

# A South African perspective on the relationship between quality of work life and organisational commitment amongst employees

Sekunyane Tebogo Lehlomela<sup>1,\*</sup>, Leigh-Anne Paul Dachapalli<sup>2</sup>, Suzette Ragadu<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of People Management and Development, Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria, South Africa, Orcid: 0000-0002-7713-2445

<sup>2</sup> Department of Human Resource Management, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa, Orcid: 0000-0001-6736-4376

<sup>3</sup> Department of People Management and Development, Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria, South Africa, Orcid: 0000-0001-6945-3305

## Keywords

Organisational  
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## Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the biographical differences between the QWL (quality of work life) and OC (organisational commitment) at a government department in Gauteng. A quantitative research approach was used to achieve the study's objectives. The quantitative research approach was chosen primarily to determine the relationship between the two variables of interests, namely quality of work life and organisational commitment. A structured questionnaire, validated from previous studies, consisting of closed-ended questions was used. Data were collected and then analysed using the SPSS IBM 25 software package. All the Pearson correlation coefficients are positive regarding the direction, inferring that the respondents' age and all work-life variables considered in this research are positively correlated. Regarding QWL, it has been inferred that age has a moderate to weak positive correlation to QWL which is statistically significant. Marital status and OC are positively correlated, with the highest p-value between the respondents' marital status and CC at 0.406. It was thus concluded that any p-value above 0.05 represents a negative correlation between variables.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background

According to a report released by a government department in Gauteng (Department of Higher Education & Training, 2018/2019), 519 permanently employed employees resigned from their jobs

<sup>1\*</sup>Corresponding Author

E-mail address: [LehlomelaST@tut.ac.za](mailto:LehlomelaST@tut.ac.za)

with vacated posts including posts in senior management, professionally qualified and experienced specialists and mid-management, qualified technical and academic personnel, junior management, supervisors, skilled and discretionary decision-making, non-qualified and defined decision-making, supervisory and superintendent. The total percentage of those who left the department between 2018 and 2019 consecutively is 5.95% (DHET, 2018/2019). Workplaces are increasingly competing for qualified and skilled employees and are desirous to attract and retain the attention of qualified and competent employees (Hamidi & Mohamadi, 2012; Ramawas, 2021). QWL is considered a dynamic multiple-dimensional structure wherein job security, reward systems, training and career development or progress and participation in decision-making processes coincide (Nanjundeswaraswamy, Swamy & Nagesh, 2020).

For Krommuang and Lertthairakul (2020), QWL is a logical process that has a set of ideologies that make people the critical resource in the organisation, and who are responsible and able to contribute and are treated with dignity and respect. QWL factors such as adequate and fair compensation, safe working conditions, future opportunities for job security, opportunity for human capacity and work life balance have become an important part of the employer toolkit to attract and retain qualified and competent employees (Singh, 2021). Government departments are no exception to this growing phenomenon as they also need to seek ways to improve QWL through the encouragement of safe and sound working conditions; better service conditions; and adequate and fair compensation. In the Gauteng Department, which is the focus of this study, demographic differences of QWL and OC must be considered within the context of this competitive environment where organisations are tirelessly working hard to attract and retain qualified employees.

QWL has major consequences on the attitudes of employees towards their organisations and employees' lives (Heikkinen & Kivijarvi, 2021). Ramawas (2021) believe that trends and developments in QWL which influence the well-being of employees and their employment results at work can be examined. While QWL maintenance issues have received considerable attention in recent years (Deery, 2018), the reality of QWL satisfaction in government departments has received significantly less attention (Singh, 2021). QWL is deeply tied to the notion of the Work Life Balance (WLB) in so far as these perceptions underlie the work-life balance, which informs overall QWL. The definition of the WLB concept is a complex task as it can be taken as the sequential interpretation of the notions of 'work,' 'life,' and 'balance' (Deery et al., 2018). Noor (2011) argues that WLB effectively manages to combine paid work with any other activities of significance to individuals such as family, personal development, leisure activities, community activities, and voluntary work. WLB is defined by Greenhaus, Collins, and Shaw (2003) as a person who is both satisfied with and committed to his or her work and family role. Consequently, employees with high WLB thus have similar commitment and time to offer to both work and non-work areas of their lives (Virick et al., 2007).

