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The Impact of Organisational Culture on Employee Engagement: A Case Study of the University of Venda

Authors:

Maphiri Tshifhiwa
Department of Human Resource Management and Labour Relations, University of Venda, Thohoyandou, South Africa

Doreen Morukhu (doreen.morukhu@univen.ac.za)
Department of Human Resource Management and Labour Relations, University of Venda, Thohoyandou, South Africa

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Abstract:

Organisational culture plays a crucial role in shaping employee engagement within academic institutions, directly affecting productivity, job satisfaction and overall performance. At the University of Venda, there are growing concerns about how organisational culture influences employee engagement, potentially impacting staff retention and institutional effectiveness. This study investigates the relationship between organisational culture and employee engagement at the University of Venda, focusing on identifying critical cultural factors that enhance or hinder engagement. The research will adopt a quantitative approach, utilising a cross-sectional survey design. Stratified random sampling will be used to select 40 employees across different departments and levels at the university, ensuring a representative sample. Data will be collected through structured questionnaires designed to assess perceptions of organisational culture and levels of engagement. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29.0 will be employed for data analysis, including descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and regression analysis to explore the relationship between the variables. The expected outcomes of the study include identifying specific cultural dimensions that positively or negatively influence employee engagement at the University of Venda and providing actionable insights for improving organizational practices.

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Introduction

This study investigates the relationship between organisational culture and employee engagement at the University of Venda, explicitly focusing on academic staff across various faculties. The study will examine key dimensions of organisational culture, such as communication and leadership support, to understand their influence on employee engagement. Understanding this relationship is crucial, as engaged employees tend to be more productive, innovative and committed to their institutions, contributing to better organisational outcomes (Dan & Canh, 2019). This section outlines the main components of the study. The background and context provide an overview of the organisational culture at the University of Venda and highlight the importance of exploring employee engagement in this setting. This section also reviews existing literature on organisational culture and engagement, focusing on the higher education context.

Moreover, the problem statement defines the challenges academic staff face at the University of Venda, particularly the gap in understanding how organisational culture impacts their engagement. The research objectives clarify the study's goals, specifically focusing on the relationship between organisational culture and employee engagement and identifying cultural dimensions that affect engagement levels. Research hypotheses provide a structured framework for the investigation. The significance of the study discusses its practical implications for university management, policymakers and academic staff, focusing on the potential benefits of fostering a supportive organisational culture. Finally, the scope and limitations define the research boundaries, concentrating on academic staff and organisational culture at the University of Venda, while also acknowledging constraints like sample size and the generalisability of findings.

Backround

Organisational culture and employee engagement are critical determinants of institutional success and productivity, particularly within higher education settings. Organisational culture refers to the shared values, beliefs and behaviours that shape how individuals interact and contribute within an institution (Wiseman, Ngirande & Setati, 2017). A positive organisational culture is associated with higher levels of employee engagement, promoting job satisfaction, employee retention, and overall performance. In academic institutions, where the quality of education and research relies heavily on the commitment and engagement of academic staff, understanding the relationship between organisational culture and employee engagement is essential.

Employee engagement is a psychological state in which employees feel strongly connected to their work, displaying enthusiasm, dedication and sustained effort (Schaufeli et al., 2019). Engaged employees contribute to organisational success by delivering high-quality work, fostering innovation,

and demonstrating loyalty (Saks, 2020). In higher education, where the demands of teaching, research, and administrative duties are significant, engaged academic staff become critical assets. However, a disconnect between organisational culture and employee engagement can lead to lower job satisfaction, increased turnover and reduced institutional performance (Mabuza, 2019).

Like many other higher education institutions, the University of Venda faces challenges related to employee engagement. Academic staff may experience disengagement due to insufficient leadership support, poor communication, or an unsupportive organisational culture. Research consistently shows that alignment between organisational culture and employee engagement is pivotal in fostering higher performance and job satisfaction (Fidyah & Setiawati, 2020). For instance, Hasan et al. (2021) note that organisational cultures promoting collaboration, transparency and innovation directly enhance employee engagement and performance. Conversely, cultures needing more supportive elements tend to foster disengagement, limiting an institution's ability to meet its objectives.

At the University of Venda, addressing employee disengagement is particularly critical for academic staff across various faculties, including Science, Engineering and Agriculture; Humanities, Social Sciences and Education; Health Sciences; and Management, Commerce and Law. This research investigates how the university's organisational culture impacts employee engagement, particularly in critical dimensions such as communication and leadership support. Understanding how these factors influence engagement is essential for developing strategies to create a more supportive and engaging work environment. Dan and Canh (2019) further suggest that organisational cultures within academic institutions can vary significantly, leading to different levels of employee engagement. Using the University of Venda as a case study, this research will explore how its unique organisational culture affects the engagement of its academic staff. The study aims to identify cultural aspects that foster or inhibit engagement, offering actionable insights to improve staff morale, retention, and overall institutional performance. Lastly, investigating the relationship between organisational culture and employee engagement at the University of Venda is crucial to understanding the broader dynamics within higher education institutions.

Statement of Research Problem

At the University of Venda, the organisational culture within the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture, Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education, Faculty of Health Sciences, and Faculty of Management, Commerce and Law significantly affects the engagement levels of academic staff. Academics across these faculties face challenges such as inconsistent communication, insufficient support and unclear expectations, which may lead to low employee engagement, job dissatisfaction and decreased productivity. These issues negatively impact the quality of education, research output and overall institutional performance. To address this problem, this study will investigate the relationship

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between organisational culture and employee engagement, identifying key cultural factors that influence engagement levels.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

Aim

This study investigates organisational culture's impact on employee engagement among academic staff at the University of Venda.

Research Objectives

- To examine the relationship between organisational culture and employee engagement among academic staff at the University of Venda.
- To identify the key cultural factors within the organisation that positively or negatively influence employee engagement across the faculties.
- To provide recommendations for improving organisational culture to enhance employee engagement and overall job satisfaction at the University of Venda.

Research Hypothesis

H1*: There was a significant positive relationship between organisational culture and employee engagement among the University of Venda academic staff.*

H2*: Certain dimensions of organisational culture, such as communication, leadership support and clarity of roles, had significantly influenced employee engagement levels.*

H3*: Enhancing organisational culture has led to improved employee engagement and higher levels of job satisfaction among academic staff at the University of Venda*

Justification of the Study

This study is significant as it aims to tackle important issues surrounding employee engagement in the academic community at the University of Venda. To uphold its commitment to educational excellence, the university must understand the factors influencing academic staff engagement, essential for creating a productive and supportive environment. In exploring the relationship between organisational culture and employee engagement, the research seeks to pinpoint cultural elements that can enhance or obstruct engagement. Increased employee engagement can lead to greater job satisfaction, lower turnover rates and higher productivity, ultimately improving the quality of education for students. The insights gained from this research will assist university management in formulating targeted strategies to strengthen organisational culture, crucial for fostering a positive work environment. This enhancement can subsequently boost institutional performance, student satisfaction and the university's reputation.

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Furthermore, engaged academic staff are more inclined to participate in research and development initiatives.

Delimitations of the Study

This study had established specific delimitations to ensure clarity and manageability. It had focused solely on academic staff from four faculties at the University of Venda: Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture; Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education; Faculty of Health Sciences; and Faculty of Management, Commerce and Law. Consequently, non-academic staff and administrative personnel were excluded, which may restrict the applicability of the findings to the broader university community. Additionally, the research was geographically limited to the higher institutions in South Africa. The study was conducted in 2024, with data collection taking place within this one-year timeframe, and any changes in organisational culture or external factors after this period will not be considered. Finally, the research has adopted a quantitative approach, primarily using surveys. It did not delve deeply into qualitative aspects of employee engagement, such as personal experiences and narratives, potentially limiting the understanding of the more nuanced factors affecting engagement in other higher education institutions.

