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PERCEIVED ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT AND EMPLOYEE RETENTION: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT AMONG NURSING STAFF IN THE VHEMBE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY

BY

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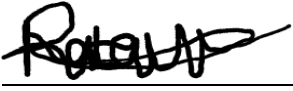SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

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DECLARATION

I, Ratau Linda Lefeletse, hereby declare that this dissertation titled: "Perceived organisational support and employee retention: the mediating role of psychological empowerment among nursing staff in the Vhembe District Municipality" submitted to the Department of Human Resource Management and Labour Relations at the University of Venda, is original in design and execution, and all reference material contained therein has been duly acknowledged.

Signature: _____   Date: <u>18/01/2021</u>

Ratau L L

ABSTRACT

This study aimed at investigating the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention of nursing staff at two public hospitals in the Vhembe District Municipality. The study further examined whether psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between employee perceived organisational support and nurses' retention. A quantitative research approach was considered to be the best approach for this study. Stratified sampling was utilised to select the sample from which to collect data. Also, self-administered questionnaires were utilised. The questionnaires were used to get biographical information of the nursing staff and details on psychological empowerment, perceived organisational support and nurses' retention. To test the relationship between perceived organisational support, employee retention and psychological empowerment, Pearson correlations analysis was carried out. Multiple regression analysis was also carried out to test the mediating role of psychological empowerment on the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26 was utilised to analyse the data collected and the findings are presented herein. The limitations of the study, the implications of the study findings and the recommendations for the health sector, as well as suggestions for future research were also presented.

Keywords: Perceived organisational support, employee retention, psychological empowerment, nursing staff, public hospitals and health sector.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my dear mom, Rachel Ratau. Thank you for believing in me Hunadi. I appreciate your love, patience, sacrifices, support and prayers during this journey. Without you, I would not have come this far.

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1.1 Introduction

The nursing profession serves as the backbone of the public health sector in the country. Currie and Hill (2012) argue that nurses usually resign from their work/profession due to dissatisfaction with their job situations. Unsurprisingly, hospital management is always seeking ways to mitigate the exodus of these valuable employees.

The acute shortage of nursing staff in South Africa is seen as a stumbling block to accomplishing the fundamental goal of the health sector, namely the provision of high-quality healthcare (Tshitangano, 2013). Numerous efforts are being made by the Limpopo Health Department to augment the number of health professionals, but a shortage of these staff persists (Annual Performance Plan, 2014).

Baernholdt and Mark (2009), in a study among rural and urban nursing units, suggest that rural hospitals should endeavour to attract, maintain and retain health professionals by improving the work environment through the provision of opportunities for personal/ professional development. Similarly, Sellgren (2009) found that hospital managers should ensure that intrinsic work values of nurses, such as job variety and autonomy, are met, to reduce the risk of high staff turnover related to non-fulfilment of these values.

Globally, the retention of high-potential employees is a huge challenge for many organisations (Aguenza & Som, 2012). Kashyap and Rangnekar (2014) highlight that employees would be more amenable to stay with their organisation if they were provided with extrinsic motivators such as performance bonuses. However, remuneration is not the only component that can motivate employees to stay. According to Nazia and Begum (2013), employee retention could also be influenced by other relational factors in the organisation, such as a supportive working environment.

Perceived organisational support has been identified as one of the most essential elements that encourage employees to stay, as it is considered a major attribute in promoting job satisfaction and employee commitment (Browning & Kanaga, 2007). Shaheen, Bukhari and Adil (2016) defined perceived organisational support as the degree to which an employee's performance is valued and acknowledged by the organisation. In other words, it reflects the employee's opinion about the care they receive from the organisation. Perceived

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organisational support, therefore, initiates a sense of responsibility in employees and motivates them to stay longer in the organisation (Dhar, 2012).

Pepe (2010) posits that employees who get enough support from their organisation tend to reciprocate by exhibiting the willingness to work as well as to stay in that organisation for a longer time. Employees who perceive organisational support are more likely to be certain and confident that they will be able to perform their job efficiently when they have all the essential resources (Tumwesigye, 2010). Therefore, they will be more inclined to show more commitment.

Karavardar (2014) defined the concept of psychological empowerment as the power and authority that employees feel internally. A study conducted by Iftikhar, Shahid, Shahab, Mobeen and Qureshi (2016) among middle-level managers in the manufacturing industry showed that psychological empowerment brings positive changes in employees' job-related behaviours and to reduce employees' turnover intentions (Wang & Lee, 2009). In a related study conducted by Klerk (2013) in the chemical industry, it was revealed that psychological empowerment positively influences employee retention. By the same token, Patrick and Laschinger (2009) also found out that psychological empowerment is positively associated with perceived organisational support. On the contrary, Ölçer and Florescu (2015), based on their study conducted among employees in the Taiwanese food industry, found that there is inconclusive evidence to support the relationship between psychological empowerment and perceived organisational support.

Furthermore, Iqbal and Hashmi (2015), in their study among higher-education institutions in Pakistan, noted that by improving psychological empowerment, the retention of employees can be increased. Also, Ölcer and Florescu (2015) claim that when employees feel a greater level of psychological empowerment, they become more satisfied with their job. Based on these findings, they suggested that exceptional emphasis need to be placed on each of the components of psychological empowerment.

Although the relationship between perceived organisational support, employee retention and psychological empowerment is well-documented e.g. (Currie & Hill, 2012; Baernholdt & Mark, 2009; Sellgren, 2009), the results have not been consistent. Therefore, a need exists to explore this relationship further particularly in a South African context.

1.2 Problem statement

South Africa is considered to be amongst the top three countries with the highest percentages of nursing staff who anticipate moving to other countries to seek job opportunities, thereby exacerbating the shortage of nurses in the country (Tshitangano, 2013). About 2000 nursing staff in South Africa were lost to the United Kingdom (UK) between 2012 and 2013 and approximately 300 more leave South Africa every month (Aries, 2015).

Also, according to data released by the South African Nursing Council (2015), more than 18% of the nursing staff do not practise their profession anymore. A further 18% are registered under nursing agencies through which some of them exclusively offer their services to moonlighting in private hospitals, whereas others are permanently employed in private hospitals. Sojane, Klopper and Coetzee (2016) found that 51% of nursing staff in private health and 59% of those in public health intend to leave their current hospitals within the coming few years. In addition, the South African Nursing Council (2017) reported that the last twenty-four months have seen an escalating nursing-staff turnover rate among its members.

Tshitangano (2013) articulates that the optimal workload ratio is currently one nurse to four patients. However, in rural hospitals such as those in the Limpopo Province, the average ratio is one nurse to 40 patients on a night shift, whilst on an afternoon shift, and one nurse will be in charge of an average of 25 patients. These statistics demonstrate an urgent need to put in place measures that will ensure that nurses are retained, particularly in the Limpopo Province.

Against the aforesaid background, it is clear that the South African Health Department has a serious challenge in retaining nursing staff in public hospitals. This current study, therefore, attempts to examine how psychological empowerment and perceived organisational support could enhance the retention of nursing staff in the health sector in the Limpopo Province. Previous studies in this area only focused on the relationships between perceived organisational support and employee retention, perceived organisational support and psychological empowerment, and psychological empowerment and retention (Kashyap & Rangnekar, 2012; Pepe, 2012; Tumwesigye, 2010).

The Department of Health, in its Annual Performance Plan (Vote 7), has identified the quality of health care as one of the crucial areas that need to be improved on in public hospitals in the Limpopo Province, particularly in the Vhembe District Municipality. The Department has

indicated that the poor levels of patient care are caused by, among other things, the shortage of staff owing to the high nursing-staff turnover in public hospitals (Annual Performance Plan, Vote 7). Perceived organisational support and psychological empowerment, as the main predictors of intention to remain, have been tackled in some sectors but not in the health sector in the Vhembe District Municipality (Iqbal & Hashmi, 2015; Armstrong-Stassen & Ursel, 2009; Jha, 2013).

1.3 The aim and objectives of the study

The main aim of this study is to examine the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention and whether psychological empowerment mediates this relationship among nursing staff employed at two public hospitals in the Vhembe District Municipality.

The specific objectives of the study are:

- To investigate whether there is a relationship between perceived organisational support and retention of nursing staff in the two public hospitals in the Vhembe District Municipality.
- To investigate whether perceived organisational support is related to psychological empowerment of nursing staff in the two public hospitals in the Vhembe District Municipality.
- To examine whether there is a relationship between psychological empowerment and retention of nursing staff among nursing staff in the two public hospitals in the Vhembe District Municipality Area.
- To investigate whether psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between perceived organisational support and retention of nursing staff in the two public hospitals in the Vhembe District Municipality.

1.4 Research hypotheses

The study hypotheses that:

H1: There is a significant relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention of nursing staff in the two public hospitals in the Vhembe District Municipality.

H2: There is a significant relationship between perceived organisational support and psychological empowerment of nursing staff in the two public hospitals in Vhembe District Municipality.

H3: There is a significant relationship between psychological empowerment and employee retention of nursing staff in the two public hospitals in the Vhembe District Municipality.

H4: Psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention of nursing staff in the two public hospitals in the Vhembe District Municipality.

1.4.1 Conceptual model

The conceptual model is informed by the research hypotheses. The relationships among these three variables (perceived organisational support, psychological empowerment and employee retention) are depicted in Figure 1.1.

Psychological empowerment

- Meaning
- Competence
- Self-determination
- Impact

Perceived organisational support

- Organisational rewards & job conditions
- Fairness
- Supervisor support

Employee retention

- Compensation
- Job characteristics
- Training & Development
- Supervisor Support
- Career opportunities
- Work-life balance
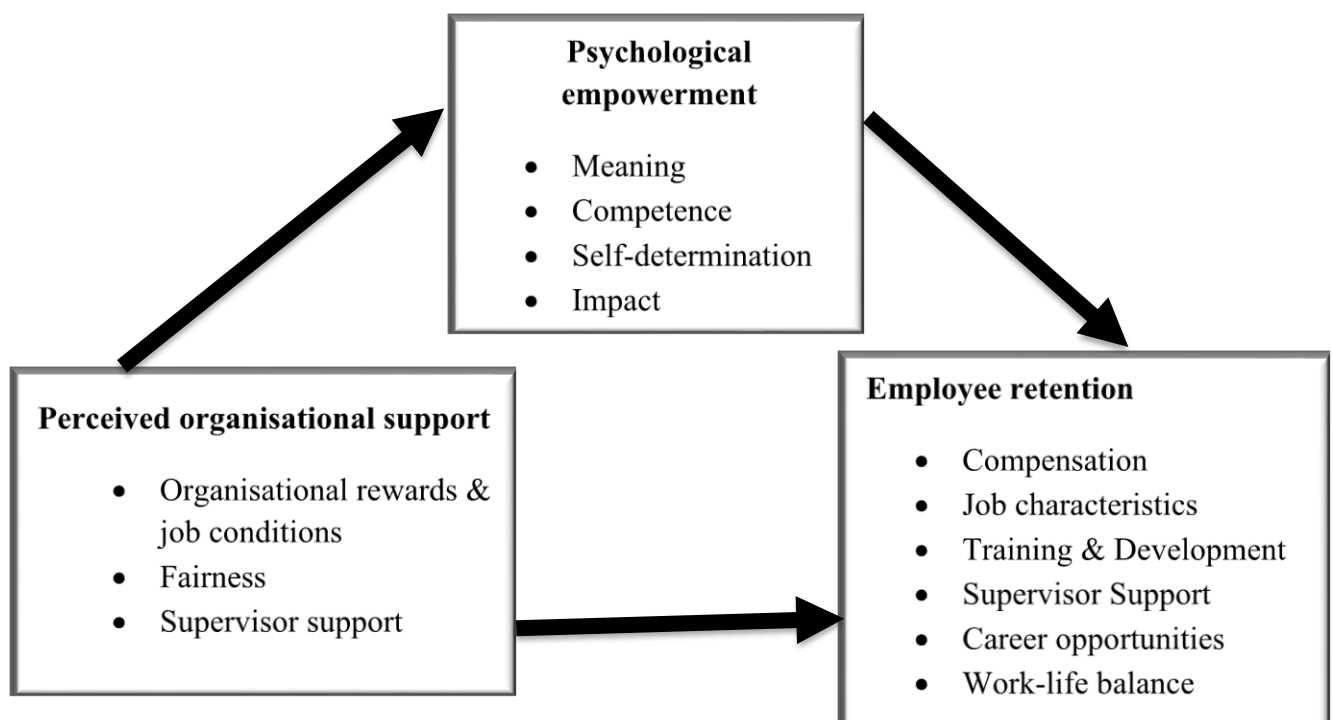
Figure 1. 1

Proposed research model

1.5 Significance of the study

Feeling valued by one's organisation plays a major role in an employee's intention to stay with an organisation for a longer time (Iqbal & Hashmi, 2015). The current study will bring to the fore those factors that can assist management to provide a supportive working environment for nursing staff. This research will also assist the policymakers to create an empowering work environment that would promote employees' wellness and consequently enable them to develop their self-efficacy and confidence (self-determination) while performing their tasks.

The research will be a supplement to the literature on perceived organisational support, employee retention and psychological empowerment. More specifically it would also contribute to the literature in a South African context and to a greater degree in the health sector in the Vhembe District Municipality. The health sector is currently experiencing an unprecedented high rate of staff turnover. This study will, therefore, assist management to identify how employees encounter the existing levels of psychological support and whether this explains the extent of employee retention. The study will also aid in determining the mediating role of psychological empowerment.

1.6 Operational definitions

Some of the key terms that are used throughout the dissertation are briefly defined below. These are 'perceived organisational support', 'employee retention' and 'psychological empowerment'.

1.6.1 Perceived organisational support

The concept of perceived organisational support is defined as a perception of employees regarding the degree to which the organisation values and acknowledges their performance, as well as the care they receive from the organisation (Shaheen, Bukhari & Adil, 2016).

1.6.2 Employee retention

Employee retention is defined as any measures taken by an organisation to keep its current resourceful employees, thereby maintaining a low staff turnover rate (Gani, 2017).

1.6.3 Psychological empowerment

According to Jose and Mampilly (2014), psychological empowerment is a process of improving the emotional state of self-efficacy amongst employees in an organisation through identifying the conditions that foster ineffectiveness and their elimination by proper and familiar techniques that enhance enhancement.

1.7 Chapter outline

The study consists of five chapters and the outline is as follows:

Chapter one provides a general summary of the research. This was done by giving an introduction and background to the study and its context within the public health sector. The key study variables, namely perceived organisational support, employee retention, and psychological empowerment were also introduced. The problem statement was highlighted. The aim and objectives of the study and the research hypotheses were presented. The chapter also encapsulates the significance of the study.

Chapter two elucidates the constructs of perceived organisational support (POS), employee retention (ER) and psychological empowerment (PE). The theoretical foundation of the study is also laid. This chapter reviews related information on the mediating role of psychological empowerment in the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention among nursing staff.

Chapter three reviews in detail the research paradigm, the research design and the research approach that was followed in this study. This chapter outlines the research population, sample and the sampling procedure, and the rationale for the sampling strategy. The measuring instruments and the statistical analyses that were utilised are also highlighted. This chapter concludes by reviewing the research ethics relevant to this study.

Chapter four presents the results of this study in detail. This includes a detailed presentation of the data collected in this study, the statistical analysis techniques utilised, as well as an assessment of the reliability and validity of the measuring instruments. The researcher focused on the data obtained from the respondents in this chapter.

Chapter five presents a discussion of the research results and seeks to draw conclusions from these findings. The possible limitations and implications of the study, as well as the recommendations for the health sector and future research, are also presented in this chapter.

1.8 Chapter summary

This study aimed at investigating the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention among nursing staff employed at two selected public hospitals in the Vhembe District Municipality, and whether psychological empowerment mediates this relationship. The background of the study was provided, and the problem statement discussed in this chapter. The objectives of the study were formulated based on the gaps from previous research. Research hypotheses were detailed to answer the research objectives. The significance of the study and chapter layout were also delineated in this chapter. This study will help the health sector to augment the number of health professionals in public hospitals.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Chapter two provides a synopsis of the literature relating to the variables of interest to this study. The construct of perceived organisational support will be investigated more broadly. The concept of employee retention will also be explored followed by a discussion on psychological empowerment. The relationships between perceived organisational support, employee retention and psychological empowerment will also be explained. The purpose of a literature review is to present, assess and summarise previous studies that are similar and related to the current study.

2.2 Perceived organisational support

2.2.1 Definition of perceived organisational support

Neves and Eisenberger (2015) define perceived organisational support as the view shared by employees concerning the care they receive from their organisation and the extent to which an employee's performance is treasured and acknowledged by their employers. Perceived organisational support can be understood as a sign that the employees value organisational membership (Battistelli, Galletta, Vandenberghe & Odoardi, 2016). Perceived organisational support captures the belief of employees that a social exchange relationship of high quality with their organisation has been built, as they will be under impression that their organisation values their involvement and welfare (Tsachouridi & Nikandrou, 2019). It becomes clear that when the organisation rewards the employees fairly and reasonably, employees feel more valued and appreciated for their effort and contribution to the organisation.

Ahmad and Yekta (2010) indicate that employees who perceive organisational support tend to be more assured and optimistic that they have all of the resources needed to carry out their duties effectively. The organisational support reflects the employer's appreciation for their efforts and actions. In addition, when employees receive favourable treatment and respect from their employer, they are more likely to feel that they have more support within the organisation (Allen & Shanock, 2013). According to Dumitru and Sava (2012), employees who perceive more of organisational support exhibit positive attitudes to the organisation and they also tend to give more in return the favourable treatment they receive from the organisation.