Various researchers such as Allen and Meyer (1990), O'Reilly and Chatman (1986), 1996), Finegan (2000), and Park, Henkin, and Egley, (2005) extensively studied OC as a variable related to performance and conduct in the field of organisational behaviour (Rawashdeh & Tamimi, 2019). OC, as a multi-dimensional concept, makes it rather difficult to define but is recognised as strengthening the positive attitudes of employees towards their organisation. Commitment employee's level of attachment to some aspect of work. OC is defined by Allen and Meyer (1990) as the mental feeling and state of employee commitment, which links a worker to the organization. Organisational commitment, for Herscovitch and Meyer (2001) is a spiritual framework that commits an employee to a specific action or aim. Employees build many relationships or attachments in the workplace over time including organisational commitment.

## **1.2. Problem Statement**

The background gives rise to the main problem of this paper, which is to determine whether there is a relationship between the quality of work life and organisational commitment of employees at a government department in Gauteng, South Africa.

### **1.3. Research Objectives**

This study aims to investigate the biographical differences between the quality of work life and organisational commitment at a government department in Gauteng. The objective of this research study is to determine whether there is a relationship between the quality of work life and organisational commitment of employees at a government department in Gauteng, South Africa.

The next section provides a review of the literature in relation to the QWL and OC, the factors influencing relationship the job satisfaction, dimensions of QWL and OC, and work environment and organisational performance. Thereafter, the methodology, main findings and discussion points relating to the responses of the participants will be elaborated upon. Lastly, the way forward and the management implications will be highlighted.

## **2. Literature Review**

Having stated the background to this paper, the next section provides a literature review of the key constructs and includes the quality of work life and organisational commitment of employees within public sectors.

### **2.1 QWL and factors that can have an impact on the performance of staff**

QWL can be described as the satisfaction of employees with their working conditions. It is a concept which covers different dimensions of an employee's work (Singh,2021). It includes work content, the work environment, wages and reward systems, training opportunities and career development, decision- making, participation, occupational health and safety, stress, workplace safety, and organisational and interpersonal relationships (Krommuang et al., 2020; Singh,2021). However, Kurt Lewin, in his Field Theory (Aziz, 2020) of employee behaviour, added a description of the relationship between QWL and performance (Agus & Selvaraj). Field Theory aims to clarify the relationship between a person and his behaviour regarding the potential role of factors in the environment, considering that the environmental perceptions and reactions influence the behaviour of individuals. The characteristics of an individual are manifested in personality and thus environmental perceptions can affect the behaviour and performance of an individual (Mafini et al., 2014).

The quality of work-life and employee satisfaction is a result of different aspects of their work-life and the environment in which they find themselves (Ntisa, 2015). Furthermore, as elaborated by various theorists, their satisfaction depends on their differing perceptions and working conditions. For instance, Krommuang and Lertthaitrakul (2020) affirm QWL as a concept which is explicitly related to employee satisfaction and happiness that develops from their career. The quality of the workforce depends on whether those needs are met, because of the disparities in career requirements. Some employees might be satisfied with minimum wage work, as long as the bills are paid, whereas others might think a given job would be too easy or too hard (Rumawas, 2021).

Organisations need to build a working environment where employees can effectively execute their work, positively affect their work, have a positive effect on their place of work, and have good relations. Competition among organisations for employees means that organisations should be attentive to the operational effectiveness of their work environment which can offer a competitive advantage (Lartey, 2021). The effectiveness of competitive advantage in organisations depends primarily on the workforce's performance. For organisations to succeed in their quest for a competitive advantage, such organisations, particularly regarding QWL and other factors that can have an impact on the performance of staff, should address the needs of their employees (Normala, 2010).

