Cape Peninsula
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HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES' IMPACT ON ACADEMIC STAFF PERFORMANCE IN PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN NAMIBIA

by

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DECLARATION

I, Fiina Shimaneni, declare that the contents of this thesis represent my own unaided work, and that the thesis has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

(signature)	**26 August 2025**
Signed	**Date**

ABSTRACT

The genesis of private higher education (PHE) in Namibia can be traced to Namibia's national independence. Soon after independence in 1991, a Commission on Higher Education was established to advise the government on the country's higher education needs, demands, and scope. Its main task was to guide how higher education should be structured and funded and determine its relationship with the government. Of the many recommendations made, the Commission reiterated that the government should not be the sole provider of higher education and recommended that the interests of all partners in higher education be represented in the new higher education system. This shaped the trajectory of PHE in post-independent Namibia. Despite the proliferation of private higher education institutions (PHEIs), their image and the quality of education they offer are a subject of national debate, which inspired this study. The aim is to explore current HRM practices in private institutions and develop a framework that will assist PHEIs in enhancing the job performance of their academic staff. The study was framed as a case study within the framework of phenomenological research design. A well-established PHE institution was selected for the study. In-depth, context-rich interviews were conducted with academic staff and key informants to capture the lived experiences of the participants. Documentary reviews supplemented this. The results of these led to the development of a HRM framework, comprising specific HRM practices (for academics) and broad HRM practices (for all staff). The study found evidence that the challenges faced by academic institutions in managing academic staff are real and complex, requiring the effective implementation of HRM practices. The results demonstrated the dual nature of challenges and enhancers affecting academic staff performance in PHEI and emphasised the significance of the ability-motivation-opportunity (AMO) theory. The AMO provides a lens through which employees' performance is understood, highlighting the interplay of ability, motivation and opportunity practices within the context of PHE. The study also revealed that HRM practices in the PHEI emphasise diverse recruitment, compensation, performance management, organisational values, training and employee relations. Further, it was found that well-established academic processes and structures inform the implementation of these practices. However, the study uncovered several challenges to effective HRM implementation, including contextual and political factors, job insecurity, the technology divide, institutional culture, resource constraints, and workload. Despite these challenges, factors that can enhance academic job performance were identified, including workload balance, career progression, leadership, collaboration and knowledge sharing. Based on these findings, an integrated HRM framework for the Namibian PHEI was proposed. It is hoped that this model will not only contribute to the enhancement of academic staff performance but also elevate the reputation of PHEIs within the country.

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DEDICATION

Accomplishments are rarely achieved without assistance from others.

First and foremost, I would like to thank God, the Almighty, for granting me the wisdom to conduct and complete my studies.

To my husband, *Komfala*, your belief in my potential has been the cornerstone of my academic journey. You are a source of strength. Thank you for driving me to reach new heights.

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GLOSSARY

Ability-enhancing HRM practices: "Refers to those HRM practices that contribute to employee increased skills to perform specific tasks" (Nor, Johar & Khairi, 2022:1605).

Academic Staff: "Lecturers and researchers responsible for direct teaching of students" (NCHE, 2016).

Academic staff job performance – "Describes behaviours that are measurable and scaled which are performed by faculty members in the workplace and include the triad core of academic work, which involves teaching, learning and research" (Yousefi & Abdullah, 2019:565).

Higher Education – "Includes all learning programmes that lead to qualifications equivalent to National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level 5 and higher and are offered by HEIs as defined in the Namibian Higher Education Act, Act 26 of 2003" (NCHE, 2016:x).

Human Resource Management Practices – "Include a collection of consistent practices and policies that are planned and implemented to ensure that human resources achieve the organisation's intent" (Simon, 2020:173).

Motivation- enhancing HRM practices: "These are HRM practices implemented by leaders or managers to motivate and encourage employees to complete the specific tasks" (Iftikar, Hussain, Malik, Hyder, Kaleem & Saqib, 2022:3).

Opportunity-enhancing HRM practices: "These refer to contextual or environmental factors beyond an employee's control but play an essential role in leading to performance-related outcomes" (Kellner, Cafferkey & Townsend, 2019)

Private higher educational institutions: "Independent institutions of higher learning founded by private individuals and maintained at the owner's cost" (Higher Education Act, 2003).