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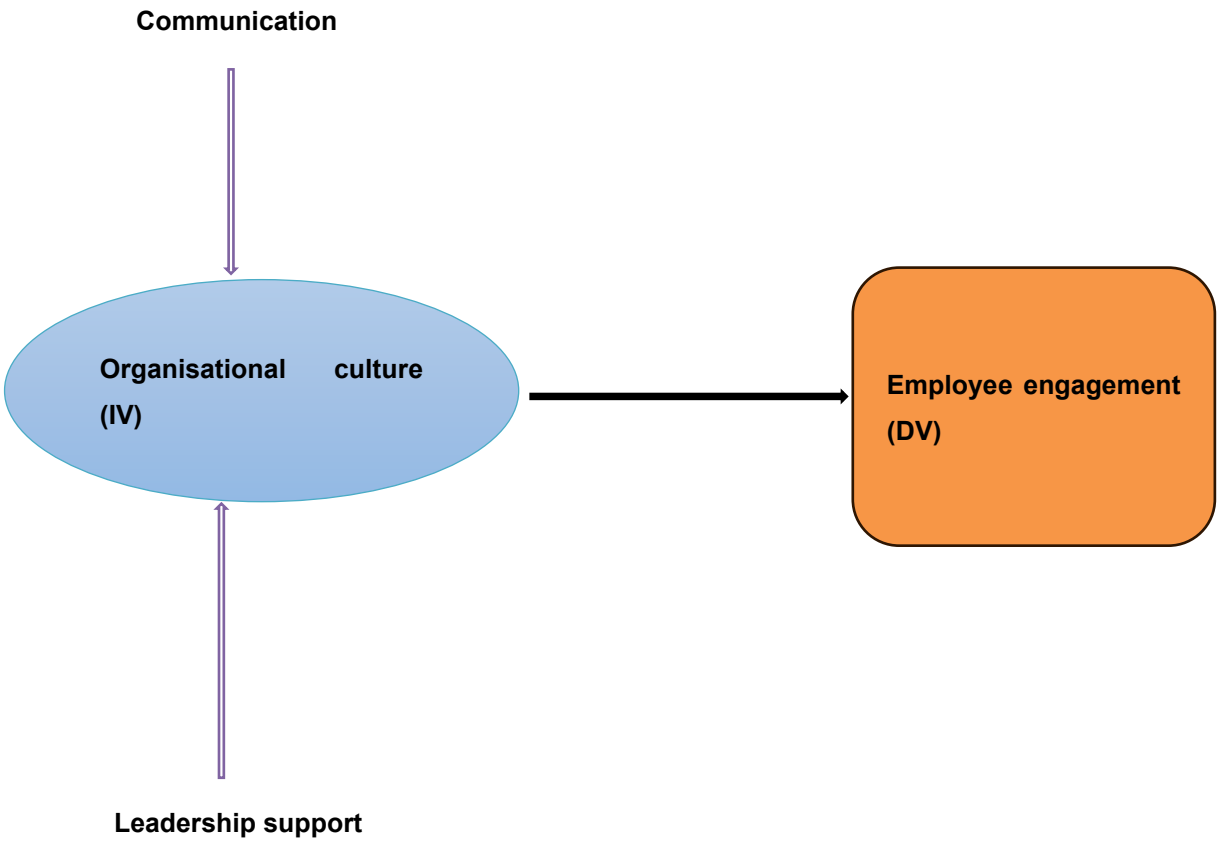

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of organisational culture on employee engagement

Figure 1 (one) depicts that organisational culture, supported by its dimensions in communication and leadership support, affects employee engagement of academic staff at the University of Venda.

Theoretical Framework

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, proposed by Bakker and Demerouti (2017), asserts that each job encompasses specific demands and resources, significantly affecting employee well-being and engagement. Within this framework, job demands are defined as the aspects of a job that require ongoing physical and mental effort. In contrast, job resources are those elements that assist employees in achieving their work objectives, alleviating job demands and promoting personal development. The significance of the JD-R model in this study lies in its relevance to the higher education sector, where job demands and resources play crucial roles in influencing the engagement levels of academic staff. Academic personnel frequently encounter substantial demands related to research outputs and teaching obligations, which can result in burnout if not counterbalanced by adequate resources. Elements of organisational culture, such as leadership support and communication, are essential to bolster

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engagement and mitigate the negative consequences of job demands. By applying this theoretical model, the study aims to explore how various dimensions of organisational culture serve as resources that enhance employee engagement among academic staff at the University of Venda. The model is depicted as follows:

