



University of  
**Southern  
Queensland**

**EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN SHARED SERVICES TEAMS  
IN A REGIONAL UNIVERSITY CONTEXT**

A Thesis submitted by

Kym Davis  
MMGT

For the award of

Doctor of Business Administration

2022

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the factors that enhance and inhibit employee engagement (EE) in shared services (SS) teams in a regional university (RU) context. To date, much of the research on SS has focused on IT, HR and Finance business units where the concept of SS first emerged, and has tended to focus on critical success factors, methods of implementation, frameworks, and case studies, with limited attention paid to EE. Additionally, there has been scant research undertaken on the experiences of professional staff in a RU context. This study sought to address this limitation. This research involved a qualitative approach and uses thematic analysis to understand the *lived experiences* of employees, with data collected via 16 semi-structured interviews, and two focus groups. The findings of this study indicated that the meaning of EE is consistent with the literature and definition used in this thesis. If participants were not sure of what EE *was* they were sure of what EE *was not*. The study aligned with Saks (2006, 2019) descriptions of the antecedents of EE, particularly in regard to job characteristics and the use of skills and abilities. The study extends on the Job Demands Resources Model (JD-R) to develop an understanding of those job and personal resources that influence EE in SS teams in a RU context. Discussions, that extended from the extant literature incorporated expectations of self, co-workers and colleagues, and those with institutional power such as supervisors and managers setting the foundation for *the rules of engagement* (RoE). Perceptions of fairness also influenced EE. People working in SS teams were highly supportive of working in SS environments. However, they also felt the tension of generalised and broad job descriptions associated with SS services. This study recommends a holistic SS design approach with a number of elements that are important to enhance EE. This includes considerations around the physical location of the SS team. Strategies for harnessing the knowledge discovered here are provided, including communicating the shared vision of the SS. Central to the enhancement of EE in SS teams in a RU context is the need to create a sense of connection, between people, place and purpose. This research will inform practitioners, human resource specialists, and policy makers by providing a deeper understanding on EE in SS in a RU context through the development of a greater understanding of the experiences of employees who work in such teams.

## **CERTIFICATION OF THESIS**

I, Kym Davis declare that the Doctor of Business Administration thesis entitled Employee Engagement in Shared Services Teams in a Regional University Context is not more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. The thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

Date: 21/09/2022

Endorsed by:

Dr Kim Southey  
Principal Supervisor

Dr Joe Zhou  
Associate Supervisor

Student and supervisors' signatures of endorsement are held at the University.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*1 January 2018 – This one is for me*

I am writing my acknowledgement as I begin – as if in some way these words will sustain me on the journey that follows. I completed my project proposal yesterday and sent it to my Supervisor for sign-off. I am nervous, hopeful, and excited.

This is my journey – it has taken a long time to get here (depending on your view of time), at 50 (the plus is silent) a lifetime, in fact. But I am here, sitting in my office, surrounded by a few items gifted by the women in my family of generations past. They serve as a reminder of the immense benefits and opportunity that education brings to your life and that each generation continues further than the last. A hope, I think, all parents share, and certainly the hope I hold for my own daughters. As a first in family to attend university I know that education is not a resource to be trivialised or wasted. I am grateful for the support, love and belief of those who supported my dream. You know who you are. I am also incredibly grateful to my research supervisors and in particular, my principal supervisor Dr Kim Southey, thank you for sharing my dream to be Dr Kym Davis.

I also grateful for regional universities such as UniSQ who exist to ensure and provide alternative pathways to higher education. Without you, I would not be here.

This research has been supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	i
CERTIFICATION OF THESIS.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES .....	ix
LIST OF TABLES .....	x
CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER .....	1
1.1    Introduction .....	1
1.2    Context and motivation for the research.....	3
1.2.1    Personal motivation .....	4
1.3    Background to the research.....	5
1.4    Research Problem and Questions .....	6
1.5    Research design and enquiry framework.....	8
1.6    Scope and Delimitations .....	9
1.7    Theoretical and practical contributions.....	10
1.7.1    DBA verses PhD.....	11
1.7.2    Practitioner contribution.....	11
1.7.3    Summary of section 1.7 .....	13
1.8    Terminology .....	13
1.9    Structure of the thesis .....	14
1.10    Chapter Summary .....	15
CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW.....	16
2.1    Introduction .....	16
2.2    Approach adopted to identify and evaluate the literature .....	17
2.3    Employee Engagement .....	22
2.3.1    Defining engagement .....	23

2.3.2	Antecedents and Outcomes of engagement .....	26
2.3.3	Measuring engagement .....	27
2.3.4	Kahn's psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work	28
2.3.5	Saks' expositions of EE in 2006 and 2019.....	31
2.3.6	Saks 2019 .....	33
2.3.7	Job Demands-Resources Model (JD-R).....	36
2.3.8	Concluding comments of Section 2.3 .....	38
2.4	Shared Services .....	39
2.4.1	Overview of the Shared Services literature.....	40
2.4.2	Human resource capability in SS.....	42
2.4.3	Link between the SS literature and EE .....	44
2.4.4	SS in universities .....	44
2.4.5	Summary of section 2.4 .....	46
2.5	Regional University Environment.....	46
2.5.1	Literature on regional universities .....	47
2.5.2	University environments and the impact of COVID-19 on regional universities	49
2.5.3	Professional staff in universities.....	51
2.5.4	Professional staff – motivations .....	53
2.5.5	UniSQ – An overview of the participant organisation in this study.....	54
2.5.6	UniSQ Employee Engagement.....	55
2.5.7	Shared Services at UniSQ .....	58
2.5.8	RU and Professional staff link to the EE literature.....	58
2.5.9	Summary of Section 2.5.....	59
2.6	Gaps stemming from the literature review.....	59
2.6.1	Research questions stemming from the literature review .....	60
2.7	Chapter Summary .....	61

CHAPTER THREE - RESEARCH DESIGN .....	62
3.1    Introduction .....	62
3.2    Philosophical Stance .....	63
3.2.1    Underlying beliefs.....	63
3.2.2    Philosophical Worldviews.....	65
3.2.3    Justification for the paradigm and methodology .....	67
3.2.4    Case study approach using multimethodology .....	68
3.3    Data Collection .....	68
3.3.1    Population sample selection .....	69
3.3.2    Thematic analysis .....	69
3.3.3    Semi-Structured Interviews and Questioning Strategy .....	71
3.3.4    Interview architecture .....	71
3.3.5    Questioning Strategy.....	72
3.3.6    Demographics of the semi-structured interview participants.....	73
3.4    Focus Groups.....	74
3.4.1    Focus Group Questions .....	75
3.5    Insider Research .....	75
3.6    Reflexivity .....	76
3.7    Validity and Reliability .....	77
3.8    Ethical Considerations .....	79
3.9    Chapter Summary .....	79
CHAPTER FOUR - FINDINGS.....	80
4.1    Introduction .....	80
4.2    Re-visiting the overarching research objective and questions .....	81
4.3    RQ1: What does EE mean to SS workers in a RU context? .....	81
4.4    RQ2 What are the factors that enhance EE in SS teams in a RU context?.....	85
4.4.2    RQ2.1 How do workers describe their positive experiences of EE? .....	91

4.4.3	RQ2.2 What aspects of SS enhance EE? .....	92
4.4.4	RQ2.3 What aspects of a RU context enhance EE? .....	94
4.4.5	RQ2.4 In what way might the COVID-19 pandemic have enhanced their EE? .	95
4.4.6	RQ2.5 What criticality did workers assign to the various factors that enhanced their EE? .....	97
4.4.7	Summary of Section 4.4 .....	98
4.5	RQ3: What are the factors that inhibit EE in SS teams in a RU context? .....	99
4.5.1	RQ3.1 How do these workers describe their negative experiences of EE? .....	101
4.5.2	RQ3.2 What aspects of working in SS inhibited their EE?.....	102
4.5.3	RQ3.3 What aspects of working in a RU inhibited their EE?.....	104
4.1.1	RQ3.4 In what way might the COVID-19 pandemic inhibited their EE? .....	105
4.5.4	RQ3.5 What criticality did workers assign to the various factors that inhibited their EE? 106	
4.5.5	Summary of Section 4.5 .....	107
4.6	Focus group findings .....	109
4.6.1	Focus group 1 .....	109
4.6.2	Themes from FG1 .....	109
4.6.3	Researcher Reflection of FG1 .....	112
4.6.4	Focus group 2 .....	112
4.6.5	Researcher Reflection of FG2 .....	116
4.7	Summary of findings .....	116
4.8	Concluding summary for Chapter 4 .....	118
CHAPTER 5 - DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION .....		122
5.1	Introduction .....	122
5.2	Discussions of RQ 1 – the meaning of EE.....	123
5.2.1	Implications/recommendations for RQ1 .....	127
5.2.2	RQ2 & RQ3 – Factors that enhanced or inhibited.....	128



5.2.3	RQ 2.1 & RQ3.1 How do workers describe their positive and negative experiences of EE	132
5.2.4	RQ 2.2 & RQ 3.2 Shared services – enhancing and inhibiting factors.....	133
5.2.5	RQ 2.3 & RQ 3.3 Regional university - enhancing and inhibiting factors .....	136
5.2.6	RQ2.4 & RQ 3.4 Influence of the COVID-19 pandemic.....	137
5.2.7	RQ 2.5 & RQ 3.5 – criticality.....	138
5.3	Summarising discussion of findings.....	139
5.3.1	Conceptual diagram of the study’s major findings.....	140
5.4	Summary of contribution to practice and recommendations .....	145
5.5	Summary of contribution to theory .....	151
5.6	Limitations and future research directions.....	152
5.7	Concluding comments .....	153
REFERENCES .....		155
APPENDIX A – TABLE 1: Engagement Theories, Models and Concepts.....		173
APPENDIX B – TABLE 2: Shared Services Literature .....		178
APPENDIX C – Interview Questions .....		184
APPENDIX D – Thematic analysis and engaging with the data.....		188

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1-1 Contextual overview of the study      Source: developed by author.....	6
Figure 1-2 Enquiry framework used to guide the study      Source: developed by author .....	8
Figure 2-2 Visual guide of Chapter 2.....	17
Figure 2-3 Concept development & maturity of literature cycle.....	19
Figure 2-4 Macey & Schneider's Framework reflecting the complexity of EE .....	23
Figure 2-5 Saks (2006) Antecedents and Consequences Model of EE.....	31
Figure 2-6 Saks (2019, p.32) Revised model of the antecedents and consequence of EE.....	34
Figure 2-7 The Job Demands-Resources model of work engagement .....	36
Figure 2-8 Shared Services verses Centralisation and Decentralisation .....	39
Figure 3-1 Visual guide of Chapter 3.....	62
Figure 3-2 The 'research onion' and design choices used in this study.....	63
Figure 4-1 Visual guide of Chapter 4.....	80
Figure 4-2 Rules of Engagement (RoE) relationships .....	83
Figure 5-1 Visual guide of Chapter 5.....	122
Figure 5-2 Conceptual diagram of EE in SS teams in a RU context .....	139
Figure 5-3 Recommendations to enhance EE in SS teams in a RU context .....	146

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1-1 Thesis outline .....	2
Table 1-2 Research Questions .....	7
Table 1-3 Practitioner needs considered in this study.....	12
Table 1-4 Regular terminology used throughout this thesis.....	13
Table 2-1 Reichers and Schneider Construct Life Cycle .....	19
Table 2-2 Summary of scholarship strength in the research areas applied in this study .....	21
Table 2-3 Definitions of 'employee engagement' in the literature.....	24
Table 2-4 Kahn's (1990) three psychological conditions of employee engagement .....	29
Table 2-5 Saks (2006) Antecedents of EE .....	32
Table 2-6 Additions to Saks (2006) Antecedents and Consequences Model.....	34
Table 2-7 Enhancing the employee experience in SS environments.....	42
Table 2-8 Selection of literature exploring professional staff in a university context .....	51
Table 2-9 UniSQ EE survey results .....	56
Table 2-10 Identified research gaps stemming from the review of the literature.....	60
Table 2-11 Research Questions .....	60
Table 3-1 Research methodology considerations .....	64
Table 3-2 Comparison of four research philosophies in business and management research	65
Table 3-3 Bruan and Clarke's (2006) approach to thematic analysis.....	70
Table 3-4 Key questions and rationale as they pertained to the RQ's.....	72
Table 3-5 Semi-structured interview demographics .....	74
Table 3-6 Focus group demographics .....	74
Table 3-7 Validity, reliability and generalisability considerations in this study .....	77
Table 4-1 Research questions (recounted from Chapter 1).....	81
Table 4-2 Examples of levels of engagement (task, team, organisational, career).....	90
Table 4-3 Summary of themes for RQ2-RQ2.5.....	98
Table 4-4 Summary of Themes for RQ3-RQ3.5 .....	108
Table 4-5 Summary of Findings .....	118
Table 4-6 Key theoretical contributions resulting from this study .....	120
Table 5-1 Summary of findings to research questions (to be discussed in this chapter) . <b>Error!</b>	
<b>Bookmark not defined.</b>	
Table 5-2 Summary of RQ1 .....	123
Table 5-3 Kahn's (1990) three psychological conditions of employee engagement .....	125

(This page is intentionally blank)

## **CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER**

### **1.1 Introduction**

*The longest journey starts with a single step (Lao Tzu).*

This purpose of this thesis is to examine the association between people's experiences of working in a shared services team and their sense of employee engagement (EE). For the purposes of this study EE is defined as: a positive, work-related state that consists of cognitive, emotional and behavioural components that are associated with individual role performances and characterised by a genuine desire to contribute to organisational success. With shared services (SS) noted as the combining of staff and duplicated support functions where they may have been previously distributed across business units into a coordinated business unit (Schulman et al. 1999, p. 9). This phenomenon is explored within the specific context of professional staff working in (SS) in a regional university (RU) context, both of which are under explored areas of research (Gander 2018b). With the rise of SS in general within business environments (ed. Klimkeit & Thirumaran 2018; Soalheira 2020; Deloitte 2021), and significant growth of SS in the university sector (SSON 2019) little is known of the employee experience of SS. This study is possibly one of the first to address this gap. The timing of the study is significant. With the university sector already under significant pressure to find efficiencies to 'burgeoning administrative costs' (Birmingham in Baxendale 2017) the Covid-19 pandemic moved the world to unprecedented times (Thatcher et al. 2020) and further exacerbated the need to reduce costs. For universities (and others), although COVID-19 provided both opportunities and challenges in ways of working it has accelerated the need to leverage efficiencies and reduce costs (ARUP 2021). With reported significant job losses through redundancies, realignments and restructures in the sector through 2019-2021 (Tjia et al. 2020; CMM 2021) the opportunity for SS teams in universities is fertile (Deloitte 2021). As a result of these factors, this study provides timely insight into the lived experience of employees working in SS teams in a RU context. The chapters that follow provide insight into the phenomena with the goal of informing those with an interest in SS and deepen our understanding of professional staff and regional universities more broadly.

To guide the reader, this chapter is structured in the following manner. First, the context and motivation for undertaking the research will be discussed. This section will be followed by an overview of the research design and guiding enquiry framework that was used. The background

to the research will then be discussed along with the theoretical and practical contributions. The chapter will then outline the research problem, research objective and subsequent research questions that formed the basis of the study. The scope and delimitations will also then be detailed. To conclude, the structure of the thesis is presented to facilitate the reader's navigation. Table 1.1 provides an outline of this thesis' five-chapter structure.

***Table 0-1 Thesis outline***

<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Summary of subject matter presented within the Chapters</b>
Chapter 1 Introduction	Introduction Context and motivation for the study Background to the research Research problem and questions Research design and enquiry framework Scope and delimitations Theoretical and practical contributions Terminology Structure of the thesis Chapter summary
Chapter 2 Literature Review	Introduction Approach adopted to identify and evaluate the literature Employee Engagement Shared Services Regional University environment Gaps stemming from the literature review Chapter summary
Chapter 3 Research Design	Introduction Philosophical Stance Data collection Focus groups Insider research Reflexivity Validity and reliability Ethical considerations Chapter summary
Chapter 4 Findings	Introduction Re-visiting the overarching research objective and RQ's Findings for RQ1 Findings for RQ2 and RQ2 sub-questions Findings for RQ3 and RQ3 sub-questions Focus group findings Summary of findings Concluding summary for Chapter 4
Chapter 5 Conclusion	Introduction Discussion of findings in relation to the overarching research objective Conclusions about RQ1

Chapter	Summary of subject matter presented within the Chapters
	Conclusions about RQ2 & RQ3 and sub-questions Discussion of findings Summary of contribution to practice Summary of contribution to theory Limitations and future research directions Concluding comments

## 1.2 Context and motivation for the research

The purpose of this study is to develop a greater understanding of the factors that enhance or inhibit EE for professional staff working in SS teams in RU content. The focus of the study brings together three important elements. Firstly, the Australian university sector has seen a significant increase in the adoption of SS models over the past 10 years (SSON 2019) with SS seemingly becoming the bureaucratic fix all for universities (Darbyshire & Shields 2018). Though the popularity of SS has risen due to the reported cost savings in minimising administrative costs (Bergeron 2003; Knol et al. 2014; PWC 2019; Deloitte 2021), there is limited research on SS in general (Soalheira 2020), and even less focused on the EE experiences of staff who work in such environments. Parallel to this identified gap in the SS literature, there is also a call in the EE literature, which to date has had a predominant reliance on quantitative data (Bailey et al. 2017), to broaden what we know about EE through qualitative research focused on contextual circumstances through the experiences of individuals (Saks 2006; Rich et al. 2010; Bakker et al. 2011a; Howes 2018; Kunte & Rungruang 2018).

Combined with the above, this study seeks to provide insight into the experiences of non-academic (professional) staff who work within the university sector, from a regional perspective. The Australian Government classifies locations outside of Australian major cities as regional (Aust Govt 2020) with regional universities making a significant contribution to their communities, both socially and economically (Productivity Commission 2017; RUN 2018; Aslan 2020). Additionally, Regional Australia is home to 9.4 million Australians, and accounts for one third of Australia's national output (Regionalaustralia.org.au 2020). As a major employer and anchor institution for the communities in which they serve, understanding the experiences of professional staff who account for over half of the workforce in universities (Padro in Bossu et al. 2018 p.v) is an important factor to further understand university life as experienced in a regional location. Developing a further understanding of working in a regional context, provides the opportunity to inform policy makers and managers to enhance the

experiences of staff (enhancing organisational efficiency) and may assist in the recruitment, attraction and retention of talent. *Professional staff* are defined as those staff that do not have an academic employment function such as non-academic professionals, administrative staff, general staff, and/or allied staff (Szekeres 2011). With a significant number of professional staff working in the Australian university sector, there has been limited research into the working lives and experiences of professional staff in academic and non-academic literature (Szekeres 2006, 2011; Gander et al. 2019). Married with this focus on professional staff is the desire to provide further insight into how EE is shaped by SS structures inside Australian *regional* universities which is also underrepresented in the literature.

As a result of these factors, the overarching research objective of this study is to explore the factors that enhance or inhibit EE in SS teams in a RU context, with a view to developing a greater understanding of their experiences. With EE oft considered the holy grail for creating a thriving and successful organisation (French 2014; Saks 2021; Bailey 2022), in a post-COVID-19 environment, the ability to leverage an engaged and committed workforce may be a critical factor to our economic and social recovery (Deloitte 2020; WEF 2020, p. 8; Saks 2021).

### ***1.2.1 Personal motivation***

A dream or vision may come from a number of sources, a desire to achieve something different or a hopeful outcome (Pham 2000, p. 19). And so, it is with this study. I was both passionate and motivated to bring this study to life for a number of reasons. As a first in family to attend university as a mature age student, I am immensely passionate about regional universities and the educational opportunities they provide. Thus, the desire to attain a Doctorate, the highest degree awarded by a university (Swinburne 2020) was a deeply held dream. Additionally, having lived and worked in regional communities for the majority of my life I understand the many benefits and unique challenges of regionality. A regional city is a community, and a regional community fortunate to have a university has deep social and economic advantage (RUN 2020, 2021). Additionally, having worked in teams for most of my working life I have often been vexed with the question of what makes a good team? With the majority of my career behind me, and the best in front of me, I have been afforded both the time, opportunity and space to ponder these questions that perplexed me. One of my favourite quotes from Joan Bolker (1998, p. 3) is:



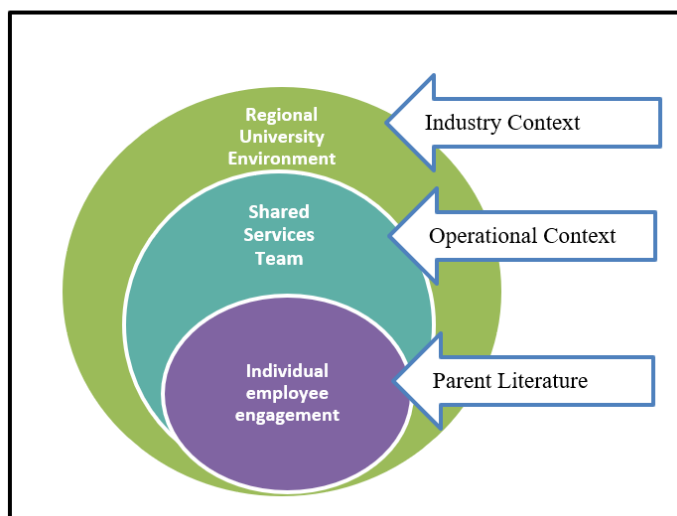
If you enjoy research and writing, some of the greatest gifts life can offer you are time, space, and a good rationalisation for devoting yourself to a project that truly interests you.

Additionally, through this study, I also have an opportunity to contribute to colleagues who work in regional universities, to document via a thesis, a formalised, academic piece of work capturing their experiences - *their story* of the factors that enhance and/or inhibit their engagement.

### **1.3 Background to the research**

Since Kahn (1990's) seminal paper 'Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work' there has been a plethora of studies focused on detailing the factors that contribute to EE. For instance, studies have identified factors that influence EE include work environment, leadership, team and co-worker relationships; training and career development; compensation; organisational policies and workplace well-being (Macey & Schneider 2008; Anitha 2014; Albrecht et al. 2021; Saks 2021; Bailey 2022). Early in the new millennium, the concept of SS also began to emerge in the business arena with some strength, with many business and government organisations looking to leverage the economies of scale and cost savings that SS models offered (Schulman et al. 1999). Whilst there is no agreed upon definition of SS there is convergence around the basic concepts and commonalities. Shared services encompass the combining of staff and duplicated support functions where they may have been previously distributed across business units into a coordinated business unit (Schulman et al. 1999; Quinn et al. 2000; Borman & Janssen 2013; Richter & Brühl 2021). This can be a physical or virtual co-location. The grouping and commonisation of support services and people offers the opportunity to reduce duplication and streamline processes. A desire to move to a SS model is often motivated to realise the reported cost savings and to leverage human resources with the objective of delivering improved service quality and outputs (Schulman et al. 1999; Van der Linde et al. 2006; Walsh et al. 2008; Herbert & Seal 2012; Richter & Brühl 2017; Klimkeit & Thirumaran 2018; Plugge et al. 2022). In university structures, SS arrangements are more likely to be in place for the efforts and services provided by non-academic, or professional staff to the university. These specific SS work arrangements (which will be discussed further in Chapter 2) mean that professional staff operate within a set of work dynamics, exclusive to them, within a much broader and diverse university structure and design. For this reason, it is contended that the drivers and enhancers of EE amongst professional staff working in a SS structure warrant specific examination.

To date, much of the discussion about the effectiveness and efficiencies of SS has focused on IT, HR and Finance business units where the concept of SS first emerged (Schulman et al. 1999), and has tended to focus on critical success factors, methods of implementation, frameworks, and case studies (See Van der Linde et al. 2006; Herbert & Seal 2012; Dollery et al. 2016; Richter & Brühl 2017; Richter & Brühl 2021). However, little attention has been paid to the EE aspect of working in a SS environment context. Additionally, there is scant research undertaken on the experiences professional staff in general (Szekeres 2006; Gander 2018b), particularly within a RU or SS context. With these dynamics in mind, Figure 1.1 provides a contextual overview within which this study is seated. It shows that the research seeks to address these limitations by exploring the nexus of EE experienced by professional staff who work within SS environments in a RU context. Bringing into focus the experiences of staff working within such teams adds a valuable piece to both the EE literature (1<sup>st</sup> body of literature), SS research and literature (2<sup>nd</sup> body of literature) and provides valuable insight into the experiences of professional staff working in RU environments.



**Figure 0-1 Contextual overview of the study**

*Source: developed by author*

#### **1.4 Research Problem and Questions**

Although there is a maturing body of literature devoted to scoping and defining EE as a construct (Macey & Schneider 2008; Albrecht 2010b; Saks 2019), much of this research reflects studies based on quantitative methodologies (Bailey et al. 2017; Shuck et al. 2021)

whilst scholars aim for construct convergence (Keathley-Herring et al. 2016) on how to identify and measure EE. Whilst these quantitative studies are essential for empirically isolating EE as a unique construct and laying essential foundations for the EE literature, qualitative investigations into people's lived experience of EE are less common in the literature (Shuck et al. 2021). At this point in its literature maturity, research associated with industry exposure and best practice insights are now called for (Keathley-Herring et al. 2016). Thus, scholars have called for researchers to examine people's experiences of EE within different contexts (Kunte & Rungruang 2018; Shuck et al. 2021) and to continue to explore and explain the reasons *why* people feel engaged at work (Saks 2006, 2021; Shuck et al. 2021) with a view to leveraging these reasons through practice. Coupled with this knowledge gap in the EE literature, is that despite the growth of SS as a structural approach to organise compatible functions performed by groups of people (Knol et al. 2014; SSON 2019; Deloitte 2021) there are broad knowledge gaps between practice and research on how the SS approach affects the working experiences for people who operate within these structures (Miskon et al. 2011; Soalheira 2020). As a result, if we hope to advance the field of SS, in theory and in practice, this gap must be addressed (Soalheira 2020).

Therefore, as previously stated the overarching research objective is to explore the factors that act to enhance or inhibit EE in SS teams in a RU. In order to achieve this objective, the following research questions and sub-questions as outlined in Table 1.2 guided the study.

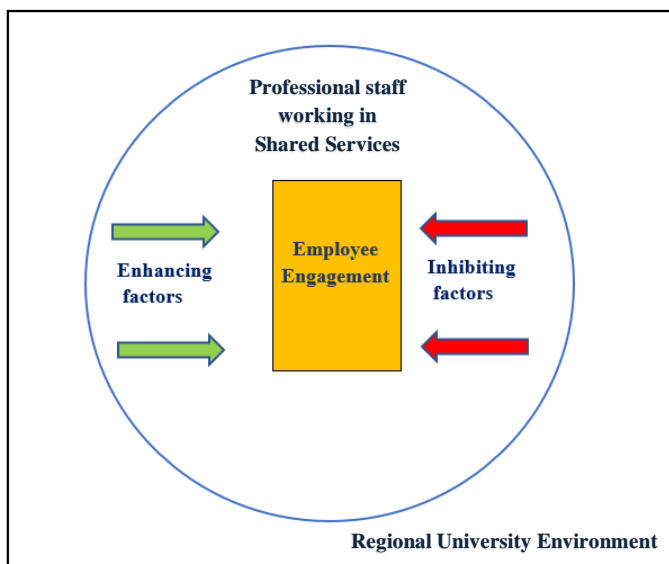
**Table 0-2 Research Questions**

<b>RQ1: What does 'employee engagement' mean to SS workers in a RU context?</b>	
<b>RQ2: What are the factors that enhance EE in SS teams in a RU context?</b>	<b>RQ3: What are the factors the inhibit EE in SS teams in a RU context?</b>
RQ2.1 How do these workers describe their positive experiences of EE?	RQ3.1 How do these workers describe their negative experiences of EE?
RQ2.2 What aspects of working in SS enhances their EE?	RQ3.2 What aspects of working in SS inhibited their EE?
RQ2.3 What aspects of working in a RU enhance their EE?	RQ3.3 What aspects of working in a RU inhibit their EE?
RQ2.4 In what way might the Covid-19 pandemic have enhanced their EE?	RQ3.4 In what way might the Covid-19 pandemic have inhibited their EE?
RQ2.5 What criticality did the workers assign to the various factors that enhanced their EE?	RQ3.5 What criticality did the workers assign to the various factors that inhibited their EE?

## 1.5 Research design and enquiry framework

This research was undertaken to explore the experiences of employees by undertaking a qualitative analysis to understand the *lived experiences* of employees, via a series of semi-structured interviews, with findings then triangulated via two focus groups with participants different to those already interviewed. This research involved a temporal analysis of the experiences of participants bounded by the contextual variables as they existed at the time of the study. Thus, the study provided an opportunity to analyse EE in SS from a RU context at a time when the sector was experiencing significant and unprecedented changes in terms of funding, cost cutting rationale, and shifting perceptions and expectations of the value of universities within the education sector. Additionally, although not the primary purpose of the study, the timing of the research coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, and as a result, a discussion on the influence of COVID-19 was included.

Figure 1.2 presents the overarching enquiry framework that was used to guide the study. In understanding the model, you will note that engagement lies in the centre of the model with the enhancing and inhibiting factors represented to the left and right respectively, demonstrating their suggested directional flow on EE. In this study, the model is bounded by SS noting that this is the contextual framework in which the study took place.



**Figure 0-2 Enquiry framework used to guide the study**

*Source: developed by author*

An inductive, interpretive analysis of the relationship between EE in SS in a RU context was undertaken acknowledging that an understanding of the complex whole is developed by reference, and in connection to, the interrelationships of the individual parts (Klein & Myers 1999). This approach acknowledges that EE, SS and the RU context are distinct yet interrelated elements and that a complete or deeper meaning is to be found within the context and relationships of all the parts and their relationships within their contextual influences (Klein & Myers 1999).

## **1.6 Scope and Delimitations**

The study sought to understand and interpret the experiences of participants within their respective SS working environments and synthesise this with, and extend, both the EE and SS literature as it currently exists in their respective fields. Therefore, participants were sought from and limited to those people working within an Australian regional university, specifically participants from client services areas across several SS business units at the University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ). UniSQ is a medium-sized, regional university based in Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia, with three campuses located at Toowoomba, Springfield, and Ipswich. A non-probability convenience sample of participants was used from staff who worked in SS teams drawn from across IT, Finance, Human Resources, Student Support Services, and Research services teams. The data collection phase commenced in January 2020 and concluded in August of 2020, thus the period of data collection and the emergence and spread of the COVID-19 pandemic coincided. As a result, a research question was introduced into the study as the significance of the Covid-19 pandemic impacts at that time in 2020 unavoidably and inevitably formed part of the discussion with participants.

Participants were drawn from employees who work in a SS environment expressly, therefore, people working in centralised structures were not included in this study. Shared services roles are typically performed by professional staff employed within universities, as such, academic staff were excluded from this study. The identified participants were predominately drawn from SS teams in HR, Finance, IT which are already commonly associated as being support services in university environments. Participants were invited from all levels from within the SS team regardless of their type of employment type (e.g., full-time, part-time, permanent, and/or casual staff).

## **1.7 Theoretical and practical contributions**

The value of viewing EE in SS teams from a RU lens is first that it adds to the current theoretical and practical debate about the effectiveness of SS as a way of organising work functions (Knol et al. 2014; SSON 2019; Soalheira 2020; Deloitte 2021), and identifies the factors that influence EE in the distinct circumstances of people working in a SS arrangement. Second, the research occurred at time when universities are being confronted with dramatic internal and external environmental changes that are changing the core of how universities function and their future as educational institutions (Lee et al. 2021; Maslan 2021). These internal and external environmental influences also act to influence an individual's ability to engage in their work roles (Van den Heuvel et al. 2010; Anitha 2014; Howes 2018; Lee et al. 2021). Change drivers include legislative and funding changes to the university sector, an increased competitive market, a reduction in international student numbers, a change to public perception (fuelled by media channels) of the value of universities, changes to top level management of the organisation and internal re-alignments, and voluntary redundancy rounds – requiring remaining staff to do more with less whilst maintaining service levels. And in 2020, the sector, which was already under considerable stress, was further impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic (ARUP 2021).

These conditions were replicated across many regional and metropolitan university environments with a common call for the sector to find efficiencies and reduce costs (Larkins & Marshman; and Norton in Hare 2016; Birmingham in Baxendale 2017; Doyle & Brady 2018; Howes 2018). As a result, these influences provide an exciting opportunity to view EE in a regional university at what might be a critical time for universities. As this is possibly one of the first studies that explores the relationship of EE in SS teams in a RU context, the study adds a valuable contribution to understanding the lived experience of professional staff working in both SS and RU environments. With even greater pressure on universities to find efficiencies in a post Covid-19 pandemic environment (ARUP 2021) and the growth of SS (PWC 2019), developing an engaged workforce in SS teams will be a critical priority. As a result of these factors, this research benefits a number of stakeholders including academia, practitioners, human resource specialists and policy makers, who seek to enhance EE in SS teams.

### ***1.7.1 DBA verses PhD***

UniSQ's Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) is designed as a professionally orientated program for students, who are already business professionals, to identify and resolve business challenges in the private and public sectors (UniSQ 2020). The primary program objectives include the ability to apply theoretical knowledge to contemporary business problems, and to critique contemporary organisational practice in light of relevant theory (UniSQ 2020).

A DBA differs from a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) which is focused on academic research and advanced research skills and knowledge, in a chosen discipline, requiring the student to make an original and substantial contribution to a field of research (Swinburne 2020; UniSQ 2021a; UQ 2021). A DBA is a professional qualification focused on research to make a significant and original contribution to business and professional practice (UniSQ 2020; CSU 2021; Swinburne 2021b). This distinction is important, as the lens of the doctoral business research student verses the PhD student are philosophically different. The doctoral student, focuses on the investigation and analysis of a business problem, to make a 'significant and original contribution to furthering professional practice' (Swinburne 2021a). They draw from a diverse body of literature in seeking to solve a business problem and further our understanding of a phenomena, coupled with a desire to contribute to practitioner practice as much as the academic literature. The PhD student, with the guidance of an advisory team, works to develop advanced research skills in a chosen field, to make a unique theoretical contribution in a field of research and become an independent researcher (UQ 2021).

### ***1.7.2 Practitioner contribution***

At times, the interest and focus of practitioners and academics can diverge in ways that render meaningful dialogue and collaboration challenging (Wensley 2009; Rousseau 2012; in Bailey 2016). Van de Ven and Johnson (2006 in Bailey 2016, p.2) capture this communication divide by articulating that scientific knowledge privileges formalised and explicit forms of knowing. In contrast, practical knowledge is intuitive, open-ended, and social, and is advanced through the subjective involvement of the individual (Van de Ven & Johnson 2006; Bailey 2016, p. 2). From a practitioner perspective three requirements are significant for the exchange of knowledge from academic to practitioner (Bartunek & Rynes 2014; Panda 2014; Styhre 2014), which Bailey (2022) described as accessible and useful, relevant and applicable, and timely. First, accessibility and usefulness of information is a prerequisite for its use and application and should be presented in a form and language that are meaningful and comprehensible to

practitioner audiences. Second, knowledge should be directly relevant to and applicable with practical application that leads to improved outcomes opposed to the creation of knowledge that has intrinsic value for its own sake (Bailey 2022) . And third, to be of value, knowledge needs to be presented in a timely manner so as to address current societal and business needs that practitioners are facing today (Bailey 2022).

In summarising and applying the above, this study answers the call to address the gap between theory and practice in the following ways. First, and perhaps most significantly, this study addresses the gap between theory and practice in the EE, SS, and RU context respectively. For example, despite the experiential growth in SS in business in general (Soalheira 2020; Deloitte 2021), including the university sector (Miskon et al. 2011; SSON 2019) there is limited research on the integration of practice and academic research (Soalheira 2020). Table 1.3 below provides an overview of the applicability and relevance of this study in addressing the gaps between theory and practice.

***Table 0-3 Practitioner needs considered in this study***

<b>Element</b>	<b>Practitioner needs/DBA Objective</b>	<b>How the study addresses</b>
Accessibility and usefulness of the knowledge	Information should be presented in a form and language that are meaningful and comprehensible to practitioner audiences (Bailey 2016). Practical and useful application of the information. DBA objective – communication skills directly relevant to business	The study is undertaken and presented in the context of a DBA opposed to a PhD. As a result of this, the context, language, format, and communication style and intent is fit for purpose. Addresses DBA objective – communication skills relevant to business.
Relevance and real-world applicability of knowledge	Knowledge should be useful with real-world practical application. Remaining DBA objectives met (refer Section 2.2.1). Integration and application of theoretical knowledge to contemporary business problems, critique and analysis of organisational practice in light of relevant theory.	This study directly addresses identified gaps in the literature for EE, SS, RU context, and professional staff). Directly answering the call to advance our knowledge with real-world practical application. That informs policy makers, practitioners and academics alike.
Timeliness of knowledge to address current societal and business needs	To be of value knowledge needs to be presented in a timely manner in order to address current societal and business needs that practitioner are facing.	Despite the significant growth in SS there has been limited interaction and integration between practice and theory. Theories not tested and/or converged with practical application. Possible pressure in post COVID-19 environment for more application of SS (Deloitte 2021). Difficult to develop credibility and best practice if not informed by academic rigor.



Element	Practitioner needs/DBA Objective	How the study addresses
		SS literature disbursed and embryonic - difficult to develop SS literature further without studies specifically focused on the academic/practitioner relationship (Soalheira 2020).

**Source:** developed by author

### 1.7.3 Summary of section 1.7

The purpose of the preceding discussion is to set the context for the literature review that follows and provide the lens through which the study has been undertaken. As a DBA candidate this study is focused on a business problem, drawing across a diverse field of literature to explore and further our understanding of EE in SS teams in a RU context. The literature itself, also diverse in its nature, has both mature (EE) and emerging (SS and RU context) bodies of literature, with several areas noted for their limited research (SS, RU context and Professional staff respectively). The literature on EE is a mature field of research, with a range of documented theories and conceptual models, with agreed upon concepts and terminologies, and that have been tried and tested with industry to produce results informing best practice. Drawing from the discussion above, an objective of this study is to provide informative insights to further our understanding into the phenomena that is useful for a wide variety of audiences, both academic and practitioner and those with an interest in this area. The sections that follow in this chapter provide an overview of the literature that has informed the study.

## 1.8 Terminology

The following table provides a quick-reference guide to terminology used throughout this thesis.

**Table 0-4 Regular terminology used throughout this thesis**

Term	Meaning
Employee Engagement (EE)	<p>Drawing from Saks (2006) and Albrecht's (2010) definitions, for the purposes of this study EE is defined as: <i>a positive, work-related state that consists of cognitive, emotional and behavioural components that are associated with individual role performances and characterised by a genuine desire to contribute to organisational success.</i></p> <p>Additionally, for this study a holistic view of EE is taken inclusive of job, work, organisational and personal engagement.</p>

<b>Term</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Enhancing factors	Enhancing factors for the purposes of this study are those factors which have a positive influence on EE.
Inhibiting factors	Inhibiting factors for the purposes of this study are those factors which have a negative influence on EE.
Organisational Justice	Organisational Justice is an employee's perceptions of fairness in the workplace. The terms OJ and perceptions of fairness can be used interchangeably (Greenberg & Colquitt 2005, p.x1).
Professional staff	For this study professional staff are classified as non-academic, support staff, administrative and/or managerial staff (UniSQ Enterprise Agreement 2018-2021, p.7).
Perceived Organisational Support (POS)	POS is the amount of care and support employees perceive to be provided by their organisation. Definition adapted from Saks (2006, p. 605) description of POS and PSS links to Kahn's (1990) description of psychological safety
Perceived Supervisor Support (PSS)	PSS is the amount of care and support employees perceive to be provided by their supervisor/s. Definition adapted from Saks (2006, p. 605) description of POS and PSS links to Kahn's (1990) description of psychological safety.
Proactive and positive personality strategies (PPS)	For the purposes of this study PPS encompasses such terms as proactive and positive dispositional characteristics, self-efficacy, optimism, autotelic and positive personality traits, and positive mindset and draws from Saks (2006, 2019), Kahn (1990) and Macey and Schneider (2008).
Regional University (RU)	A regional university is classified as a university with headquarters located in regional Australia (RUN 2021). Regional Australia includes towns, small cities and areas that lie beyond the major capital cities (Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide and Canberra) (Regional Australia Institute 2021).
Rules of Exchange (RoE)	Identified and defined in this study as an individual's expectation of their return on investment (ROI) in the engagement exchange between oneself, co-workers and colleagues and the organisation.
Return on Investment (ROI)	Return on investment – perceptions of the benefits received in terms of an individual's investment or inputs into organisational life.
Shared Services (SS)	Shared services encompass the combining of staff and duplicated support functions where they may have been previously distributed across business units into a coordinated business unit (Schulman et al. 1999, p. 9).

Source: developed by author except where otherwise stated

## 1.9 Structure of the thesis

In concluding, this thesis consists of five chapters as introduced in Table 1.1. After this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 contains a review of the scholarship into SS and EE and provides insight into the RU context, inclusive of the role of professional staff. Chapter 3 describes the research design and Chapter 4 presents the findings of the thematic analysis. Chapter 5 discusses and concludes these findings, provides recommendations, details limitations of the study and suggests areas of future research.

## **1.10 Chapter Summary**

This chapter acted to provide an overview of the important elements of this thesis by introducing the background, context and motivation to conduct a doctoral study in the areas of EE in SS teams in a RU context. It also detailed the overarching research objective which is to explore the factors that act to enhance or inhibit EE in SS teams in a RU. The set of three (3) major research questions and associated sub-questions that will be used to achieve this objective were stated. The study's scope and delimitations were provided. The structure of the thesis was also outlined to facilitate the reader's navigation. The chapters that follow will provide a review of the literature relevant to the study, methodology and research design, and conclude with a discussion on subsequent findings, recommendations and future research directions.

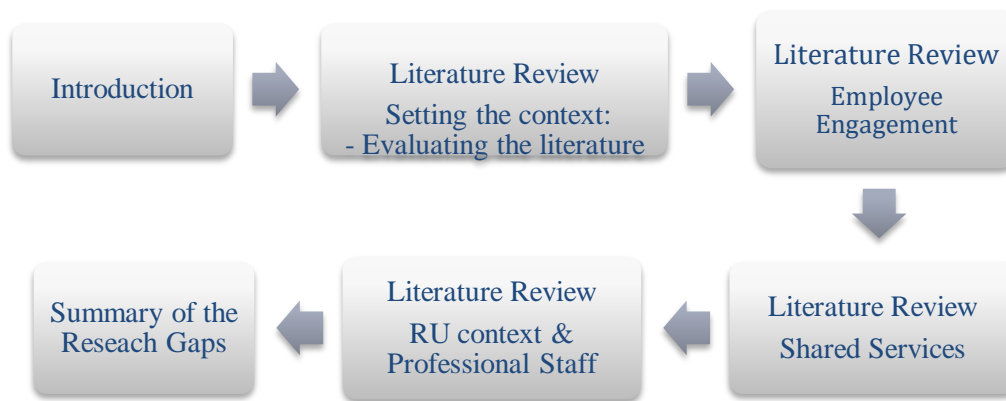
## CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

*Sometimes you need to be the bird...sometimes the worm – it's all about the view*  
(Saldana 2021).

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the literature, which identifies the research gaps, and provides an understanding of the theoretical foundations which both guided and informed the study. Drawing from Chapter 1 and Figure 1.1 which provided a visual overview, the overarching objective of this study was to explore the factors that enhance or inhibit EE in SS teams in a RU context. As a result of this overarching objective three foundational areas of literature, as displayed in Figure 1.1, were significant in exploring the research problem. The first was an analysis of the EE literature as it applies to the study. The second was to build an understanding of the state of the SS literature as it currently exists. The third, was to provide a synthesis of the literature on the university sector through a RU lens, inclusive of the role of professional staff, to provide insight into the context of which the study takes place.

Accordingly, this chapter is organised as follows. The chapter commences with a discussion on the maturity assessment approach that has been adopted in this chapter to evaluate and classify the literature. This will be followed by an overview of the EE literature relevant to the study and an overview of the current state of the SS literature. The section that follows will set the context of a RU environment inclusive of the role of professional staff. The chapter will conclude by identifying the gaps resulting from the review of the literature and detail the RQ's which were subsequently developed. Figure 2.2 provides a visual overview of this chapter to guide the reader.



**Figure 0-1 Visual guide of Chapter 2**

## **2.2 Approach adopted to identify and evaluate the literature**

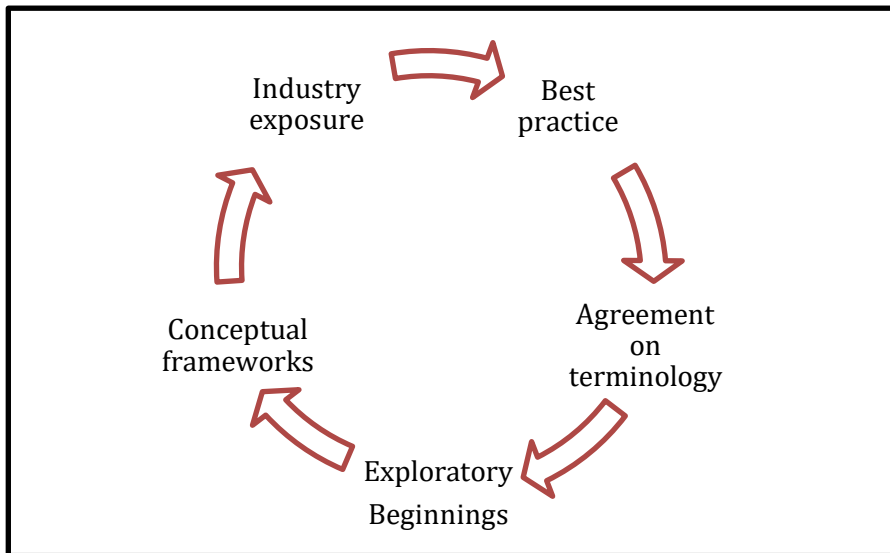
The literature review presented in this chapter was framed (a) by Keathley-Herring et al.'s (2016) generalised maturity-based approach to conducting and assembling a literature review and (b) Reichers and Schneider's (1990) Construct Life Cycle. To orientate one's understanding of a body of literature, it is beneficial to evaluate (a) the maturity, (b) the impact, and (c) the development of a research field by identifying and analysing the published literature central to the task (Keathley-Herring et al. 2016). Completing successful research that offers a contribution to a research area, depends on the researcher's ability to identify, analyse and synthesise literature relevant to the field that is of interest to the academic community (Keathley-Herring et al. 2016) and other vested stakeholders. With unprecedented access to electronic information, searching in any field, can return a vast and anxiety provoking amount of information (Mewburn 2021). Thus, a researcher's ability to critically evaluate what is relevant and what is not, is central to the task.

Several approaches can be used to identify, analyse and synthesise relevant literature, including focusing on the content of the literature, focusing on the way in which the research has been conducted and/or focusing on the characteristics of the publications themselves (Hood & Wilson 2001; Patra et al. 2006; Cronin et al. 2008; Taylor & Taylor 2009; Smith 2012). These approaches provide valuable insights to guide the research (Keathley-Herring et al. 2016). The level of development of the research area also has an impact on the trustworthiness and reliability of any literature review analysis (Keathley-Herring et al. 2016). The maturity of a

research area is commonly addressed in literature analysis. Whilst this concept lacks a consistent definition and a firm set of assessment criteria (Keathley-Herring et al. 2016), the assessment of the maturity of literature does share some common elements, such as assessing changes over time (Keathley-Herring et al. 2016). This assessment generally aims to analyse the current state of the research area through identification of current and future trends, in-depth evaluations of the research area as well as identification and justification of future research areas (Porter & Detampel 1995; Budi et al. 2013). Whilst this type of assessment goes beyond the typical literature analysis, it creates further insight into how well established the field is and speaks to the relative trustworthiness of the conclusions drawn from the literature (Keathley-Herring et al. 2016).

Within a maturity analysis, a research area can be described as progressing from a highly conceptual stage where most of the research is exploratory, to a more advanced stage where quantitative studies are conducted, best practices are identified and prescriptive information is disseminated (Keathley-Herring et al. 2016). It should also be noted that the development process is more iterative than linear, with various topics within research areas developing uniquely at their own rate (Keathley-Herring et al. 2016).

A significant maturity characteristic that is commonly mentioned is the relationship between academic research and its practical applications in the field (Keathley-Herring et al. 2016). With a key objective of academic research to solve real-world problems and generate practical solutions (Gagnon & Ghosh 1991; Maloni et al. 2009; Pasqualine et al. 2012; NHMRC 2021; UniSQ 2021b). As a result of this a research area should evolve from its exploratory beginnings to conceptual frameworks being proposed and tested, with concepts then applied to industry for exposure. The final stages should see a convergence to best practice and agreement on the consistent use of terminology (Stone 2012; Keathley-Herring et al. 2016). Figure 2.3 provides a graphical overview.



**Figure 0-2 Concept development & maturity of literature cycle**

**Source:** developed for study from (Keathley-Herring et al. 2016, pp. 927-951)

In relation to the development of the literature, the discussion above drawing from Keathley-Herring et al. (2016) is not dissimilar to that of Reichers and Schneider's (1990) construct life cycle. Inspired by Kuhn (1970), *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* who proposed that the conduct of science produces a patterned evolution of ideas (Rebelo & Gomes 2008). Reichers and Schneider (1990) proposed the evolution of concepts is composed of three phases, these being: (a) introduction and elaboration, (b) evaluation and augmentation and (c) consolidation and accommodation. Table 2.1 below discusses the elements.

**Table 0-1 Reichers and Schneider Construct Life Cycle**

Phase		Elements
Phase 1	Introduction and Elaboration	Starts when a concept is invented, reinvented, discovered or borrowed from another scientific area. In this stage the authors try to define the concept and elaborate earlier definitions, demonstrate its usefulness and importance for the area and make an effort to integrate previous loose ideas or findings from other authors. During this phase authors conceive, develop and apply particular operationalisations of the concept and treat it mainly as an independent or dependent variable.

Phase		Elements
Phase 2	Evaluation and Augmentation	<p>The second phase is characterised by the first critical reviews of the concept and previous literature. Critiques address issues such as faulty conceptualisation, inadequate operationalization, insufficient marking of the concepts boundaries and equivocal empirical results. Phase 2 is when more reliable measurement techniques and instruments are claimed and when authors begin to propose moderating and mediating variable for a better understanding of research findings. Importantly, in response to criticism a sub-phase begins to appear, with articles attempting to overcome the major conceptual and empirical limitations that have been highlighted.</p> <p>This sub-phase is conceptualised as ‘...limitations of earlier conceptual and empirical work are acknowledged while authors offer ‘new and improved’ conceptualizations and empirical studies. Reconceptualisations of the construct appear, and they are applied to a variety of theoretical and/or practical problems (Reichers &amp; Schneider 1990, p. 7)</p>
Phase 3	Consolidation and Accommodation	<p>The controversies surrounding the topic tend to decrease; a few definitions and few operationalisations become generally recognised and accepted. Tested antecedents and consequences become known and boundaries are more clarified. Meta-analysis begins to appear which consolidate previous findings. As a sign for the general acceptance and general recognition of the concept is its inclusion in broader conceptual models or ‘in the words of (Reichers &amp; Schneider 1990, p.7) ...a well-accepted concept appears as a moderator, mediator, or contextual variable in models of more general interest’. Phase 3 can also be a period when research and publications centred on the concept decrease, although work remains in clarifying some of the remaining mysteries of the concept.</p>

**Source:** adapted from Reichers and Schneider (1990); Rebelo and Gnomes (2008).

As with Keathley-Herring et al. (2016) discussion on the maturity of literature cycle, the construct life cycle model is not strictly defined in chronological order (Reichers & Schneider 1990; Rebelo & Gomes 2008). With Reichers and Schneider (1990 in Rebelo & Gnomes 2008, p.296) recognising that ‘this fact contributes to the fuzziness of stage boundaries and to some ambiguity in signalling the transition from one stage to another’. Thus, the type of research being produced also matters (Rebelo & Gomes 2008). Whilst Reichers and Schneider (1990 in Rebelo & Gnomes 2008) applied their model to organisational culture and climate concepts, due to the underlying idea that concepts follow a patterned evolution, they consider it could be applied to other topics.