According to Alhmoud and Rjoub (2019), retaining and managing employees is vital when organisations aim to achieve competitive advantage. They went further and emphasised the above through their definition of employee retention as an employer's attempt to retain employees in their workforce, which may be used as a strategy to gain a viable benefit, aligned with the total organisational strategy. In the viable business environment of today, successful organisations require loyal, satisfied, and committed employees in order to reduce costs, build market share, increase organisational revenues, and improve the bottom line (Rumawas, 2021). Additionally, employees who are pleased and happy with the work and their jobs are more dedicated to both their jobs and the organisation as a whole, which subsequently means that they are always willing to go the extra mile to ensure improved customer satisfaction (Singh, 2021).

## **2.2 Organisational commitment factors**

OC as a construct that explains the emotional, physical and psychological attachment of employees towards an organisation, was developed in order to explore the intensity of employee loyalty towards their organisation and how their attachment affects their performance. Thus, OC can be seen as an emotional appreciation and the participation of the employee in the organisation. The three dimensions of OC, as explored by Allen and Meyer (1990), are described as emotional attachment (Affective Commitment), the perceived cost of leaving (Continuance Commitment), and a sense of obligation (Normative Commitment). In a study of the relationship between employee's satisfaction with HR practices and their Affective Commitment (AC) to the organisation, Kinnie *et al.* (2005) found that Work Life-Balance (WLB) and QWL are linked to the OC of all employee groups. Moreover, the authors showed that shared efforts to help employees achieve a balance between their jobs and their lives have to do with all employee groups' obligations. WLB has an essential role to play in alleviating high intentions to leave and improving organisational commitment. Leave intentions are positively linked to actual departure (Nkomo *et al.*, 2013).

The attitudes of individuals with regards to their organisation and their intentions to leave have been the subject of a number of studies, revealing a plurality of attitudes that influence leave intentions (Villanueva *et al.*, 2009; Singh, 2021). Research on the history of labour has conventionally been concentrated on the influence of attitudes such as JS and OC, meaning the influence of these factors on the intention of employees to leave, as detailed by Deery and Jago (2015). For example, Villanueva and Djurkovic (2009) found that the links between job stress and intentions to leave were partially mediated by JS and OC. This is an extremely significant finding for the purposes of the present study, in so far as JS and OC are mediators of the desire to leave, which is precisely the variable under investigation. Deery and Jago (2009) conducted their study within organisations regarding the development of strategies to reduce high corporate turnover.

## **2.3 Generational classification and their motivators**

Different employees from different age groups are motivated and satisfied by differing interests. To this end, Heyns and Kerr (2018) distinguish between different generations and what keeps them loyal to a particular organisation. Heyns and Kerr (2018) discovered that employees from the early 20th century are different from modern-day employees and offer a generational classification which is comprised of Veterans, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Y. These groups are habitually defined as having their own distinctive characteristics, motivators, and work values that may affect both individual and organisational performance.

Generation Y has been strongly promoted by Krahn, Johnson and Galambos (2021), while other research (Krommuang et al., 2010) combines the needs of this generation with a strong preference for work-life balance and materialistic rewards. Muskat and Reitsamer (2019) differentiated Generation Y as employees who lack long-term OC, as they need a supportive work environment and need to feel nurtured. Generation Y employees differ from other generations in terms of motivation and values. This generation has an even greater appreciation for leisure and job security, and is often seen as self-centred. The professed distinctiveness of the generations suggests that each one is driven by different motivators, which can lead to an increased need to understand how each generational group can best be influenced in terms of OC and increased productivity (Mgiba, 2015).

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **Research approach and design**

For the purposes of this study, the quantitative research approach used the survey method to collect primary data.

#### **Population sample and data collection**

The survey research method was selected because it uses questionnaires to obtain data from a sample of respondents selected from the population, which made it directly applicable to this study (Creswell, 2014). Respondents were selected using the non-probability convenience sampling technique. The convenience sampling technique was used because it was difficult to access all the respondents at the selected government departments simultaneously. An initial sample size of  $n=$  respondents was set, using the available historical information. However, 290 usable questionnaires were collected and used in the data analysis, giving an acceptable response rate of nearly 73%. The profile of the respondents showed that this government department is a female-dominated environment with 54% females compared to 45% males, while 1% of respondents chose to be categorized as "others". These results imply that the workforce of the Gauteng government is dominated by females, which can be regarded as the result of the government's effort to address gender imbalance in the South African working environment.