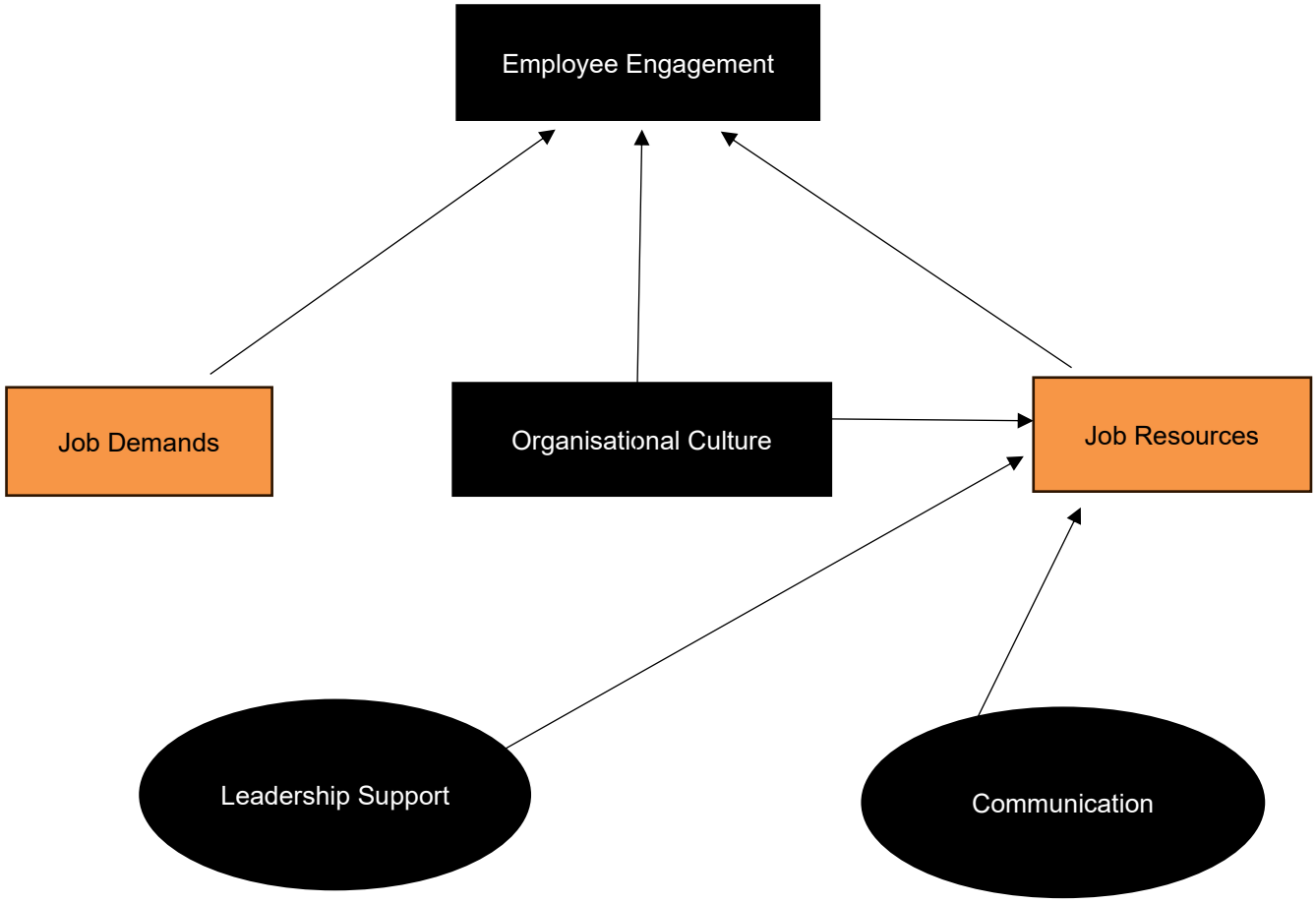

Figure 2: Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model by Bakker and Demerouti (2017)

The model illustrates how job demands and resources influence employee engagement and the role of organisational culture, leadership support and communication in shaping these dynamics.

Conceptualising Organisational Culture

Organisational culture pertains to the fundamental values, beliefs and assumptions that govern the behaviour of individuals within an organisation (Wiseman et al., 2017). It includes the collective norms and practices that dictate how employees interact, collaborate, and approach their work. Organisational culture is pivotal in influencing employee behaviour, particularly how staff confront challenges and

engage with their responsibilities. According to Joseph and Kibera (2019), a robust organisational culture is marked by shared values that resonate with the institution's mission, fostering employees' sense of belonging and collective identity. This alignment can lead to improved organisational performance, as employees are more inclined to engage in behaviours supporting institutional goals. For instance, a culture that prioritises academic excellence and innovation in higher education can inspire staff to pursue high-quality research and teaching practices.

Additionally, the alignment between organisational culture and employee expectations can significantly impact job satisfaction and engagement levels. Employees who perceive a disconnection between their values and the organisational culture may experience disengagement and dissatisfaction (Meng & Berger, 2019). Thus, understanding and nurturing a positive organisational culture is vital for enhancing employee engagement, especially in the academic setting of the University of Venda.

Leadership Support

Leadership support is a crucial facet of organisational culture that directly impacts employee engagement. Influential leaders foster an environment where employees feel valued, recognised and empowered to contribute to the organisation's success (Hermawan, Thamrin, & Susilo, 2020). Leaders who are committed to their teams cultivate trust and promote open communication, which can significantly boost employee engagement. Numerous studies have shown that when employees perceive robust leadership support, they are more likely to experience higher job satisfaction and engagement levels (Shen & Jiang, 2019). For example, Nikolova et al. (2019) discovered that engaged leaders cultivate trust and collaboration, enhancing engagement among their teams.

Additionally, leadership support may manifest through mentoring, providing necessary resources and facilitating professional development opportunities. These factors are particularly critical in higher education, where academic staff often seek avenues for growth and advancement. Moreover, effective leadership can alleviate the adverse effects of job demands, as supportive leaders can assist employees in navigating challenges and diminishing feelings of being overwhelmed (Kwon & Kim, 2020). At the University of Venda, promoting leadership support is essential for improving employee engagement among academic staff, enabling them to flourish in a demanding work environment.

Communication

Communication within an organisation is a fundamental element that shapes employee engagement. Effective communication ensures the smooth flow of information, clarifies expectations and fosters a sense of belonging among employees (Wood et al., 2020). Conversely, better communication can lead to better understanding, reduced morale, and disengagement. An organisational culture that encourages open and transparent communication empowers employees to express their concerns and suggestions,

enhancing their engagement (Bailey, Benson & Bruner, 2019). Research indicates that organisations prioritizing effective communication witness higher employee engagement and retention (Tran, 2021). In higher education, where collaboration and teamwork are crucial, effective communication fosters a culture of cooperation and shared objectives, thereby increasing engagement among academic staff.

Furthermore, communication is vital for managing change within organisations. Employees are more inclined to embrace change when they are well-informed and involved in decision-making (Chión, Charles & Morales, 2020). This involvement can foster a greater sense of ownership and commitment to organisational goals, further enhancing employee engagement. Consequently, cultivating a culture of effective communication is essential at the University of Venda to promote engagement and ensure academic staff feel supported and informed.

Conceptualising Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is frequently described as an employee's emotional and intellectual commitment to their work, reflecting their enthusiasm and dedication (Schaufeli et al., 2019). Engaged employees are more likely to exert discretionary effort, resulting in improved performance and reduced turnover rates (Byrne, 2022). Engagement encompasses various dimensions, including job satisfaction, commitment to the organisation, and alignment with its objectives (Sun & Bunchapattanasakda, 2019). The significance of employee engagement in higher education is profound, as engaged academic staff significantly contribute to the quality of education and research outcomes. Hermawan et al. (2020) argue that engaged employees are more likely to display organisational citizenship behaviours, such as collaboration, innovation, and commitment to institutional objectives. This engagement can create a positive feedback loop, where engaged employees motivate others and contribute to a thriving organisational culture.

Furthermore, the connection between engagement and well-being is noteworthy. Engaged employees generally experience higher levels of job satisfaction and reduced stress, contributing positively to their overall well-being (Wood et al., 2020). In contrast, disengaged employees may suffer from burnout and dissatisfaction, resulting in higher turnover rates and diminished organisational performance. Therefore, fostering employee engagement is essential for institutions like the University of Venda, where academic staff are vital for achieving educational excellence.

The Relationship Between Organisational Culture and Employee Engagement

The link between organisational culture and employee engagement is well-documented in academic literature. A positive organisational culture fosters employee engagement by providing the essential resources and support employees need to flourish (Meng & Berger, 2019). For instance, Hasan et al.

(2021) highlight that cultures promoting collaboration and innovation directly boost employee engagement, leading to improved performance outcomes.

Conversely, a negative organisational culture can impede engagement, resulting in lower job satisfaction and elevated turnover rates (Mabuza, 2019). Employees operating within a negative culture may feel undervalued, unsupported, and disconnected from organisational goals, leading to disengagement and decreased performance. Thus, understanding how organisational culture affects employee engagement is crucial for developing strategies that enhance the overall effectiveness of institutions such as the University of Venda.

Moreover, the interplay between organisational culture dimensions—specifically leadership support and communication—further shapes employee engagement. Strong leadership and effective communication can establish a supportive environment that fosters engagement, while their absence can lead to disengagement and dissatisfaction. Therefore, addressing these dimensions is critical for cultivating a positive organisational culture that enhances employee engagement among academic staff.

The theoretical and conceptual foundations for examining employee engagement among academic staff at the University of Venda, beginning with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, which highlights the balance between job demands and resources, particularly in the higher education context. It defines organisational culture as the shared values and beliefs influencing employee behaviour, emphasizing its role in fostering job satisfaction and engagement. The significance of leadership support is discussed as a critical component that enhances engagement through trust and empowerment. At the same time, effective communication is essential for clarifying expectations and promoting a sense of belonging. Additionally, the chapter conceptualises employee engagement as the emotional and intellectual commitment to work, underscoring its importance for educational quality and research outcomes. Finally, it outlines the relationship between organisational culture and employee engagement. It notes how a positive culture can enhance engagement by providing necessary resources and support, thereby setting the stage for the study's investigation into these dynamics within the University of Venda.