As an organising scheme, and for their explanatory potential to make sense of a body of literature, both models, i.e., the maturity of literature and the construct life cycle, have been utilised as a lens to view the literature for this study. These frameworks serve to inform the complexities of the discussion that follows on the literature relevant to this study in terms of providing a mechanism to assess the maturity of the literature relevant to the study, and, stemming from this assessment, informing the subsequent research gaps and contributions to be made to the respective fields of research. Table 2.2 provides a summary of how these frameworks have been used to assess the state of the relevant literature in this study. These frameworks are returned to at the end of this chapter, in Section 2.6, to identify the knowledge gaps between the key areas of scholarship relevant to this study.

**Table 0-2 Summary of scholarship strength in the research areas applied in this study**

AREA OF RESEARCH	STRENGTH OF SCHOLARSHIP		
	Impact	Maturity (quantum)	Development (Life-cycle stage)
<b>Employee engagement</b>	Convergence to best practice. Agreement on Terminology and concepts. Extensive body of industry and academic research. Collaboration between practitioner and academic literature.	Extensive/Mature	Consolidation and Accommodation
<b>Shared services</b>	Lack of integration between theory and practice. Disparate and embryotic body of literature (Miskon et al. 2011). Little exposure between research, empirical studies and literature (Soalheira 2020).	Emerging	Introduction and Elaboration
<b>Professional staff in universities</b>	Disparate body of literature. Under researched. Professional staff considered the invisible worker (Szekeres 2011; Bossu et al. 2018a).	Emerging	Introduction and Elaboration
<b>Regional university work environments</b>	Some convergence, under broader university context. Under researched from a regional perspective, particularly professional staff and scarce literature on SS in a university context.	Emerging	Evaluation and Augmentation

**Source:** developed by author

To elaborate on Table 2.2, the literature on EE has an extensive body of literature both in the academic and practitioner fields, with concepts well-tested and exposed to industry, and common acceptance of terminology and a convergence on best practice. Additionally, there are a number of reviews and meta-analyses of concepts (Crawford et al. 2010; Bailey et al. 2017;

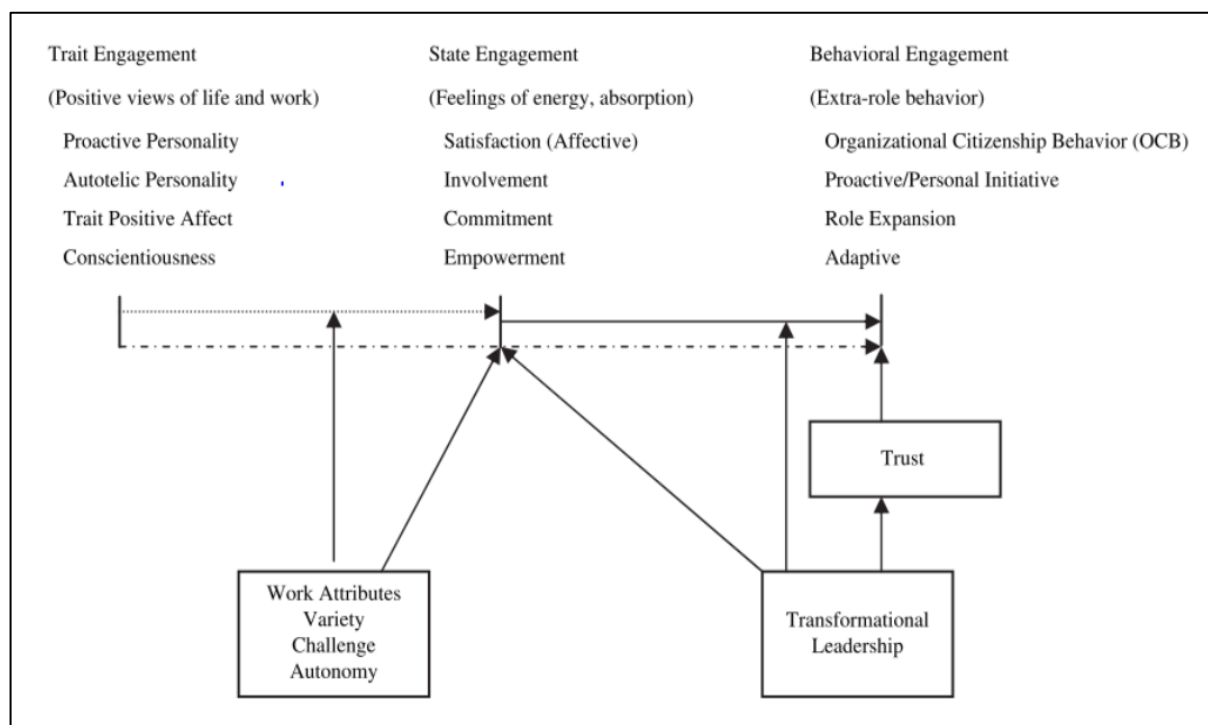
Saks 2019; Shuck et al. 2021) As a result of this and drawing from the discussion, EE is classified as a mature and developed body of literature. However, although a mature body of literature, consistent with Reichers and Schneider's (1990, p. 7) lifecycle model although in Phase 3 – Consolidation and Accommodation, there is still work to be done in clarifying some of the remaining mysteries of the concept. Namely, as will be expanded on in Section 2.3, a call for qualitative studies, focused on the lived experience of individuals within their contextual circumstances (Bakker et al. 2011b; Rana et al. 2014). By contrast the literature on SS, RU and professional staff are best described as emerging bodies of research, noted for their lack of research and disparate bodies of literature (Miskon et al. 2011; Gander 2018b; Soalheira 2020). As a result, the analysis here brings into focus the overarching context in which the study sits. The first is that although there is an extensive amount of literature on EE, the call remains for qualitative studies that explore EE in different contexts from the lived experience of individuals (Bakker et al. 2011b; Rana et al. 2014; Fletcher et al. 2020; Shuck et al. 2021), married with a need to explore and develop the SS literature (Miskon et al. 2011; Soalheira 2020).

### **2.3 Employee Engagement**

The concept of EE has generated enormous interest in both the academic and practitioner domains (Macey & Schneider 2008; Albrecht 2010; Saks 2019; Voice Project 2020; AON 2021; Gallup 2021; Bailey 2022). Despite a proliferation of engagement-related research, there remains room for further discovery (Saks 2006; Albrecht 2010; Rana et al. 2014; Fletcher et al. 2019; Shuck et al. 2021). Faced with a plethora of engagement literature, one of the first challenges lies in defining EE (Macey & Schneider 2008; Albrecht 2010). Intuitively, when we come to define EE, we think we understand it. However, when faced with the task it is soon realised there is a vast and deep complexity to the concept with EE not so easily unravelled. Macey and Schneider (2008) captured the complexities of defining engagement, articulating that EE is a complex nomological network – a multidimensional construct that sits within a family of interrelated yet distinctly identifiable elements. Employee engagement as a construct is linked to job and task satisfaction; job and organisational commitment, psychological empowerment and job involvement with EE associated with desirable outcomes at the individual, group and organisational level (Macey & Schneider 2008; Bailey et al. 2017).

Using Macey and Schneider's (2008) framework below, EE can be viewed as being comprised of trait, state and behavioural conditions. Trait is viewed as an individual's predisposition, that

is, an individual's positive views of life and work, comprising elements of proactive and self-motivated personality (Macey & Schneider 2008). State engagement comprises feelings of energy and absorption and behavioural engagement manifests as discretionary effort and organisational citizenship behaviours (Macey & Schneider 2008). Further, certain job design conditions such as the nature of work, challenge, variety, autonomy and transformational leadership influence state and behavioural engagement (Macey & Schneider 2008). Figure 2.4 shows that these conditions of the workplace and individual traits and behaviours may have both direct and indirect effects on trait, state and behavioural engagement. While trust also has a role in the relationship between leadership and subsequently on behavioural engagement, (Macey & Schneider 2008).



**Figure 0-3 Macey & Schneider's Framework reflecting the complexity of EE**

**Source:** Macey and Schneider (2008, p. 6).

### 2.3.1 Defining engagement

Engagement, rose to prominence through the seminal paper 'Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work' by William Kahn (1990, p. 694) who defined personal engagement as '*the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles*'. *In engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances*' (Kahn 1990, p. 694). Disengagement was seen as '*an*

*uncoupling of oneself from one's work role*' (Kahn 1990, p. 694). *'In disengagement, employees sought to withdraw from their roles cognitively, physically and/or emotionally during work performances'* (Kahn 1990, p. 694). Building from this, (Schaufeli et al. 2002, p. 74) define engagement as *'a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption'*.

The engagement literature has evolved significantly since Kahn's (1990) original work with a number of researchers furthering the paradigm (May et al. 2004; Saks 2006; Schaufeli et al. 2006; Macey & Schneider 2008; Bakker et al. 2011a; Shuck 2011b; Anitha 2014; Bailey et al. 2017; Schneider et al. 2018). Concurrent to the evolution and maturation of engagement in academic literature, there has been a similar evolution of employee engagement initiatives from practitioners and management professionals (Saks 2006) who are also keen to leverage the outcomes employee engagement initiatives would appear to offer (Bailey et al. 2017). To demonstrate the complexities and nuances of the EE construct, Table 2.3 lists key definitions of EE identified in the literature. Table 2.3 is supported by Appendix A which also provides an overview of the key theories and constructs used for EE.

**Table 0-3 Definitions of 'employee engagement' in the literature**

<b>EE as unique and subjective experience to individuals</b>	<b>EE as the positive antithesis to engagement</b>	<b>EE as holistic engagement with state, trait and behavioural components and connection to work, other employees and the organisation. Links to higher performance.</b>
Personal engagement is the 'harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances'. Personal disengagement is described as 'the uncoupling of selves from work roles; in disengagement, people withdraw and defend themselves physically, cognitively, or emotionally during role performances (Kahn 1990, p. 694).	Maslach and Leiter (1997) rephrased burnout as an erosion of engagement. Important, meaningful and challenging work becomes unpleasant, unfulfilling and meaningless. The engagement burnout dimensions conceptualised as direct opposites: energy verses exhaustion, involvement verses cynicism and efficacy verses ineffectiveness (Maslach et al., 2001).	'a positive attitude held by the employee toward the organization and its values. An engaged employee is aware of business context and works with employees to improve performance' (Robinson et al. 2004, p. IX).
<b>EE – as a distinct yet interrelated concept – a unique experience</b>	<b>EE as physical, behavioural and socio emotional experience</b>	<b>EE as a holistic experience and discretionary effort.</b>
Engagement consists of cognitive, emotional and behavioural	Engagement is defined as 'a positive, fulfilling, work-	EE defined in general terms 'as the level of commitment and

components that are associated with individual role performances. Further, engagement is a distinct and unique concept, distinguishable from related concepts as organisational commitment, organisational citizenship and job involvement (Saks 2006).	related state of mind that is characterised by vigor, dedication, and absorption'. Engagement is not a momentary state but rather a 'more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state ...' (Schaufeli et al. 2002, p.74)	involvement an employee has towards their organisations and its values. Anitha (2014) further expands the concept to the behavioural aspect. An engaged employee is aware of their responsibility in the business goals and motivates their colleagues, for the success of the organisational goals. This positive attitude of the employee with the workplace and its value system is positive emotional connection of the employee towards their work. 'Engaged employees go beyond the call of duty to perform their role in excellence' (Anitha 2014, p.308).
---	---	---

**Source:** developed by author

The social science literature has long called upon its scientists to define constructs in order to strengthen their meaning and relevance within a theory that allows scientists to communicate knowledge from one to another, or to outsiders (Timasheff 1947). EE is no different with academia reasoning that a lack of agreed upon definition creates confusion, and risks limiting the applicability of employee engagement in building theory and practice (Refer Shuck et al. 2017 for a good discussion). Macey and Schneider (2008) posit that a single, agreed upon definition of engagement is unnecessary so long as there is agreement on the general constructs and clear delineation of what kind of engagement one is speaking about. Albrecht (2010) articulates that although it is unlikely there will ever be universal agreement of a single definition and measure of engagement, and in line with Timasheff's (1947, p. 201) explanation that concepts consist of constant attributes, it is important that any EE discussion reflect what is conceptually at the core of the construct. That is, that EE is a positive work-related psychological state characterised by a genuine willingness to contribute to organisational success (Albrecht 2010).

For the purposes of this study, this author builds on Albrecht's (2010) position and proposes that EE is a unique experience for individuals through their subjective processing of the factors that influence engagement which is also influenced by the contextual circumstances in which individuals find themselves (Saks 2006; Rich et al. 2010; Bakker et al. 2011a). Additionally, engagement is not static and can be expressed in varying degrees at an individual, task, job, group and/or organisational level, that is, EE is multi-dimensional in nature (Kahn 1990; Saks 2006; Shuck 2011a; Shuck et al. 2017). As a result of this, questions do remain of the lived

experience and influence of the contextual variables surrounding individuals and how this acts to influence engagement, which warrants further research to understand the engagement paradigm (Rich et al. 2010; Bakker et al. 2011b; Jenkins & Delbridge 2013; Rana et al. 2014). In summary and taking into consideration the variety of EE definitions, the number of EE attributes, and the complexity of EE dimensions explored in this section in this study, this study will draw from Saks (2006) and Albrecht's (2010) definitions and define EE as:

*a positive, work-related state that consists of cognitive, emotional and behavioural components that are associated with individual role performances and characterised by a genuine desire to contribute to organisational success.*

This definition captures the multi-dimensional nature of EE, in that a person can have positive in-role affect either simultaneously or incongruently with positive affect towards their employing organisation. Additionally, for this study a holistic view of EE is taken inclusive of job, work, organisational and/or personal engagement.

### **2.3.2 Antecedents and Outcomes of engagement**

There are a number of antecedents and outcomes of engagement which are recognised in the literature (Kahn 1990; Saks 2006; Anitha 2014; Bailey et al. 2017; Saks 2019). Influencing factors of EE include: work environment; leadership; team and co-worker relationships; training and career development; compensation; organisational policies and workplace well-being (Anitha 2014), with work environment and leadership (Macey & Schneider 2008; Anitha 2014) and meaningful work (Albrecht et al. 2021) also associated with engagement. Bailey et al.'s (2017) synthesis of 214 engagement studies grouped the antecedents of engagement into psychological states; experienced job-design-related factors; perceptions of leadership and management; individual perceptions of organisational and team factors and organisational interventions and activities. Meanwhile, recent work by Saks (2021) suggests that caring human resource management (HRM) practices (such as flexible work arrangements, participative decision making, and health and wellness programs) will be reciprocated by employees caring for their organisation to produce an organisational climate of care, which could ultimately foster higher levels of EE.

Documented outcomes of engagement include: positive performance changes at the individual, group and organisational level (Kahn 1990; Anitha 2014; Bailey et al. 2017); increased morale;

health and wellbeing; and positive impacts on work-related attitudes such as commitment, reduced intention to quit and job satisfaction (Kahn 1990; Bailey et al. 2017; Kunte & Rungruang 2018). Interest in engagement is also in part, driven by its reported positive organisational outcomes such as, increased profit margins, higher productivity, increased innovation, positive influences on service environments, reduced absenteeism and turnover (Macey & Schneider 2008; Shuck 2011a; Shuck et al. 2011; Anitha 2014).

### **2.3.3 *Measuring engagement***

Engagement, over the years, has been viewed through a number of theoretical lenses including, but not limited to: social exchange theory (SET) (Blau 1964; Gouldner 1960; Homans 1958); social identity theory (SIT) (Hogg 2016); leader member exchange (LMX) (Dluebohn et al. 2017, job demand resources theory and model (JD-R) (Bakker & Demerouti 2008), job characteristics theory (JCT) (Hackman & Oldham 1976), with a number of studies linking back to Kahn's (1990) original work (Bailey et al. 2017; Kunte & Rungruang 2018). Common measures include the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) Schaufeli et al. 2006; the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) (Demerouti and Bakker 2007) and May et al.'s (2004) three pillar dimensional scale which looks at the physical, emotional and cognitive components of engagement (Bakker & Demerouti 2008). Although the UWES and JD-R model and theory have dominated studies (Bakker et al. 2011a; Bailey et al. 2017; Bakker & Demerouti 2017; Kunte & Rungruang 2018), the OLBI and the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) provide the opportunity to view engagement in partnership with its negative consequences influenced in the burnout literature (Demerouti & Bakker 2008).

Appendix A Table 1 provides an overview of some of the key concepts, frameworks and theories as they currently exist. For the purposes of this study, Kahn's (1990) conceptualisation of the psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work, Saks (2006, 2019) model and Bakker and Demerouti's (2007) JD-R model are expanded on for their relevance to this study. Kahn (1990) is used as it provides a solid foundation with which to understand the psychological conditions of engagement at the individual level (Saks & Gruman 2014). Saks (2006) is used as it was one of the first empirical studies of the antecedents and consequences of EE, with Saks (2019) work, providing an update and review of the applicability of the findings, model and subsequent theory. A discussion on the JD-R model, is provided as the JD-R model is the most commonly used model to explain engagement (Bakker et al. 2011a, 2011b; Saks & Gruman 2014). The JD-R model has also been used across a wide

variety of contexts (Bakker et al. 2011a). Together these authors, Kahn (1990), Saks (2006, 2019) and the JD-R model (Bakker et al. 2011a, 2011b) provide a solid foundation in which to view EE in SS teams in a RU context.

#### **2.3.4 *Kahn's psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work***

Considered the father of employee engagement (May et al. 2004; Crawford et al. 2010; Shuck & Wollard 2010; Wollard & Shuck 2011), Kahn's (1990) seminal paper – *Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement of work* influenced the engagement paradigm (Gruman & Saks 2011; Saks & Gruman 2014; Shuck et al. 2021) and elegantly frames the human experience of engagement. Kahn (1990) builds from Hackman and Oldham's (1976) job characteristic theory (Bailey et al. 2017), grounding Kahn's (1990) work in solid theoretical foundations. May et al. (2004) empirically tested Kahn's (1990) premise finding that meaningfulness, safety and availability were related to engagement (Saks 2006). And although, some 30 years since it was originally conceptualised, Kahn's work is commonly accepted and cited extensively across academic literature (Shuck et al. 2021).

Kahn's (1990) premise was that people use varying degrees of their selves in their work roles, physically, cognitively and emotionally (Kahn 1990). Kahn (1990, p. 694) defined personal engagement as '*the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances*'. Disengagement is defined as, '*the uncoupling of selves from work roles; in disengagement, people withdraw and defend themselves physically, cognitively, or emotionally during role performances*' (Kahn 1990, p. 694).

Kahn's (1990) concepts of engagement and disengagement built from Alderfer (1972) and Maslow (1954) 'integrate the idea that people need both self-expression and self-employment' in their work (Kahn 1990, p. 694). Kahn's (1990) research premise was two-fold: the first being that the psychological experience of work influences people's attitudes and behaviours and secondly, that factors such as individual, interpersonal, group, intergroup, and organisational factors influence these experiences. Kahn's (1990) psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement are in essence an individual's subjective processing of work experiences that create the conditions in which individuals personally choose to engage or disengage at work (Kahn 1990).



Kahn (1990, p. 703) study focused on ‘how people’s experiences of themselves and their work contexts influenced moments of personal engagement and disengagement’. The premise is ‘similar to Hackman and Oldham’s (1980) notion that there are critical psychological states that influence people’s internal work motivations’ (Kahn 1990, p. 703). Kahn’s (1990, p. 703) three psychological conditions (meaningfulness, safety and availability) were analysed as ‘if they were a contract between person and role’. Kahn (1990, p. 703), posited that the three conditions ‘shaped how people inhabited their roles and that individual’s seemed to unconsciously ask themselves three questions around safety, availability and meaningfulness’, which influenced their decision to personally engage or disengage in work situations depending on the answers. The questions related to (1) How meaningful is it for me to bring myself into this role? (2) How safe is it for me to do so? And (3) How available am I to do so? (Kahn 1990, p. 703). Kahn (1990, p. 703) viewed the psychological conditions reflecting ‘the logic of actual contracts’ and that ‘people agree to contracts containing clear and desired benefits and protective guarantees when they believe they have the resources necessary to fulfil the obligation’. In sum, people according to Kahn (1990) vary their personal engagement according to their perceptions of the benefits, meaningfulness and/ or guarantees of safety they perceive in situations. Table 2.4 below provides an overview of Kahn’s (1990) three psychological conditions.

**Table 0-4 Kahn's (1990) three psychological conditions of employee engagement**

Dimensions of Psychological Conditions			
Dimensions	Meaningfulness	Safety	Availability
Definition	Sense of return on investments of self in role performances.	Sense of being able to show and employ self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status or career.	Sense of possessing the physical, emotional and psychological resources necessary for investing self in role performances.
Experiential components	Feel worthwhile, valued, valuable; feel able to give to and receive from work and others in course of work.	Feel situations are trustworthy, secure predictable, and clear in terms of behavioural consequences.	Feel capable of driving physical, intellectual, and emotional energies into role performance.
Types of influence	Work elements that create incentives or disincentives for investment of self.	Elements of social systems that create situations that are more or less predictable, consistent, and nonthreatening.	Individual distractions that are more or less preoccupying in role performance situations.

Dimensions of Psychological Conditions			
Dimensions	Meaningfulness	Safety	Availability
Influences	<p>Tasks: Jobs involving more or less challenge, variety, creativity, autonomy, and clear delineation of procedures and goals.</p> <p>Roles: Formal positions that offer more or less attractive identities, through fit and with a preferred self-image, and status and influence.</p> <p>Work interactions: Interpersonal interactions with more or less promotion of dignity, self-appreciation, sense of value, and the inclusion of personal as well as professional elements.</p>	<p>Interpersonal relationships: Ongoing relationships that offer more or less support, trust, openness, flexibility, and lack of threat.</p> <p>Group and intergroup dynamics: Informal, often unconscious roles that leave more or less room to safely express various parts of self; shaped by dynamics within and between groups in organizations.</p> <p>Management style and process: Leader behaviours that show more or less support, resilience, consistency, trust, and competence.</p> <p>Organizational norms: Shared system expectations about member behaviours and emotions that leave more or less room for investments of self during role performances.</p>	<p>Physical energies: Existing levels of physical resources available for investment into role performances.</p> <p>Emotional energies: Existing levels of emotional resources available for investment into role performances.</p> <p>Insecurity: Levels of confidence in own abilities and status, self-consciousness, and ambivalence about fit with social systems that leave more or less room for investments in self in role performances.</p> <p>Outside life: Issues in people's outside lives that leave them more or less available for investments of self during role performances.</p>

Source: Kahn (1990, p. 705) re-drawn for thesis by author

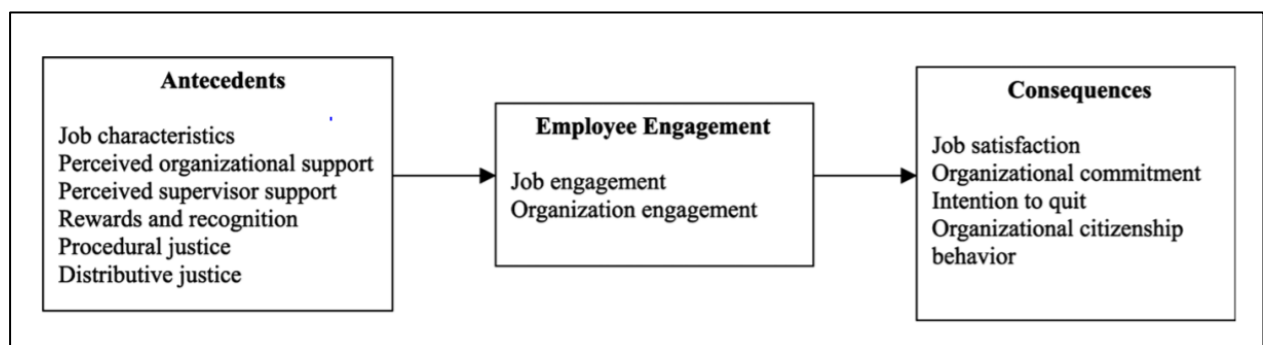
Kahn (1990, p. 703) articulates that this ‘*contractual imagery helped to make sense of the data on participant's experiences...*’. Further, ‘*experiences of the benefits, guarantees and resources were associated with particular influences*’ (Kahn 1990, p. 703). For example, psychological meaningfulness was associated with work elements such as receiving a return on one's physical, cognitive and emotional investments as to whether one felt worthwhile, useful, and valuable, encompassing the ability to undertake challenging and engaging work. Psychological safety was associated with elements of social systems support. Psychological availability was associated with personal distractions that preoccupied people leaving them with varying degrees of availability to engage in role performances.

Although it has been some years since Kahn's original conception of the psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement, Kahn's work was well accepted as the foundational beginnings of EE (Shuck et al. 2021) and provides an elegant insight in which to

understand the psychological conditions that underpin an individual's decision to engage or not engage at work (Saks & Gruman 2014).

### 2.3.5 Saks' expositions of EE in 2006 and 2019

Saks (2006) tested one of the first models of EE and stemming from Kahn's (1990) and Maslach et al.'s (2001) work proposed that it was possible to identify a number of antecedents for EE. Refer to Figure 2.5 for an overview of Saks (2006) original model of EE. Saks (2006) has been used as it was one of the first empirical studies of the antecedents and consequences of EE, with Saks (2019) work providing an update and review of the applicability of the findings, model and subsequent theory.



**Figure 0-4 Saks (2006) Antecedents and Consequences Model of EE**

**Source:** (Saks 2006)

Saks (2006) model and subsequent theory had a number of foundational premises. First, Saks (2006) recognises that although Kahn's (1990) and Maslach et al.'s (2001) models indicate the psychological conditions and/or antecedents that are necessary for engagement, neither model fully explained why individuals respond to these conditions with varying degrees of engagement (Saks 2006). Saks (2006) posits, drawing from Robinson et al.'s (2004) description of EE as a two-way exchange between employer and employee, that social exchange theory (SET) provides a reasonable rationale for understanding the EE relationship exchange. SET proposes that employees choose to engage or not engage, cognitively, emotionally and/or physically, to varying degrees in response to an organisation's actions (Saks 2006). Within SET parameters, if the parties (employee and organisation) abide by the rules of exchange, it is possible, over time, to develop trusting, loyal and mutual commitments.

Saks (2006) model depicts the antecedents and consequences of EE on job engagement and organisation engagement, which is then extended to reflect the outcomes or consequences of engagement such as, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, intention to quit, and/or organisational citizenship behaviour. Saks (2006) believes that the two most dominant roles for organisational members are their work role and their role as members of the organisation. To reflect this, although job and organisation engagement are interrelated, they are viewed as separate concepts (Saks 2006). Drawing from Maslach et al. (2001) and Saks (2006, p.603) who advise that:

*job engagement is associated with a sustainable workload, feelings of choice and control, appropriate recognition and reward, a supportive work community, fairness and justice, and meaningful and valued work.*

Organisational engagement may be viewed as the emotional and intellectual commitment to one's organisation and the discretionary effort individuals are prepared to offer (Saks 2006).

In Table 2.5 Saks (2006) antecedents of job characteristics was informed by Kahn's (1990, 1992) task characteristics and the belief that psychological meaningfulness is developed from a sense of return from self-in-role investments. Task characteristics capture that challenging work, variety, and tasks that allow for the use of different skills, personal discretion and the opportunity to make a valued contribution, enhance psychological meaningfulness (Kahn 1990). Kahn's (1990) task characteristics correlate with Hackman and Oldham's (1980) five core job characteristics (skills variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback). The central premise being that jobs that are high on core job characteristics provide individuals with incentive to bring themselves more fully into their work and as a result are more engaged (Kahn 1990; Saks 2006). The remainder of Saks (2006) proposed antecedents are discussed in Table 2.5 below.

**Table 0-5 Saks (2006) Antecedents of EE**

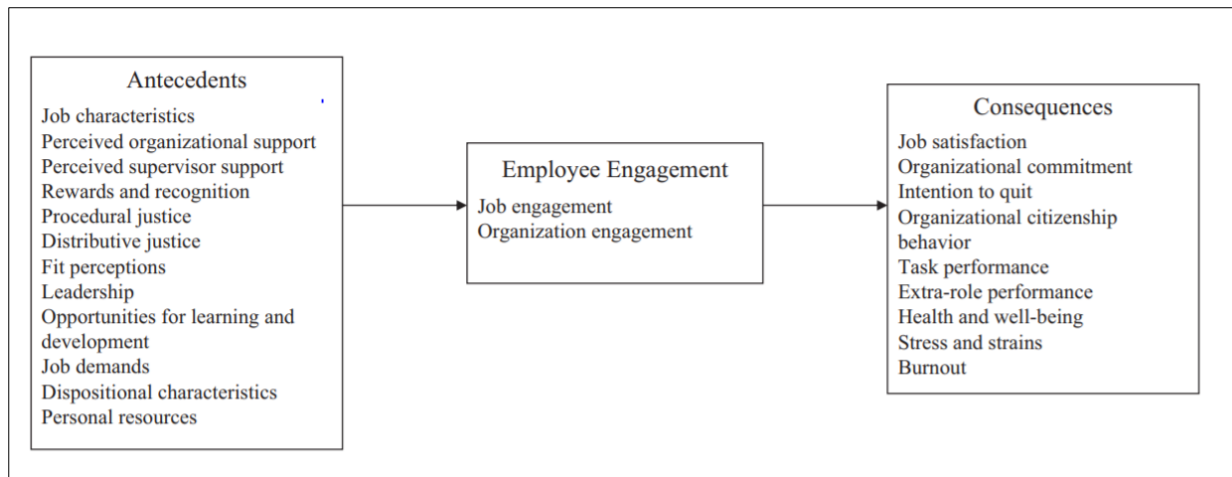
Antecedent	Elements	Hypothesis	Points to note
Job Characteristics	Links to Kahn (1990) and Hackman and Oldham (1980). Posits that challenging work, variety, tasks that allow for different use of skills, personal discretion, and the opportunity to make a valued	Job characteristics are positively related to job and	Discusses job and task characteristics interchangeably.

Antecedent	Elements	Hypothesis	Points to note
	contribution enhance psychological meaningfulness. Kahn's work builds from Hackman and Oldham's (1980) five core job characteristics of skills variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback.	organisation engagement.	
Perceived organisation support (POS) and perceived supervisor support (PSS)	Psychological safety involves a sense of being able to show and employ oneself without negative consequences (Kahn 1990). An important element of safety stems from the amount of care and support employees perceive they are provided by their organization as well as their <b>direct</b> supervisors.	POS and PSS are positively related to job and organisation engagement	Saks (2006) acknowledges POS and PSS (direct supervisor) as being positively related to engagement. Saks (2006) does recognise the positive impact of <b>social support</b> more broadly (see Maslach et al. 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker 2004).
Rewards & Recognition	People vary in their engagement as a function of their perceptions of the benefits they receive from their role (Kahn 1990). A sense of return on investment can come from <b>external</b> rewards and recognition in addition to meaningful work.	Rewards and recognition are positively related to job and organisation engagement	Discusses external rewards does not discuss internal rewards.
Distributive and procedural justice	Organisational justice is concerned with an individual's perceptions of fairness of the organisation (Colquitt et al. 2014). Distributive justice is related to the perceptions of fairness of the decision outcomes. Procedural justice refers to the perceived fairness of the means and processes used to determine outcomes (Colquitt et al. 2014).	Distributive and procedural justice are related to job and organisational engagement.	Positive perceptions of fairness can improve engagement (Maslach et al. 2001). Saks (2006) does not mention interactional justice or it's subcomponents, interpersonal and informational justice.

**Source:** adapted from Saks (2006).

### 2.3.6 Saks 2019

Saks subsequently re-visited his (2006) antecedents and consequences model in 2019 (refer Figure 2.6) conducting additional analyses using the original data. Saks (2019) updated study finding that skill variety is the main job characteristic that predicts job engagement (Saks 2019). Additionally, Saks (2019) found that using the UWES of work engagement, that job characteristics and perceived organisational support are significant predictors of job engagement. Additionally, job engagement predicts job satisfaction, organisational commitment, organisational citizenship behaviour and intention to quit and mediates the relationship between the antecedents and consequences (Saks 2019).



**Figure 0-5 Saks (2019, p.32) Revised model of the antecedents and consequence of EE**

**Source:** Saks (2019, p. 32)

Saks (2019) review of the literature indicated general support for the Saks (2006) model with the 2019 review leading to an updated model with additional antecedents and consequences. Saks (2019) revised model is shown in Figure 2.6 with the additions to the model, along with recent additions in the literature, discussed in Table 2.6. With over 10 years between Saks original and revised work, Saks (2019) reported an exponential jump in the EE literature.

**Table 0-6 Additions to Saks (2006) Antecedents and Consequences Model**

Antecedent	Elements	Hypothesis
Fit perceptions	Perceptions of fit and perceived value-congruence are positively related to engagement (May et al. 2004; Crawford et al. 2010; Rich et al. 2010; Saks & Gruman 2011)	Fit and value congruence influence engagement.
Leadership	Leadership was found to be an important antecedent of engagement, particularly positive types such as transformational, authentic and ethical leadership (Carasco-Saul et al. 2015; Breevaart et al. 2016) . Links to holistic view of relationships with others and the organisation.	Leadership is an important antecedent of engagement – particularly positive types such as ethical (links to organisational justice dimensions).
Opportunities for learning & development	Opportunities for learning and development and the creation of a positive learning climate are positively related to engagement related to engagement.	Important job resource for facilitating engagement (Bakker & Xanthopoulou 2013).
Job demands	Challenges and hindrances influence engagement.	Complex relationship where some antecedents interact to influence engagement. E.g., Job resources can have a buffering effect on engagement when negative job demands are high. Complex interplay between antecedents

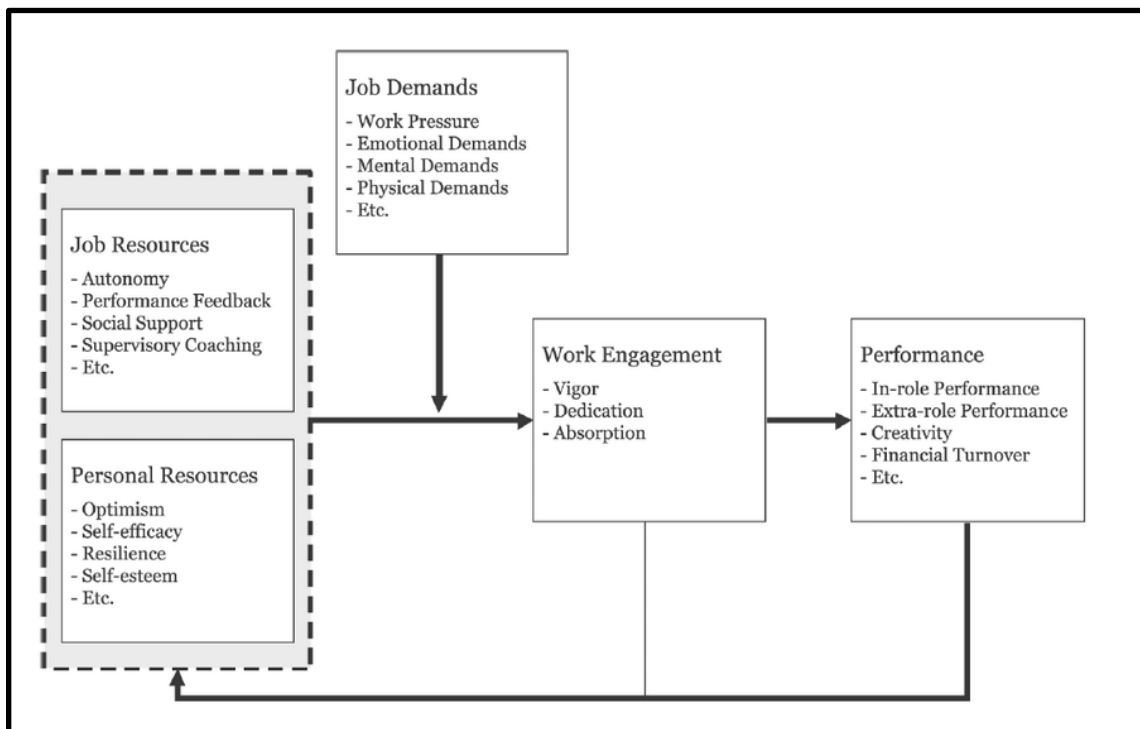
Antecedent	Elements	Hypothesis
		having both moderating and mediating effects.
Dispositional characteristics	Dispositional characteristics such as conscientiousness, positive affect, proactive personality and *core self-evaluations. In addition to personal resources (see below) positively related to work engagement. *core self-evaluations represent a stable personality trait which encompasses and individual's subconscious fundamental evaluations about themselves. People who have high core self-evaluations will think positively of themselves and be confident in their own abilities. Links to the four personality dimensions of locus of control, neuroticism, self-efficacy and self-esteem.	Dispositional characteristics influences engagement
Personal resources	Personal resources such as self-efficacy, optimism and resilience.	Personal resources influence engagement.
Meaningful work	Meaningful work, consisting of a collection of job resources, specifically, job variety, supervisor support, development opportunities, autonomy, and feedback, create a critical psychological state associated with the JD-R model, and consequently links the provision of these job resources to employee engagement (Albrecht et al. 2021).	Meaningful work enhances employee engagement.
Caring HRM system	A system of caring HRM practices such as job design, training and development, flexible work arrangements, work-life balance, participation in decision making, health and safety, career development, and health and wellness programs will support the production of an organisational climate of care (Saks 2022).	Creating an organisational climate of care and concern for employees via the implementation of a 'caring HRM system' will increase employee engagement.

**Source:** Adapted from Saks (2019) Albrecht et al. (2021) and Saks (2021).

Importantly, according to Saks (2019) the practical implications of the updated findings indicate that organisations can influence employee engagement by focusing on skill variety, social support, reward and recognition, distributive and procedural justice and through the provision of opportunities for learning and development (Saks 2019). Additionally, Saks (2019) notes that the relationships are more complex than shown, with some of the antecedents found to be relational (Saks 2019), and others interacting to influence engagement. Thus, there remain a number of moderating and mediating relationships that are not captured (Saks 2019). The more recent findings by Albrecht et al. (2021) and Saks (2021) continue to focus on exploring how collections of various work conditions and factors to create new understandings of how to support EE, such as meaningful work and caring HRM systems respectively.

### 2.3.7 Job Demands-Resources Model (JD-R)

Whilst Saks (2006) published one of the first empirical studies of the antecedents and consequences of EE, the JD-R theory and subsequent model is the most commonly used model to explain engagement (Bakker et al. 2011, 2012; Saks & Gruman 2014). The JD-R model (refer to Figure 2.7) was introduced in international literature some 15 years ago (Bakker & Demerouti 2017) and since that time, the model has been applied across thousands of organisations and inspired numerous empirical studies (Halbesleben 2010; Nahrgang et al. 2011; Bakker et al. 2014; Crawford et al. 2014). Additionally, the JD-R model has been used by practitioners in the UK, Europe, Canada and Australia to ‘*inform psychosocial education policies/activities and risk assessment approaches*’ (Bakker & Demerouti 2017, p. 273).



**Figure 0-6 The Job Demands-Resources model of work engagement**

**Source: Adapted from:** (Bakker & Demerouti 2008, p. 313)

Studies have consistently shown that job resources and personal resources facilitate work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti 2008; Bakker et al. 2011a; Bakker & Demerouti 2017). The JD-R model and subsequent theory assumes that job resources and personal resources are mutually related and combine and/or act independently to influence work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti 2008; Bakker et al. 2011a). For example, the model proposes that when job



demands are high, personal and/or job resources become salient and have a positive impact on work engagement. Work engagement subsequently positively impacts job performance (Bakker & Demerouti 2008). At its core the JD-R model proposes that job and personal resources are the major predictors of engagement, and that these resources become important in the context of high job demands (Bakker & Demerouti 2008).

As displayed in Figure 2.7, job resources refer to those physical, psychological, social or organisational aspects of the job that are necessary to achieve work goals (Bakker & Demerouti 2008). Job resources act to reduce job demands and the associated physical and psychological costs (Bakker & Demerouti 2008). Job resources also act to stimulate personal growth, learning and development (Bakker & Demerouti 2008). Job resources are assumed to play an intrinsic motivational role because they fulfil basic human needs, such as the need for autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Bakker & Demerouti 2008). It is proposed for example, that skill variety fosters learning, which leads to increased job competence with social support and the freedom to make decisions satisfying the need for autonomy and sense of belonging respectively (Bakker et al. 2011a). Job resources may also foster extrinsic motivation through development of positive and resourceful work environments and foster an individual's willingness and return on investment to work tasks (Bakker et al. 2011a).

Job demands refer to those physical, psychological, social or organisational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or cognitive and emotional (psychological) effort (Bakker & Demerouti 2008). Examples of job demands include high workloads and pressure; unfavourable physical environments; and/or emotionally demanding interactions (Bakker & Demerouti 2008). And whilst job demands are not always perceived as negative (at times they might be perceived as challenging and thus motivating), they may turn into stressors when meeting those demands requires high (or sustained) effort from which the employee, with insufficient resources (job and/or personal) is not able to adequately recover (Bakker & Demerouti 2008).

The strength of the JD-R theory and model according to Bakker and Demerouti (2008) is the applicability of the job demands/job resources categories across a wide range of settings with its ability to incorporate many possible working conditions, focusing on both negative and positive indicators that influence employees (Bakker & Demerouti 2008).

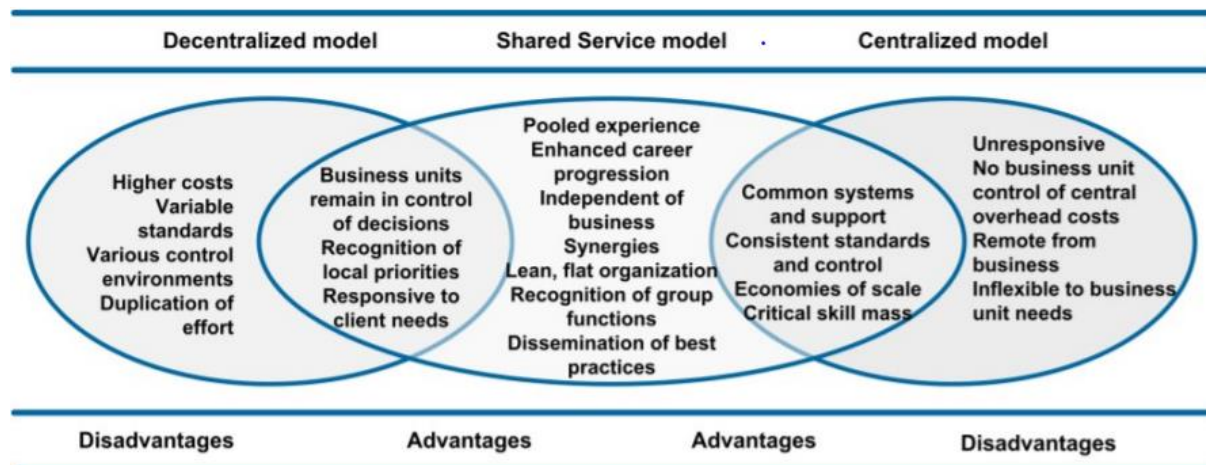
### **2.3.8 Concluding comments of Section 2.3**

In an era where organisations continuously seek to find and leverage efficiencies – the development of an engaged workforce drives bottom line results and offers competitive advantage (Macey & Schneider 2008; Anitha 2014). Intertwined with this, given the complexity of university environments the matter of interpersonal and intrapersonal dynamics should be of concern to everyone with an interest in the future of the Australian university sector (Howes 2018). And although we may understand the necessary conditions for engagement, we do not fully understand why individuals respond to these conditions in various degrees (Saks 2006; Rich et al. 2010; Bakker et al. 2011a). As result of the conundrum of what we do and do not know about engagement, EE has become one of the most significant concepts in field of management in recent years (Crawford et al. 2013 in Bailey et al. 2017, p.32). Additionally, despite the growth and interest in EE as noted from the academic and practitioner domains (Saks 2006; Bailey et. 2017), there remains opportunity for collaboration between the two fields to further advance the concept (Bailey 2022).

As a result of the discussion above and the identified strength of existing measures and theories, and the maturity of the engagement field, these existing measures, Kahn (1990), Saks (2006, 2019) and the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti 2008) provide a core foundation with which to study engagement and can and should be expanded to better capture the positive and negative aspects of engagement (Bakker et al. 2011a; Tims et al. 2011). However, an over reliance on quantitative measures has been noted in the literature (Bailey et al. 2017) and to further our understanding of engagement, there is a need for qualitative studies focused on understanding different contextual environments and how these influence individuals and their engagement levels (Kunte & Rungruang 2018). This study contributes to addressing the challenge going forward, which is to understand EE within deeper contextual environments and to further develop our understanding of how EE influences at the individual, group and/or organisational level (Bakker & Demerouti 2008; Bakker et al. 2011a; Bailey et al. 2017; Kunte & Rungruang 2018). Kahn's (1990) Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work, Macey and Schneider's (2008) Framework, Saks (2006, 2019) Antecedents and consequences model, and the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti 2008; Bakker et al. 2011b; Bakker & Demerouti 2017) provide valuable insight into EE and provide a solid foundation in this study to explore EE within SS teams in a RU context.

## 2.4 Shared Services

To answer the question of what SS is, it is prudent to start with clarifying what SS is not. Shared services is neither centralisation or de-centralisation but rather provides the opportunity to combine the best of what centralisation and de-centralisation has to offer whilst leaving out the inefficiencies (Schulman et al. 1999). Refer to Figure 2.8.



**Figure 0-7 Shared Services versus Centralisation and Decentralisation**

**Source:** (Schulman et al. 1999, p. 12)

Bergeron (2003) describes shared services as a management strategy in which non-core business functions are consolidated into its own organisational unit, primarily to save costs, generate value and improve services (Bergeron 2003; Schulz & Brenner 2010; Knol et al. 2014). In today's competitive environment where there is a focus on administrative efficiencies and reduction of costs, many SS centres are being established in public organisations with the goal of achieving higher levels of efficiency and minimising duplicated support processes (Bergeron 2003; Knol et al. 2014; Richter & Brühl 2021; Plugge et al. 2022). Darbyshire and Shields (2018) believe SS has become the new poster child of university bureaucrats as they seek to minimise burgeoning administrative costs and leverage efficiencies with reduced funding models. Borman and Janssen (2013) eloquently articulate that the flexible nature of SS structures allows for different definitions with slightly different nuances, however, the fundamental essence of the sharing of services and commonisation of support activities remains broadly the same. Borman and Janssen (2013) encapsulate SS as being the consolidation of back-office services within a single area of an organisation, typically replacing arrangements where there has been duplication of effort. This reduces costs, improves innovation, and allows

for increased focus on core activities. At its foundation, SS refers to the practice of an organisation making the decision to share a common set of services rather than have a series of duplicated functions distributed across business units (Quinn et al. 2000, p. 11).

A fundamental shift in a SS approach is a philosophical change from being a transaction focused operation servicing internal and external clients, to one of partnering with stakeholders to co-create value (Schulman et al. 1999; Quinn et al. 2000). For the purposes of this study, Schulman et al.'s (1999) definition of shared services fits well with the research objectives and was adopted. Schulman et al. (1999, p. 9) define shared services as:

The concentration of company resources performing like activities, typically spread across the organisation, in order to service multiple internal partners at lower cost and with higher service levels, with the common goal of delighting external customers and enhancing corporate value.

To date, much of the debate about the effectiveness and efficiencies of SS has focused on IT, HR and Finance business units where the concept of SS first emerged (Schulman et al. 1999; Richter & Brühl 2020), and has tended to focus on critical success factors, methods of implementation, frameworks, and case studies (see Van der Linde et al. 2006; Herbert & Seal 2012; Dollery et al. 2016; Richter & Brühl 2017). However, little attention has been paid to the employee experience, including the EE aspect of working in a SS environment. Additionally, there is scant research undertaken on the experiences of professional staff working in university environments in general, with Szekeres (2006) referring to professional staff as the invisible worker and even less focused through a regional lens. This study appears to be the first of its kind, focused on EE in SS in a RU context.

#### ***2.4.1 Overview of the Shared Services literature***

Evaluating SS as a body of literature is necessary. Despite the growth and interest in SS in the business sector (Miskon et al. 2012; SSON 2021) the field of academic literature on SS is wanting (Schulz & Brenner 2010; Soalheira 2020). Considered an embryonic (Knol et al. 2014), or emergent field (Richter & Brühl 2020), with a scarcity of research (Farndale et al. 2009) with considerable gaps between practice, empirical research and literature (Soalheira 2020). Criticisms include fragmentation and a lack of in-depth studies (Howcroft & Richardson 2012) and a lack of understanding of the antecedents for success (Richter & Brühl 2017, 2020). Additionally, scholars note that research has not been able to keep pace with the evolution of

SS (Lacity et al. 2010; Richter & Brühl 2017). Consistent with the Construct Life Cycle (Reichers & Schneider 1990) discussion in Section 2.2, SS is therefore in the early phases of development as a field of research, with little exposure to conceptual frameworks, industry exposure and best practice. Appendix B provides an overview of the literature that assisted in informing this study, which shows a disparate body of literature, with limited focus on people working in SS environments. What information does exist on SS workers, falls within a broader study of SS environments and is embedded in studies rather than being a central focus of a study.

However, despite the identification of a lack of SS research as can be seen from Appendix B, the literature on SS is developing with a number of quality publications evident and a Google Scholar search using keyword search of ‘shared services’ returning 828,000 results across a broad range of SS topics. Notable publications over the last 5 years include *Management of Shared Services in Asia: Examples from Malaysia and Singapore* (eds. Klimkeit & Thirumaran 2018, p.11) who note that SS are essentially people businesses and as a result three chapters have been included covering the importance of recruitment and selection of talented staff in SS, the criticality of continuous training and development, and ways to retain talent. Organisations used for the study are from the corporate sector and not focused on higher education and although human resources were identified as an important capability, EE was not explicitly explored in this study. Soalheira’s (2020) Dissertation *Shared Services and the Competitive Advantage of the Firm* was a qualitative study, using semi-structured interviews and case studies that drew from the banking, mining, manufacturing, and IT service sectors and conceptualised a new SS model. Soalheira (2020) also identified HR as key capability, with EE not explicitly explored or identified. Richter (2021) and Richter and Bruhl (2022) similarly have a number of publications in the SS space. Including their Richter and Bruhl (2017) journal *Shared Service center research: A review of the past, present, and future*. Once again, whilst Richter and Bruhl (2022, 2017, 2020) identify human resources as a key capability in alignment with Richter’s (2021) paper *Shared Services: configurations, dynamics and performance* EE has not been explicitly identified or explored. Plugge et al.’s (2022) paper used a qualitative analysis of a unique dataset of 121 international firms with findings showing that SS design influences SS success and that this is variable across contextual circumstances that is: SS is not a one size fits all approach.

Interestingly, despite a lack of research within the university context, SS have been extensively adopted as a means for improving organisational performance as business environments seek to innovate to provide quality services at lower costs (Gospel & Sako 2010; Rothwell et al. 2011; Miskon et al. 2012; Bangemann 2017; SSON 2019; Plugge et al. 2022). Additionally, there are predictions that interest in SS will grow in a post-COVID-19 environment, as organisations face increased pressure in finding operational efficiencies, and that SS structures will be of interest to operational areas that were previously thought to be impossible (Deloitte 2021).

There has been an exponential interest in SS as an organising structure in workplaces (Schulman et al. 1999; Quinn et al. 2000; Gospel & Sako 2010; Schulz & Brenner 2010; Miskon et al. 2012; Borman & Janssen 2013; Richter & Brühl 2017; Klimkeit & Thirumaran 2018 (eds); Soalheira 2020). The complexities of moving to SS structures are well noted (Schulman et al. 1999; Miskon et al. 2011; Borman & Janssen 2013; Richter & Brühl 2021) with recognition that human resources are integral to the successful implementation of SS, and to their ongoing success (Schulman et al. 1999; Quinn et al. 2000; Van der Linde et al. 2006; Walsh et al. 2008; Klimkeit & Thirumaran 2018 (eds)). In spite of this observation, there has been limited research that has considered human resources in SS teams. Section 2.4.2 will expand on this discussion.

#### **2.4.2 Human resource capability in SS**

Although no studies could be located that explored EE in a SS team, nor EE within a RU context specifically, the broader literature does provide some insights into the importance of investment into the employee experience in SS environments. Table 2.7 provides some insights noting that labour is a significant SS cost and that human resources are central to the SS equation.