2.2.2 Antecedents of perceived organisational support

Kurtessis, Eisenberger, Ford, Buffardi, Stewart and Adis (2017) show that perceived organisational support encompasses several forms of favourable treatment. These are depicted diagrammatically in Figure 2.1 and discussed in detail.
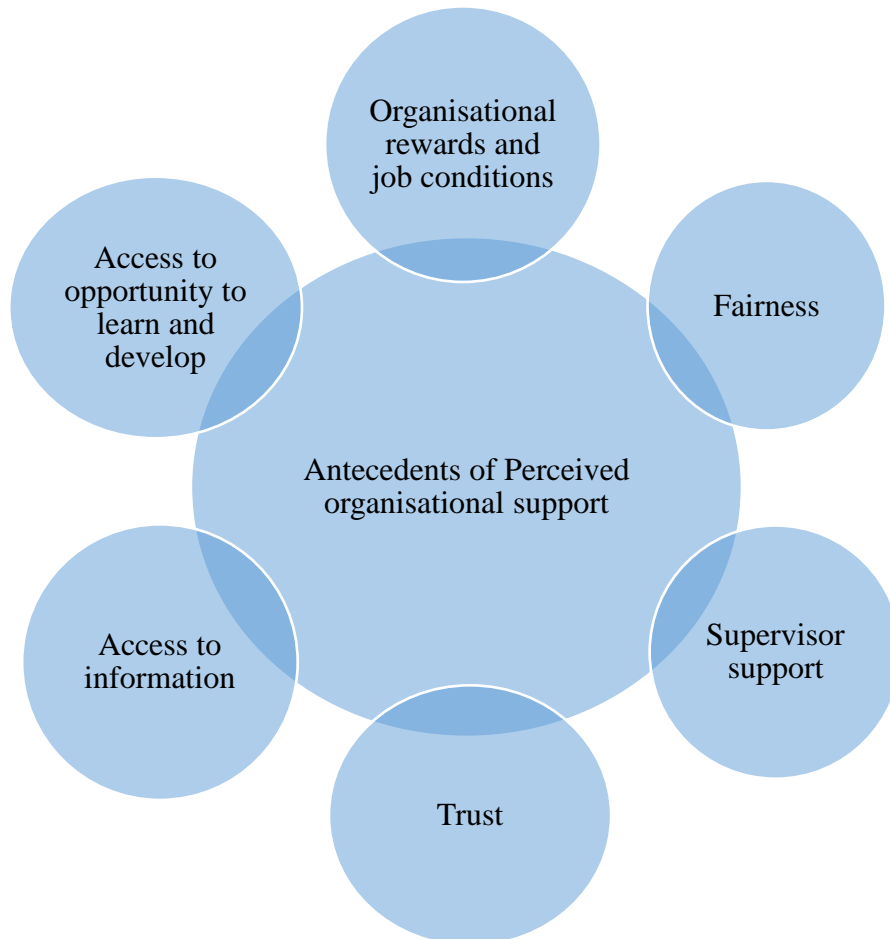
Figure 2. 1

Antecedents of perceived organisational support

2.2.2.1 Organisational rewards and job conditions

Kurtessis *et al* (2017) identified some of the factors that influence organisational rewards and conditions such as pay, recognition, promotions, job security, autonomy, the presence of role stressors and training. In addition, Boxall and Purcell (2011) postulate that being autonomous would make one feel competent and positive in their ability to perform well, hence, they will be less likely to give up. Navin (2015) adds that employees' desire to remain loyal to their

organisations will also increase when they are being rewarded for their inputs and given a chance to be independent.

2.2.2.2 Fairness

Perceived organisational support increases when an employee sees his or her organisation as being fair and just (Kurtessis *et al*, 2017). In this context, procedural justice refers to equality and fairness in distributing the resources among employees in an organisation (Ahmad & Nawaz, 2015). Furthermore, Pomirleanu and Mariadoss (2015) advocate that continued existence of fairness in decision-making, particularly, regarding the equal distribution of resources, should increase perceived organisational support as employees will see this as the organisation showing concern for their welfare. Ahmad and Nawaz (2015) indicate that studies have proved fairness and procedural justice to be the most important factors influencing perceived organisational support. When employees believe that they are being treated fairly in the organisation, they are more likely to perceive more support.

2.2.2.3 Supervisor support

Perceived organisational support can be increased by the perceptions that one's supervisors are supportive as they are seen by employees to be acting on behalf of the employer (Kurtessis *et al*., 2017). Kurtessis *et al*. (2017) further indicate that an employee relies comprehensively on his or her supervisors' orientation towards him or her as a sign of organisational support. Perceived organisational support tend to be higher when the supervisor is believed to care about the employees' experience at work and does what they can to demonstrate appreciation for the work done (Harris & Kacmar, 2018).

2.2.2.4 Trust

Spreitzer and Quinn (2001) define trust as a notion that other people can be counted on to do what they said. Trust is known to be related to perceived organisational support (Kazanchi, 2018). According to Kim, Moon and Shin (2019), employees' view on the quality of their exchange relationship with the organisation would likely be stimulated when they have trust. When trust is built, employees can easily comply with the rules and regulations of the organisation, hence control decreases when trust rises.

2.2.2.5 Access to information

Kurtessis *et al.* (2017) describe information sharing as a tool that aids employees in accomplishing their work objectives at a higher level. Researchers further maintain that training and education can assist employees to acquire the required information in the form of data and practical knowledge. An employee's trust is acquired when the organisation is eager to share information with employees, either good or bad (Boxall & Purcell, 2011). Therefore, employees will be more likely to feel that they are being trusted by their organisation.

2.2.2.6 Access to opportunities to learn and develop

According to Boxall and Purcell (2011), conducting training on facilitative leadership, teamwork and change management can assist in providing the knowledge required for problem-solving. Training should be expanded to fulfil multiple individual needs and organisations should change their training contents to fulfil the increased need for multi knowledge-workers, (Kurtessis *et al*., 2017).

2.2.3 Consequences of perceived organisational support

Hakeem and Nisa (2016) assert that perceived organisational support leads to several outcomes favourable to employees and the organisation such as job satisfaction, a positive mood at work, organisational commitment, employee engagement and high in-role performance. These outcomes are depicted in a diagrammatical form presented in Figure 2.2.
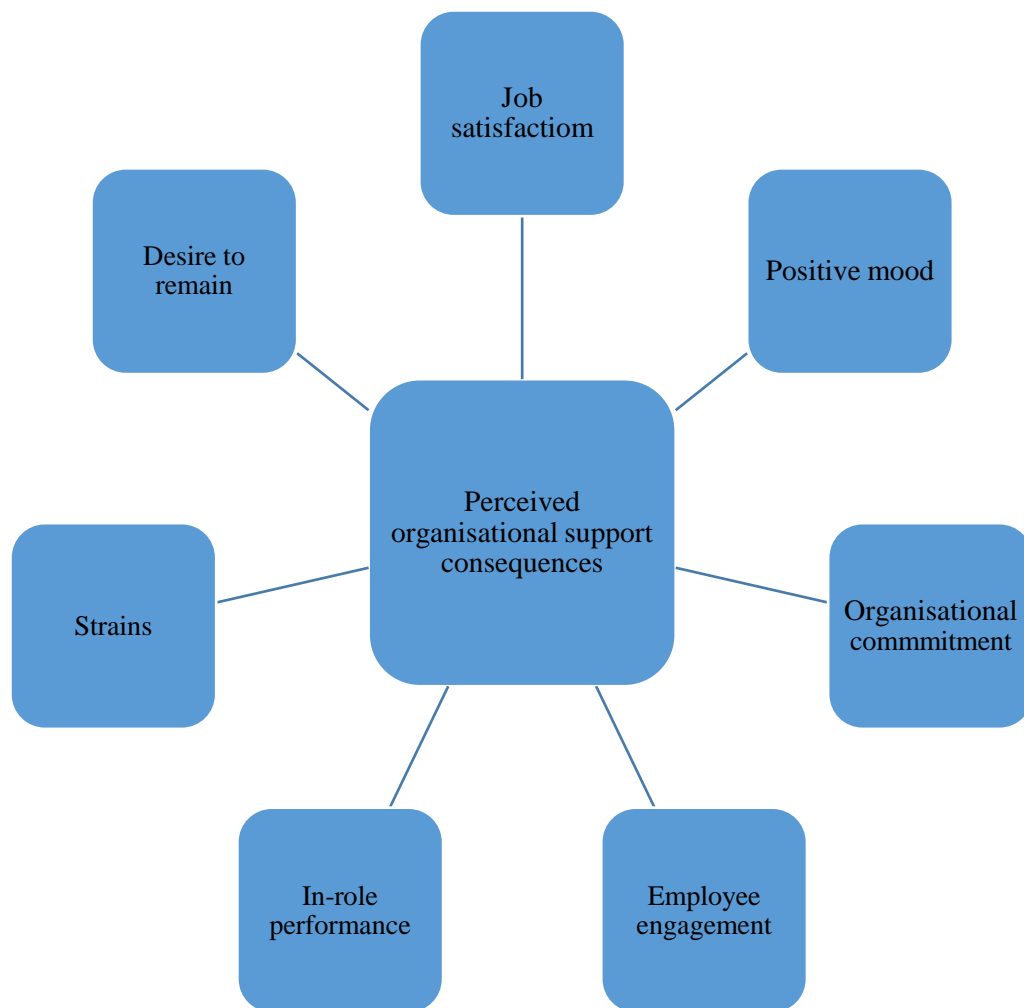
Figure 2. 2

Perceived organisational support outcomes

2.2.3.1 Job satisfaction

In Herzberg's motivational theory (1959), job satisfaction is viewed as an employee's affective response to all various areas of his or her job (Liu, Aungsuroch & Yunibhand, 2016). According to Spector (1985), job satisfaction refers to how employees feel about their job as well as their working environment. Perceived organisational support adds to the overall job satisfaction through the availability of support to employees and meeting their socio-emotional needs (Kalpana & Gopinath, 2018).

2.2.3.2 Positive mood

Hakeem and Nisa (2016) define a positive mood as a general emotional state without a specific object differing conceptually from job satisfaction. Perceived organisational support

enhances positive mood through contributing to employee's feelings of competence and worth. Ahmad *et al*., (2015) also showed that perceived organisational support positively influences job satisfaction and a positive mood.

2.2.3.3 Organisational commitment

Employee organisational commitment is an important organisational outcome resulting from perceived organisational support (Krishnan & Mary, 2012). Akintayo (2010) explained employee organisational commitment as an extent to which employees feels devoted and loyal towards their organisations. According to organisational support theory, perceived organisational support is known to be an indication of the organisation's commitment because employees tend to feel obliged to care about the organisation and reciprocate in terms of commitment and loyalty (Ahmed *et al*., 2015). This assertion was supported by Riggle, Edmondson and Hansen (2009) in the study of the relationship between perceived organisational support and job outcomes.

2.2.3.4 Employee engagement

Sundaray (2011) asserts that it is crucial for an organisation to have its employees engaged with their work because highly engaged employees consistently deliver beyond the organisation's expectations. Saks (2011) described employee engagement as an extent which employees feel passionate, satisfied with and have enthusiastic about the work they do. Studies by Ahmad *et al*. (2015); Krishnan and Mary (2012) indicated that perceived organisational support positively influences employee engagement. Therefore, it can be assumed that employees who get enough support from their organisation become more involved, passionate and satisfied with their jobs.

2.2.3.5 In-role performance

In-role performance refers to all the behaviours or tasks that an employee needs to carry out, which are necessary for the completion of the tasks found in their job description (Zhu, 2013). Perceived organisational support was found to improve job performance. Employees were also found to willingly take actions beyond their assigned responsibilities, which are favourable to the organisation (Krishnan & Mary, 2012).

2.2.3.6 Job strains

Demiral, Kilic and Padir (2018) define job strain as the relationship between demands and decision latitude. Job strains arise when an employee experiences a combination of greater psychological, physical, emotional demands and lower decision-making freedom over organisational tasks and skills usage. Krishnan and Mary (2012) declare that through the availability of resources and emotional support required to face high demands in the organisation, the unpleasant psychological and psychosomatic reactions that may cause tension or anxiety can be reduced. Therefore, it can be argued that perceived organisational support is more likely to lessen the strains in the organisation

2.2.3.7 Desire to stay with the organisation

According to the norm of reciprocity, one way that an employee can reciprocate favourable treatment from their organisation is to continue with their participation in that organisation (Akintayo, 2010). The literature on the overview of antecedents and consequences of perceived organisational support concedes that perceived organisational support strongly and positively correlates with a desire to remain with the organisation (Dursun, 2015; Chan, 2019). Employees who receive more support have a greater desire to remain with the organisation for a longer time (Krishnan & Mary, 2012).

Perceived organisational support is the main part of a social exchange process in which employees are hopeful that their achievements will be valued and rewarded by their organisation, whilst, on the other hand, the organisation expects that employees' performance will be very good (Stinglhamber, Caesens, Clark & Eisenberger, 2016). Perceived organisational support arises when employees benefit from actions taken by the organisation (Neves, Mesdaghinia, Eisenberger & Wickham, 2018). As a result, perceived organisational support ultimately contributes to the increase in employee retention in the organisation (Battistelli, Galletta, Vandenberghe & Odoardi, 2016). Taken together, it can be opined that employees with high organisational support are not likely to pursue other employment opportunities.

Zhang (2018) also supports the view that perceived organisational support is positively related to the intentions to stay in the organisation for a longer time. Chew and Wong (2008), who conducted a study in the hotel industry, also found that when employees perceived that they were being supported by their organisation, they reciprocated by showing the intentions

to stay longer in the organisation. Therefore, it can be reasonably assumed that the presence of support from an organisation reduces employees' intentions to quit.

Providing organisational support through compensation and recognition evokes an emotional state of goodwill to the organisation and builds up the connection between employees and their employer (Muse & Wadsworth, 2012). Eisenberger *et al*. (1990) theorise that employees will be obliged to return the favour and they will also be encouraged to be valuable for the organisation due to the fundamental concept of reciprocity. Perceived organisational support augments the employees' feeling that they are rooted in the organisation (Allen & Shannock, 2012). Allen, Shore, and Griffeth (2013) revealed that employees' obligations to support their organisation in accomplishing its goals are strengthened by perceived organisational support.

In addition, perceived organisational support leads to a positive mood in the organisation, which may result in positive emotional enablement at work, thus improving the psychological empowerment of employees (Sulea, Virga, Maricutoiu, Schaufeli, Zaborila Dumitru, & Sava, 2012). Nursing staff who receive high levels of perceived organisational support will experience more psychological empowerment through information sharing (Kimpah, Ibrahim & Raudeliunience, 2015). The researchers further add that when the organisation creates a clear work role and share important information with employees, practices such as a greater sense of value, proficiency, autonomy as well as personal consequences among employees would be generated.

Moreover, Ali *et al*. (2010) maintained that when employees feel they are getting organisational support, they will be assured that they will have essential resources, rewards for their efforts and organisational affiliation for their actions. The support, as a result, enables employees to develop their self-efficacy, maintain their impact in the organisation and be confident while performing organisational tasks (Ali *et al*., 2010). Smit, Stanz, and Bussin (2015) state that the perception of employees about organisational support would psychologically empower them in the work setting. According to Patrick and Laschinger (2009), perceived organisational support is positively correlated to psychological empowerment. Thus, it can be claimed that when employees feel more supported and appreciated by the organisation, their level of psychological empowerment increases.

2.2.4 Relationship between perceived organisational support and other organisational variables.

Wang and Wang (2020) noted that organisations that offer more organisational support reduce employees' job burnout. Perceived organisational support was found to be an important attribute that improves employees' job performance and decreases job burnout as well as turnover in an organisation. Chass and Balu (2018) revealed that there is a strong and positive relationship between perceived organisational support and employee engagement. Moreover, Hussain and Asif (2012) discovered a strong, significant and positive correlation between perceived organisational support and employee organisational commitment as well as ownership among employees in an organisation. Furthermore, a strong and positive relationship was also revealed between perceived organisational support and job satisfaction (Maan, Abid, Butt, Ashfaq & Ahmed, 2020).

2.3 Employee retention

2.3.1 Definition of employee retention

Gani (2017) describes employee retention as an effort made by an organisation to keep its current resourceful employees. Vaiman (2008) adds that employee retention also involves actions taken by the organisation to persuade employees to stay in the organisation for a longer period. Aiken, Cheung and Olds (2009) maintain that the shortage of nursing staff is both a real and aggravating problem. Sustainable and available health-care services are determined by the availability and quality of the workforce (Dubois, Nolte & McKee, 2010). It is, therefore, a concern for the health sector to have the ability to attract, absorb, and retain the right calibre employee.

2.3.2 Impact of employee retention on the organisation

Buchan (2013) maintains that turnover can have an unfavourable outcome on the quality of care in the health sector when it reaches high levels. Samuel and Chipunza (2009) argue that challenges with the high nursing-staff turnover are exacerbated when employees not only quit the organisation, but also the health profession itself. Therefore, the overall workload remains the same in the organisation as the burden on the employees who are still working for the organisation increase when the organisation loses employees, which in turn lead to work disruptions and losses in productivity (Yamamoto, 2012).