#### **Administration of the survey**

After obtaining clearance from management at the selected government department, questionnaires were administered to participants during the month of July 2021. Respondents were given a period of approximately 5 days to complete the questionnaire. During the collection of the data, ethical considerations such as the right to anonymity, right to confidentiality, informed consent, right to privacy or non-participation, and the right to protection from discomfort or harm were followed.

#### **Measuring instrument**

Participants were requested to complete a questionnaire comprising three (3) sections, namely: Section A (biographical information), Section B (an organisational commitment questionnaire from Meyer and Allen (1997), and Section C (the QWL questionnaires which was used by Walton (1975) to measure QWL (Bless, et al., 2018). Questionnaires have been sourced from validated questionnaires that have previously been used to conduct related studies. The items will be rated on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = “strongly disagree” and 5 = “strongly agree.” The researcher provided the sampled staff members with questionnaires and allowed them to drop off the research questionnaire in sealed boxes that were placed in the office of the person in charge of a research project in this government department. Two sealed boxes were provided, one for the consent form and the other for the questionnaire, in order to ensure confidentiality.

### **Data Analysis**

The study is conducted using a quantitative research method and adopts a survey design. The data will be exported and coded to the Social Science Statistical Package (SPSS version 25), which is the leading socio-science data management and analytics programme. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics (i.e., means, standard deviations), and inferential statistics (correlations and the Analysis Variance (ANOVA).

### **Validity and reliability considerations**

Thatcher (2010:122) recognizes that reliability relates to consistent, repeatable results. De Vos et al. (2011:177) further believe that reliability occurs when the measurement is consistent or when the system calculates the same value for the same subjects in the same situation. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used to assess the reliability of the instrument. When the alpha of Cronbach's coefficient is less than 0.6, according to Sekaran (2005:185), the instrument is unreliable. An alpha coefficient is satisfactory if it exceeds 0.7 (Blanche, et al., 2006) but acceptable if above 0.50 (Kothari, 2008). This study has alpha coefficient that exceeds 0.5. The acceptability of a 0.50 alpha coefficient is also supported by Leedy and Ormond (2019). Based on these researchers' views, it is concluded that this study's coefficient alpha is satisfactory of 0.50 for this study would be an appropriate criterion for acceptance. As a result, Kothari, 2008). As a result, the measurement instrument is reliable.

### **Ethics**

Ethical considerations such as confidentiality, fairness, anonymity and disclosure of information were applied. Full ethical clearance was granted from the Tshwane University of Technology (FCRE2019/FR/11/001-MS). Furthermore, all participants could withdraw at any stage and were not obligated to participate in the study and informed consent was obtained from the participants

## **4. Results and Findings**

To receive the responses required from the sample, 400 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents while only 290 responses were received which was less than the required sample. 290 is nevertheless equivalent to a response rate of 72.5% which is still very good.

### **4.1 A Summary of response rate**

Table 1: Response rate

Number of surveys send	400
Sample required for the population of	278
Number of respondents	290
Response rate percentage	72.5%

Table 1 shows that the response rate for this study was 72.5%, which is a good response rate. The next section will present the results from the primary data analysis followed by their interpretation. It is subdivided into two main sections, first the demographic results presented in the form of pie charts, followed by the primary results present in figures and tables. The results are given in two main sections, firstly the demographic results followed by those pertaining to the research objectives answering the questions.

#### 4.1. Demographic results presentation.

The demographic results are presented in the form of pie charts, each of which is interpreted below. Respondents gender distribution