**Table 0-7 Enhancing the employee experience in SS environments**

<b>SS</b>	<b>Link to EE literature</b>
According to Schulman et al. (1999) atmosphere and culture in SS is important. SS employees have a better understanding of the connection and value of their work to the strategic purpose of their organisation. SS team members appreciate the development of the variety of skills required for an SS environment and the career opportunities they perceive SS to bring. SS members can feel a loss of connection to previous business units they worked with. This emphasises the need to	Kahn (1990), SAKS (2006 & 2019) & JD-R model.  Links to job characteristics and use of skills and abilities and importance of social support.

SS	Link to EE literature
make connections between the work of the SS and business units explicit for all employees (Schulman et al. 1999, p.37). Need flexible skilled staff, good communication, buy-in, and develop a partnership approach (Schulman et al. 1999, pp 115-126).	Speaks of link to strategy and purpose which is not explicitly detailed in Kahn (1990), Saks (2006, 2019) or the JD-R model.
Success factors for SS include strong communication configuration and organisational design considerations to facilitate effective (Richter & Bruhl 2021)	SS – design as job resource links to the JD-R model.
The soft stuff is the hard stuff – to make SS weather the inevitable storms, there needs to be a commitment to sustained culture change. Failure to pay attention to the soft side of change is a recipe for underperformance or failure (Quinn et al. 2000, pp.157).	People are central to the SS equation. POS/PSS Social support systems as a job resource Saks (2006 & 2019) & JD-R model.
Transformation takes place at the business unit level; success arises at the firm level. SS implementation is the integration and reshaping of support activity related resources such as human capital, technology and organizational design elements (Gospel & Sako 2010; Maatman & Meijerink 2017). Link between dynamic capabilities and organisational structure underexplored (Richter & Bruhl 2020).	SS design as a job resource linking to the JD-R model and raises again the importance of staff as a resource.
Klimkeit & Thirumaran (eds 2018) SS are essentially people businesses. Recruitment and selection of talented staff is essential and can be challenging. Continuous training and development is important and the provision of career development opportunities plays a key role in retaining staff (Kugler 2018; Pasi 2018; Scholl 2018).	Identifies the importance of people in the SS puzzle. This links again to the JD-R model and. Saks (2019) Antecedents recognises opportunities for learning and development.
Howcroft and Richardson (2012, p.119) SS are feminized environments; bland open-plan surroundings (SS not sexy area to tell your mates you're working in). Workers clustered into their functional team, symbolic of their role within the division of labour. People are both a necessity and a challenge. Right skill mix is a challenge. Only want a subset of staff as too many high-flyers with career aspirations are problematic. Use of teams ubiquitous and physical layout reflects the expectation that employees will work together. Combination of team working, and standardisation and the need to incorporate flexibility allowing for job rotation and interchangeability of labour. While mainstream literature depicts the flattened structure of the team as having the potential to foster group learning, the reality is one of knowledge appropriation and a levelling out of skills, thereby removing distinctions between career grades and denying recognition of some competencies. Labour is the largest cost component of SS (Howcroft & Richardson 2012, p.123).	EE – social structures, job characteristics  Discusses the importance of the people in the SS puzzle.  Job and task variety.  Office design. Raises concept again of SS design as an important job resource linking to the JD-R model. SS environment as both a job resource and demand under the JD-R model.

Source: developed by author

### ***2.4.3 Link between the SS literature and EE***

As highlighted above, although no direct studies of EE in SS teams have been undertaken, people and the design of the SS team are important elements of SS implementation and ongoing success. This adds relevancy to the use of Kahn (1990) in exploring the psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement in understanding what experiences of working in SS environments might influence an individual's decisions to personally engage and disengage in their work roles. The design of SS, for the purposes of this study takes a holistic and encompassing meaning to include decisions around work processes, including decisions around how the SS team partners with clients and the physical design of the SS team i.e., where the team might be located, inclusive of office design. Given the importance of these decisions both Saks (2019) model and the JD-R model provide important insights into those resources and/or antecedents such as job characteristics, opportunities for learning and development, PSS and POS, and social support systems more broadly that have been associated with EE. Additionally, given Saks (2019) contention that skill variety is the main job characteristic that predicts job engagement, this provides an interesting lens given that one of the objectives of SS is commonisation of service delivery and work design with a focus on standardisation of work and skill sets (i.e., a one size fits all approach). In terms of the JD-R model given its broad applicability across contexts, and that job and personal resources facilitate work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti 2017), exploring those job and personal resources that are important in SS environments not only builds our understanding of SS, but assists in furthering the SS literature through analysis with known constructs.

### ***2.4.4 SS in universities***

Despite universities being good candidates for implementing SS structures (Dove 2004; Yee et al. 2009; Miskon et al. 2011), sourcing data on the use of SS in the university sector is difficult to ascertain (SSON 2019). Universities are complex institutions that balance public funding and responsible investment with the need to develop high-quality operations to deliver services to create competitive advantage (SSON 2019). The relative homogenous business requirements of universities coupled with continued pressure to find operational efficiencies, and manage costs, creates an environment where the sharing of services becomes an attractive option (Miskon et al. 2011; Deloitte 2021). In 2019 the Shared Services and Outsourcing Network (SSON) reported that an increasing number of universities were opting to set up SS centres as an effective means of running their operations (SSON 2019). Whilst hard data is difficult to ascertain, SSON (2019) advised that of the 51 universities across Australian and New Zealand



(ANZ), 27 (53%) reported having some form of SS in their organisation. With significant growth over the past 10 years, since 2014, SS have doubled and compared to 2010, the number of SS centres has increased five-fold (SSON 2019). At a meeting of the Australian Business Dean's Council (ABDC 2021 personal communication Friday 30, April) of the 39 representative members present all reported having SS of some form at their university, with the primary focus on the sustainable delivery of services whilst managing costs.

Although limited, some SS research does exist that incorporates an Australian context. Miskon et al. (2011) conducted an exploration of the types of SS arrangements in Higher Education (HE), undertaking a literature review and comprehensive search for cases of SS in the HE sector. Miskon et al.'s (2011, p. 3) search yielded disparate sources of information such as whitepapers, reports, and web site information. Miskon et al. (2011) identified SS at the University of Melbourne, Macquarie University, University of Newcastle, University of Wollongong, University of Sydney, Monash University, University of New South Wales, and UniSQ. A similar internet search to Miskon et al.'s (2011) for this study yielded (but not limited to) SS at Swinburne University, RMIT, Southern Cross, Griffith University, University of Tasmania, and Australian National University. Miskon et al. (2011, p. 1) acknowledged that:

...there has been little synthesis, conceptualization or discussion (in general or in HE) around the different types of possible shared services options and how they are structured. A deeper understanding of potential types of sharing arrangements will be of value to those universities considering shared services, implementing shared services, and managing shared services.

Whilst Miskon et al.'s (2011) study focused on IT, some learnings are possibly applicable across broader SS teams. Miskon et al. (2011) found that universities typically implement SS to leverage the delivery of services through enhanced human and technical resources, with a focus on cost control. This is consistent with the extant literature on SS and that in Australian universities, SS are most commonly implemented to leverage operational efficiencies, manage costs and reduce duplication (Miskon et al. 2015; Elmasri 2019; SSON 2019). Whilst there is limited academic research on staff experiences of SS, some articles in the *Campus Morning Mail* raise staff concerns around perceived loss of knowledge and services with the

implementation of SS, and concerns around reduction in staffing numbers with SS seen as a threat to collaborative relationships (CMM 2020).

Despite this noted lack of research on SS (Klimkeit & Thirumaran 2018 (eds); Soalheira 2020) and concerns with the difficulty of implementation and doubts as to the reality of the delivery of cost savings (Richter & Brühl 2017; Richter & Brühl 2021), there seems to be a continued interest and growth of SS teams in general and in the university sector (SSON 2021). As a result, this study adds a valuable piece to the SS literature, particularly from a regional university lens.

#### **2.4.5 *Summary of section 2.4***

As can be seen from the discussion above, the literature on the employee experience of working in SS is wanting (Schulz & Brenner 2010; Soalheira 2020), despite recognition that human resources are an important factor in SS implementation and to SS ongoing success (Schulman et al. 1999; Klimkeit & Thirumaran 2018 (eds)). Additionally, despite the growth of SS in the higher education section (SSON 2021), and with an anticipated growth in a post-COVID-19 pandemic era (Deloitte 2021), little investigation has been undertaken in university environments, including from a regional university perspective. Thus, this study will add to the current theoretical and practical debate about the effectiveness of SS as a way of organising work functions and identify the factors that influence EE within these structures in the contextual parameters of this study. The section that follows will provide insight into the RU context inclusive of the role of professional staff, that will add additional insight into the contextual circumstances in which the study is seated.

### **2.5 Regional University Environment**

The Australian Government classifies locations outside of Australian major cities (Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide and Canberra) as regional (Aust Govt 2020; Regional Australia Institute 2017). Regional Australia is home to 9.45 million Australians, with regional areas making a considerable contribution to the Australian economy accounting for one third of our national output and employing one in three working Australians (Regionalaustralia.org.au 2020). Regional universities are anchor institutions for their communities, as a major employer and through the provision of important social and economic value (Productivity Commission 2017; RUN 2018; Aslan 2020; RUN 2020).

In a pre-COVID environment, The Regional University Network's (RUN) report *The economic impact of the Regional Universities Network* found that regional universities delivered an additional \$2.4b to their communities, created 11,300 jobs in regional Australia, with 7 out of 10 graduates going on to work in a regional area (RUN 2018, 2020). In terms of spending, it is estimated that regional students spend approximately \$690m in their campus regions with RUN universities themselves generating \$2.5bn worth of investment and spending (RUN 2020); RUN (2021). Current member universities of the RUN are CQ University, Charles Sturt University, Southern Cross University, University of New England, University of the Sunshine Coast, University of Southern Queensland, and Federation University.

### ***2.5.1 Literature on regional universities***

Literature from an Australian regional university perspective is sparse and is mainly provided via whitepapers, reports and grey literature through institutions such as the RUN, Universities Australia, and Government organisations such as the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), and the Department of Education. A Google Scholar search using the search term 'regional universities' returns a range of disparate results with a broad range of foci including, a number of papers focused on international contexts (UK, America, Greece, Korea, Vietnam/Mongolia etc) with studies from an Australian context limited. A selection of relevant publications from 2018 to 2022 include:

*Shaping the 21<sup>st</sup> century student experience at regional universities – Final report 2018* (Nelson et al. 2018). The project surrounding the report was focused on the student experience with a view to improving outcomes. Partner institutions included Charles Sturt, Central Queensland University, Federation University, James Cook University, Southern Cross University, University of New England, and University of Southern Queensland. Of the Six recommendations for institutions the first was to intentionally design and enact administrative practices, including admissions pathways, to ensure all students are able to participate fully in the university's formal and informal activities. The report also acknowledges that the Australian higher education system is operating in an increasingly complex sociocultural, economic, and political environment (Nelson et al. 2018).

Goriss-Hunter and White's (2021) article in the Australian Universities Review, *Teamwork and regional universities - The benefits for women of a third space*, found that women enjoyed working in teams and preferred flexibility, autonomy and positive teamwork environments.

Additionally, the article also recognised the valuable contribution that regional universities make regionally and nationally and that regional universities are closely linked to the communities in which they operate.

Aprile et al.'s (2021) paper *Publish, perish, or pursue? Early career academics' perspectives on demands for research productivity in regional universities*, although focused on academic experiences, also highlighted the influence of working in a regional university as an important influencer driving a sense of personal satisfaction for workers through being connected to and making a difference in regional communities.

Shinners (2022) paper *Defining regionality for Australian higher education* (incidentally the Author is from the Office of the Vice-Chancellor at UniSQ), notes again the importance of and connection of regional universities to their communities and the valuable economic and social contribution regional universities make locally and nationally to the Australian economy. Shinners (2022, p.514) notes that regionality is not well defined in the Australian higher education sector with a need for 'regional universities to take ownership of the concept' in development of their identities. Shinners (2022, p.519) suggests that a definition of regionality in higher education should not default to the oft-used 'non-metropolitan' definition and offers the following definition:

Regionality describes the way in which a higher education institution understand, connects with and responds to the geographic, socio-economic and political context in which it operates. Regionality is a reciprocal concept, where synergies between a region and a higher education institution are mutually beneficial, and positively contribute to the identity of both.

In 2017 the Australian Government commissioned an Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education (IRRRRE). Emeritus Professor John Halsey conducted the review to examine the challenges faced by students with a view to finding innovative solutions to help them succeed at school and beyond (Australian Government 2021). Although the report had a broad remit across the education sector, access to quality educational opportunities (including university study) remains a priority for the Australian Government noting the value of regionally placed universities and that

‘ given the existing challenges, and those that lie ahead, access to high quality education and training opportunities for RRR young people and communities are ‘non-negotiables’ (Halsey 2018).

### ***2.5.2 University environments and the impact of COVID-19 on regional universities***

Whilst the full economic impact of COVID-19 continues to unfold, the Australian university sector has been forced to rapidly respond to a market that is exposed to considerable financial risks and loss of income from international students and other environmental changes, with the sector expected to lose billions of dollars in revenue with a projected A\$18 billion by 2024, in lost revenue from international students alone (PWC 2019; Aslan 2020; RUN 2020; Maslan 2021). And whilst the winds of change were already upon universities, COVID-19 has rapidly accelerated the need to find efficiencies and reduce costs (O'Connor & Connelly 2020; TEQSA 2021). Whilst the challenges for regional and metropolitan universities are similar with the need to move to online delivery, loss of income from international students, uncertainty around ongoing student enrolments, loss of revenue in student accommodation, and changes to funding (Aslan 2020; Thatcher et al. 2020; RUN 2021; TEQSA 2021). Without targeted support, Covid-19's long-term impact on regional universities and their communities is potentially devastating (Aslan 2020).

Whilst it was deemed inevitable that jobs would be lost in the Australian university sector as a result of COVID-19 (Aslan 2020), the reality and impact is daunting (Littleton & Stanford 2021a). The picture for Australian universities is ‘getting worse’ with research from the Centre for Future Work reporting that the tertiary sector has been hit by bigger job losses than any other non-agricultural sector in the economy (Littleton & Stanford 2021b), and that the sector had lost almost 40,000 staff in 2020 (Littleton & Stanford 2021). Whilst all universities are affected, regional universities and their communities are most vulnerable (Aslan 2020; RUN 2020). This is particularly concerning as regional universities are also often the largest employer in their home cities, playing a significant role through economic growth and capability development for their regions (RUN 2020). Helen Bartlett, former RUN Chair (in Aslan 2020) believes the impacts for job losses are felt the greatest for regional economies and communities where there are few alternatives for professional employment locally. Aslan (2020) believes that if regional universities are not supported, regional education and economies will suffer for many years.

Whilst it is recognised that the ‘university sector is vital to Australia’s future’ (Productivity Commission 2017, p. 3), and post-COVID-19 recovery (Littleton & Stanford 2021; RUN 2021; Universities Australia 2021) with the sector employing 8% of Australian workers and our largest services export contributing \$41 billion to Australia’s GDP (Universities Australia 2021) we have seen a continued call over the past few years for greater transparency, accountability and efficiency when it comes to tax-payer funded endeavours (Abbott & Doucouliagos 2003; Hare 2016; Birmingham in Baxendale 2017; TEQSA 2021). In the face of decreased monetary support from government funds there has been a call domestically and internationally for universities to decrease administrative costs to ensure universities are able to deliver value to their students (Birmingham in Baxendale 2017). Some in the sector call this the commercialisation of the university and heralds in the era where universities are expected to be managed as viable business that generates financial value (Howes 2018).

Howes (2018, p. 442) attests to the complexity of university environments describing them as ‘very complex socio-political-educational institutions with many competing internal cultures and multifaceted interpersonal and intrapersonal dynamics’. Goodman (2018) captures the essence of the shift of change in university environments well, articulating that there are questions around the relevance of physical campuses with a move to digitised, flexible delivery modes. And, concurrent with a rise in university costs, we have seen rising expectations from stakeholders (students – international and domestic, government and taxpayers) on perceptions of value for money and university outcomes in terms of research outputs, and graduate ready qualities (Goodman 2018; Devinney & Dowling 2020). Universities are somewhat experiencing an identity crisis, working to re-invent themselves and remain relevant amidst changes in public perceptions of the value of universities and changes to government funding models (Goodman 2018). Changes to funding models, and a difficult political environment marred by uncertainty, short-termism, and a lack of bipartisan consensus is also significantly influencing the sector (Friday & Cawood 2018). The University of Sydney Association of Professors (2018) believes that the corporatised university model led by non-academic staff is a threat to the quality of traditional university models and academic life. These evolving trends and the scarcity of research focusing on the experiences of professional staff in regional universities provides an interesting backdrop in which to consider EE, with the development of an engaged workforce playing an important role in organisational sustainability in post-COVID-19 recovery (Deloitte 2020).

### ***2.5.3 Professional staff in universities***

Despite the important contribution professional staff make to their employing universities, they have been largely ignored in academic literature (Gander 2018b). With a reported 130,000 people employed in academic and professional roles in Australian Universities, with 14000 of those in regional areas (Universities Australia 2021). Professional staff are significant contributors to the functioning of universities (Bossu et al. 2018). Gander (2018b) reports that detailed data is not collected on professional staff in Australia, however, if comparisons were drawn with UK universities (which are based on similar governance systems), Gander (2018b) estimates that there would be over 15,000 professional staff in Australian universities. For perspective of scale, professional staff account for over half of a universities staffing profile, with significant costs associated with administrative functions of university life (Padro in Bossu et al. 2018, p. V). Szekeres (2006) and Lewis (2014) in Gander (2018b) raised this paradox of the invisible, hidden, unnoticed and undervalued professional staff which was at odds with their increasing positions of authority, importance, and centrality to the operation of their organisation.

There are various terms used to describe professional staff that exist within universities including non-academic, general staff, administrative staff, support staff, managerial, professional and technical (Graham 2012; Bossu et al. 2018; NTEU 2021). The term professional staff was established by the Association for Tertiary Education Management (ATEM) in Australian Universities through a sector-wide consultation process in 2011 (Graham 2012 in Bossu et al. 2018, p. 3). UniSQ (2018) classifies professional staff as anyone employed by the university who is not employed as an academic employee (USQ Enterprise Agreement 2018-2021, p.7).

Whilst Gander's (2018) assessment that Professional Staff have been largely ignored in academic literature, Table 2.8 below shows that there is emerging scholarship exploring what it means to be a professional staff member in a university context. While this table does not capture all research to date on professional staff, it provides a summary of the emerging themes on within the scholarship on professional staff working within the university sector.

***Table 0-8 Selection of literature exploring professional staff in a university context***

Author/s and year	Type	Title	Notes
Bossu et al. (2018)	Book	Professional and Support Staff in Higher Education	Topics include Identities and Third Space; Concepts, Practice and Representation; Leadership and Collaboration; Career Development and Progress. Davis (2018, pp262-273) Chapter <i>Connecting the Dots for Professional Practice in Higher Education: Leadership, Energy Management, and Motivation</i> . Connects the dots in higher education in a time described as volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) to leadership, energy management, and motivation.
Roberts (2018)	Journal	Professional staff contributions to student retention and success in higher education	The paper focuses on the contributions that professional staff make within the student lifecycle. Model proposed has been developed through a regional university lens – namely Charles Sturt University. Literature review includes role of professional staffing noting their invisibility in the literature and valuable contributions to university life. Roberts (2018, p.145) review of the literature indicates that student success is more likely when institutions recognise the essential value of both academic and professional staff contributions through a partnership approach to deliver student-centred outcomes.
Gander (2018a)	Journal	Professional staff in universities: Career needs, values, attitudes and behaviours	A mixed method approach exploring the careers of university professional staff via 226 participants from the UK and Australia. Findings extended the career profile theory by highlighting that individual needs, related behaviours and outcomes and that various psychological mechanisms act to drive career behaviours. Paper also notes that limited research has been undertaken on professional staff careers within universities despite the increased reliance on professional management in universities (Dollard and Banks 2014 in Gander 2018b).
Veles (2020)	Thesis	University professional staff in collaborative <i>third space</i> environments: A multiple case study of the Australian and Singapore campuses of one university	University professional staff comprise more than 50 per cent of Australian higher education staff. Third space collaborations (third space – the cross-boundary space between professional and academic domains). Utilisation of the third space offers the opportunities to access professional staff's wide range of skills and expertise – with the opportunity to leverage capability and co-create value (creation of collaborative capital).
Journal for Higher Education Policy and Management	Journal	The journal is an international journal of professional experience and	1 x article on SS – O'Regan (2012) Timetabling: a shared services model (at the University of New Castle).



Author/s and year	Type	Title	Notes
		ideas in higher education. Research articles in this journal are double-blind peer reviewed with a Q1 rating	Curran and Prottas (2017) <i>Role stressors, engagement and work behaviours: a study of higher education professional staff</i> . Focused on US higher education context. Perceptions of role ambiguity, conflict and work overload led to lower levels of EE and organizational citizenship behaviours.  Bolden & Petrov (2014) <i>Hybrid configurations of leadership in higher education employer engagement</i> .  Special issue: <i>Employability and employment outcomes as drivers of higher education practice</i> ” <i>Implications for development of a future-capable workforce</i> (Vol 41, Issue 5, 2019). – focused on graduate outcomes
Australian Universities Review	Journal published 2 yearly	The journal is the National Tertiary Education Union’s (NTEU) refereed journal, published to encourage debate and discussion about issues in higher education and it’s contribution to Australian public life with a focus on matters of concern to NTEU membership (NTEU 2022)	<i>Coronavirus and the crisis of higher education: Post-pandemic universities</i> (Roffee & Kimberley 2022). Confirms that universities have long been in crisis, well before the Covid-19 pandemic. Move of universities into marketized and commodified public system (Rea 2016).

**Source:** developed by author

#### 2.5.4 Professional staff – motivations

Gander’s (2018b) study on careers of professional staff, in Australia and the UK provides some insight into the motivations of university professional staff finding that professional staff have a number of key expectations from their roles including, high levels of responsibility, skill development, skill utilisation, and interesting work. Additionally, professional staff are attracted to the university sector by an integrated set of needs including, the opportunity to use their skills and experience, a friendly work environment, career security, salary, with individuals also placing a high emphasis on sector values (LFHE 2010 in Gander 2018). In sum, people are attracted to the higher education sector because they feel it offers a worthwhile

career path and drives a sense purpose (Gander 2018b). Whilst professional staff are satisfied with their roles, there was a mismatch between the desire for a career and opportunities for promotion (Gander 2018b). Gander (2018) advises these findings relate closely to new contemporary career orientations of protean and boundaryless careers with scholars finding that employees are now more motivated by attitudes such as value match, interesting and challenging work (intrinsic motivators) compared with more traditional careers driven by extrinsic motivators such as promotion, pay, and job security (Briscoe et al. 2006; Arthur 2014). Some caution is warranted, as although the study showed that intrinsic motivators were the most important, extrinsic motivators were not unimportant (Gander 2018b), with participants particularly interested in the career and promotion opportunities gap. Gander's (2018b, p. 1) findings:

*...indicate that professional staff have an integrated approach to expressing their own meaning of career success, integrating both traditional, extrinsic desires with more contemporary, intrinsic ones.*

There are a few important points to note from Gander's (2018b) study. The first is the importance that individuals place on intrinsic motivators, that are satisfied by their organisations which lead to overall satisfaction (Gander 2018b). Professional staff have higher levels of job satisfaction, when they are intrinsically motivated by skill utilisation, interesting work, skill development, responsibility and autonomy, with their needs fulfilled for promotion and career opportunities.

#### ***2.5.5 UniSQ – An overview of the participant organisation in this study***

UniSQ is a medium-sized, regional university headquartered in Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia (UniSQ Toowoomba), which is located 110 kilometres west of the Brisbane CBD (UniSQ Annual Plan 2019, p. 7). UniSQ also has two campuses located at Springfield and Ipswich and operates a hub at Stanthorpe based within the Queensland College of Wine Tourism (QWCT), which is a joint venture with the Qld Government (UniSQ Annual Plan 2019, p.7). A core function of UniSQ is to support the engagement of Queenslanders in higher education, with a reported 59% of full-time UniSQ students living and or working in a regional location (UniSQ Annual Report 2019, p.25), with UniSQ also one of the largest employers on the Darling Downs (UniSQ Annual Report 2019, p.25).

UniSQ has evolved through a number of phases over its 50 year plus history, evolving as a regional campus of the Queensland Institute of Technology in 1967, to an autonomous college of advanced education – The Darling Downs Institute of Advance Education (DDIAE) in 1971, through to the University College of Southern Queensland (UCSQ) in 1991 to become The University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ) in January of 1992 (UniSQ Annual Plan 2019, p.7). UniSQ is a ‘recognised leader in online and blended education’ (UniSQ 2020) and offers on-campus and off-campus education, with more than half of its student cohort electing to study fully online domestically and internationally (UniSQ Annual Plan 2019, p.7).

With the cessation of the demand-driven funding model, and the impact of COVID-19 UniSQ recognises that Australian universities are operating in challenging times (UniSQ Annual Report 2019, p.8; UniSQ Annual Report 2020). In addition to student and research focused efforts, UniSQ has also sought to: strategically align the University’s resources; streamline administrative structures and processes to achieve organisational efficiencies whilst maintaining and further optimising productivity and quality through continuous improvement’ (UniSQ 2019, p.8). The UniSQ 2020 Annual Report noted the continued ‘highly dynamic and challenging operating environment’ for universities, particularly the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (UniSQ 2020, p.3). This commentary of the pressure on the university environment is mirrored in the extant literature (see Howard 2020; Thatcher et al. 2020) with many acknowledging that the ‘winds of change’ were already gathering momentum, prior to COVID-19.

In 2020, UniSQ worked to consolidate its position in supporting regional development through focused research and accessible higher education whilst ‘continuing its program of necessary reforms’ (UniSQ Annual Report 2020, p.3). With a number of reviews, restructures and realignments in 2018, 2019 and 2021, (*Campus Morning Mail* 2019, 2021), with UniSQ reporting a number of voluntary redundancies (UniSQ Annual Report 2019) and a voluntary early retirement round in 2022 to respond to the pressure in the external environment.

#### **2.5.6 *UniSQ Employee Engagement***

UniSQ surveys employees on a regular basis to gauge the level of engagement within the workplace (2018 UniSQ Annual Report). Table 2.9 below provides a summary overview from UniSQ Annual reports of outcomes from EE surveys for the years 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020.

**Table 0-9 UniSQ EE survey results**

UniSQ EE - Key points reported in Annual Reports	Researcher reflection and link to the literature
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>In March 2020, UniSQ conducted its sixth employee engagement survey</b> (UniSQ Annual Report 2020, p.54). With a participation rate of 76%, the results ‘showed that EE remained high at 74%’ (UniSQ Annual Report 2020, p.54).</li> <li>• The results also showed that ‘employees share a strong belief in the purpose and values of UniSQ and highly value their relationships with co-workers’ (UniSQ Annual Report 2020, p.54).</li> <li>• Additionally, the survey reported high levels of satisfaction from employees in regard to UniSQ’s flexibility, safety, diversity and inclusion initiatives (UniSQ Annual Report 2020, p.54).</li> <li>• Results also highlighted some continuing themes that UniSQ needs to focus on including: ‘building a shared understanding of the future direction and strategy of the University through improved communication, streamlining change management and improving work processes’ (UniSQ Annual Report 2020, p.55).</li> <li>• The results from the survey also showed that ‘employees’ awareness and belief in UniSQ values is at 89%, which is 7% higher than other benchmarked universities throughout Australia and New Zealand’ (UniSQ Annual Report 2020, p.55).</li> </ul>	<p>Survey articulates that staff ‘share a strong belief in the purpose and values of UniSQ’. Links to Gander’s (2008) contention that professional staff are attracted to the sector through an integrated set of needs.</p> <p>High value on relationships with co-workers – suggestive that these relationships are important job resource. This also links to Gander’s (2008) contention that professional staff are attracted to a ‘friendly work environment’.</p> <p>Also see how these components combine to be effective job resources in the JD-R and Saks (2019) Fit perceptions through values congruence.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The fifth employee engagement survey was conducted in February 2018</b>, with a participation rate of 79% (2018 UniSQ Annual Report, p.50). Overall, it showed that results remained high at 75%, placing UniSQ on par with university sector benchmarks (2018 UniSQ Annual Report, p.50).</li> <li>• High levels of satisfaction from employees were found in regard to UniSQ’s diversity and inclusion practices, alignment to organisational purpose and values, and the workplace benefits that UniSQ employees enjoy’ (2018 UniSQ Annual Report, p.50).</li> <li>• The results also highlighted some continuing themes that the University must give focus to over the coming years as we continue to strive towards improved impact from our educational and research activities, including building a shared understanding of the future direction and strategy for the University, and increasing collaboration, communication and innovation across the organisation (2018 UniSQ Annual Report, p.50).</li> </ul>	<p>Continue to see a need to build a shared understanding and link to the vision and strategy of the organisation.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The fourth EE survey was conducted in 2016</b> with an 87% response rate -well above regional University sector response rate of 66% (UniSQ Annual Report, p.45).</li> <li>• On average USQ’s results increased by 5 percent overall to the 2014 survey, and by 11 percent compared to the 2010 survey. Results show that UniSQ continues to outperform the Australian University benchmark average on almost all</li> </ul>	<p>High rate of EE – above sector results including above sector results for response rates.</p> <p>Shows strong relationship between employees and the organisation.</p>

UniSQ EE - Key points reported in Annual Reports	Researcher reflection and link to the literature
<p>management practices assessed within the survey. In particular, UniSQ's employee engagement level of 79 percent exceeded its key performance indicator target of 77 percent, and places it fourth in the University sector in terms of the highest levels of engagement. Whilst there are some areas that continue to come through as challenges for UniSQ, the positive news is that these areas have all shown increases compared to previous results.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UniSQ was presented with an Australian Higher Education Industry Association/Voice Project "Change Challenge Award" for achieving the second highest levels of positive change (i.e., most significant growth and improvement) among all universities that Voice Project surveyed in the period July 2015 to June 2016. The awards recognise organisations that achieve outstanding improvements in their people management and employee engagement. This is the second time UniSQ has received this award, with the University previously winning this same accolade in 2014. Being recognised with this award for a second consecutive occasion demonstrates a dedicated and sustained focus on driving long term improvements in the work environment and culture at UniSQ (2016 Annual Report, p.38).</li> </ul>	<p>Links to Kahn (1990) and Saks (2019), sense of return of investment of self in role, values congruence and perceptions of fit. Possible links to Ganders (2018a) contention that employees are intrinsically motivated by a connection and sense of purpose.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The third UniSQ EE survey was conducted in 2014.</b> Improving Divisional and University-wide communication, consultation and involvement in decision making. Streamlining processes and eliminating and reducing red-tape and bureaucracy. A focus on internal capability and capacity development for leaders and managers. Alignment of University expectations for ICT and information services with resources and prioritisation. A range of various human resources, people development and culture initiatives and priorities (2015 UniSQ Annual Report, p. 33).</li> </ul>	<p>Raises the importance of communication</p>

**Adapted from:** UniSQ annual reports 2015, 2016, 2018, 2020

Overall, participation rates in the EE surveys are at benchmarked or above industry standards for the period 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020. As a result, these survey results do provide reasonable insight into EE at UniSQ. Throughout the surveys UniSQ identified a number of key areas in which they were doing well, and that were important to staff and a number of 'continuing themes' that required focus (UniSQ Annual Report 2020, p.54). These included the need to continue to develop communication and the need to build an alignment to the purpose and strategy of the university.

### **2.5.7 *Shared Services at UniSQ***

Ahead of the SSON's [\*Shared Services for Higher Education Summit\*](#) (25-27 November 2019) in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. Joe Guerrini, a shared services manager (finance) at UniSQ provided the following insights. UniSQ has been leveraging shared services for over a decade (SSON 2019) and are now developing a business case for further optimisation that allows them to continue to evolve SS through further 'centralisation' of operations and reduction of service points by 75% (SSON 2019). Mr Guerrini (SSON 2019) concluded that success factors for building a successful SS included: building a cohesive and aligned team with consideration of the physical placement of staff to facilitate relationships and the flow of information (Guerrini cited in SSON 2019); understanding the need and offer of modern support; and balancing the need for speed and compliance (Guerrini cited in SSON 2019). At the heart of the implementation for SS was to 'drive contingency planning' to ensure service standards and the continuity of delivery of services, the by-product has been cost savings, a reduction of staff numbers by natural attrition, and increased service abilities resulting from cross-skilling (Guerrini cited in SSON 2019).

Teams that have been grouped into SS at UniSQ include, Finance, HR, IT, Student Support Services, and some services teams within the Research portfolio. (Note: although approached Mr Guerrini was not available to be interviewed as part of this study. However, participants from SS teams including other managers and supervisors were able to be interviewed).

### **2.5.8 *RU and Professional staff link to the EE literature***

As can already be seen from the discussion throughout section 2.5 there is a complex interplay of factors that may act to influence EE in SS teams in a RU context. These include a sense of connection through working at a regional university and contributing to one's community, attraction to the sector for the opportunity to use one's skills and experience, perceptions of positive work environments, career security and values congruence. In essence it is possible to get a sense of factors that broadly combine into job resources and personal resources under the JD-R model. Additionally, it is possible to see the link to Sak's (2019) Antecedents of EE, particularly through job characteristics, fit perceptions, and learning and development opportunities.

### **2.5.9 Summary of Section 2.5**

This section provided an overview of regional universities and professional staff in general assisting in setting the context for their operating environment and pressures resulting from the impact of COVID-19 and sector changes. As can be seen, regional universities and professional staff make a valuable contribution to their organisations and the communities in which they serve. Given the under researched areas of their contextual circumstances, investigation into the lived experience of their working lives has the opportunity to assist policy makers, managers, supervisors and the organisation and may assist in the recruitment, retention and attraction of talent and ultimately, assist in creating operational efficiencies through an engaged workforce.

### **2.6 Gaps stemming from the literature review**

As a result of the review and analysis of the literature the following gaps have been identified. In the first instance, EE offers a significant and mature body of research, with a number of good measures that provide a solid base with which to view EE (Bakker et al. 2011b; Tims et al. 2011). With an overreliance on quantitative studies (Bailey et al. 2017) there is a call for qualitative studies focused on the lived experiences of individuals in different contexts (Kunte & Rungruang 2018; Fletcher et al. 2019; Shuck et al. 2021). Additionally, whilst we may know some of the antecedents and consequences of EE, we do not fully understand why individuals react as they do (Saks 2006; Rich et al. 2010; Bakker et al. 2011b). Nor do we understand those job and personal resources that are required to enhance EE in SS teams. This study will address these limitations.

Additionally, this study also answers the call in advancing the EE literature in ‘solving the remaining mysteries of the concept’ noted in Section 2.2, Reichers and Schneider’s (1990) Construct Life Cycle, through the analysis of EE in different contexts. As discussed in Section 2.4 the SS literature is an embryotic and emergent field of literature (Knol et al. 2014; Richter & Brühl 2017) with a lack of integration between theory, practice and empirical studies (Soalheira 2020). This study is possibly one of the first that is focused on EE in SS teams. Similarly, there is a lack of research on regional universities and professional staff in general who are considered invisible workers in universities (Szekeres 2011). As result, the study brings together three critical pieces, consolidation of the EE literature through qualitative analysis of EE within a specific context, and advancement of the SS through the analysis of ‘tried and tested’ conceptual models from the EE field. Additionally, given the contribution of

regional universities to the economy, this study brings to attention the experiences of professional staff working in regional universities. Table 2.10 provides an overview of the identified research gaps stemming from the literature review

**Table 0-10 Identified research gaps stemming from the review of the literature**

<b>Literature on:</b>	<b>Maturity level</b>	<b>Research Gap</b>
EE	Mature body of literature Agreed concepts Common terminologies Industry tested and best practice	Qualitative studies – from the perspective of individuals in different contexts.
SS	Emerging and disparate body of literature Convergence of industry and academic in the early stages	Limited studies focused on the employee experience No known research of EE in SS teams No known research of EE in SS teams in a RU context
RU context inclusive of the role of professional staff	Overall, an under explored body of literature with research gaps existing on EE in SS teams in a RU context	Limited research on regional universities Limited research on professional staff in general Limited research on professional staff in a regional university context Limited research on EE & professional staff No known research on EE in SS teams in a RU context

Source: developed author for this study

### **2.6.1 Research questions stemming from the literature review**

Stemming from the review of the literature, identified themes and gaps. The following research questions (RQ's) as outlined in Table 2.11 were developed for the study.

**Table 0-11 Research Questions**

<b>RQ1: What does 'employee engagement' mean to SS workers in a RU context?</b>	
<b>RQ2: What are the factors that enhance EE in SS teams in a RU context?</b>	<b>RQ3: What are the factors the inhibit EE in SS teams in a RU context?</b>
RQ2.1 How do these workers describe their positive experiences of EE?	RQ3.1 How do these workers describe their negative experiences of EE?
RQ2.2 What aspects of working in SS enhances their EE?	RQ3.2 What aspects of working in SS inhibited their EE?
RQ2.3 What aspects of working in a RU enhance their EE?	RQ3.3 What aspects of working in a RU inhibit their EE?
RQ2.4 In what way might the Covid-19 pandemic have enhanced their EE?	RQ3.4 In what way might the Covid-19 pandemic have inhibited their EE?
RQ2.5 What criticality did the workers assign to the various factors that enhanced their EE?	RQ3.5 What criticality did the workers assign to the various factors that inhibited their EE?



## **2.7 Chapter Summary**

With these dynamics in mind this study seeks to address the limitations identified in this literature review by exploring the nexus of employee engagement experienced by professional staff who work within SS environments in a RU context to understand their experiences and factors that enhance and inhibit the EE. Given the strength of existing measures, as discussed above, Kahn (1990), the JD-R and Saks (2019) will be used to inform the study.

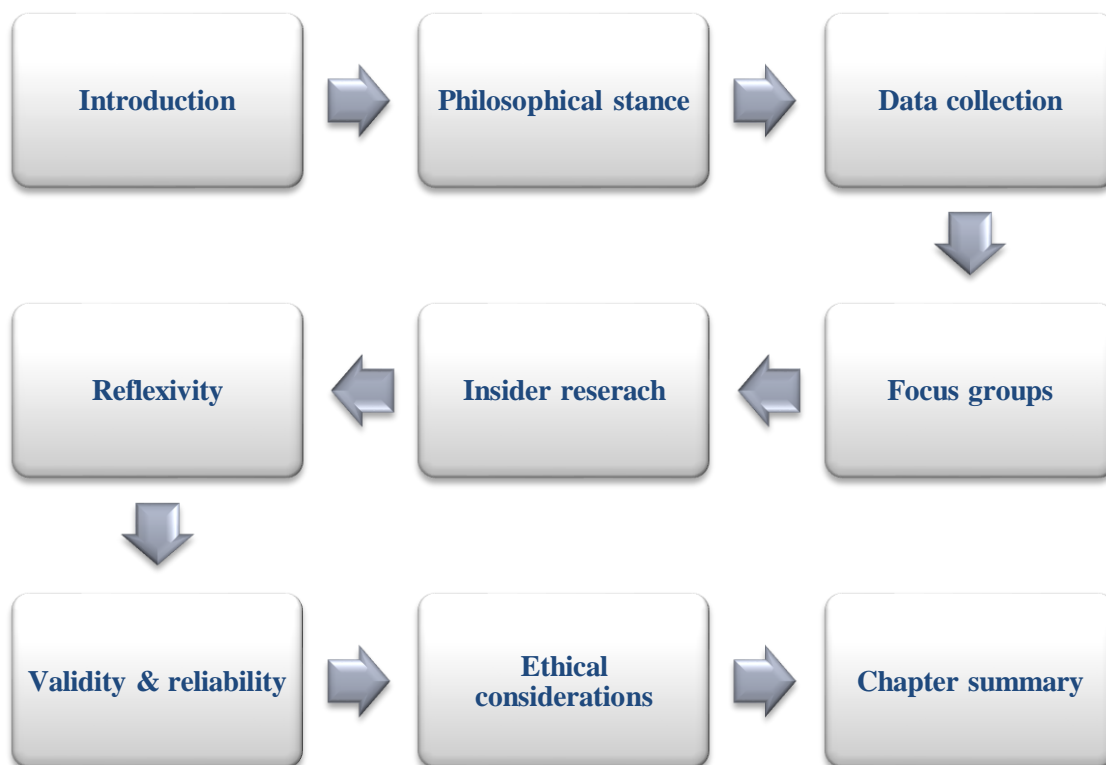
Bringing into focus the experiences of staff working within such teams will add a valuable piece to both the EE literature (1<sup>st</sup> body of literature), the SS research agenda (2<sup>nd</sup> body of literature) and provide valuable insight into the experiences of professional staff working in regional university environments. Stemming from this discussion, Chapter 3 will outline the research design that guided the study.

## CHAPTER THREE - RESEARCH DESIGN

*Researcher, Analyse thyself. “You can’t learn how to tell someone else’s story until you first learn how to tell your own” (Saldaña 2018, p. 1).*

### 3.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 introduced the research and Chapter 2 reviewed the literature relevant to the study. The aim of this Chapter is to detail the research design and methodology used to investigate the proposed research questions. To achieve this aim, the section will commence with an introduction to the research paradigm in which the researcher operated, followed by detailing the design, methods, and the data collection techniques used to investigate the research questions. The chapter will conclude with a summary of how ethical considerations were met and answer questions in relation to the validity and reliability of the study. Figure 3.1 provides a visual guide of Chapter 3.

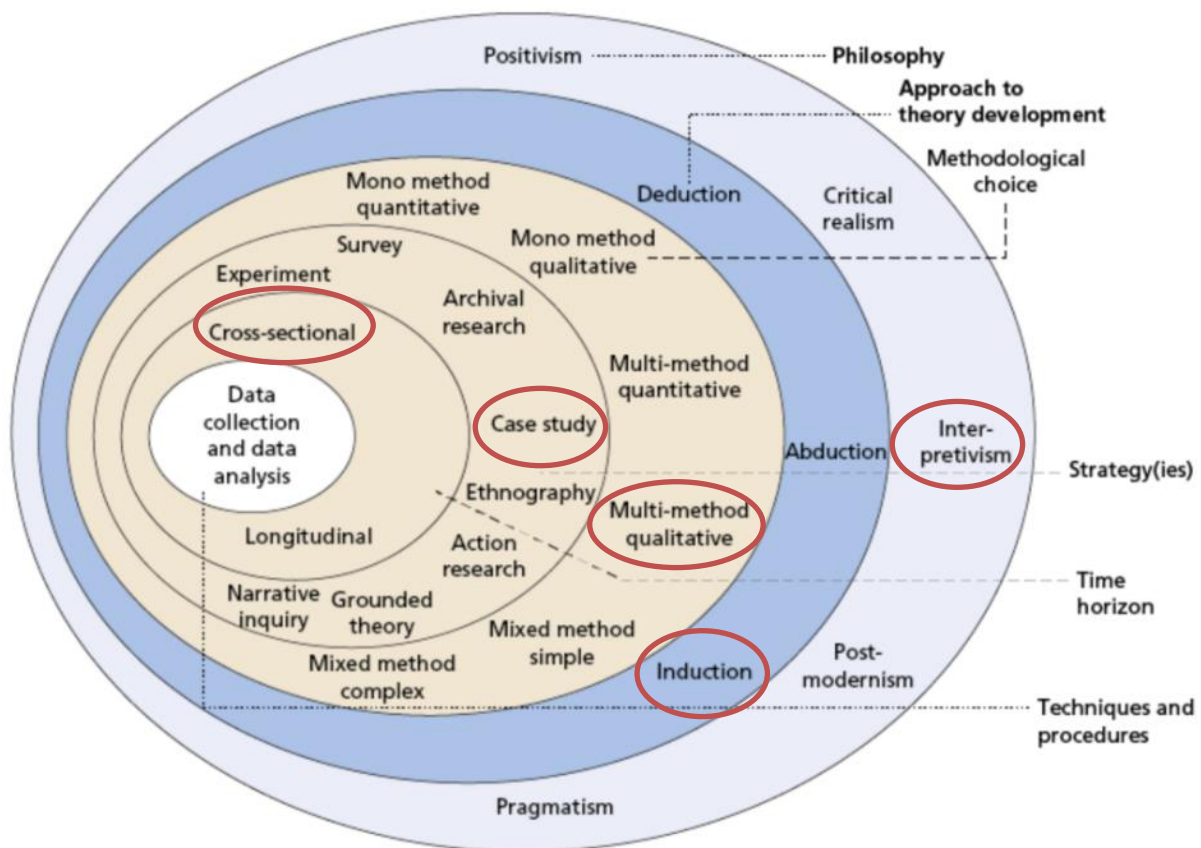


*Figure 0-1 Visual guide of Chapter 3*

## 3.2 Philosophical Stance

### 3.2.1 Underlying beliefs

Important elements in the design of research involves the intersection of philosophy, research design and specific methods (Creswell 2014, p. 5). At every stage of our research, we make assumptions and judgements, and these inevitably shape the research questions, the methods we choose, and how, as researchers, we interpret findings (Crotty 1998 in Saunders et al. 2019). Saunders et al. (2019, p. 130) research onion depicted in Figure 3.2 below provides an illustration of the research process, visually representing the interconnectedness of the research path and decision choices. The red circles, which have been added here by the author, depict the design choices adopted for this study.



**Figure 0-2** The 'research onion' and design choices used in this study

**Source:** © 2018 Mark Saunders, Phillip Lewis and Adrian Thornhill. Saunders et al. 2019, p.130, with red circles added by the author of this study.

The philosophy and approaches chosen for a study are influenced by practical considerations and the research problem to be solved, with acknowledgement that different approaches are ‘suited to achieving different things’ (Saunders et al. 2019, pp. 128-32). It is also noted that, reflexivity – the questioning and examination of one’s own beliefs, judgements, and practices, and how these may have influenced the research is also critical to the research process (Finlay 1998; Creswell 2014; Saunders et al. 2019). Additionally, investigators must also acknowledge how their study aligns with research methodology dimensions regarding (a) the nature of reality (**ontology**), (b) questions on what constitutes acceptable knowledge (**epistemology**), and (c) the role of values (**axiology**) (Saunders et al. 2019, p. 133). Refer Table 3.1. With the discussion typically framed in terms of a choice between **positivist** and **interpretivist** and between **quantitative** or **qualitative** approaches (Saunders et al. 2019, pp. 133-59).

**Table 0-1 Research methodology considerations**

Concept	Description
Ontology	<p>A branch of philosophy that studies the nature of reality or ‘being real’ in relation to the phenomenon being studied.</p> <p>Two aspects of ontology are <b>objectivism (external reality)</b> and <b>subjectivism (internal -personal feelings/perceptions)</b>. Objectivism represents the position that social entities exist external and independent to social actors concerned with their existence. For example, objectivism would attest that <i>engagement</i> is its own entity that interacts and is experienced by those social actors engaged with it. Subjectivism holds that social phenomena are created through the perceptions, beliefs, experiences and actions of the social actors involved i.e., engagement has meaning as experienced, developed, and understood by social actors involved with the process.</p> <p>Questions to be asked: What is the nature of reality? Is it- External (objective) and or socially constructed (subjective)?</p>
Epistemology	<p>A branch of philosophy that studies the nature of knowledge and what constitutes acceptable knowledge in a field of study. With epistemology the researcher looks to the question of what is important in the study. Is it the data and collection of facts and study of resources, akin to the natural scientist – an objective approach or the <i>feelings</i> of the social actors involved, taking into account subjective realities?</p> <p>It could be said the <i>resources</i> researcher is embracing a <b>positivist</b> philosophy in the development of knowledge whereas the <i>feelings</i> researcher is adopting an <b>interpretivist</b> approach.</p>
Axiology	<p>A branch of philosophy that studies the researcher’s own value on the research process. As researchers it is important to consider our values and the influence, they have on our research journey. It is important to ask the question as to whether we can really undertake research in a value free manner. In a pragmatic approach, values play a large role in interpreting results with the researcher taking both objective and subjective points of view. In a positivist approach the researcher undertakes the research objectively in a value-free way, independent of the data. Realists recognise that research is value-laden, and they account for the impact that their inherent biases and cultural norms have on the research being undertaken. An <b>Interpretivist</b> approach also recognises that research is value-bound with the researcher being a subjective individual who <i>becomes</i> a part of what is being researched.</p> <p>Question to be asked: What is the role of values? Is it value-free or value-bound?</p>

Concept	Description
Positivism	Adoption of the philosophical stance of the natural scientist. The researcher engages in the collection of data about an observable reality and search for regularities and causal relationships in data to create law-like generalisations. Existing theory may be used, using hard, observable facts to confirm, refute or further develop theory. Research is undertaken in a value-free way.
Interpretivism	Interpretivists believe that it is necessary to understand the role of <i>social actors</i> in the research being undertaken and that the role of social actors in management research adds a complexity where defining down to law-like generalisations as is in the positivist approach is simply not possible. In Interpretivist philosophy, the researcher enters the world of the social actors in their research topic and seeks to understand from the respondent's point of view or frame of reference, acknowledging the complexity and capturing the nuances of these differences. There is a belief given the complexity and uniqueness of business management research that an interpretivist approach is necessary to fully understand all the parameters (human, context, time) of the research being undertaken.
Quantitative Research Method	Refers to the process of collecting and analysing numerical data to find patterns and averages test causal relationships and generalize results to wider populations.
Qualitative Research Method	Qualitative research is the process of collecting and analysing non-numerical data, opinions and/or experiences and is used to gather in-depth, holistic insights into phenomena, within their social context, to develop understanding and/or generate new ideas for research. Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals and groups assign to a phenomena. It is an interpretative process where researchers make sense of the subjective and socially constructed meanings about the phenomenon being studied.

**Source:** adapted from Punch (2006); Creswell (2014); Saunders et al. (2019, pp. 128-60) and Okesina (2020).

### 3.2.2 Philosophical Worldviews

In the field of business and management research there are four commonly accepted philosophies (Punch 2006; Creswell 2014; Saunders et al. 2019). These are, pragmatism, positivism, realism and interpretivism (Punch 2006; Creswell 2014; Saunders et al. 2019). Table 3.2 below provides an overview of the four paradigms, with the chosen paradigm for this study highlighted in the orange column for 'interpretivism'.

**Table 0-2 Comparison of four research philosophies in business and management research**

Paradigm	Pragmatism	Positivism	Realism	Interpretivism
<b>Ontology</b> – the researcher's view of the nature of reality	External, multiple, view chosen to best enable answering of	External, objective and independent of social actors	Is objective. Exists independently of human thoughts and beliefs or knowledge of their existence	A methodological approach to social study informed by philosophies such as phenomenology and hermeneutics which focuses on how individuals make

Paradigm				
	Pragmatism	Positivism	Realism	Interpretivism
	the research question		(realist), but is interpreted through social conditioning – a critical realist perspective.	<p>meaning of their lifeworld's (Neubauer et al. 2019).</p> <p>Meaning is socially constructed, subjective, may change, multiple views.</p> <p>The interpretivist researcher enters the world of the research subjects and works to understand their world from their point of view.</p> <p>An interpretivist view is an appropriate approach in business and management research given the complexity and uniqueness of situations (Saunders et al. 2019).</p> <p>Critical to understanding context (specific circumstances at a specific point in time).</p>
<b>Epistemology</b> – the researcher's view on what constitutes acceptable knowledge	Either or both observable phenomena and subjective meanings can provide acceptable knowledge dependent upon the research question. Pragmatism has a focus on practical applied research, integrating different perspectives to interpret the data.	Only observable phenomena can provide credible data and facts. Focus on law-like generalisations and causality. Looks to reduce phenomena to its simplest elements.	Observable phenomena provide credible data and facts. Insufficient data means inaccuracies in sensations (direct realism). Alternatively, phenomena create sensations which are open to misinterpretation (critical realism). Focus on explaining within contextual circumstances.	<p>Subjective meanings and social phenomena.</p> <p>Focus upon the details of the situation. A reality behind these details with subjective meanings motivating actions.</p>
<b>Axiology</b> – the researcher's	Values play a significant role in	Research is undertaken in a value-free	Research is value laden. The researcher is	Research is value-bound. The researcher is part of what is being researched, participant

Paradigm				
	Pragmatism	Positivism	Realism	Interpretivism
view of the role of values in the research	interpreting results, the research adopting both an objective and subjective lens.	way. The researcher is independent of the data and maintains an objective stance.	biased by world views and experiences.	and research tool. The relationship between researcher and participant is interactive, cooperative and participative.
Data collection techniques most used	Mixed or multiple method designs, quantitative and qualitative	Highly structured, large samples, measurement, predominately quantitative, but can be qualitative.	Methods chosen must fit the subject matter – quantitative or qualitative.	Small samples, in-depth investigations.  Qualitative

Source: (Saunders et al. 2019, pp. 128-60)

### 3.2.3 Justification for the paradigm and methodology

To answer the intended research questions this study was undertaken via a qualitative study- to gather insights into the lived experiences of individuals. Qualitative research is broadly seen as any kind of research that produces findings that have not been arrived at by means of purely quantification or statistical means (Strauss & Corbin 1990, p. 17 in Golafshani 2003). Qualitative researchers seek to understand a phenomena in a context-specific real-world setting (Patton 2002, p. 39 in Golafshani 2003).