Organisations must establish an effective employee retention system that will ensure that talented employees stay in the organisation (Wayne, & Erdogan, 2012). Employees often take with them valuable knowledge, abilities and their present projects when they leave an organisation. According to Heneman and Judge (2009), the consequences of poor employee retention include increased recruitment, selection, training and production costs. Igbal (2010) argues that retention strategies of the organisation must focus on who the organisation intends to retain because an ineffective employee retention strategy can disrupt the productivity of the organisation. Therefore, retention strategies of the organisation must look at the assessment of both retention costs and benefits (Coetzee & Stoltz, 2015).

2.3.3 Factors contributing to employee retention

Van Dyk (2011), in a study done in the South African context, identified several important retention factors that every organisation needs to consider when attempting to retain employees. These factors include compensation, job characteristics, opportunities for training and development, supervisor support, career opportunities and work-life balance. The above-mentioned factors are considered important in facilitating employees' decisions to exit or stay in the organisation, depending on employees' priorities (Gani, 2017). Figure 2.3 provides an overview of the employee retention factors explained by Van Dyk (2011).
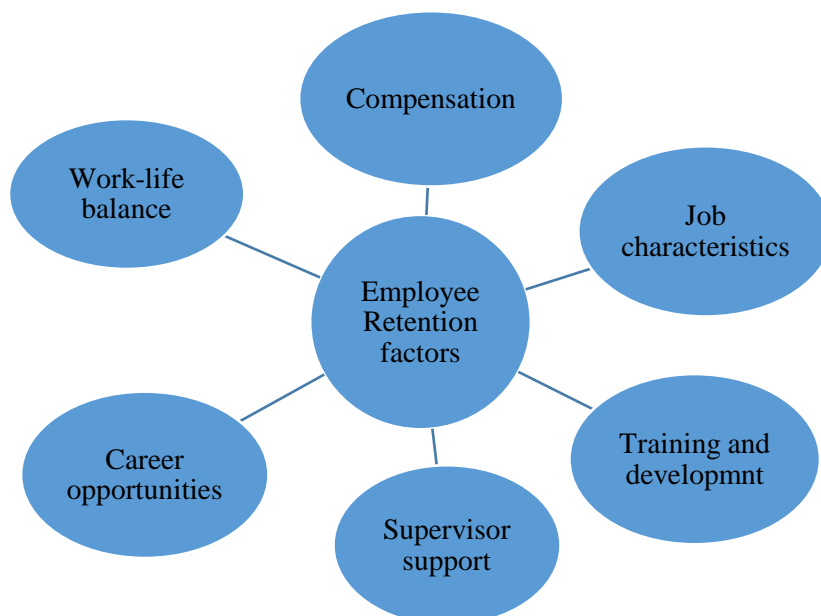
Figure 2. 3

Employee retention factors

2.3.3.1 Compensation

Compensation is defined as financial and non-financial rewards for work done (Morrow, 2011). Financial rewards entail basic salaries and incentives, whereas non-financial rewards refer to non-monetary rewards that employees get for the work done (Sitati, 2017). According to Van Dyk (2012), salary and monetary benefits are identified as direct and indirect antecedents of turnover intentions in the organisation.

2.3.3.2 Job characteristics

Van Dyk and Coetzee (2012) concede that the job characteristics model helps us to understand factors that enhance employee job performance and satisfaction through an adjustment of the job itself. Coetzee and Stoltz (2015) state that job characteristics entail skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback as specialised employees prefer jobs for which they will be able to utilise different skills, present challenging assignments and provide job autonomy.

2.3.3.3 Training and development

Employees tend to perceive that their organisation value them more when they are provided with opportunities for advancement (Kraimer, Seibert, Wayne, Liden & Bravo 2011). According to Coetzee and Stoltz (2015), training and development also serve to provide employees with a sense of self-assurance and improves their positive emotional attachment to an organisation. Van Dyk (2011) states that training and development is a substantial element in retaining professionally qualified workforces. Based on this view, the researcher believes that training and development programmes may also convey clear messages to workers that their organisations regard them as valuable resources.

2.3.3.4 Supervisor support

The recognition and feedback that employees get from their supervisors are very crucial for retaining valuable employees (Morrow, 2011). The researcher further pointed out that the support that employees receive from the organisation perceived increases the commitment of employees in the long run, which will result in employees remaining in the organisation for a maximum period.

2.3.3.5 Career opportunities

Kraimer *et al*. (2011) defined career opportunities as a certain job that may be a stepping stone to employees' ambitions. Kraimer *et al*. (2011) further stated that career opportunities consist of internal and external opportunities. Van Dyk (2011) referred to internal career opportunities to employees' opportunity to move to different positions in the current organisations, such as promotions; external career opportunities may mean moving to outside the organisation. Research conducted by Morrow (2011) has shown that career growth is a determinant in reducing employees' intentions to leave. Van Dyk and Coetzee (2012) revealed that when employees realise that there are several career options within the organisation, they may perform better and will decrease their intentions to leaving the organisation; therefore, it can be argued that career opportunities motivate employees to remain in the organisation for a longer time.

2.3.3.6 Work-life balance

It is described as the ability of the employees to meet their job demands and family commitments including other duties and activities that are not related to their job (Kim, 2014). To encourage work-life balance, Thomas (2015) suggests that access to telecommuting facilities, childcare centres, as well as employee assistance programmes, need to be provided to the employees by their organisations. According to Coetzee and Stoltz (2015), work-life balance policies influence employees' psychological attachment positively as employees tend to perceive that the organisation cares about them.

Retaining the best employees is important to every organisation's long-term health and success (Das, Nandialath & Mohan, 2013). Grobler, Wärnich, Carrell, Elbert and Hatfield (2011) pointed out that retaining employees might be a huge problem as employees are enthused by numerous factors. Failing to retain the employees is an exorbitant proposition for any organisation as organisational concerns like lost knowledge; insecure employees; a costly candidate; training time and investment are included (Wayne, & Erdogan, 2012).

2.3.4 Three main pillars of employee retention

Kundu and Lata (2017) proposed three Rs of employee retention to be implemented to keep workers in the organisation for the reason that today's employees are hard to retain and each time a new offer comes, they migrate. The three Rs of employee retention are identified as respect, recognition, and rewards. These three main pillars hold utmost importance in

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retaining employees in the organisation for a longer time (Kundu & Lata, 2017). They are shown in Figure 2.4 and discussed in detail below.

Recognition

Respect

Rewards

Employee Retention
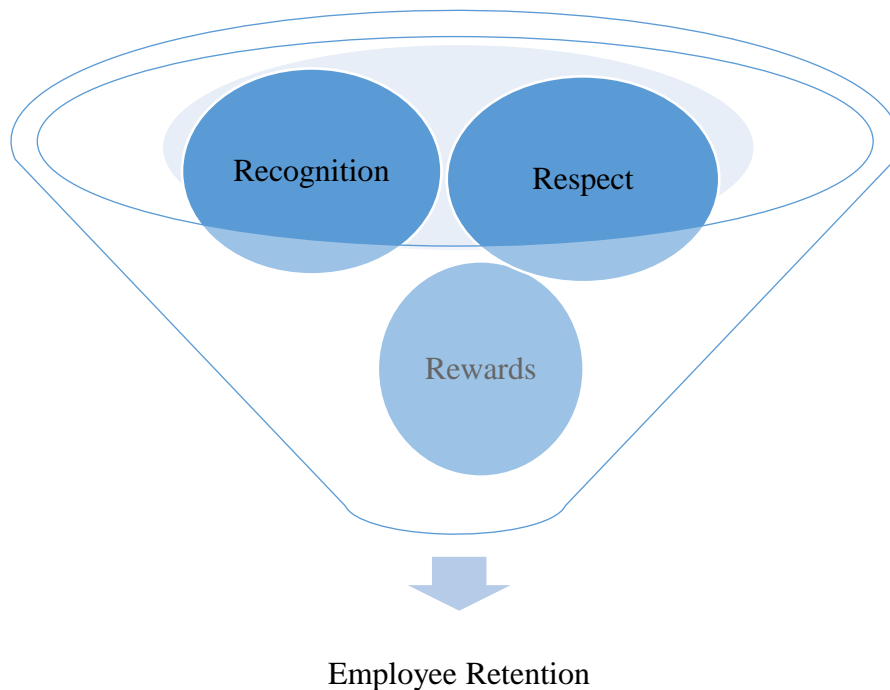
Figure 2. 4

The three Rs of employee retention

2.3.4.1 Respect

Kundu and Lata (2017) defined respect as special regard given by one person to another or other people. The researchers further said that respect is considered as the foundation of keeping employees in the organisation. If employees feel respected, they will have a good reason to work.

2.3.4.2 Recognition

Recognition and rewards will be of little consequence when employees are not being respected (Kundu & Lata, 2017). They referred recognition as a special sign and the act of perceiving clearly. Kundu and Lata (2017) further added that challenges with retention and morale occur as a result of an organisation not paying enough attention to the needs and reactions of employees. The authors indicated that when employees are not being recognised, their job loses meaning to them and is reduced to a mere task that they feel they need to do to get money.

2.3.4.3 Rewards

Kundu and Lata (2017) view rewards as the extra perquisites the organisation gives to employees beyond the respect and acknowledgement that make it worth the employees' while to work hard and go the extra mile. Employees perform their duties more sincerely and passionately if they feel content (Kundu & Lata, 2017).

Smit, Stanz and Bussin (2015) state that it is imperative to note that when employers hire people with relevant skills and abilities, they develop and establish retention strategies that will keep the employees for a longer time. Kashyap and Rangnekar (2014) emphasise that organisations can retain employees by being proactive in terms of giving enough support to the employees. According to Tumwesigye (2012), employees will choose to be part of the organisation for a longer time, when they are sure that their employer appreciates their efforts and cares a lot about their comfort as well as their wellbeing. Perceived organisational support is also known to positively correlate with high employee retention. This was supported by the findings of Cho, Johansson and Guchait (2009), which indicated that high scores on perceived organisational support, was related to high scores on employee retention.

Nawawi, Hussain, Ramli, Sulaiman and Razali (2015) in their study on the relationship between the employees' psychological empowerment and retention intentions in the spa industry in Malaysia, found that lack of empowerment from the management makes an employee feel burdened and stressed; this results in well-trained spa employees leaving. It can, therefore, be suggested that employee retention, is reliant on the ability of the management to empower their employees, psychologically. A study by Nawawi *et al.,* (2015) also maintains that the best approach to sustain the interest of employees is through psychologically empowering them to take initiatives without hesitating. On this basis, it can be proposed that the psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention.

2.3.5 Relationship between employee retention and other organisational variables

Training and development were revealed to have a positive impact on employee retention in the 21st century world of work (Gani, 2016). To support this finding, Ling *et al* (2016) states that employees who are provided with training tend to stay longer in that organisation. The researchers further postulate that when employees are deeply committed in the organisation also tend to stay with the organisation.

Similarly, a study by Pauw (2011) reveals that organisational commitment directly influence employee retention. In support, Umamaheswari and Krishnan (2016) also argue that when an employee is committed to his or her organisation, he or she is not likely to seek other employment opportunities. Moreover, employability was also found to improve the retention of employees in an organisation (Gani, 2016). On the other side, Martin and Ryan (2010) show that job satisfaction and work empowerment structures also have a positive effect on employee retention.

2.4 Psychological empowerment

2.4.1 Definition of psychological empowerment

Maynard, Gilson and Mathieu (2012) define psychological empowerment as a heightened intrinsic task motivation stemming from a task that provides motivation and satisfaction, both of which are the most important drivers of employees' success and long-term impact. Stewart, McNulty, Griffin and Fitzpatrick (2010), on the study of psychological empowerment and structural empowerment among nurse practitioners, indicate that nursing staff tend to express positive behaviour, self-assurance, independent rights, and a higher feeling of their work impact when they are psychologically empowered.

Psychological empowerment is also described as a process of improving the emotional state of self-efficacy amongst employees in the organisation (Jose & Mampilly, 2014). In the same vein, Stander and Rothmann (2010) view psychological empowerment as an intrinsic task-motivation expressed in the form of cognition such as meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. Empowering employees is very crucial for organisations as empowered employees can respond rapidly to changes in the working environment.

Spreitzer (1995) argues that initially there were two distinct perspectives on empowerment within the work environment, namely; structural empowerment and psychological empowerment. Structural empowerment focused on liberating management practices and policies, such as increasing availability of information, support, more opportunities to learn and develop as well as other organisational resources to employees (Abdissa & Fitwi, 2016; Dewettinck, & van Ameijde, 2011; Rothstein, 1995). A study undertaken by Zhang, Ye and Li (2018); Çavuş and Demir (2010) indicated that nursing staff are more likely to be structurally empowered when the management offers them autonomy and motivates them to take part in the decision-making processes. Meanwhile, psychological empowerment

concentrates more on the employee experience of empowerment such as what employee needs to feel for interventions to turn out to be effective rather than management practices and policies anticipated at empowering employees (Spreitzer, Kizilos, & Nason, 1997). Psychological empowerment entails entrusting decision-making privileges to employees (Spreitzer, 2008). In this manner, it is believed that employees will act in an empowered way by effecting necessary alterations at the structural level. For example, employees will now be able to exert control over how their tasks are performed.

According to Joo and Nam (2019), the cognitive-affective responses emanating from such structural level were then reclassified as psychological empowerment. A study concluded on staff nurses by Laschinger, Wilk, Cho, and Greco (2009) also indicate that structural empowerment caused psychological empowerment in the workplace. Similarly, Zhang, Ye and Li (2018) suggest that when nursing staff work in an empowered nursing practice environment, there would be pleasant relationships amongst them which then provide further opportunities to decrease work-related stress and emotional burnout.

Mendes and Stander (2011) assert that every organisation must empower and retain its employees to accomplish the goals of the organisation. They further postulated that managers ought to understand how empowerment persuades the employees to stay in the organisation for a longer period. Additionally, a study conducted by Saif and Saleh (2013), in Jordanian hospitals, showed that the employee work outcomes can be improved by creating an empowering work environment.

Every organisation needs the knowledge, abilities, positive energy, innovation and creativity of every employee, starting from the front-line workers to the highest managers to be successful in today's global environment (Uner & Turan, 2012). The authors further postulated that best organisations achieve this through empowering employees to take initiative as well as to serve the collective interests of the organisation autonomously.

2.4.2 Dimensions of psychological empowerment

Psychological empowerment encompasses a set of four dimensions reflecting employees' orientation to their role such as meaning, competence, self-determination as well as impact (Stander & Rothmann, 2010). Seibert, Wang and Courtright (2011) emphasise that these four dimensions form an overall construct of psychological empowerment, however, the non-existence of a single dimension will devalue, but not entirely disregard the overall effect of

experienced empowerment (Dewettinck & van Ameijde, 2011). Stander and Rothmann (2012) explain the four dimensions of psychological empowerment. They are depicted in Figure 2.5 and explained in detail below.
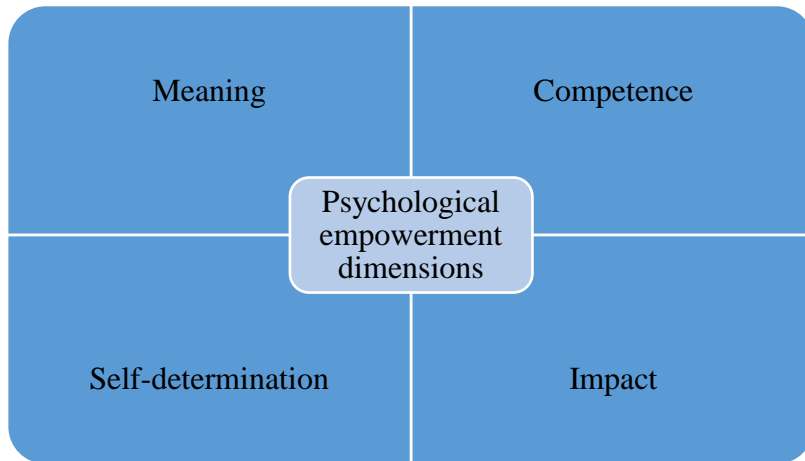
Figure 2. 5

Dimensions of psychological empowerment

2.4.2.1 Meaning

Stander and Rothmann (2012) regard meaning as the value of an individual's work. Meaning reflects a sense of purpose and a special connection at work (Dewettinck & van Ameijde, 2012). Nursing staff whose attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and values are compatible with organisational requirements, have a sense of meaning (Stewart *et al.* 2008). Seibert, Wang and Courtright (2011) argue that when employees are empowered, they tend to believe that their work is of value; hence, they care a lot about their work activities.

2.4.2.2 Competence

Stander and Rothmann (2012) define competence as the employees' capability to perform job requirements. According to Maynard, Gilson and Mathieu (2012), employees believe that they possess the skills, knowledge, abilities and experience required to perform their work-related duties well. Seibert *et al.* (2011) suggest that this cognition be called competence rather than self-esteem as it focuses specifically, on efficacy related to a work role.

2.4.2.3 Self-determination

It is known as the ability of an individual to make choices and regulate their actions (Dewettinck & van Ameijde, 2012). Dewettinck and van Ameijde (2012) further argued that

this concept refers to a sense of independence whereby people do their work without outside compulsion. Self-determination is related to the opportunity to choose job activities that make sense and to carry out those activities in a way that appears appropriate (Stander & Rothmann, 2012).

2.4.2.4 Impact

Impact refers to the individual's ability to influence the outcomes of an organisation. Maynard, Gilson and Mathieu (2012) referred to impact as a belief in which employees can influence the system and the outcomes of the organisation. Seibert *et al.* (2011) found that impact signifies a success an employee feels after accomplishing his or her goals. These researchers further suggested that feeling of perceived impact involves the sense that workers are certainly accomplishing something.

