistent across all three items. The three items in question reveal low levels of uncertainty from the sample, although uncertainty tended to be higher at an individual level compared to a collective employee level.

6.3.3 Erosion

The dimension comprises three items which measure erosion. The first item is 'My employer demands more from me while giving me less in return'. The dominant response at 37% of respondents was '1- Not at all'. The cumulative finding with 63% of respondents selected 'Slightly' or 'Not at all'. This implies that most of the respondents refute the item, notwithstanding that just under 40% of respondents affirmed. This suggests that participants felt they were well rewarded, with an increase in work resulting in more rewards. Jones (2024) suggests that this relationship has not eroded, as there is a balance and absence of a strain between employer and employee.

The second item is 'My employer offers stagnant or reduced wages the longer I work here'. The dominant response is '1- Not at all'. The cumulative finding at 71% included responses of 'Slightly' or 'Not at all', indicating a strong refute of the item. These findings are like the first item; there is a good balance and absence of strain in the relationship (Jones, 2024).

The third item is 'I get more and more work for less pay'. The dominant response is '1- Not at all' with 36% of respondents selecting this option. The cumulative findings had 63% of respondents selecting 'Slightly' or 'Not at all'. The findings suggest that participants felt they were sufficiently remunerated for more work taken on. This refutes the presence of erosion and a gradual decline in reciprocity perception (Meira & Hancer, 2021).

Although the items were generally refuted by the sample responses, the third item recorded the highest response of '5- to a great extent', indicating a minority discontent about work pay balance from the sample. Overall, erosion as assessed by this study was not an issue perceived across a large portion of the sample.

6.3.4 Dedication

This dimension comprises five items. The first item, 'I find the work I do full of meaning and purpose,' which assesses the utility derived from work. The dominant response is '4- Moderately' with 40% of the sample respondents selecting this option. The cumulative finding entails 74% of the sample respondents selecting 'Moderately' or 'To a great extent'. This implies that most respondents found their work meaningful and purposeful. According to Baran and Sypniewska (2020), dedication is represented by a strong sign of commitment; this is evident in the participants' responses through this item.

The second item, 'I am enthusiastic about my job,' measures the level of employee enthusiasm. The dominant response is '4 – Moderately' and '5 – To a great extent' respectively, with 37% of respondents selecting the former and 35% the latter option.

These options also collectively made up the cumulative finding of 72% of respondents, indicating high levels of employee enthusiasm. This aligns with Baran and Sypniewska (2020), who state that dedicated employees were portraying a sense of enthusiasm and pride.

The third item is 'My job inspires me', which measures the level of inspiration derived from work. The dominant response is '4- Moderately' with 37% of respondents selecting this option. The cumulative findings indicate that 69% of respondents selected '4 – Moderately' as well as 'To a great extent'. This indicates a high level of inspiration from work derived from the sample. These findings were reported by Sakthimala and Deepalakshmi (2023), who highlighted that employees who were passionate about their job looked forward to going to work, therefore, feeling inspired.

The fourth item is 'I am proud of the work that I do', which measures the level of pride derived from work. The dominant response is '5- To a great extent' with 46% of respondents selecting this option. The cumulative findings indicate that 79% of respondents selected '4 – Moderately' or '5– To a great extent'. This item represented the strongest indicator of dedication from the sample, and there is mostly a sense of pride and passion in the work that the respondents do (Sakthimala & Deepalakshmi, 2023).

The fifth item is 'To me, my job is challenging', which measures the level of demand that the work of the respondents requires of them. The most common response is '5- To a great extent', with 35% of respondents selecting this option. An additional 29% selected '4- Moderately', and this made the total of cumulative findings 64%. Although this item is positively skewed, indicating a propensity of respondent work to be challenging, it has the lowest cumulative finding as well as the most '1 – Not at all' selections, indicating a relevant minority that is insufficiently challenged by their work. Gera et al. (2019) support this view, stating that dedicated employees report high levels of enthusiasm and find their job sufficiently challenging.

In conclusion, the sample results indicate high levels of dedication amongst the sample respondents. This is mostly noted in item four, although all items are skewed in affirmation. Within this dimension, Item five was the weakest based on the spread of the feedback.

6.4 Psychometric properties

The study analysed the results using psychometric properties such as reliability, validity, normality, and regression for the four concepts (No trust, uncertainty, erosion, and dedication). The findings demonstrate strong psychometric properties, thus validating the use in this study. The scales were previously validated by scholars; therefore, the scales were psychometrically sound to use for this study (Yesufu, 2020; Gera et al., 2019).

The internal consistency reliability – Cronbach's Alpha for all four values ranged from 0.845 to 0.883, which suggests that the items within the scale measured the constructs intended. Schrepp (2020) suggests that a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.7 is recommended and represents a high level of internal consistency. This assures the researcher that the scales are reliable and are measuring the same underlying constructs (Schrepp, 2020).

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measures the suitability for factor analysis. It looks at the proportion of variance which is common variance (Shrestha, 2021). KMO's acceptable threshold is 0.5, and in this study, the KMO was significantly higher than 0.5. This suggested that the factors were best suited for factor analysis. The KMO in this study ranged between 0.720 and 0.843, which signifies a good and high level of sampling validity. Radhika et al. (2023) state that this KMO can be considered to be "Meritorious", which means it is deserving of praise. The Barlett's Test reflects p-values of constructs that were below 0.05, which signifies a very good validity (Goldberg & Scheiner, 2020).

6.5 Hypothesis One (H1) – No Trust

The psychological contract concept was popularised by Argyris (1960) and further developed by Rousseau (1989). Rousseau (1989, p.123) defined the psychological contract as “an individual's beliefs regarding the terms of conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between the focal person and another party”. The concept is central to this study in assessing employee perception in organisations. The trust dimension in the study has been critical, and its fulfilment is linked to positive organisational performance and outcomes (Hammouri et al., 2022; Topa et al., 2022). Contrary to this belief, distrust is a concern for scholars, as it can be a sign of a psychological contract breach (Henderson & O’Leary-Kelly, 2021). A psychological contract breach emanating from distrust leads to reduced engagement and job satisfaction (Topa et al., 2022).

The first hypothesis states: **The ‘no trust’ dimension of the psychological contract will portray a strong negative impact on dedication.** This proposition suggests that employees’ perception of distrust increases when dedication decreases. This is an inverse relationship. Dedication, as defined by Baran and Sypniewska (2020), is characterised by a sense of enthusiasm, pride, and challenges in the work. Employees who portray this component have a strong identification and satisfaction with their work (Baran & Sypniewska, 2020).

The Social Exchange Theory grounds a psychological contract breach; it suggests that employment relationships are reciprocal in nature (Meira & Hancer, 2021). The theory suggests that employees are likely to reciprocate a psychological contract breach through withdrawing and disengaging from tasks (Baran & Sypniewska, 2020).

In testing the hypothesis, it is required to understand the sample. A psychological contract is subjective, implicit, and informal in nature (Kutaula et al., 2020). Thus, it is important to establish the prevalence of the ‘no trust’ dimension within the pool of respondents. This step is crucial as a psychological contract breach is based on employee perception (Gong & Wang, 2022). The prevalence of the ‘no trust’

dimension within the pool of the sample allows the researcher to determine whether it is sufficiently represented for statistical testing.

The item 'Withholds information from their employees', examines the perceived information transparency. The response shows that the frequency of '1-Not at all' and '2—Slightly' was dominant, therefore, suggesting that hybrid employees do not think their employers withhold information from them. These results are crucial to this study as transparency is a key component of psychological contract fulfilment (Hammouri et al., 2022). Janssen (2019) states that a lack of transparency can cause incongruence, where employee and employer have differing views of mutual obligations. The low score on this item suggests that this is not widely perceived.

The second item, 'Acts as if they don't trust employees.'. The item shows a data skew heavily towards trust, with almost 70% reporting their employer at '1-not at all' or '2-slightly'. This item was directly measuring the 'no trust' dimension, which suggests an employment relationship breakdown (Holland & Scullion, 2021). Frydinger et al. (2021) state that trust and loyalty are basic components of the modern-day relational psychological contract. The interpretation of these findings implies that employees reported that they feel their employers perceive them as trustworthy.