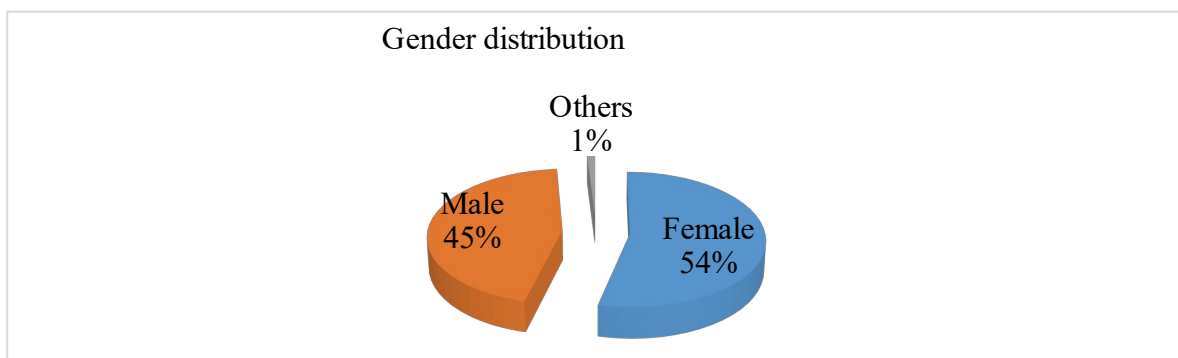


Figure 1: Respondent gender distribution

The Figure 1 shows that this government department is a female dominated environment with 54% females compared to 45% males, while 1% of respondents chose to be categorised as others. These results imply that the workforce of the Gauteng government is dominated by females, which can be regarded as the result of the government effort in addressing gender imbalance in the South African working environment. This also shows a better representation of females when compared to the nation's demographics, considering the 2020 mid-year population estimates which has shown that South Africa has almost 30.5million females which represent 51% of the gender share (Department of Higher Education & Training, 2018/2019).

#### 4.2. Respondent age distribution

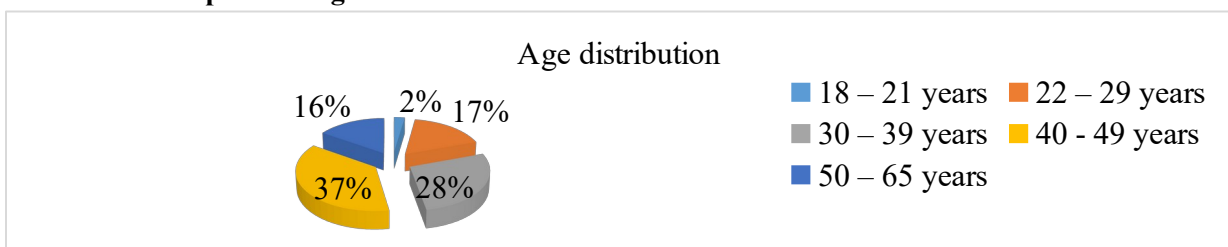


Figure 2: Respondent age distribution

According to the results presented in the above Figure 2, the relative majority of respondents, are between the ages of 40 to 49 years old representing 37%, followed by 28% of respondents who are from 30 to 39 years of age. Those between the ages of 50 to 65 years represent 16%, while those between the ages of 22 to 29 years represent just 17%, with only 2% of respondents being between the ages of 18 to 21 years.

#### 4.3. Respondents' length of service

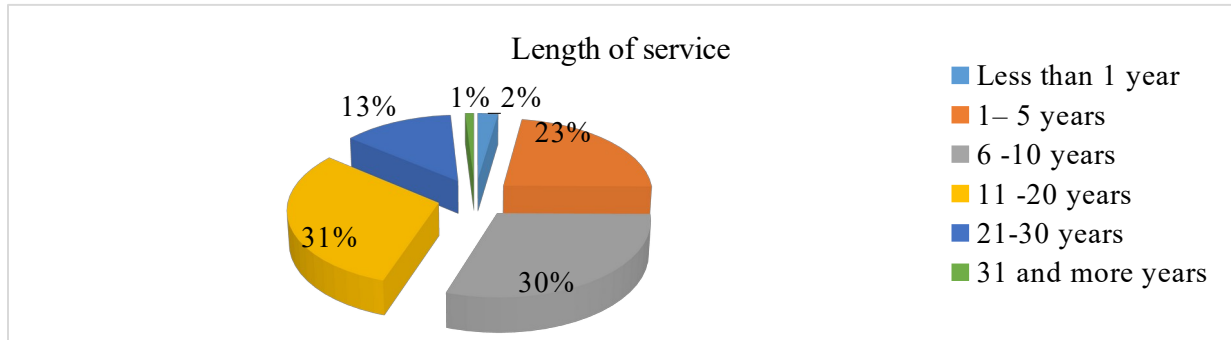


Figure 3: Respondents' length of service

The results reported in Figure 3 reveal that only 2% of the participants have a length of service of less than 1 year. Those with 1-5 years length of service account for 23% of the total participants while those with 6-10 years, 11-20 years, and 31 years and more, respectively account for 30.0%, 31%, 13%, and 1.0% of total participants.