Psychological empowerment, therefore, denotes a mental state that can be measured (Anderson & Funnell, 2010). Additionally, Anderson and Funnel (2012) posit that psychological empowerment is considered a perpetual variable, which implies that employees in the organisation are seen as either more or less empowered rather than just empowered or not empowered. A study conducted by Jha (2013) in the Indian Information Technology sector revealed that, for employees to feel psychologically empowered, changes in managerial practices, such as promoting autonomy, freedom and creating an atmosphere, need to be done. These modifications may develop a feeling of psychological empowerment among employees.

In addition, Jaiswal and Dhar (2016) asserted that employees who are empowered feel more competent and are more likely to be highly productive in the organisation. Kukenberger (2012) emphasise that employees who are empowered tend to perform better than employees who are not. Zhang and Bartol (2010) have also shown that psychologically empowered employees tend to feel that their job requirements are congruent with their values and beliefs. Perceived organisational support can be a powerful influence on components of psychological empowerment (Ali *et al.*, 2010). Jaiswal and Dhar (2016) attempted to clarify psychological empowerment as something closely related to the perception of an employee towards the organisation.

Raub and Robert (2013) debated that when employees are independent and autonomous, their loyalty to the organisation increases. Joo and Shim (2010) also indicated that psychological

empowerment positively influences employee retention. The authors added that employees who feel psychologically empowered show greater levels of perceived organisational support and are believed to remain with the organisation for a longer time. As a result, it is safe to suggest that psychological empowerment is likely to have a positive effect on both perceived organisational support and retention of employees. If employees are confident in their abilities and have control over their work, they tend to feel that they are supported by the management, and, in turn, they will be persuaded to stay in the organisation for a longer time (Zhang & Bartol, 2010).

2.4.3 Three components of psychological empowerment

Zimmerman (1995) argued that psychological empowerment includes three components which serve a useful guide to identify empowered outcomes namely; intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioural. These aspects are explained in detail in Table 1.1.

Table 1. 1

Components of psychological empowerment

Components of psychological empowerment	Descriptions	Examples
Intrapersonal component	According to Eisman, Zimmerman, Kruger, Reischl, Miller, Franzen and Morrel-Samuels (2016), intrapersonal component denotes to how individuals think about themselves in relation to their connections to their social situations. Therefore, individuals with higher levels of self-esteem were perceived to believe in their capability to exercise control and create positive change in the organisation.	Domain particular perceived control, domain precise-self-worth, motivation control
Interactional component	Wong, Zimmerman and Parker (2010) describe the interactional component as an understanding of social and capital resources required to accomplish one's goals. The authors further proclaimed that understanding the resources available and accessible in a particular environment is a dire aspect of an individual's capability to exercise control effectively over the situation. This psychological empowerment component contains supportive relationships with supervisors that help employees to develop the skills necessary to solve problems and cope with stress (Zimmerman, 1995).	Critical awareness, understanding casual awareness, skill development
Behavioural component	Eisman, Zimmerman, Kruger, Reischl, Miller, Franzen and Morrel-Samuels (2016) defined behavioural component as actions taken by the individuals to influence outcomes or adapt to a change. Zimmerman (2000) state that these three components can be integrated to make a meaningful change when individuals develop self-assurance in themselves.	Community involvement, organisational participation, coping behaviours

Zimmerman (1995) concluded, based on these three components, that a psychologically empowered person is the one who believes that he or she is capable of; (i) influencing a situation (the intrapersonal component); (ii) understanding the way systems work in that situation (the interactional component), and (iii) engaging to exercise control of the situation (the behavioural component).

2.4.4 Relationship between psychological empowerment and other organisational variables

K'osuri, Eggesa and Onyango (2020) argue that the organisational survival and success of the public health sector depend on the psychological empowerment of employees. Psychological empowerment was found to have a positive influence on loyalty and job satisfaction of employees in an organisation (Gillet, Huart, Colombat & Fouquereau, 2013). The researchers further revealed that when employees perceive the support from the organisation as a result of meaning, impact, competence and self-determination, their motivation and engagement increase. Moreover, Welch (2011) found out that psychological empowerment is positively associated with employee engagement and commitment, absorption, emotional-dedication and physical strength.

2.5 The relationship among perceived organisational support, employee retention and psychological empowerment

2.5.1 The relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention

It is every employee's wish to work in a conducive working environment that provides support for employees. In this regard, it can be argued that organisations with supportive strategies can attract, maintain and retain employees for a longer period (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019). In support, Dursun (2015) postulates that perceived organisational support motivate employees as they tend to reciprocate by staying in the organisation. Arasanmi and Krishna (2019) suggest that to support, attract and retain employees, any organisation need to set out policies and mechanisms.

In a study by Satardien, Jano and Mahembe (2019), it was confirmed that perceived organisational support has a negative influence on employees' intention to leave the organisation. This indicated that employees' intention to leave the organisation could be decreased when employees receive care, respect, fair salaries and benefits. Chan (2019) confirms a positive association between perceived organisational support and employee

retention in an organisation. The finding is in line with the results of Kundu and Lata (2017), Ghosh and Sahney (2011) which revealed a positive and significant correlation between perceived organisational support and long tenure.

2.5.2 The relationship between perceived organisational support and psychological empowerment

Psychological empowerment is seen as an action that concentrates on employees for employees to cultivate the potential that they already have (Zulfikar & Putra, 2020). A study by Maan, Abid, Butt, Ashfaq and Ahmed (2020) reveals that perceived organisational support had a positive impact on psychological empowerment and job satisfaction. Maan *et al*. (2020) further revealed that offering organisational support to the less proactive employees will eventually build up employee psychological empowerment and job satisfaction. Moreover, Zulfikar and Putra (2020) concede that the implementation of psychological empowerment certainly supports the organisation in accomplishing its work role objectives.

Perceived organisational support has been often investigated as the antecedent of psychological empowerment (Ali *et al*., 2010). Abdulrab, Zumrah, Almaamari, Al-Tahitah, Isaac and Ameen (2018) revealed that perceived organisational support is positively associated with the components of psychological empowerment. Patrick and Laschinger (2009) also confirm that perceived organisational support positively correlates with psychological empowerment.

2.5.3 The relationship between psychological empowerment and employee retention

Seibert, Wang and Courtright (2011) postulate that psychological empowerment decreases turnover intentions because when employees feel intrinsically motivated and supported, they tend to reciprocate these feelings with better loyalty and continual employment. Psychological empowerment is observed as one of the most major psychological factors that reduce turnover intentions (Ertürk & Vurgun, 2015). Thus, this demonstrated that psychological empowerment negatively influences turnover intentions. Nawawi *et al*. (2015) posit that the lack of empowerment from the management makes an employee feel burdened and stressed and this often results in employees leaving the organisation. This serves as proof that employee retention depends on the ability of the management in the organisation to psychologically empower its employees. Klerk (2013) confirm that there is a positive correlation between psychological empowerment and employee retention. The findings are

similar to the findings of Joo and Shim (2010), which revealed a positive correlation between psychological empowerment and retention of employees among the Arab schools' teachers.

2.6 Theoretical framework

This current study is anchored on the social exchange theory (SET) developed by Homan (1958). The theory proposes that social behaviour is the result of an exchange process whose purpose is to increase the benefits and lessen the costs (Cook, Cheshire, Rice & Nakagakwa, 2013). According to Kumar, Jauhari, Rastogi and Sivakumar (2018), social exchange theory is the theoretical foundation of organisational support, for the reason that it recognises the resources and the rewards received from others as more highly valued when they are centred on discretionary choice rather than situations beyond the benefactor's control.

In addition, Munoru (2017) reports that to determine whether the organisation is ready to reward the increased employees' effort and to meet the socio-emotional needs of employees, employees develop beliefs about the extent to which management values their contributions and cares about their safety. According to the norm of reciprocity, one way that employees who experience extensive support from their organisation repay the organisation is through staying in the organisation for a longer time (Munoru, 2017). A study conducted by Armstrong-Stassen and Ursel (2009) among managerial and professional employees in Canada found that perceived organisational support positively correlates with retention of employees.

The researcher envisages that perceived organisational support will have the same association with the retention of nursing staff as it does with other employees in different sectors. On this basis, it is reasonable to suggest that employees who perceive greater support from the organisation will be more inclined to stay with the organisation than those who lack such support. The researcher, therefore, proposes that there is a relationship between perceived organisational support and the retention of employees in an organisation.

2.6 Chapter summary

The constructs of perceived organisational support (POS), employee retention (ER) and psychological empowerment (PE), as well as their theoretical foundation, were discussed in this chapter. The factors of each variable have been listed and discussed. Furthermore, the relationships between the variables and other organisational factors were discussed. The relationships amongst variables have also been discussed from previous researchers.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the research paradigm, research design, and the research approach used in this study. Secondly, an overview of the research population, sample and the sampling procedure, and the rationale for the sampling strategy will also be discussed. Furthermore, a description of the data collection method and how ethical protocols were followed will be discussed. Moreover, the way the pilot study was carried out and how questionnaires were administered will be outlined. The techniques and procedures used in analysing the data will also be presented.

3.2 Research paradigm

According to Iddris, Musa and Asiedu (2018), a research paradigm can be viewed as a set of common principles and agreements shared between scientists on how issues should be understood and addressed. Kelly, Dowling and Millar (2018) also pointed out that the research paradigms establish philosophies that outline how a researcher perceives the world, interprets and acts within that world. According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), there are four main types of paradigms namely, positivism, interpretivism, critical theory and pragmatism and these are discussed below.

3.2.1 Positivist paradigm

According to Iddris *et al*. (2018), a positivist paradigm is an epistemological approach that advocates the use of quantitative research methods. Furthermore, Iddris *et al*. (2018) pointed out that this paradigm is explained as the foundation for the researcher's ability to be detailed in the explanation of the parameters and numbers in the data that are collected, analysed and interpreted.

Positivist paradigm disregards human behaviour and unexplained phenomenon (Pham, 2018). That means the positivist researcher ought to be able to observe manifestations in the specific phenomenon being studied as well as being able to generalise what can be expected in another place in the world. Rahi (2017) postulate that in this paradigm, the erroneousness of scientific data gathered need to be cautiously reviewed as it is likely to alter the end-results of the hypotheses.

Rahi (2017) add that erroneousness of scientific data collected can happen in some cases where the respondents choose random answers than giving authentic responses as well as where respondents may not be permitted to have the flexibility of giving responses which are more pertinent to their personal situations. However, this paradigm is valid, reliable, objective and transparent from personal biases (Kelly *at al*., 2018). Therefore, one can always remain realistic and count on it for long.

3.2.2 The Interpretivist paradigm

The interpretivist paradigm is often called the constructivist paradigm, and it is used to understand the subjective world of human practice (Kelly *et al*., 2018). In a similar view, Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) add that the interpretivist paradigm emphasises on understanding human behaviour and how people interpret the world around them. This paradigm advocates the use of subjectivist epistemology, meaning that researchers make sense of their data using their own thoughts and rational processing of data well-versed by their interactions with the respondents (Iddris *et al*, 2018).

According to Cohen, Manion and Marison (2018), the interest of interpretivists is to expand the profound understanding of phenomena within its complexity of the setting rather than to take a broad view of the results to other societies and other situations. In addition, Irshaidat (2019) asserts that data collected in the interpretivist paradigm is comprehensively impacted by personal perspective and values, hence it cannot be generalised.

The interpretivist paradigm aims to judge, evaluate and refine interpretive philosophies rather than to generate a new philosophy. This contradicts with the positivist paradigm that believes that the reality is relatively independent of the context and studied scientifically through standardised measures (Irshaidat, 2019). Dean (2018) argues that interpretivism emphasises qualitative research approach over quantitative research approach.

3.2.3 The critical theory paradigm

It is sometimes referred to as the transformative paradigm, and it is aimed at changing politics to confront social oppression and improve social justice in a particular setting (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Kelly *et al*. (2018) state that the critical theory paradigm positions its exploration in social justice subjects and seek out to address the political, social as well as

economic matters, which in turn lead to conflict, social oppression, struggle as well as power structures of any kind of levels this may arise.

Critical theory is dependent on social values whereas empirical law theories strive for objective reality. The critical theory paradigm adopts a transactional epistemology whereby the researcher interacts with the respondents through combining observations and interviews, together with other approaches that foster dialogue and reflection (John, 2018). Asghar (2013) believes that this research paradigm is mostly appropriate for qualitative research designs than quantitative and mixed research designs.

3.2.4 The pragmatic paradigm

According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), this paradigm is based on the argument that it may be difficult to discover the real truth about the world through a single scientific technique, as is argued in positivist paradigm, and neither is it possible to determine social reality as amassed under the interpretivist paradigm. However, to understand human behaviour, this paradigm supports and recommends the use of mixed methods (Brierley, 2017).

In this context, the researcher endeavours to acquire knowledge by obtaining valid and reliable results. Positivism paradigm aims to offer a valid and reliable understanding of the reality and is more inclined towards quantitative research approach. Therefore, the positivism research paradigm was used in this study due to its well-structured methodology (Rahi, 2017).

3.3 Research design

Couper (2017) defined a research design as a strategy that defines how, when and where data will be gathered and analysed. Sileyew (2019) adds that the research design process is the decision to be made with regards to the research approach as it regulates how appropriate information for a study will be acquired. According to Kumar (2019), there are three main types of research designs namely, exploratory design, explanatory design and descriptive design. These are explained below.

3.3.1 Exploratory design

Kumar (2019) asserts that an exploratory design is used out with the aim of either exploring an area where little information is known or examining the likelihoods of undertaking a

research study. An exploratory design is undertaken when there are limited studies to enable one to predict an outcome (Sileyew, 2019). Couper (2017) adds that researchers often use exploratory designs to establish an understanding of how best to proceed when studying an issue and what methods would be suitable for collecting information about the subject.

3.3.2 Explanatory research design

The explanatory research design, also known as casual research, emphasizes a problem which has not been well researched previously. It generates operational descriptions and offers well-researched models (Masango, 2019). Couper (2017) proclaims that explanatory research designs help to understand why the world operates the way it does by giving out a causal relationship among the variables and also through reducing other possibilities. Kumar (2019) adds that causality can only be inferred but never be proven because it is difficult to make conclusions about causal relationships.

3.3.3 Descriptive design

Roy (2019) proclaims that the purpose of the descriptive design is to define problems as accurately as possible without influencing them in any way. The descriptive design is more inclined towards the positivism paradigm because the latter is aimed at producing a reliable and valid understanding of realism (Rahi, 2017). In the descriptive design, research variables are measured and control over the research situation is limited (Masango, 2019).

In this study, a descriptive design was selected due to its high degree of representativity (Kumar, 2019). The researcher obtained and described respondents' views about the constructs of perceived organisational support, employee retention and psychological empowerment in public hospitals. The basic purpose of this descriptive design was not only to describe each of the variables but also to establish the relationship between perceived organisational support, employee retention and psychological empowerment. In this study, there was no manipulation of variables and the researcher did not control any of the variables but only measured them.

3.4 Research approach

Mohajan (2017) views a research approach as a procedure that gives the direction of conducting research methodically and efficiently. According to Flick (2018), there are three

types of research approaches namely quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. These are explained below.

3.4.1 Quantitative approach

According to Kumar (2019), the quantitative research approach emphasises the traits of social behaviour which could be measured with certainty. This research approach can be used to examine the relationships between variables with the help of statistical methods (Bryman, 2017). The analysis of data consists of statistically analysed scores to test research hypotheses (Flick, 2018).

3.4.2 Qualitative approach

Qualitative research approach emphasises the use of the words (Bryman, 2017). Flick (2018) asserts that the data collected through qualitative research approach depend on the experience of the researchers involved in the research process. In addition, responses within this research approach cannot be measured or quantified (Brenne, 2017). Brenne (2017) further alluded that only comparisons are possible in this approach, and it is likely to create data duplication over time. Qualitative research is not the right approach to research if statistical data are required (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). According to the literature, this research approach is directly linked to the interpretivism and critical theory paradigms (Dean, 2018 & Asghar, 2013).

3.4.3 Mixed methods approach

Schoonenboom and Johnson (2017) state that this approach is normally used when little is known about a research topic. However, the researcher first learns about which variables to study using the qualitative research approach, after which those variables are then studied further with a bigger sample size using the quantitative research approach. Although mixed methods approach gives rich information, it had a drawback of requiring a longer period to complete data collection given the two separate phases (Bryman, 2017). Brierley (2017) asserts that the mixed methods approach is more appropriate in the pragmatic paradigm.

This study was quantitative as it investigated the relationship between perceived organisational support, employee retention and psychological empowerment. The quantitative research approach was, therefore, considered to be the best approach for this study because it helps to limit the speculation by testing the research hypotheses and explains casual

relationships between the variables (Bryman, 2017; Satardien, Jano & Mahembe, 2019). Furthermore, the quantitative research approach is known to be the most appropriate research approach to a study that advocates the use of positivism paradigm as it is objective and free from personal biases (Kelly *at al*., 2018).

3.5 Research Population

Bell, Bryman and Harley (2018) describe a research population as the comprehensive group of individuals, units or objects from which a sample is chosen. In this study, the researcher targeted all permanent nursing staff employed at two public hospitals in the Vhembe District Municipality of the Limpopo Province, South Africa, namely, Siloam hospital and Tshilidzini hospital. The population size of the study is 850 nursing staff (Statistics South Africa, 2019). The number of nursing staff at Siloam Hospital was estimated to be 350 whilst Tshilidzini Hospital has about 500 nurses.