The underpinning philosophical paradigm adopted was interpretivism. Interpretivism is highly appropriate for business research when the objective is to explore and gain rich insights on a phenomenon from the perspective of individuals within their contextual circumstances (Saunders et al. 2019). **Interpretivists** believe that it is necessary to understand the role of social actors in the research being undertaken and that the role of social actors in management research adds a complexity wherein defining down to law-like generalisations as is in the positivist approach is simply not possible. In Interpretivist philosophy, the researcher enters the world of the social actors in their research topic and seeks to understand from the respondent's point of view or frame of reference, acknowledging the complexity and capturing the nuances of these differences. There is a belief given the complexity and uniqueness of business management research that an interpretivist approach is necessary to fully understand

all the parameters (human, context, time) of the research being undertaken (Saunders et al. 2019, p. 149).

Given the lack of development in the field of SS literature, in such circumstances, Knol et al. (2014, p. 92) recommends that an interpretative epistemological stance, which aims to provide deep insight into the complex world of the lived experience of a phenomenon is appropriate when there is limited theory development in a field.

### ***3.2.4 Case study approach using multimethodology***

To support this enquiry, this study adopts an interpretive approach. Interpretivism, is a form of qualitative research that seeks to describe a phenomenon by ‘exploring it from the perspective of those who have experienced it’ (Neubauer et al. 2019, p. 91). Semi-structured interviews, utilising open-ended questions and critical incident questions were used to collect data from individual participants. Semi-structured interviews allow for flexible, open-ended dialogue on research themes, the open-ended questions and critical incident questioning strategies allows participants to share their experiences in their own words (Saunders et al. 2019, pp. 437-66).

### **3.3 Data Collection**

As discussed above, this study was undertaken through an interpretivist lens using a multimethod case study strategy to enable viewing the phenomena through the subjective experiences of individuals in a specific context. To support this multi-method approach, first, a series of 16 semi-structured interviews was undertaken with respondents who worked in SS teams at the UniSQ. Themes from the semi-structured interviews were then triangulated via two (2) focus groups each with four (4) respondents, who, apart from one person, were different people from those already interviewed. The data collection phase commenced in January 2020 with focus groups concluding in August of 2020. As a result of this, the period of data collection and the emergence and spread of the COVID-19 pandemic coincided, and although not the focus of the intended research, the impact of COVID-19 inevitably formed part of the discussion. Additionally, as a result of COVID-19 ethics was amended to allow for interviews to be conducted via Zoom. As part of my researcher reflection this emerged as an unexpected benefit of COVID-19. It allowed participants additional privacy through flexibility in time and location of the interview with some participants already working from home and other participants electing to participate out-of-hours. As a researcher, Zoom interviews provided the opportunity to be fully focused on participant’s non-verbal cues. Permission was given to



record the Zoom interviews, thus being able to view the interview in context of verbal and non-verbal responses assisted with further establishing the context of responses. Challenges included ensuring that the technology was working correctly and that participants had sufficient internet access. These questions were asked of participants prior to interview and again before interviews commenced. All interviews and focus groups interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Data was then analysed using NVivo computer software using Braun and Clarke (2006) guidance for thematic analysis and Saldana's (2021) application of coding and theming of textual information.

### **3.3.1 *Population sample selection***

Upon receiving HREC Ethics Approval to undertake this study (no. H19REA181), participants were recruited from SS teams at UniSQ. Through the researcher's contacts, managers and/ supervisors were contacted in SS areas of IT, Finance, HR, Student Support, and Research Services teams to circulate an email to potential SS professional staff. Participants were also required to sign Consent Forms. Given the specificity of the study non-probability, snowball sampling was used. Snowball sampling is a convenience sample strategy and is used when you are trying to recruit people who need to meet a certain criteria, and where participants with contact has already been made, refer other possible participants (Saunders et al. 2019, pp. 292-325). To this end, upon obtaining initial interviews within an area or team, respondents were asked if they could recommend others in their contacts who might match the requirements of the study. That is staff who worked in shared services teams at UniSQ. Additional steps to ensure the integrity of the research were undertaken throughout the research process. These included (a) purposive selection of participants from teams both related and unrelated to each other, and (b), a deliberate strategy of spacing the interviews and focus groups to allow sufficient time for contemplation, transcription of interviews and reflexivity.

### **3.3.2 *Thematic analysis***

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns and themes within data sets (Braun & Clarke 2006). Thematic analysis is widely used and is a method for minimally organising and describing data sets in rich detail and assist in interpreting aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis 1998 in Braun & Clarke 2006). Thematic analysis involves a number of choices which need to be considered in the research approach (Braun & Clarke 2006) including, what counts as a theme, the type of analysis being undertaken, is it inductive verses theoretical thematic analysis, semantic or latent themes, and epistemological approach

(Braun & Clarke 2006). Table 3.3 provides an overview of the key questions of Bruan and Clarke's (2006) approach to thematic analysis and its application to this study.

**Table 0-3 Bruan and Clarke's (2006) approach to thematic analysis**

<b>Thematic analysis questions</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Implication for this study</b>
What counts as a theme?	It is not the size or the prevalence of a theme. In qualitative analysis there is no prescribed answer to the question of size. Research judgement is necessary to determine what a theme is, and flexibility and reflexivity are required. The criticality of a theme and its ability to capture something important is a consideration.	Use of researcher reflexivity and research diary to assist in the identification and applicability of themes.
Type of analysis	Is it a rich description of the data set or a detailed account of one particular aspect? Thematic analysis provides scope to provide a rich over-all description or to provide a details and nuanced account of one particular theme or group of themes within the data.	Under explored area of research (EE in SS teams in a RU context). Opportunity for broad over-all description and detailed and nuanced account of lived experience of respondents.
Inductive verses theoretical thematic analysis	Themes or patterns can be identified in an inductive (bottom up) way or in a theoretical or deductive way. In an inductive approach the themes are linked to the data. Theoretical thematic analysis the research is driven by the researchers theoretical or analytic interests. This form of thematic analysis tends to provide less of a rich description of the full dataset and but a more detailed analysis of specific segments of the data.	Inductive approach initially, but later synthesised with existing EE theories in order to advance the field of SS and in recognition that EE is a mature body of literature with well tested and accepted theories and concepts.
Explicit or interpretative themes	Further decisions revolve around the level at which themes are to be identified i.e., explicit (semantic) or interpretative (latent). Thematic analysis typically focuses primarily on one level. With a semantic approach the themes are identified with the explicit or surface meanings of the data and the researcher is not looking for meaning beyond what a participant has said or what is written. Thematic analysis at the interpretative level goes beyond the semantic content of the data and works to identify or examine the underlying ideas that shape or inform the semantic content of the data.	Interpretive approach focused on the lived experience of individuals. Thematic analysis at the latent level in order to understand the nuanced underlying ideas underlying the semantic content of the data.
Epistemology	Epistemological approach informs how you theorize meaning and influences the outcomes and focus of the research. Whilst epistemology is generally determined when a project is being conceptualised, it is present throughout the research particularly during analysis as the	Interpretative approach as the researcher is subjective and inherently biased and sensitive to the cultural norms having worked in the SS environment in the organisation under study and

Thematic analysis questions	Description	Implication for this study
	research focus shifts to interest in different aspects of the data.	therefore jointly generated the knowledge based on the researcher's personal experiences and interaction with the participants (Okesina 2020) .

**Source:** Adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006, pp. 77-101).

In summarising, thematic analysis involves the searching across a data set (interviews, focus groups and/or a range of texts) to find repeated patterns of meaning (Braun & Clarke 2006). The exact form and subsequent outcome of thematic analysis varies, and as a result the answer to questions above are useful to guide the research (Braun & Clarke 2006) and links to the reliability and validity of research.

### ***3.3.3 Semi-Structured Interviews and Questioning Strategy***

The study was undertaken using semi-structured interviews. Semi structured interviews is an interview strategy where the interviewer does not strictly follow a formalised list of questions, and allows for a flexible, open-ended dialogue on the research themes (Saunders et al. 2019, pp. 437-9). The interviewer is able to include new questions if required and has the ability to alter the order of questions if needed (Saunders et al. 2019, pp. 437-9). A semi-structured interview strategy is an effective qualitative approach when the researcher seeks to explore and gain insight into participants' thoughts, feelings, experiences and beliefs about a phenomenon (Saunders et al. 2019, pp. 437-9).

### ***3.3.4 Interview architecture***

To commence the interview process, five (5) initial interviews were conducted in January 2020. The purpose of these initial interviews was to build researcher capability in interview techniques, allow time and space for reflexivity and to provide the opportunity to refine questions as required. As a result of these initial interviews, questions relating to organisational justice (OJ) were then included. Refer Appendix C for a copy of the interview questions used. A further 11 interviews were undertaken progressively from March 2020 until saturation point was reached, which occurred in April 2020. Saturation is an accepted methodological principle in qualitative research and refers to the point in the research when it appeared that no new information was being obtained (Guest et al. 2006).

### 3.3.5 Questioning Strategy

A series of open-ended questions and critical incident questions was used for the interview protocol. Open-ended questions and critical incident are questions that cannot be answered with a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ and allows the participant to respond in their own way and in their own words (Saunders et al. 2019, pp. 457-63). A critical incidence technique asks respondent to describe a critical incident that is key to the research question and provides the opportunity to explore and describe both the key tenets and nuances of their experiences (Saunders et al. 2019, p. 457). Table 3.4 below lists the key questions and the rationale for asking.

**Table 0-4 Key questions and rationale as they pertained to the RQ's**

Question	Rationale	Relevant RQ
When we talk about employee engagement, what does the term employee engagement mean to you?	Setting the baseline for the shared understanding of EE between participant and researcher	RQ1
Can you tell me about a situation or time when you felt fully engaged in your work? Engagement may be experienced as feeling absorbed, attentive, time just seemed to flow, you were in the zone, you experienced positive feelings in relation to your work, your organisation and/or to your co-workers.	Critical incident question to provide depth and insight into a key experience to bring to light the nuances and the key tenants of the experience.	RQ2.1
Can you tell me about a situation or time when you felt disengaged in your work? Dis-engagement may mean you felt uninvolved, detached, a sense of disconnection and or unhappiness at work, and/or an inability to be fully present.	Critical incident question to provide depth and insight into a key experience to bring to light the nuances and the key tenants of the experience.	RQ3.1
For the purposes of this project, your work environment meets the definition of a ‘shared services’ structure. Do you think this structure helps or hinders your ability to perform your job?  If there was anything you could change about how the ‘shared services’ structure that you work in operates – what might that/they be?	Open questions to explore SS from the lived experience of participants.  Asking the question in a different way to uncover positive factors of their SS experience.	RQ2 & RQ3 RQ2.2 RQ3.2

If you were told that the ‘shared services’ structure that your team uses to provide services to the UniSQ was to be dismantled and decentralized, how would that make you feel? What would you miss most? What would be your biggest concern? What would be a positive?		
There is a lot happening in the university sector at the moment. How does this influence your engagement levels? How does working in a regional university influence your engagement? Is there a difference between working in regional verses a metropolitan university? (Career opportunities, presentism etc.)?	University context prompts. An open question to explore their lived experience	

**Source:** developed by author for this study

### ***3.3.6 Demographics of the semi-structured interview participants***

Demographic information was collected on a voluntary basis from participants in the semi-structured interviews. This included, age, gender, length of service and education. The purpose of this was three-fold. The first was to commence the questioning strategy with an ‘ice-breaker’ to make the respondents feel comfortable and settle into ‘an easy’ question set. The second was to ascertain as the study progressed if any insights or themes emerged on the basis of demographics. The third purpose was to be able to document for the purposes of record keeping the diversity and range of participants interviewed for the purposes of rigor, validity, and generalisability. Of those that were interviewed 10 people identified as female and 6 identified as males. In the semi-structured interview groups 15 out of 16 provided their length of service with a range of 2 years to 35 years with an average of 10.73 years. Of the 16 participants, 6 participants had supervisory responsibilities (38%). Only 12 people provided their age with a range between 30 to 54. Six respondents were between the 30–39-year age group and 6 between 39-between 40-54 years. Table 3.5 below provides an overview.

**Table 0-5 Semi-structured interviewee demographics**

No.	Pseudonym	Interview	Supervisor	Gender	Age	Length of Service
1	Alice	Semi-structured Int	Y	F	NA	8
2	Betty	Semi-structured Int	Y	F	NA	11.5
3	Rick	Semi-structured Int	Y	M	NA	10
4	Chrissy	Semi-structured Int	N	F	30 +	15
5	Rhonda	Semi-structured Int	N	F	NA	NA
6	Madonna	Semi-structured Int	N	F	42	6
7	Doreen	Semi-structured Int	N	F	38	10
8	Roger	Semi-structured Int	Y	M	54	10
9	Sam	Semi-structured Int	N	M	30 +	10
10	Wayne	Semi-structured Int	Y	M	33	3
11	Linda	Semi-structured Int	N	F	38	15
12	Merv	Semi-structured Int	Y	M	54	7
13	Ruth	Semi-structured Int	N	F	41	2
14	Alex	Semi-structured Int	N	M	50	35
15	Rachel	Semi-structured Int	N	F	39	8
16	Emily	Semi-structured Int	N	F	49	10.5

**Source:** Developed for the study.

### 3.4 Focus Groups

Two focus groups were conducted in August 2020 to triangulate themes from the semi-structured interviews. Each focus group was comprised of 4 participants. Focus Group 1 (FG1) was comprised of 4 members from a single SS team (i.e., members were direct teammates). Focus Group 2 (FG2) was comprised of 3 colleagues who worked in the same business area but were from different teams and who had supervisory/management responsibilities. The 4th participant who also had management/supervisory responsibilities was from an SS team and department different to the other FG2 participants. Gender was the only demographic asked of the focus group participants, with the groups being comprised of 3 men and 5 women across FG1 and FG2. FG1 was comprised of 3 women and 1 male. FG2 was comprised of 2 women and 2 men.

**Table 0-6 Focus group demographics**

No	Pseudonym	Focus Group	Supervisor	Gender	Team Association
17	Roxy	Focus Group 1	Y	F	Direct team member
18	Daisy	Focus Group 1	N	F	Direct team member
19	Bonnie	Focus Group 1	N	F	Direct team member
20	Matt	Focus Group 1	N	M	Direct team member
21	Ruby	Focus Group 2	Y	F	Same business area – different team
22	Eddie	Focus Group 2	Y	M	Same business area – different team

No	Pseudonym	Focus Group	Supervisor	Gender	Team Association
23	Bruce	Focus Group 2	Y	M	Same business area – different team
24	Liz	Focus Group 2	Y	F	Different team

### 3.4.1 Focus Group Questions

In triangulating themes that emerged from the semi-structured interviews a series of reflections/themes was posed to focus group participants. The first was articulating how respondents defined engagement in their own words i.e., how engagement was defined in the *lifeworld* of participants. This was followed by consideration of the critical incident questioning strategies that sought to explore the times respondents felt fully engaged or disengaged and the factors that influenced those experiences. Discussion on the influence of perceptions of fairness (organisational justice) was included with the various elements of distributive, procedural and interactional justice (informational and interpersonal) posed to the focus groups. Discussions also included triangulating information on the discussions stemming from questions on SS (structure, enabling factors, concentration verses dissolved information for example). Questions on the regional university context were also included. Refer Appendix C for details of the themes and discussion posed to the Focus Groups.

## 3.5 Insider Research

Insider research is said to exist on a continuum that is dependent on the closeness of the researcher to the phenomenon being researched (Mercer 2007; Trowler 2011). Insider research has been described as research which is undertaken within an organisation, group or community in which the researcher is also a member (Trowler 2011; Unluer 2012; Fleming 2018). It could be seen that this definition is too narrow (Hellowell 2006; Fleming 2018), and that insider research could also apply when the researcher, although not member of the group, has prior or familiar knowledge of the group. Thus, the researcher's position as a former employee of UniSQ and as an employee within the higher education sector has both benefits and challenges (Fleming 2018). Key advantages include access (Saunders et al. 2019, pp. 434-94) and the pre-understanding that the researcher brings to the design of the study (Brannick & Coghlan 2007; Unluer 2012) with a key challenge to counter any research bias that may exist as a result of this relationship (Chavez 2008; Unluer 2012; Fleming 2018). Linking to Section 3.2.2 it should also be noted that consistent with an Interpretative approach, the research is value bound with the researcher becoming part of the research process both as a research tool and through development of relationships with participants (Saunders et al. 2019, pp.128-60),

thus an element of Insider Researcher is an inevitable consequence of the methodology adopted for this study.

Steps to minimise bias include ensuring rigor and transparency of data collection methods; conducting the research in an ethical manner; focusing on the validity and reliability of the research; and an awareness and reflection on the relationship between participant and researcher (Unluer 2012; Fleming 2018). The relationship between participant and researcher becomes one of trust, and what participants choose to share, or not to share in an interview may be influenced by this relationship (Unluer 2012; Fleming 2018). Whilst participants might be willing to share information with someone who understands, they may also be unwilling to share information for fear of judgement or potential impact on their ongoing work relationships (Mercer 2007; Chavez 2008; Fleming 2018). Based on this knowledge and informed by the extent literature (See: Mercer 2007; Chavez 2008; Unluer 2012; Fleming 2018) strategies to counteract bias included: approval of research design and approach by Confirmation of Candidature committee; adherence to the requirements of the ethical conduct of research; review of research questions by supervisor prior to interviews; allowing time and space for reflexive practice throughout process; completion of consent forms prior to interviews and reassurance to the principles of anonymity and confidentiality for participants. The scheduling of interviews via Zoom as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic also allowed for greater flexibility and privacy for individuals. The process was further aided by the interview architecture outlined in the previous sections and the Researchers' departure from the organisation in October of 2019.

### **3.6 Reflexivity**

Reflexivity is an essential component of qualitative research (Watt 2007) and a major strategy for quality control (Berger 2015). Reflexivity is described as the self-examination and evaluation of one's attitudes and beliefs, reactions to data and findings, and interactions with those who take part in the research in order to overcome barriers to interpretation in order to gain greater insights (Saunders et al. 2019, pp. 130-5). In the context of this project, the researcher is the primary instrument in the collection and analysis of the data, thus reflexivity is an essential component of the research process (Watt 2007; Saldaña 2018; Saunders et al. 2019). Additionally, given the complex nature of qualitative inquiry, a continuous commitment to reflect on the synthesis between thoughts, belief, attitudes and subsequent conclusions, on the phenomenon being studied adds to the integrity of the research and assists in the



development of *becoming* a better researcher (Watt 2007). In terms of a commitment to reflexivity the following strategies were utilised:

- Reflective journal writing to engage in curious questioning of thoughts and assumptions.
- Reflective review with Research supervisor through check-ins and feedback on drafts.
- Engaging in reflective practice with research ‘buddies’ including mentors from other disciplines.
- Engaging in an iterative cycle of review, analysis, contemplation, and sense checking before making conclusions,
- Undertaking an interactive process between data, reflection, and the extent literature.

### 3.7 Validity and Reliability

The traditional meanings of validity, reliability and generalisability are generally applied in quantitative research paradigms with no direct equivalence in qualitative research design (Golafshani 2003). However, there is value in these concepts that require repositioning for the qualitative researcher in order to demonstrate the truth, transparency and validity of the research and research processes (Golafshani 2003). Table 3.7 below draws from Golafshani (2003) and (Noble & Smith 2015) to answer the questions of validity and reliability and add to the narrative of demonstrating the rigor of the research for the reader. In qualitative research, validity and reliability have been interchanged with such terms as credibility, trustworthiness, truth, value, applicability, consistency and confirmability, and although different terms the central tenants remain fundamental to the qualitative process (Noble & Smith 2015).

**Table 0-7 Validity, reliability and generalisability considerations in this study**

Element	Description	How this was achieved in the study (mitigation)
Validity	<p>Validity in research is concerned with the accuracy and truthfulness of the findings. Validity in qualitative research is the ability to demonstrate the appropriateness of the of the decisions around the research choices.</p> <p>Questions to be answered – is the research question valid, is the choice of methodology and design in relation to the research question valid, is the sampling and data analysis robust? Overall, a valid study should demonstrate a holistic and valid framework between the phenomena being studied and the methods used to achieve the research outcome.</p>	<p>Control for bias through Research Diary, consultation, and feedback with Supervisor.</p> <p>Adherence to the Conduct of Ethical Research.</p> <p>Approval of Research Design by Confirmation of Candidature Committee.</p> <p>Correlation between research questions, phenomena, and research design.</p>

Element	Description	How this was achieved in the study (mitigation)
		Design and approach of semi-structured interviews, focus groups and participant architecture.
Reliability	The essence of reliability for qualitative research lies with its consistency, stability and repeatability of data as well as the researcher's ability to collect and record information accurately. In quantitative research, reliability refers to exact replicability of the processes and results. In qualitative, a margin of variability for results is tolerated provided the methodology and epistemological logistics consistently yield data that are ontologically similar but may differ in richness and ambience within similar dimensions.	Adherence to principles of good research conduct outlined in the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.  Feedback and review with Research Supervisor.  Researcher Reflexivity.
Generalisability	Most qualitative research studies, if not all, are meant to study a specific issue or phenomenon in a certain population or ethnic group, of a focused locality in a particular context, hence generalizability of qualitative research findings is usually not an expected attribute. However, with rising trend of knowledge synthesis from qualitative research via meta-synthesis, meta-narrative or meta-ethnography, evaluation of generalizability becomes pertinent. A pragmatic approach to assessing generalizability for qualitative studies is to adopt criteria for validity: That is, use of systematic sampling, triangulation and constant comparison, proper audit and documentation, and multi-dimensional theory.	Saturation point used to signify sufficient data had likely been collected.  Applicability of findings across population group. Use of a robust interview architecture. Five initial interviews were conducted to refine process and RQ's. Interviews were then phased to allow for reflection, and exploration within and across participants.  Comparison of data to findings in the extant literature.
Triangulation	Triangulation is a strategy for improving the validity and reliability of a study by using several methods and/or data. Triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods to understand the phenomena.	Use of semi-structured interviews with strategic selection of participants from different representative groups.  Use of a Reflective Diary  Triangulation of data from semi-structured interviews to focus groups.  Comparison of data to findings in the extant literature.  Triangulation with summary reporting of prior EE surveys conducted at UniSQ.

**Source:** adapted from Golafshani (2003); Leung (2015); Noble and Smith (2015)

### **3.8 Ethical Considerations**

This research project was undertaken in accordance with the values and principles of ethical research conduct, including assessment of risk and benefits and with the informed consent of respondents as contained in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, 2007. The research project was approved by the UniSQ Research Ethics Committee, reference number H19REA181. Steps taken to ensure the confidentiality and protection of data and individuals was undertaken in accordance with UniSQ's Research Code of Conduct Policy – 14/2208PL.

### **3.9 Chapter Summary**

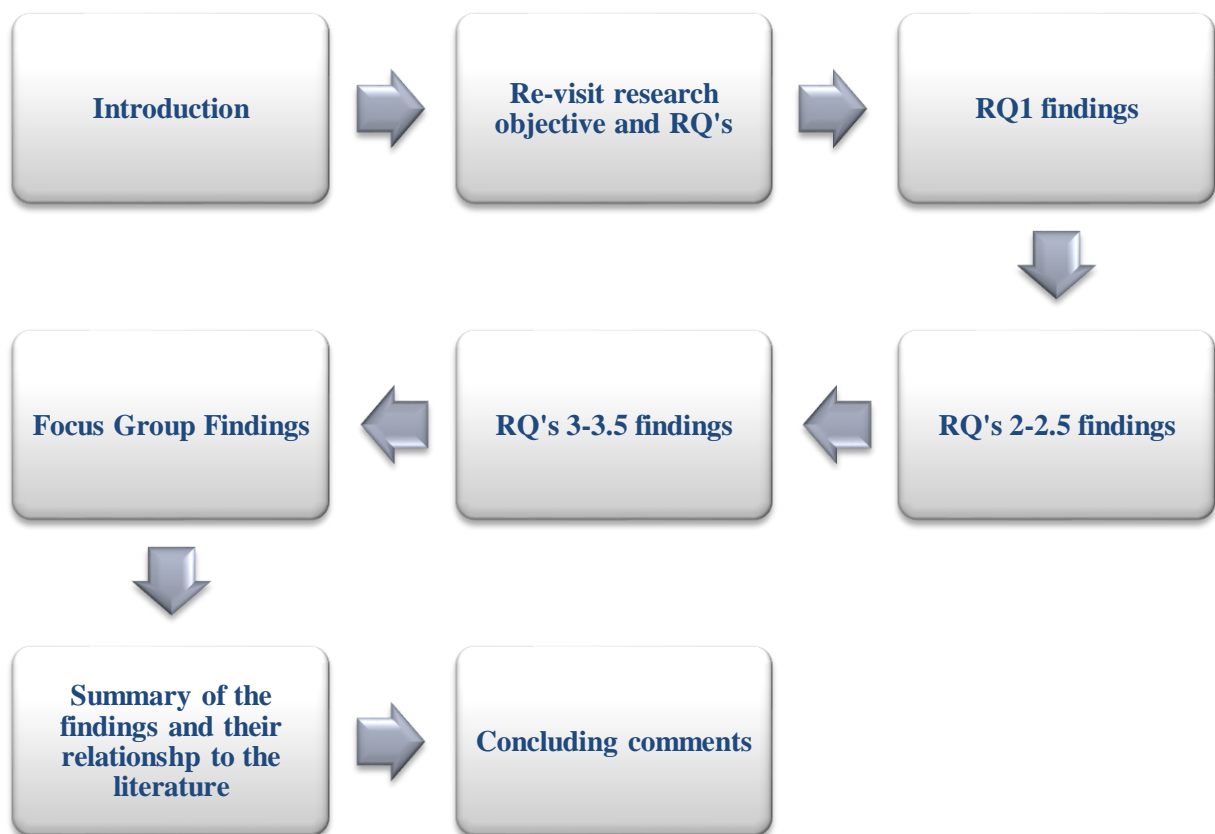
The purpose of this chapter was to discuss and justify the research design selected for the study and discuss the underpinning philosophical worldview of the researcher. This research was a qualitative study underpinned by an interpretative philosophy using a qualitative multimethod, inductive, cross-sectional, case study strategy in an effort to tell the story from the lived experience of how EE is experienced from the perspective of individuals who work in SS teams in a regional university context. The multimethod element of the study utilised a set of 16 semi-structured interviews with data/themes then triangulated via two (2) focus groups. Care and consideration was given to the purposive selection of participants to ensure the validity and reliability of findings. Data was analysed via NVivo using Braun and Clarke's (2006) schema for thematic analysis. Chapter 4 which follows, will detail the findings from thematic analysis.

## CHAPTER FOUR - FINDINGS

*Chapter 3 commenced with a quote from Saldaña (2018, p. 1) – “You can’t learn how to tell someone else’s story until you first learn how to tell your own”. This is their story...*

### 4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter detailed the research design of the study and the underpinning rationale to explore EE from the lived experience of participants. The purpose of this chapter is to detail the findings of the thematic analysis in relation to the overarching research objective and research questions. Chapter 5 that follows, will discuss these findings. This chapter is organised as follows. First the research objective and RQ’s will be revisited. This will be followed by outlining the findings in relation to the research questions from the semi-structured interviews. Findings will then be detailed relative to the focus groups. This will be followed by a summary of the findings and their relationship to the literature and the final section will conclude the Chapter. Figure 4.1 below is provided as an overview of this chapter to guide the reader.



*Figure 0-1 Visual guide of Chapter 4*

## 4.2 Re-visiting the overarching research objective and questions

The overarching research objective for the study was to explore the factors that enhanced or inhibited EE in SS teams in a RU context. To achieve this objective Table 4.1 re-visits the research questions and sub-questions that this study sought to answer.

**Table 0-1 Research questions (recounted from Chapter 1)**

<b>RQ1: What does ‘employee engagement’ mean to SS workers in a RU context?</b>	
<b>RQ2: What are the factors that enhance EE in SS teams in a RU context?</b>	<b>RQ3: What are the factors the inhibit EE in SS teams in a RU context?</b>
RQ2.1 How do these workers describe their positive experiences of EE?	RQ3.1 How do these workers describe their negative experiences of EE?
RQ2.2 What aspects of working in SS enhances their EE?	RQ3.2 What aspects of working in SS inhibited their EE?
RQ2.3 What aspects of working in a RU enhance their EE?	RQ3.3 What aspects of working in a RU inhibit their EE?
RQ2.4 In what way might the Covid-19 pandemic have enhanced their EE?	RQ3.4 In what way might the Covid-19 pandemic have inhibited their EE?
RQ2.5 What criticality did the workers assign to the various factors that enhanced their EE?	RQ3.5 What criticality did the workers assign to the various factors that inhibited their EE?

## 4.3 RQ1: What does EE mean to SS workers in a RU context?

RQ1 was posed to provide participants the opportunity to articulate their interpretation and meaning of the term EE. The following question was posed to participants “When we talk about employee engagement – what does that term mean to you?” The posing of this question served a number of purposes including: (a) to provide the opportunity for participants to give a description of EE in their own words from their personal experiences; (b) to develop a shared foundation and understanding between participants, and the researcher, as to the meaning of EE; and (c) to clarify and develop an understanding of what EE meant from the lived experience of participants in order to compare these understandings to how EE is portrayed in literature.

In the ensuing discussion participants had a variety of thoughts on what EE was. Interestingly, in the discussions, if participants were not sure of what EE *was*, based on their experiences, they were sure on what EE *was not*. In summarising some of the key points from participants, EE was not just turning up, ticking a box and leaving at the end of the day without a care in the world (disengaged or passive engagement) (Alice; Merv). Nor was it destructive or negative

behaviours (disengaged) such as white anting, gossiping, or passive aggressive behaviours (Rick). EE also comprised elements of free will in *wanting* to do something opposed to *having* to do something (Bonnie) or being coerced to do something (Rick).

#### *Disengaged/passive engagement*

I guess to me it sort of means are people coming to work for more reasons than just taking home a pay packet (Alice).

...you see people go home at 4.30pm and not a care in the world. I would see them as not engaged. Disinterested in, you know they turn up they get paid, go home (Merv).

#### *Actively disengaged - destructive or negative behaviours*

So, someone who is not engaged is someone who will be... some of those attributes, they are passive aggressive, or ummm, you know doing that sort of white-anting or gossiping, those sorts of things which are counter-productive, I think, for an engaged environment (Rick).

Consistent with the definition developed by the author in Chapter 2 descriptions of EE consisted of positive cognitive, emotional and behavioural components which are characterised by a genuine desire to contribute to organisational success.

#### *Engaged*

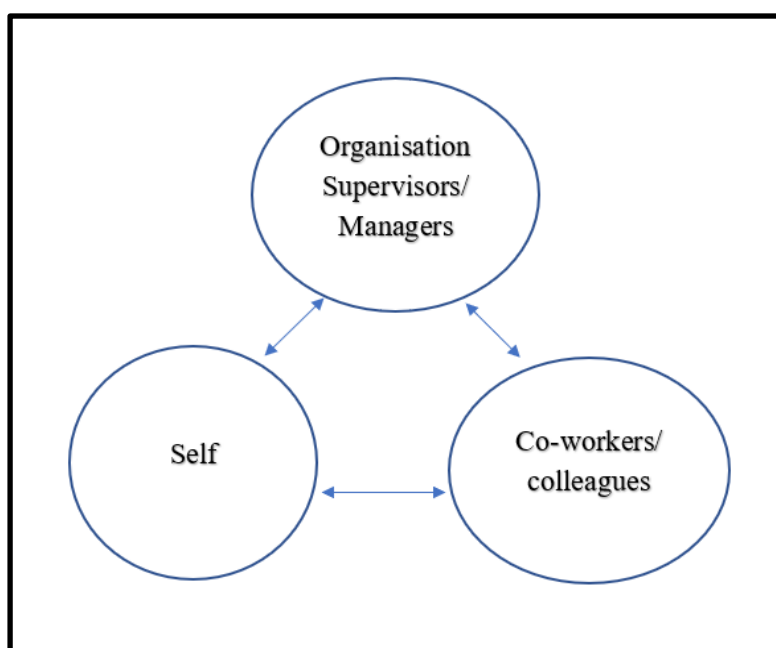
'I think to me it means that employees actively wanting to be at work, are happy to be at work and are trying to make work a better place' (Linda).

I think the outputs of an engaged employee are that they are productive, they are happy in their work and they have a good work-life balance and...they are making a good contribution to the business' (Rick).

Yes (light-heartedly) I'm perky when I am engaged (Alice).

An important element stemming from the conversation that extends from the extant literature incorporated expectations of self and others (co-workers/colleagues), including the organisation and/ or those with organisational power, such as leaders, supervisors/managers, which set the foundations for the *rules of engagement* which is suggestive of participants expectations of a return on investment (ROI), i.e. if I invest my commitment and energy I will

get something back, with the ROI realised through a *three-way* horizontal and vertical exchange between parties (self, co-workers/colleagues and the organisation and/or those with organisational power such as leaders, supervisors and managers), as represented in Figure 4.2. Drawing from Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002, p.700) leaders, managers and supervisors, for the purposes of this study are included in the category of ‘organisation’ because they act as *agents* for the organisation with employees viewing their supervisors (manager and /or leaders) as the mechanism through which employees perceive/evaluate or judge (or make a global assessment) of the organisations support.



**Figure 0-2 Rules of Engagement (RoE) relationships**

Source: developed by the author

For example:

*Elements of an engaged employee (self):*

I think it means wanting to turn up being, fully present when you are at work, and really wanting to do the best that you can and focus, on that customer service side of things. Not just showing up and getting paid, but actually wanting to achieve something and working with the people that you are in the team with. I guess working towards that common goal, but really being, present and going above and beyond (Madonna).

*Expectations of others -co-workers and colleagues:*

I guess to me it sort of means are people coming to work for more reasons than just taking home a pay packet. So I think it means they are coming to work because they enjoy what they do and like working and they know what place their role has in the organisation so they know what piece of the puzzle they are. They are not just like...and I don't want to downgrade process workers....but they are not just going to the factory making a thousand batteries and go home – you know – it is what it is. I think engagement is how invested in the organisation and its success you are above your own success of getting paid (Alice).

If I no longer feel that my co-workers are as competent... then I would be losing engagement (Alice).

I think it is an employee's enthusiasm, innovation, willingness to participate and be involved as a team, with a high focus, on customer service (Ruth).

*Expectations of the organisation (including leaders, supervisors, managers, and those with organisational power):*

*Feeling valued by authority figures*

...feeling engaged means having that experience valued, respected and sought in the appropriate circumstances. ...If you want staff to be engaged, they need to feel that they are valued in the contributions that they make. ... but most people who put their heart and soul into what they do need to know that's valued. So, staff engagement to me, comes from, it doesn't matter who it is, but someone in your leadership chain understanding and acknowledging the contribution that you can and do make while you go about what you do (Betty).

*Respectful treatment from authority figures*

Ummm and they are not feeling, and I think they are not feeling like that they are being coerced or they are being comprised in any way in the work that they are doing (Rick).

*That one is more than a number and valued for their contributions.*

I know what place I have; I know I am valued. I know all of that stuff. I would say that I am invested and that I am engaged and I notice how I would say I ...if I get less and less engaged, I am just a number and they don't care, so that is when I would notice a slide in my being less engaged. If I ... no longer trust in my upper line management...then I would be losing engagement (Alice).



#### **4.3.1.1 Summary of findings of RQ1 and development of relevant theme/s**

In summarising, stemming from the findings the theme developed for RQ1, which explored the meaning of EE, a set of ‘Rules of Engagement’ (*RoE*) were identified. These *RoE*’s encompass an individual’s expectation of their return on investment (ROI) in the engagement exchange between oneself, co-workers and colleagues and the organisation. For the purposes of this study and the *RoE the organisation* is inclusive of leaders, supervisors and managers and those with organisational power.

Figure 4.2 above provides a visual representation of these relationships. These findings in relationship to the literature will be discussed in the next chapter.

#### **4.4 RQ2 What are the factors that enhance EE in SS teams in a RU context?**

A number of factors acted to enhance EE in SS teams in a RU context. These included the opportunity to use one’s skills and abilities, knowing what piece of the puzzle you are – connection to purpose and outcomes and, feeling valued and valuable for the work that one does. Other factors that would appear to enhance EE included the influence of proactive and autotelic personality traits and ‘levels of engagement’ which are also discussed. Section 4.4.1.3 will also detail some of the miscellaneous points worthy of noting that were raised in the discussions. These factors are consistent with Saks (2019) and the JD-R. In the descriptions provided and in conversations with participants it was also possible to get a sense of Kahn’s (1990) descriptions of the need for individuals to have self-expression and self-employment at work and get a sense of the interplay of individual, interpersonal, group, intergroup and organisational factors on their engagement. For example, in paraphrasing for participants below, they felt a sense of engagement when they and their teams were recognised and valued for the work they undertook and where they felt there was a connection to the purpose and outcomes of the organisation. That is, they knew what piece of the puzzle they were.

I feel valued and I feel engaged then I can better value my team and they will be engaged and then they pass that on to our clients who then talk about us outside of UniSQ and it all becomes a flow on (Alice).

...if you want staff to be engaged, they need to feel that they are valued in the contributions that they make...So, staff engagement...comes from...someone in your leadership chain

understanding and acknowledging the contribution that you can and do make while you go about what you do (Betty).

... we can have all the best purpose and vision in the world, but if we don't have the resources to deliver it, then you are going to get disengaged because it just becomes disenfranchising after a while. Because it doesn't matter what you do, you can't seem to achieve what you want and what you need to do, because you are not adequately resourced (Rick).

In the examples below from Alice and Linda we get a sense of the importance of feeling both valued and valuable for self and one's work and inputs including through the use of one's skills and abilities. We also get a sense of the ROI (linking to RQ1) for individuals through intrinsic rewards (i.e., *I feel valued*) and the importance of being able to play a role in influencing work outcomes that contribute to organisational success. Additionally, in Alice's example below, we also see again, the link to the RQ1 and the ROI and the RoE in the extension of the concern for not only for self but others (in this instance Alice's team) in the engagement exchange, in wanting to be valued and respected for inputs.

What makes me feel good is when my position and my team and the work that we do, if we feel that we are valued for what we do. If we feel that people, maybe that they don't necessarily fully understand what we do – they are not deep in the guts of XXX law, but they appreciate that we aren't just data monkeys, just pushing paper, that we have a really strong knowledge base and we are the service centre of excellence for XXX. We do know our stuff so I think feeling appreciated and feeling like we are taken seriously, and that we can help influence some of the changes and we can help influence how some work areas might do things even if it is the same policies and how they might do them better (Alice).

Linda's example below, highlights the importance to her of feeling valued for her inputs and how it makes her feel less engaged in her work professionally and personally when this is not present. This links to the findings in RQ1 – The meaning of EE, and the RoE theme through Linda's description, we are again able to get a sense of the ROI exchange between individuals and the organisation. Additionally, Linda's description also provides us with insight into Kahn's (1990) descriptions of the ROI for individuals in the engagement exchange and how this influences an individual's decision as to whether they personally engage or disengage at

work, with Linda articulating when she does not feel valued, she will do her job, but it is not quite the same ‘spark’ and suggestive that she is not fully present and engaged in her work role.

I think the biggest thing is like we spoke about. The feeling of being valued. For me that is huge and so when I don’t feel like that, sure I might go to work and do my job, and I will do it well. But you are just missing that little bit of, I don’t know, the spark the feeling of, you know my job actually is important. And, I am valued for doing it (Linda).

Rick’s example provides further insight of the complexities of an integrated and holistic perspective highlighting the complexities of the interrelationships between knowing what piece of the puzzle you are and a connection to the purpose, vision and outcomes of the organisation. Additionally, drawing from Saks (2006, 2019), Rick’s example highlights the interplay of perceived supervisor support (PSS) and perceived organisational support (POS), and respectful interpersonal treatment (leading to justice dimensions) through effective leadership and autonomy verses micro-management. PSS, POS, leadership and autonomy were found to be antecedents in Saks (2006,2019) model of the Antecedents and Consequences of Employee Engagement.

...I think to be engaged it needs to be the complete package. So, you need to be (a) working in an organisation that you share the values with, you need to then...and it is a trickle down from that. So, you need to have those shared values with your organisation, you then need to make sure the leadership in the organisation you have trust and faith in them to do what they are doing. And you see their vision and see their purpose and they are able to articulate that clearly to you. So, there is no ambiguity around what it is that we are trying to achieve in the role..... People need to know, why, what it is they are trying to do. So, for me, I think, it is really important to have good leadership. And that leadership needs to trust you to get on with what you are needing to do. You don’t want micro-management ...the management piece needs to be about, here is our vision or our purpose, go and make it happen ...And that really allows you to form your own path and being engaged with the work you are doing in your own way. It shouldn’t be dictated upon you, I don’t think. There needs to be some flexibility around how you get from A to B (Rick).

#### **4.4.1.1 Proactive and positive personality strategies (Theme: Positive personality strategies)**

In the course of discussions, it also became apparent that proactive and positive personality strategies (PPS) '*as an approach to life*' (Ruth) had a role to play in EE with respondents drawing on them as a personal resource and to use as a strategy to reset/refocus during challenging periods (Wayne). For this study, PPS encompasses such terms as proactive and positive dispositional characteristics, self-efficacy, optimism, autotelic and positive personality traits, and positive mindset and are included in the theme of positive personality strategies (PPS). This theme draws from Saks (2006, 2019), Kahn (1990), and Macey and Schneider (2008), who refer to the importance of positive personality strategies and their influence on EE, and from the JD-R model which extends the discussion noting the importance of PPS on EE particularly when job demands are high. Discussions with participants highlighted that PPS might also be considered a personal resource that could and should be developed in employees with some responsibility for engagement falling to individuals:

If you don't challenge yourself, or you don't participate in certain activities you could potentially be missing out on knowledge, on experiences, that other people are having. So, I think it is important to put yourself out there and be involved. You do have to have a responsibility to involve yourself as much as the university or the industry that you are working in pushes you to be involved and engaged in things. It is a responsibility on at least two parts to ensure that engagement is there (Ruth).

Additionally, drawing from one's experiences (good or bad) would also appear to influence an individual's subjective assessment of their workplace conditions which can act to influence their engagement through sense making of their experiences and/or providing perspective. These examples link to Kahn's (1990) assessment that the psychological experience at work play a role in influencing EE. For example, Alex drew a sense of satisfaction which influenced his engagement in his current work role based on a time when he was doing work that he saw as not being a good fit for his skills and abilities and was not work that he enjoyed.

Yeah, I like what I do, you've got that personal satisfaction of actually, you know, helping people out...Yes, and there was a time, there wasn't, so it certainly has changed over the years (Alex).

Extending from Alex's comments Roger felt he was experiencing a renewed sense of purpose and engagement in his work having moved into a new role where he felt valued and valuable for his contributions and where his skills and abilities were being utilised, and where he had the opportunity to contribute to organisational outcomes:

...the last couple of years it is been a creative time for me....after being appointed xxxxx....I have been given the opportunity to...well it is really up to me to either make a difference or not....I just feel empowered to actually do something....So I think that's important. Because I have seen both sides of the fence...(Roger).

Interestingly, Emily's example of a time and the factors where she felt fully engaged drew from her experience with a previous employer. This set a benchmark for expectations her ROI on *the engagement exchange* and linking to Kahn (1990) her subjective assessment of her workplace experience. That is, how the psychological experience at work influences Emily's attitudes and behaviours (Kahn 1990). In paraphrasing for Emily, she felt valued and valuable for herself and her work, the people were great, it was a vibrant time for her, and she had a number of career opportunities, and felt stretched through personal development. For Emily '*I think it was a combination of everything. Because management were great. Like they looked after you, you always felt valued...*' and although she likes her current team, the experience is different '*yeah – it is completely different. I guess, look to be honest, I haven't felt as valued there*'.

#### **4.4.1.2 Levels of engagement**

In the course of discussions how personal/job and organisational engagement influenced EE at the task, team, organisational level was also explored. These findings support Sak's (2019) descriptions of the multi-dimensional nature of employee engagement and that individuals customise their own engagement profiles to suit their specific needs. Thus, in the examples below, it is not so much where individuals draw from, be that at the task, team and/or organisational level, what is important is that linking to PPS strategies, an important element is that the individual knows how they re-set, re-focus and/or understand their own motivational influences. For example, Wayne (Ref 1) and Linda (Ref 2) require a sense of connection at the organisational level. For Linda, engagement at the organisational level minimises frustrations that occur at task and team level. Denotating the importance of her organisational engagement Linda also shared if this was not present, she would be looking to exit her role and/or the

organisation. For Wayne, although engagement is all three (task, team and organisation) his engagement starts at the organisational level and has a flow on effect. Further, although Ruth (Ref 3) advises she draws engagement from the team social aspect, she still requires a strong connection to the strategic direction of the organisation. For Chrissy (Ref 4) proximity is a key influencer where she draws engagement from her task and team with a lesser need at the organisational level.

**Table 0-2 Examples of levels of engagement (task, team, organisational, career)**

Ref	Identified themes and elements	Supporting quotation
1	Engagement is organisation, task and team.	I think it is all 3 but it is actually the other way around. It starts at the organisation, and then comes down to the task level. Because, if you are not engaged, you can be engaged for a task, for one particular task, but not necessarily, at the organisation. Whereas, if you fully engaged, you are engaged at the organisational level and then the task will actually form part of the engagement (Wayne).
2	Engagement at the organisational level. If Linda did not have this alignment, she would be looking for other opportunities.	From an engagement point of view, my thinking is organisation. So there are some things that if I am engaged with the organisation other factors are not as big, because I know that I am adding value, and the work is positive. If I wasn't engaged, I'd be considering what else was happening in there as well as potentially looking for other opportunities, not necessarily just within the organisation (Linda).
3	Draws engagement from the team social aspect, with link to big picture.  Symbiotic relationship	I am very much a social person though, so I do need team engagement and certainly, you need to have that direction or that strategic focus, from an organisation as well. If that vision is not there and you are just sort of working in isolation or not knowing what the bigger picture is – then that makes a big difference as well. For me, firstly, I think it is a team level (Ruth).
4	Task to team to organisation	I think it is probably more the task, it is probably almost like descending from task to team to organisation. I can't even really think...that organisation, not example exactly, but when I think of what it is that I am doing, physically doing, I do get quite a lot out of my team but, ummm they're not as important as the task I am doing in terms of how engaged I am with what I am doing. Not really sure the organisation comes into it a great deal for me. I have not really thought about that one (Chrissy).

#### **4.4.1.3 Miscellaneous points about EE**

Other points from participants as noted in the example below from Alice, reconfirms the flow on effect, the importance of feeling valued and valuable, and the authentic use of rewards. Additionally, Alice raises the importance of the ripple effect of engagement, disengagement and/or negative behaviours flowing on to others, including clients. Importantly, Alice's

comment reflects that the organisation pays well (further explored in RQ2.3), thus for her, if we turn to Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs it is possible Alice considers that her lower order needs are being met thus she has higher expectations in the engagement exchange between herself and the organisation.

Because I think its ....it's got this flow on effect ..., its more than just, we will shout you a xmas party at the end of the year and now you are a valued employee. Because it's like...you can't just be nice to me once during the year and give me a gift card for \$25 and be like, all right, she is sorted for the rest of the year, because it is not always about the money. And we are paid well at this organisation so I'm not worried about that, I could go somewhere else, but it is about, if I feel valued and I feel engaged then I can better value my team and they will be engaged and then they pass that on to our clients who then talk about us outside of UniSQ and it all becomes a flow on. Like engagement is 12 months a year process and it is a flow on effect. Because you can disengage someone by being disengaged. Like, if I sat there and bitched in XXX long enough, I would disengage my employees ... just went well, if she is not happy we are not happy' (Alice).

#### ***4.4.2 RQ2.1 How do workers describe their positive experiences of EE?***

As discussed as part of the semi-structured interviews two (2) critical incident questions were used with participants asked to describe a time when they felt fully engaged or disengaged in their work. The use of the critical incident questions was to provide the opportunity to explore and describe EE based on a pivotal experience from the respondent's point of view, to understand the key tenets and nuances of their experiences (Saunders et al. 2019, p. 668).

Linking to the findings from RQ2 respondents felt engaged when they had the opportunity to use their skills and abilities. When they felt valued and valuable, and felt a connection to purpose and where their work made a contribution (to self, team and/or the organisation), and had a tangible outcome. The size of the task varied from the everyday, where individuals could see the value and purpose of their contribution, and/or to a special project or stretch opportunity. This desire for variety and challenge at work as described by participants is reminiscent of Saks (2019) contention that skill variety is related to engagement and to Kahn's (1990) belief that psychological meaningfulness is related to an individual's motivation as to whether they personally engage or disengage in their work roles. Through the two (2) examples below from Linda and Rachel, we get a sense of the intrinsic and psychological ROI in having

the opportunity to engage in challenging work, that provided the opportunity to use their skills and abilities and make a contribution to the organisation.

So the most fun thing I have been working on at the minute is an attempt to go paperless.... when we were in the midst of trying to figure out the best way to go paperless, I was very happy, and I enjoyed working. It was nice to have a challenge, it was good to feel like I was, you know contributing to better work standards (Linda).

... an example would be when I was given some additional responsibilities. Above and beyond my usual work. So it was a special project, that had been run previously by somebody else who had left the university. And they asked if I wanted to do it on top of my normal duties, which would mean that I had extra work to do. But I found it really interesting. It was a challenge, for me, and I was really proud that they had given me the opportunity to do that (Rachel).

#### **4.4.3 RQ2.2 What aspects of SS enhance EE?**

Overall, respondents indicated that SS was the right team structure and that SS supported and facilitated the sharing of ideas, the delivery of consistent and equitable services, the development of knowledge and skills and that SS facilitated enhanced communication between team members and clients.

I think whether it is a university context or not. I think shared services works better... Share ideas, share workload I guess, consistency, in approach' (Merv).

I think this is the model. So yeah, I am not sure there would be any positives [of not having SS]. ...some of the strategic aspects that we are working on at the moment probably wouldn't be achievable in a de-centralised structure (Sam).

I believe it helps. And it is great to be able to have everyone on the same team. I believe it helps because there is consistency in the approach of the business. You all have similar plan of attack. In previous roles I've worked in both a team focused services verses a central service and the messaging wasn't consistent there were different rules and policies applied at different levels of the business for the same kind of activity or task. So having a central service ensures that there are not silos, it is open communication. You all have the same vision and the same plan of attack. So, it is a lot more equitable (Ruth).



Additionally, the physical location and co-location of SS teams also had a factor to play in facilitating and enhancing communication, relationships, learning and collaboration.

So, I think it really helps being in that shared space because the shared services allows you to call on those people that you need who are centres of excellence for what they know...So, I think it helps that we've got all these different experts in our team that we can call on... So, I think it does help' (Alice).

But a positive, and I've seen it in other service teams, especially in the same space. Just having that open communication, overhearing something that has been said in the team beside you, going oh I didn't know that, can you show me how to...you know so it does open things up and that information is shared a lot more freely, and a lot more informally, which I think is the best way. Especially around any training materials or tech stuff (Madonna).

'I guess for me it was interesting to be able to work with people who fall within my shared services space that I don't have a lot to do with them...So, it was really good to, then I guess, do some workshopping and discuss different ideas and then it helped me understand what they did as well. I can then understand how it then links into me. And then on the other side, I watched them start understanding the [teams name] facets more and as soon as they started understanding it more I just felt more engaged...because they don't just think I am hitting the big red button. I think that helped me feel engaged because there were people understanding me and I was understanding people and we were coming up with solutions that would help other people' (Alice).