The third item, 'Introduces changes without involving employees', measures a lack of participation in change. The item yielded a division in the sample, with some at 42% and '3-Somewhat' or more. This reflects the psychological contract transition, which is triggered by a lack of involvement. This further suggests the need for explicit renegotiation, which will be beneficial in the new work context (Baruch & Rousseau, 2019).

The fourth item, 'Doesn't share important information with employee', emphasises the first findings, with responses cumulatively reporting 64% (both '1-not at all' and '2-slightly'). This finding suggests that employees do not perceive their employer as holding back important information from them; therefore, no breach was recorded.

This is a noteworthy finding in today's workplace, where communication is heavily reliant on technology in hybrid and remote work settings (Reddy & Sai, 2024).

It can be deduced that 'no trust' perception is low, which signifies that the psychological contract of the employee is fulfilled (Naveed & Qamar Zia, 2024). It is, however, worth noting that these results cannot be generalised; thus, the need to explicitly renegotiate employment terms is required (Baruch & Rousseau, 2019). Furthermore, the construct is defined by a sense of pride, enthusiasm and commitment (Baran & Sypniewska, 2020). Therefore, the construct has a positive-negative impact on the dedication dimension. This is in alignment with the literature that has linked psychological contract breach to a reduction in employee engagement and commitment. The statistical tests brought a standardised beta of -0.127 and a p-value of 0.420. This is aligned with the hypothesised direction; however, the extent is weak. This leads to the researcher not supporting hypothesis 1.

6.6 Hypothesis Two (H2) - Uncertainty

The modern employment landscape is continuously changing (Duran, 2019). This hypothesis focuses on the 'uncertainty' construct as a dimension of the psychological contract transition. The hypothesis states, '**The 'uncertainty' dimension of psychological contract will portray a strong negative impact on dedication**', it posits a direct and negative relationship. This hypothesis seems rational and reasonable, as employee engagement is relational and may not thrive on ambiguity. This is supported by Baran and Sypniewska (2020), who defined engagement as having pride, enthusiasm, and strong work identification. Holland and Scullion (2021) support this view, stating that employees who perceive their commitments as unknowable are likely to experience negative consequences relating to a psychological contract transition. Turner (2020) states that this is withholding the affective commitment that surrounds dedication, and therefore, it is not reciprocated with disengagement.

A quantitative study, which captured 103 responses, was conducted. Its variance provides the context for hypothesis testing with dedication, which is measured with the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli, 2021). A 5-point Likert scale was used to score the items. A greater score is indicative of a greater perception of uncertainty.

The first item is relevant for capturing the perceived probability of an employment relationship's future: 'Difficult to predict the future direction of their relations with me'. In this item, relational ambiguity was tested as a component of insecurity that is linked to trust and commitment in relational psychological contracts (Frydlinger et al., 2021). The results show a lack of perceived ambiguity with a cumulative of 67% reporting, from '1-Not at all' and '2-Slightly'. This is indicative of a stable psychological contract, therefore suggestive of a fulfilled psychological contract.

The second item, 'Uncertainty regarding their commitment to employees', mirrors a sense of certainty. These measures focus on the perceived reliability and trustworthiness of the organisation regarding its promises. Rao and Kunja (2019) stated that this is a key component of the psychological contract. The distribution shows a positive consensus of certainty, at 69% cumulative amount of '1-Not at all' and '2-Slightly'. Literature has linked this finding with a positive and fulfilled psychological contract, subsequently resulting in positive organisational outcomes (Hammouri et al., 2022).

The third item, 'Uncertainty regarding their commitment to me,' is a personal inquiry. This item looks at individual beliefs about oneself and the organisation, which is in line with the sentiments of the psychological contract (Rao & Kunja, 2019). The responses in this item, cumulative 68% in the low categories, are aligned with the two previous items. This suggests that participants felt secure in the agreements or in dealing with the organisation. This is a sign of relational contract, which is featured by trust and loyalty (Chan, 2021).

It is noteworthy that 3.9% of participants reported feeling high certainty regarding the organisation's commitment to employees. However, this number shoots to 11.7% for commitments to participants personally. This aligns with Scholar's work that reported that the psychological contract is subjective and individualised in nature (Kutaula et al., 2020).

It can be deduced from these results that the 'uncertainty' dimension is low. These results are consistent in all three measures, with the mode at '1-Not at all'. Therefore, the sample is experiencing a psychological contract fulfilment. The annexures attached provide a display of the sample clustered tightly, portraying a positive end of the spectrum, reflective of a psychological contract fulfilment. The hypothesis is thus not supported as the phenomenon is non-existent within the dataset. A regression analysis was conducted, and a standardised beta coefficient of -0.008 with a p-value of 0.961 was found. This further supports that no practical significance could be found.

6.7 Hypothesis Three (H3) - Erosion

Topa et al. (2022) state that when a psychological contract is maintained, it fosters loyalty and high performance; however, a breach will have an inverse effect, disengagement. This leads to discussions of the third dimension 'erosion', which is the perception that the employer is demanding more from the employee while providing less in return (Lopes, 2021). This leads to a decline in reciprocity perception. The hypothesis stated **'The 'erosion' dimension of psychological contract will portray a strong negative impact on dedication'**.

Erosion was measured using three items. The data was received from 103 respondents who reported being hybrid workers; there were no missing values from the dataset. The scale (1 – Not at all to 5 – To a great extent) reflects high erosion levels when the score is higher. This indicates a greater belief that the employer is breaching the terms of employment, which is a transition component (Holland & Scullion, 2021).

The first item, 'My employer demands more from me while giving me less in return', measured erosion. The question focuses on the perceived imbalance in the give-and-take dynamic, which is the core of the Social Exchange Theory, that underscores the psychological contract (Meira & Hancer, 2021). The most frequently occurring response was '1-Not at all' at 37%, which implies that the respondents do not feel the imbalance. A cumulative total of 63% reported '2-Slightly' and '1-Not at all', which indicates a balanced relationship between employee and employer.

The second item focuses on a tangible form of erosion, 'My employer offers stagnant or reduced wages the longer I work here. This item investigates the financial breach, which is at the centre of transactional components of a psychological contract (Chan, 2021). The responses to this question yielded the strongest 'trust' responses, with 46% of participants reporting '1-Not at all'. The cumulative total for '1-Not at all' and '2-Slightly' is 71%, which is the highest percentage. The data imply that respondents experienced the least relational and financial erosion in the form of stagnancy or reduced pay. The employer is fulfilling the economic obligations as perceived by respondents.

The final and third item, 'I get more and more work for less pay', also measures erosion. It combines increased demands with diminishing returns and is referred to as work intensification (Marathe et al., 2019). It aligns with the Job Demands-Resources model (J D-R), where an increase in workload is a stressor (Bakker et al., 2023). Similarly, the mode is '1-Not at all' at 36%, and the majority at 63% (slightly and not at all). It is to be noted that this item also produced a high number of '5-To a great extent' responses, at 13%. The results imply that the majority of respondents do not experience work intensification. The 13% of respondents who perceive it feel it to a greater extent, which is unaligned with the reciprocity of the psychological contract (Meira & Hancer, 2021; Tsai & Kang, 2019).

The results for the erosion dimension were recorded as low and positively skewed. This shows a baseline of trust, which is consistent with a fulfilled psychological contract (Lis et al., 2021; Naveed & Qamar Zia, 2024). Erosion portrayed the lowest variance, thus potentially making it difficult to detect a strong correlation. The results

present a potential paradox. Furthermore, the results show that erosion is not a perceived issue in the sample, which implies a high level of a general fulfilled psychological contract (Turner, 2020). The central research question posits that when erosion is perceived, it will influence employee dedication.

Regression analysis has directly answered the research question, and specifically Hypothesis 3. The erosion variable gave a standardised beta value of -0.349 and a p-value of 0.015. As previously stated, a 0.05 value is the threshold; the relationship is significant and unlikely to occur by chance. This means that there is a significant predictive relationship. This aligns with the literature, which states that a psychological contract breach leads to negative organisational outcomes (Gong & Wang, 2022).

Statistical significance is established through the p-value, which confirms a relationship. However, a beta coefficient (-0.349) further describes the strength and nature of the relationship. The existence of a negative sign signifies empirical validation for the direction hypothesised: as perception of erosion increases, dedication reciprocally decreases. This aligns with the Social Exchange Theory outline in Chapter 3. The magnitude of the beta suggests a moderately strong negative impact.