3.6 Sample and Sampling procedure

Fink (2019) defines a sample as a group of people chosen from the study population to take part in a research study. Fink (2019) further states that a sample is regularly utilised when the size of the targeted population too big, as it may not be possible to study the whole population. The process of choosing a sample from the total population to participate in a study in such a manner that the participants represent the larger group from which they were chosen is called the sampling procedure (Alvi, 2016). There are two main forms of sampling, namely probability sampling and non-probability sampling (Kumar, 2019).

Probability sampling is a sampling method wherein a sample is chosen at random, thereby giving each individual in the population an equal chance or likelihood of being chosen (Bell at al., 2018). The main advantage of this method is that it gives the perception that a sample is representative of a population. Kumar (2019) states that, unlike probability sampling, non-probability sampling uses non-random sampling to select the sample. This means that sample units are gathered in such a way that does not give all individuals an equal chance of being chosen.

For this study, the probability sampling method was utilised because all respondents had an equal likelihood of being chosen, and the findings were more likely to exactly reflect the whole population. Etikan and Bala (2017) identified five kinds of probability sampling

methods namely simple random sampling, systematic random sampling, stratified sampling, cluster sampling and multi-stage sampling.

The present study utilised a stratified random sampling method. This method is normally utilised when population entails units that vary from each other with characteristics that mean, every unit is different from all the characteristics of the targeted population (Etikan & Bala, 2017). As a result, homogeneous population units are divided into subgroups. Those subgroups are called strata. To ensure adequate representation of each stratum (subgroup), the sample is then selected from each stratum randomly.

The rationale for employing this sampling method is that the population was heterogeneous meaning the population consisted of units that are very different from each other. The population composed of different characteristics such as hospitals. The district has eight (8) hospitals, and only two were utilised in the present study namely; Tshilizini Hospital and Siloam Hospital. Tshilidzini is the biggest hospital in the district and Siloam is one of the oldest hospitals in the province.

The population was separated into sets named strata such that each hospital was represented by a stratum. The participants of a specific stratum (hospital) were then more similar than the population as a whole. Tshilidzini hospital represented the first stratum and Siloam hospital represented the second stratum in that order. The study respondents were then selected from each hospital randomly.

An online Rao soft sample size calculator was utilised to calculate a representative sample to ensure that the sample was a true reflection of the whole population. A minimum sample size of 206 respondents (nursing staff) was suggested; nonetheless, 230 questionnaires were distributed to cater for the unusable and unanswered questionnaires from the respondents. 110 questionnaires were distributed to Siloam hospital (first stratum) and 120 questionnaires were distributed to Tshilidzini hospital (second stratum).

3.7 Data collection method

A self-administered questionnaire was utilised to gather data from the respondents. According to Couper (2017), a self-administered questionnaire allows the respondents to complete without any intervention from the researcher during the completion. The

questionnaire consisted of different instruments namely, psychological empowerment scale, perceived organisational support scale and employee retention scale.

Biographical information was gathered regarding the respondents' age, gender, highest qualification, length of service, rank/designation and job status. Psychological empowerment was assessed using the Psychological empowerment scale developed by Spreitzer (1995). It is a 12-item scale measuring four dimensions, namely; meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. Each item was scored on a five-point Likert scale with responses ranging from *(1) strongly disagree (1)* to *(5) strongly agree.* Examples of items used in this section will include *"I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job"* and *"My impact on what happens in my department is substantial."*

Spreitzer (1995) found this instrument to have a good internal consistency with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.78. Richardson (2018) in the study of psychological empowerment in the healthcare sector in Arizona also used the same instrument and obtained the reliability coefficient of 0.87. In the South African context, Stander and Rothman (2009) conducted a study on the psychological empowerment of employees in selected organisations and reported a reliability coefficient of 0.91. This shows that this instrument is reliable and, therefore, it was employed in the present study.

To measure perceived organisational support, 10 items from a survey of perceived organisational support scale developed by Eisenberger *et al.* (1986) were used. The response categories ranges from (1) strongly disagree to *(5) strongly agree.* Examples of items on this questionnaire include: *"The organisation values my contribution to its well-being"* and *"The organisation strongly considers my goals and values."* The Cronbach Alpha coefficient of this instrument was found to be between 0.93 and 0.91 (Armstrong-Stassen & Ursel, 2009). Foong-ming (2008), in a study conducted in Malaysia, in different knowledge-intensive industries, obtained a reliability coefficient of 0.84 for this instrument. The study conducted by Maziriri, Chuchu and Madinga (2019), in the South African small and medium enterprises, found the reliability coefficient of this instrument to be 0.79.

Employee retention was assessed with an 11-item survey of the employee retention scale developed by Kyndt, Dochy, Michielsen and Moeyaert (2009). The response categories range from *(1) strongly disagree* to *(5) strongly agree.* Examples of items include: *"I'm planning on working for another organisation within a period of three years"; "Within this*

organization, my work gives me satisfaction" and *"I see a future for myself within this organisation".* The total scores were computed for each scale. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient of this instrument was found to be 0.92 (Kyndt *et al.,* 2009). In South Africa, Ferreira and Mujajati (2017) studied the recruitment advertising industry obtained a reliability coefficient of 0.95.

3.8 Pilot study and questionnaire administration

Ndekwa (2017) explained a pilot study as a way of making sure that all items in the questionnaire are detailed clearly and all questions transmit the same meaning to all the respondents. Taylor (2019) proclaims that a pilot study gives the researcher a clue of roughly how long the questionnaire would take to be completed, and it ensures that repetitive items are avoided in the questionnaire. In this study, a pilot study was carried out to test the respondents' understanding of the questions, and the suitability of the questions. This also enabled the researcher to identify and rectify any problems before the administration of the questionnaire.

According to Morris and Rosenbloom (2017), the pilot study usually does not consider the sample size as a major issue since the aim is to identify the troubles that the researcher may encounter in the actual study. However, Morris and Rosenbloom (2017) further stated that 5% to 15% of the sample size is a reasonable number depending on the availability of the participants. In this study, 40 questionnaires which are 14% of the study sample size were administered to the pilot participants the same way it was administered during the actual data collection process. The nurses were asked for feedback to identify difficult questions. To check if the time it took to complete was acceptable, the time the nursing staff took to complete the questionnaire was also recorded. The researcher further checked if all questions were answered. All unnecessary and difficult questions were removed or restated.

With the help of the nursing manager, the researcher distributed the questionnaires to the identified nurses who were permanently employed. The respondents were given two weeks to complete the questionnaire. The nursing manager was provided with the marked locked box for the respondents to return their completed questionnaires to ensure the anonymity of the respondents. The researcher made constant visits to the hospitals to collect the completed questionnaires. Respondents were instructed to deposit the completed questionnaires in a clearly marked and locked box placed in the nursing manager's office. The researcher then

collected the completed questionnaires from the nursing manager's office. This was necessary as nurses were always busy and the only time they were free was during their lunchtime and after working hours.

3.9 Data analysis

Sharma (2018) defines data analysis as the process of applying statistical and logical techniques with the aim of summarising and evaluating data collected. In this study, the data collected were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26. Descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies, means and standard deviations were used to describe the data in summary form. Item analysis was first carried out before the analysis to check the internal consistency of the items.

According to John (2018), factor analysis tests the inter-relationship that exists in a large number of items with the aim of reducing them into smaller groups (Factors), which consists of correlated variables. In this study, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used in as to explore the factor structure of the scales. The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was reviewed to make sure that the original variables reflect the underlying variables (John, 2018).

The Pearson correlation analysis was executed to examine the relationship between the three variables (perceived organisational support, employee retention and psychological empowerment). Regression analysis using process by Hayes (2017) was executed to examine the mediating role of psychological empowerment on the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention. To test mediation, an interaction term (perceived organisational support * psychological empowerment) was created (Hayes, 2017).

3.10 Ethical considerations

Research ethics refers to applied principles that consist of well-established rules and procedures that define how a researcher must act (Akaranga & Makau, 2016). John (2018) asserts that ethics in research concern high standards to ensure the truthfulness of data and diminish the misrepresentation of the data collected.

The researcher obtained ethical clearance from the University of Venda, Research Directorate, which grant permission to undertake the study. Moreover, approval was sought from the Provincial Department of Health to carry out the study in public hospitals in the Vhembe District Municipality in the Limpopo Province, South Africa. Approval was also

sought from the Vhembe District Municipality Department of Health. After the approval had been granted from the Provincial Department of Health and the Vhembe District Municipality Department of Health, the researcher asked permission from the management of the respective hospitals. When this was granted, the researcher then further informed the eligible nursing staff about the purpose of the research. The following ethical standards were considered:

3.10.1 Informed consent

Yip, Han and Sng (2016) define informed consent as an ethical requirement for a study that involves human participants, whereby the participants get informed about all aspects of the study and its risks. The searcher obtained informed consent from each of the nursing staff in this study. The nursing staff were informed of their rights not to take part in the study. The researcher made it clear to the respondents that they are allowed to pull out from the study at any point should they feel that their rights are violated or for any further motive without explaining to the researcher.

3.10.2 Avoiding harm during the research

Harm during the research refers to an injury to the rights, safety and wellbeing of the respondents that include physical and mental factors (Cox, 2019). In this study, there were no deception and mishandling of information that resulted in mental discomfort for the respondents. There were no actions that caused harm whereby the respondents experienced an injury during the research. The informed consent process was completed to respect respondents' autonomy to avoid contravening the respondents' rights. The researcher considered the lasting impact of her actions or things she said during the research.

3.10.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

According to Kumar (2019) confidentiality concerns with the privacy of information including consents to view, share, and use that particular information. It is a fundamental requirement of ethical research that information revealed within the research context be kept confidential (Farrugia, 2019). The respondents were informed of the extent to which confidentiality will be maintained in the informed consent process.

The respondents were further guaranteed that the information provided would be kept confidential and used strictly for academic purpose. Anonymity is the best protection of confidentiality regarding personal information and records (Cox, 2019). The researcher ensured that the respondents do not reveal any identifying details like their names on the questionnaires distributed to them.

Lastly, the researcher will keep all the original data for five years. Moreover, the researcher acted with sincerity during this research process and acknowledged all the works from other authors cited in this research.

3.11 Chapter summary

This chapter focused on the methods that were followed in the present study. Firstly, the research paradigm that guides the study was discussed in this chapter. Three main types of research designs were explained in detail. The research approach that was used in this study was also elaborated. The population of the study were discussed in this chapter as well as sample and sampling procedure followed. How data was collected from the respondents was explained in detail. The manner in which the pilot study was carried out was discussed as well as how the questionnaires were given to the respondents in the respective hospitals. Lastly, the chapter discussed how data collected from the respondents were analysed and the ethical protocols followed in this study.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

Chapter Four lays out an analysis of the responses obtained from the two hospitals in the Vhembe District Municipality. This chapter begins by addressing the issue of missing values. The findings on demographic information, item analysis and the reliability analysis outputs for each scale are presented. Furthermore, factor analysis, descriptive statistics of each variable, correlation analysis as well as mediated regression analysis are also presented.

4.2 Missing values

Missing values implies data missing due to non-response to one or more questions by participants (Hendrikz, 2017). Incomplete data often generates problems when using the remaining data to draw conclusions. According to Manly and Wells (2015), a well-planned research study, as well as diligence in collecting data from the respondents, assists in preventing the problem of dealing with the missing of data during the analyses stage. To increase the response rate, the researcher expressed genuine appreciation by thanking the respondents for the time they were taking out of their busy schedules to take part in the study. Also, the researcher was sensitive to the respondents' time by giving them an idea of how long the questionnaire would take to complete. A total of 230 questionnaires were fully completed and these were used during the analyses. Therefore, no missing values were found in this study.

4.3 Demographic information

This section presents the results of different demographic characteristics of the respondents. Demographic questions were aimed at understanding the identity of the respondents better. The characteristics that were looked at in this study are gender, age in years, highest qualification, length of service, rank/designation and job status. These results are presented in Table 4.1.

4.3.1 Gender

The results show that out of the 230 respondents, the majority were females 144 (63%) and 86 (37%) were males. This shows that most of the nursing staff in the selected two hospitals in Vhembe District Municipality are females. This is not uncommon as females generally dominate the nursing profession.

4.3.2. Age of the respondents in years

Most of the respondents were in the age of category of 41-50 years old (35%). This was followed by those who were in the age category of 31-40 (22%) whilst those who were 51 years and above were also 22%. 14% of the respondents were in the age category of 26-30 whilst the fewest (7%) were in the 20-25 years old category. This is also illustrated in Table 4.1.

4.3.3 Highest academic qualification

With regards to the highest qualification of the respondents, 44 (19%) had a certificate, 79 (34%) had a Diploma and 89 (39%) nursing staff were degree holders. Nursing staff who had postgraduate qualifications were 16 (7%) whilst 2 (1%) of the respondents had other qualifications. Therefore, it can be concluded that most of the respondents hold at least diploma and degree qualifications.

4.3.4 Length of service

Most of the respondents 79 (34%) had between 6-10 years working in the hospitals, followed by 58 (25%) of the respondents who had between 11 and 15 years working in the hospitals. Respondents 46 (20%) who had less than 5 years working in the hospitals were few. However, the fewest responses were from nursing staff 47 (21%) with more than 16 years working in the hospitals.

4.3.5 Rank/designation

Out of 230 respondents, 66 (29%) of them were nursing assistants, 22 (10%) were licenced professional nurse/licenced vocational nurses, 111 (48%) were Registered Nurses, 22 (10%) were Advanced Practice Registered Nurses and only 9 (4%) of them were a Doctor of nursing practice (DNP). Therefore, this means that most of the nursing staff members from the two hospitals were Registered Nurses.

4.3.6 Job status

The results show that all the respondents 230(100%) were permanently employed in the two hospitals. The current study intended to test the retention of nurses in two hospitals in the Vhembe District Municipality. Employee retention is a phenomenon wherein employees

decide to stay with their present employer and stop seeking other employment opportunities. Thus, a researcher targeted only nursing staff that were on permanent employment.

Table 4. 1

Demographic information

Item	Category	Frequency (*f*)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	86	37%
	Female	144	63%
Age	20-25 years	16	7%
	26-30 years	33	14%
	31-40 years	50	22%
	41-50 years	80	35%
	51+	51	22%
Highest academic qualification	Certificate	44	19%
	Diploma	79	34%
	Degree	89	39%
	Postgraduate	16	7%
	Other	2	1%
Length of service	0-5 years	46	20%
	6-10 years	79	34%
	11-15 years	58	25%
	16+	47	21%
Rank/designation	Nursing assistant	66	29%
	LPN/LVN	22	10%
	Registered Nurse	111	48%
	APRN	22	10%
	DPN	9	4%
Job status	Permanent	230	100%
	Contract	0	0.0%

Note: LPN/LVN= Professional nurse/licenced vocational nurses; APRN= Advanced practice registered nurses; DPN= Doctor of nursing practice

4.4 Item analysis

In this study, three instruments explained in chapter three were utilised to collect data from the respondents. Item analysis results for each scale are presented in this section. An item analysis using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Version 26 was carried out to check the internal consistency of the scales to improve the reliability of the scales. The reliability of the scales was improved through identifying and excluding items that did not contribute to the internal consistency of the total scale guided by the reliability analysis output for each scale (Nunnally, 1978). Acceptable Cronbach alpha coefficients range was from 0.70 and above as recommended by Pallant (2016). In this study, a guideline to interpreting Cronbach alpha coefficients provided by (Nunally, 1978) was used. The Cronbach alpha coefficient guideline is presented in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4. 2

Cronbach alpha coefficient guideline

Cronbach alpha coefficient	Decision
Below 0.70	Limited applicability
0.70 - 0.79	Adequate
0.80 - 0.89	Good
90 and above	Excellent

4.4.1. The reliability analysis output for psychological empowerment scale

A Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.739 was obtained on a 12-item psychological empowerment scale developed by Spreitzer (1995). According to Nunally (1978), this is adequate. As shown in Table 4.3, items PE5, PE10 and PE12 had corrected item-total correlation values below 0.30, thereby indicating that they are poor items. For this scale, the removal of these three items slightly decreased the Cronbach alpha hence a decision was made to retain them. The purpose of removing the poor items is to improve scale reliability. And if there is no improvement from the exclusion of item, then it is better to retain them (Smith, 2019).

Table 4. 3

The reliability analysis output for psychological empowerment

	Cronbach's Alpha .739			N of Items 12
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	**Scale Variance if Item Deleted**	**Corrected Item-Total Correlation**	**Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted**
PE1	43.39	32.711	.351	.728
PE2	43.33	32.432	.374	.726
PE3	44.50	27.168	.459	.711
PE4	43.93	31.318	.348	.725
PE5	43.63	32.522	.251	.735
PE6	44.86	27.736	.499	.703
PE7	44.60	26.721	.500	.703
PE9	44.55	28.074	.464	.709
PE9	43.51	31.736	.398	.722
PE10	43.50	32.242	.270	.733
PE11	44.25	29.663	.384	.721
PE12	43.71	32.564	.213	.739

4.4.2. The reliability analysis output for perceived organisational support scale

Item analysis was carried out on the 10-item perceived organisational support scale. It initially obtained an inadequate Cronbach alpha of 0.683. As shown in Table 4.4 (a), items POS2, POS6 and POS9 had corrected item-total correlation values below 0.30, thereby indicating that these were poor items (DeVellis, 2003). To improve the reliability of the scale, a decision was taken to remove the three items for further analysis.