Methodology

Research Paradigm

A research paradigm is a set of foundational assumptions that guide a researcher's understanding and interpretation of the world (Thanh, Thi & Thahn, 2015). These paradigms establish a conceptual framework that outlines the methodologies and procedures utilised in a study. Choosing a research paradigm is a vital initial step in the research process, as it significantly influences later decisions about literature, research methods and the overall research strategy. This study considered three main research paradigms: positivism, interpretivism and logical inquiry. This research adopts a positivist

paradigm, which has been purposefully selected to align with the study's objectives. The central aim is to produce comprehensive findings with broad applicability, enabling hypothesis testing, pattern identification and formulating predictive relationships. Oates (2006) and Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) suggest that the positivist paradigm is appropriate for research that generates extensive, empirically supported insights. This approach posits that reality is objective and stable, allowing for unbiased observation and description.

Researchers within the positivist paradigm typically maintain a non-invasive approach when investigating phenomena, focusing on systematically isolating and reproducing observations (Williams, 2019). Predictions are derived from previously observed phenomena, thoroughly explaining their interrelations (Williams, 2019). The choice of a positivist paradigm is well-suited to this study's exploration of the relationship between organisational culture and employee engagement among academic staff at the University of Venda. This paradigm provides a robust basis for the research, enabling a systematic examination of the factors that influence these dynamics (Kardiansyah & Salam, 2021).

Research Approach

The research approach establishes the essential framework that guides the methodology for meeting the study's objectives and tackling the primary research questions and issues (Lewis, 2015). Within research methodologies, three main approaches are generally utilised: qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods research (Kowalczyk, 2016; Powoh, 2016). Qualitative research concentrates on understanding the importance of individuals or groups, investigating their thought processes and analysing their experiences within specific social and cultural settings to uncover underlying meanings and connections (Agustin, 2015).

In contrast, the quantitative approach primarily focuses on quantifying gathered data and applying numerical and mathematical principles to the research process. It assumes that phenomena and associated variables can be evaluated objectively (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Neuman, 2014). Given the nature of this study, which examines the relationship between organisational culture and employee engagement among academic staff at the University of Venda, the quantitative research approach is deemed the most suitable option. This approach aligns with the study's objectives as it enables data collection from a broad respondent base, quantifies data into numerical formats and allows for generalisations to be drawn from the findings within the target population (Windows et al., 2012).

Research Design

The research design is crucial in empirical investigations, offering a meticulously structured framework that directs the entire data collection, analysis and interpretation process, all tailored to address specific

research questions (Leavy, 2017). There are three primary research designs: explanatory, exploratory and descriptive. Explanatory research primarily seeks to uncover the root causes of events, establish causal relationships and evaluate social theories, focusing on the "why" of phenomena. This type of research is precious when examining complex interactions within social systems (Babbie & Roberts, 2018; Neuman & Robson, 2018).

In contrast, exploratory research aims to formulate and refine research questions, generate new insights and explore relatively uncharted areas within a specific field. This approach is especially beneficial when prior knowledge or established theories are limited (Leavy, 2017). On the other hand, descriptive research seeks to provide a comprehensive portrayal of a dataset, creating a clear and organised understanding of the subject matter (Patten & Newhart, 2018; Neuman & Robson, 2018). For this study, which aims to explore the relationship between organisational culture and employee engagement among the academic staff at the University of Venda, the selected research design is descriptive research methodology. This choice aligns well with the objective of understanding the current conditions and complexities of these interconnected factors within the university context. The descriptive approach is suitable for providing a holistic view of organisational culture and employee engagement.

Given the intricate and multifaceted nature of these factors, a quantitative investigation is not only justified but necessary. This approach fits well with the quantitative research methodology, involving numerical representation and data manipulation to reveal patterns and extract valuable insights. Since organisational culture and employee engagement domains can be quantified, this methodology is well-equipped to capture the diverse landscape of these interconnected factors, enhancing the study's potential to generate meaningful findings.

Population

According to Katz, Lazarsfeld and Roper (2017), a population is the group of elements a study intends to examine. This research specifically focuses on the academic staff at the University of Venda. The study explores the relationship between organisational culture and employee engagement among this group. Key participants in the research include academic staff members across various departments and faculties within the university. The research utilised a targeted sampling strategy based on specific objectives to ensure that this population is accurately represented. The exact size of the population remains unknown.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

A systematic sampling approach was employed for this study, which investigates the relationship between organisational culture and employee engagement among the academic staff at the University of Venda. The sample consisted of 40 academic staff members, with each of the four faculties

contributing 10 participants. Systematic sampling, a form of probability sampling, involves randomly selecting an initial sample element and then choosing subsequent elements at regular intervals until the desired sample size is achieved. The primary advantage of using systematic sampling in this research is its capacity to ensure a representative sample of academic staff across the four faculties. The random starting point in the selection process helps to minimise potential bias. This systematic approach facilitates an organised and efficient method for participant selection, providing a robust foundation for the study's findings regarding the interplay between organisational culture and employee engagement within the academic context of the University of Venda.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection involves a systematic approach to comprehensively and accurately understanding the studied subject (Gravetter & Forzano, 2018). Furthermore, data collection enables individuals and organisations to analyse findings and anticipate future trends or patterns in response to specific inquiries (Gravetter & Forzano, 2018). In this study, which investigates the relationship between organisational culture and employee engagement among the academic staff at the University of Venda, data were collected using a self-administered online questionnaire. A questionnaire is a research instrument designed to obtain specific participant information (Mbhele, 2016). It can be administered through various means, including face-to-face interactions, telephone calls, hand delivery, postal mail or online platforms (Hlapo, 2016). Given the current technological landscape, the questionnaire was emailed using Google Forms.

Reliability and Validity of Data

In the research on "The relationship between organisational culture and employee engagement among the academic staff at the University of Venda," it is essential to emphasise the significance of reliability and validity in quantitative research. These elements are fundamental for ensuring the credibility and meaningfulness of the collected data and research outcomes (Babbie, 2016; DeVellis, 2017; Hair et al., 2019; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Reliability, within the scope of this research, pertains to the consistency and stability of measurements, ensuring the dependability and reproducibility of the data. Various measures, such as internal consistency or test-retest reliability, were employed to assess reliability, evaluating the extent to which results remain consistent over time or across different samples. Similarly, a significant focus of the study was on validity, which was assessed through approaches like content, criterion and construct validity (Babbie, 2016).

Content validity ensures that the items adequately represent the intended constructs, while criterion validity examines the correlation with external criteria. Construct validity delves into the underlying theoretical structure of the measurements. This research explored variables such as organisational

culture and employee engagement within the context of the University of Venda. In summary, this study thoroughly addressed reliability and validity concerns to explore the relationships among variables related to organisational culture and employee engagement, ensuring the trustworthiness and significance of the research findings.

Data Analysis

For this research on "The relationship between organisational culture and employee engagement among the academic staff at the University of Venda," data analysis involved the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29 (IBM-SPSS, 2019). Descriptive statistics provided summaries that include measures such as means, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages. Correlation analysis will be conducted to investigate the relationship between organisational culture and employee engagement. Furthermore, regression analysis determined whether organisational culture could predict employee engagement levels.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Age Distribution

The age distribution among the participants in this study highlights a diverse demographic within the academic staff at the University of Venda. The largest group comprises individuals aged 35-44, representing 30% of the sample, followed closely by the 45-54 age group at 25%. Participants aged 25-34 and those 55 years and older each account for 22.5% of the total. This varied age representation indicates a workforce that balances youthful perspectives with the wisdom and experience of older staff members, which can foster a rich organisational culture.