The results show that Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 were not supported within the multiple regression model. Erosion dimension emerged as the strongest and as the only statistically significant unique predictor. Furthermore, the lack of support for 'no trust' and 'uncertainty' hypotheses in the multiple regression model did not necessarily imply no correlation. As indicated in previous tables, the correlation exists significantly. There is an overlap of the variance; however, erosion explains a unique portion of variance in 'dedication'. It can be deduced that the 'erosion' dimension of psychological contract portrays a strong and significant negative impact on employee 'dedication'.

6.8 Strength of the study

The study initially hypothesised:

- Hypothesis 1: The 'no trust' dimension of the psychological contract will portray a strong negative impact on dedication.
- Hypothesis 2: The 'uncertainty' dimension of the psychological contract will portray a strong negative impact on dedication.
- Hypothesis 3: The 'erosion' dimension of the psychological contract will portray a strong negative impact on dedication.

The study expectations were that all three hypotheses would be true and supported in answering the main research question, 'To what extent does the psychological contract transition impact dedication in a hybrid work environment?'. Although the former stated were initial expectations, the researcher expected variations in the degree of correlation. The findings found that erosion was a stronger predictor of the 'dedication' dimension.

6.9 Conclusion

The following results were found for the hypotheses:

- Hypothesis 1: The 'no trust' dimension of the psychological contract will portray a strong negative impact on dedication = not supported
- Hypothesis 2: The 'uncertainty' dimension of the psychological contract will portray a strong negative impact on dedication = not supported
- Hypothesis 3: The 'erosion' dimension of the psychological contract dimension will portray a strong negative impact on dedication = supported

All the hypotheses were grounded in the Social Exchange Theory, which suggests employees who perceive a breach of trust, certainty, and erosion will reciprocate by withdrawing efforts and commitment levels. The overall perception of 'No Trust' was low, the overall perception of 'Uncertainty' was low, and the overall perception of 'Erosion' was low, with respondents reporting a balanced relationship.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study with recommendations. The main findings are outlined, with recommendations to stakeholders.

7.2 The study

The study sought to assess the effect of the psychological contract transition on the dedication of employees within a hybrid working environment. Mistrust, uncertainty and erosion are components of a psychological contract transition, and they are associated with the psychological contract between the employer and the employee (Abarantyne et al., 2019). I had dived into the psychological contract of employees in a hybrid work environment.

This matters because hybrid work now represents one of the biggest developments in organisational culture over the past five years (Dale et al., 2024). Organisations continue to spend millions on engagement surveys post the COVID pandemic (Wadood et al., 202). This working model is still being refined in various industry contexts, and its execution can greatly influence productivity, engagement, as well as the motivation of employees (Dale et al., 2024). Lastly, the research aims to encourage organisations not to “wing it” but rather to use data-driven frameworks to encourage dedication in employees. As a hybrid employee, this matters to me because I have firsthand experience with how the psychological contract transition affects me.

7.3 Research context

This study focused on hybrid employees in South Africa. Of these workers and the sample captured, 85% from the initial pool indicated that they work in hybrid environments, with 53% having 10 or more years of work experience, and 69% being based in the Gauteng Province. The surveys were online; therefore, participants had to access them using digital technology.

This matters because the insights received were significant in relation to the study (hybrid work environment). The employees were experienced, which gave more credibility to their opinions on the hybrid work model discussion. They were predominantly based in Gauteng, which is the most economically active province in South Africa, and are relevant to this study.

7.4 What did we know:

Before conducting research, we knew of the Social Exchange theory, Job Demands-Resources theory, and Psychological Contract Theory, which extensively proved that psychological contract breach results in adverse effects such as decreased job satisfaction, commitment, and work engagement (Xu & Payne, 2020). Organisational changes tend to precipitate psychological contract re-evaluation as well as the potential breach of it. Employees with a fulfilled psychological contract were likely to reciprocate positively with loyalty and engagement (Tsai & Kang, 2019).

We had robust evidence on employee engagement, stating that well-engaged employees are likely to be productive and subsequently result in positive organisational outcomes (Turner, 2020). The dedication dimension of employee engagement is characterised by a sense of pride and enthusiasm in one's job, and that challenges were positive to maintain dedication (Woods, 2021).

We also knew about the relationships in the traditional office settings. They were easier to gauge among employees and between employees and the employer (Shaik & Makhecha, 2019). We also knew that work practices had changed since the COVID-19 pandemic and that some employers were agile in managing the changes (Uru et al., 2022). The psychological contract was therefore being renegotiated and re-established. Employees were working from home post the pandemic, with some still fully remote (Vartiainen & Vanharanta, 2024).

7.5 What did we not know:

Existing academic literature does not extensively cover psychological contract transition and dedication in the context of hybrid workers. It is not specific in detailing the elements of psychological contract transition (no trust, uncertainty, and erosion) that are the most prominent factors for employees when the traditional work environment is disrupted (van Gilst et al., 2020).

We did not know how the psychological contract was shifting or being redefined post-COVID in relation to dedication, from the employee perspective (Walker, 2023). What visibility and communication constitute sufficient for engaging in hybrid environments? We also did not know if the traditional ways of engaging would suffice in the hybrid environment. Employees' perception of the employer's trust, uncertainty and erosion was also unknown. We, therefore, lacked a clear understanding of how to foster dedication through the psychological contract.

7.6 What specific questions did the study answer

The study was tailored towards answering three specific questions:

- To what extent does the psychological contract transition impact dedication in a hybrid work environment
- The cumulative impact of psychological contract transition on employee dedication
- The elements of psychological contract transition (trust erosion, uncertainty, value erosion) that are most important in predicting employee dedication.

7.7 How did the study answer these questions

The study utilised a quantitative approach and cross-sectional research design, which was based on previously validated scales. The data was collected using an online questionnaire with a sample of 103 employees to evaluate the key constructs:

- Independent Variables: NO TRUST (4 items, $\alpha = .883$), UNCERTAINTY (3 items, $\alpha = .869$), and EROSION (3 items, $\alpha = .845$). Using the PCI scale.

- Dependent Variable: DEDICATION, using the UWES scale (5 items, $\alpha = .876$).

A reliability analysis was conducted on all scales to ensure internal consistency and validity. Descriptive statistics and a standard multiple regression were the primary analysis tools, which were used to assess the overall predictive influence of the three independent variables on dedication.

7.8 What were the research outcomes

The following results were found for the hypotheses:

- Hypothesis 1: The 'no trust' dimension of the psychological contract will portray a strong negative impact on dedication = not supported
- Hypothesis 2: The 'uncertainty' dimension of the psychological contract will portray a strong negative impact on dedication = not supported
- Hypothesis 3: The 'erosion' dimension of the psychological contract dimension will portray a strong negative impact on dedication = supported

This suggests that the erosion dimension best influences the dedication dimension of employee engagement.

Quantitatively: The survey data revealed a positive correlation between psychological contract transition and employee engagement.

Qualitatively: Most employees are not experiencing a psychological contract breach, however. Employees feel that they are trusted by their employers.

7.9 Contribution

This research will contribute to theory to psychological contract and employee engagement in hybrid work environments. Businesses can leverage the findings by establishing strategies to maintain employee engagement during times of change. They will be in better positions to support employees and addressing other issues relating to hybrid work environments. Future research should be conducted on cross-cultural comparison, industry-based and focus on specific roles. These elements will provide richer data and evidence-based findings.