Table 4.4 a

The reliability analysis output for perceived organisational support scale (1st Round)

	Cronbach's Alpha .683			N of Items 10
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	**Scale Variance if Item Deleted**	**Corrected Item-Total Correlation**	**Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted**
POS1	30.29	23.063	.348	.189
POS2	31.40	26.267	.054	.165
POS3	29.83	23.338	.383	.310
POS4	29.79	23.275	.405	.296
POS5	30.19	21.946	.497	.349
POS6	30.39	24.161	.270	.170
POS7	30.40	22.984	.368	.181
POS9	30.00	23.463	.369	.215
POS9	30.80	23.610	.292	.235
POS10	29.92	21.767	.463	.315

Item analysis was executed again on the remaining seven items of the perceived organisational support scale. An adequate new Cronbach alpha of 0.711 was obtained (Pallant, 2016). As shown in Table 4.4(b), the remaining items were not problematic; hence, all items were retained for further analysis.

4.4.3 The reliability analysis output for employee retention scale

The 11-item employee retention scale developed by Kyndt *et al.* (2009) achieved a Cronbach alpha of 0.526 which is inadequate (Nunnally, 1978). As shown in Table 4.5 (a), items ER1, ER5, ER6, ER7, ER8, ER9 and ER11 had corrected item-total correlation values below 0.3, thereby indicating that these were poor items (Pallant, 2010). A decision was made to remove the seven items for further analysis to improve the reliability of the scale.

Table 4.4 b

The reliability analysis output for perceived organisational support scale (2nd Round)

	Cronbach's Alpha .711			N of Items 7
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	**Scale Variance if Item Deleted**	**Corrected Item-Total Correlation**	**Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted**
POS1	21.87	15.098	.339	.700
POS3	21.41	14.942	.434	.676
POS4	21.37	14.829	.469	.668
POS5	21.77	14.202	.492	.660
POS7	21.99	15.192	.340	.699
POS9	21.59	15.117	.408	.682
POS10	21.50	13.893	.478	.663

Item analysis was executed again on the remaining 4 items of the employee retention scale and it now obtained an adequate new Cronbach alpha of 0.776. As shown in Table 4.4 (b), the remaining items were not problematic hence there were all retained for further analysis.

4.4.4 Summary of reliability coefficients

From the discussion above, all scales have shown to be adequately reliable as their Cronbach alpha values were above 0.7 (Nunally, 1978). Perceived organisational support scale obtained a Cronbach alpha value of 0.711; a Cronbach alpha value of 0.776 was achieved on employee retention scale while psychological empowerment obtained a Cronbach alpha value of 0.739. The summary of Cronbach alpha results is shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 a

The reliability analysis output for employee retention scale (1st Round)

	Cronbach's Alpha .526			N of Items 11
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	**Scale Variance if Item Deleted**	**Corrected Item-Total Correlation**	**Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted**
ER1	37.68	24.743	.101	.538
ER2	36.83	23.070	.325	.472
ER3	36.03	22.182	.382	.454
ER4	36.60	23.665	.305	.480
ER5	36.53	23.045	.241	.495
ER6	37.10	24.614	.176	.512
ER7	37.65	23.887	.198	.507
ER8	36.78	26.232	.027	.551
ER9	36.10	25.921	.247	.505
ER10	36.51	22.544	.316	.477
ER11	37.02	24.117	.153	.522

Table 4.5 b

The reliability analysis output for employee retention scale (2nd Round)

	Cronbach's Alpha .776			N of Items 4
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	**Scale Variance if Item Deleted**	**Corrected Item-Total Correlation**	**Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted**
ER2	11.90	6.628	.632	.693
ER3	12.11	6.904	.520	.755
ER4	11.68	7.049	.617	.703
ER10	11.59	7.318	.555	.734

Table 4. 6

Summary of scales reliability coefficients

Scale	Cronbach alpha	Decision
PE	0.739	Adequate
POS	0.711	Adequate
ER	0.776	Adequate

Note. PE= Psychological empowerment POS= Perceived organisational support, ER= Employee retention

4.5 Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

Results achieved from exploratory factor analysis are presented in this section. The objective of carrying out exploratory factor analysis was to check the dimensionality of the scales and used in the current study. Principal component analysis using the varimax rotation method was used to perform exploratory factor analysis. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26 was also used to perform exploratory factor analysis on three scales namely; perceived organisational support scale, employee retention scale and psychological empowerment scale. Only items with factor loading values above 0.5 were retained for further analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014).

4.5.1 The dimensionality analysis of psychological empowerment scale

Exploratory factor analysis for the psychological empowerment was carried out per subscale and there are four subscales in the psychological empowerment such as Meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. EFA was carried out to check the uni-dimensionality of the subscales and they were uni-dimensional.

4.5.1.1 The dimensionality analysis of meaning subscale

The meaning sub-scale obtained a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy value of 0.584 and a Barlett's Test of Sphericity test statistic was significant with a value of 22.016 (df = 3, p= 0.000) (Miljko, 2017). Therefore, exploratory factor analysis could be carried out. The factors explained approximately 45.810% of the variance. This is also illustrated in Table 4.7.

Table 4. 7

Factor analysis: Meaning subscale

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling	Adequacy	0.584
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	22.016
	Df	3
	Sig.	.000

Total Variance Explained						
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative%
1	1.374	45.810	45.810	1.374	45.810	45.810
2	.830	27.661	73.471			
3	.796	26.529	100.000			

	Factor 1
PE2	.665
PE5	.669
PE10	.696

Figure 4. 1

A scree plot for meaning subscale

The result of a single factor was supported by the scree plot in Figure 4.1 as it yielded a single factor on the left of the elbow (DeVellis, 2003).

4.5.1.2 The dimensionality analysis of competence subscale

The competence sub-scale obtained a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy value of 0.586 and a Barlett's Test of Sphericity test statistic was significant with a value of 38.028 (df = 3, p= 0.000) (Miljko, 2017). Therefore, exploratory factor analysis could be carried out. The factors explained approximately 49.322% of the variance. This is also illustrated in Table 4.8.

Table 4. 8

Factor analysis: competence subscale

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling	Adequacy	0.586
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	38.028
	Df	3
	Sig.	.000

Total Variance Explained

	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative%
1	1.480	49.322	49.322	1.480	49.322	49.322
2	.839	27.964	77.286			
3	.681	22.714	100.000			

	Factor 1
PE1	.738
PE9	.749
PE12	.611

Figure 4. 2

A scree plot for competence subscale

The result of a single factor was supported by the scree plot in Figure 4.2 as it yielded a single factor on the left of the elbow (DeVellis, 2003).

4.5.1.3 The dimensionality analysis of self-determination subscale

The self-determination sub-scale obtained a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy value of 0.630 and a Barlett's Test of Sphericity test statistic was significant with a value of 95.176 (df = 3, p= 0.000) (Miljko, 2017). Therefore, exploratory factor analysis could be carried out. The factors explained approximately 58.660% of the variance. This is also illustrated in Table 4.9.

Table 4. 9

Factor analysis: self-determination subscale

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling	Adequacy	0.630
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	95.176
	Df	3
	Sig.	.000

Total Variance Explained						
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative%
1	1.760	58.660	58.660	1.760	58.660	58.660
2	.724	24.130	82.790			
3	.516	17.210	100.000			

	Factor 1
PE6	.800
PE7	.807
PE8	.685

Figure 4. 3

A scree plot for self-determination subscale

The result of a single factor was supported by the scree plot in Figure 4.3 as it yielded a single factor on the left of the elbow (DeVellis, 2003).
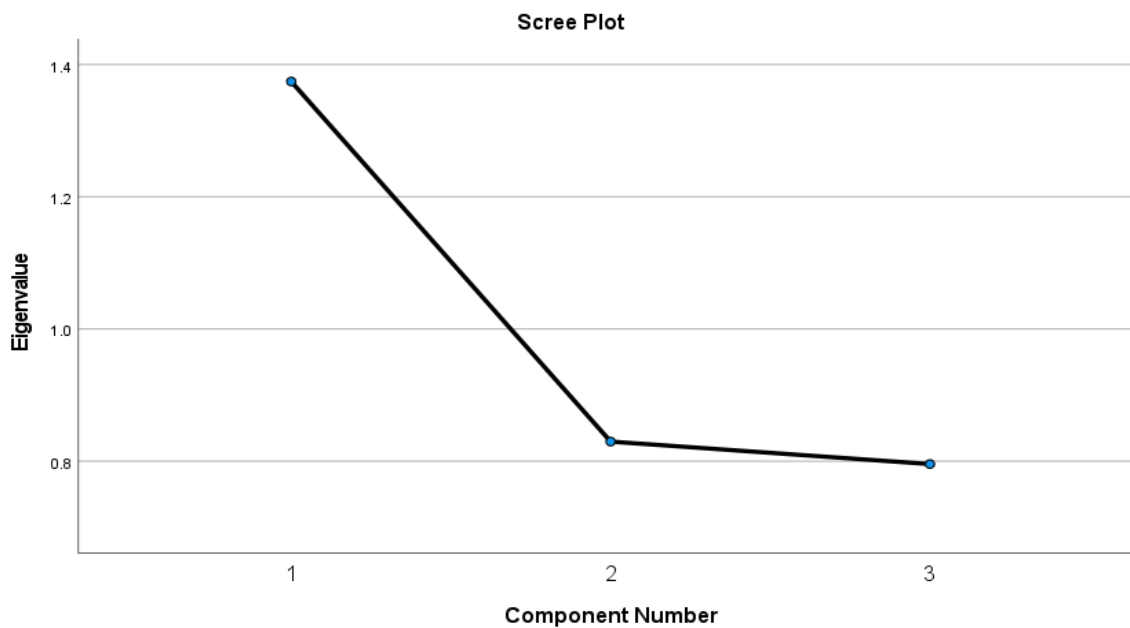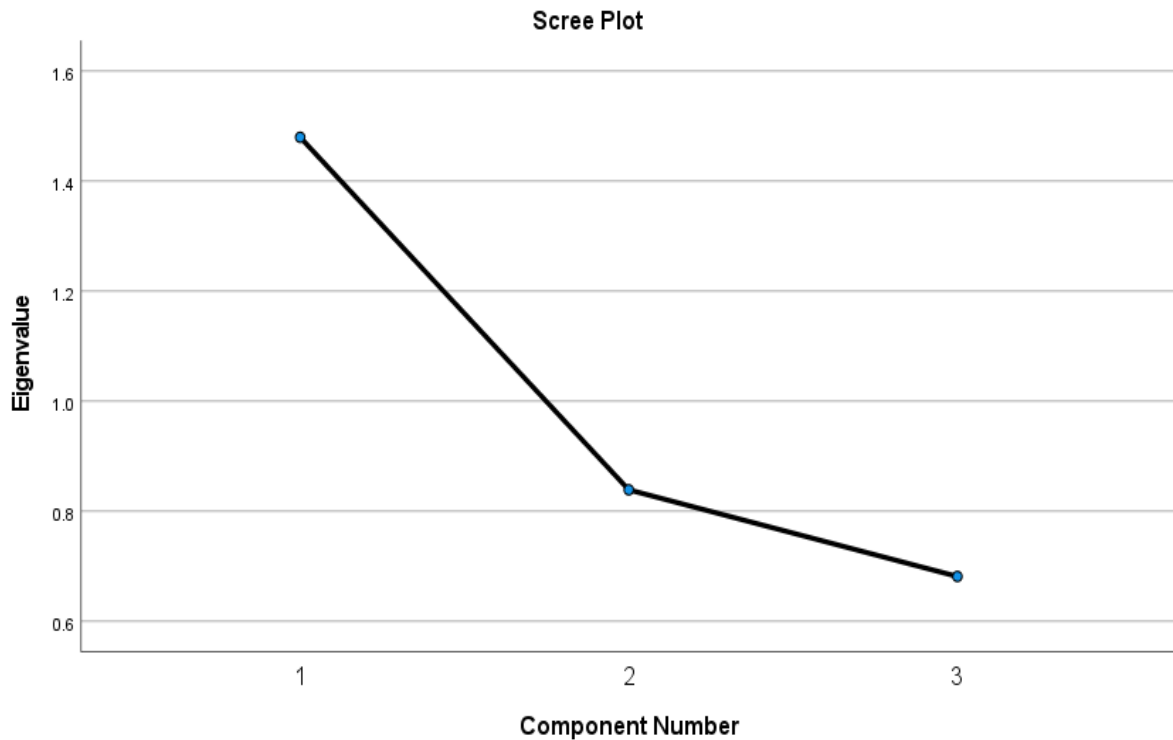
4.5.1.4 The dimensionality analysis of impact subscale

The impact sub-scale obtained a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy value of 0.546 and a Barlett's Test of Sphericity test statistic was significant with a value of 26.183 (df = 3, p= 0.000) (Miljko, 2017). Therefore, exploratory factor analysis could be carried out. The factors explained approximately 45.868% of the variance. This is also illustrated in Table 4.10.

Table 4. 10

Factor analysis: impact subscale

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling	Adequacy	0.546
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	26.183
	Df	3
	Sig.	.000

Total Variance Explained

	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative%
1	1.376	45.868	45.868	1.376	45.868	45.868
2	.920	30.673	76.541			
3	.704	23.459	100.000			

	Factor 1
PE3	.491
PE4	.757
PE11	.750
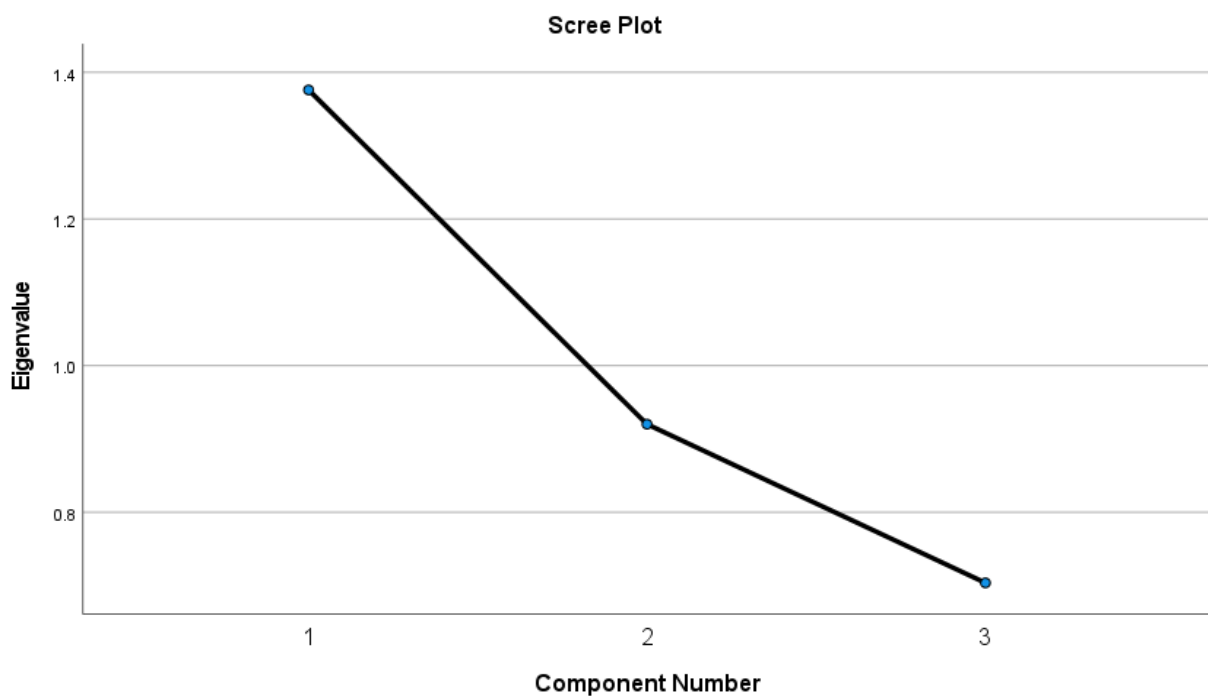
Figure 4. 4

A scree plot for self-determination subscale

The result of a single factor was supported by the scree plot in Figure 4.4 as it yielded a single factor on the left of the elbow (DeVellis, 2003).
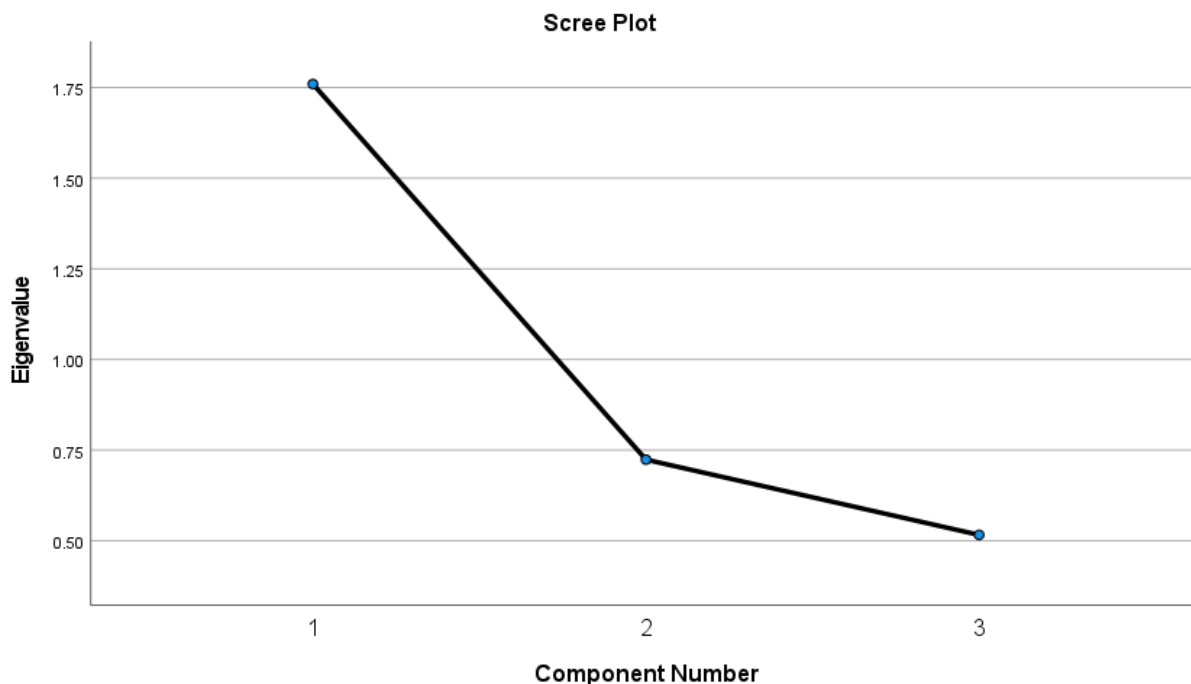
4.5.2 The dimensionality analysis of the perceived organisational support scale

The perceived organisational support scale obtained a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy value of 0.763 and a Barlett's Test of Sphericity test statistic was significant with a value of 255.887 (df = 21, p= 0.000) (Miljko, 2017). Therefore, exploratory factor analysis could be carried out. The factors explained approximately 53.164% of the variance. This is also illustrated in Table 4.11.