When asked what they might improve in their SS teams, or what they might miss if their SS teams were disbursed, respondents noted that they would miss their colleagues with concerns around the dilution of services, information and skills. This further triangulated the importance of SS as a structure, the importance of relationships and SS as a way of organising to enhance services. Chrissy's example below again highlights the benefits of the physical location and co-location of SS teams in enhancing a sense of connection, and the efficiency and effectiveness of her SS environment. Through these descriptions from respondents, in alignment with the JD-R model it is possible to get a sense of how a SS model might be considered a valuable job resource that contributes to the enhancement of EE in SS teams.

### *Social support from team members*

Probably the social aspect. Just being in a team of like-minded people... So, I know them pretty well. So yeah but the social aspect, it is a fairly good team. We can have a joke, so if it was to be dismantled and it was to be decentralised and I was put out into a business unit somewhere, I might feel a bit isolated. Yep, that's probably the thing I'd miss the most (Sam).

I think I would definitely probably miss the team culture the most... But, that's probably what I would miss, the team culture, the team support, ummm just that I guess collegiality with you know, your team. And I guess that close access to support from the other teams that have something to do with your role. Like, you know, if you identify that there is a training need, you can just go up the corridor to....and maybe discuss that. So that's what I think I would miss of that... I guess the immediacy of other services to help or bounce things off. That sort of thing. So always see the value in that in where we are... (Chrissy).

### *SS as a job resource*

... I have elements of my job that I could not do if I did not have that person there ready to put that puzzle piece in place.... I just simply can't do my job if there was just me (Doreen).

We achieve better consistency instead of having us all embedded in different faculties and departments. There is a lot more opportunity to discuss processes and ...to achieve more consistency, more equity and all that sort of thing... (Chrissy).

Stemming from these discussions two (2) themes were developed for RQ2.2 the relevance of which will be further discussed as part of the Summary for factors that enhanced EE in Section 4.4.7. The first one is *putting the shared into SS*. A SS environment facilitates the sharing of ideas, knowledge and skills, the sharing of resources, and provides an important job resource through the provision of social support. The second theme links back to RQ2 and is one of *connection*.

#### **4.4.4 RQ2.3 What aspects of a RU context enhance EE?**

As can be seen from the following examples a number of factors influence EE from a RU perspective including, linking to RQ2 a sense of connection, and a sense of connection to the purpose and outcomes of the university, and their link to the community. And close connection to clients, co-workers and the community. Additionally, linking to the Literature in Section

2.5.4 – Professional staff - motivations it is also possible to see participants recognition and attraction of the benefits of working for a RU, as a major employer for the region and one that offered good working conditions and flexible work options.

It probably enhances the engagement a little bit from a point of view that you actually see the impact that the university is having on the community in a bigger way rather than in a more city centre. Because it is a large employer and you can actually see the difference in the community (Wayne).

Oh definitely, yeah. Yes – it is your second family. You know what I mean, because it is regional ... you get to meet and know a lot more people.

A recognition of the good working conditions as an employer that a RU offers.

...We've got the best jobs, the best working conditions...(Alex).

I feel very happy with my individual treatment and certainly the wage that I receive and the flexibility that I have and the support that I have when I need to alter my work hours (Linda).

The interrelationship of connection through regional as a lifestyle:

...it is more like a big country town. Being in a regional area. So, there is more, friendly is not probably the right word, but more interaction with other people, who are more willing to interact (Merv).

Interviewer: Do you feel a greater sense of connection with the region because you live and work there? Yeah, absolutely (Linda).

#### **4.4.5 RQ2.4 In what way might the COVID-19 pandemic have enhanced their EE?**

The data collection phase for this study was conducted from January 2020 to August of 2020. As a result, the period of data collection and the emergence and spread of the COVID-19 pandemic coincided, and although not the primary focus of the intended research, COVID-19 inevitably formed part of the discussion. COVID-19 offered both opportunities and challenges,

professionally and personally for participants which influenced their engagement. The challenges of COVID-19 on EE will be elaborated on in RQ3.4. Factors that enhanced included: exploring new ways of working, including work from home (WFH), improved productivity, the use of one's skills and abilities and a sense of connection to purpose.

Ruth's example below highlights the multifaceted nature of responding to COVID-19. In discussions Ruth spoke with confidence and surety of the experience indicating that she had a clear understanding of her role and direction in responding to COVID-19 through individual and team efforts on behalf of the organisation. This links to the themes of connection, sense of purpose and knowing what piece of the puzzle you are developed in RQ2. Regular check-ins also facilitated Ruth's social support and sense of connection. In Ruth's example it is also possible to get a sense of the way in which job and personal resources may influence engagement and linking to Kahn's psychological conditions (1990) how Ruth's personal safety through WFH might facilitate her *availability* to be fully present in her work role.

Well, we are trialling work from home (WFH) in response to the current Covid-19 situation. So, in an effort to practice social distancing and testing our business continuity to ensure we can work and service our clients from home. And that has been working quite well. We've had regular engagement meetings; we are testing all different sorts of collaborative systems and platforms to ensure we can communicate with our teams and our customers. And it is working very well. We are finding our productivity has improved, because we are not getting the regular interruptions of a busy office space. It is all going well. We are coping fine. We have a good rapport, and we are all working collaboratively together despite the distance. So, it is good (Ruth).

Rachel's example below provides insight into the pre-COVID-19 environment noting, as raised in Chapter 2 the *winds of change* were already upon universities to find efficiencies and that Rachel felt a sense of engagement though increased job security that COVID-19 offered. Additionally, linking back to the 'rules of engagement theme' Rachel also felt the need to *remain engaged* because *her team were counting on her*.

I think it is a very interesting time to be in the university sector. The things prior to COVID I guess there was a lot of uncertainty around what was happening.... We'd been undergoing a review...a lot of jobs will be lost there. After COVID I feel like in the short term, my job is quite secure so I'm more engaged in it...and I know that people are counting on me. So

I guess that goes back to the team thing. You know, my team are counting on me to get these things done and therefore, I know that I need to remain engaged, so I am remaining engaged because of that (Rachel).

#### **4.4.6 RQ2.5 What criticality did workers assign to the various factors that enhanced their EE?**

Questions around the criticality of factors was also asked of respondents to determine if some factors were more important than others in influencing engagement. Key factors of criticality included being valued as an employee and for your skills and abilities, and a sense of connection to purpose (knowing what piece of the puzzle you are), and a SS environment. Determining criticality was dependent on the individual, that is, what might be more important for one individual may differ from another. However, in general, there was common agreement that a SS structure enhanced EE. There was also common agreement that the opportunity to use your skills and abilities enhanced engagement as was a link between self, and the work being undertaken to the purpose of the organisation. Additionally, working for a major employer in the region and personal resources, as well as positive personality strategies also contributed to enhancing engagement. Factors that enhanced engagement would seem to have a number of complex co-dependent and interrelated aspects. The examples and discussion for RQ2.5 have a number of points that connect them to the literature including LFHE's (in Gander 2010) contention that professional staff in universities are attracted to the sector by an integrated set of needs including, the opportunity to use their skills and experience, work environment and working conditions such as salary and flexible work arrangements. Additionally, it is possible to get a sense of the factors that enhance EE in SS environments more broadly into the findings from Saks (2006, 2019), Kahn (1990), and the JD-R model.

*Use of skills and abilities, feeling valued and valuable, connection – knowing what piece of the puzzle you, connection to the purpose and outcomes of the organisation*

I think knowing your purpose. But next to that is also being valued for your purpose. So not only knowing your purpose to the organisation but knowing your value to the organisation and feeling that value in some kind of reward and recognition. It doesn't have to be much, but 'oh I can see here that this is the contribution that I made'. People need to identify with their value to the organisation. So when it comes to, I know why I am doing thing, I know what I show up every day, and here is an example of how it makes a

difference. Here's an example of my value in this place, in this time, in this organisation (Betty).

But I think when I am feeling most engaged, it is when I am feeling like I am achieving a lot more. That I am making a difference in my workplace, where we are all working as a cohesive team (Ruth).

*Shared services model*

I think whether it is a university context or not. I think shared services works better... Share ideas, share workload I guess, consistency, in approach (Merv).

#### 4.4.7 Summary of Section 4.4

In summarising the findings for RQ2 it is possible to see that a number of factors acted to enhance EE in SS teams in a RU context. These factors are consistent Macey and Schneider's (2008) description of EE as a complex nomological network that sits within a family of family of interrelated yet distinctly identifiable elements and of EE as being comprised of trait, state and behavioural components. Additionally, as described by Saks (2019) the relationship between factors has a complicated interplay in the lives of participants with a number of moderating and mediating relationships. Table 4.3 below brings together an overview of the key findings and themes for this section to guide the reader. The complexities of the relationships and interrelationships of the themes will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

**Table 0-3 Summary of themes for RQ2-RQ2.5**

<b>RQ's 2-2.5 and sub themes</b>	<b>Link to the literature</b>
<b>RQ2: What are the factors that enhance EE in SS teams in a RU context?</b> <i>Themes: Connection (people, place &amp; purpose), use of skills &amp; abilities, positive personal strategies, valued &amp; valuable, know what piece of the puzzle you are</i> The opportunity to use one's skills and abilities Knowing what piece of the puzzle you are – connection to purpose and outcomes Feelings of being valued and valuable Positive personality strategies – including the ability to re-set and re-focus Levels of engagement – task, team, organisation and/or career A connection to people and team (links to RQ2.2/RQ2.3)	Kahn (1990) Saks (2006, 2019) Macey & Schneider (2008)
<b>RQ2.1 How do these workers describe their positive experiences of EE?</b> <i>Theme: Connection – valued &amp; valuable</i>	Kahn (1990) Saks (2006, 2019) Macey & Schneider (2008)

<b>RQ's 2-2.5 and sub themes</b>	<b>Link to the literature</b>
Links to RQ2 - a time when they had use of their skills and abilities, felt valued and valuable, and knew what piece of the puzzle they were (connection & outcome).	
<b>RQ2.2 What aspects of working in SS enhances their EE?</b> <i>Theme: Putting the shared into SS, connection, place is powerful</i> Putting the shared into SS -share skills, learning, support, training & development. Liked being with their tribe - team SS as an organising structure and way of working, location and co-location with SS and stakeholders.	Kahn (1990) Saks (2006, 2019) Macey & Schneider (2008)
<b>RQ2.3 What aspects of working in a RU enhance their EE?</b> <i>Theme: Place is powerful, connection</i> RU as an employer, attractive working conditions, regional as a lifestyle, connection to purpose and outcomes.	Kahn (1990); Saks (2006, 2019); JD-R; LHFE 2010; Gander 2018
<b>RQ2.4 In what way might the Covid-19 pandemic have enhanced their EE?</b> <i>Theme: links to RQ2 and COVID opportunities</i> Use of skills and abilities knew what piece of the puzzle you were, new ways of working. Links to connection and purpose and use of skills & abilities	Kahn (1990); Saks (2006, 2019); JD-R
<b>RQ2.5 What criticality did the workers assign to the various factors that enhanced their EE?</b> Links to RQ2, range of holistic factors, unique to the individual however there are some commonalities. Use of skills and abilities, respected and valued for one's inputs, SS environment, attraction to RU. Implications: Use of skills and abilities, OJ, connection to purpose and outcomes	Kahn (1990); Saks (2006, 2019); JD-R

Source: developed by author

#### **4.5 RQ3: What are the factors that inhibit EE in SS teams in a RU context?**

Factors that inhibited EE included, (a) not having the opportunity to use your skills and abilities, (b) a sense of not being valued or respected for your skills and abilities and (c) perceptions of fairness. Perceptions of fairness is also further discussed in RQ 3.1. In the example below, Rachel describes a time when she was not included in key discussions in which she was the subject matter expert. For Rachel, this influenced her engagement through a sense of not being respected for oneself, and not feeling respected or valued for her skills and abilities. Rachel's experience highlights a number of factors. Firstly, Rachel's experience links back to RQ1 – The Meaning of EE and again provides some expectations of the ROI in the engagement exchange and the RoE. As the subject matter expert Rachel had an expectation that she would be included in the discussions and felt she had a lot to offer in terms of experience, skills and

expertise. Rachel's description of the experience also links to perceptions of fairness/organisational justice, and we start to see how episodes of perceived *injustice* influence EE. For Rachel, this links to her feelings around her interpersonal treatment and informational justice (the quality of the explanations) which are both elements of interactional justice.

... I was very disengaged because I feel like there were opportunities there that would have been perfect for me to be involved in. Ummm and I was not included in those discussions, meetings, user groups, for whatever wonderful reason they had. Ummm and felt that they were missing out on the huge amount of experience I had at the university and also in previous roles (Rachel).

Further to Rachel's example, Alex provided an example of a time in which he felt disengaged, and it was difficult to see the reasoning/s when he had undertaken considerable training for his work role and was then moved into a different role. Alex's example links to an individual's assessment of the appropriate use of their skills and abilities and their understanding around how these skills are utilised by the organisation. Alex's experience links to the Themes in RQ1: where individuals draw a sense of engagement through the use of their skills and abilities, and the RoE – linking to their expectations of the ROI in the engagement exchange. Additionally, for Alex his perceptions around the quality of these decisions, through distributive, procedural and interactional justice, inclusive of interpersonal (how I was a treated by others) and informational justice (the quality of the information), also influenced his engagement.

Well it was quite a few years ago now, but, it wasn't that long after I just finished XXXX training. And then, all of a sudden I had a bit of change, change jobs and do all of the XXXX work. ...So I pretty much had to stop xxxx and go and do this complete new job that you sort of knew nothing about. So, and you just think well, seriously? And, also the person who had to give up that job...had to sort of train me. ... So it was pretty much take a job off xxx that they had been doing for god knows how many years, and saying you are not doing that anymore. You've got to do this...And I get...you know the cross skilling. I can see some points to it, certainly see the other side of it too. But ummm you certainly get disengaged with it.....This isn't exactly what I signed up for (Alex).

Alice's example below also highlights the sense of disengagement that can be experienced when individuals see 'injustice' being experienced by self and co-workers. The context of Alice's example is her perceptions around individuals progressing in the organisation for who



they know rather than the competency of their skills and abilities and their contributions. In this example we again get a sense of justice dimensions – distributive, procedural and interactional justice alluding to the quality transparency and ultimately trust around decisions and perceptions of interpersonal treatment by the organisation and/or significant others (managers, supervisors and/or those with the decision-making power). In Alice's example we also see again, the expectations around the engagement exchange (RoE), and the appropriate use of skills and abilities.

And we are just sitting here feeling like we are just sour grapes, but you have become less engaged because you go, if you know someone, if you got some kind of advantage, if it isn't simply because you are an expert in your field... it feels like that will get you further than having genuine skills and experience. And that makes me disengaged (Alice).

#### ***4.5.1 RQ3.1 How do these workers describe their negative experiences of EE?***

In alignment with RQ 2.1, RQ3.1 also used a critical incident question with participants asked to describe a time when they felt fully disengaged in their work in an effort to understand the key tenets and nuances of their experience (Saunders et al. 2019, p. 668). Again, whilst there is an interplay of factors that influenced respondent's negative experiences, linking to RQ3 there was a focus on concerns around organisational justice/perceptions of fairness and again on the ROI and expectations in relation to the engagement exchange (RoE) and the use of one's skills and abilities. Interestingly, for those individuals who are the institutional gatekeepers for the organisation such as HR and Finance for example, perceptions of injustice are felt quite deeply which highlighted a concern not just for self but for others in their care (co-workers and stakeholders). This again links to the individual's perceptions around the ROI in the engagement exchange and expectations of others – that is, those with the power, influence and decision-making in the organisation.

I guess some of the disengagement that I have felt comes from that being able to see a lot of peripheral stuff because of what I deal with...that makes me feel disengaged.... (Alice).

Wayne's example provides insight into the quality of information received from those with organisational power around decision making and how that influences his engagement.

From an employee point of view, sometimes the decisions that are passed down, don't appear to have any reason behind them what-so-ever, and when you ask for comments and feedback, it doesn't make any sense at all. And when you try and dig a bit further there is no further information provided. So that can be frustrating (Wayne).

Merv's experience below extends from Wayne's example and further hints at the influence of perceived disrespect through interpersonal treatment and not valuing the team's or his skills and abilities and subject matter expertise in their area of operations.

... We were trying to finalise [a vital task] for the year. And we were trying to get feedback and engagement out of [a supervisor]. And not getting any feedback, or engagement at all. Until the 11th hour, or later. We were just given here is the [paperwork and requirements] for next year. It was completely different to what it had been in the past, what we had worked to and had to make it work, make it fit. So, it is hard to be engaged at 9-10 o'clock on a Friday night. ... and we saw, issues that were going to arise...the more important thing is, if we can see it is not going to work or be a problem in the future. And we are the ones that are going to have to deal with what's not working in the future. That's just ....annoying because we know it is going to be a waste of our time (Merv).

#### **4.5.2 RQ3.2 What aspects of working in SS inhibited their EE?**

Factors that inhibited EE in SS teams included generic position descriptions, performance matters, and the tension of a 'one size fits all' approach to shared services. Additionally, linking back to the physical location and co-location of SS teams in RQ2.2 there is a tension in finding the right balance in SS design principles 'the one size fits all approach' and/ or decisions around the concentration of resources (i.e., all together) or disbursed out from the main team, or co-located with clients. In the examples below it is also possible to see the link to organisational justice, though equitable practices and perceptions of fairness. As a result, from this discussion the theme developed for this section was: *customised verses generic as an overarching approach to the design elements of SS inclusive of structure and decisions around how the SS team operates.*

In Linda's example below she notes that although staff within SS have generic PD's and are paid at the same levels there can be some differences in skill and capability levels which creates frustration in SS teams.

I think there needs to be more recognition of your skill set. So, you know this particular person, is obviously competent in some aspects but not all of that aspects that we are supposed to be able to complete in our jobs. So that, is not to say that they don't have, you know, a valid contribution to make. But it needs to be recognised that is not at the same level as someone else works at, and the next person works at. Like you can't just dump everyone into a broad spectrum of, you know, whatever group or whatever level (Linda).

In Wayne's example below we again see the complexity of the interrelationships. Through distributive and procedural justice lens we see the perceptions around the disparity of work that is expected and perceptions of equitable pay, including the procedural elements of regular position and pay review cycles. Additionally, Wayne's comments around the inability to influence decisions 'higher up' lead to feelings of how he perceives he (and others) are treated by the organisation through interactional justice dimensions – (interpersonal and informational justice). Interpersonal treatment being concerned with how one is treated by others especially authority figures and/or those with the decision-making power and informational justice being focused on the quality, truthfulness and transparency of the information around decision making that lead to the decisions of how rewards and benefits are delivered.

I think that there is actually some disparity between work that is expected ... compared to other sections. But that is a challenging point because it is not necessarily something that you have a huge amount of influence over because of position descriptions and role classifications. You've got to push for the classification, the job positions to be re-classified to try and make it more even. But it depends effectively on the reporting people higher up and the decisions that they've made when the positions were created. They don't always get reviewed and re-classified very regularly (Wayne).

For Ruth, her concerns link back to the benefits of the physical location and co-location of her SS teams in facilitating relationships, communication, and consistency of service approach.

Although we have a shared structure, we are quite spread out between 3 different buildings at the moment within our team. So I would certainly see more benefit in having one location. So we could communicate more freely...we are seeing a little bit of a silo where they only deal with that, or they only deal with those people. They only look after that building. So having one central team there is one voice, one point of contact for the university for all of our customers (Ruth).

In Chrissy's example she raises the 'pros and cons' of SS noting that whilst there are benefits to their physical co-location including consistency and equity of service delivery she wonders if SS 'benefits us more' opposed to the 'departments that we partner with':

I kind of do agree with the idea that we would be more effective for them [the clients] if we were embedded out in the faculties. For relationship developing and being able to assist more because you know the reasons more because you are sitting in the business... I wonder whether sometimes our advice is as good as it could be when we are actually sitting with them, interacting with them on a daily basis... A bit more proactive if we could anticipate. You can't anticipate needs if you don't know what the business is exactly. Because we don't sit in the business it is a little bit hard to just keep your ear to the ground to know what might be coming. I think you'd be a bit more proactive maybe.

#### **4.5.3 RQ3.3 What aspects of working in a RU inhibited their EE?**

Aspects of working in a RU context that inhibited EE included reduced career opportunities, and the influence of underperforming/disengaged staff. A selection of quotes from respondents is provided below to provide insight.

Once again, highlighting the interrelationships between factors, and in essence the 'catch 22' of RU employment Wayne notes it can be both a positive and negative career wise. With a reduced talent pool due to population size, it is not always as competitive for roles, however this also can create fewer career opportunities as given the good working conditions, regional location and a RU being a major employer for the area, there is not necessarily the same level of staff churn, which creates job and career opportunities.

... I think with it being regional it is both a positive and a negative because there is a positive in a sense that.. you still have the competitiveness of applying for jobs, but it is not as competitive as it would be in the city centre – like in Brisbane, due to the population. But because of that people, don't move jobs as much, which then creates fewer opportunities for career progression, which then falls back on the engagement a little bit (Wayne).

Linda also notes the good working conditions, and potential lack of job opportunities in a regional area with particular frustration around underperforming and/or non-engaged staff and

the difficulty of having them exit the organisation. Linda's comments also link into perceptions of fairness and expectations of others around the RoE. Linda's comments also link back to points raised in RQ3.2 regarding the use of generic position descriptions in SS teams and the theme of customised verses generic.

... in my team, I don't think it is fair....in my particular team, there is a person who I feel, is not pulling their weight. And then, because we are in the university sector...there is not enough, repercussions, so they get all the good stuff, as in the flexibility, everything that I have just said that I really appreciate, without maybe putting in any effort...Yes, and we have good working conditions as well, it is you know, it is not that easy to pick up another job. There is no way that they [disengaged/underperforming employee] will ever leave (Linda).

#### ***4.1.1 RQ3.4 In what way might the COVID-19 pandemic inhibited their EE?***

Linking to RQ2.4 COVID-19 also presented a number of challenges which influenced engagement. These factors included concerns around personal safety, issues with resources, and concerns around what life and a return to campus life might look like.

Rachel's example below notes the absence of support from being physically present with her co-workers and the ability to bounce ideas of each other.

... working from home...I don't like it, to be honest. I really don't. I feel like my support network has been decimated. Because we did work as a really cohesive unit, and we all bounced off each other. And, I feel, that because there's not that opportunity for you to bounce off people, ummm as I used to. I am finding that quite difficult to navigate. So, I think if it was like this forever, I think I would really struggle (Rachel).

Whilst Linda's example highlights the influence of concerns around personal safety and the ongoing implications of COVID-19.

Well, given the state of the world at the minute I feel like, I certainly am on edge, there is a lot of unknown and a lot of anxiety with what will happen in the world. But also...what will happen with my work, what will happen with my family, what will happen, with my kids, what will happen with school. You know it is just unknown (Linda).

And Emily's example highlights challenges around the physical resources required to do one's job.

Ummm look, it's been challenging to work, like...the first probably at least week, ummm was challenging working from home. Just trying to get your head together, working from a different environment and like at first, I just had a laptop, you know, like at work, when I am in the office, I've got two screens. And, I found it very hard to try and adapt and so I was doing, using my mobile a lot, by taking photos and writing stuff down. So it was time consuming to do my job. And not to mention, just sitting on a funny chair. So then I went to work, because then they said, we could take stuff home. So I got my office chair, and then I ended up just the other week getting a monitor. So, I've got two screens. So much better (Emily).

#### ***4.5.4 RQ3.5 What criticality did workers assign to the various factors that inhibited their EE?***

Questions around the criticality of factors was also asked of respondents to determine if some factors were more important than others in influencing engagement. Key factors of criticality included organisational justice dimensions, being valued as an employee and for your skills and abilities, and a sense of connection to purpose. Although a variety of factors act to influence overall, perceptions of justice resonated strongly with respondents with concerns around interactional justice – interpersonal and informational justice. The perceived lack of opportunities in a regional university combined with frustrations around generic PDs also influenced.

##### *Organisational Justice dimensions*

I think probably what's most important to me is feeling like there is a sense of equity across all areas...I have a really strong sense of I don't feel this is fair and that stops me being engaged (Alice).

I think it would just be an overall summary to say it is important to have the justification for any decision that is made (Wayne).

##### *Feeling valued, and valuable and use of skills and abilities*

I think the biggest thing is like we spoke about. The feeling of being valued. For me that is huge and so when I don't feel like that, sure I might go to work and do my job, and I

will do it well. But you are just missing that little bit of, I don't know, the spark the feeling of, you know my job actually is important. And, I am valued for doing it (Linda).

I think it keeps coming back to being able to improve life for everybody else. And see how what I am doing actually has a flow-on effect. But, yes to definitely to use my full set of skills as well because I'm the sort of person that needs to be challenged as well. So, I need to be a bit stretched and that makes me feel that I am useful (Rhonda).

#### *Sense of connection*

Yes, you have to enjoy what you are doing. So you spend an enormous amount of our living life at work so you don't want to be doing something that you don't ultimately have some enjoyment in. And enjoyment doesn't necessarily mean fun, but enjoyment can also come from once again, having that purpose that direction having a shared vision with those that work around you and having some common goals that you are working commonly towards (Betty).

#### **4.5.5 Summary of Section 4.5**

In summarising the findings for RQ3 – RQ3.5 similar to RQ2 it is possible to see that a number of factors inhibit EE in SS teams in a RU context. This again highlights Macey and Schneider's (2008) description of EE a being comprised of a complex nomological network comprised of a family of interrelated yet distinctly identifiable elements. The findings also align with Saks (2019) description that the relationship between factors has a complicated interplay in the lives of participants with a number of moderating and mediating relationships and that we don't fully understand why individuals respond as they do. As with RQ2 the umbrella theme for this section is: Curb for whilst these factors inhibit EE their presence alone or combined in some manner do not lead to an individual's decision to as Kahn (1990) describes to personally disengage from their work roles.

Table 4.4 below brings together an overview of the key findings and themes for this section to guide the reader. The complexities of the relationships and interrelationships of the themes will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

**Table 0-4 Summary of Themes for RQ3-RQ3.5**

<b>RQ's and subthemes</b>	<b>Link to the literature</b>
<b>RQ3: What are the factors the inhibit EE in SS teams in a RU context?</b> <i>Theme: Feeling valued and valuable and <b>respected</b> for one's inputs</i> Opportunity to use one's skills and abilities Organisational Justice: perceptions of fairness, episodes, and perceptions of injustice People – conflict & those not committed links to RQ 3.2 & RQ3.3	Kahn (1990) Saks (2006, 2019) Macey & Schneider (2008)
<b>RQ3.1 How do these workers describe their negative experiences of EE?</b> <i>Theme: extends theme in 2.1 to include respected. Connection – valued, valuable and <b>respected</b>.</i> A time when participants were not respected or valued for their skills and abilities (links to RQ2). Links to RQ3, RQ2.1 and extends to perceptions of fairness through episodes of injustice.	Kahn (1990) Saks (2006, 2019) Macey & Schneider (2008)
<b>RQ3.2 What aspects of working in SS inhibited their EE?</b> <i>Theme: one size-fits all – customised verses generic</i> Tension between customised verses generic Generic PD's, one size fits all approach People management	Schulman et al. (1999) Quinn et al. (2000) Richter and Bruhl (2021)
<b>RQ3.3 What aspects of working in a RU inhibit their EE?</b> <i>Theme: Links to above – customisation verses generic and RU context</i> Lack of career opportunities (PD's/progression). Problem is not if they go...the problem is if they stay – people management.	Klimkeit and Thirumaran (eds 2018) Howcroft and Richardson (2012)
<b>RQ3.4 In what way might the Covid-19 pandemic have inhibited their EE?</b> <i>Theme: challenges - safety &amp; availability</i> Links to Kahn (1990) safety and availability, see the impact of demands in the lives of respondents Challenges – resources; safety and availability; concerns around what return to campus life might look like.	Kahn (1990) Saks (2006,2019) JD-R model
<b>RQ3.5 What criticality did the workers assign to the various factors that inhibited their EE?</b> Links to RQ2.5 and justice perceptions - Tension between generic and customised Implications: bring OJ back to the management table	Saks (2006, 2019) Macey & Schneider (2008)

Source: developed by author



## 4.6 Focus group findings

### 4.6.1 Focus group 1

Focus Group 1 was comprised of participants who worked as members of a shared services team. This provided the opportunity to triangulate themes from a team perspective providing horizontal and vertical input, with a mix of ages, experience, and gender. In general, there was agreement with the themes and discussions stemming from the semi-structured interviews with the team providing rich and valuable insights.

### 4.6.2 Themes from FG1

Overall, there was a commonality in the themes relating to the meaning and contributing factors of EE. Participants confirmed that they felt engaged when they: had the use of their skills and abilities; knew “what piece if the puzzle they were” and felt a connection to the purpose and vision of the organisation; and could see an outcome. Importantly in the example below, Daisy articulates the nuances in that the use of skills and abilities and/or challenge opportunities can be through stretch opportunities and projects and/or through the team’s normal tasks and duties where the purpose and outcomes were clear. Additionally, Daisy’s comments also further highlight the benefits of the physical location of the SS team.

Yeah, well I would agree with that. I would agree with ummm definitely if you’ve all got a shared purpose...that’s always been something that makes me feel a little bit more engaged. And sometimes purpose can be quite smallish, like a small project or a small...for us its getting people XXX each week. But, there’s just those, you’re all coming together when you are in a team environment, in particular, that makes you feel a bit more engaged and involved (Daisy).

FG1 further articulated the nuanced difference of engagement between having to do something and wanting to do something (Bonnie).

Overall, there was agreement on the positive benefits of a SS environment, agreeing that the right balance of SS design was important, including how *partnering* was approached with clients. Partnering decisions include if SS team members are located within their services teams (concentrated) or dispersed out into their client areas. These decisions were seen as interrelated

with the development of generalist or specialist knowledge, consistency of processes and service delivery and how relationships are built.

Definitely. Like a goal, everybody works toward the same goal. ...within process and time, get it all out, get it all checked and make sure that everything's done by the expected date (Matt).

I agree with that summary. Definitely learn more when you...are all together...you don't have as much access to the in-depth training if you were out in the faculties or areas. I know that faculties...used to ...have their own XXX officer. And I know that every single one of those XXXX officers was doing everything different... I think there was a lot of that dissatisfaction in those particular people's jobs. ...(Daisy).

Overall FG1 respondents agreed on the benefits of a RU context including a connection to people and place and a closer connection to clients and drew a sense of pride from that connection. This also included the attractiveness of UniSQ as a premier employer in the region.

I tend to agree with most of what they've sort of said. I guess I kind of feel UniSQ is its own little community...I know, when I see our researcher results...and I meet regularly with our cohorts with Griffith, and UQ and all of that. I sort of feel, you know, I always feel proud when universities do great things, but then, when our university does great things, I'm like whooo hoo that's us. You know, so yeah (Roxy).

Oh it was so good [getting a job at UniSQ]. Yeah, it was, not many people like especially my age, sort of thing have a job position in UniSQ. So it was really good to have a good title and everything (Bonnie).

Yep, pretty much on the same page for that one again. Ummm I studied at UniSQ umm so I heard what a great employer they are. Ummm so it was a great accomplishment for me to actually get a position in UniSQ at that point in time...(Matt).

In terms of the factors that inhibited EE in SS in a RU context the discussion centred around the non-use of skills and abilities and a lack of connection to the purpose and vision of the organisation. In the example below Daisy eloquently articulates the complexities of the

relationships demonstrating the interplay of positive personality strategies, the novelty and challenge of new learning, and the impact of non-use of one's skills and abilities.

I said before about stretching yourself, ummm, for me I love to learn. I'll get more disengaged quickly if I stop. ... so that's definitely part of my engagement, that's important to me...always learning something, always stretching yourself. And that's where I suppose that challenging projects can become really quite enjoyable, if you are not just getting those wonderful achievements or your clients really happy at the end of it and you've been a pivotal part of it, but that you have actually learnt a lot along the way. Ummm, because if you are doing something, and a bit like you had said to, if it is something worthwhile, yeah, I have worked on things where I have felt like they are not worthwhile, and we are not really learning anything. My skills aren't being used for example and that is not engaging, absolutely, but where you flip that and you are being stretched, you might be at the, you know, the little bit of that stretchy end of your skillset but you are learning, and you are growing. I think that that's awesome engagement and we're lucky here in XXXXXX because things have constantly changed since I've got here anyways. We are always learning something new. (Daisy).

COVID-19 did not factor high in the discussions with respondents from FG1 – with questions around COVID-19 included in the broader discussions of the influence of the RU context and the influences of change and pressures in the sector. Further to this discussion, as noted in the Researcher Reflection on FQ1, this was a very cohesive team, clear on their purpose, goals and direction. Thus, the transition to WFH and then back to campus in responding to COVID-19 was quite seamless. Additionally, in discussions the team had undertaken a lot of work in moving to a Tiered Service model and paperless transactions. Thus, working online and remote was not an interruption to their work lives. In some ways their pragmatic and adaptable response to change links to their PPS as a personal resource and shows its application at work.

... Ummmm pulling up my sleeves I literally started as COVID hit. So I had 3 days in the office and ummm pretty much had to pull up my sleeves and you know put my head down and dig in to it from home. So, ummm that was pretty interesting. Never worked from home before (Matt).

#### **4.6.3 Researcher Reflection of FG1**

It was evident in the session that FG1 was a strong cohesive team that enjoyed working together in their SS environment. They demonstrated many of the elements of the research themes. For example they felt a connection their SS environment through a shared purpose where they could see the link between themselves, the team and to organisational outcomes. The team was comprised of people with proactive and autotelic personality traits, exhibiting a positive demeanour. The ‘vibe’ during the focus group session was palpable. They enjoyed what they did, their co-workers and drew a sense of pride in being a UniSQ and RU employee. Additionally, the team had undertaken a lot of work in implementing online services and improving their work processes, which for them released their latent capacity and enabled them to focus on more meaningful work and take their leave entitlements and to continue to work to discover and leverage process improvements. Thus, for FG1, SS offered a positive experience and was an important job resource.

So, for you this shared services model is actually working towards HBU – highest and best use of your time and expertise? So, it’s actually been an enabler (Interviewer)?

Yes....And as we streamline this, it means that we have more time... so we are not in a really fast cycle of doing doing, check it, check it, check it.... So it kind of helps us plan our workload a lot more...we will not get resourcing for any more members, so we need to get to a point where people are taking the right amount of leave, we can then look at more process improvements, because we have time to look for process improvements...(Alice).

#### **4.6.4 Focus group 2**

Focus group 2 provided the opportunity to engage in discussion with participants who were leaders of SS teams. Whilst there was general agreement on the themes arising from the semi-structured interviews and FG1, the discussion with leaders provided interesting insights and nuanced perspectives on the challenges of EE in SS teams in a RU context from the perspective of those with responsibilities for the management of staff.

Interestingly, supervisors noted the challenge of providing opportunities that used the full range of an individual’s skills and abilities, ‘...*probably none of us use our full range of abilities every day, or at all.*’ (Liz). With supervisors also raising that thought needed to be given to how one provides for variety in work tasks to enhance fulfilment.

I think there is a big difference between being engaged in what you are doing and actually being fulfilled by that. Because you, you're never gonna be 100% engaged in my opinion... I think...to achieve that is pretty hard with all the staff ...you may not use 100% of your abilities, but you are still fulfilled (Bruce).

I think the full use of your skills and abilities also adds to the variety of the tasks that you may undertake. I think people do have broad skill sets and if they get stuck into a rut, umm whereas if they are able to exercise their full range of abilities, they get more variety in their workplace which will lead to more engagement (Don).

Supervisors concurred that employee engagement was enhanced through a connection to the vision, purpose and outcomes of the organisation and that good communication facilitated this.

Yes, the likelihood, of being engaged if you've got those three (3), you know vision, purpose and what we want to achieve, the likelihood you are going to be engaged is probably higher (Margaret).

In terms of levels of engagement (task, team and organisation) supervisors agreed it was easier to engage staff when the focus or outcome was clear. Be that at the task, team or organisational level with acknowledgement that understanding the vision and purpose of the organisation was an important driver.

It is probably easier...for people to be engaged when they've got something very specific to focus on. Ummm, maybe engagement lessens when you don't have a clear understanding of how to undertake something, for example (Margaret).

It mightn't necessarily be what task either, it might be like XXXX has just gone through a bit of a process to break down that employee survey. So it mightn't necessarily be your specific tasks to get engagement, it could be ummm you know a whole of department tasks, so you can be engaged ...in just your particular duties...a group thing rather than an individual job engagement (Liz).

Recognition of skills and abilities is also central to relationships, which necessitates leaders being able to self-evaluate on the currency of their own skills and abilities. The example below from Don also alludes to the importance of interactional justice and interpersonal treatment of staff evidenced through *listening* and acknowledging one's own skill set and hence the

‘supervisors’ ability to assess what piece of the puzzle they play in work roles. Bruce also concedes that as a manager, understanding your own skills and abilities and how to apply those is an important factor. The points also link to the expectations around the engagement exchange (our expectations of self and others) and to understanding what *piece of the puzzle* you play in organisational life.

So, I think not being listened to can really put people offside very quickly. Especially when that is a skill set that they do have and it’s probably more current than managers or senior managers may have, as well (Don).

Yeah, I guess, how do you recognise if your skills and abilities is no longer, relevant is the wrong word, but no longer current, like what Don was saying before.....I think that takes a skill on its own and that comes down to the team support around you. To go, oh hang on, I am no longer the expert in that (Bruce).

Supervisors also noted the importance of good communication through the building of a positive culture, creating safe space for people to have a voice, and listening to staff as important components of effective relationships. In the examples below it is possible to see the link to organisational justice dimensions, particularly interactional justice – interpersonal and informational, and to PSS and POS. This also links to RQ1 and the expectations around the rules of engagement and expectations of behaviour in the engagement exchange.

*Interpersonal & informational justice elements; expectations within the rules of engagement*

That’s really interesting because again that comes back to some of the points that Bruce and Don were making around, self-awareness of that leader on how they should be behaving and again, it is setting expectations for the team. Like, if you are making a decision, the decision should be transparent and give people the opportunity to provide input, again, influence. Again, sometimes they will have .... the decision will not change, because that’s unfortunately sometimes how it is. (Margaret).

FG2 reflected on the COVID-19 pandemic recognising both the opportunities and challenges it had presented. And, although opportunities were presented through increased productivity and the opportunity to progress key projects, overall, the concerns and challenges weighed heavy. For example, in Margaret’s example below it is possible to see the interconnection of these experiences.

### *Opportunities and challenges of COVID-19*

....for us, ummmm I think the impact of Covid, I think it was quite positive. We probably have struggled more having to return people to campus. Because, ummm from our point of view, it didn't impact our productivity...it helped to some degree. And ... if I am thinking selfishly from an XXX perspective across the whole university. It gave us plenty of opportunities. We are able to push things that we've been trying to do that the uptake was so small, because there was no need. Once people had to work remotely, we were able to push things, like TEAMS, like more use of Zoom, more use of other collaborative tools, that we've got. You know I was able to get through a purchase for a product to help with managing our XXX remotely.... So, for us it was a GREAT benefit because it helped us get a few things moving along the line (Margaret).

In Don's example below we get a sense of the personal challenges of COVID-19 which links to the findings in RQ3.4 where concerns around personal safety and availability were raised. Don also articulates the challenges of WFH with interruptions, and issues with work, life balance. Don's experience also highlights the impact of job demands and their influence in one's working life.

From a business point of view, I could see advantages...but from a personal point of view there were also challenges. Ummm with working with kids at home, was a struggle, and yeah, and, ummm once they went back to school, it was, the productivity just soared.... because of the distractions through the day, you were forced to work until 8 o'clock at night... (Don).

From the discussions with FG2 it is possible to get a sense of insight into the influence of COVID-19 for individuals. As a final reflection Bruce and Liz's comments below highlight the complexities including the of leveraging flexible work practices on an ongoing basis, concerns around mental health, the impact of COVID-19 on creativity, innovation and team environments, and concerns around what the return to campus life might look like.

### *Final reflections and concerns around the return to campus life*

... two observations I have there when I came back to work from working from home ummmm one was it was incredibly noisy here. Like insanely noisy I was finding that I had to actually put my headphones on and that was bizarre. And the other big thing for myself,

was getting right back to the start we were talking about engagement fulfilment .....for me, umm I found that the tangible being here has a part of fulfillment for me and my role. So as much as I really enjoyed some days working from home, and don't get me wrong, if there's a vote I'm like yes, but that needs to be part of flexibility for our team. But being here I felt, oh wow, that's actually good, as much as students aren't walking around at the moment...Yeah, just being here and walking around and seeing the campus, and it gives me a sense of fulfillment and I didn't know it was part of what I enjoyed in my role until the point I was back. Umm so university context, if, the focus changes from UniSQ currently trying to make out the front of UniSQ a little bit more inviting in that, and certain things around major buildings and what not. If that slows down, because well people aren't here anyway, I am not sure what that does for the future (Bruce).

...seems to be very interesting what will happen down the track because the working from home, yes it might work, from a you know a productivity point of view ok. But I am not sure how it works, for your mental health. All your time on your own, for creativity, teamwork, and also just from a how fun it is to come to a university campus with no people and no students. You know, for me it is actually quite depressing and I found. And from a personal point of view, I hate being at home on my own. Because you don't get to talk to anyone. So the activity might be...but there is all these other things, for me, that if it went on for a very long time, or if a decision was made by the university that everyone talk to you supervisor to decide to stay at home or come to work or some combination too, ummm I am not actually really very comfortable with that. I can sort of visualise what that might do to the campus environment and team environment and just yeah....I have concerns about it, I guess (Liz).

#### **4.6.5 Researcher Reflection of FG2**

FG2 was interesting as it provided the opportunity to source input from individuals tasked with leading and developing SS teams. And, whilst there was general agreement of the themes arising from the semi-structured interviews and to FG1 the nuanced perspective of the challenges of providing opportunities for staff to use their range of skills and abilities, which participants raised as a factor to their engagement, provided insight into the complexities of the generic verses customised nature of SS environments.

#### **4.7 Summary of findings**

Stemming from the discussion throughout this Chapter several themes and findings were developed as a result of this study. At the end of this chapter, Table 4.5 provides a collated



summary with a full discussion on the findings and their relationship to the literature to be discussed in Chapter 5 that follows. From a fundamental level, the study found that the findings were consistent with Macey & Schneider's descriptions of EE being comprised of Trait, State and Behavioural conditions. The findings were also consistent with the definition used for the study which defined EE as:

*A positive, work-related state that consists of cognitive, emotional and behavioural components that are associated with individual role performances and characterised by a genuine desire to contribute to organisational success.*

The findings were consistent with Kahn's (1990) descriptions of the psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. Noting that Kahn (1990) introduced us to the 'contractual imagery' of the ROI of self in role and that an individual's psychological experiences at work, inclusive of group, intergroup and organisational interactions, and their subjective assessment of these experiences subsequently influenced their decisions as to whether to personally engage or disengage in their work roles. Additionally, there is a consistency in the findings to Kahn's (1990) Dimensions of Psychological Conditions – Meaningfulness, Safety and Availability. Findings both extend and provide new insights through its application into COVID-19, RU and SS contexts more broadly.

The application of Saks (2019) to the study provided interesting insights, nothing that there are a number of consistencies, including that the use of skills and abilities enhances engagement, with Saks (2019) finding that skill variety was the main job characteristic that predicts job engagement. Additionally, the importance of Dispositional Characteristics (included in the description of PPS in this study) on EE has been identified. The findings are also consistent with Saks (2019) noting that the relationships between the factors that enhance and/or inhibit have a complex interplay in the lives of individuals with a number of moderating and mediating relationships. This study extends and provides new insight into Saks (2019) model through extension of Organisational Justice dimensions (interactional justice and its two sub-components interpersonal and informational). These will be discussed in Chapter 5. Additionally, Saks (2019) is both extended and provides new insight through its application across SS, and RU contextual circumstances more broadly.

Additionally, the findings are consistent with, extend and provide new insight into the JD-R model by providing insight into those job and personal resources that facilitate engagement for professional staff working SS teams in a RU context. Noting that SS as a way of organising would appear to be an important job resource. Additionally, insight into those job demands that influence EE in SS teams in a RU context also extends and provides new insight through the JD-R model.

Key areas of interest that extend on the extant literature include:

- The concept of EE as being a three-way exchange between parties, (self, co-workers & colleagues and the organisations). In contrast to Saks (2006) description of EE as a two-way exchange between individuals and the organisation.
- The influence of organisational justice (perceptions of fairness) dimensions on EE.
- Clarity on the influence of PSS and POS, and the importance of social support more broadly.
- SS as a job resource as a way of organising work, and
- The influence of a RU context on EE.

Additionally, new findings not explicitly detailed in Kahn (1990), Saks (2019) or the JD-R is influence of the development of a sense of connection by ‘knowing what piece of the puzzle’ you are in organisational life and understanding how your contributions link to the purpose and outcomes of your task, team and/or organisation.

#### 4.8 Concluding summary for Chapter 4

In concluding, this chapter presented the findings in relation to the overarching research objective and questions. A summary of these findings is presented below:

**Table 0-5 Summary of Findings**

**RQ1: What does ‘employee engagement’ mean to SS workers in a RU context?**

*Theme: The rules of engagement (RoE)*

The meaning of EE is consistent with the literature and definition used in this thesis. If participants were not sure of what EE *was* they were sure of what EE *was not*. Discussions were consistent with Kahn’s ROI and contractual imagery, Saks (2019), and the JD-R. Descriptions were also consistent with Macey and Schneiders (2008) framework as being comprised of trait, state and behavioural components. Discussions that extended from the extant literature incorporated expectations of self and others (including the organisation) setting the foundation for *the rules of engagement* which is suggestive of a 3-way horizontal and vertical reciprocal exchange between parties.

<p><b>RQ2: What are the factors that enhance EE in SS teams in a RU context?</b>  <i>Themes: Connection (people, place &amp; purpose), use of skills &amp; abilities, PPS, feeling valued and valuable and knowing what piece of the puzzle you are.</i></p> <p>Enhancing factors included: the opportunity to use one's skills and abilities; knowing what piece of the puzzle you are – connection to purpose and outcomes; feelings of being valued and valuable; PPS including the ability re-set and re-focus through the application of levels of engagement; a connection to people, place, and purpose. Findings have a relationship to RQ2.1-2-5 RQ3-3.5 respectively.</p>	<p><b>RQ3: What are the factors the inhibit EE in SS teams in a RU context?</b>  <i>Theme: Not feeling (or the need to feel) valued and valuable and <b>respected</b> for one's inputs</i></p> <p>Not having the opportunity to use one's skills and abilities  Organisational Justice: perceptions of fairness, episodes, and perceptions of injustice  People – conflict &amp; those not committed (influenced by the ROE from RQ2)</p> <p>Findings link to have a relationship to RQ 3.2 &amp; RQ3.5 &amp; RQ2-2.5</p>
<p><b>RQ2.1 How do these workers describe their positive experiences of EE?</b>  <i>Theme: Connection – valued &amp; valuable (and respected)</i>  Links to RQ2 - a time when they had use of their skills and abilities, felt valued and valuable, and knew what piece of the puzzle they were (connection &amp; outcome).</p>	<p><b>RQ3.1 How do these workers describe their negative experiences of EE?</b>  <i>Theme: extends theme in 2.1 to include the need to feel respected.</i></p> <p>A time when participants felt they were not respected or valued for their skills and abilities (links to RQ2).</p> <p>Findings link to RQ3, RQ2.1 and extends to perceptions of fairness through episodes of injustice.</p>
<p><b>RQ2.2 What aspects of working in SS enhances their EE?</b>  <i>Theme: Putting the shared into SS, connection and place is powerful</i></p> <p>Putting the shared into SS through the sharing of skills, learning, support, training &amp; development and social support more broadly.</p> <p>Participants liked being with <i>their tribe</i> (a team of likeminded and similarly engaged individuals).</p> <p>SS as an organising structure and way of working, location and co-location with SS and stakeholders.</p>	<p><b>RQ3.2 What aspects of working in SS inhibited their EE?</b>  <i>Theme: one size-fits all – customised verses generic</i></p> <p>Tension between customised verses generic  Generic PD's, one size fits all approach to SS  Influence of non-performing/not engaged staff.</p>
<p><b>RQ2.3 What aspects of working in a RU enhance their EE?</b>  <i>Theme: Place is powerful, connection</i>  RU as an employer, attractive working conditions, regional as a lifestyle, connection to purpose and outcomes.</p>	<p><b>RQ3.3 What aspects of working in a RU inhibit their EE?</b>  <i>Theme: Links to above – customisation verses generic and RU context</i>  Lack of career opportunities (PD's/progression).  Problem is not if they go...the problem is if they stay – people management.</p>
<p><b>RQ2.4 In what way might the Covid-19 pandemic have enhanced their EE?</b></p>	<p><b>RQ3.4 In what way might the Covid-19 pandemic have inhibited their EE?</b></p>

<p><i>Theme: links to RQ2 and COVID-19 opportunities</i></p> <p>Use of skills and abilities knew what piece of the puzzle you were, new ways of working.</p> <p>Links to connection and purpose and use of skills &amp; abilities</p>	<p><i>Theme: challenges - safety &amp; availability</i></p> <p>Links to Kahn (1990) safety and availability, see the impact of demands in the lives of respondents</p> <p>Challenges – resources; safety and availability; concerns around what return to campus life might look like.</p> <p>Microcosm for the JD-R model particularly though the need for appropriate job resources</p>
<p><b>RQ2.5 What criticality did the workers assign to the various factors that enhanced their EE?</b></p> <p>Links to RQ2, range of holistic factors, unique to the individual however there are some commonalities. Use of skills and abilities, respected and valued for one's inputs, SS environment, attraction to RU.</p> <p>Implications: SS environment, use of skills and abilities, OJ, connection to purpose and outcomes</p>	<p><b>RQ3.5 What criticality did the workers assign to the various factors that inhibited their EE?</b></p> <p>Links to RQ2.5 and justice perceptions -</p> <p>Tension between generic and customised job roles/descriptions</p> <p>Implications: bring OJ back to the management table</p> <p>Implications: bring OJ back to the management table</p>

Source: developed by author

Additionally, as an advanced organiser for the next chapter, an indicative summary of where this study's findings contribute to the literature is provided in Table 4.6. This table denotes where there is consistency between this study's findings and the key literature identified for this study, and where opportunities arose in the study to either extend current theory, and potentially new and unique insights.

**Table 0-6 Key theoretical contributions resulting from this study**

Literature	Consistent	Extends	New
Macey & Schneider (2008)	Yes	No relevant finding	No relevant finding
Definition of EE used for the study	Yes	Workers have an informal set of 'rules of engagement' (RoE) suggesting a 3-way horizontal and vertical reciprocal exchange between parties and <i>how</i> through the RoE, EE becomes operationalised	
Kahn (1990)	Yes	Organisational justice, particularly transactional justice, has strong influence on EE	Knowing 'what piece of the puzzle' one is in organisational

Literature	Consistent	Extends	New
Saks (2019)	Yes	A 3 <sup>rd</sup> party identified in the EE exchange relationship, that being colleagues. This is beyond just the individual and the organisation. The role of 'proximity' with colleagues in building trust.	life and understanding how one contributes to it.
JD-R	Yes	SS arrangements can be considered a 'job resource'. Trustful and respectful relationships are an embedded 'job resource'. Covid-19 provided a microcosmic representation of the JD-R, particularly though the need for appropriate job resources.	
EE in SS in RU	No relevant finding	No relevant finding	<p>SS provides a 'tribe' mentality which facilitates connection.</p> <p>The notion that SS teams, as institutionalised structures, overtly provide a location/space that facilitates connections and engenders EE.</p> <p>RU workplaces provide attractive conditions and meaningful work but limited by career progression.</p>

Source: developed by author

Chapter 5 which follows, contains a discussion of these findings, presents conclusions and recommendations, details the limitations of the study, and suggests future research directions.