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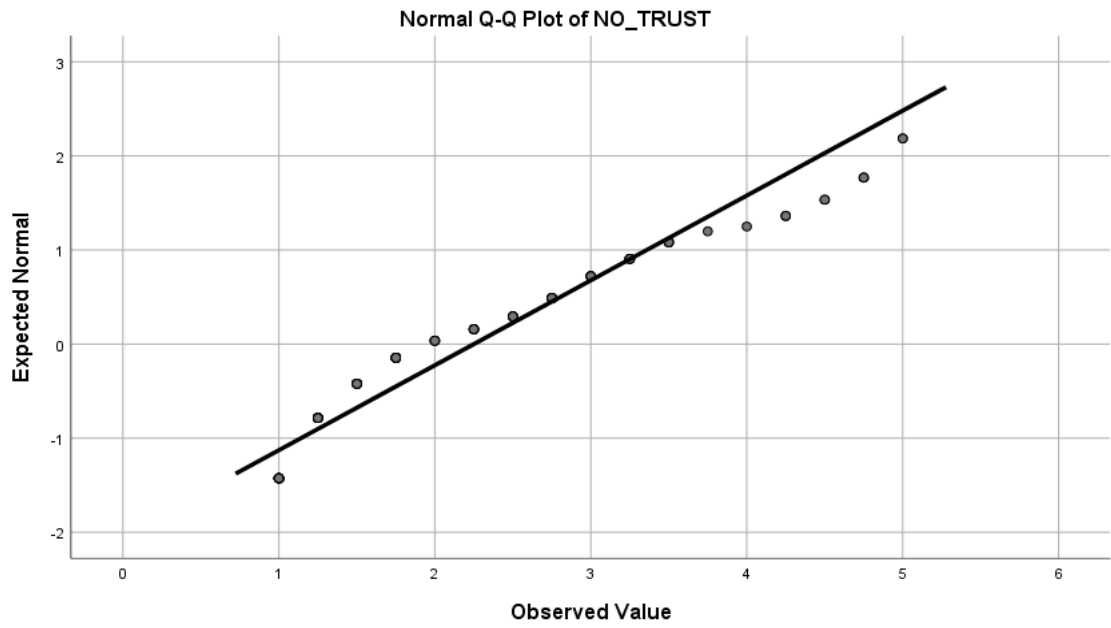
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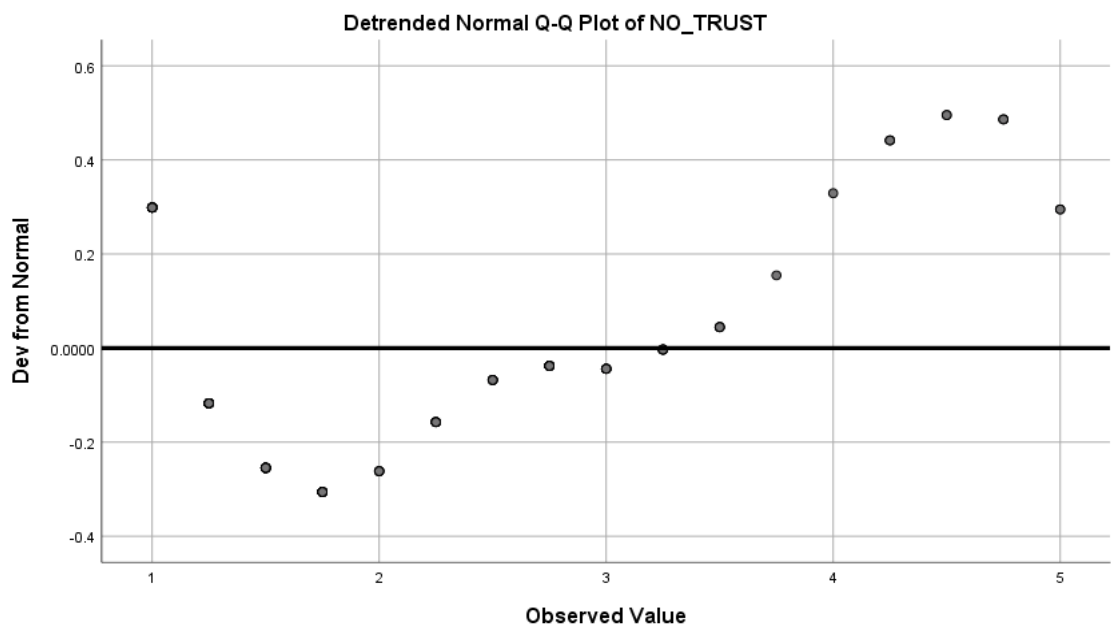
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APPENDICES

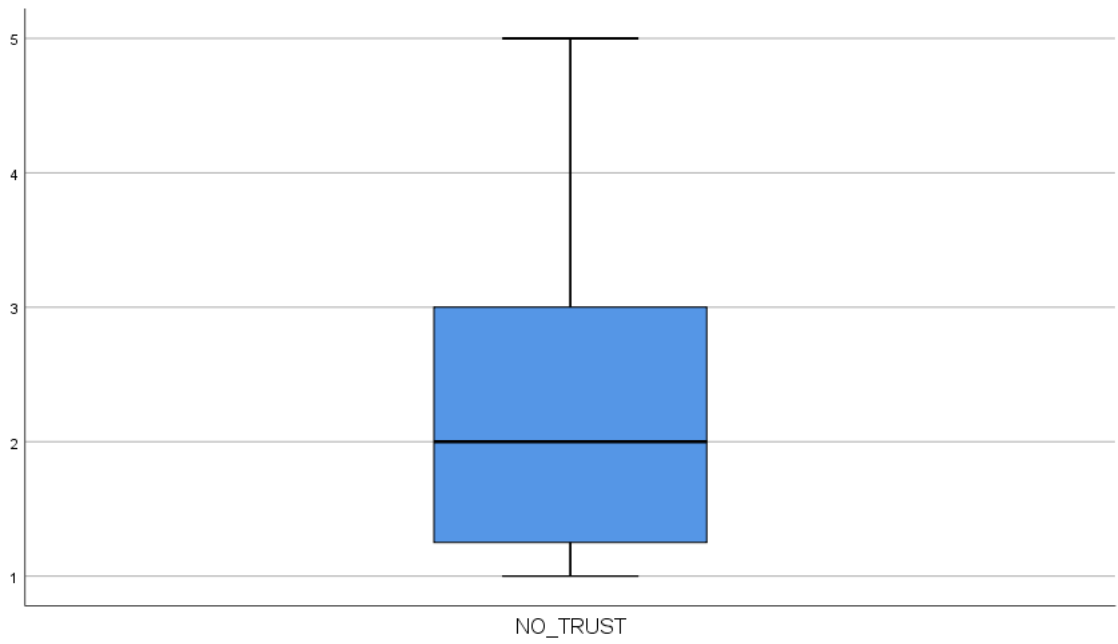
1 Appendix 1: Normal Q-Q plot of No Trust



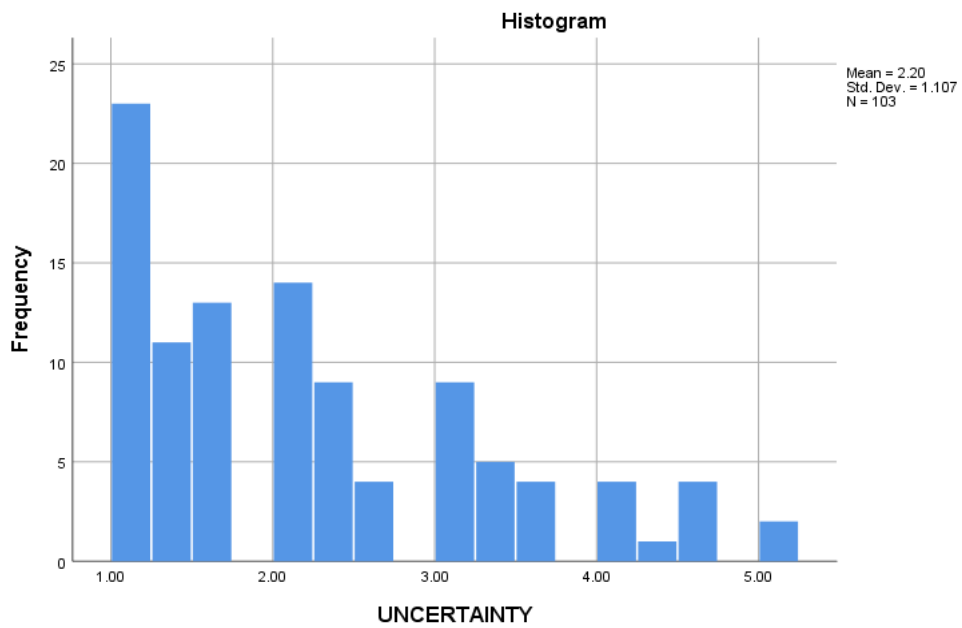
2 Appendix 2: Detrended normal Q-Q plot of No Trust