#### 4.4. Respondents' Highest Completed Qualification

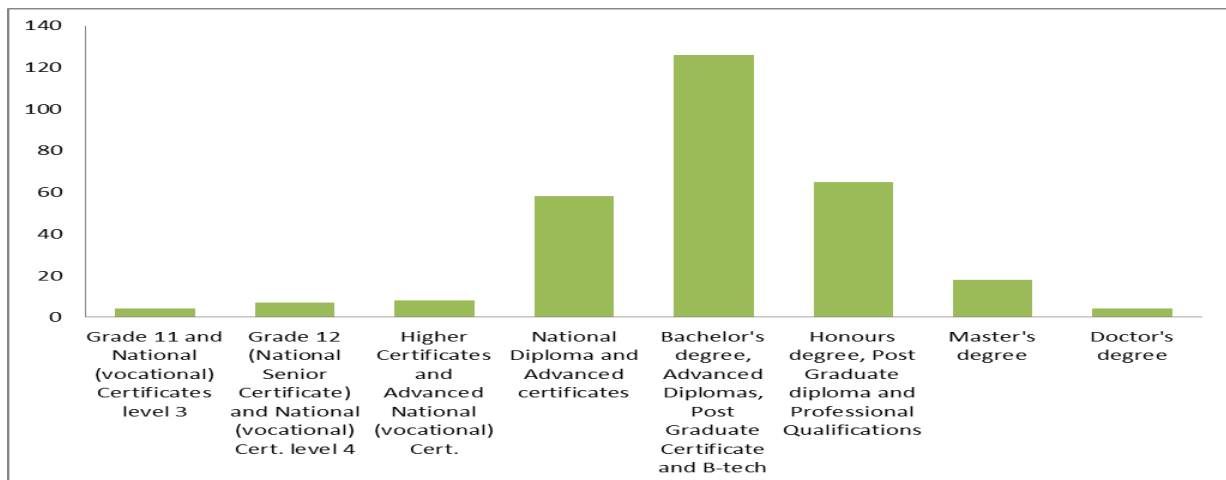


Figure 4: Respondents' Highest Completed Qualification

As presented in Figure 4, the majority of the respondents have either a diploma or a bachelor's degree. Indeed 32% declared that they have a diploma, while 37% are in possession of a bachelor's degree. Thus, an average of 69% of respondents had formal tertiary education, with 17% of respondents having a postgraduate qualification. Only 1% of respondents were educated below secondary level, while 13% claim to have a secondary education level.

#### 4.5. Job Status Distribution



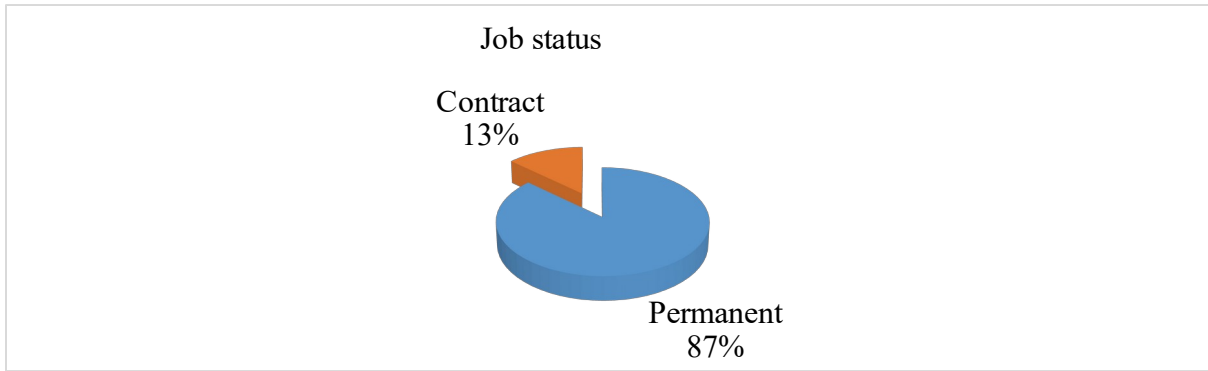


Figure 5: Job Status Distribution

The majority (87%, n=252) of the respondents are permanent staff members. A vastly smaller percentage, 13% (n=38), of the sampled respondents were employed on a contract basis.