Table 4. 11

Factor analysis: Perceived organisational support

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling	Adequacy	0.763
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	225.887
	Df	21
	Sig.	.000

Total Variance Explained

	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.598	37.115	37.115	2.598	37.115	37.115	1.922	27.451	27.451
2	1.123	16.049	53.164	1.123	16.049	53.164	1.800	25.713	53.164
3	.841	12.019	65.183						
4	.718	10.252	75.435						
5	.661	9.449	84.884						
6	.589	8.416	93.300						
7	.469	6.700	100.000						

	Factor 1	Factor 2
POS3	.814	
POS4	.744	
POS10	.727	
POS1		.620
POS5		.697
POS7		.752
POS9		.531
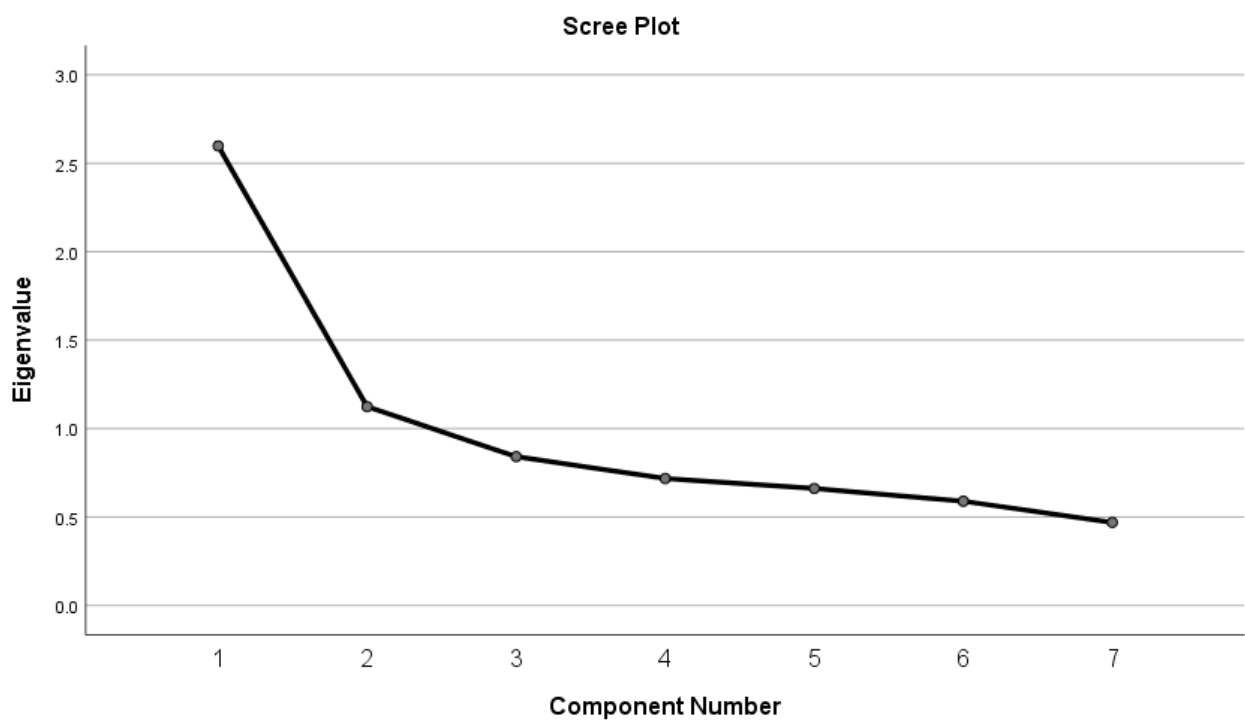
Figure 4. 5

A scree plot for perceived organisational support

A scree plot demonstrates the eigenvalues on the y-axis and the number of factors on the x-axis (Beavers, Lounsbury & Huck, 2013). The point where the slope of the curve is noticeably flattening shows the number of factors that should be produced by the analysis.

The possibility of two factors was shown to the left of the elbow of the scree plot in Figure 4.5.

4.5.3 The dimensionality analysis of employee retention scale

Employee retention scale obtained a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy value of 0.782 and a Barlett's Test of Sphericity test statistic was significant with a value of 237.089 (df = 6, p= 0.000) (Miljko, 2017). Therefore, exploratory factor analysis could be carried out. The factor explained approximately 60.111% of the variance.

Table 4. 12

Factor analysis: Employee retention

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling	Adequacy	0.782
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	237.089
	Df	6
	Sig.	.000

Total Variance Explained						
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative%
1	2.404	60.111	60.111	2.404	60.111	60.111
2	.624	15.602	75.712			
3	.526	13.152	88.865			
4	.445	11.135	100.000			

	Factor 1
ER2	.815
ER3	.722
ER4	.804
ER10	.756
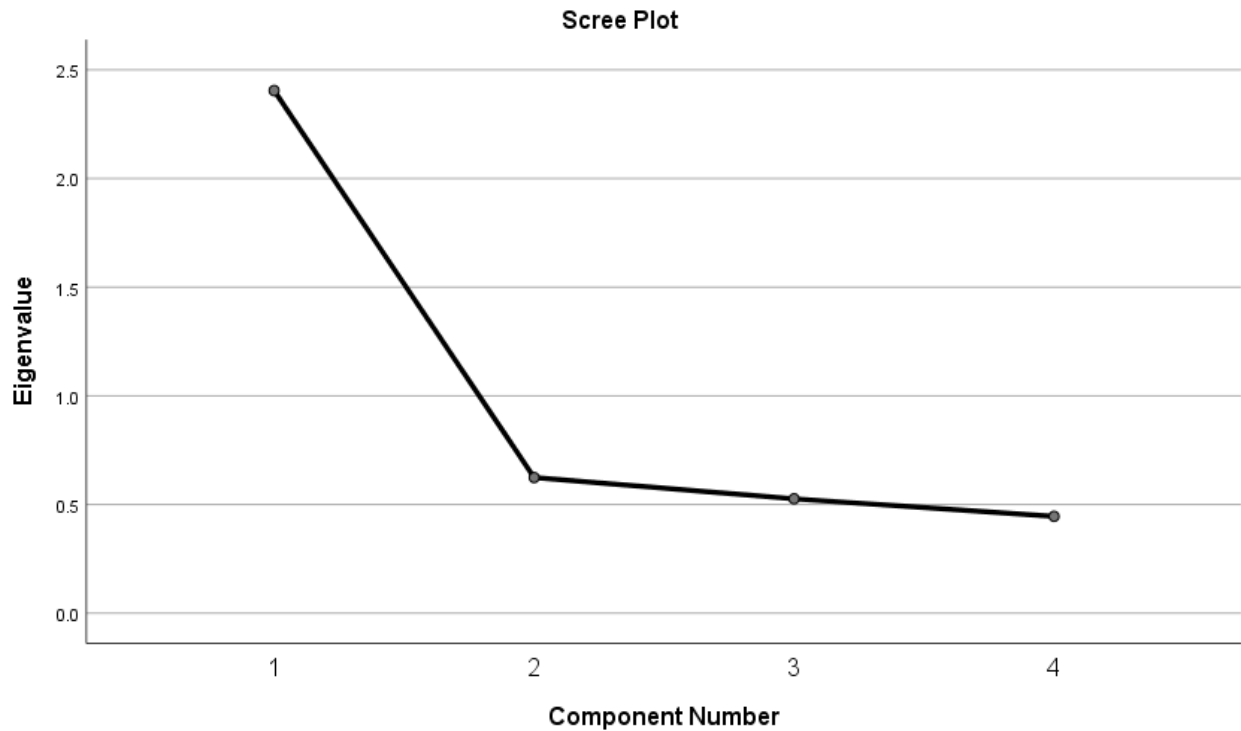
Scree Plot

Figure 4. 6

A scree plot for employee retention

The result of a single factor was supported by the scree plot in Figure 4.6 as it yielded a single factor on the left of the elbow (DeVellis, 2003).

4.6 Descriptive statistics

This section presents the means and standard deviations obtained on the overall scale of the three instruments. Antonius (2011) explains that descriptive statistics are normally being utilised to describe a situation through summarising information in such a way that indicates the important numerical features of the data. This is summarised in Table 4.13 to provide an optical representation of the distributions. Measures of central tendency, dispersion and normality of data were also presented in this section.

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Table 4. 13

Measures of central tendency, dispersion and normality

Construct	x̄	Median	Mode	SD	Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE
POS	3.6	3.6	3.7	4.37	-.075	.160	-0.822	.320
ER	3.9	4	5	3.39	-.715	.160	-0.435	.320
PE	3.9	3.9	3.8	4.66	-.582	.160	-0.881	.320

Note. POS= Perceived organisational support; ER = Employee retention; PE = psychological empowerment; x̄ =sample mean; SD= standard deviation; SE= standard error.

The average score for perceived organisational support shows that most respondents had a high level of perceived organisational support, meaning that nursing staff perceived that they are getting enough support from their organisation (x̄ = 3.6; *SD* = 4.37). The mean score for employee retention was (x̄ = 3.9; SD = 3.39). This indicates that most of the nursing staff had no intention to leave the organisation. The mean score for psychological empowerment was also revealed to be (x̄ = 3.9; SD = 4.66), which indicates that most of the respondents were psychologically empowered.

Malik, Khan, and Shah (2018) define normality of data as a bell curve with a normal distribution of the mean, mode or median scores. In quantitative data analysis, there are different types of statistical analyses that are followed based on whether the data is found to be normal or not. If the data is normal, parametric tests are carried out. If the data deviates from normality, non-parametric tests are carried out (Pallant, 2013).

The normality of data is done by assessing the skewness and kurtosis values of the data. For normal data, these values should lie between-2 and +2 (Bryne, 2010). In this case, data was found to be normal as the skewness and kurtosis values for all the scales were within the acceptable range.

4.7 Correlations: Relationship between perceived organisational support, employee retention and psychological empowerment.

To investigate the relationship between perceived organisational support, employee retention and psychological empowerment as well as strength and the direction of the relationship, a two-tailed Pearson correlation analysis was used. Pearson correlation analysis is a procedure

that assesses the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The results are presented and also illustrated in Table 4.14.

4.7.1 Correlations of perceived organisational support and employee retention

The results indicate that perceived organisational support is significantly associated with employee retention ($r = 0.389$, $p < 0.01$). This means that as perceived organisational support increases, employee retention also increases. Therefore, hypothesis one which states that there is a relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention is supported. See the details in Table 4.14.

4.7.2 Correlations of perceived organisational support and psychological empowerment

A significant positive relationship was found between perceived organisational support and psychological empowerment ($r = 0.331$, $p < 0.01$) as shown in Table 4.14. This shows that when employees feel supported by the organisation, they tend to express a positive attitude, greater confidence as well as more autonomous rights. Therefore, hypothesis two which states that there is a relationship between perceived organisational support and psychological empowerment is also supported.

4.7.3 Correlations of psychological empowerment and employee retention

The results discovered that psychological empowerment had an influence on employee retention ($r = 0.354$, $p < 0.01$). This means that as psychological empowerment increases, employee retention also rises. Therefore, hypothesis three which states that there is a relationship between psychological empowerment and employee retention is supported as well. The results are shown in Table 4.14.

Table 4. 14

The relationship between perceived organisational support, employee retention and psychological empowerment

Variable	1	2	3
1. Perceived organisational support	1		
2. Employee retention	.389[**]	1	
3. Psychological Empowerment	.331[**]	.354[**]	1

4.8 Mediation analysis: Mediating effect of the psychological empowerment on the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention.

Regression analysis using Process Version 3 was carried out in this section to investigate the mediation effect of psychological empowerment on the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention.

In step one of the mediation analysis, the regression of perceived organisational support on employee retention was significant whilst ignoring the mediator, $\beta = 0.3017$, t (177) = 6, 3732, $p < 0.01$. In the second step, the regression of perceived organisational support on the mediator, psychological empowerment, was also significant, $\beta = .3533$, (t) 228 = 5, 3010, $p < 0.01$. Step 3 of the mediation process showed that the regression of perceived organisational support on employee retention while controlling for the mediator, psychological empowerment was significant, $\beta = 0. 2367$, (t) 228 = 4,873, $p < 0.01$. For the moment, step four showed that when perceived organisational support is controlled, psychological empowerment remains a significant predictor of employee retention, $\beta = 0.1841$, $(t)228 = 4.0436$, $p > 0.01$.

However, the indirect effect was analysed using non-parametric bootstrapping. In non-parametric bootstrapping, if the null of 0 falls between the lower and upper bound of 95% Confidence Interval (CI), then the inference is that the population indirect effect is 0. If 0 falls outside the confidence interval, then the indirect effect is inferred to be non-zero. In this case, the indirect coefficient was statistically significant, $\beta = 0.065$, SE = 0.0228, 95% CI = (0.025, 0.1114). Therefore, hypothesis four stating that psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention is supported. See the details in Table 4.15.

Table 4. 15

Summary of the mediation effect of psychological empowerment on the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention.

Steps	Variables	*B*	*T*	*df*	*p*
Step 1	POS predicting employee retention	.3017,	177	6,3732	0.01
Step 2	POS predicting psychological empowerment	.3533	228	5.3010	0.01
Step 3	POS predicting employee retention with psychological empowerment as a control	.2367	228	4.8731	0.01
Step 4	Psychological empowerment predicting employee retention, with POS as control	.1841	228	4.0436	0.01

Indirect effets : $\beta = 0.065$, *SE* = 0.0228, 95% *CI* = (0.025, 0.1114).

Note. POS= Perceived organisational support; β= Beta; SE= standard error; df= degrees of freedom.

4.9 Chapter summary

The main aim of chapter four was to lay out the analysis of data obtained from the two hospitals in the Vhembe District Municipality. Before the chapter presented the data analysis, the chapter addressed the issue of missing values. The chapter presented the findings on demographic information. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of the variables were well presented. The relationship between perceived organisational support, employee retention and psychological empowerment was assessed using the Pearson correlations analysis. The mediated regression analysis was carried out to determine the mediating effect of the psychological empowerment on the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention. The results of the analysis revealed that psychological empowerment does not mediate the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research results presented in chapter four. The chapter further provides the conclusions reached regarding the research findings. Moreover, limitations, implications and recommendations for future research will also be discussed.

5.2 Discussion of the results

The findings on demographic information, item analysis, factor analysis, correlation, as well as mediated regression analysis are discussed below.

5.2.1 Demographic discussion

The current study had a sample of 230 employees with the females being the majority of the respondents (63%). In support of the current findings, considering the nature of work, the high representative of females is not surprising. Zamanzadeh, Valizadeh, Negarandeh, Monadi and Azadi (2013) assert that there are more females than males in the nursing profession. Ike and Olawumi (2018) also note that previously nursing profession was believed to be a female profession. The researchers further added that males were less motivated to pursue careers in nursing as it was perceived as a job for females. Rajacich, Kane, Williston and Cameron (2013) point out that patients, co-workers, and the public tend to discriminate male nurses who chose a career in nursing. The results further show that most of the respondents were in the age of category of 41-50 years old (35%). These results are linked to the study of Marć, Bartosiewicz, Burzyńska, Chmiel, and Januszewicz (2019) which also found that most of the nursing staff were in the age category of 41-50 years. The current results again reported the smallest percentage of nursing staff younger than 30 years of age. Marc *et al*. (2019), in their study among nursing staff in Poland, suggested that mental burden in the nursing profession might be one of the reasons nursing graduates are frightened to enter the nursing profession.