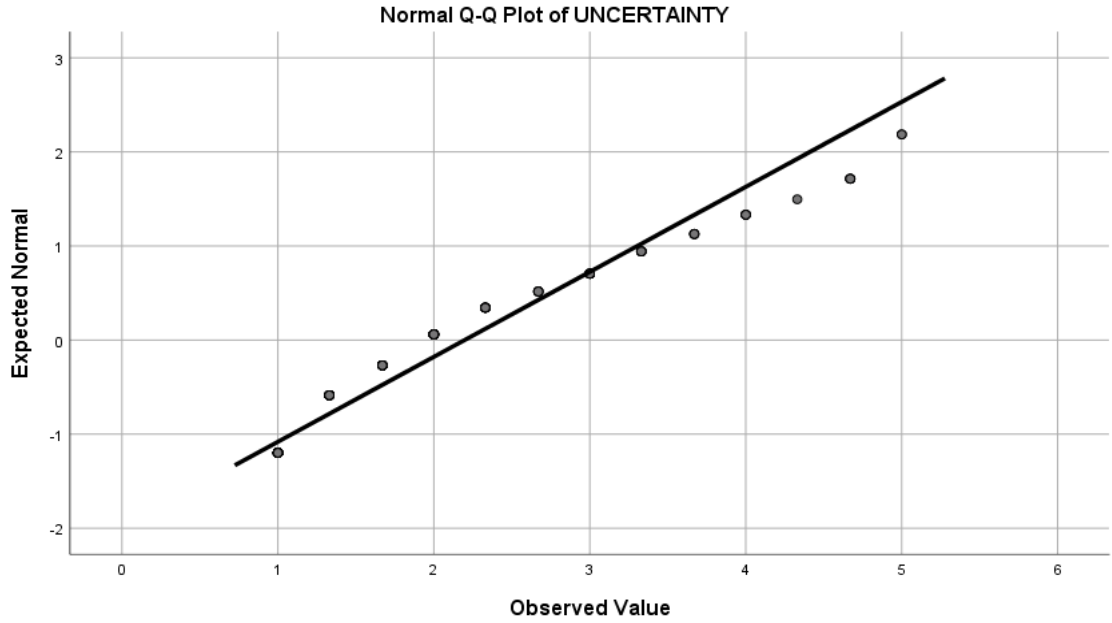
3 Appendix 3: No Trust Boxplot



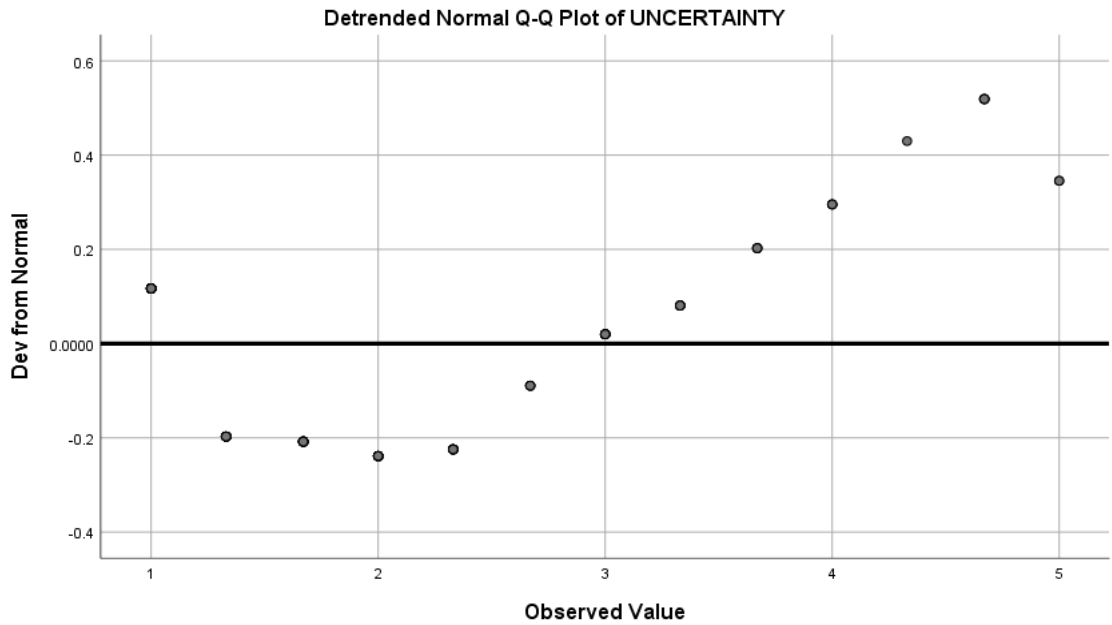
4 Appendix 4: Uncertainty histogram



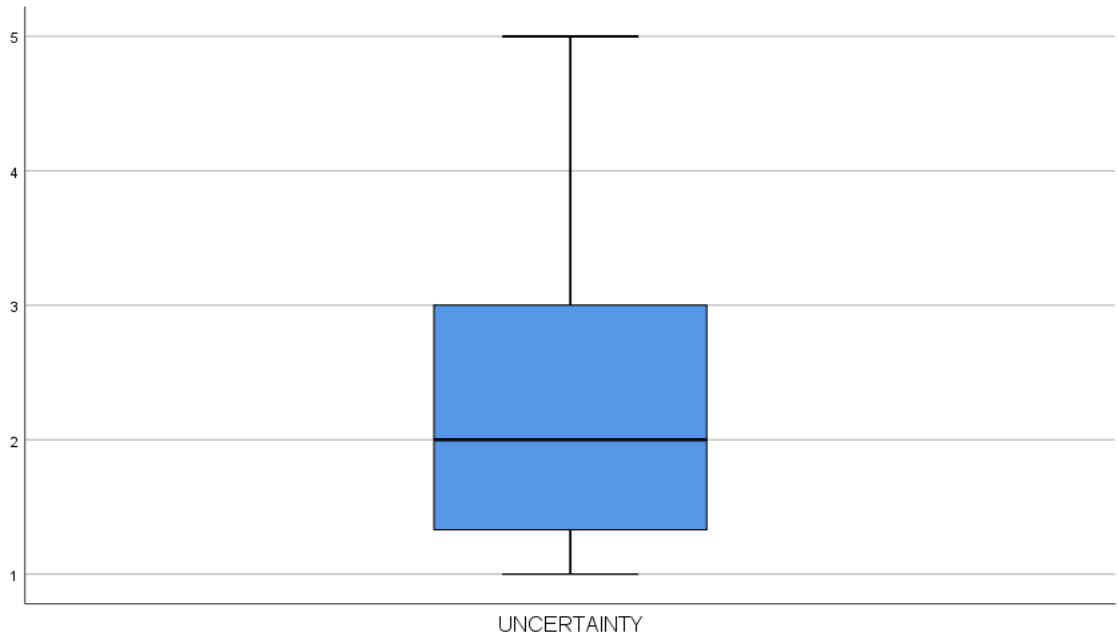
5 Appendix 5: Uncertainty Q-Q Plot



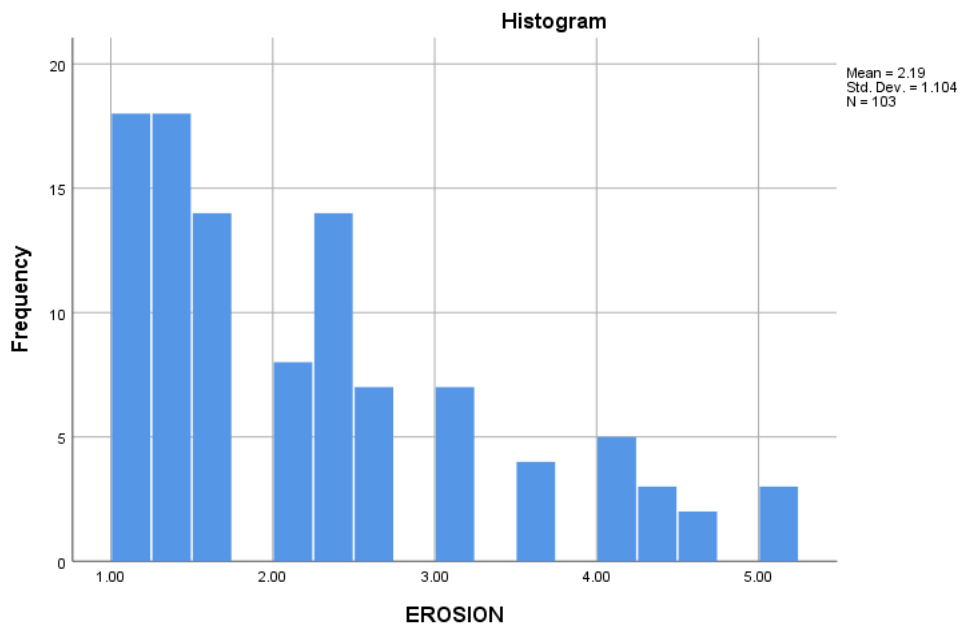
6 Appendix 6: Detrended Normal Q-Q Plot of Uncertainty