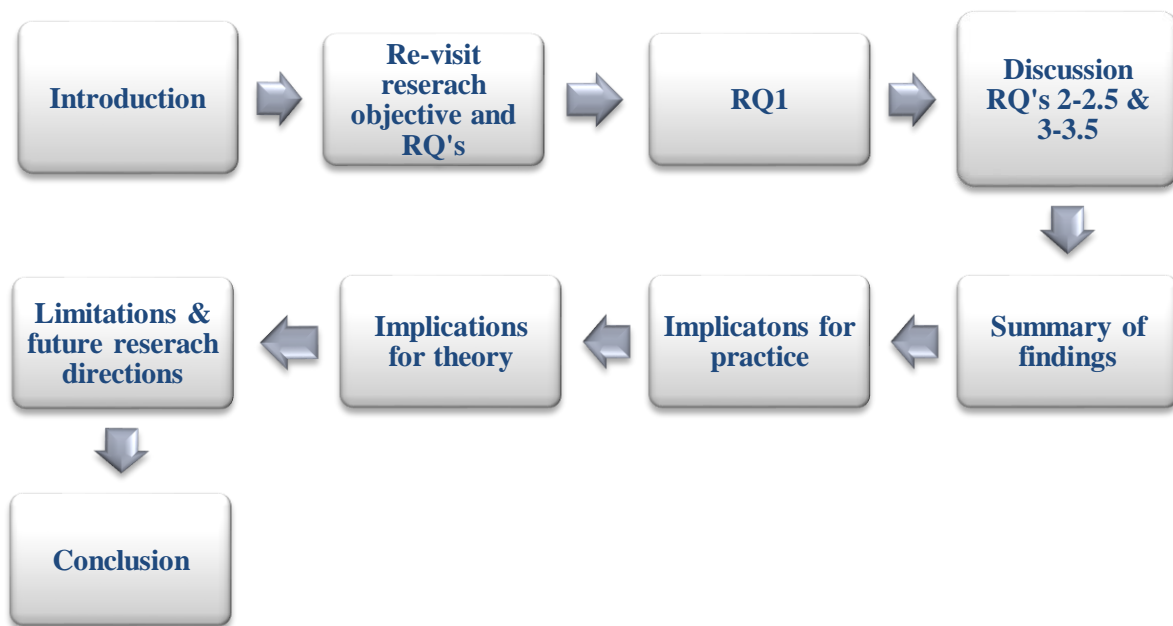
## CHAPTER 5 - DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

*There is nothing more powerful than the voice of lived experience (Anon).*

*It is only when you look back you can see how far you've come (Author).*

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter contains a discussion of the findings identified in the previous chapter. Implications for theory and practice will be discussed followed by the limitations of the study and recommended areas of future research. Figure 5.1 below provides a graphical representation to guide the reader, depicting that each research question will be discussed sequentially regarding their themes in relation to enhancing and inhibiting factors, before presenting the final elements of the concluding commentary.



*Figure 0-1 Visual guide of Chapter 5*

## 5.2 Discussions of RQ 1 – the meaning of EE

In discussions regarding RQ1 participants were asked to articulate their understanding of EE to set the foundation of shared meaning between researcher and participant and subsequently the readers of this dissertation. Table 5.2 provides a summary of the findings.

**Table 0-1 Summary of RQ1**

**RQ1: What does ‘employee engagement’ mean to SS workers in a RU context?**

*Theme: The rules of engagement (RoE)*

The meaning of EE is consistent with the literature and definition used in this thesis. If participants were not sure of what EE *was* they were sure of what EE *was not*. Discussions were consistent with Kahn’s ROI and contractual imagery, Saks (2019), and the JD-R. Descriptions were also consistent with Macey and Schneider’s (2008) framework as being comprised of trait, state and behavioural components. Discussions that extended from the extant literature incorporated expectations of self and others (including the organisation) setting the foundation for *the rules of engagement* which is suggestive of a 3-way horizontal and vertical reciprocal exchange between parties.

Source: developed by author

As discussed in Chapter 4 exploring the meaning of EE with participants was consistent with definitions of engagement in the literature and the definition used in this thesis. Interestingly, if participants were not sure of what engagement *was* they were sure of what engagement *was not*. Engagement was not just turning up, ticking a box, and leaving at 4pm without a care in the world (passive engagement). Nor was engagement negative or destructive behaviours such as white anting, gossiping or coercive behaviours. Descriptions of engagement were consistent with Macey and Schneider’s (2008) framework of EE being comprised of trait, state and behavioural components, which included a commitment to do one’s best for self, the team and the organisation. Participants positive descriptions of EE aligned with the definition of EE used in this study which drew from Saks (2006) and Albrecht’s (2010) and defined EE as *a positive, work-related state that consists of cognitive, emotional and behavioural components that are associated with individual role performances and characterised by a genuine desire to contribute to organisational success*.

What the study highlighted in this definition is that this is also what participants expected to see in the positive cognitive, emotional and behavioural performance of others (co-workers and colleagues, leaders and the organisation). Kahn (1990, p. 703) introduced us to the ‘contractual imagery’ and the concept of the return on investment (ROI) which influences an individual’s choice of personally engaging or disengaging in work contexts (refer Section 2.3.4). Saks

(2006, 2019) uses social exchange theory (SET) to explain engagement as a two-way exchange between employees and the organisation. Drawing from Section 2.3.5 SET proposes employees choose to engage or not engage, cognitively, emotionally, and/or physically, to varying degrees in response to an organisation's actions (Saks 2006). Within SET parameters, if parties (employees and the organisation) abide by the *rules of engagement* (RoE), it is possible over time to develop trusting, loyal commitments. In Chapter 4, responses to RQ1 indicated that the RoE also apply to colleagues and co-workers in addition to those with institutional powers (supervisors, managers, leaders) i.e., the organisation. This distinction of a 3-way exchange between parties, draws from Kahn's (1990) and (Saks 2006, 2019) descriptions of self in role investment – noting the individuality of EE and Rhoades and Eisenberger's (2002, p.700) contention that leaders, managers and supervisors (i.e., those with organisational power) act as agents for the organisation. What's missing from Kahn (1990), Saks (2006, 2019) and the JD-R model, and raised by the participants in this study is the influence around the expectations of co-workers and colleagues in the engagement exchange which subsequently formed the foundations for the theme of the RoE - which are the expectations and perceptions of the physical, cognitive and emotional inputs from self and others, co-workers/colleagues and the organisation, inclusive of managers, supervisors and/or those with organisational power).

This finding has a number of important implications. Firstly, it extends on the EE literature broadening our understanding of EE from a two-way exchange to a three-way horizontal and vertical exchange between employees and the organisation. Additionally, the study also provides insight into *how* EE becomes operationalised in the world of work as part of the cultural norms and expectations of 'how we do things around here', that is, those behavioural, cognitive and/or emotional interactions that are consistent with expectations of what an engaged employee might look like. With those expectations outside of *engagement* being categorised as not engaged or actively disengaged. Kahn (1990) articulates these expectations, noting that individual, interpersonal, group, intergroup, and organisational factors influence an individual's psychological experience at work which subsequently influenced their decisions as to whether to personally engage or disengage in their work roles.

Central to the RoE exchange is the development of positive relationships and trust between parties. Macey and Schneider's (2008) model articulates that trust influences the relationship between leadership and behavioural engagement. Through Kahn's (1990) descriptions of the



Dimensions of Psychological Conditions it is possible to see the foundations of how trustful and positive relationships are built through meaningfulness, safety and availability. At a practical level, trustful relationships are built over time and through interactions with individuals. Whilst the sections that follow will expand on recommendations, training and development, cultural awareness, and good communication are important elements. Organisational justice (perceptions of fairness) and concerns around how individuals are treated in the workplace are key concerns for individuals. Thus, how individuals **feel**, and their subsequent perceptions of their treatment matter. For the reader, Kahn's (1990) three psychological conditions of employee engagement is provided below with Psychological Safety highlighted to provides some conceptual guidance as to how facilitate trustful relationships.

***Table 0-2 Kahn's (1990) three psychological conditions of employee engagement***

Dimensions of Psychological Conditions			
Dimensions	Meaningfulness	Safety	Availability
Definition	Sense of return on investments of self in role performances.	Sense of being able to show and employ self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status or career.	Sense of possessing the physical, emotional and psychological resources necessary for investing self in role performances.
Experiential components	Feel worthwhile, valued, valuable; feel able to give to and receive from work and others in course of work.	Feel situations are trustworthy, secure predictable, and clear in terms of behavioral consequences.	Feel capable of driving physical, intellectual, and emotional energies into role performance.
Types of influence	Work elements that create incentives or disincentives for investment of self.	Elements of social systems that create situations that are more or less predictable, consistent, and nonthreatening.	Individual distractions that are more or less preoccupying in role performance situations.
Influences	Tasks: Jobs involving more or less challenge, variety, creativity, autonomy, and clear delineation of procedures and goals. Roles: Formal positions that offer more or less attractive identities, through fit and with a preferred self-image, and status and influence. Work interactions: Interpersonal interactions with more or less	Interpersonal relationships: Ongoing relationships that offer more or less support, trust, openness, flexibility, and lack of threat. Group and intergroup dynamics: Informal, often unconscious roles that leave more or less room to safely express various parts of self; shaped by dynamics within and between groups in organizations.	Physical energies: Existing levels of physical resources available for investment into role performances. Emotional energies: Existing levels of emotional resources available for investment into role performances. Insecurity: Levels of confidence in own

Dimensions of Psychological Conditions			
Dimensions	Meaningfulness	Safety	Availability
	promotion of dignity, self-appreciation, sense of value, and the inclusion of personal as well as professional elements.	Management style and process: Leader behaviours that show more or less support, resilience, consistency, trust, and competence. Organizational norms: Shared system expectations about member behaviours and emotions that leave more or less room for investments of self during role performances.	abilities and status, self-consciousness, and ambivalence about fit with social systems that leave more or less room for investments in self in role performances. Outside life: Issues in people's outside lives that leave them more or less available for investments of self during role performances.

**Source:** Kahn (1990, p. 705) re-drawn for thesis by author

In terms of the psychological safety dimension of Kahn's framework, Saks (2006, 2019) model lists perceived organisational support (POS), perceived supervisor support (PSS), distributive and procedural justice with leadership – particularly, transformational, authentic and *ethical* leadership. Saks (2006, p. 605) description of POS and PSS links to Kahn's (1990) psychological safety which is described as:

...than an important aspect of safety stems from the amount of care and support employees perceive to be provided by their organisation and that supportive and trusting relationships as well as supportive management promotes psychological safety.

Other than the above reference, neither Saks (2006 or 2019) provide a detailed description/definition of POS and PSS. Linking to the findings in RQ2 where participants articulated that their EE was enhanced when they felt valued and valuable, and from drawing from organisational support theory (Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002, pp. 699-700) state that:

employees develop global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization (POS) and Supervisors (PSS) value their contributions and cares about their well-being (POS).

Whilst the JD-R model does not explicitly list trust, job resources are detailed as those physical, psychological, social and/or organisational aspects of the job that are necessary to achieve work goals (Bakker & Demerouti 2008). Through this description it is possible to conceptualise that trust and respectful relationships are embedded more broadly into this category and included

into social support in Bakker and Demerouti's (2006 p.312) description of interpersonal and social relations including supervisor and co-worker support and team climate, linking to Saks (2006, 2019) use of social exchange theory (SET) and the development of trusting and loyal relationships.

It is also possible the inclusion of EE as a three-way exchange to include colleagues and co-workers is influenced by proximity. That is, an individual's closest and most common interactions on a daily basis may be with their co-workers and colleagues, therefore, these relationships matter in their experiences and their subjective psychological assessment of work. Thus, whether a colleague or co-worker chooses to engage or disengage at work directly influences individuals and teams. This expectation of the reciprocity in the engagement exchange in part provides insight into how expectations of group and intergroup norms (cognitive, emotional and behavioural) influence engagement. And whilst SET provides a reasonable rationale for understanding the two-way exchange between individuals and the organisation (Saks 2006) the phenomena of proximity and reciprocity expectations as a three-way exchange between parties provide interesting future research directions.

An interesting point in discussions with participants was that, if they were not sure what EE was, they were immediately sure, or found it easier to articulate what EE was not. Whilst the full reasons for this paradox are unclear, it provides an opportunity for further exploration. Possible reasons are that in the world of work, individuals have a reasonable understanding and expectation of the norms and behaviours that are required at work (i.e., the psychological contract), and it is not until a transgression occurs (a breach of these behaviours/expectations and/or group norms) that the non-conformity becomes salient. In some ways, individuals at work experience a form of cognitive dissonance in the processing of their experiences of engaged versus disengaged and/or actively disengaged employees, which was evidenced in participants descriptions of those experiences. In simplistic terms the participants descriptions of their experiences and the subsequent development of the RoE theme was reminiscent of the adage *a fair day's work for a fair day's wage*, with employees' expectations of the reciprocity of this exchange inclusive of their co-workers, colleagues and the organisation.

### ***5.2.1 Implications/recommendations for RQ1***

This finding for RQ1 in the extension of the RoE representative as 3-way exchange between parties has important implications for those who manage SS teams. Firstly, it recognises the

importance of building a positive and healthy team environment through trusting and meaningful relationships. Noting that a healthy work environment and social systems/support are important factors in both the JD-R model and Kahn's (1990) Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement and links to findings in the SS literature that culture is an important element of SS environments ([Refer Section 2.4.2 Table 2.7](#)) (Schulman et al. 1999; Quinn et al. 2000, p157; Gospel & Sako 2010; Maatman & Maijerink 2017; Klimkeit & Thirumaran (eds 2018).

Importantly, the influence of the RoE on EE raises the notion that as we articulate and communicate organisational values, those managing SS teams should also be looking to develop, agree upon and communicate what a shared vision of *employee engagement* looks like. This articulation of the RoE offers the opportunity to embed an EE framework into the cultural norms of the SS team. The premise being – that a clear understanding and agreement as to what *engagement is and is not* encourages and supports consistent application of positive cognitive, emotional and behavioural elements of EE thus enhancing cohesion in SS environments.

### 5.2.2 RQ2 & RQ3 – Factors that enhanced or inhibited

RQ2 and RQ3 examined more broadly the factors that enhanced or inhibited EE in SS teams in a RU context. RQ2 & RQ3 each contained five sub-questions which will be discussed with practical recommendations provided in the sections that follow.

<b>RQ2: What are the factors that enhance EE in SS teams in a RU context?</b>	<b>RQ3: What are the factors the inhibit EE in SS teams in a RU context?</b>
<p><i>Themes: Connection (people, place &amp; purpose), use of skills &amp; abilities, positive personal strategies, valued &amp; valuable, know what piece of the puzzle you are</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The opportunity to use one's skills and abilities</li> <li>• Knowing what piece of the puzzle you are – connection to purpose and outcomes</li> <li>• Feelings of being valued and valuable</li> <li>• Positive personality strategies – including the ability to re-set and re-focus</li> <li>• Levels of engagement – task, team, organisation and/or career</li> <li>• People and team (links to RQ2.2/RQ2.3)</li> </ul>	<p><i>Theme: Not feeling valued and valuable and <b>respected</b> for one's inputs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not having the opportunity to use one's skills and abilities</li> <li>• Organisational Justice: perceptions of fairness, episodes and perceptions of injustice</li> <li>• People – conflict &amp; those not engaged</li> <li>• links to RQ 3.2 &amp; RQ3.3</li> </ul>

Implications: variety of factors enhance EE consistent with the extant literature. We see the influence of PPS and the ability to draw on personal resources to re-set and refocus.	Implications: We get a sense of the relationships between RQ2 & RQ3 and see the emergence and impact of the factors relating to OJ dimensions.
---	--

Source: developed by author

#### **5.2.2.1 RQ2: Enhancing factors**

In sum, factors that enhanced EE included the opportunity to use one's skills and abilities, knowing what piece of the puzzle you are which was associated with feeling a connection to purpose and outcomes, and feelings of being valued and valuable for one's contribution. Positive personality strategies (PPS) through proactive and autotelic personality traits also had a part to play in an individual's approach to life which teases at the concept that EE is not just something that happens to us, but rather something that individuals have a role in making a contribution to, and importantly, EE as something that can be developed. Thus, the concept of training and development on PPS is another way organisations might seek to enhance and stimulate EE. Additionally, a participants previous good or bad experience also influenced ones current EE perceptions. Thus, the role of self in the EE exchange becomes salient.

The engagement literature is proliferated with discussions and questions of the various types of engagement (work, job, task, organisational, personal engagement), whether engagement is static or fluctuates. It results in a complex array of meanings and applications of EE and speaks to the difficulty of defining EE as discussed in Chapter 2 and enforces Macey and Schneider's (2008) contention that one is clear on what type of engagement one is speaking about. As a result of this complexity, this study took a holistic view of EE in recognition of its multi-dimensional nature inclusive of job, work organisational and/or personal engagement. What is important, however is that findings from this study showed that individuals draw from task, team, and/or organisational, and for some from their broader career level as a means of engagement and that at times, they use this 'connection' to their 'personal engagement strategy' as a means to re-set/re-focus during challenging periods. This shows the complex and multi-faceted nature of EE with the individuality of responses again reminding us of EE as a unique experience for individuals. This 'individuality' in the engagement experience and exchange attests to the importance of both employees and employer (supervisors/managers and/or the organisation) developing an understanding of self and the employee as a means to understand what factors motivates individuals in order to cultivate or promote conditions in which EE might be enhanced.

Additionally in the responses to RQ2 there is also a sense of the JD-R model and Saks (2019) antecedents in action. Consistent with Saks (2019) findings, this study found that the use of skills and abilities is related to EE. The study extends on these findings to show that the use of skills and abilities is facilitated and/or enhanced through a connection to purpose and/or knowing what piece of the puzzle you are in organisational life. Importantly, participants articulated that they felt a sense of engagement through the use of skills and abilities, be that through an everyday task, stretch opportunity and/or project. What was important for participants, was their sense of connection to purpose and/or knowing what piece of the puzzle they were – and feeling valued for these contributions. Given the generic nature of SS this is an important distinction in understanding factors that might enhance EE, with the finding suggesting that *connecting* individuals to the purpose of their inputs and finding ways in which to value them for those inputs is a means to enhance EE. The concept of being valued for one's organisational inputs and for self is a consistent theme through Kahn (1990), and specifically listed in psychological meaningfulness, experiential components - feeling worthwhile, valued, valuable (Refer Table 5.3) and Saks (2019) and the JD-R embedded in PSS and POS more broadly.

Additionally, Saks (2019) identified dispositional characteristics and the JD-R identified personal resources (e.g., optimism, resilience, self-efficacy) as important for supporting EE. For the purposes of this study, these were grouped into positive personality strategies (PPS). Saks (2019) contended that personal resources become salient when job demands are high. Although difficult to ascertain the quantification of the term high, certainly in discussions with participants, examples were provided of drawing from different areas of one's work to re-set or re-focus during challenging periods, and/or taking a pragmatic view of challenging experiences. Additionally, a number of participants seemed to just have a positive or pragmatic *way of* viewing or processing, as Kahn (1990) articulates, their psychological experiences of work, which ultimately influenced their individual attitudes and behaviours. PPS can perhaps be developed in employees and/or screened for when determining an individual's suitability or fit for a role during recruitment processes. This fits with the literature in the SS field that people are a key capability of SS success and that the right skill mix (or person job-role fit) is important for these types of environments.

### **5.2.2.2 RQ3: Factors that inhibited EE**

Factors that inhibit EE, at first glance, may appear to be the antithesis of the enhancing factors identified in RQ2, with responses suggesting that not having the opportunity to use one's skills and abilities, and feelings of not being respected or valued for the work that one does, inhibiting EE. However, a most notable inclusion in these discussions with participants, which they did not identify when viewing EE through the 'enhancing' lens, were organisational justice (OJ) dimensions.

Organisational justice refers to people's perceptions of fairness in organisations and has three components (Greenberg & Colquitt (eds) 2005). Distributive justice is where employees are concerned with the fairness of resource distributions, such as pay, rewards, promotions and the outcome of dispute resolution. Procedural justice is where employees are concerned with the decision-making procedures that lead to outcomes, and interactional justice is where employees are concerned with the nature of the interpersonal treatment received from others, especially key organisational authorities (Greenberg & Colquitt (eds) 2005). Interactional justice also has two sub-components, interpersonal and informational justice. Interpersonal justice refers to the degree to which people are treated with politeness, dignity and respect by authorities and third parties in executing procedures or determining outcomes. Informational justice is focused on the accuracy, quality, timeliness and perceived truthfulness of information, and is associated with perceptions of the explanations provided to people that convey information about why certain procedures or outcomes were distributed (Greenberg & Colquitt (eds) 2005).

Therefore, inhibiting factors were found not to be entirely the direct inverse of the enhancing factors, because of the inhibitors' strong association with OJ. From the inhibiting lens, perceptions of fairness weighed heavily on individuals, not only for themselves, but also concern for others. Experiences of perceived injustice were felt quite deeply by individuals aggregating to broader feelings of the perceptions of fairness of the organisation and/or management. Importantly, for those SS areas that are the institutional gatekeepers of organisational policy and procedures such as HR and Finance, perceptions of injustice were felt deeply and created an additional emotional burden, particularly where they felt injustice had been served out to those in their care. Respondent's descriptions of organisational injustice highlighted the tensions between expectation and reality in the ROE between employees and employers and those with the power in organisational relationships such as supervisors and managers. Perceptions of less than an equitable exchange for self and/or others is reminiscent

of cognitive dissonance due to the lack of consistency in what the organisation says it will do and what it does. The emotional, cognitive and even physical impacts of this perceived inconsistency translated to an emotional burden/job demands, as identified in the JD-R model.

Whilst justice dimensions do appear in the JD-R and Macey & Schneider (2008) and Saks (2016, 2019) models they are largely focused on distributive and procedural justice dimensions. This study highlighted the influence of interactional justice and the two sub-components informational and interpersonal as being of significant concern to individuals which subsequently influenced their EE. It is possible in the JD-R, Saks (2006, 2019) and Macey & Schneider's (2008) models that interactional justice has been subsumed into PSS and POS and more broadly. However, given the identification of their importance in this study and similar to Macey and Schneider (2008) description of EE a complex nomological network that sits within a family of interrelated yet distinctly identifiable elements, justice dimensions are perhaps best viewed in their entirety as part of their justice constructs.

### **5.2.3 RQ 2.1 & RQ3.1 How do workers describe their positive and negative experiences of EE**

RQ2.1 and RQ3.1 used a critical incident question technique to provide respondents the opportunity to describe a time when they felt engaged or disengaged in their work in order to capture the key tenants and nuances of their experiences.

<b>RQ2.1 How do these workers describe their positive experiences of EE?</b>	<b>RQ3.1 How do these workers describe their negative experiences of EE?</b>
<p><i>Theme: Connection – valued &amp; valuable</i> Links to RQ2 - a time when they had use of their skills and abilities, felt valued and valuable, and knew what piece of the puzzle they were (connection &amp; outcome).</p> <p>What is important to note is that connection can be built in the everyday – not just special projects or stretch opportunities.</p>	<p><i>Theme: extends theme in 2.1 to include respected. Connection – valued, valuable and respected</i> A time where they did not have the use of their skills and abilities and were not valued for their inputs.</p> <p>Concerns around perceptions of fairness weighed heavy – for self and others. Distributive, procedural, interactional (information &amp; interpersonal) Links to RQ3, RQ2.1 and extends to perceptions of fairness through episodes of injustice.</p>
<p>Implications: Importance of shared understanding of strategies etc. The opposite of RQ2.1 is not necessarily engagement ...because of justice dimensions.</p>	

Source: developed by author



In describing times where they felt engaged, and consistent with RQ2 respondents described a time where they had the opportunity to use their skills and abilities, times where they felt valued and valuable for their inputs and where they could see a link to the purpose and outcomes of the task, team and/or organisation. Whilst this was achieved through a stretch opportunity or project, EE was possible to achieve through everyday tasks where respondents could see the link to outcomes and could see the connection to purpose. This has important implications for SS environments in particular where often the objective is ‘commonisation of approach’ and where there may be limited opportunities for special projects and stretch opportunities.

Participants cited times they felt disengaged occurred when they did not have the opportunity to use their skills and abilities or were associated with times, they did not feel respected or valued for their inputs. Again, linking to RQ3 – perceptions of justice weighed heavily with strong feelings around interactional justice dimensions and it’s two subcomponents interpersonal and informational justice.

#### 5.2.4 RQ 2.2 & RQ 3.2 Shared services – enhancing and inhibiting factors

RQ2.2 and RQ3.2 respectively considered the enhancing and inhibiting factors of EE in, specifically, a SS environment. Table 5.3 below provides an overview.

<b>RQ2.2 What aspects of working in SS enhances their EE?</b>	<b>RQ3.2 What aspects of working in SS inhibited their EE?</b>
<p><i>Theme: Putting the shared into SS, connection, place is powerful</i>            SS as an organising structure and way of working            SS physical location and co-location of SS teams            Sharing of skills, learning, ideas, support</p>	<p><i>Theme: one size-fits all – customised verses generic</i>             Tension between customised verses generic            Generic PD’s, one size fits all approach            People management            Tension of one size fits all            Generic PD’s</p>
<p>Implications: Provides valuable insight and extends our knowledge of the employee experience of SS. Tension between generic and customised approach.</p>	

Source: developed by author

Overwhelmingly, respondents were supportive of their SS environment and felt that it was the ‘right structure whether that be in the university sector or not’. The positive way in which employees perceived their SS environment is both encouraging and surprising. Whilst we know

that SS are attractive to organisations for their reported cost savings, and efficiencies that is, alignment of processes, reduction of duplication, and commonisation of support services (Richter & Bruhl 2021; Plugge et al. 2022; Klimkeit & Thirumaran (eds) 2018), little is known of the employee experience in SS teams. This lack of knowledge exists despite recognition in the extant literature the human resources are central to the implementation and success of SS (Quinn et al. 2000; Gospel & Sako 2010; Maatman & Maijerink 2017). And whilst this study, in part, addresses this gap, there are mixed reports on the effectiveness of SS in general, and some concerns on the client experience (Richter & Brühl 2020; Richter & Brühl 2021). In some ways, this study assists in the public relations image of shared services and might create a positive image and greater understanding of their use in organisations if stakeholders and clients (and others with an interest) understand the underlying attraction to SS teams that employees might have.

In relation to the theme, ‘putting the shared into SS’, EE appears to have a symbiotic relationship with the enhancing factors identified in this study. That is, effective SS design supports EE, while SS outputs benefit from members of SS teams experiencing EE. SS structures require the creation of positive and supportive social systems which allows for the *sharing* of resources, both job resources and the support/enhancement of personal resources as described in the JD-R. Respondents in general enjoyed being ‘with their tribe’ – like minded individuals and teams with which they shared a common purpose, goals and objectives. Shared services allowed for the sharing of ideas, workload, and expertise. SS was a means to bounce ideas and seek support from within their tribe.

Also, of interest and underexplored in the SS literature is the benefit of the physical location and co-location of SS teams and their proximity to clients. With participants indicating there was a significant benefit and trade off stemming from the choices around location and co-location of SS teams which subsequently enhanced their SS experience. Thus, for SS – how and where people work – become important factors in how to optimise the EE experience for people who work in SS. It appears that in optimising SS environments, engaged employees subsequently offer enhanced outputs through positive service environments which can translate to increased outputs at the organisational level. This circular relationship aligns with Gospel and Sako’s (2010) and Maatman and Maijerink (2017) assessment that success for SS is delivered at the business unit level and realised at the firm level and in line with Saks (2006, 2019), JD-R; and Kahn’s (1990) contention that engaged employees have positive

organisational outcomes, such as reduced absenteeism and turnover, organisational citizenship behaviour, and offer increased profits. Importantly engaged employees offer enhanced service environments, which is a key objective of the SS promise. Although organisational outcomes were not tested in this study. Participants did give a sense of increased commitment and satisfaction with their roles, team and task with a desire to provide good service – thus offering the promise of the creation of a positive service environment. Given that quality service environment is a key element of SS design, the creation of a fertile work environment with a view to positive outputs will be of importance to those with an interest in SS.

Ironically, the factors that inhibited EE in SS teams in a RU context were the very things that SS hope to achieve – that is, commonisation and consistency, with respondents frustrated with generic positions descriptions (PD) and a one size fits all approach to SS, including around the development of client relationships or ‘partnering’. The issue around generic PDs is not straight forward, as the university sector uses generic PDs and Higher Education Worker Levels (HEWLS) to classify staff which links to the disbursement of resources including remuneration. Thus, the use of generic PDs has a double layer of complexity (SS, and RU context), and provides another good example of distinct yet interrelated elements in the factors that enhance and inhibit EE in this context. That is, generic PDs both supported the SS objective but also frustrated team members, and each SS design needs to be finely tuned to the specific needs of the organisation’s context and the clientele that the SS team serves.

From discussions it also became apparent that SS offers a positive and supportive work environment, and those members would miss their co-workers and work context if they had to leave their SS team. This insight again highlights the importance of recruitment and job-role-person fit and is consistent with what we do know of human resources in SS where it is noted that human capital is an important contributor to SS success (Howcroft & Richardson 2012; Klimkeit & Thirumaran (eds) 2018).

Several implications stem from this discussion. The first is that overwhelmingly SS as a structure and as a way of organising is seen as positive by employees. Effectively, SS puts the shared into SS, through the enhancement of personal and job resources. With little known of the human experience of working in such teams, this is an important finding. Additionally, the influence of the location and co-location of SS teams, uniquely underexplored in the literature provides a potential interesting area of future research, particularly as organisations operate

within increasingly digitised and/or virtualised environments, and/or physically distant ways of working.

### 5.2.5 RQ 2.3 & RQ 3.3 Regional university - enhancing and inhibiting factors

RQ2.3 and RQ3.3 focused on factors that enhanced and inhibited EE in a RU context. Overall, respondents were attracted to a regional university (RU) for a variety of reasons. Firstly, RUs are seen as attractive employers in regional areas, offering good working conditions through flexible working practices, and remuneration. Additionally, there is some prestige attached to working in a RU, where they are often large employers in their areas. Regional was synonymous with a regional lifestyle, also seen as benefit in terms of lifestyle and offering a closer connection to colleagues, clients and the community. Factors that inhibited EE included a perception of reduced career opportunities through reduced staff churn, and the retention of underperforming/disengaged staff. This narrative from respondents corresponds with the review of in literature in Chapter 2, which highlighted that professional staff are attracted to the university sector by an integrated set of needs including the opportunity to use their skills and experience, and an attractive work environment (Gander 2018). Also consistent with the literature in factors that inhibited was a mismatch between career and promotional opportunities.

<b>RQ2.3 What aspects of working in a RU enhance their EE?</b>	<b>RQ3.3 What aspects of working in a RU inhibit their EE?</b>
<p><i>Theme: Place is powerful, connection</i></p> <p>RU as an employer, attractive working conditions, regional as a lifestyle, connection to purpose and outcomes.</p>	<p><i>Theme: Links to above – customisation verses generic and RU context</i></p> <p>Lack of career opportunities (PD's/progression). Problem is not if they go...the problem is if they stay – people management.</p>
<p>Implications: Develops our understanding of an employee's connection to their regional workplace. Consistent with the literature.</p>	

Source: developed by author

Perhaps the generalisable lesson from the 'regionality' aspect of this study, is the potential organisational benefit derived from investing in cultivating a positive 'employer brand', as a possible proxy for how in this study, the SS workers were attracted to the benefits of being employed by a regional university. Positive employer branding was found to contribute to attracting and managing a profile of employees who exhibit EE behaviours (Yousf & Khurshid

2021). Thus, in order to leverage EE from positive employer branding, it appears that based on the findings here, organisations should seek to provide a work environment that offers their employees positive interactions and connection to their colleagues and customers, career development opportunities, and reasons to have pride in the role and contribution that the organisation makes within its community, be it a local, national and/or global community.

### 5.2.6 RQ2.4 & RQ 3.4 Influence of the COVID-19 pandemic

The influence of COVID-19 offered both opportunities and challenges that acted to influence EE. On the one side, COVID-19 offered the opportunity to explore new ways of working and progressed key projects in the longer term. At the same time, individuals had concerns around their safety and what a return to campus life might look like.

RQ2.4 In what way might the Covid-19 pandemic have enhanced their EE?	RQ3.4 In what way might the Covid-19 pandemic have inhibited their EE?
<p><i>Theme: Opportunities</i>  <i>Links to RQ2</i>  Skills and abilities, knowing what piece of the puzzle you are, progression of key projects, new ways of working</p>	<p><i>Theme: Challenges – safety and availability</i>  Links to Kahn (1990) safety and availability, see the impact of demands (JD-R) in the lives of respondents    Challenges – resources; safety and availability; concerns around what return to campus life might look like.</p>
<p>Implications: Develops our understanding of how skills &amp; abilities and knowing what piece of the puzzle you play are in mobilising action. Likewise, it gives insight to how safety and job demands influence. Adds to evolving narrative of the influence of COVID-19 in the lives of individuals.</p>	

Source: developed by author

Whilst the literature on COVID is still emerging, the limited nature of this study only adds a small piece to that narrative. It does however provide insight from respondents on how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted their lives in the context in this study. Of significance in discussion with respondents was seeing how the commonality of a shared purpose, use of skills and abilities, and exploration of new ways of working influenced their daily lives. Respondents were clear on their path and directions, sourced the resources required to undertake tasks with the necessary supports to achieve their outcomes. In part it was the JD-R in action through the interaction of jobs and personal resources. Additionally, concerns around safety, and what the return to campus life might look like, also demonstrated Kahn's (1990) safety and availability

elements. As an overall assessment although COVID-19 offered opportunities, the negative elements were of concern in the lives of respondents.

### 5.2.7 RQ 2.5 & RQ 3.5 – criticality

In extending the two critical incident questions for the final two sub questions (RQ2.5 and RQ 3.5), respondents were asked if some of the factors relating to the enhancing or inhibiting of EE were more important than others. Whilst no overtly new information was contributed by this question, the benefit of this question, was that it (a) indicated a saturation of ideas/themes from the participants and that significant factor(s) remained unidentified based on the participants' experiences; and (b) reinforced the former responses to the prior questions.

<b>RQ2.5 What criticality did the workers assign to the various factors that enhanced their EE?</b>	<b>RQ3.5 What criticality did the workers assign to the various factors that inhibited their EE?</b>
<p>Links to RQ2, range of holistic factors, unique to the individual however there are some commonalities. Use of skills and abilities, respected and valued for one's inputs, SS environment, attraction to RU.</p> <p>Implications: Use of skills and abilities, OJ, connection to purpose and outcomes</p>	<p>Links to RQ2.5 and justice perceptions -</p> <p>Tension between generic and customised</p> <p>Implications: bring OJ back to the management table</p> <p>Implications: bring OJ back to the management table</p>
<p>Implications: Although EE is a unique experience for individuals a SS environment and feelings of connection (people, place &amp; purpose) enhance engagement. Principles of OJ are also central to a positive employee experience and enhance EE.</p>	

Source: developed by author

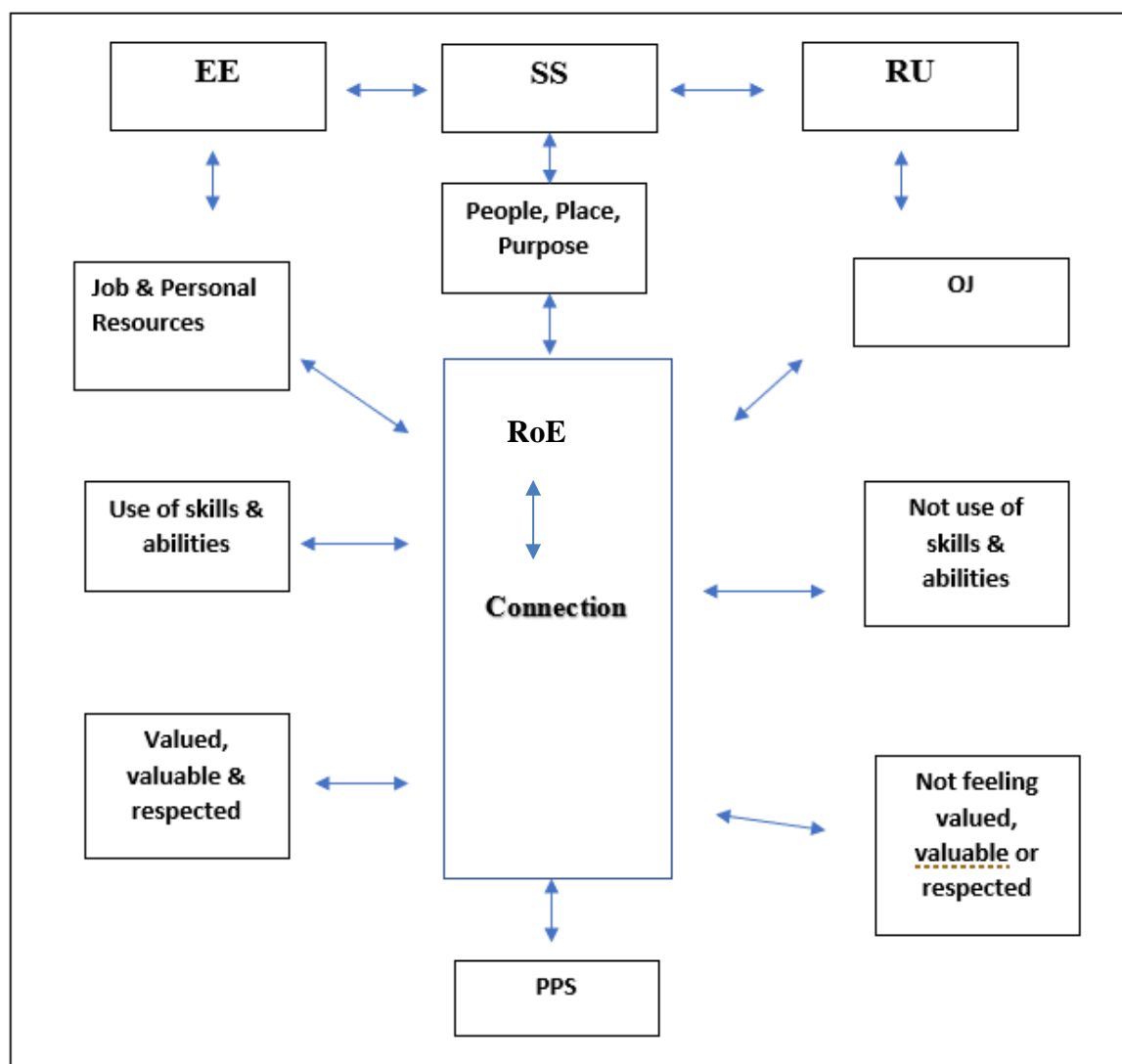
Overall, it would seem SS enhanced EE as a way organising work, as a structural arrangement and through its development of a positive and enhanced work environment. Similarly, the opportunity to use one's skills and abilities and where respondents could see a connection to purpose and outcomes was also central to the employee experience. As a holistic approach, engagement was enhanced when individuals felt they were valued and valuable for the work that they did.

In answer to RQ3.5 perceptions of fairness, and episodes of injustice weighed heavily on individuals with a complicated interplay between the OJ dimensions of procedural, distributive and particularly interactional justice and its two subcomponents interpersonal and informational justice. As a result, the theme statement in RQ2.5 was adjusted to reflect OJ

dimensions by encapsulating that EE was enhanced when respondents felt valued, valuable and respected for themselves and their inputs.

### 5.3 Summarising discussion of findings

As can be seen from the conclusions to the RQ's a number of factors work to enhance or inhibit EE in SS teams in a RU context, including the influence of the Rules of Engagement (RoE) and creating connection to people, place and purpose. Figure 5.3 below provides a figurative overview of the primary factors identified in this study.



**Figure 0-2** Conceptual diagram of EE in SS teams in a RU context

**Source:** developed by author

Factors that enhanced included the opportunity to use one's skills and abilities and feeling valued and respected for one's inputs and positive personality strategies (PPS). Overall, participants liked their SS environments, as a way of organising work, and their SS environment through social support more broadly. A SS environment allowed for the sharing of skills, ideas and workload, and participants liked being with their tribe, a team of likeminded and similarly engaged individuals. Factors that inhibited included not having the opportunity to use one's skills and abilities and perceptions of fairness (organisational justice). As was seen in RQ3.2 there is also a tension in SS environments between the customised verses generic nature of SS. This includes the use of generic position descriptions, which also has a relationship to RU environments, who tend to offer standardised PD's and levels of remuneration and a one-size-fits all approach to SS. Key to SS environments is creating a sense of connection. As discussed, enhancing and inhibiting factors have a complex interplay in the lives of participants and consistent with Macey and Schneiders (2008) description, might be viewed as a complex nomological network of factors that are distinct yet interrelated.

### ***5.3.1 Conceptual diagram of the study's major findings***

Figure 5.3 provides a holistic representation of the major findings of this study. Each of the elements identified in Figure 5.3 are explained in this section.

**RoE and Connection:** As this study highlighted the RoE are the expectations and perceptions of the physical, cognitive and emotional inputs from self, co-workers/colleagues and the organisation, inclusive of managers, supervisors and/or those with organisational power. Central to the RoE exchange is the development of positive relationships and trust between parties. The RoE represents the 3-way exchange between parties and the normative behaviours of these dynamic exchanges. The RoE supports the development of a positive and healthy team environment. Noting that a healthy work environment and social systems/support are an important factor which allows individuals to develop their personal sense of their **connection** to their SS environment. From the discussion in 5.2.2 and given the significance of justice dimensions in this study, perceptions of fairness are a key influence on the factors that enhance or inhibit EE. A commitment to 'fairness' in the distribution of resources and rewards, and the application of organisational policy facilitates alignment between individual's and the organisation. As highlighted in the findings is that the RoE provides insight into *how* EE becomes operationalised in the world of work as part of the cultural norms and expectations of 'how we do things around here', that is, those behavioural, cognitive and/or emotional



interactions that are consistent with expectations of what an engaged employee might look like. With those expectations outside of *engagement* being categorised as not engaged or actively disengaged. Failure to be consistent with the RoE expectations, particularly through perceived episodes of *unfairness* could ultimately lead to employees, choosing to *disengage or become passively engaged at work*.

EE was enhanced for individuals in SS teams in a RU context through a sense of connection. This sense of connection was driven by an individual's connection to **people, place and purpose**, with these too proving to be distinct yet interrelated elements. As we have seen in responses, participants felt a connection to their **SS environment**. A SS environment provided an important job and personal resources through, (a) SS as a way of organising work, and (b) SS through the provision of social support more broadly. Overall, individuals liked the people they worked with and the work they were undertaking. Engagement was also enhanced through *place* – with considerations around the physical location and/or co-location of SS teams also a means to facilitate engagement through the development of quality relationships with co-workers, colleagues and clients. With the discussion again providing insight into the criticality of design elements of SS teams as a means to enhance job and personal resources.

Connection was also facilitated through connection to **purpose** and outcomes and understanding what piece of the puzzle one is. This could be at the task, team and/or organisational level for individuals, with the key message being that individuals like to see and understand how their inputs make a contribution to the organisation, with the task or team the vehicle for this contribution. The opportunity to use one's **skills and abilities**, and feelings of being **valued and valuable** connects individuals to their task, team and/or organisation. Remembering that for individuals they drew from these levels of engagement differently (Refer 4.4.1.2) for their motivation and/or to re-set/re-focus during challenging periods. Additionally, whilst individuals also enjoyed stretch opportunities and special projects in which they could extend upon their skills and abilities, engagement was also enhanced via their everyday tasks through facilitating a connection to purpose and through an individual's understanding of what piece of the puzzle they were in the process.

Throughout the course of discussions with participants and with the emergence of **OJ**, the theme of valued and valuable was expanded to include respect. Thus, feeling **valued, valuable and respected** provides a source of **personal connection** for individuals. Saks (2006) contends

that the two most dominant roles for organisational members are their work role and their role as members of the organisation. At the foundation of these roles as this study has shown and in line with Kahn's (1990) centrality of personal engagement and personal disengagement is the individual – their unique needs, wants, and ways in which they process their subjective experiences at work and the ways in which they customise their personal engagement profiles.

Participants also drew a sense of **connection from their RU context**, as an employer and regional as a place, and lifestyle. With participants articulating that they felt a closer connection to their clients and the work they were doing, which again reinforces a reciprocal relationship to their sense of purpose and hence their engagement. This sense of place and the theme place is powerful also connects to the importance of place in decisions around where the SS and/or decisions where SS teams are located with the physical location and/or co-location of the SS team also shown to have an influence on connection and EE.

In the discussions with participants a number of factors inhibited EE included not having the opportunity to use one's skills and abilities, and not feeling valued or respected for one's inputs. Subsumed into these areas and SS and RU more broadly are the issues around generic PD's and a one-size fits all approach to SS (customised verses generic).

The use of **skills and abilities** would seem relatively straight forward and perhaps readily solved through clear positions descriptions, role clarity, and decisions around person-job-role fit. This links to the current SS literature, which is clear that human resources are a critical factor in the implementation and ongoing success of SS. Thus, the recruitment, attraction, retention and development of the *right* staff for SS teams is a critical component to the effectiveness of SS and has an influence on EE. This criticality of having the right combination of staff in SS team's links to the *RoE* in which participants indicated that their engagement was also influenced through their expectations of others, including co-workers and colleagues and the organisation in the engagement exchange. Having the right people in SS teams and expectations of the *RoE* also links to frustrations raised around staff who were seen as *not engaged*. Again, given the centrality of human resources to the effectiveness of SS and their influence of EE, those staff not performing do need to be managed. This also bears a relationship to RU more broadly, where discussions were centered around RU's being seen as major employers for the region, offering good working conditions, with underperforming staff unlikely to move on. It was also recognised that in the literature and in practice that universities

in general can have a lack of career opportunities. Thus, given the flattened structure of SS and the generic nature of the work – getting the balance right between generic versus customised design and approaches, the opportunity to provide meaningful work and the use of skills and abilities becomes salient.

Perceptions of not feeling valued, valuable and/or respected links to the theme of **OJ**, which was a major influencer on factors that inhibited EE in SS teams in a RU context. Three areas are important for this discussion, and these are (a) the influence of individuality, (b) OJ/Perceptions of Fairness and (c) the *RoE*. In (a) we again see the *individuality*, in drawing from Khan (1990) of how an individual's experience work and their subjective processing of their work experiences and how it influences attitudes and behaviours. Whilst it is difficult to *control* how people feel as a variable, through the *RoE* and other approaches including through optimising PPS, and through a greater understanding of how OJ plays out in the lives of participants, it is perhaps possible to optimise how people feel at work.

Perceptions of fairness/OJ (b) had a complex and deep-seated interplay in the experiences of participants. Respondents were interested in the allocation of resources (distributive justice), the fairness in the processes of the allocation of those resources (procedural justice) and concerns around interactional justice and its two sub-components interpersonal and informational justice. Interpersonal justice is concerned with the degree to which people are treated with politeness, dignity and respect by authorities and third parties in executing procedures or determining outcomes (Colquitt et al. 2005). Whilst informational justice focuses on the quality of explanations provided by people that convey information about why procedures were used in a certain way or why outcomes were distributed in a certain way in terms of their timeliness, specificity, and truthfulness (Colquitt et al. 2005). Discussions with respondents indicated that they were concerned with issues of justice not only for themselves but for others in their organisation and that experiences of justice/injustice aggregate in line with Rhodes & Eisenberger (2002) on PSS and POS to an individual's global assessments. Additionally, for those areas responsible for the distribution of resources or the 'gatekeepers' of organisational policy and procedures such as HR and finance, experiences where the organisation failed to act justly (by their perception) was felt quite deeply.

Speaking to the saliency of OJ and/or perceptions of fairness (the terms can be used interchangeably), Greenberg and Colquitt (eds) (2005, p.xi) contend that if you visit any

workplace and ask how people feel about their organisations the conversation will inevitably turn to justice dimensions and issues or concerns around fairness and unfairness. As discussed through the RQ's justice dimensions are embedded into Saks (2019) and the JD-R through distributive and procedural justice, POS and PSS (Saks 2019) and Social Support (JD-R) more broadly. However, given the importance of each of their components, distributive, procedural and interactional (including interactional justice's two sub-components interpersonal and informational) OJ dimensions are best viewed as distinct elements in EE. Bies (in Greenberg & Colquitt eds, 2005 pp 194-5), articulates that organisational justice had long been included in management and leadership training and had been a central element to Henri Fayol's (Fayol is considered the father of management theory) conceptualisation of management. As to why OJ is no longer a key element in the dominant models of leadership and management today emerges as an intriguing question with research presenting a compelling case that justice variables can improve leadership and facilitate meaningful and trustful relationships Bies (in Greenberg & Colquitt eds, 2005 pp 194-5). As a result of the influence on OJ/perceptions of fairness for this study – training and development on justice dimensions would be highly recommended for those in SS environments to enhance EE and promote consistency in the application of the distribution of resources, and more importantly to enhance communication (informational justice) and the creation of positive relationships at the individual, team and organisational level (POS and PSS).

The discussion above returns us to the central premise of the RoE and that individuals draw a sense of engagement from having the opportunity to use their skills and abilities and that they need to feel valued, valuable and respected for those inputs. This is consistent with Kahn (1990), Saks (2006, 2019) and the JD-R. This study also showed that there is a complicated interplay of factors that enhance and inhibit EE and demonstrates that EE is in fact an eco-system – or as Macey and Schneider (2008) describe a complex nomological network comprised of a family of distinct yet interrelated concepts and consistent with Saks (2019) description with a complicated relationship between factors with a number of moderating and mediating relationships. Additionally, given the centrality of individuals to EE although we may develop greater and deeper understanding of the key tenants and nuances, we may never fully understand why people respond as they do to their experiences.

In this sense, the importance of PPS becomes integral to the EE relationship. Both as a personal strategy from individuals in understanding how they work, how they process their experiences

and how they draw and enhance their own EE. In short, what motivates them and how they process their various experiences and make sense of them. This raises the concept that EE is not just something that happens *to* us, but something that individuals can also influence to enhance their experience at work. Additionally, as raised by participants, development of PPS also has the opportunity to enhance one's *personal resources*. In this sense as well, organisations might also seek to offer (as some already do) training and development, drawing from the positive psychology field, in positive mindset, personal wellness, growth versus fixed mindsets, life-long learning and the like. This individuality of the responses to EE also reinforces the need for managers and supervisors (and the organisation) to develop an understanding of the employees in their care, to understand their personal motivations, and understanding of how work environments might be enhanced to facilitate engagement – that is what are those job and personal resources that might be developed to enhance work environments.