#### 4.6. Marital Status Distribution

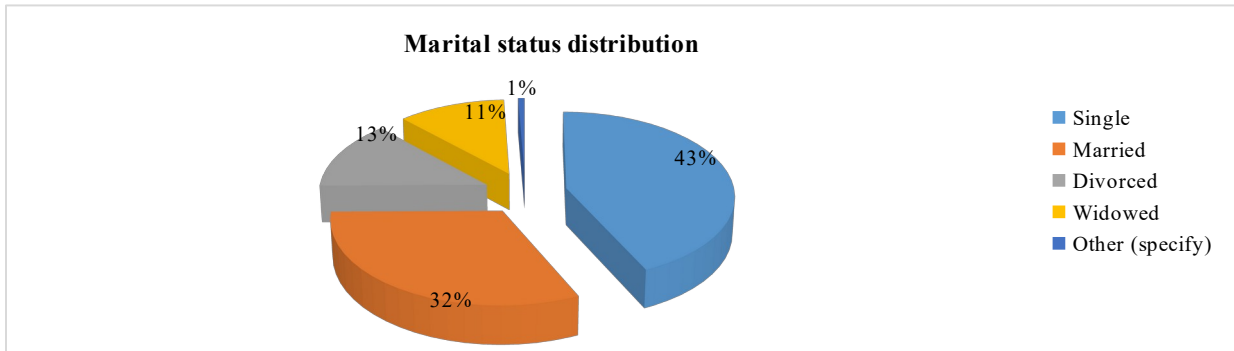


Figure 6: Marital Status Distribution

Figure 6 reveals that 43% of the respondents are single, 32% are married, while 13% are divorced, and 11% of the respondents are widowed.

#### 4.7. Reliability statistics: compensation

Table 2: Compensation items reliability test: Cronbach's Alpha

Reliability statistics for compensation		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.923	.924	3

Source: Researcher's Field Survey Result (2022)

The reliability or internal consistency of the three variables measuring compensations was tested using Cronbach's alpha as shown in Table 2. This yielded a coefficient of 0.923, which is higher or equal to 0.9, implying an excellent internal consistency (Kothari,2008).

COMP1=I am satisfied with my salary (remuneration)

COMP2=the rewards that I receive from this job are fair

COMP3=I am satisfied with the benefits that the company offers

#### 4.8. Descriptive statistics for compensation

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for compensation

Descriptive statistics for compensation			
			N
Compensation1			290
Compensation3			290
Compensation3			290

Source: Researcher's Field Survey Result (2022)

Descriptive statistics were performed for the compensation variables on the data collected from the sample of 290 participants, and the results were presented in table 4.3, on the Likert scale of five points agreements (1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree). Although the mean samples are close to 4, which are "agreed," the highest was COMP1 (3.8586), which tested the level of satisfaction with an employee's salary or remuneration. At the same time, the lowest was the COPM3 (3.8276), which has tested the level of satisfaction with company benefits. It can generally be said that indeed employees, as per the results, are satisfied with their compensation.

#### 4.9. Working conditions items reliability test: Cronbach's Alpha

Table 4: Working conditions items reliability test: Cronbach's Alpha

Reliability statistics for working conditions		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.878	.879	4

Source: Researcher's Field Survey Result (2022)

The reliability or internal consistency of the four variables measuring working conditions was tested using Cronbach's alpha as presented in Table 4 and yielded an  $\alpha$  value of  $0.7 \leq \alpha = 0.878 \leq 0.9$ , which describes good internal consistency (Kothari, 2008).