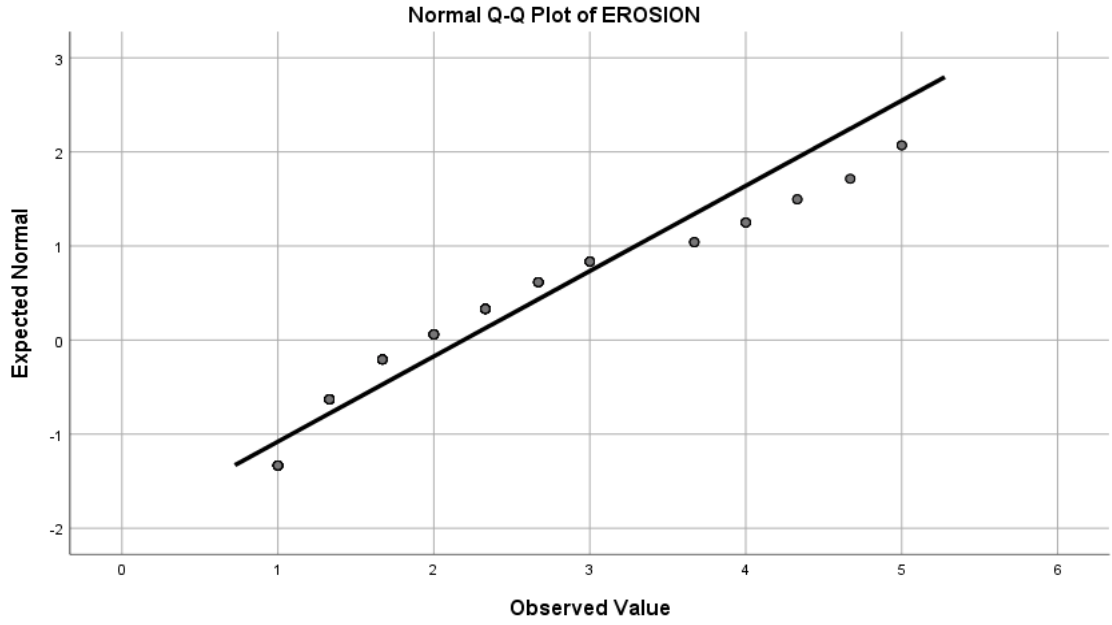
7 Appendix 7: Boxplot of Uncertainty



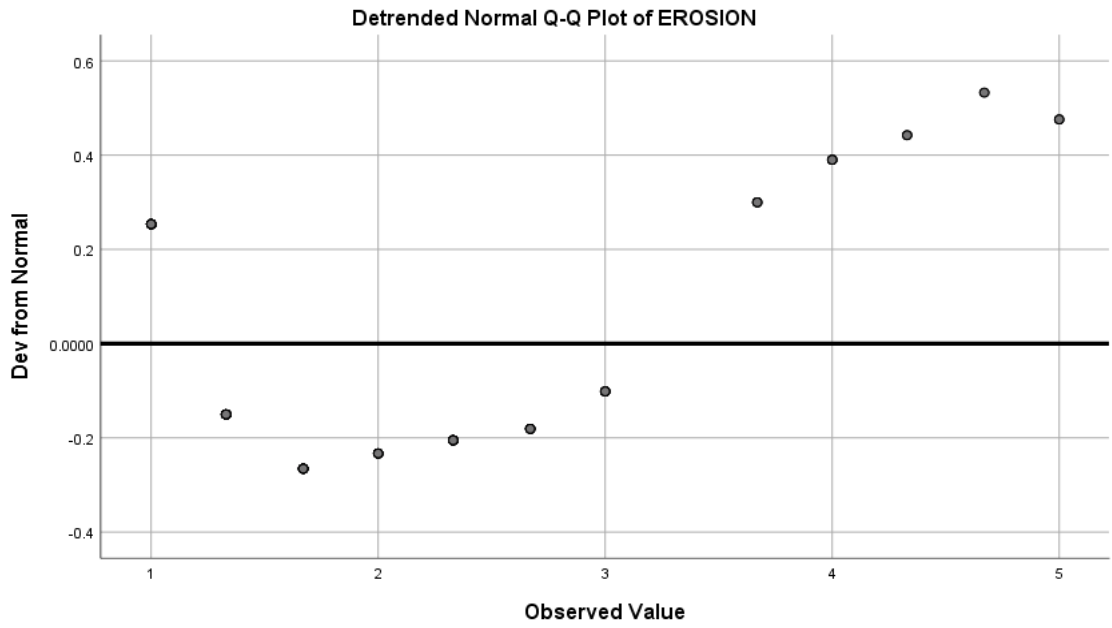
8 Appendix 8: Erosion histogram



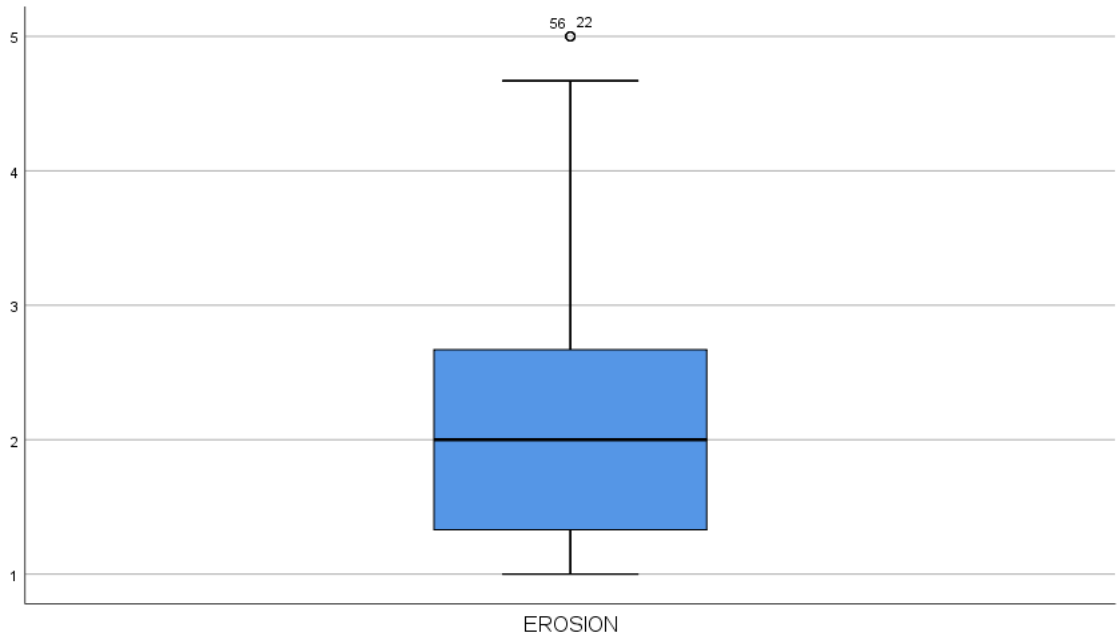
9 Appendix 9: Normal Q-Q Plot of Erosion