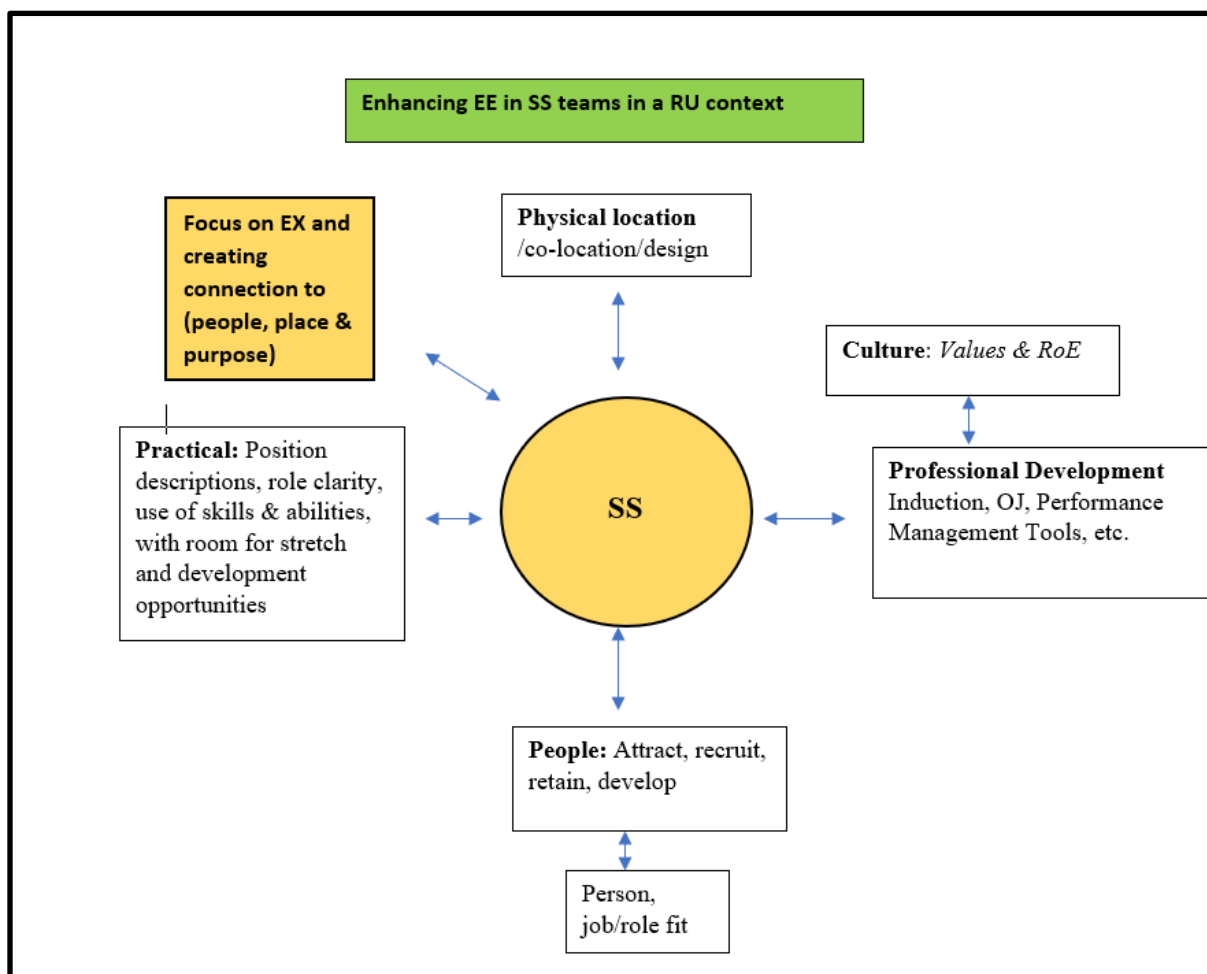
#### **5.4 Summary of contribution to practice and recommendations**

This study makes valuable contributions to practice in exploring EE in SS teams in a regional university context. As organisations look to leverage efficiencies as a result of COVID-19 this study provides timely advice to universities on how to optimise their SS experiences for staff, with human resources integral to efficient and effective service delivery. Additionally with the increase in SS in universities, this study provides valuable insight into how capability might be leveraged in SS.

As a result of the findings and discussions above, the following practitioner recommendations are made that may assist in enhancing EE in SS teams in a RU context. Fundamentally, in enhancing EE in SS teams in a RU context the key element is looking for ways in which to **connect** employees to their SS environment. Given the number of variables and complexity of the EE relationship rather than focussing on discrete elements, a holistic approach focused on the entirety of the employee experience is recommended. It was identified earlier that employer branding may assist organisations in attracting people with the most appropriate job-person-organisation fit. This suggestion is extended further by recommending consideration of the **‘employee experience’ (EX)** which is defined as an employee's holistic perceptions of their relationship with their organisation (Plaskoff 2017). Decisions around the quality of the relationship between employee and employer through the EX are derived at through all of the touchpoints in the employee's journey starting from job candidacy through to exiting the organisation – essentially the employee lifecycle (Plaskoff 2017). An EX-philosophy

advocates for an *employee centric* approach, transforming from a traditional transactional human resources strategy to one where organisations can design an experience for employees that demonstrates they *care* and subsequently, linking to this study, *value* the employees within their work context (Plaskoff 2017). An EX-philosophy advocates the need to ‘deeply understand the needs, wants, fears and emotions’ of employees with the goal of developing meaningful relationships that can lead to an enhanced employee experience and EE (Plaskoff 2017, pp137-8).

In creating a positive experience for employees and drawing from this study the following recommendations are also made. Figure 5.4 provides a visual to guide of the practical advice, with the points discussed below.



**Figure 0-3 Recommendations to enhance EE in SS teams in a RU context**

**Source:** developed by author

### *Shared services*

At the foundation decisions around the design principles the SS team are fundamental, not only to the implementation and ongoing success of the SS team, but in enhancing EE. Design principles include key questions around how and where work will be undertaken, the recruitment and selection of staff, development of position descriptions and how to best optimise the use of employee's skills and abilities. Given that employees are central to the success of SS – an approach focused on holistic design elements is recommended as shown in Figure 5.4 noting that the relationship between elements are both interrelated and reciprocal.

Central to the design is the need to create a connection between the employee and the SS environment at the task, team and organisational level. People need to understand their *why*. Create connection and communicate the shared vision of the SS team through multiple mediums including performance discussions, positions descriptions, visual aids such as posters/dashboards etc. Take the vision, objectives and goals of the SS team and turn them into visible artifacts. Celebrate the various wins, milestones, and achievements visibly and practically.

Ideally and if possible, engaging employees in the co-design principles of the SS team encourages buy-in, and promotes a partnership approach, with partnering and the co-creation of value typical of a SS ideology (Schulman et al. 1999; Quinn et al. 2000). Even if this cannot be done at the conception of the SS team, ongoing dialogue with staff creates the opportunity to continue to evolve and make adjustments to the SS environment. The physical elements of the design of the SS team are discussed further below.

### *Physical location and co-location of your Shared Service*

This study has shown that the physical location and co-location of the SS team has a positive influence on EE. Thus, careful consideration needs to be given to the physical location of the team and where and how SS staff *partner*. For example, in a post-COVID-19 pandemic era (I use this term deliberately as whilst the pandemic has passed, COVID-19 and its impact on workplaces remain), many workplaces, including universities have work from home (WFH) and/or flexible/hybrid ways of working. Exploration of hybrid ways of working has the potential to attract employees into SS environments and links to professional staff's attraction to the university sector in general through access to flexible work practices. However, given the finding of the benefits of the physical location and co-location of SS teams, to each other

and to their clients, hybrid mode (a blend of WFH and work-in-the office) is recommended. Whilst studies show that it is possible to build engagement in remote teams (See: Gibson 2021) these studies have predominately been done on teams already working remotely, with no known studies undertaken on SS teams in a RU context as they transition from traditional modes of working to hybrid modes.

Additionally, thought should be given to the physical environment, careful to avoid Howcroft and Richardson's (2012) description of SS environments as bland open plan environments, with workers clustered into their functional team, symbolic of their roles within the division of labour. Testament to the changing nature of work, there is some positive work being undertaken in workplace design noting that a good workplace design (the physical arrangement of employees work areas) can have a positive effect on health, wellbeing and productivity (Hui & Aye 2018). Modern workplace designs have evolved to spaces that create opportunity for collaboration, are technology enabled and stylishly decorated. SS environments should also embrace these principles and develop areas with the employee experience in mind. Design elements should take both a heuristic and holistic approach with a focus on workplace wellbeing and a focus on creating healthy, functional and sustainable spaces.

### *Culture*

Creating a positive culture in SS team is important and can be facilitated by having a shared understanding and agreement to the Values of the team and the Rules of Engagement (RoE). This assists in creating a shared understanding and agreement to 'how we do things around here'. Again, it is important that employees have the opportunity to have input into the development of these elements to facilitate shared agreement and buy-in. Coupled with this is a clear understanding of the consequences of non-conformity and/or management of destructive or deviant behaviour. For example, develop or review codes of conduct and grievance mechanisms to provide the mechanisms for conveying consequences of destructive behaviours. To support culture – further strategies are embedded into the professional development and practical considerations categories in this discussion which include good HR supports and planning for ongoing career conversations with staff.

### *Professional development*

SS can be enhanced through the development of effective professional development programs. As a foundation an effective and supportive Induction program, sets the tone for the



relationship between the organisation and the employee and provides the opportunity to embed the required cultural norms and expectations. A program for Induction should include plans for ongoing mentoring, coaching and support. Additionally, the planning for ongoing meaningful professional development including opportunities for stretch opportunities and special projects are important. Additionally, secondment opportunities to work with clients or in other areas of the university are proactive ways in which to develop meaningful and reciprocal relationships. Additionally, as this study has also shown, developing understanding between different business areas facilitates relationships, contributes to the effectiveness of the SS and enhances EE.

Given the importance of OJ to the findings in this study and recognising Greenberg and Colquitt (eds) (2005 pp 194-5) contention that OJ had *fallen off* the management table, it is perhaps time to bring OJ back into focus through effective training and development of the principles of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice (inclusive of interpersonal and informational justice). Training in justice dimensions provides the opportunity to enhance communication and facilitate cohesive relationships through best practice. Training and development in justice may seem challenging however, as a starting point some guidance can be provided from Leventhal's (1980) principles and considerations around communication. Leventhal's principles for evaluating procedural justice (Leventhal 1980) also known as Leventhal's Rules, are able to be broadly applied across justice dimensions and provide a suitable lens for interactions with employees. The six rules call for: consistency, bias-suppression, accuracy, correctability, representativeness and ethicality. As an approach, Leventhal's Rules provide a solid foundation in which to develop meaningful relationships with staff. Additionally, given the importance of interactional justice dimensions (inclusive of interpersonal and informational justice) identified for SS teams, communication is paramount and should deliberately include thoughts about each of the OJ dimensions as individuals are including their perceptions of fairness in these interactions. Importantly, as this study has raised, the quality of interpersonal interactions and the quality, truthfulness and timeliness of information that is to be passed to employees matters. Essentially, training and development in justice dimensions is a means to enhance communication and interpersonal relationships in organisations. This articulation of etiquette in how we interact in SS teams and the expectation of the RoE creates an environment of understanding between parties, and creates an environment for respectful, trustful and meaningful relationships. Through this development of a positive work environment, we create the conditions for EE to be enhanced.

Additionally, thought should also be given to the development of PPS, noting this too, is an important finding in this study. Many organisations currently offer health and wellbeing programs, these might be expanded to facilitate an awareness and understanding of the broad range of PPS and their practical application. In essence, PPS, in contemporary work environments might be an important ‘soft skill’ that all employees could use to their own competitive advantage. Existing tools such as, The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), Big Five Personality Test, Enneagram, and DiSC Assessment may also be useful for the development of staff in understanding self and others, with a view to assist in developing cohesive, trustful and respectful relationships.

### *People*

As discussed, people are critical to SS success. To use an analogy, it is essential to get the right people, on the right bus, in the right seat, heading in the right direction. And the wrong people off the bus and fast (Collins 2001). This analogy speaks to the attraction, recruitment and retention of staff, and linking them to the purpose and vision of the SS team. Person, job/role fit is important and linking to the EX, the ongoing relationship management (as opposed to traditional management) and development of staff is important. The management of staff ‘not performing’ and/or not the right fit can be challenging. Thus, a robust recruitment and screening process will help. Thought here might also be given to the use of screening tools such as psychometric testing, which can be used for aptitude tests, skills tests, and personality tests that might assist with screening and recruitment. As will an accurate and honest representation of the role through position descriptions and the recruitment phase. Testimonials from staff, and/or the opportunity to speak to staff throughout the recruitment phase may also assist. Getting recruitment right up-front will save time and money later, with a reminder, as this study has shown that the ripple effect of non-performing/disengaged staff is damaging to the SS team environment. Additionally, as raised by participants, RU are attractive employers in regional areas, offering good remuneration and flexible work packages, thus underperforming or disengaged staff may not readily exit the organisation. This again, speaks to the importance of regular career conversations with staff, to enhance relationships, provide check-ins and confirm that employees remain connected to the vision and purpose of the SS team. Additionally, clear and transparent processes for the management of non-performing staff and/or grievances will assist endeavours.

### *Practical considerations regarding position descriptions*

At a practical level, careful consideration needs to be given to the development of position descriptions, as highlighted above, to ensure an accurate representation of the role. This ensures an accuracy between perception and reality (linking to justice dimensions) and assists with person-job-role fit. Additionally, in university environments position descriptions are linked to remuneration and other resources (superannuation, annual leave, hours of work etc). That said, position descriptions should not be so rigid that they do not allow for development, and some job crafting such as special projects, stretch opportunities, and the opportunity to acquire a variety of skills which have been shown to enhance EE. However, it is a fine balance, as through a justice lens, these opportunities need to be genuine and not seen to be as opportunities in which to take advantage of staff (through additional work) without appropriate remuneration/rewards. Additionally, these opportunities need to be available for all staff (again using the OJ lens) to ensure equity and application of the RoE exchange.

## **5.5 Summary of contribution to theory**

The substantive contribution to theory that occurred through this study was presented in Section 4.7 where consideration was given to how this study advances or contributes to Kahn's (1990) and Saks (2006, 2019) theories of EE, and the JD-R. Furthermore, and in summary, several gaps were identified in the analysis of the literature in Chapter 2 in which a generalised maturity-based approach was used as a framework for the literature review. Chapter 2 also outlined the maturity of EE, SS and RU fields. Noting that whilst EE is considered a mature field of research, gaps still exist in terms of qualitative studies focused on contextual circumstances from the lived experience of individuals, to clarify some of the remaining mysteries (Reichers & Schneider 1990; Bakker et al. 2011a; Rana et al. 2014). Chapter 2 also identified that SS as a field, is embryonic in its development (Knol et al. 2014) with a disparate body of literature and limited integration between theory and practice (Richter & Brühl 2020; Soalheira 2020). Additionally, although there is a growing body of literature on professional staff in universities, they remain somewhat 'invisible' (Szekeres 2006; Lewis 2014; Gander 2018b). As a result of these gaps, this study makes a valuable contribution in the following ways.

Although a plethora of EE literature there is still a call for extending qualitative research focusing on the lived experience of individuals in different work contexts thus adding further depth and breadth to the analysis of EE, which adds another piece to the EE puzzle. As an

evolving field of research SS has a disparate and limited body of research with limited (if any) focused on EE in SS teams specifically. This research addressed this gap furthering the field of SS research from the perspective of individuals who work in such teams. Married with these identified gaps there has also been limited research on the experiences of professional staff in the university sector, with Szekeres (2007) calling them the invisible worker. This research assists in addressing this gap. Importantly drawing on Chapter 2.2 this study advances the SS literature as an emergent field of literature through analysis adding to the SS field, and via analysis with accepted EE constructs.

## **5.6 Limitations and future research directions**

This study was undertaken via a qualitative inquiry to understand the phenomena from the lived experience of the participants. To explore the topic, 16 semi-structured interviews and two focus groups were undertaken with participants from SS teams within a RU context. Thus, the results are representative within a particular context at specific point in time, with a sample of participants designed to draw a depth of insight as opposed to a breadth of data that a qualitative or mixed methods study may provide. As a result of this limitation future areas of study should be expanded to include SS teams across different contexts, including a comparative analysis across different regional universities with the possibility to then do comparisons with SS teams in metropolitan universities. Given the emergence and significance of SS, to advance the field of literature further, international and cross-national studies within universities would also provide interesting insights. A mix of approaches including case studies, quantitative and mixed methods should also be explored and are encouraged. More broadly, studies on EE in SS teams in other industries settings would provide a comparative perspective on EE in SS teams. This research could also consider how hybrid and remote work as a result of the post Covid-19 pandemic, influence EE in SS teams.

Also significant, and a worthy area of further research is the influence of OJ to tease out the key tenants and nuances of its influence on EE in SS teams. Whilst a number of authors and current models such as Macey and Schneider (2008), Saks (2019), and the JD-R) identify trust, and procedural and distributive within their remit, further research focused on the full suite of OJ dimensions to include interactional justice and its two subcomponents interpersonal and informational justice would seem appropriate.

Additionally, as discussed being an insider researcher and undertaking qualitative research had both advantages and disadvantages. Another researcher without these connections and taking a different approach may have interpreted data and themes differently. Thus, as discussed above, different approach across different contexts will assist in the exploring this topic further.

## **5.7 Concluding comments**

In concluding, the overarching research objective for this study was to explore the factors that enhanced or inhibited EE in SS teams in a RU context. The study found that, consistent with the extant literature that a range of factors contribute to enhancing or inhibiting EE in SS teams. Also consistent with the extant literature, these factors are distinct, yet interrelated and have a complex interplay in the relationship between individuals and their contextual circumstances. Whilst this study commenced the conversation of exploring EE in SS teams, further research is recommended in order to develop a more mature and sophisticated understanding of the phenomena. Limitations identified the specificity of this study, i.e., 16 semi-structured interviews, and 2 focus groups within a specific context – namely a regional Australian university. Chapter 3 outlined the complexity of the interviewee architecture, and appropriate research methodology and design which supported the goals of the research and the investigation. Qualitative research of this nature is designed to provide a depth to research opposed to a breadth through statistical quantification. The approach was entirely appropriate given the underexplored nature of the topic and embryonic field of the SS literature. An interpretive approach was used to explore the phenomena from the lived experience of participants. This type of research approach is appropriate ‘when the objective is to provide deep insight into the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it’ (Andrade 2009; Schwandt 1994 p.118; Knol 2014, p.92). Chapter 4 detailed the findings of the thematic analysis in relation to the overarching objective and RQ’s. Chapter 5 present the conceptual model of building EE in SS teams, identifying the importance of connection and RoE at its core. The discussions provided insights which may assist those with an interest (practitioners, HR professionals and Academia) in ways they might enhance EE in SS teams in a RU context. It is possible that the findings might also be applicable more broadly to SS teams outside the RU environment.

As this thesis draws to a close, in what has been a long and significant journey. I would like to take the opportunity to once again thank my participants for sharing their time, their stories and expertise in an effort to make a contribution to practice and theory and to my own goals. I

would also like to mark the milestone of undertaking a doctorate during the COVID-19 pandemic. Undertaking research of this scale is never an easy undertaking, and as a researcher during this time, (a time like no other) it certainly added challenges and some opportunities. But that's a story for a different time. I simply take the opportunity to mark the milestone of having undertaken the majority of this study during an unprecedented period of our modern history. And as a subsequence, important, I think to add an additional thank you to all of those people, including my research supervision team, who made time to contribute to the journey.

In Chapter One, I wrote that '*the longest journey starts with a single step*', this final step, which seemed so far in the distance has finally come and is equally as special as the first.

## REFERENCES

Abbott, M & Doucouliagos, C 2003, 'The efficiency of Australian universities: a data envelopment analysis', *Economics of Education review*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 89-97.

ABDC 2021, *Australian Business Deans Council Professional Managers' Network*, Australian Business Deans Council, Australia, viewed 23 Nov, <<https://abdc.edu.au/professional-services/professional-managers-network/>>.

Albrecht, SL 2010, *Employee engagement: 10 key questions for research and practice in Handbook of employee engagement*, Edward Elgar Publishing.

Albrecht, SL, Green, CR & Marty, A 2021, 'Meaningful work, job resources, and employee engagement', *Sustainability*, vol. 13, no. 7, p. 4045.

Alderfer, C 1972, *Human needs in organizational settings*, Free Press of Glencoe, New York.

Anitha, J 2014, 'Determinants of employee engagement and their impact on employee performance', *International journal of productivity and performance management*, vol. 63, no. 3, pp. 308-23.

AON 2021, *AON*, Aon plc, Australia, viewed 1 January <<https://www.aonhumancapital.com.au/>>.

Aprile, KT, Ellem, P & Lole, L 2021, 'Publish, perish, or pursue? Early career academics' perspectives on demands for research productivity in regional universities', *Higher Education Research & Development*, vol. 40, no. 6, pp. 1131-45.

Arthur, MB 2014, 'The boundaryless career at 20: where do we stand, and where can we go?', *Career development international*.

ARUP 2021, *The Future Ready University*, ARUP, Australia, <<https://www.arup.com/perspectives/publications/research/section/the-future-ready-university>>.

Aslan, M 2020, 10 August 2020, 'Why regional universities and communities need targeted help to ride out the coronavirus storm', *The Conversation*, viewed 20 August 2020, <<https://theconversation.com/why-regional-universities-and-communities-need-targeted-help-to-ride-out-the-coronavirus-storm-143355>>.

Australian Government 2021, *Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education*, Department of Education, Australia, viewed 15 July,

<<https://www.dese.gov.au/quality-schools-package/independent-review-regional-rural-and-remote-education>>.

Bailey, C 2022, 'Employee engagement: Do practitioners care what academics have to say—And should they?', *Human Resource Management Review*, vol. 32, no. 1, p. 100589.

Bailey, C, Madden, A, Alfes, K & Fletcher, L 2017, 'The meaning, antecedents and outcomes of employee engagement: A narrative synthesis', *International Journal of Management Reviews*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 31-53.

Bakker, AB & Demerouti, E 2007, 'The job demands-resources model: State of the art', *Journal of managerial psychology*.

Bakker, AB & Demerouti, E 2008, 'Towards a model of work engagement', *Career development international*, vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 209-23.

Bakker, AB & Xanthopoulou, D 2013, 'Creativity and charisma among female leaders: The role of resources and work engagement', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, vol. 24, no. 14, pp. 2760-79.

Bakker, AB & Demerouti, E 2017, 'Job demands—resources theory: Taking stock and looking forward', *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, vol. 22, no. 3, p. 273.

Bakker, AB, Albrecht, SL & Leiter, MP 2011a, 'Work engagement: Further reflections on the state of play', *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 74-88.

Bakker, AB, Albrecht, SL & Leiter, MP 2011b, 'Key questions regarding work engagement', *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 4-28.

Bakker, AB, Demerouti, E & Sanz-Vergel, AI 2014, 'Burnout and work engagement: The JD—R approach'.

Bangemann, TO 2017, *Shared services in finance and accounting*, Routledge.

Bartunek, JM & Rynes, SL 2014, *Academics and practitioners are alike and unlike: The paradoxes of academic—practitioner relationships*, Sage Publications Sage CA: Los Angeles, CA, 0149-2063.

Baxendale, R 2017, 'Education Minister says uni cuts won't hit fees, funding', *The Australian*, 19 December, viewed 19 December, <<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/education-minister-says-uni-cuts-wont-hit-fees-funding/news-story/bcbbd18993586f4ce253b9c1ffe7092f>>.

Berger, R 2015, 'Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research', *Qualitative Research*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 219-34.



Bergeron, B 2003, *Essentials of shared services*, vol. 26, John Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, New Jersey, viewed 31 October 2017, <<https://books.google.com.au/books?hl=en&lr=&id=AMe-VeEu6mQC&oi=fnd&pg=PR3&dq=Essentials+of+shared+services&ots=X-idFhPYgD&sig=8DWBMafgLopgoDsT8ARlts7qBcY#v=onepage&q=Essentials%20of%20shared%20services&f=false>>.

Blau, P 1964, *Exchange and power in social life*, John Wiley & Sons, New York.

Bolker, J 1998, *Writing your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day*, Owl Books, Henry Holt and Company, LLC, New York.

Borman, M & Janssen, M 2013, 'Reconciling two approaches to critical success factors: The case of shared services in the public sector', *International journal of information management*, vol. 33, no. 2, pp. 390-400.

Bossu, C, Brown, N & Warren, V 2018, 'Professional and support staff in higher education: An introduction', *Professional and support staff in higher education*, pp. 1-8.

Boyatzis, R 1998, *Transforming qualitative information: thematic analysis and code development*, Sage.

Brannick, T & Coghlan, D 2007, 'In defense of being “native”': The case for insider academic research', *Organizational research methods*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 59-74.

Braun, V & Clarke, V 2006, 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', *Qualitative research in psychology*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 77-101.

Breevaart, K, Bakker, AB, Demerouti, E & Derks, D 2016, 'Who takes the lead? A multi-source diary study on leadership, work engagement, and job performance', *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, vol. 37, no. 3, pp. 309-25.

Briscoe, JP, Hall, DT & DeMuth, RLF 2006, 'Protean and boundaryless careers: An empirical exploration', *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, vol. 69, no. 1, pp. 30-47.

Budi, I, Aji, RF & Widodo, A 2013, 'Prediction of research topics on science & technology (S&T) using ensemble forecasting', *International Journal of Software Engineering and Its Applications*, vol. 7, no. 5, pp. 253-68.

Carasco-Saul, M, Kim, W & Kim, T 2015, 'Leadership and employee engagement: Proposing research agendas through a review of literature', *Human Resource Development Review*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 38-63.

Chavez, C 2008, 'Conceptualizing from the inside: Advantages, complications, and demands on insider positionality', *The qualitative report*, vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 474-94.

CMM 2020, 30 November 2020, 'Uni Melbourne admin changes: staff fear more of the same', *Campus Morning Mail*, viewed 10 December 2020, <<https://campusmorningmail.com.au/news/uni-melbourne-admin-changes-staff-fear-more-of-the-same/>>.

CMM 2021, *Campus Morning Mail*, Campus Morning Mail, viewed 28 November <<https://campusmorningmail.com.au/>>.

Crawford, ER, LePine, JA & Rich, BL 2010, 'Linking job demands and resources to employee engagement and burnout: a theoretical extension and meta-analytic test', *Journal of applied psychology*, vol. 95, no. 5, p. 834.

Crawford, ER, Rich, BL, Buckman, B & Bergeron, J 2013, 'The antecedents and drivers of employee engagement', in *Employee engagement in theory and practice*, Routledge, pp. 71-95.

Crawford, ER, Rich, BL, Buckman, B & Bergeron, J 2014, 'The antecedents and drivers of employee engagement', *Employee engagement in theory and practice*, pp. 57-81.

Creswell, JW 2014, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, & Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4th edn, SAGE Publications, Inc, London.

Cronin, P, Ryan, F & Coughlan, M 2008, 'Undertaking a literature review: a step-by-step approach', *British journal of nursing*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 38-43.

Cropanzano, R & Mitchell, MS 2005, 'Social exchange theory: An interdisciplinary review', *Journal of management*, vol. 31, no. 6, pp. 874-900.

CSU 2021, *Doctor of Business Administration*, Charles Sturt University, Australia, viewed 07 Sept 2021, <<https://study.csu.edu.au/courses/business/doctor-business-administration>>.

Curran, TM & Prottas, DJ 2017, 'Role stressors, engagement and work behaviours: A study of higher education professional staff', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, vol. 39, no. 6, pp. 642-57.

Darbyshire, P & Shields, L 2018, 'Shared university services 'snake oil': opinion', *Campus Review*, 21 August, viewed 31 August 2018, <<https://www.campusreview.com.au/2018/08/shared-university-services-snake-oil-opinion/>>.

Deloitte 2020, *Workforce strategies for a post-COVID-19 recovery Workbook*, Canada, <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/ca/Documents/human-capital/ca-en-human-capital-workforce-strategies-post-covid-19-recovery-workbook-aoda.pdf>>.

Deloitte 2021, *2021 Global Shared Services and Outsourcing Survey Report*, Deloitte, Deloitte Netherlands, <https://www2.deloitte.com/nl/nl/pages/enterprise-technology-and-performance/articles/2021-global-shared-services-survey-report.html>>.

Demerouti, E & Bakker, AB 2008, 'The Oldenburg Burnout Inventory: A good alternative to measure burnout and engagement', *Handbook of stress and burnout in health care*, pp. 65-78.

Devinney, T & Dowling, G 2020, 14 May 2020, 'Is this the crisis higher education needs to have?', <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/crisis-higher-education-needs-have>>.

Dollery, B, Kortt, MA & Drew, J 2016, 'Fostering shared services in local government: A common service model', *The Australasian Journal of Regional Studies*, vol. 22, no. 2, p. 225.

Dove, CS 2004, *The shared service center: A model for university efficiency?*, University of Pennsylvania.

Doyle, T & Brady, M 2018, 'Reframing the university as an emergent organization: implications for strategic management and leadership in higher education', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, vol. 40, no. 4, pp. 1-16.

Dulebohn, JH, Bommer, WH, Liden, RC, Brouer, RL & Ferris, GR 2012, 'A metaanalysis of antecedents and consequences of leader-member exchange: integrating the past with an eye toward the future', *Journal of Management*, vol. 38, pp. 1715-1759.

Elmasri, N 2019, 12 November 2019, 'Explore Top Tips and Lessons Learned from Monash University's Shared Services Transformation', viewed 15 November 2019, <<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/explore-top-tips-lessons-learned-from-monash-shared-services-elmasri/>>.

Farndale, E, Paauwe, J & Hoeksema, L 2009, 'In-sourcing HR: shared service centres in the Netherlands', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, vol. 20, no. 3, pp. 544-61.

Ferreira, C 2017, 'Factors Influencing the Performance of Shared Services Centres', The University of Liverpool (United Kingdom).

Finlay, L 1998, 'Reflexivity: an essential component for all research?', *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, vol. 61, no. 10, pp. 453-6.

Fleming, J 2018, 'Recognizing and Resolving the Challenges of Being an Insider Researcher in Work-Integrated Learning', *International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning*, vol. 19, no. 3, pp. 311-20.

Fletcher, L, Bailey, C, Alfes, K & Madden, A 2019, 'Mind the context gap: a critical review of engagement within the public sector and an agenda for future research', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, vol. 31, no. 1, pp. 6-46.

Fletcher, L, Bailey, C, Alfes, K & Madden, A 2020, 'Mind the context gap: a critical review of engagement within the public sector and an agenda for future research', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, vol. 31, no. 1, pp. 6-46.

French, M 2014, 'Employee Engagement: The Holy Grail', 1 March 2020, <<https://www.subscribe-hr.com.au/blog/employee-engagement-the-holy-grail>>.

Friday, C & Cawood, R 2018, 19 September, 'University sector reform requires bipartisan approach', *Higher Education*, viewed 19 September 2018, <<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/university-sector-reform-requires-bipartisan-approach/news-story/a6bfa051541f12c3bee768ac15fb92ed>>.

Fried, Y & Ferris, GR 1987, 'The validity of the job characteristics model: A review and meta-analysis', *Personal Psychology*, vol. 40, no. 2, pp. 287-322.

Gagnon, RJ & Ghosh, S 1991, 'Assembly line research: Historical roots, research life cycles and future directions', *Omega*, vol. 19, no. 5, pp. 381-99.

Gallup 2021, *Gallup*, Gallup, Inc, viewed 02 February, <<https://www.gallup.com/home.aspx>>.

Gander, M 2018a, 'Professional staff in universities: Career needs, values, attitudes and behaviours', *Australian Journal of Career Development*, vol. 27, no. 3, pp. 160-71.

Gander, M 2018b, 'A descriptive study of professional staff, and their careers, in Australian and UK universities', *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 19-25.

Gander, M, Girardi, A & Paull, M 2019, 'The careers of university professional staff: a systematic literature review', *Career development international*.

Gibson, M 2021, 'Employee engagement antecedents and outcomes: perceptions of what engagement looks like for remote workers', University of Southern Queensland.

Golafshani, N 2003, 'Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research', *The qualitative report*, vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 597-607.

Goodman, J 2018, 'Four higher education trends to watch out for in 2019', no. 18 December, viewed 20 December 2018, <<https://www.campusreview.com.au/2018/12/four-higher-education-trends-to-watch-out-for-in-2019/>>.

Goriss-Hunter, A & White, K 2021, 'Teamwork and regional universities: The benefits for women of a third space', *The Australian Universities' Review*, vol. 63, no. 2, pp. 11-21.

Gospel, H & Sako, M 2010, 'The unbundling of corporate functions: the evolution of shared services and outsourcing in human resource management', *Industrial and Corporate Change*, vol. 19, no. 5, pp. 1367-96.

Gouldner, AW 1960, 'The norm of reciprocity: A preliminary statement', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 25, pp. 161-178.

Graham, C 2012, 'Transforming spaces and identities: the contributions of professional staff to learning spaces in higher education', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, vol. 34, no. 4, pp. 437-52.

Gruman, JA & Saks, AM 2011, 'Performance management and employee engagement', *Human Resource Management Review*, vol. 21, no. 2, pp. 123-36.

Guest, G, Bunce, A & Johnson, L 2006, 'How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability', *Field methods*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 59-82.

Hackman, JR & Oldham, GR 1976, 'Motivation through the design of work: Test of a theory', *Organizational behavior and human performance*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 250-79.

Hackman, JR & Oldham, GR 2010, 'Not what it was and not what it will be: The future of job design research', *Journal of organizational behavior*, vol. 31, 2-3, pp. 463-479.

Hackman, JR & Oldham, GR 1980, *Work redesign*, vol. 2779, Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley.

Halbesleben, JR & Demerouti, E 2005, The construct validity of an alternative measure of burnout: Investigating the English translation of the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory, *Work & Stress*, vol. 19, no. 3, pp. 208-220.

Halbesleben, JR 2006, 'Sources of social support and burnout: a meta-analytic test of the conservation of resources model', *Journal of applied psychology*, vol. 91, no.5, p.1134.

Halbesleben, JR 2010, 'A meta-analysis of work engagement: Relationships with burnout, demands, resources, and consequences', *Work engagement: A handbook of essential theory and research*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 102-17.

Halsey, J 2018, *Independent review into regional, rural and remote education*, AGDo Education, <https://www.dese.gov.au/quality-schools-package/resources/independent-review-regional-rural-and-remote-education-final-report>>.

Hare, J 2016, 'Analysis of university finances reveals inefficiencies', *The Australian*, 10 February, viewed 10 March 2018, <<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/analysis-of-university-finances-reveals-inefficiencies/news-story/550b76c7dcd854c58b0b5c825c3e8aae>>.

Hellawell, D 2006, 'Inside-out: analysis of the insider-outsider concept as a heuristic device to develop reflexivity in students doing qualitative research', *Teaching in higher education*, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 483-94.

Herbert, IP & Seal, WB 2012, 'Shared services as a new organisational form: Some implications for management accounting', *The British Accounting Review*, vol. 44, no. 2, pp. 83-97.

Hobfoll, SE 1989, 'Conservation of resources: a new attempt at conceptualizing stress', *American psychologist*, vol. 44, no. 3, p.513.

Hobfoll, SE, Halbesleben, J, Neveu, JP & Westman, M 2018, 'Conservation of resources in the organizational context: the reality of resources and their consequences', *Annual review of organizational psychology and organizational behavior*, vol. 5, pp.103-128.

Hogg, MA 2016, 'Social identity theory' *Understanding peace and conflict through social identity theory* (pp. 3-17). Springer, Cham.

Homans, GC 1958, 'Social behavior as exchange', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 63, pp. 597–606.

Hood, WW & Wilson, CS 2001, 'The literature of bibliometrics, scientometrics, and informetrics', *Scientometrics*, vol. 52, no. 2, pp. 291-314. Howcroft, D & Richardson, H 2012, 'The back office goes global: exploring connections and contradictions in shared service centres', *Work, Employment and Society*, vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 111-27.

Howes, T 2018, 'Effective strategic planning in Australian universities: how good are we and how do we know?', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, vol. 40, no. 5, pp. 442-57.

Jenkins, S & Delbridge, R 2013, 'Context matters: Examining 'soft' and 'hard' approaches to employee engagement in two workplaces', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, vol. 24, no. 14, pp. 2670-91.

Kahn, WA 1990, 'Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work', *Academy of management journal*, vol. 33, no. 4, pp. 692-724.

Kahn, WA 1992, 'To be fully there: Psychological presence at work', *Human relations*, vol. 45, no. 4, pp. 321-49.

Keathley-Herring, H, Van Aken, E, Gonzalez-Aleu, F, Deschamps, F, Letens, G & Orlandini, PC 2016, 'Assessing the maturity of a research area: bibliometric review and proposed framework', *Scientometrics*, vol. 109, no. 2, pp. 927-51.

Klein, HK & Myers, MD 1999, 'A set of principles for conducting and evaluating interpretive field studies in information systems', *MIS Quarterly*, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 67-93.

Klimkeit, D & Thirumaran, K (eds) 2018, *Management of Shared Service Centers in Asia: Examples from Malaysia and Singapore*, GRIN Verlag.

Knol, A, Janssen, M & Sol, H 2014, 'A taxonomy of management challenges for developing shared services arrangements', *European Management Journal*, vol. 32, no. 1, pp. 91-103.

Kugler, K 2018, 'Career Development and Retention', in D Klimkeit & K Thirumaran (eds), *Management of Shared Service Centers in Asia Examples from Malaysia and Singapore*, GRIN Verlag.

Kuhn, T 1970, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd edn, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.

Kunte, M & Rungruang, P 2018, 'Timeline of engagement research and future research directions', *Management Research Review*, vol. 41, no. 4, pp. 433-52.

Lacity, MC, Khan, S, Yan, A & Willcocks, LP 2010, 'A review of the IT outsourcing empirical literature and future research directions', *Journal of Information technology*, vol. 25, no. 4, pp. 395-433.

Lee, M, Coutts, R, Fielden, J, Hutchinson, M, Lakeman, R, Mathisen, B, Nasrawi, D & Phillips, N 2021, 'Occupational stress in University academics in Australia and New Zealand', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, pp. 1-15.

Leung, L 2015, 'Validity, reliability, and generalizability in qualitative research', *Journal of family medicine and primary care*, vol. 4, no. 3, p. 324.

Lewis, K 2014, 'Constructions of professional identity in a dynamic higher education sector', *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, vol. 18, no. 2, pp. 43-50.

LFHE 2010, *Insight into Career Motivation in Higher Education: Analysis of Aggregated Results From 2009 Benchmarking Study*, Leadership Foundation for Higher Education London.

Littleton, E & Stanford, J 2021a, *An Avoidable Catastrophe: Pandemic Job Losses in Higher Education and their Consequences*, The Australia Institute - Centre for Future Work, Australia, [https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/theausinstitute/pages/3830/attachments/original/1631479548/An\\_Avoidable\\_Catastrophe\\_FINAL.pdf?1631479548](https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/theausinstitute/pages/3830/attachments/original/1631479548/An_Avoidable_Catastrophe_FINAL.pdf?1631479548)>.

Littleton, E & Stanford, J 2021b, 'An Avoidable Catastrophe - Pandemic Job Losses in Higher Education and Their Consequences', *The Australia Institute*, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/an-avoidable-catastrophe/>>.

Maatman, M & Meijerink, J 2017, 'Why sharing is synergy: The role of decentralized control mechanisms and centralized HR capabilities in creating HR shared service value', *Personnel Review*.

Macey, WH & Schneider, B 2008, 'The meaning of employee engagement', *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 3-30.

Maloni, MJ, Carter, CR & Carr, AS 2009, 'Assessing logistics maturation through author concentration', *International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management*.



Maslach, C, Schaufeli, WB & Leiter, MP 2001, 'Job burnout', *Annual review of psychology*, vol. 52, no. 1, pp. 397-422.

Maslach, C, Jackson, SE & Leiter, MP 1997, *Maslach burnout inventory*, Scarcrow Education.

Maslan, G 2021, 'COVID cuts, casualisation create rising stress for staff', *Univeristy World News*, viewed 23 July, <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20210721154014538>>.

Maslow, A 1954, *Movitation and personality*, Harper & Row, New York.

May, DR, Gilson, RL & Harter, LM 2004, 'The psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety and availability and the engagement of the human spirit at work', *Journal of occupational and organizational psychology*, vol. 77, no. 1, pp. 11-37.

Mercer, J 2007, 'The challenges of insider research in educational institutions: Wielding a double-edged sword and resolving delicate dilemmas', *Oxford review of education*, vol. 33, no. 1, pp. 1-17.

Mewburn, I 2021, 'Information indigestion? The search for a perfect note take system.', 7 April <<https://thesiswhisperer.com/2021/04/07/perfectnotes/>>.

Miskon, S, Bandara, W & Fielt, E 2015, 'Applying the principles of interpretive field research: An example of an IS case study on shared services'.

Miskon, S, Bandara, W, Fielt, E & Gable, GG 2011, 'An exploration of shared services types in higher education', *Proceedings of the 17th Americas Conference on Information Systems (AMCIS 2011)*.

Miskon, S, Bandara, W, Fielt, E & Gable, GG 2012, 'Understanding shared services: An exploration of the IS literature', in *Human Resources Management: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications*, IGI Global, pp. 785-800.

Nahrgang, JD, Morgeson, FP & Hofmann, DA 2011, 'Safety at work: a meta-analytic investigation of the link between job demands, job resources, burnout, engagement, and safety outcomes', *Journal of applied psychology*, vol. 96, no. 1, p. 71.

Nelson, K, Readman, K & Stoodley, I 2018, *Shaping the 21st century student experience at regional universities*, 1760515027, Australian Government Department of Education and Training, Canberra, ACT.

Neubauer, BE, Witkop, CT & Varpio, L 2019, 'How phenomenology can help us learn from the experiences of others', *Perspectives on medical education*, vol. 8, no. 2, p. 90.

NHMRC 2021, *National Health and Medical Reserach Council*, Australian Government, Australia, viewed 15 April, <<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/>>.



Noble, H & Smith, J 2015, 'Issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research', *Evidence-based nursing*, vol. 18, no. 2, pp. 34-5.

NTEU 2021, *National Tertiary Education Union*, National Tertiary Education Union, Australia, viewed 27 November 2021, <<https://www.nteu.org.au/>>.

O'Connor, T & Connelly, S 2020, 16 October 2020, 'Five cost-saving strategies for universities wanting to invest in their future', <https://www.nousgroup.com/insights/cost-saving-universities/>>.

Okesina, M 2020, 'A Critical Review of the Relationship between Paradigm, Methodology, Design, and Method in Reserach', *Journal of Research & Method in Education*, vol. 10, no. 3.

Paagman, A, Tate, M, Furtmueller, E & De Bloom, J 2015, 'An integrative literature review and empirical validation of motives for introducing shared services in government organisations', *Information Journal of Information Management*, vol. 35, no. 1, p. 110-123.

Panda, A 2014, 'Bringing academic and corporate worlds closer: We need pracademics', *Management and Labour studies*, vol. 39, no. 2, pp. 140-59.

Pasi, KS 2018, 'Training & Development in SSCs in Asia', in D Klimkeit & K Thirumaran (eds), *Management of Shared Service Centers in Asia Examples from Malaysia and Singapore* GRIN Verlag.

Pasqualine, A, Plytiuk, CF, da Costa, SEG & de Lima, EP 2012, 'Performance Management in Healthcare: A bibliometric review', *IIE Annual Conference. Proceedings*, Institute of Industrial and Systems Engineers (IISE), p. 1.

Patra, SK, Bhattacharya, P & Verma, N 2006, 'Bibliometric study of literature on bibliometrics', *DESIDOC Journal of Library & Information Technology*, vol. 26, no. 1.

Patton, M 2002, *Qualitative evaluation and reserach methods*, Sage Publications Inc, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Pham, B 2000, 'Research at regional universities in Australia: visions and realisation', *Higher Education Management*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 117-30.

Plaskoff, J 2017, 'Employee experience: the new human resource management approach', *Strategic HR Review*, vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 136-41.

Plugge, A, Nikou, S & Janssen, M 2022, 'A fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis of factors influencing successful shared service center implementation', *Industrial Management & Data Systems*.

Porter, AL & Detampel, MJ 1995, 'Technology opportunities analysis', *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, vol. 49, no. 3, pp. 237-55.

Productivity Commission 2017, *University Education, Shifting the Dial: 5 year Productivity Review, Supporting Paper No. 7*, Canberra,  
<https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/productivity-review/report/productivity-review-supporting7.pdf>>.

Punch, KF 2006, *Developing Effective Reserach Proposals*, 2 edn, Sage Publications Ltd, London.

PWC 2019, *Shared Services - Digitise Your Services*, PricewaterhouseCoopers GmbH Wirtschaftsprüfungsgesellschaft, <https://www.pwc.de/de/prozessoptimierung/pwc-studie-shared-services.pdf>>.

Quinn, B, Cooke, R & Kris, A 2000, *Shared Services Mining for Corporate Gold*, Pearson Education Limited 2000, Great Britain.

Rana, S, Ardichvili, A & Tkachenko, O 2014, 'A theoretical model of the antecedents and outcomes of employee engagement', *Journal of Workplace Learning*.

Rea, J 2016, 'Critiquing neoliberalism in Australian universities', *Australian Universities' Review, The*, vol. 58, no. 2, pp. 9-14.

Rebelo, TM & Gomes, AD 2008, 'Organizational learning and the learning organization', *The learning organization*.

Regional Australia Institute 2021, *Regional Australia Institute*, Regional Australia Institute, Australia, viewed 15 April 2021, <<http://www.regionalaustralia.org.au/home/what-is-regional-australia/>>.

Reichers, AE & Schneider, B 1990, 'Climate and culture: An evolution of constructs', *Organizational climate and culture*, vol. 1, pp. 5-39.

Rhoades, L & Eisenberger, R 2002, 'Perceived organizational support: a review of the literature', *Journal of applied psychology*, vol. 87, no. 4, p. 698.

Rich, BL, Lepine, JA & Crawford, ER 2010, 'Job engagement: Antecedents and effects on job performance', *Academy of management journal*, vol. 53, no. 3, pp. 617-35.

Richter, PC & Brühl, R 2017, 'Shared service center research: A review of the past, present, and future', *European Management Journal*, vol. 35, no. 1, pp. 26-38.

Richter, PC & Brühl, R 2020, 'Ahead of the game: Antecedents for the success of shared service centers', *European Management Journal*, vol. 38, no. 3, pp. 477-88.

Richter, PC & Brühl, R 2021, 'Shared service implementation in multidivisional organizations: A meta-synthesis study', *Journal of General Management*, vol. 46, no. 2, pp. 73-90.

Roberts, J 2018, 'Professional staff contributions to student retention and success in higher education', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, vol. 40, no. 2, pp. 140-53.

Roberts, Kh & Glick, W 1981, 'The job characteristics approach to task design: A critical review', *Journal of applied psychology*, vol. 66, no. 2, pp.193.

Robinson, D, Perryman, S & Hayday, S 2004, *The drivers of employee engagement*, Institute for Employment Studies.

Roffee, J & Kimberley, N 2022, 'Coronavirus and the crisis of higher education: Post-pandemic universities', *The Australian Universities' Review*, vol. 64, no. 1, pp. 3-5.

Rothwell, AT, Herbert, IP & Seal, W 2011, 'Shared service centers and professional employability', *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, vol. 79, no. 1, pp. 241-52.

Rousseau, DM 2012, 'Designing a better business school: Channelling Herbert Simon, addressing the critics, and developing actionable knowledge for professionalizing managers', *Journal of Management Studies*, vol. 49, no. 3, pp. 600-18.

RUN 2018, *Economic impact of RUN universities 2018*, Regional Universities Network, Australia, viewed 28 November 2018, <<http://www.run.edu.au/resources/RUN%20Economic%20impact%20report%20final.pdf>>.

RUN 2020, *Economic Impact of the Regional Universities Network*, Regional Universities Network, <https://www.run.edu.au/publications/>.

RUN 2021, *Regional University Network*, Regional University Network, Australia, viewed 15 April 2021, <<https://www.run.edu.au/>>.

Saks, AM 2006, 'Antecedents and consequences of employee engagement', *Journal of managerial psychology*, vol. 21, no. 7, pp. 600-19.

Saks, AM 2019, 'Antecedents and consequences of employee engagement revisited', *Journal of Organizational Effectiveness: People and Performance*.

Saks, AM 2021, 'Caring human resources management and employee engagement', *Human Resource Management Review*, p. 100835.

Saks, AM & Gruman, JA 2011, 'Getting newcomers engaged: The role of socialization tactics', *Journal of managerial psychology*.

Saks, AM & Gruman, JA 2014, 'What do we really know about employee engagement?', *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 155-82.

Saldana, J 2021, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, SAGE Publications Ltd, London.

Saldaña, J 2018, 'Researcher, analyze thyself', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, vol. 17, no. 1, p. 1609406918801717.

Saunders, M, Lewis, P & Thornhill, A 2019, *Research Methods for Business Students*, Sixth edn, Pearson Education Limited, England.

Schaufeli, W & De Witte, H 2017, 'Work Engagement in Contrast to Burnout: Real or Redundant?', *Burnout Research*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 58-60.

Schaufeli, WB, Bakker, AB & Salanova, M 2006, 'The measurement of work engagement with a short questionnaire: A cross-national study', *Educational and psychological measurement*, vol. 66, no. 4, pp. 701-16.

Schaufeli, WB, Salanova, M, González-Romá, V & Bakker, AB 2002, 'The measurement of engagement and burnout: A two sample confirmatory factor analytic approach', *Journal of Happiness studies*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 71-92.

Schneider, B, Yost, AB, Kropp, A, Kind, C & Lam, H 2018, 'Workforce engagement: What it is, what drives it, and why it matters for organizational performance', *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, vol. 39, no. 4, pp. 462-80.

Scholl, L 2018, 'Planning, Recruiting, and Selecting Talent', in D Klimkeit & K Thirumaran (eds), *Management of Shared Service Centers in Asia Examples from Malaysia and Singapore* GRIN Verlag.

Schulman, DS, Harmer, MJ, Dunleavy, JR & Lusk, JS 1999, *Shared Services Adding Value to The Business Units*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., United States of America.

Schulz, V & Brenner, W 2010, 'Characteristics of shared service centers', *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 210-9.

Shinners, J 2022, 'Defining regionality for Australian higher education', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, pp. 1-15.

Shirom, A 2003, 'Job-related burnout: A review in JC Quick & LE Terick (Eds.) Handbook of occupational health psychology, *American Psychological Association*, pp. 245-264.

Shuck, B 2011a, 'Employee engagement: An examination of antecedent and outcome variables', *Human Resource Development International*, vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 427-45.

Shuck, B 2011b, 'Integrative literature review: four emerging perspectives of employee engagement: an integrative literature review', *Human Resource Development Review*, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 304-28.

Shuck, B & Wollard, K 2010, 'Employee engagement and HRD: A seminal review of the foundations', *Human Resource Development Review*, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 89-110.

Shuck, B, Reio Jr, TG & Rocco, TS 2011, 'Employee engagement: An examination of antecedent and outcome variables', *Human Resource Development International*, vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 427-45.

Shuck, B, Kim, W & Fletcher, L 2021, *Engagement at 30: a retrospective and look forward through an international cross-cultural context*, Taylor & Francis, 1367-8868.

Shuck, B, Osam, K, Zigarmi, D & Nimon, K 2017, 'Definitional and conceptual muddling: Identifying the positionality of employee engagement and defining the construct', *Human Resource Development Review*, vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 263-93.

Smith, DR 2012, 'Impact factors, scientometrics and the history of citation-based research', *Scientometrics*, vol. 92, no. 2, pp. 419-27.

Soalheira, J 2020, 'Shared services and the competitive advantage of the firm', Queensland University of Technology.

SSON 2019, 'Shared Services in Higher Education Driving Cost Savings and Operational Efficiency', 1 April, <<https://www.ssonetwork.com/events-sharedservicesweek-au/blog/deploying-and-maturing-shared-services-in-higher-education-driving-cost-savings-and-operational-efficiency>>.

SSON 2021, *Shared Services & Outsourcing Network* International Quality & Productivity Centre (IQPC), viewed 1 March, <<https://www.ssonetwork.com/>>.

Stone, KB 2012, 'Four decades of lean: a systematic literature review', *International journal of lean six sigma*.

Strauss, A & Corbin, J 1990, *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and Procedure for Developing Grounded Theory*, Sage Publications, Inc, Newbury Park.

Styhre, A 2014, 'The influence of neoliberalism and its absence from management research', *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*.

Swinburne 2020, *Doctor of Philosophy*, Swinburne University of Technology, viewed 15 October 2021, <<https://www.swinburne.edu.au/courses/study-levels-explained/doctor-of-philosophy/>>.

Swinburne 2021a, *Entry requirements for research degrees*, Swinburne University of Technology, Australia, viewed 18 October 2021, <<https://www.swinburne.edu.au/courses/applying/how-to-apply-research-degree/entry-requirements/>>.

Swinburne 2021b, *Doctor of Philosophy (professional doctorate)*, Swinburne University of Technology, viewed 7 Sept 2021, <<https://www.swinburne.edu.au/courses/study-levels-explained/doctor-of-philosophy/>>.

Szekeres, J 2006, 'General staff experiences in the corporate university', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, vol. 28, no. 2, pp. 133-45.

Szekeres, J 2011, 'Professional staff carve out a new space', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, vol. 33, no. 6, pp. 679-91.

Taylor, A & Taylor, M 2009, 'Operations management research: contemporary themes, trends and potential future directions', *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*.

TEQSA 2021, *Forward impact of COVID-19 on Australian higher education - report*, Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, Australia, <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/latest-news/publications/forward-impact-covid-19-australian-higher-education-report>>.

Thatcher, A, Zhang, M, Todoroski, H, Chau, A, Wang, J & Liang, G 2020, 'Predicting the Impact of COVID-19 on Australian Universities', *Journal of Risk and Financial Management*, vol. 13, no. 9, p. 188.

Timasheff, NS 1947, 'Definitions in the social sciences', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 53, no. 3, pp. 201-9.

Tims, M, Bakker, AB & Xanthopoulou, D 2011, 'Do transformational leaders enhance their followers' daily work engagement?', *The Leadership Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 121-31.