WOC1 I feel very content with my workload (quantity of work).

WOC2 I feel very satisfied with the use of technology in my tasks.

WOC3 I am satisfied with the working conditions in my workplace.

WOC4 I am satisfied with the security equipment and individual and collective protection provided by my company.

#### 4.10. Descriptive statistics for working conditions

Table 5: Descriptive statistics for working conditions

Descriptive statistics for working conditions
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	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Working Conditions1	4.0069	.41589	290
Working Conditions2	3.9552	.48656	290
Working Conditions3	4.0000	.45565	290
Working Conditions4	3.9793	.43971	290

Source: Researcher's Field Survey Result (2022)

Descriptive statistics were performed for the four work condition variables on the data collected from the sample of 290 participants, with the results presented in table 4.5, on the Likert scale of five points agreements (1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree). The highest mean was WOC1 (4.0069) which describes the employees' feelings concerning the workload, which can be compared to the smallest, WOC2 (3.9552), expressing employee satisfaction with the use of technology. It can be inferred that as far as working conditions are concerned, the employees are struggling with the use of technology.

## 5. Managerial implications

The managerial implications of these findings point to the key role that remuneration has to play, over and above all other considerations in terms of QWL management. This study furthermore reinforces the consideration by which employee investment in an organisation represents a sunk cost, with employees having invested time and effort into the organisation, and having gained seniority, being thus able to enjoy increased benefits and remuneration generally associated with seniority, and being seen as potentially unwilling to exchange their current benefits for an uncertain offering in the open market. Reflecting on the use of continuance commitment as a retention strategy implies the judicious employ of the perks of seniority, both in terms of direct remuneration as well as in terms of remuneration bonuses based on length of service. This research will inspire DHET managers, leaders and other relevant stakeholders to improve the nuanced understandings of government employee behaviour, especially regarding their commitment, QWL, and WLB. Therefore, this research constitutes a promising step forward towards fully understanding the relationship between regulatory focus and OC.

## 6. Conclusions, Limitations and Future Research

Both financial and non-financial rewards effectively enhance employee motivation, commitment and contribute towards justifiable growth. It is so due to the fact that a motivated employee gives their optimal effort to improve their firm's performance. It has been discovered from other literature that job satisfaction is positively linked to OC, which is negatively connected to turnover intention. Financial rewards have also been revealed to have a substantial positive outcome on employee commitment. Employees who appreciate the success of QWL will give more commitment in return toward their organisation. Thus, it is logical to say that with good QWL, employee commitment would be enhanced. So, the greater the satisfaction of the employees, the greater their commitment to the organisation, or vice versa. Turnover intention, commitment, and other related variables relating to work satisfaction have a positive correlation between JS and OC. The relationship between employee satisfaction and its outcomes is moderated by individual or cultural factors. This research concerns establishing what the demographical differences between QWL and OC at a government department

in Gauteng area which has tested the level of satisfaction with company benefits. It can generally be said that indeed employees, as per the results, are satisfied with their compensation.

QWL is a critical concept that has a vital role in an employee's life, QWL indicates that a balance between personal life and work life will lead to employee commitment. Thus, it was envisaged that findings from this study will address the literature gap by investigating factors that directly affect quality of work life to stay in the government departments in Gauteng province of South Africa. As with all research, there are limitations to this work. In the context of study limitations, the study adopted a quantitative approach, qualitative approach should have also been employed in order to determine the true feelings of the employees. With quantitative method of collecting data, only closed questions are asked no room to elaborate. Lastly, the data came from appointed employees working in the DHET in a single province; to increase the generalizability of the findings.

Future studies can investigate other attitudinal concepts in addition to organisational commitment which may act as potential influences in the significance difference between QWL and organisational commitment, trust in management variables and involvements as mechanisms producing commitment to the organisation. Finally, the findings cannot be generalized, as there is a possibility of bias because of differences in understanding of and attitude to perceived QWL. This research will inspire further research that aims to improve the nuanced understandings of government employee behaviour, especially regarding their commitment, QWL, and WLB. Therefore, this research constitutes a promising step forward towards fully understanding the relationship between regulatory focus and OC.

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