Understanding the implications of this age diversity is vital for interpreting perceptions of organisational culture and employee engagement. Younger employees may be more inclined to seek flexibility, innovation, and opportunities for professional growth, while older staff might prioritise job security, stability, and effective communication from leadership. This blend of perspectives provides both challenges and opportunities for the university. By cultivating an inclusive environment that respects and integrates the viewpoints of all age groups, the University of Venda can enhance employee engagement and overall job satisfaction, leading to a more productive and cohesive workplace.

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Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. 25-34	9	22.5%
2. 35-44	12	30.0%
3. 45-54	10	25.0%
4. 55+	9	22.5%
TOTAL	**40**	**100%**

Table 1: Age group

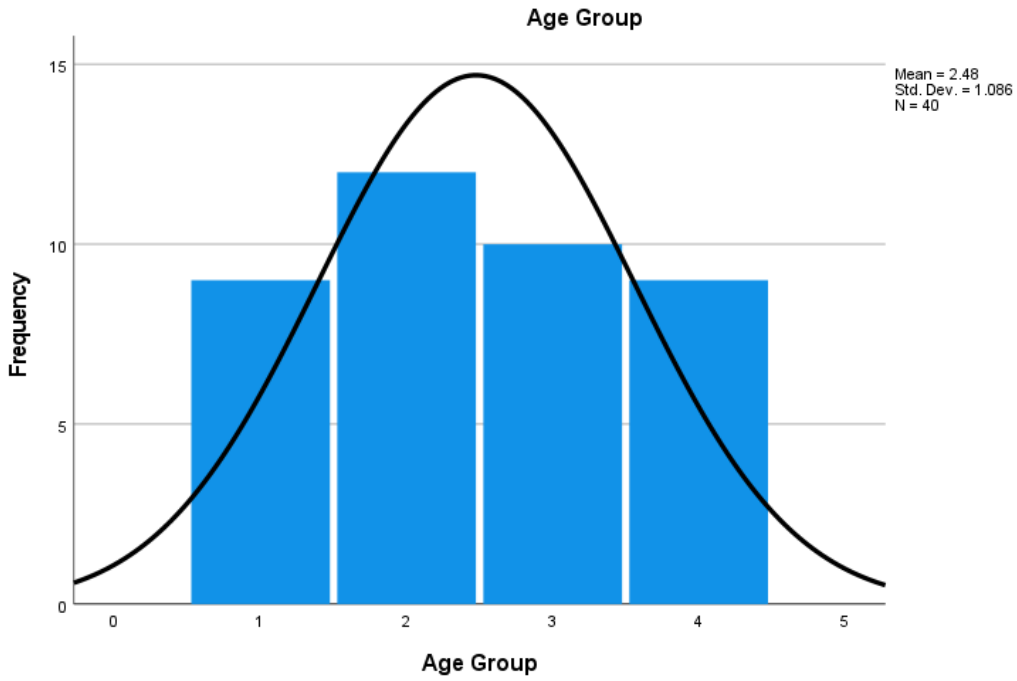

Figure 3: Age group

Gender Distribution

The gender distribution among participants in this study reveals a predominantly male representation within the academic staff at the University of Venda. Males represent 57.5% of the sample, while females represent 42.5%. This disparity in gender representation highlights an ongoing trend within many academic institutions where male staff may outnumber their female counterparts. Understanding the implications of this gender distribution is crucial for interpreting perceptions of organisational culture and employee engagement. The predominance of male participants may influence the overall workplace

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dynamics, including communication styles, leadership approaches, and collaboration methods. Additionally, this gender imbalance could affect the inclusivity of the organisational culture, potentially impacting female staff's engagement and job satisfaction.

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Male	23	57.5%
2. Female	17	42.5%
TOTAL	**40**	**100%**

Table 2: Gender description

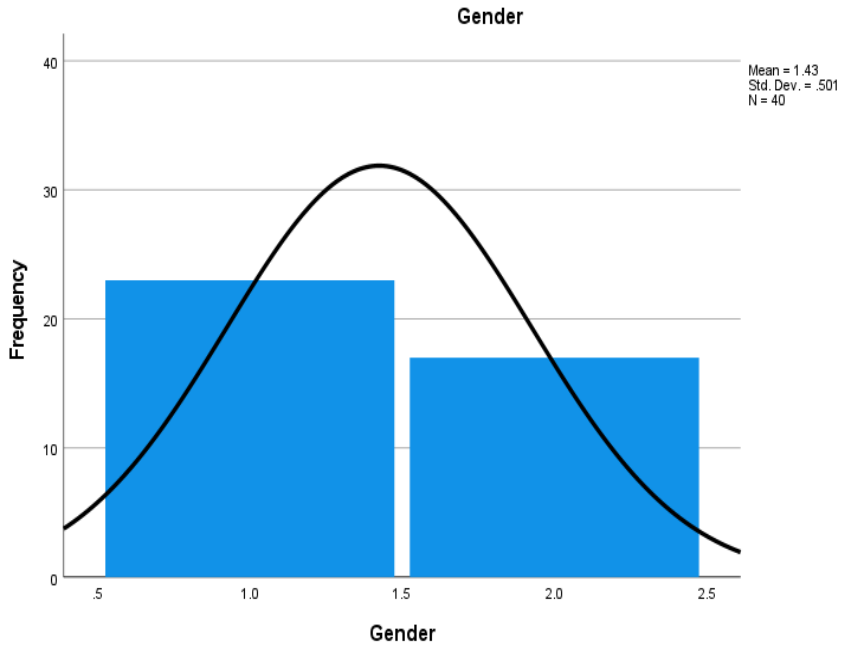

Figure 4: Gender description

Position Distribution

The position distribution among participants in this study indicates a strong presence of lecturers, who constitute 50% of the academic staff at the University of Venda. Senior lecturers follow with 30%; associate professors make up 7.5%; professors account for 2.5%; and administrative/support staff represent 10%. This distribution highlights the university's emphasis on teaching and the critical role of lecturers in fostering an engaging academic environment. The predominance of lecturers and senior lecturers suggests a focus on instructional effectiveness, which can enhance student experiences.

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However, the limited representation of higher academic ranks indicates a potential gap in mentorship and leadership opportunities. To promote a more inclusive organisational culture and enhance employee engagement, the University of Venda should invest in professional development initiatives that encourage career advancement for all staff levels, thereby fostering a supportive environment that benefits both faculty and students.