Tjia, T, Marshman, I, Beard, J & Baré, E 2020, 'Australian university workforce responses to COVID-19 pandemic: reacting to a short-term crisis or planning for longer term challenges?'

Trowler, P 2011, 'Researching your own institution: Higher education'.

UniSQ 2022, *Annual Reports*, viewed 20 2021, <https://www.unisq.edu.au/about-unisq/governance-leadership/plans-reports>.

UniSQ 2018, *University of Southern Queensland Enterprise Agreement 2018-2021*, Fair Work Commission - Australia's national workplace relations tribunal, Australia, <https://www.fwc.gov.au/document/agreement/AE502544>>.

UniSQ 2020, *Doctor of Business Administration (DBAR) - DBA*, Toowoomba, viewed 15 Oct 2021, <<https://www.usq.edu.au/handbook/current/information-technology/DBAR.html>>.

UniSQ 2021a, *Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)*, University of Southern Queensland, Australia, viewed 7 Sept 2021, <[https://www.usq.edu.au/study/degrees/doctor-of-philosophy?gclid=EAIaIQobChMI9bqig4Wo9AIV2n0rCh022w27EAAAYASAAEgKaJ\\_D\\_BwE](https://www.usq.edu.au/study/degrees/doctor-of-philosophy?gclid=EAIaIQobChMI9bqig4Wo9AIV2n0rCh022w27EAAAYASAAEgKaJ_D_BwE)>.

UniSQ 2021b, *University of Southern Queensland*, viewed 15 April <<https://www.usq.edu.au/research>>.

Universities Australia 2021, *Universities Australia The Voice of Australia's Universities*, Universities Australia, Australia, viewed 18 October, <<https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/>>.

Unluer, S 2012, 'Being an insider researcher while conducting case study research', *Qualitative Report*, vol. 17, p. 58.

UQ 2021, *Doctor of Philosophy* The University of Queensland Australia, Australia, viewed 15 April 2021, <<https://future-students.uq.edu.au/study/programs/doctor-philosophy-7501>>.

USAP 2018, 'What Should Universities Be?', University of Sydney Association of Professors, Camperdown Campus, New Law Building, viewed 20 November 2018, <<http://sydney.edu.au/usap/Conference2018/>>.

Van de Ven, AH & Johnson, PE 2006, 'Knowledge for theory and practice', *Academy of management review*, vol. 31, no. 4, pp. 802-21.

Van den Heuvel, M, Demerouti, E, Bakker, AB & Schaufeli, WB 2010, 'Personal resources and work engagement in the face of change', *Contemporary occupational health psychology: Global perspectives on research and practice*, vol. 1, pp. 124-50.

Van der Linde, T, Boessenkool, A & Jooste, C 2006, 'Understanding shared services (Article 1 of 3)', *Acta Commercii*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 173-87.

Van der Linde, T, Boessenkool, A & Jooste, C 2006, 'Key success factors for the management of a shared services business unit (Article 3 of 3)', *Acta Commercii*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 198-212.

Veles, N 2020, 'University professional staff in collaborative third space environments: A multiple case study of the Australian and Singapore campuses of one university', James Cook University.

Voice Project 2020, *Voice Project About*, Voice Project, Australia, viewed 15 April <<https://voiceproject.com/about>>.

Walsh, P, McGregor-Lowndes, M & Newton, CJ 2008, 'Shared services: Lessons from the public and private sectors for the nonprofit sector', *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 67, no. 2, pp. 200-12.

Watt, D 2007, 'On becoming a qualitative researcher: the value of reflexivity', *Qualitative Report*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 82-101.

WEF 2020, *The Future of Jobs Report 2020*, World Economic Forum, Switzerland, <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-future-of-jobs-report-2020>>.

Wegman, LA, Hoffman, BJ & Carter, NT 2018, 'Placing job characteristics in context: Cross-temporal meta-analysis of changes in job characteristics since 1975', *Journal of Management*, vol. 44, no. 1, pp.352-386.

Wensley, R 2009, 'Research in UK business schools or management research in the UK?', *Journal of management development*.

Wollard, KK & Shuck, B 2011, 'Antecedents to employee engagement: A structured review of the literature', *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, vol. 13, no. 4, pp. 429-46.

Yee, J, Chian, FTT & Chan, T 2009, 'A preliminary decision model for shared services: insights from an Australian University context'.

Yousf, A & Khurshid, S 2021, 'Impact of employer branding on employee commitment: employee engagement as a mediator', *Vision*, p. 09722629211013608.



**APPENDIX A – TABLE 1: ENGAGEMENT THEORIES, MODELS AND CONCEPTS**

<b>Theory/concept/ model/measure</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Criticisms</b>	<b>Reference</b>
Job demands resources (JD-R) model and theory	JD-R model/theory assumes that job resources and personal resources are mutually related and combine or act independently to predict work engagement. When job demands are high, personal and/or job resources have a positive impact on work engagement. Work engagement subsequently positively impacts job performance.	Intuitive model. Most commonly used model to explain engagement.  Bakker, et al. (2011, p.77) believe the model ‘provides an elegant and powerful framework by which to explain the conditions that influence work engagement’.	Doubt cast over its status as a theory. Transactional/linear model that assumes individuals react in rational ways to a limited range of conditions. Evidence that resources increase engagement and that demands decrease engagement is not clear cut.	Bakker et al. (2011, p.77).  Bakker and Demerouti (2008).  Bailey et al. (2017).
Job Characteristics Theory (JCT)  Job Characteristics Model (JCM)	JCT a theory/model is a means of systematising the relationships between job characteristics and individual responses to work. JCT identifies five core job characteristics (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy & feedback that affect five work-related outcomes (motivation, satisfaction, performance, absenteeism & turnover). The model is based on the idea that the task itself is key to employee motivation – a boring job stifles motivation whereas a challenging job enhances motivation. The five core job dimensions influence three key critical psychological states	Fried and Ferris (1987) conducted a meta-analytic review of almost 200 studies and confirmed the reliability of the model.  Most popular approach to task design research (Roberts & Glick 1981).	Wegman et al. (2018) advises that a number of authors including the JCM’s creators Oldham and Hackman (2010) believe that the JCM in its original formation is deficient in describing the modern work context.	Fried and Ferris (1987).  Hackman and Oldham (2010).  Roberts and Glick (1981).  Wegman et al. (2018).

Theory/concept/ model/measure	Description	Advantages	Criticisms	Reference
	(experienced meaningfulness of the work, experienced responsibility for outcomes & knowledge of the results of the work), which in turn influence the identified personal and work outcomes.			
Social Exchange theory (SET)	The foundation premise of SET is that there exists a reciprocal relationship between employers and employees. A basic tenet of SET is that relationships evolve over time developing into trusting, loyal and mutual commitments, as long as parties abide by certain rules of exchange (Saks 2006). When employees perceive they are valued and treated well by their employer they are more likely to respond by exerting effort via increased engagement levels.	Second most widely used framework (Bailey et al. 2017).  Saks (2006) believes that SET provides a stronger theoretical rationale for employee engagement filling the gap of Kahn (1990) and Maslach et al.'s (2001) models which do not fully explain why employees respond in particular ways.	Different theories of SET have evolved and led to misconceived or pragmatic applications.	Bailey et al. (2017).  Corpanzano & Mitchell (2005).  Saks (2006).
Social Identity Theory (SIT)	SIT is a social psychological theory of intergroup relations, group processes and the social self. SIT is one manner in which to explain intergroup behaviour.  Social identification is a perception of alignment with a group. Social identification leads to activities that are congruent with group and organisational norms	SIT has been applied to organisational behaviour since its inception with SIT having clear implications for understanding work motivation and performance. Its usefulness is that identification with (group) motivates group members to work for the group's interests, which in turn may positively influence performance.	The number of studies that consider the relationship between identification with motivation and performance is small (yet convincing, thus proving opportunity for an extension of research.	Hogg et al. (1995).

Theory/concept/ model/measure	Description	Advantages	Criticisms	Reference
	People classify themselves into various social categories. People will seek an alignment with their identified group.			
Conservation of Resources Theory	<p>COR is based on the premise that individuals seek to acquire and preserve valued resources (personal, energetic, social, material).</p> <p>A resource-orientated model based on the supposition that individuals strive to gain, protect and preserve resources and what is threatening is the potential or actual loss of these resources. Hobfoll's (1989) model was developed as a new stress model.</p>	<p>Hobfoll (1989) believes the model is more comprehensive, directly testable and provides a clear direction for research on stress and stress resistance.</p> <p>Most widely cited theories in organisational psychology and organisational behaviour.</p> <p>COR is the basis for the more work-specific leading theory of organisational stress – the JD-R model further attesting to its practicality.</p>	Halbesleben's (2006) meta-analysis of the social support and burnout literature found that social support as a resource did not yield different relationships across the three burnout dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and personal accomplishment – challenging the COR model.	<p>Bailey et al. (2017).</p> <p>Halbesleben (2006).</p> <p>Hobfoll (1989).</p> <p>Hobfoll et al. (2018).</p>
Leader Member Exchange (LMX)	LMX as a theory is a relationship-based approach to leadership that focuses on the two-way relationship between leader's and followers. LMX also recognises that leaders develop different relationships with followers. Originally rooted in role theory but has evolved to rely on social exchange theory.	LMX has developed and evolved over the years and has a significant and robust body of empirical work.	LMX research has limited research that considers the role/influence of work context. Lacking are multi-level studies that capture group and organisational context and how these influence the LMX exchange. Most LMX scales do not measure, with limited studies measuring the reciprocity between leader and follower even though LMX is conceptualized as an exchange process based on this reciprocity.	Dulebohn et al. (2017).
Kahn's 1990 Psychological conditions of personal	Engagement is influenced by three antecedent psychological conditions: meaningfulness, safety & availability.	Kahn's (1990) seminal work influenced the engagement paradigm. May et al.'s (2004) study found that	May et al.'s (2004) study was the only study to empirically test Kahn's (1990) model (Saks 2006).	Bailey et al. (2017).

Theory/concept/ model/measure	Description	Advantages	Criticisms	Reference
engagement and disengagement at work	Draws from Hackman and Oldham's (1976) Job Characteristics Theory.	meaningfulness, safety and availability were significantly related to engagement (Saks 2006).	Kahn's (1990) model does not sufficiently explain why individuals respond to the antecedents of engagement (Saks 2006).	Hackman and Oldham (1976).  May et al. (2004).  Saks (2006).
Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES)	<p>The UWES measures the three engagement dimensions of vigor, dedication &amp; absorption.</p> <p>Original 17 items UWES measure and can be shortened to 9 items (UWES-9).</p> <p>Work engagement may be conceived as the positive antipode of burnout.</p>	Most widely adopted measure; validated for use in several languages. Peer reviewed. The confirmatory factor analyses applied to studies confirmed the fit of the hypothesized structure to the data was superior to that of any other alternative factor structures.	<p>No evidence of discriminant validity of UWES compared to job satisfaction and that the three-factor structure is not robust cast doubt on the transference internationally.</p> <p>Some studies that failed to find the three-factor structure could be partially attributed to translation issues.</p>	<p>Bailey et al. (2017).</p> <p>Bakker and Demerouti (2008).</p> <p>Kunte and Rungruang (2018).</p> <p>Schaufeli et al. (2006).</p>
Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)	Developed by Maslach and Jackson to assess an individual's experience of burnout. The MBI measures emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and personal accomplishment	Most commonly employed burnout measure. Adaptions have been made to the model for use outside of the human services area. Changes made to wording for cultural adaption. The convergent validity of two burnout instruments: A multi-trait, multi-method) demonstrated that the inclusion of positively	<p>Researchers troubled by some of the psychometric limitations (e.g. wording); and the limited conceptualisation of burnout on which the model is based.</p> <p>Originally developed exclusively for the use in human services. Additionally, the three sub-scales of MBI: emotional exhaustion; depersonalisation and personal accomplishment were only</p>	<p>Demerouti and Baker (2008).</p> <p>Maslach et al. (1997).</p>

Theory/concept/ model/measure	Description	Advantages	Criticisms	Reference
		praised items can improve the psychometric properties of burnout measurement and reduce method artefacts due to one-sided questionnaires.	applicable to employees who worked with people.  Factoral validity of the MBI is not beyond question.	
Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI)	<p>Originally developed to assess burnout but includes positive and negative items and as such it can be used to assess work engagement as well as burnout.</p> <p>OLBI was developed as an alternative measure to the Maslach Burnout Inventory driven by perceived shortcomings of that model</p> <p>An entirely new instrument that can be used across occupational contexts.</p>	<p>Factoral validity has been confirmed in several studies and countries. Studies confirmed that a two-factor structure (exhaustion and disengagement) as the underlying factors fitter better across occupational groups.</p> <p>OLBI offers researchers an alternative measure of burnout that offers balanced wording, that can be used to measure what is seen as its opposite - engagement.</p>	<p>Reflections on the study of burnout commentary by Shirom (2003) believes that the various measures of burnout should be analyzed within broader models that include causes, correlates, and effects of burnout, thereby generating evidence relevant to the nomological validity of burnout.</p> <p>Need for further studies.</p>	<p>Shirom (2003)</p> <p>Bailey et al. (2017).</p> <p>Bakker and Demerouti (2008).</p> <p>Halbesleben and Demerouti (2005).</p>
Three pillars - physical, emotional and cogitative components	Built on Kahn's (1990) ethnographic study. The revised framework showed that the three psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety and availability were positively associated with engagement.	Built on understanding the psychological conditions that foster how and why individuals addressing a void in the literature. Revised model based on the original framework worked to improve its explanatory power.	Future research should consider how the psychological conditions operate in different contexts as this original research was conducted in narrow roles within claims processing.	May et al. (2004).

## APPENDIX B – TABLE 2: SHARED SERVICES LITERATURE

**Acronyms: SS – Shared Services; SSC – Shared Services Centre; CSF – Critical Success Factors; EE-Employee Engagement**

Title	Source	Themes
Shared Services Adding Value to the Business Units (Schulman et al. 1999).	Book	Definitive text – practitioner based. Organising internally for competitive advantage. In the search for competitive advantage, companies are looking inward. SS is tactical. Moving to SS is a complex process. Primary reasons for the move to SS: cost savings, one-company approach. Improve <i>back-office/support</i> functions to enable core activities. HR elements in text-leadership, change management, engaging people in the process. Nothing specifically focused on EE of teams.
Shared Services Mining for Corporate Gold (Quinn et al., 2000).	Book	Definitive text – practitioner based. Organising internally for competitive advantage. Organisations can no longer afford the luxury of duplicated internal services. SS leverages off the inefficiencies of centralised/de-centralised models. Cost savings main motivation. HR element is focused on change management & buy-in. Nothing specifically focused on EE in SS teams.
Understanding Shared Services (Article 1 of 3) (Van der Linde et al. 2006).	Acta Commercii 2006	SS viable business model organisations can use to reduce costs and enhance efficiency and effectiveness. Purpose of trilogy of articles is to introduce SS as a business model and discuss how to manage a SS business unit. SS is being introduced to gain cost advantages through reduction & streamlining in staffing costs, improved processes, increased productivity. SS – offers sustainable competitive advantage. Organisations are looking inwards at support units (Finance, HR, ICT etc) to gain cost efficiencies and add to competitive advantage. Discusses the benefits of enhanced staff capability through SS structure.
Key Success Factors For The Management of A Shared Services Business Unit (Article 3 of 3) (Van der Linde et al., 2006).	Acta Commercii 2006	Key success factors to successfully manage a SS unit. SS is a process of continuous improvement. Key points: market-customer driven focus, SLA's, change (internal), communication, trust, removing boundaries, culture. Nothing focused on the employee experience. *People are a critical key success factor for SSC's. <b>People – make or break SSC's.</b> Discusses communication, leadership, training, performance measures. Nothing capturing the experiences of employees or the ongoing engagement of staff to realise the competitive advantage of SSCs.
Shared Services: Lessons from the Public and Private Sectors for the Non-profit Sector (Walsh et al., 2008).	The Australian Journal of Public Administration Q2	SS becoming more common in NFP sector following trends in Private and Govt sector.  Paper looks at lessons learned and structural arrangements. Call for further research and analysis on SS to assist in the increasing number of organisations engaging in this type of collective arrangement. Public sector in Aust moved to adopt SS in an effort to achieve greater administrative efficiencies.

Title	Source	Themes
		<p>Early emphasis on cost of delivering support services (finance, hr, ICT facilities).</p> <p>Critical success factors (CSF) 3: people; 5: roles; 6: culture Talk of importance of leadership and executive involvement, effective management of change/communication.</p> <p>Gains to be made in implementing SSC – still lacking for information. For example, performance management is an essential to effective SS but we are still unclear how best to proceed given the variety of models that can be adopted.</p>
The unbundling of corporate functions: the evolution of shared services and outsourcing in human resource management (Gospel & Sako 2010).	Industrial and Corporate Change  UK – Q1	<p>Analyses the demand side of outsourcing. Line of questioning in the paper -when and why have major global corporations started to create SS and outsourcing functions such as IT, Finance &amp; HRM? Done through analysis of P&amp;G and Unilever (complex internal organisational structure).</p> <p>Interesting: creation of internal SS's prior to outsourcing leads to greater retention of in-house capability. Outsourcing in the first instance leads to greater reliance on suppliers' capabilities.</p> <p>Viewed in historical perspective business activities have a long history of being moved from being centralised to de-centralised (bundled-unbundled) in various forms.</p> <p>Discusses the importance of retaining capability and strategy and management of outsourcing. No focus on the EE experiences of staff.</p>
Characteristics of shared service centers (Schulz & Brenner 2010).	Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy  Q2	<p>Overview of definitions with an objective to derive a common understanding of SSC concepts. Need to understand the evolving nature of the definitions to understand the practical implications of the concept.</p> <p>Public and private SSC's differ. SCC's risen greatly in relevance and importance in the private and public sectors. SSC – reduce costs, improve service values and achieve greater administrative efficiencies.</p> <p>SSC under researched. Nothing focused specifically on the EE experiences of staff.</p>
Success and failure factors of shared services: an IS literature analysis (Miskon et al. 2011).	QUT eprints  Proceedings of the 2011 International conference on Research and	<p>Organisations seeking improvements in their performance are increasingly exploring alternative models and approaches – e.g., SS. SS often adopted due to its promise of the economies of scale.</p> <p>SS in the HR &amp; Finance fields mentioned again. SS alternative to centralisation/de-centralisation.</p>

Title	Source	Themes
IS – Information Systems	Innovation in Information Systems	<p>SS is an important area in the Information Systems (IS) field – IS an enabler of SS and a promising area of SS application. This paper looks at success and failures from an IS perspective.</p> <p>Summary results: Success factors: - IT, change management, communication, standardization, silo management, knowing what is to be shared, project management, top management support, green-field approach. Failure factors: - mismanagement of staff retrenchments, poor acceptance of high upfront investment, inflexible staff arrangements, lengthy implementations, not mandating use.</p> <p>Paper does not focus on staff experience, EE, post implementation.</p> <p><b>One major reason of unsuccessful SS <u>implementations</u></b> is the lack of understanding about what factors significantly impact the effectiveness of SS initiatives. These are still not clearly defined nor researched.</p>
Shared service centres and professional employability (Rothwell et al. 2011).	Journal of Vocational Behavior Q1	<p>SS emerging organisational form with the potential to drive fundamental change. New work practices (NWP) delineation between core and non-core activities.</p> <p>SSC – support functions finance, HR, purchasing, IT &amp; Legal. SSC encourages units to operate in a quasi-market manner. Primary driver – reduce costs. Other: service improvement, grouping of expertise, economies of scale, leveraging competitive advantage through information and communications technology.</p> <p>SSC as an alternative to outsourcing? Martini workers – any place, anytime, anywhere. SS as a flexible employment model. Hourglass professions (adapted from the hourglass economy). Growth of employees at the higher and lower end of workforce with less in the middle.</p> <p>Looking at the career motivations as to why individuals engage in professional work with SSC's. Not specifically looking at how to engage staff when employed or their experiences/motivation through the EE lens.</p> <p>Research gap: we are seeing a changing nature of work and there is a relative neglect of SSC's in academic literature. <b>Future research, individual impact and organizational strategic level.</b></p>
Shared services as a new organisational form: Some implications for management accounting (Herbert & Seal 2012).	The British Accounting Review Q1	<p>SS claims to reduce costs and improve support service quality Alternative approach to outsourcing. Paper focused on finance field. List of benefits claimed by consultants makes compelling case for SS yet academic research suggests more of a mixed verdict.</p> <p>Paper does not look at the individual level experience or how to keep staff engaged.</p>



Title	Source	Themes
		SS covers a wide variety of motivations, organisational forms, functional areas and implementation patterns. <b>Given its evolving state more research is called for to provide perspective.</b>
Reconciling two approaches to critical success factors: The case of shared services in the public sector (Borman & Janssen 2013).	International Journal of Information Management Q1	SS embraced by private and public sectors. <b>Implementation can be difficult and critical success factors are not yet well understood.</b>  Information Services (IS) perspective. Not looking at individual experience of working in SS environments.  Research directions: only a relatively small number of critical success factors were identified. <b>Need broader attention to absent CSFs in their contextual environment.</b>
A taxonomy of management challenges for developing shared services arrangements (Knol et al. 2014).	European Management Journal Q1	During SSC develop organisations encounter a variety of challenges which affect success or failure. Embryonic research field, insight into management challenges is lacking. Three Dutch case studies. Challenges vary per situation. Authors argue that it is imperative to combine theoretical perspectives to attain a richer understanding of SSCs. Not focused on the experiences of staff working in SSCs post implementation.
An integrative literature review and empirical validation of motives for introducing shared services in government organisations (Paagman et al. 2015).	International Journal of Information Management Q1  Proceedings of the 21 <sup>st</sup> European Conference on Information Systems	NZ & Dutch government organisations. Cost reductions major motive. Experts sceptical about government organisations being able to achieve reported cost savings. This is a concern given that major public policy goal in many OECD countries (and the reason for SS implementation) is the achievement of back office/support services administrative savings. As organisations realise the difficulty in achieving cost savings other motives such as improvement of service, streamlining, consistency, exchange of internal capabilities and access to resources increase in significance.  Resulting from increased pressure (budget cuts, political reforms, increased calls for service quality, cost containment and transparency) government organisations are searching for strategies to improve the cost effectiveness and efficiencies of <i>back-office</i> functions without compromising service levels. SS can be seen as a means to achieve this.  Research gap: Given the important role of public agencies in society, ongoing evaluation of the success of SS is essential to provide feedback into public policy.
Shared service centre research: A review of the past, present and future (Richter & Bruhl 2017).	European Management Journal (Q1)	Growing importance of SSCs numbers doubling over the last decade (Deloitte 2015, 2007). Primary reason for the move to SS is the reported cost savings – yet case-base evidence not conclusive. Mixed results of success. Implementing SSC complex process. <b>Research has not kept pace with the evolution of SSC's.</b> Dispersed body of literature on SSC research. Recent studies have delivered rich insights regarding SSCs in operation.

Title	Source	Themes
<b>First comprehensive review of the dispersed literature on SS research p.27</b>		<b>However, there is a lack of focus in understanding pivotal relationships and dependencies (McIvor et al., 2011, p27 in Richter &amp; Bruhl).</b>
Factors influencing the performance of shared services centres (Ferriera 2017).	Liverpool.ac.uk  Dissertation	Studied the factors that contribute to the performance of shared service centres (SSCs) and if public sector SSCs are simply copies of private sector SSCs. Action research, mixed methods design. Surveyed 146 SSCs USA, UK, Canada & Brazil, triangulated data composed of SSC managers and public-sector experts. <b>Positive relationship between culture and excellence – culture an enabler of service excellence. Call for more research into public sector SSCs</b>
Effective strategic planning in Australian universities: how good are we and how do we know? (Howes 2018).	Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management  Q1	Universities are complex socio-political-educational institutions. Internal environments influence productivity and organisational effectiveness. A critical key to effective management of such environments lies <b>in harnessing the motivation of employees in order to achieve objectives</b> . This should be of concern to everyone with an interest in the future of the Australia university sector.
Reframing the university as an emergent organisation: implications for strategic management and leadership in higher education (Doyle & Brady 2018).	Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management  Q1	Pressure of change on university organisational forms from traditional models. New forms and strategy influenced by the complexity of changes as the local and global levels. University forms influenced by managerialism, academic capitalism, marketisation of higher education. Does this change impact academic well-being and quality of teaching and research? <b>Move from traditional models and governance models...</b> significant reorientation of existing administrative arrangements and rethinking the role academia. Continuing political pressure on higher education to be more agile and responsive to rapidly changing social needs. Examples rise of the corporatisation of universities, micro-courses, flexibility in learning and teaching etc.
Shared university services ‘snake oil’: opinion (Darbyshire & Shields 2018).	Campus Review	Globally the managerialist juggernaut is influencing universities. Influenced by the ‘political caprices, whims and fancies’... budgets shrinks and expectations rise. <b>Universities in many countries are embracing shared services models with the common goal of saving money</b> . Grasso Cornell – financial challenges in higher education are accelerating the use of shared services models. ‘In an attempt to cut burgeoning administrative costs, centralised shared services are the new poster children of university bureaucrats everywhere’ (Darbyshire & Shields). A key question to be asked is what is their impact and are they successful?
Management of Shared Services Centers in Asia  (Examples from Malaysia and Singapore)	e-book	In the Asia Pacific Region, Malaysia has emerged as a major location for the operating shared services organizations. This book provides insights into the principal aspects of SS organisations, covering the fundamentals, key framework and new trends (foreword Pascal Bornet, 2018). Topics: Internal organisation and governance; talent recruitment, training & development; <b>career development &amp; retention</b> ; financial

Title	Source	Themes
Klimkeit and Thirumaran (eds) 2018)		management; performance management; collaboration; ICT; automaton; knowledge. Does not discuss EE directly. Method: field study interviews by students (JCUS & DHBW). Authors write that SS are essentially people businesses, and as a result it is appropriate that their Edited book allocate three chapters to the discussion covering the importance of recruitment and selection of talented staff in SS, the criticality of continuous training and development, and ways to retain talent (p. 11).
Shared services and the competitive advantage of the firm (Soalheira 2020).	QUT ePrints Dissertation	Premise of the dissertation: to investigate how Shared Services Organisations (SSO's) contribute to the competitive advantage of the firm. Conceptualises a new SSO model, Shared Services Profit Organisation (SSPO). Cites extant literature on SS has tended to focus mainly on cost savings, headcount reductions, delivery of value and implementation solutions, additionally empirical research on cost savings in wanting.  Qualitative study: semi-structured interviews in the banking, mining, manufacturing and IT sectors. Then themes triangulated via case studies with four large multinational firms. <b>Recognises human resources as key capability.</b>
Shared services: configurations, dynamics and performance (Richter 2021).	Baltic Journal of Management Q2	The paper explores the configurations of SSC's. Recognises that human capital is highly important for the operations of SSC's. Human capital – refers to the knowledge and skills that are embodied in employees because it determines the effective and efficient processing of tasks. Also recognises that communication – especially with other SSC is also important through the formalisation of relationships, trust, and complexity. Complexity draws from Bergeron (2003, p.23) who emphasises that “it's critical to remember that business relationships are complex and success cannot simply be mandated from above.
Shared service implementation in multidivisional organizations: A meta-synthesis study (Richter & Bruhl 2022).	Journal of General Management Q2	Article explores SSC implementation. Authors aggregated results of previous studies using qualitative meta-synthesis to identify, extract, and synthesize variable, their interrelations, and relationships to SSC success. This led to the development of a theoretical model that describes what factors are important and how and why they are related to SSC success.
A fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis of factors influencing successful shared service implementation (Plugge et al. 2022).	Industrial Management & Data Systems Q1	A qualitative analysis of a unique dataset of 121 international firms to examine the combined effects of five factors, modularization, standardization, decision-rights, portfolio and customer-orientation. Findings showed that multiple configurations of conditions lead to successful SSC implementation. Practical implications are that success factors of SSC's re dependent on the SSC configuration.

## APPENDIX C – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

#### Introduction:

Thank you agreeing to be interviewed. I really appreciate your time. As discussed, I have allowed 1 hour for us today. The interview may take less time. Thank you also for returning the consent form. A reminder that you are able to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty and if you have any questions, you are welcome to contact the research team via the details in the participant information sheet. To assure you, the interview is confidential, and data will be de-identified. For the purposes of transcription, this interview is also being recorded. This interview is low risk, and your wellbeing is of utmost importance. If at any time you feel uncomfortable, please let me know, and I will check-in with you throughout the interview. Additional information regarding support, should you need it is detailed in the Participant Information on page 3.

#### Background to the study:

This study forms the requirements of the Doctor of Business Administration at USQ. My research project is to explore the factors that influence positively or negatively, employee engagement for staff working in shared services teams in a regional university context.

The overarching research objective is to identify *the factors that act to inhibit or enhance employee engagement in shared services teams in a regional university context*. As a result of this overarching objective the following questions will guide the focus of the research: -

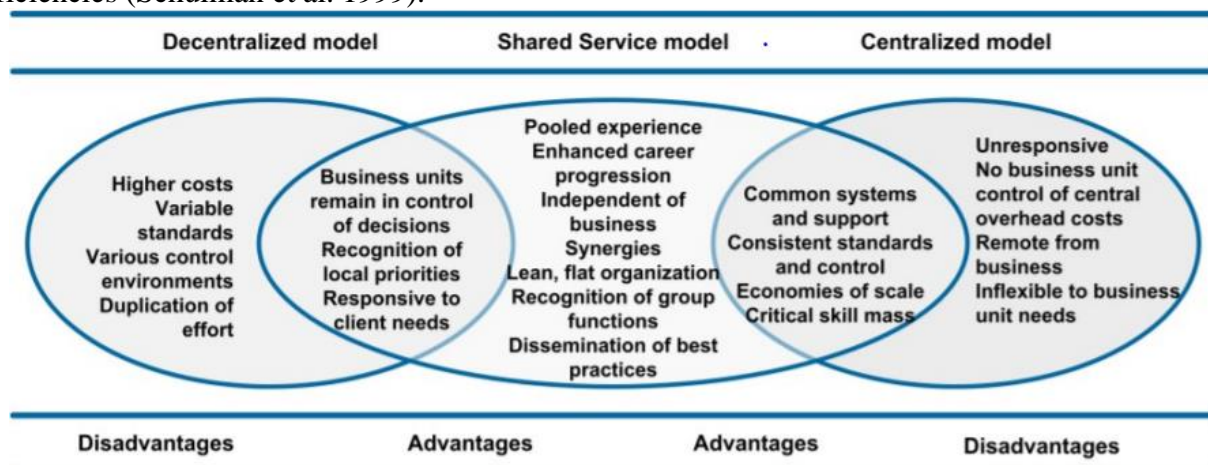
RQ<sub>1</sub>: What are the factors that act to enhance employee engagement in shared services teams?

RQ<sub>2</sub>: What are the factors that act to inhibit employee engagement in shared services teams?

RQ<sub>3</sub>: What are the criticality of these factors that individuals assign and how do these influence their sense of employee engagement?

#### Definition of Shared Services (if needed)

To answer the question of what shared services is we start with clarifying what shared services is not. Shared services is neither centralisation or de-centralisation but rather provides the opportunity to combine the best of what centralisation and de-centralisation has to offer whilst leaving out the inefficiencies (Schulman et al. 1999).



Source: (Schulman et al. 1999, p.12)

A fundamental shift in a shared services approach is a philosophical change from being a transaction focused operation servicing internal and external client, to one of partnering with stakeholders to co-create value. In the university sector this may or may not include the use of service level agreements and or KPI's. At a minimum there is always the promise of increased service delivery and reduction of organisational cost.

For the purpose of this project Schulman et al., (1999, p.9) definition of shared services fits well with the research objectives and will be adopted for the purposes of this study. Schulman et al. (1999, p.9) define shared services as:

*The concentration of company resources performing like activities typically spread across the organisation, in order to service multiple internal partners at lower cost and with higher service levels, with the common goal of delighting customers and enhancing corporate value.*

## **Questions:**

### **Demographic**

Some demographic information on the participant will be collected (for example: gender, age, length of service, family status, education). This is voluntary and participants may elect not to disclose information. The information is useful in determining if these factors influence engagement.

### **Engagement**

When we talk about employee engagement, what does the term employee engagement mean to you?

Can you tell me about a situation or time when you felt fully engaged in your work? Engagement may be experienced as feeling absorbed, attentive, time just seemed to flow, you were in the zone, you experienced positive feelings in relation to your work, your organisation and/or to your co-workers.

Reflecting on your experiences are some of those factors more important to you than others?

When we talk about engagement, would you say engagement for you is at the task, team or organisational level?

Does your sense of engagement translate to your career outside of the organisation (broader career)?

Can you tell me about a situation or time when you felt disengaged in your work? Disengagement may mean you felt uninvolved, detached, a sense of disconnection and or unhappiness at work, and/or an inability to be fully present.

Reflecting on your experiences are some of those factors more important to you than others?

### **University context**

There is a lot happening in the university sector at the moment. How does this influence your engagement levels?

How does working in a regional university influence your engagement? Is there a difference between working in regional verses a metropolitan university? (Career opportunities, presentism etc.)?

### **Shared Services**

For the purposes of this project, your work environment meets the definition of a 'shared services' structure. Do you think this structure helps or hinders your ability to perform your job?

If there was anything you could change about how the 'shared services' structure that you work in operates – what might that/they be?

If you were told that the 'shared services' structure that your team uses to provide services to the USQ was to be dismantled and decentralized, how would that make you feel? What would you miss most? What would be your biggest concern? What would be a positive?

### **Organisational Justice**

Background if needed:

Organisational Justice – is the perception of fairness in organisations and refers to the extent to which employees perceive workplace procedures, the distribution of resources and interactions and outcomes are fair in nature. There are three components distributive, procedural and interactional justice.

Distributive justice: - perceived fairness of how rewards are distributed (equity principle)

Do you feel that you get fairly recognised/rewarded for your individual efforts within your SS team?

More broadly, do you think your SS team gets fairly recognised for its contribution to USQ outcomes/goals?

### **Procedural Justice: - fairness of the decision process leading to a particular outcome**

Do you think the work processes/systems you must use to get your work done within your team are fair and reasonable?

More broadly, do you think the work processes/systems that your SS team must use to get its work done are fair and reasonable?

**Interactional Justice:** - the theory focuses on the quality of the interpersonal treatment people receive when procedures are implemented

In performing your individual role within the SS team, do you feel that you are on the receiving end of polite and respectful interactions with (a) customers/clients and (b) other members of your team?

Do you feel your SS team as a whole, is well treated/respected by other divisions of USQ when communicating/transacting with them?

### **Summary question**

Based on what we have discussed in our session today, is there anything else that you would like to add on your experiences around employee engagement in shared services teams in a regional university context?

Thank you for your time today. I shall now end the recording.

### **Focus Group Question Guide**

#### **Interviewer guide:**

*Welcome and background to the study referring back to the Focus Group Participant Information. The purpose of this focus group is to discuss the themes from the semi-structured interviews. I am very excited to have the opportunity to meet with you today, so my thanks to you again for your time. A reminder that all data will be de-identified, and you have my contact information and the contact information of the research team if you have any questions.*

Drawing from themes developed from the semi-structured interviews a number of areas were explored in the Focus Groups. These were centered around:

- Exploring engagement from the perspective (lived experience) of participants
- The times and factors that influenced feelings of engagement
- The times and factors that influenced feelings of dis-engagement
- The experience and influence of the university context on their sense of engagement
- How shared services influenced their engagement (pros & cons)
- The influence of perceptions of fairness (organisational justice). Distributive, procedural and interactional (informational and interpersonal) justice.

## **APPENDIX D – THEMATIC ANALYSIS AND ENGAGING WITH THE DATA**

### **Introduction**

As noted in Section 3.6 reflexivity is an essential component of qualitative research (Watt 2007) and a major strategy for quality control (Berger 2015). Reflexivity is described as the self-examination and evaluation of one's attitudes and beliefs, reactions to data and findings, and interactions with those who take part in the research in order to overcome barriers to interpretation in order to gain greater insights. In the context of this study I, as the researcher was the primary instrument in the collection and analysis of the data, thus reflexivity is an essential component of the research process (Watt 2007; Saldana 2018; Saunders et al. 2019). Additionally, in drawing from the research approach, an interpretive approach recognises that the research is value-bound with the relationship between researcher and participant interactive, participative and cooperative (Saunders et al. 2019). Whilst Chapter Three of the thesis details the Research Design, the purpose of this Appendix is to provide the researchers' reflection on engaging with the data and detail processes and decisions-making in regard to how themes were developed.

To guide the process a number of considerations were undertaken including who should be interviewed, and how this best supported the investigation into a relatively under explored areas such as EE in SS teams in a RU context. In taking a multi-method approach semi-structured interviews were undertaken which allowed for open ended questions and structured and unstructured conversation. This supported the research objectives and is an effective qualitative approach when the researcher seeks to explore and gain insight into participants' thoughts, feelings, experiences and beliefs about a phenomenon (Saunders et al. 2019, pp.437-9). To strengthen, the data collection and assist with consolidating the themes a series of focus groups were also planned, which also supported a multimethod approach. As is consistent with Confirmation of Candidature processes this design was approved as appropriate by my Supervision team and panel prior to commencement of the research. The research design approach was also required for Ethics Approval, with approval sought and confirmed prior to any interviews taking place.



As a new researcher and to build confidence and competency, interviews were phased in order to build researcher capability in interview techniques, to allow time and space for reflexivity and to provide the opportunity to refine questions as required. To commence the interview process, five (5) initial interviews were conducted in January 2020. As a result of these initial interviews, questions relating to organisational justice (OJ) were then included. A further 11 interviews were undertaken progressively from March 2020 until saturation point was reached, in April 2020. This phasing of the interviews proved to be an effective strategy given the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to utilise Zoom to conduct the interviews. Additionally, as mentioned, OJ emerged as a theme early in the interviews as a recurring point. When reflecting through the data, I could ‘see’ that OJ was raised in the first interview. The phasing of the interviews also provided time and space as the researcher to personally transcribe all of the interviews. This was invaluable, and I would encourage all researchers to engage in this process. Table 1 below provides an overview and narrative of the interview process used and reflection.

**Table 1: Interview process**

Group	Date	Notes on participants	Researcher reflection
Group 1 – five (5) initial semi-structured interviews	4 <sup>th</sup> January 2020 to 31 <sup>st</sup> January 2020	This group was comprised of three (3) supervisors, four (4) women and one (1) male. Length of service ranged from three (3) years to 11.5 years. Participants were from different teams.	These interviews were transcribed with initial thinking around lessons from the data conceptualised before moving to the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Phase (Group 2 interviews). The researcher and Primary Supervisor engaged in reflective practice to consider the findings and broad themes, explore learnings and discuss refinement of RQ’s and interview techniques.
Group 2 – 2 <sup>nd</sup> phase of interviews  Eight (8) participants	28 February 2020 to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2020	This group was comprised of four (4) men and four (4) women. This group had three (3) supervisors. Average length of service was 7.87 years with a range from two (2) to 15 years. Participants were from different teams.	When reflecting I was pleased with how the interviews were progressing fortunate that COVID-19 had not slowed the research process. Given the flexibility with Zoom, I was able to schedule participants at times that suited their needs which added to the diversity of representation emerging in my interviewees. At this point I was starting to see commonality of themes which was validating given that participants were from different SS teams. Had we not been able to use Zoom it was unlikely these interviews would have continued.

Group	Date	Notes on participants	Researcher reflection
			Again, researcher and Primary Supervisor met briefly to discuss findings and techniques. Initial 'playful' coding using broad themes had commenced in NVivo.
Group 3 – 3 <sup>rd</sup> phase of interviews  Three (3) participants	2 <sup>nd</sup> April 2020 to 18 <sup>th</sup> April 2020	Three participants were interviewed, 1 male and 2 women. Participants were from different teams. Average length of service was 17.83 years.	Again, a rich diversity in participants. Themes and findings were consistent with prior interviews. Research and Primary Supervisor discussed. As researcher given the commonality of responses, it was determined that saturation had been reached. To be certain, I engaged in reflective practices and reviewed all transcripts to be certain and spent time re-visiting and re-coding NVivo to be confidently certain of this assessment.
Focus group 1 (FG1)  Four (4) participants	3 <sup>rd</sup> August 2020	Four (4) teams members were interviewed comprised of a supervisor and team members. Other data has been de-identified to protect privacy.	A significant period was left between the ending of the 3 <sup>rd</sup> Phase of the semi-structured interviews until the researcher was sufficiently confident to engage in conversation as a result of the data and themes with FG1. I was fortunate with FG1 in that they were from one (1) team. This team provided a rich source of experiences (highlighted in the thesis). I considered myself fortunate to have the opportunity to interview them and was very grateful for their time and input. Their experiences and commentary were in alignment with the themes from the semi-structured interviews and provided a rich source of data and narrative.
Focus group 2 (FG2)  Four (4) participants	7 August 2020	Four (4) people were interviewed (2 women and 2 men) all with supervisory responsibilities. Participants were from different SS teams.	Again, incredibly fortunate to have access to managers responsible for SS teams. This provided interesting insights and rich sources of narrative which both complemented and supported data and themes already gathered.

### Interacting and engaging with the data

Interacting and engaging with the data as a novice researcher can be overwhelming. And drawing from Mewburn (2020) we live in an era when access to data and information can be overwhelming. Two authors guided my journey, Braun and Clarke (2006) and Saldana's (2021)

text *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. In determining what might be a theme one needs to engage most earnestly and use an iterative and cyclic process of refining your thinking whilst challenging bias. Reflection and contemplation, time and space to consider the emerging stories is paramount. This is not time that can be rushed. As my Primary Supervisor advised ‘you need to know your data, and move between the data, to the literature, to the themes and back again a multitude of times (Southey 2022, personal communication Monday 4 April). In understanding what counts as a theme Bruan and Clarke (2006) provide guidance that it is not the size or the prevalence of a theme. The researcher is looking for patterns, meaning, hidden nuances, semantic and latent themes (Saldana2021). Research judgement is necessary to determine what a theme is, and flexibility and reflexivity are required to consider the data. The criticality of a theme and its ability to capture something important is a consideration (Saldana 2021). Although there may be no ‘one best way’ to code, Table 2 below provides an overview of the process I used to engage and interact with my data and subsequently arrive at decisions regarding themes.

**Table 2:** Process of interacting and engaging with the data – development of themes

Phase	Process	Researcher reflection	Outcomes
Prior to commencing interviews	Worked with my Primary Supervisor to develop the question set. Read, reviewed and reflected on the conduct of interview techniques.	The pre-planning phase is very important and assists in building confidence in interview techniques. Participants who are working do not want their time wasted with an interviewer who they think is unprepared and unprofessional. Presenting a professional presence builds trust. I tested my interview questions on trusted peers for feedback and on people from different fields (not familiar with EE) to assist with question clarity. This proved to be a very sound tactic and led to the development of the opening question “when we talk about EE what does that term mean to you”.	I felt prepared and confident to commence the interviews.  Led to the development of the question “when we talk about EE what does that term mean to you”. Whilst the question was used to set the shared meaning of EE between researcher and participant. It proved to be a rich source of information and provided a possible future and interesting research direction.
<b>Phase 1</b>	Conducted the initial interviews All interviews were transcribed by the researcher	I had thought about engaging a transcription service. However, having the time and space to transcribe myself proved invaluable and increased skill, and confidence in interviewing.	Deeper engagement with the data in deciding to transcribe myself. Built knowledge of and confidence with the data.

Phase	Process	Researcher reflection	Outcomes
		As an additional bonus, it also built confidence using difference software and platforms.	
<b>Phase 2</b>	Conducted the 2nd and 3rd group of semi-structured interviews	<p>Continued to transcribe and reflect on emerging themes in a playful manner - open to thoughts and ideas. Reflected with peers and my Primary Supervisor on themes emerging.</p> <p>Read the data on screen and in hard copy. De-identified the data and numbered Respondent 1, Respondent 2 etc to begin to disassociate people and personality from the data. Developed broad themes from the data that I wanted to triangulate with my Focus Groups. Discussed themes, data and focus group questions with Primary Supervisor before proceeding to FG's.</p>	<p>Spent considerable time reflecting.</p> <p>Drawing mind maps</p> <p>At times I would read RQ1 for example across the interviews or alternate to reading three or 4 from across the different groups. I did this by reading hard copy and NVivo.</p> <p>Outcome: I felt confident in my thinking and ability to 'communicate' this thinking before proceeding to my focus group interviews.</p>
Phase 3 – Focus Groups	Conducted Focus Groups – 2 FG's comprised of 4 people in each.	<p>Completed FG1 – and felt confident with the process. FG1 was in agreement with the themes and ideas raised.</p> <p>Completed FG2 – the Supervisor group was interesting, and I was grateful to have sourced them. There was general agreement of the findings, but they did have some interesting perspectives which were incorporated into the findings.</p>	The work I did above assisted in building confidence with my focus groups. Not having done focus groups via zoom previously I knew that these needed to be handled competently. It was privilege to have participants make their time available and I wanted to make maximum use of our time together out of respect and respect for the professionalism of the research process.
Overall summary	The points above reiterated for the researcher the importance of diversity and inclusion of the research participants. A robust interview architecture ensuring representation across SS teams with a mix of gender, ages and roles, added to the research project and provided strength to the data. Whilst it was mix of good luck and planning, careful consideration with population samples is important.		

## Development of the themes

Stemming from the above I then felt confident enough to continue to finalise my themes. Table 3 provides an overview of this process. As discussed above initially I was very sequential and methodical in my process in interacting and engaging with the data. This suits my learning style and personal preference and in working through my own ‘mind’ it was how I ‘needed’ to engage with the data to find the ‘story’ that my participants were sharing of their lived experience in SS teams.

**Table 3: Development of themes**

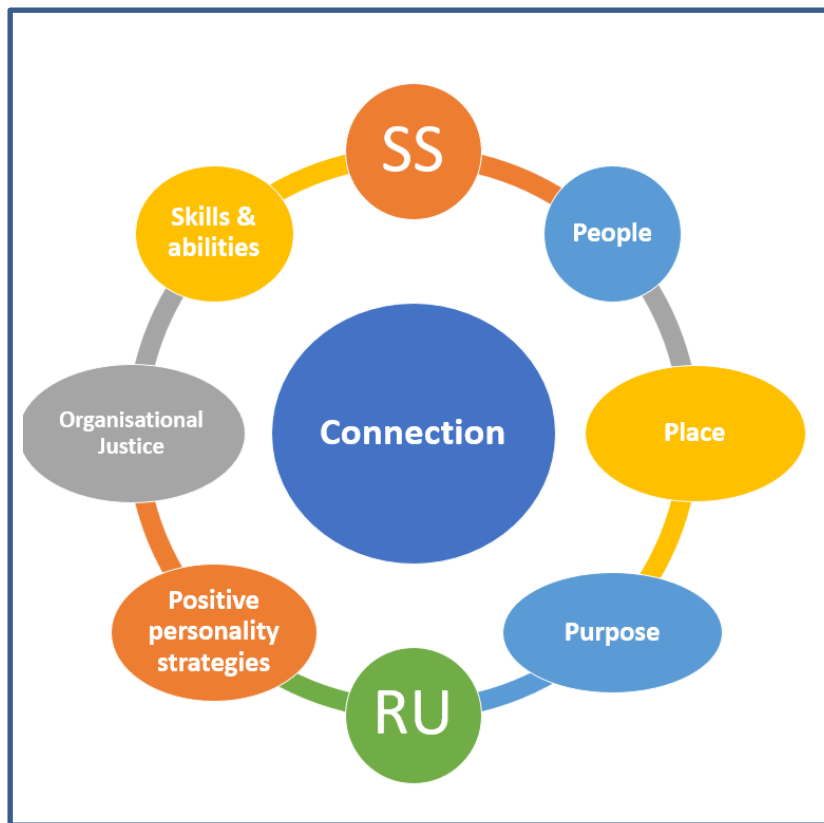
Phase	Process	Theme
First phase: semi-structured interviews Step 2	Initial coding in NVivo – very rudimentary. Imported all the transcripts and coded by RQ. This was deliberate in order to explore and understand responses to the RQ’s and assist in refining thinking. This also assisted in building confidence with NVivo. This process, as detailed in Table 2 was supported by continued interaction with the data in hard copy. Data was de-identified to numerical pseudonyms to assist with creating a relationship with the data opposed to people.	By RQ  Allowed for horizontal and vertical review of the data (Across questions and down through interviews)
First phase: semi-structured interviews Step 2	Step 2 in my first phase was focused on broad top-level coding to understand the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the meaning of EE as described by participants so that I could understand this in relation to how EE was defined in the literature. This was achieved by looking firstly across RQ1 and then for examples across the entirety of each transcript to find examples of this ‘definition of EE in action’.</li> <li>I coded Examples of SS, RU and Professional across each transcript in the same manner starting with the relevant RQ and then across the transcript.</li> </ul> <p>After this I spent time reflecting and referring back to the literature review in order to prepare for the focus groups.</p>	The meaning of EE Factors that enhance Factors that inhibit SS RU Professional Staff
Second phase: focus group interviews Step 1	I transcribed the focus groups and similar to the steps above, I interacted with them in hard copy and coded them in NVivo within their discrete subset.  I spent time in comparing FG1 and FG2 – and engaging in reflective practice as to the differences. I also then started to compare between the semi-structured interviews and FG’s looking for confirmations and differences.	First phase was to the RQ’s 2 <sup>nd</sup> phase was to the above top-level codes
Phase three: finalising my thinking	As can be seen – my process was highly iterative, reflective and used an inductive open coding process as is appropriate with the research design. This fits well with an interpretive research philosophy – where the	Refer to Table 5 below which formed the basis of Table 4.5

Phase	Process	Theme
	objective is to understand the unique contextual circumstances at a specific point in time. (Saunders et al. 2019). This was an inductive analysis that sought to cover semantic and latent themes. Whilst some themes were explicit the meaning behind these from the lived experience of participants, equally important.	Summary of Findings in the thesis and Figure 1 which synthesised mind mapping activities.

**Table 5: Final development of themes**

<b>RQ1: What does ‘employee engagement’ mean to SS workers in a RU context?</b> <i>Theme: The rules of engagement (RoE)</i>	
<b>RQ2: What are the factors that enhance EE in SS teams in a RU context?</b> <i>Themes: Connection (people, place &amp; purpose), use of skills &amp; abilities, PPS, feeling valued and valuable and knowing what piece of the puzzle you are.</i>	<b>RQ3: What are the factors the inhibit EE in SS teams in a RU context?</b> <i>Theme: Not feeling (or the need to feel) valued and valuable and <b>respected</b> for one’s inputs.</i>
<b>RQ2.1 How do these workers describe their positive experiences of EE?</b> <i>Theme: Connection – valued &amp; valuable (and respected)</i>	<b>RQ3.1 How do these workers describe their negative experiences of EE?</b> <i>Theme: extends theme in 2.1 to include the need to feel respected.</i>
<b>RQ2.2 What aspects of working in SS enhances their EE?</b> <i>Theme: Putting the shared into SS, connection and place is powerful.</i>	<b>RQ3.2 What aspects of working in SS inhibited their EE?</b> <i>Theme: one size-fits all – customised verses generic.</i>
<b>RQ2.3 What aspects of working in a RU enhance their EE?</b> <i>Theme: Place is powerful, connection.</i>	<b>RQ3.3 What aspects of working in a RU inhibit their EE?</b> <i>Theme: Links to above – customisation verses generic and RU context.</i>
<b>RQ2.4 In what way might the Covid-19 pandemic have enhanced their EE?</b> <i>Theme: links to RQ2 and COVID-19 opportunities</i>	<b>RQ3.4 In what way might the Covid-19 pandemic have inhibited their EE?</b> <i>Theme: challenges - safety &amp; availability</i>
<b>RQ2.5 What criticality did the workers assign to the various factors that enhanced their EE?</b> Links to RQ2, range of holistic factors, unique to the individual however there are some commonalities. Use of skills and abilities, respected and valued for one’s inputs, SS environment, attraction to RU.  Implications: SS environment, use of skills and abilities, OJ, connection to purpose and outcomes	<b>RQ3.5 What criticality did the workers assign to the various factors that inhibited their EE?</b> Links to RQ2.5 and justice perceptions. Tension between generic and customised job roles/descriptions. Implications: bring OJ back to the management table

**Source:** developed by author



**Figure 1: Mind map synthesis** Source: developed by author