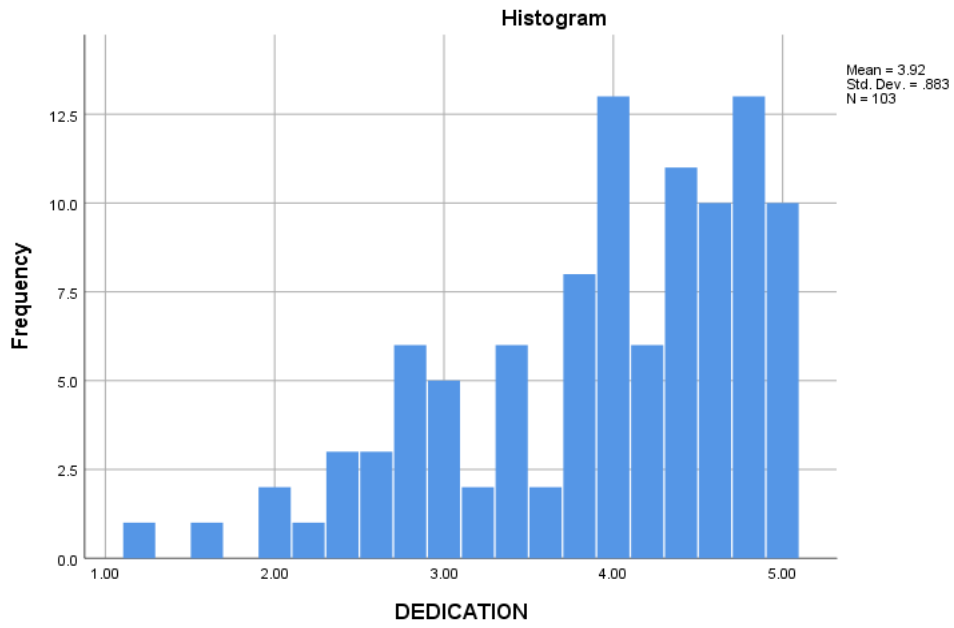
10 Appendix 10: Detrended Normal Q-Q Plot of Erosion



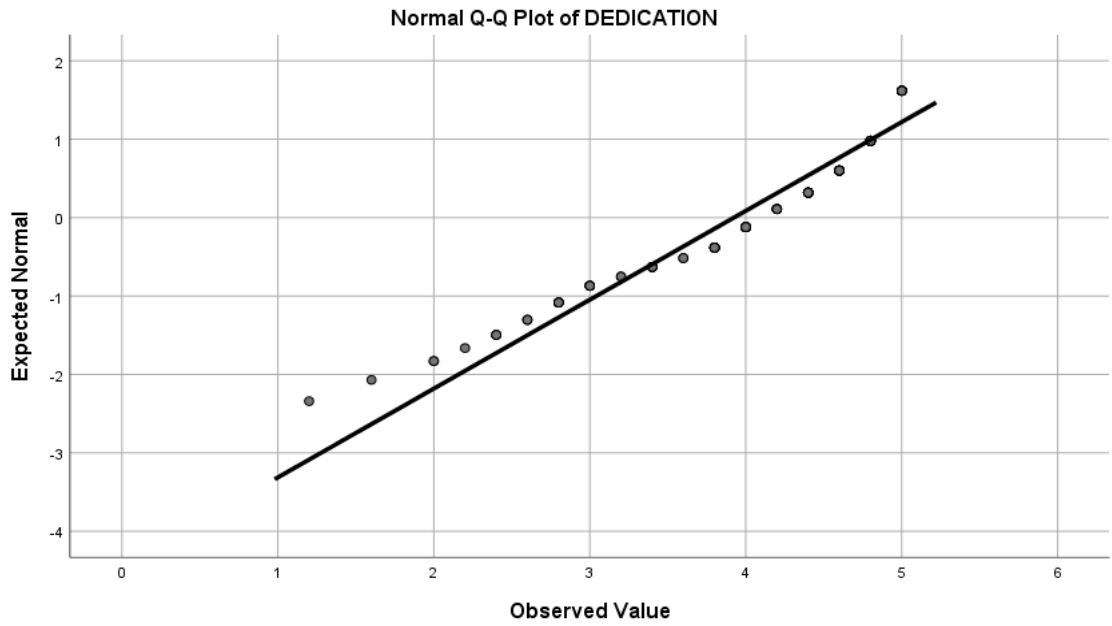
11 Appendix 11: Box plot for Erosion



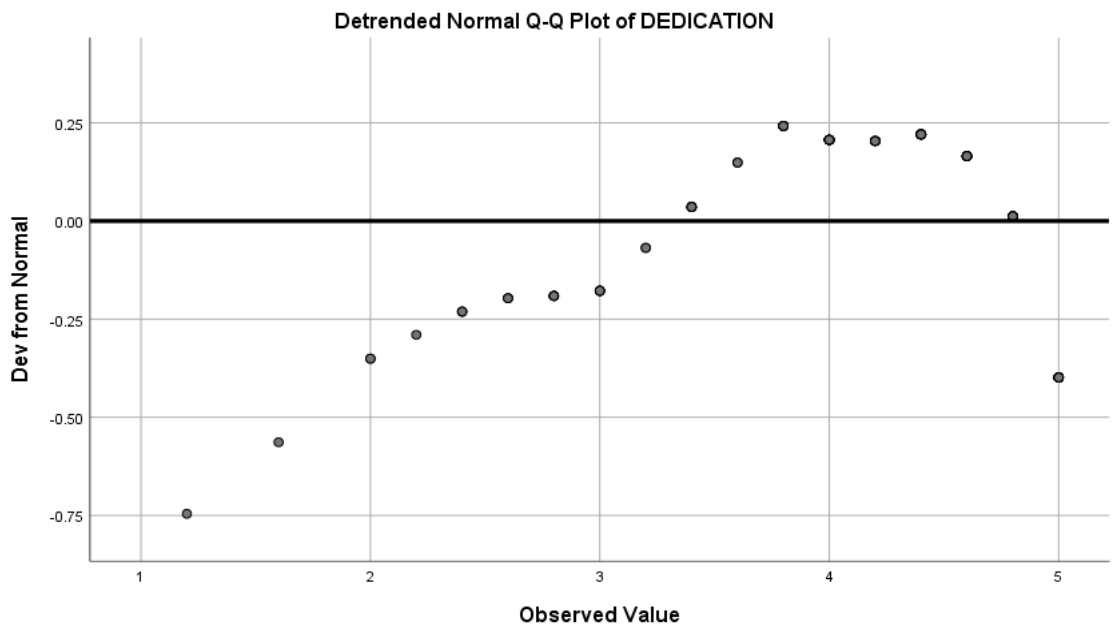
12 Appendix 12: Histogram for Dedication



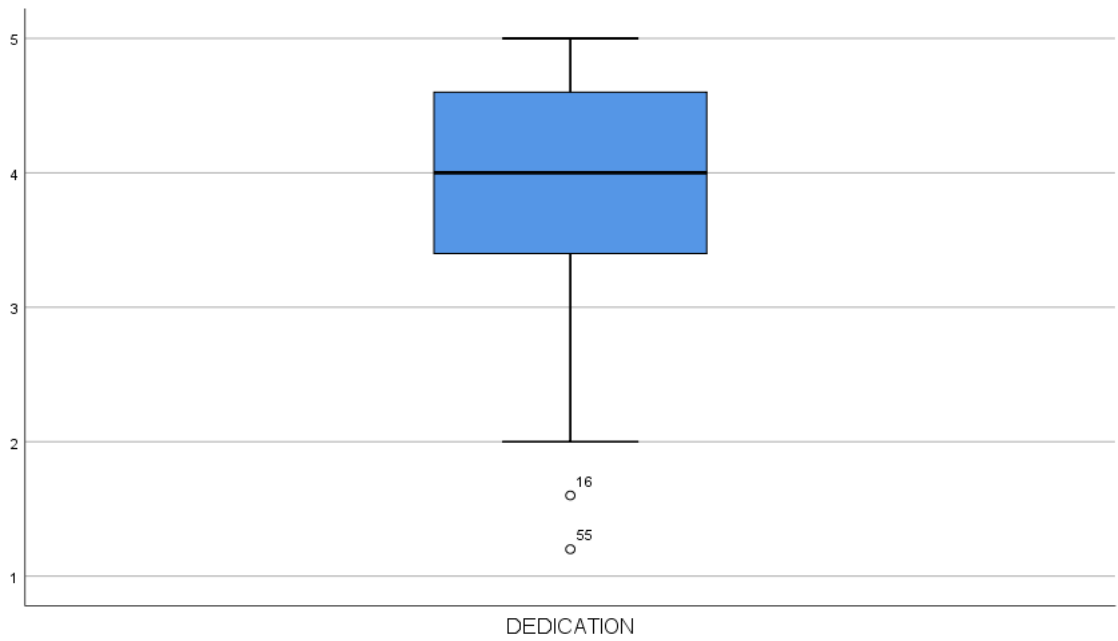
13 Appendix 13: Normal Q-Q Plot of Dedication