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Lecturer	20	50.0%
2. Senior Lecturer	12	30.0%
3. Associate Professor	3	7.5%
4. Professor	1	2.5%
5. Administrative/Support Staff	4	10.0%
TOTAL	**40**	**100%**

Table 3: Position Description

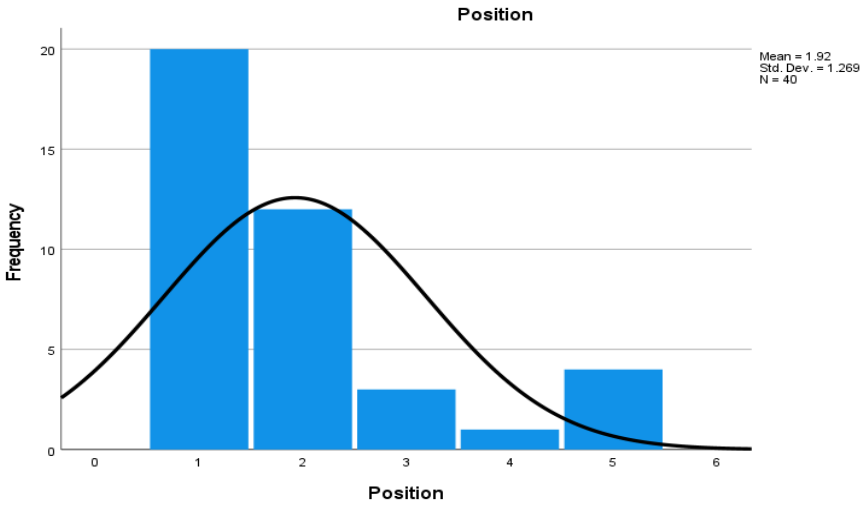

Figure 5: Position description

Years of Service at the University of Venda

The distribution of years of service among participants reveals a varied tenure within the academic staff at the University of Venda. Participants with 1-5 years of experience constitute the largest group at 30%, followed closely by those in the 6-10 years category at 25%. Individuals with less than 1 year of service and those with 10 or more years each account for 22.5% of the sample. This range in experience levels highlights fresh perspectives from newer staff and the insights of seasoned employees. This diversity in

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tenure can significantly impact organisational culture and employee engagement. Newer employees may bring innovative ideas and a willingness to adapt, while those with more extended service may contribute institutional knowledge and a deep understanding of the university's culture. To maximise the strengths of this diverse workforce, the University of Venda should foster mentorship opportunities that connect experienced staff with newer employees. This approach can enhance collaboration, ensure knowledge transfer, and contribute to a more engaged and cohesive academic community.

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Less than 1 year	9	22.5%
2. 1-5 years	12	30.0%
3. 6-10 years	10	25.0%
4. 10+	9	22.5%
TOTAL	**40**	**100%**

Table 4: Years of Service at the University of Venda

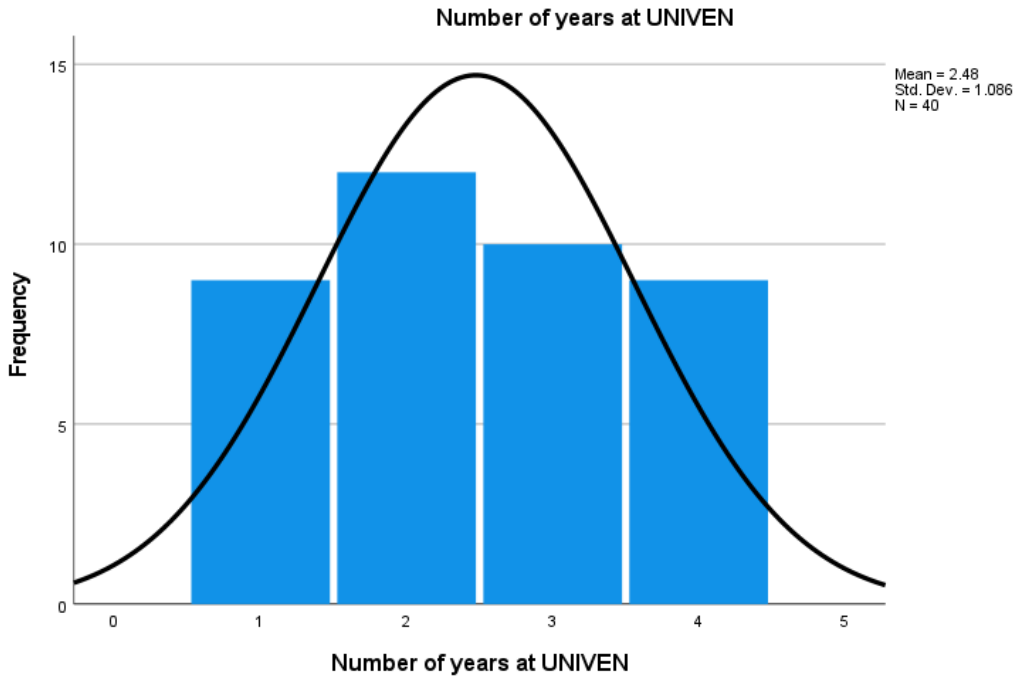

Figure 6: Years of Service at the University of Venda

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Faculty Distribution Among Participants

The distribution of participants across different faculties at the University of Venda shows a significant concentration in the Faculty of Management, Commerce and Law, which comprises 42.5% of the sample. This is followed by the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture at 35%. In contrast, the Faculty of Health Sciences accounts for 12.5%, while the Faculty of Humanities, Social Science and Education represents 10%. This variation in faculty representation highlights the university's strengths in specific disciplines while indicating areas that may require further support.

The predominance of participants from the Faculty of Management, Commerce and Law and the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture suggests that these areas may play a crucial role in shaping the organisational culture and employee engagement at the university. The insights and experiences shared by staff from these faculties can significantly influence the overall academic environment. However, the lower representation of faculty from Health Sciences and Humanities could point to a need for initiatives that enhance engagement and support within these areas. To promote a more inclusive organisational culture, the University of Venda should consider targeted efforts to ensure that all faculties are represented, and their unique challenges and contributions are recognised and addressed, ultimately fostering a more cohesive academic community.

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Faculty of Management, Commerce and Law	17	42.5%
2. Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture	14	35.0%
3. Faculty of Health Sciences	5	12.5%
4. Faculty of Humanities, Social Science and Education	4	10.0%
TOTAL	**40**	**100%**

Table 5: Faculty Description

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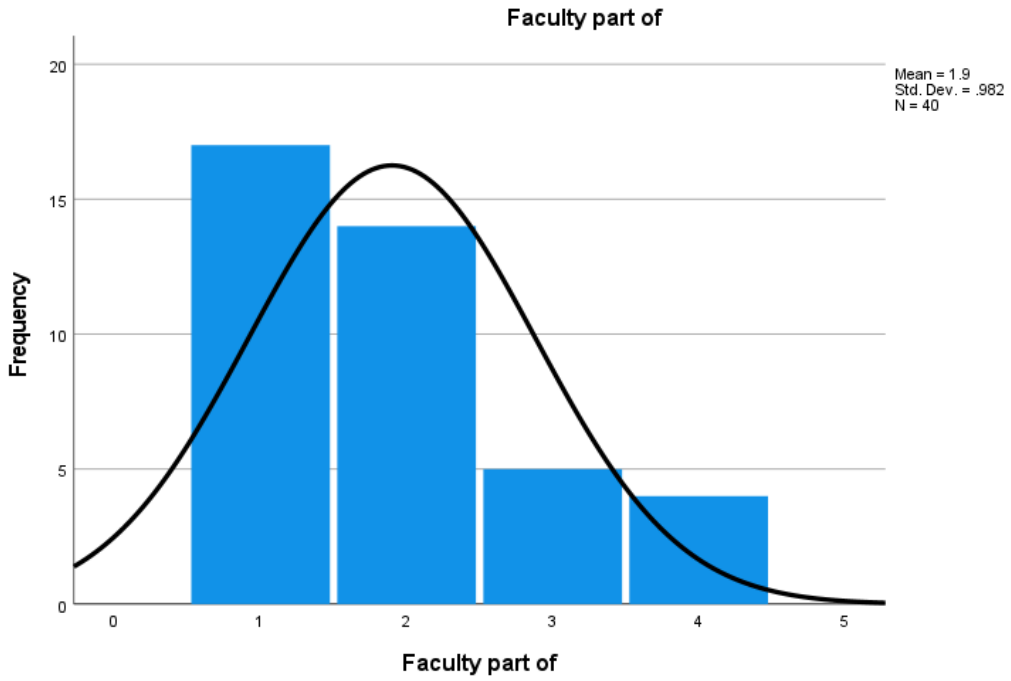

Figure 7: Faculty Description

Hypothesis Testing

Analysis of the Relationship Between Organisational Culture and Employee Engagement Among University of Venda Academic Staff.