In this 21st century world of work, many employers need their new registered nurses to hold a bachelor's degree because a four-year degree was found to have the most profundity education (Fawaz, Hamdan-Mansour, & Tassi, 2018). This is in line with the current finding that revealed that most of the respondents hold diploma (79%), and degree qualifications

(89%). According to Havenga and Sengane (2018), a huge workload carried by nursing staff does not agree to a pattern of interaction supervision and immense academic programmes. The researchers further noted that, in most cases, the nurses are not able to access study leaves to further their studies. These findings can justify the current results that reported a lower percentage (7%) of nurses who possess postgraduate qualifications in two public hospitals in Vhembe district in the Limpopo province in South Africa. Given enormous job demands placed on nurses, it makes it difficult for them to pursue their postgraduate qualifications (Havenga & Sengane, 2018). Additionally, the results also indicate that most of the respondents (34%) had between 6-10 years working in hospitals. This support the findings of Armstrong-Stassen and Schlosser (2010) that showed that nurses leave their jobs before they reach the age of retirement due to being overworked and emotionally stressed.

The results further show that most of the nursing staff members (48%) at two public hospitals were Registered Nurses. These findings are cognisant with the annual statistics information released by South Africa Nursing Council in 2019, which indicated that the largest group of nurses are Registered Nurses.

5.2.2 Discussion of reliability and validity analysis

An item analysis was executed to determine the internal consistency of the scales to improve the reliability of the scales. All items that had corrected item-total correlation values below 0.30 were excluded. The results show that all the Cronbach alpha values were above 0.70 for all the constructs and therefore were acceptable (Pallant, 2016).

The Cronbach alpha's value for psychological empowerment was 0.739. This was consistent with that of Stander and Rothman (2009) whose Cronbach's alpha value was also above 0.70. Furthermore, the Cronbach's alpha value for perceived organisational support (0.711) was also consistent with that of Maziriri *et al*. (2019) whose Cronbach's alpha value for perceived organisational support was above 0.7. The results further revealed an acceptable Cronbach's alpha value of 0.776 for employee retention which is similar to those by Ferreira and Mujajati (2017). This item analysis opened a way for further correlation and mediated regression analysis.

An exploratory factor analysis was carried out to determine whether the scales were measuring exactly what they were supposed to measure in this study. To improve the validity, items that seemed to be complex when determining the unidimensionality scales were

excluded from the analysis. As recommended by Tabbachnick and Fidell (2014), items with factor loading values above 0.50 were retained for further analysis.

In the psychological empowerment scale, all of the subscales such as meaning, competence, self-determination and impact were found to be unidimensional; one factor on each subscale was produced with all items loading above the recommended cuff-off value of 0.5 as shown in table 4.7, 4.8, 4.9 and 4.10. Stander and Rothman (2009) also found the psychological empowerment scale to be unidimensional. In perceived organisational support scale, two factors were produced with all items loading above the recommended cut-off value of 0.50 as shown in Table 4.11. These results are in contrast to previous studies which found this scale to be not unidimensional (Tabbachnick & Fidell, 2014). Furthermore, employee retention scale was also found to be unidimensional due to the exclusion of poor items revealed when performing item analysis. This is in support of a study by Kyndt *et al*. (2009) which found this scale to be unidimensional.

5.2.3 Discussion of correlation results by hypothesis

A two-tailed Pearson correlation analysis was carried out to test the relationship between perceived organisational support, employee retention and psychological empowerment to answer the research hypotheses. In chapter 4, Table 4.14, the correlation analysis between perceived organisational support and employee retention show that perceived organisational support has a strong, positive, and significant relationship with employee retention ($r = 0.389$, $p < 0.01$). We, therefore, accept hypothesis 1 and conclude that there is a relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention. Thus, the results show that employees who feel valued by their organisation have more desire to remain with the organisation for a longer time (Krishnan & Mary, 2012). This could assist management in health facilities to craft policies and supportive strategies that can attract and retain their employees for a longer period (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019). This is in line with a study undertaken in the health sector among nursing staff in Italy, which revealed that perceived organisational support was positively associated with employee retention (Battistelli at al., 2016). As much as this related study was done in the health sector, the study was not conducted in South Africa. Therefore, this study is unique that little information is known about the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention in a South African context.

Moreover, the results in Table 4.14, showed that there is a strong, positive and significant relationship between perceived organisational support and psychological empowerment ($r = 0.331$, $p < 0.01$). Therefore, we accept the hypothesis 2 and conclude that there is a relationship between perceived organisational support and psychological empowerment. These results articulate that employees who feel psychologically empowered show greater levels of perceived organisational support (Joo & Shim, 2010). Thus, if employees feel more supported and appreciated by their organisation, they are more likely to feel confident in their abilities and have control over their work. This finding is consistent with the study conducted by Maan *et al* (2020) in the manufacturing and service sectors which found that when employees receive perceived organisational support tend to feel more empowered psychologically. Previous studies on this relationship have been tackled in some sectors but not in the health sector, hence there was a need to conduct the current study in the health sector in Vhembe District Municipality in the Limpopo Province.

In addition, the results in Table 4.14 demonstrate that there was a strong, positive and significant relationship between psychological empowerment and employee retention ($r = 0.354$, $p < 0.01$). Therefore, hypothesis 3 was accepted. It stated that there is a relationship between psychological empowerment and employee retention of nursing staff from the two public hospitals in the Vhembe district municipality area of the Limpopo Province of South Africa. The findings demonstrate that if management in the health sector can empower their employees to take initiatives without hesitating, such employees will have a strong desire to remain with the organisation. Similarly, research conducted by Nawawi *et al*. (2015) among spa employees in Malaysia, and by Banan (2017) among nurses in Egypt, revealed a strong, positive and significant correlation between perceived organisational support and employee retention. This means that employees become loyal and continue with their employment when they feel intrinsically motivated by the organisation.

5.2.4 Discussion of mediation analysis results

Mediated regression analysis was carried out to investigate whether a relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention can be explained by psychological empowerment. This was tested by hypothesis 4 which states that psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention among nursing staff in two public hospitals in the Vhembe District Municipality.

In chapter 4, Table 4.15, results indicate that psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention. Therefore, hypothesis four is supported. This means that psychological empowerment explains the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention. This finding is similar to the previous study by Iqbal and Hashmi (2015) in higher education institutions in Pakistan, which revealed that psychological empowerment, mediates the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention. The current study can be called a ground-breaking study as little information is known on this topic in the health sector, specifically in a South African context.

5.3 Conclusions

The main purpose of this study was to examine the mediating role of psychological empowerment on the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention at two selected public hospitals in Vhembe District Municipality in the Limpopo Province in South Africa. The data was collected through a questionnaire at two selected public hospitals. The results show that perceived organisational support positively influence employee retention. The results further proved that perceived organisational and psychological empowerment are positively related. Moreover, the results showed that indeed psychological empowerment had a positive influence on employee retention. Moreover, the mediation regression analysis results revealed that psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention. This means that psychological empowerment explains the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention among nursing staff at two selected public hospital in Vhembe District Municipality in the Limpopo Province in South Africa.

Health sector facilities need to investigate the mediating role of psychological empowerment on the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention. The literature on perceived organisational support and psychological empowerment addresses the retention in other sectors, not in the health sector. A very few studies have been done to check whether psychological empowerment explains the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention, specifically in a South African context. Based on the findings in this study, it is safe to conclude that indeed psychological empowerment explains the relationship between perceived organisational support, employee retention and psychological empowerment. However, little information is known about the

mediating role of psychological empowerment on the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention. Therefore, we suggest that researchers should continue conducting more studies on the mediation of psychological empowerment on the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention.

These findings contribute to new knowledge on the relationship between perceived organisational support, employee retention and psychological empowerment, particularly in the South African context. Moreover, these findings can be used by leaders to create a supportive working environment, which will, in turn, develop employee's self-efficacy and improve their level of confidence while performing their tasks, which will result in the retention of nursing staff in the public hospitals.

5.4 Limitations of the study

The study was affected by COVID-19 pandemic. The study aimed at collecting data among nursing staff from three hospitals in the Vhembe District Municipality in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. However, only two hospitals were used. The other hospital could not be accessible. Limited access to hospitals due to COVID-19 pandemic, therefore, affected the sample size as the researcher was not allowed to enter the third hospital to collect data. Despite this limitation, the findings are still reliable and valid as the researcher managed to collect data from two out of three hospitals. In addition, another limitation was that data was collected only from nursing staff who were permanently employed at two public hospitals therefore underrepresenting nursing staff employed at other public hospitals. As a result, the findings cannot be generalised to the entire population of nursing staff in the Limpopo Province in South Africa but rather be recommended.

5.5 Recommendations for future research

Future research on this topic should use a larger sample to strengthen the power of the research outcome. More public hospitals in the Limpopo Province should be studied to understand the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention as well as the mediating role of psychological empowerment on this relationship among nursing staff. A sample was limited to nurses employed at two public hospitals in the Vhembe District municipality area in the Limpopo province; as a result, the results cannot be generalisable to other public hospitals in South Africa.

There is also a lack of information both in the South African context and overseas regarding the mediating role of psychological on the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention. Therefore, it is recommended that more research should be done on the mediating role of psychological on the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention

5.6. Implications

5.6.1 Theoretical implications

The findings of this study contribute to the field of human resource management in the Health Sector, specifically in a South African context. These findings provide some insights into the relationship between perceived organisational support, employee retention and psychological empowerment. These may be beneficial to the public hospitals that wish to retain their nursing staff.

5.6.2 Practical implications

The results show a positive and significant relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention. Nursing staff who perceived a high level of support are less likely to look for other employment opportunities. Nursing staff with a low level of perceived organisational support had intentions of leaving the organisation. Therefore, this finding implies that hospitals must provide sufficient support to attract and retain their nursing staff. The results further revealed that perceived organisational support has a positive impact on psychological empowerment. Nursing staff that feel that their organisation care deeply about their wellbeing become more empowered psychologically. On the other hand, nursing staff who feel undervalued in an organisation are less empowered psychologically. This implies that hospitals must value and appreciate their nursing staff to empower them psychologically.

Moreover, a strong, significant and positive relationship between psychological empowerment and employee retention was found. Nursing staff develop a strong desire to continue with employment when they feel confident in their abilities and have control over their work. Meaning, competence, self-determination and impact will influence employees to remain in the organisation for a longer time. Nursing staff will remain loyal to the organisation when they feel psychologically empowered.

5.7 Chapter summary

The main aim of this study was to investigate the mediating role of the psychological empowerment on the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention of nursing staff in Vhembe district municipality area in the Limpopo province in South Africa. A strong and positive relationship was revealed among perceived organisational support, employee retention and psychological empowerment. The mediation of psychological was not found on the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee retention. The research results presented in chapter four were discussed in this chapter. Also, the conclusions of the study findings were made. This chapter also highlighted the possible limitations of the study, both theoretical and practical implications as well as the recommendations for future research.

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ANNEXURE A: QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please tick (√) the answer that applies to you

1. Gender

Male		Female	

2. Age in years

20-25		26-30		31-40		41-50		51+	

3. Highest qualification

Certificate		Diploma		Degree		Postgraduate		Any other, specify	

4. Length of service

0-5 years		6-10 years		11-15 years		16+	

5. Rank/Designation

Nursing Assistant		Licenced professional Nurse/Licenced vocational nurse (LPN/LVN)		Registered Nurse (RN)		Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN)		Doctor of nursing Practice (DNP)	

6. Job status

Permanent		Contract		Any other, specify	

SECTION B: PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT, PERCEIVED ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT AND EMPLOYEE RETENTION

Please indicate your level of agreement about how you feel with your current job. Tick (√) in the box that applies to you.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT SCALE		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
PE1	I am confident about my ability to do my job.					
PE2	The work that I do is important to me.					
PE3	I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job.					
PE4	My impact on what happens in my department is large.					
PE5	My job activities are personally meaningful to me.					
PE6	I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department.					
PE7	I can decide on my own how to go about doing my own work.					
PE8	I have considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my job.					
PE9	I have mastered the skills necessary for my job.					
PE10	The work I do is meaningful to me.					
PE11	I have significant influence over what happens in my department.					
PE12	I am selfassured about my capabilities to perform my work activities.					

PERCEIVED ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT SCALE		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
POS1	The organisation values my contribution to its wellbeing.					
POS2	If the organisation could hire someone to replace me at lower salary, it would do so.					
POS3	The organisation strongly considers my goals and values.					
POS4	The organisation really cares about my wellbeing.					

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
POS5	The organisation is willing to extend itself in order to help me perform my job to the best of my ability					
POS6	The organisation feels there is little to be signed by employing me for the rest of my career.					
POS7	If I decided to quit, the organisation would try to persuade me to stay.					
POS8	The organisation takes pride in my accomplishments at work.					
POS9	If my job were eliminated, the organisation would prefer to lay me off rather than transfer me to a new job.					
POS10	The organisation tries to make my job as interesting as possible.					

EMPLOYEE RETENTION SCALE		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
ER1	I'm planning on working for another organisation within a period of three years.					
ER2	Within this organisation my work gives me satisfaction.					
ER3	If I wanted to do another job or function, I would look first at the possibilities within this organisation.					
ER4	I see a future for myself within this organisation.					
ER5	It doesn't matter if I'm working for this organisation or another, as long as I have work.					
ER6	If it were up to me, I will definitely be working for this organisation for the next five years.					
ER7	If I could start over again, I would choose to work for another organisation.					
ER8	If I received an attractive job offer from another organisation, I would take the job.					
ER9	The work I'm doing is very important to me.					
ER10	I love working for this organisation.					
ER11	I have checked out a job in another organisation previously.					

Thank you for your participation

ANNEXURE B: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

NAME OF RESEARCHER/INVESTIGATOR:

Ms LL Ratau

Student No:
11636907

PROJECT TITLE: **Perceived organizational support and employee retention: the mediating role of psychological empowerment among nursing staff in the Vhembe District Municipality.**

PROJECT NO: **SMS/19/HRM/01/0409**

SUPERVISORS/ CO-RESEARCHERS/ CO-INVESTIGATORS

NAME	INSTITUTION & DEPARTMENT	ROLE
Dr J Palo	University of Venda	Supervisor
Mr H Ngirande	University of Venda	Co- Supervisor
Ms LL Ratau	University of Venda	Investigator – Student

ISSUED BY:
UNIVERSITY OF VENDA, RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Date Considered: September 2019
Decision by Ethical Clearance Committee Granted
Signature of Chairperson of the Committee: ....
Name of the Chairperson of the Committee: Senior Prof. G.E. Ekosse

UNIVERSITY OF VENDA
DIRECTOR
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
2019 -09- 0 4

ANNEXURE C: APPOVAL FROM LIMPOPO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA.

Department of Health

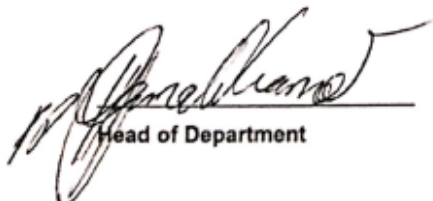|		
Ref	:	LP – 201912 - 009
Enquires	:	Ms PF Mahlokwane
Tel	:	015-293 6028
Email	:	Kurhula.Hlomane@dhsd.limpopo.gov.za

L L Ratau

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN DEPARTMENTAL FACILITIES

Your Study Topic as indicated below;

Perceived organizational support and employee retention: The mediating role of psychological empowerment among nursing staff in the Vhembe District Municipality.

1. Permission to conduct research study as per your research proposal is hereby Granted.
2. Kindly note the following:
   a. Present this letter of permission to the institution supervisor/s a week before the study is conducted.
   b. In the course of your study, there should be no action that disrupts the routine services, or incur any cost on the Department.
   c. After completion of study, it is mandatory that the findings should be submitted to the Department to serve as a resource.
   d. The researcher should be prepared to assist in the interpretation and implementation of the study recommendation where possible.
   e. The approval is only valid for a 1-year period.
   f. If the proposal has been amended, a new approval should be sought from the Department of Health
   g. Kindly note that, the Department can withdraw the approval at any time.

Your cooperation will be highly appreciated

Head of Department

15/02/2020

Date

University of Venda

LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
VHEMBE DISTRICT

Ref: S5/6
Enq: Muvari MME
Date: 11.02.2020

Dear Sir/Madam... RATAU   L.L

Permission to conduct a research on the
" PERCEIVED ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT + EMPLOYEE RETENTION "

1. The above matter refers.

2. Your letter received on the 11.02.2020 ...requesting for permission to conduct a research is hereby acknowledged.

3. The District has no objection to your request.

4. Permission is therefore granted for the study to be conducted within Vhembe District. You are expected to submit the results to the District.

5. You are however advised to make the necessary arrangements with the facilities concerned.

Wishing you success in your endeavors.

2020-02-12

CHIEF DIRECTOR: DISTRICT HEALTH   DATE

Private Bag X5009 THOHOYANDOU 0950
OLD parliamentary Building Tel (015) 962 1000 (Health) (015) 962 4958 (Social Dev) Fax (015) 962 2274/4623
Old Parliamentary Building Tel: (015) 962 1848, (015) 962 1852, (015) 962 1754, (015) 962 1001/2/3/4/5/6 Fax (015) 962 2373, (015) 962 227

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ANNEXURE E: EDITING CERTIFICATE

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(PTY) LTD

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envirostatconsulting@gmail.com | +27746865819 | +27662995195

14 January 2021

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that I have edited the Dissertation by
Ratau Linda Lefeletse entitled,

"PERCEIVED ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT AND EMPLOYEE RETENTION:
THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT AMONG
NURSING STAFF IN THE VHEMBE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY"

submitted for the Master of Commerce in Human Resources Management at the
University of Venda.

Kindly contact me should you have any queries.

Yours sincerely

James Chapangara Mugabe Pr.Sci.Nat.

Lead Consultant

Envirostat Consulting (Pty) Ltd

University of Venda