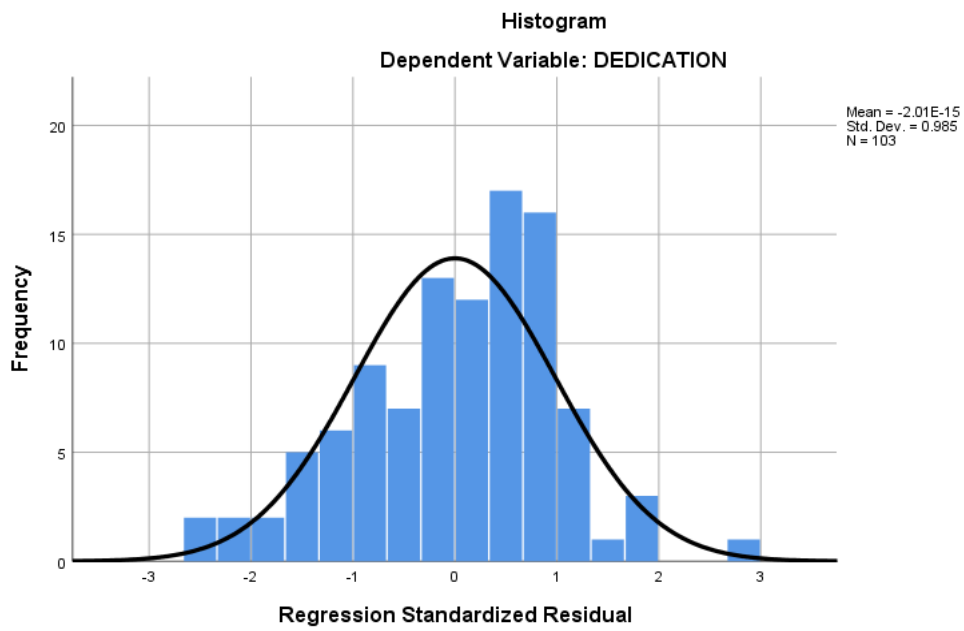
14 Appendix 14: Detrended Normal Q-Q Plot of Dedication



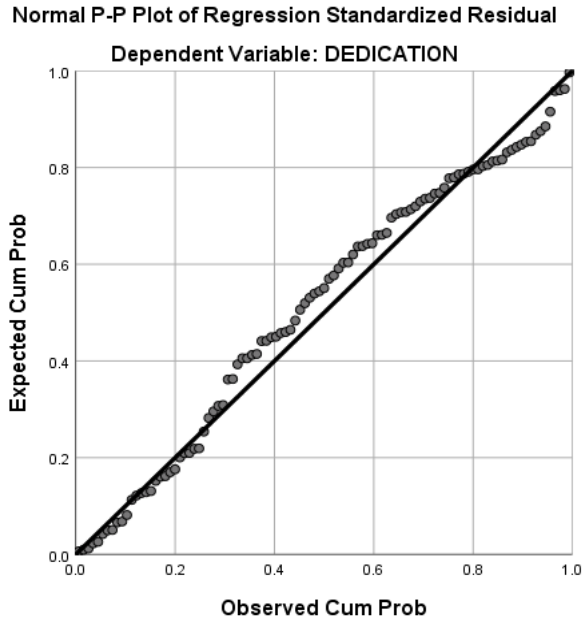
15 Appendix 15: Boxplot for Dedication



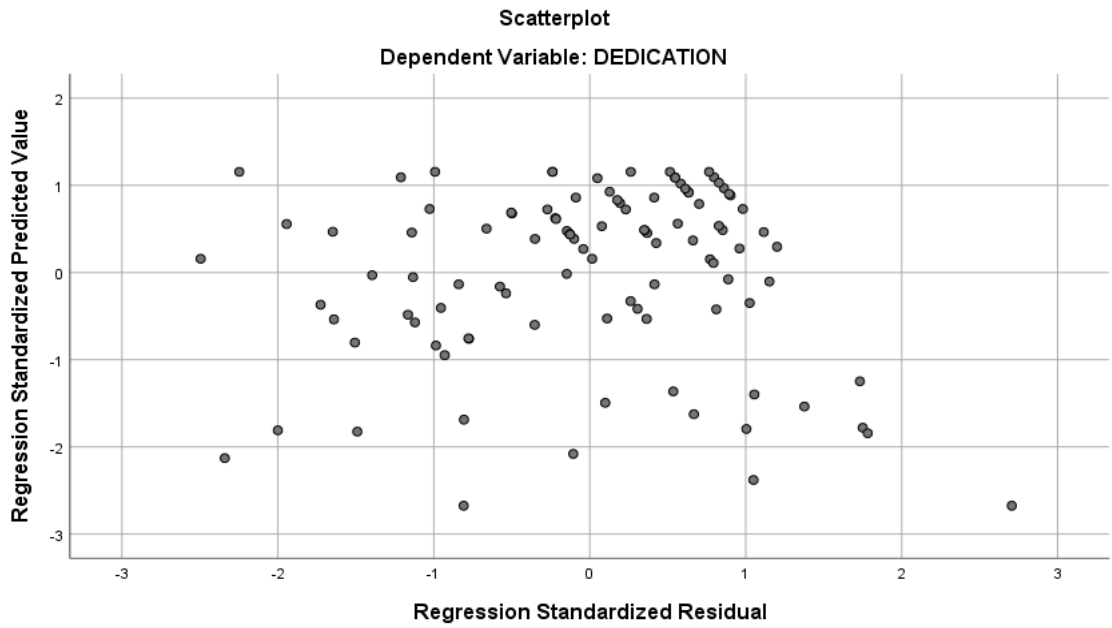
16 Appendix 16: Histogram for Dedication



17 Appendix 17: Normal Q-Q Plot of Regression Standardised Residual



18 Appendix 18: Scatterplot of Regression Standardised Residual



QUESTIONNAIRE

By ticking this box, you accept and consent to participating in this survey.

Psychological contract Inventory – Psychological contract Transition

To what extent do the items below describe your employer’s relationship to you? Please read each statement carefully and decide if you ever feel this way about your job. If you have never had this feeling, cross the ‘1’ (one) in the space after the statement. If you have had this feeling, indicate how often you feel it by crossing the number (from 2 to 5) that best describes the frequency. The items are extracted from the PCI-validated scale.

Please answer each question using the following scale by ticking one of the below:

1- Not at all, 2-Slightly, 3-Somewhat, 4-Moderately, 5-To a great extent

- | | NO TRUST | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|----|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1 | Withholds information from its employees | | | | | |
| 2 | Acts as if it doesn’t trust its employees | | | | | |
| 3 | Introduces changes without involving employees | | | | | |
| 4 | Doesn’t share important information with its workers | | | | | |
| | UNCERTAINTY | | | | | |
| 5 | Difficult to predict the future direction of its relations with me | | | | | |
| 6 | Uncertainty regarding its commitments to employees | | | | | |
| 7 | Uncertainty regarding its commitments to me | | | | | |
| | EROSION | | | | | |
| 8 | My employer demands more from me while giving me less in return | | | | | |
| 9 | My employer stagnant or reduced wages the longer I work here | | | | | |
| 10 | I get more and more work for less pay | | | | | |

Employee Engagement – UWES-17 Dedication

The following statements are about how you feel at work. Please read each statement carefully and decide if you ever feel this way about your job. If you have never had this feeling, cross the ‘1’ (one) in the space after the statement. If you have had this feeling, indicate how often you feel it by crossing the number (from 2 to 5) that best describes how frequently you feel that way. The items are extracted from the UWES-17 validated scale.

Please answer each question using the following scale:

1- Not at all, 2-Slightly, 3-Somewhat, 4-Moderately, 5-To a great extent

UWES-17 Dedication

1 2 3 4 5

- 13 I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose
- 14 I am enthusiastic about my job
- 15 My job inspires me
- 16 I am proud of the work that I do
- 17 To me, my job is challenging