The relationship between organisational culture and employee engagement was explored through descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. Starting with OC1 (Organisational Culture item 1), there is a significant positive correlation with EE1 (Employee Engagement item 1), as indicated by a Pearson correlation coefficient of r = 0.336 (p = 0.034). This suggests that higher scores in OC1 are associated with higher scores in EE1, supporting the hypothesis. Similarly, OC4 demonstrates a significant positive correlation with EE1, with a correlation coefficient of r = 0.402 (p = 0.010). This further substantiates the assertion that specific aspects of organisational culture positively influence levels of employee engagement. Moreover, OC4 also shows a significant positive correlation with EE3, with a Pearson correlation of r = 0.359 (p = 0.023), and with EE2, showing r = 0.390 (p = 0.013). These results reinforce that a positive organisational culture is linked to increased employee engagement. Notably, OC9 exhibits a significant positive correlation with EE2 (r = 0.384, p = 0.015), while presenting a negative correlation with EE3 (r = -0.437, p = 0.005). This duality suggests that while some aspects of organisational culture may promote engagement, others could hinder it.

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However, not all correlations are significant. Several organisational culture items (OC2, OC3, OC5, OC6, OC7, OC8, OC10) display weak or non-significant correlations with various employee engagement items. This indicates that while some aspects of organisational culture positively influence engagement, others may have negligible effects. In conclusion, the analysis partially supports H1, highlighting a significant positive relationship between organisational culture dimensions and employee engagement among the academic staff at the University of Venda. The findings underscore cultivating a supportive organisational culture to enhance employee engagement. 252. Further investigation could explore which cultural elements profoundly impact engagement, enabling more targeted interventions.

Variables	$\bar{X}$	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
OC1	3.30	1																			
OC2	3.05	-.209	1																		
OC3	3.53	.202	.023	1																	
OC4	3.30	.402*	-.116		1																
OC5	3.33	.130	-.263			1															
OC6	3.68	.031	-.033				1														
OC7	2.90	-.051	-.050					1													
CO8	4.00	-.129	-.169						1												
OC9	3.63	-.090	-.282							1											
OC10	2.75	.075	-.034								1										
EE1	3.33	.336*	.009									1									
EE2	3.30	.110	-.173										1								
EE3	3.50	.359*	-.138											1							
EE4	3.40	.019	.053												1						
EE5	3.18	.150	-.148													1					
EE6	3.53	-.093	.214														1				
EE7	3.43	-.273	.053															1			
EE8	3.38	-.134	.127																1		
EE9	3.35	0.13	.161																	1	

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EE10	3.40	-.062	-.020																	1

Table 6: Relationship Between Organisational Culture and Employee Engagement Among University of Venda Academic Staff

Specific dimensions of organisational culture, such as communication, leadership support and clarity of roles, had significantly influenced employee engagement levels.

Variables	$\bar{X}$	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
1. Communication between leadership and staff is open and transparent.	4.00	1				
2. Leadership provides clear direction and support for academic staff	4.40	.000	1			
3. The roles and responsibilities of academic staff are well-defined.	4.40	.000	1.000	1		
4. TOTALEE	4.58	.400*		.	1	

Table 7: Influence of the Dimensions of Organisational on Employee Engagement Levels

Enhancing organisational culture has led to improved employee engagement and higher levels of job satisfaction among academic staff at the University of Venda.

Discussion of the Results

Literature Review Vs Demographic Properties Results

The discussion of results integrates the study's findings with the theoretical framework and literature review, highlighting the relationship between organisational culture and employee engagement among academic staff at the University of Venda. This section explores key elements such as leadership support, communication, and cultural inclusivity, drawing connections to the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model and the specific organisational culture characteristics outlined in the literature.

Organisational Culture and Employee Engagement

The findings reveal a diverse demographic composition within the university's academic staff, with varied age groups, gender representation, academic positions, years of service, and faculty affiliation. This diversity plays a pivotal role in shaping perceptions of organisational culture and influencing engagement levels. Wiseman et al. (2017) state that organisational culture embodies the shared values and assumptions governing employees' behaviours. The varied age and tenure distributions at the University

of Venda suggest that academic staff, ranging from new entrants to seasoned professionals, bring unique perspectives that influence cultural dynamics and engagement levels.

Younger employees, who comprise a considerable portion of the staff, will likely value innovation, flexibility, and professional growth, aligning with the JD-R model's emphasis on job resources that encourage development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Supportive organisational practices—such as leadership mentorship and transparent communication—are particularly significant for these individuals. The literature supports the idea that these resources improve engagement and alleviate the adverse effects of job demands. Conversely, older staff members may prioritise job stability and leadership communication, as Joseph and Kibera (2019) indicated. Recognising and integrating these diverse preferences could help the University of Venda foster a supportive environment that enhances engagement across age groups.

Leadership Support

Leadership support emerged as a critical aspect of organisational culture, influencing employee engagement, aligning with findings by Hermawan et al. (2020), who posited that supportive leadership fosters a sense of value and recognition among employees. The predominance of lecturers and senior lecturers in the staff composition, comprising 80% of the sample, highlights the importance of instructional roles in shaping the university's culture. However, the limited representation of senior academic ranks like professors suggests a potential gap in career progression and mentorship, which is critical for fostering engagement through leadership support. Effective leaders can alleviate the challenges associated with academic roles by offering mentorship and resources, as discussed by Kwon and Kim (2020), which is essential in the higher education context where job demands are high.

Supporting academic staff in career advancement through professional development initiatives can address this gap, promoting a culture of growth and stability, ultimately boosting engagement. This need aligns with the JD-R model, where leadership support serves as a resource to reduce burnout and foster employee well-being, enabling employees to meet high job demands without compromising their engagement levels.

Communication

Communication within the University of Venda's organisational culture plays a fundamental role in shaping employee engagement. The literature emphasises effective communication as essential for engagement, especially in academic settings where collaboration is key (Wood et al., 2020). However, the gender and faculty distribution findings reveal that male staff and members from the Faculty of Management, Commerce and Law, as well as the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture, are predominant, potentially impacting communication dynamics. The literature suggests that a transparent,

inclusive communication approach helps prevent misunderstandings and promotes engagement (Bailey, Benson & Bruner, 2019). Additionally, ensuring that all faculty members are represented in decision-making could foster inclusivity and address disparities, promoting a culture of open communication that resonates with employees across departments. By encouraging input from underrepresented faculties, such as Health Sciences and Humanities, the university can work towards an inclusive environment where academic staff feel informed, valued, and aligned with organisational goals.

Inclusivity and Cultural Fit

The demographic and faculty distribution results underscore the importance of inclusivity in organisational culture. Meng and Berger (2019) highlighted that alignment between organisational culture and employee expectations significantly influences engagement. At the University of Venda, faculties with lower representation, such as Health Sciences and Humanities, might feel less connected to the dominant organisational culture shaped by larger faculties. Such disparities can lead to disengagement if staff in smaller faculties perceive their contributions as undervalued. The JD-R model reinforces that job resources such as inclusivity, supportive culture, and recognition contribute to sustained engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Implementing initiatives that support faculty-specific needs and integrating voices from all faculties into the university's cultural fabric can improve engagement and foster a sense of collective identity. A culture that values diverse contributions is likely to inspire a greater commitment to institutional goals and enhance overall job satisfaction, as evidenced by Byrne's (2022) assertion that engaged employees are more likely to remain dedicated to their organisation.

Literature Review Vs Correlation Results

The findings from this study reveal important insights into the relationship between organisational culture and employee engagement among academic staff at the University of Venda. Integrating these results with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) and the study's objectives, the analysis offers a deeper understanding of how specific dimensions of organisational culture, such as leadership support, communication and role clarity, align with the proposed hypotheses and influence employee engagement levels.

Hypothesis 1: Positive Relationship Between Organisational Culture and Employee Engagement

The results confirm that organisational culture significantly impacts employee engagement, supporting H1. Positive correlations between specific dimensions of organisational culture (OC1, OC4, and OC9) and employee engagement indicators (EE1, EE2, and EE3) indicate that an enriching organisational environment correlates with enhanced engagement levels. For instance, OC1's positive association with

EE1 (r = 0.336, p = 0.034) suggests that an organisational culture promoting mutual respect and shared values fosters an emotional and intellectual commitment among employees, aligning with the literature's emphasis on organisational culture's influence on employee behaviour and satisfaction (Wiseman et al., 2017).

Furthermore, OC4's strong correlation with both EE1 (r = 0.402, p = 0.010) and EE3 (r = 0.359, p = 0.023) aligns with Joseph and Kibera (2019), who argue that shared values within an organisation contribute to employees' sense of belonging. This connection reinforces the study's objective of exploring how organisational culture contributes to engagement among academic staff, emphasising that positive cultural practices within the University of Venda are integral in boosting engagement and meeting institutional goals.

Hypothesis 2: Influence of Organisational Culture Dimensions on Employee Engagement

Hypothesis 2 also supports the findings, indicating that specific organisational culture dimensions, particularly communication and leadership support, significantly influence engagement levels. OC9's positive correlation with EE2 (r = 0.384, p = 0.015) and negative correlation with EE3 (r = -0.437, p = 0.005) highlight the dual nature of certain cultural elements in influencing engagement. Leadership support, a dimension of OC9, may act as a double-edged sword—supportive leadership can increase engagement (Shen & Jiang, 2019). Still, inconsistencies in leadership behaviour or limited access to professional development may hinder engagement, as indicated by the negative correlation with EE3.

These results resonate with the JD-R model's assertion that job resources like leadership support and effective communication are vital in mitigating job demands and enhancing well-being and engagement (Kwon & Kim, 2020). Strong leadership support aligns with Hermawan, Thamrin, and Susilo (2020), who noted that empowering employees through supportive leadership could foster trust and, in turn, elevate engagement. This insight is particularly valuable in an academic setting, where teaching and research demands can overwhelm staff if not balanced by organisational support.

Hypothesis 3: Enhancing Organisational Culture Leads to Improved Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction

The findings further substantiate H3, which posits that strengthening organisational culture can enhance engagement and job satisfaction. The varied age distribution (with a balanced representation from all age groups) and tenure (ranging from less than a year to over 10 years) of participants indicate that engagement efforts must consider demographic differences to support job satisfaction inclusively. Older staff may value stability and effective communication, whereas younger employees might prioritise growth opportunities (Wood et al., 2020). The University of Venda could improve job satisfaction by

developing a culture that supports professional development and recognises individual achievements, especially for lecturers and senior lecturers, who comprise most of the sample.

Moreover, OC4's significant positive correlation with multiple engagement indicators ($r = 0.390$, $p = 0.013$) suggests that nurturing cultural attributes such as collaboration and clear communication is essential for a cohesive and engaging work environment. Bailey, Benson, and Bruner (2019) highlight that transparent communication strengthens commitment and alignment with organisational objectives, contributing to a cohesive and engaging workplace. Addressing the low representation of certain faculties (such as Health Sciences and Humanities) in engagement initiatives could further promote inclusivity and align with the study's objective of fostering a supportive organisational culture across the university.

Implications for Organisational Culture and Employee Engagement

The study's findings align with the existing literature and the JD-R model, underscoring that an engaging organisational culture is a crucial job resource for academic staff, fostering satisfaction and mitigating burnout. However, the insignificant or weak correlations between some organisational culture items (OC2, OC3, OC5, OC6, OC7, OC8, and OC10) and engagement measures reveal that certain cultural elements may have limited influence on engagement. These elements could be areas for further investigation or additional contextual adaptation to maximise their impact.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed to enhance employee engagement among academic staff at the University of Venda. Leadership support and communication emerged as key factors, suggesting that leadership training programs should foster supportive and transparent communication across departments. Regular feedback sessions can create a more inclusive culture where academic staff feel valued and involved. Additionally, clear definitions of roles and responsibilities are essential for fostering purpose and engagement; the University should periodically review job descriptions to ensure alignment with departmental goals and staff expectations.

To support professional growth, investing in development opportunities like research grants, conference attendance, and mentorship can boost engagement, especially among experienced faculty. Creating an inclusive organisational culture that respects diverse perspectives and promotes collaborative decision-making is crucial, particularly for underrepresented faculties such as Health Sciences and Humanities. Regular engagement surveys can offer insights into the effectiveness of these initiatives, while feedback mechanisms ensure staff voices are heard, allowing for continuous improvement. Work-life balance is another priority, and policies promoting flexible scheduling and wellness programs can help academic staff manage their multiple roles, reducing burnout and enhancing engagement. Finally, recognising and

rewarding contributions through awards and acknowledgements can build morale, motivating staff by celebrating their academic, teaching, and service achievements. These recommendations aim to strengthen a positive organisational culture, fostering long-term commitment, job satisfaction, and engagement among the University of Venda's academic staff.

Implications and Conclusion

This study explored the relationship between organisational culture and employee engagement among academic staff at the University of Venda, framed within the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model. The findings indicate a significant positive relationship between specific dimensions of organisational culture—specifically leadership support and communication—and employee engagement levels. The diverse demographic profile of the academic staff highlighted the importance of understanding varying perspectives and needs, which can be leveraged to create a more inclusive and supportive environment. The results partially support the hypotheses, suggesting that while specific elements of organisational culture enhance engagement, others may have a limited or negative impact. Consequently, fostering a robust organisational culture is essential for promoting employee engagement, reducing burnout, and improving overall job satisfaction. This research underscores the need for targeted interventions that address the strengths and weaknesses of the current organisational culture at the University of Venda.

The study's findings focus on the relationship between organisational culture and employee engagement among academic staff at the University of Venda. It revisits the research objectives and hypotheses, confirming a significant positive correlation between specific dimensions of organisational culture—particularly communication and leadership support—and employee engagement levels, thereby supporting the first hypothesis. However, the analysis also highlights that not all cultural dimensions exert a uniformly positive influence, with some showing weak or negative correlations. The chapter offers targeted recommendations for enhancing organisational culture, such as leadership training and improved communication strategies, while emphasising the need for ongoing assessment to adapt to the evolving needs of staff. Ultimately, it underscores the importance of a supportive cultural environment in fostering employee engagement and job satisfaction. It also suggests future research avenues to explore specific cultural elements and their effects on diverse employee demographics.

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