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

AMO: Ability - Motivation - Opportunity

APHEIN: Association of Private Higher Education Institutions, Namibia

HE: Higher Education

HEI: Higher Education Institution

HR: Human Resource

HRM: Human Resource Management

NCHE: National Council for Higher Education

PHE: Private Higher Education

PHEI: Private Higher Education Institution

SET: Social Exchange Theory

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Human resource management (HRM) is a social science of overseeing how employees are managed in organisations to develop organisational performance (Sweis, Ogla, Abdallat, Sweis, Suifan & Ralehm, 2020:3) and to gain a competitive advantage (Igbal, Rasheed, Khan & Siddiqi, 2021; Oloruntoyin, Damilola & Gbenga, 2020:2; Obeidat, Al-Khateeb, Masa'deh & Akour, 2019). However, the context, such as organisational types and employee characteristics, is critical for the success of HRM application in organisations (Al-Twal, 2022:1). Thus, HRM practices provide the context whereby organisations achieve their corporate and personal objectives (Jawaad Amir, Bashir & Hasan, 2019). Elrehail, Harazneh, Alzghoul, Alnajdawi & Ibrahim (2019:126) define HRM practices as a set of internal and coherent activities within an organisation to reinforce and promote employee competency, motivation and commitment. The importance and increasing need to adopt effective HRM practices in organisations have prompted many studies focusing on effective human resource management (Shehata, Montash & Areda, 2020; Oloruntoyin et al., 2020). Consequently, organisations that effectively implement HRM practices and functions are likely to reap benefits compared to their counterparts who do not (Cherif, 2020:530). Exploring HRM practices that effectively foster the climate of recruitment, training, performance appraisal, and succession planning is worthwhile for an organisation in any sector (Ismail, Majid, Jibrin-Bida & Joader, 2019). Higher education institutions (HEIs) are no exception.

As a cumulative body of research on the interconnection between HRM and education quality emerges (Ashraf, 2019), university management must address this element to enhance academic reputation. Accordingly, universities' management must take a keen interest in establishing and maintaining HRM practices, while also taking cognisance of institutional characteristics (Hossain & Rahman, 2019). The effectiveness of higher education depends on HRM practices, whereby academic staff are managed to serve the institution (Susanj, Jakopec, & Doric, 2020). Basnyat & Lao (2020) point out that HRM practices include recruitment and selection, performance management, training and development, compensation and employee relations. Malik and Lenka (2020) added job design, career opportunities, and HR planning as additional HRM practices. While the list of practices is not exhausted, recent studies (Radtchnko-Draillard, 2021:3; Aydogan & Arslan, 2020; Grobler et al., 2019:7; Gahlwat & Kundu, 2019:743; Malik & Lenka, 2020:728) generally accept practices such as selective staffing, training, performance-based appraisal, compensation and reward policy,

grievance procedures, attitudes surveys, employee participation, information sharing and job rotation as organisational practices that constitute HRMPs.

Organisational success largely depends on the capability of its human resources (Ismail et al., 2019). Similarly, the role of human resources is irrefutable in HEIs (Susanj et al., 2020). With HEIs starting to be seen as a business sector, competition is becoming notable among universities (Blair-Cox, 2019:1). This has resulted in a popular conceptualisation known as McUniversity, where universities are competing not only for better academically strong students, but also for better experienced and qualified staff (Gie, 2017:64). This, however, demands university management to rethink their approach for managing employees. Consequently, HEIs leaders should recruit, develop, reward, and retain staff who can aid in the success of institutions (Aboramadan, Albashiti, Alharazin & Dahleez, 2020:155).

Regarding HRM practices, particularly in private institutions, Khan, Aajiz, and Ali (2018) found that weak areas include the need for proper staff vacancy advertisements, the absence of induction policies, low salary packages, and vague appraisals. Mondejar and Asio (2022) examined teachers' job satisfaction in a private academic institution and state that although private institutions engage in HRM practices, several practices need attention. The authors found that posting of open vacancies and qualifications, and advancement standards are not properly enforced. In addition, the differences in income and other benefits affect educators' job satisfaction. Similarly, Tamrat and Teferra (2020:687) found a shortage of qualified staff and an inability to attract and retain academics as some of the significant risks facing private educators.

Anis, Islam and Abdullah (2018) examined challenges faced by private higher education institutions (PHEIs), exposing the most formidable challenges facing Malaysian private education institutions. Among these challenges, private educators' biggest issues are the inability to hire and retain qualified academics and a lack of dedicated scholars. These problems result from financial constraints facing private educators and, consequently, they are neither able to offer attractive remuneration, a manageable workload, nor better perks, as offered by their competitors.

While it could be argued that PHEIs face a myriad of challenges, it is also the fastest-growing segment of HE worldwide (Qureshi & Khawaja, 2021:172). In line with this growth, the pivotal role of academic staff in these settings cannot be ignored. With HEIs seen as a business sector and competition becoming notable among universities (Blair-Cox, 2019:1), private educators have begun to realise that new HRM approaches are needed to respond to the dynamics of a hyper-competitive environment (Susanj et al., 2020:477). More importantly, institutions that effectively implement HRM practices through which academic staff are recruited, developed, and oriented to serve the institution

(Susanj et al., 2020) are likely to reap better benefits compared to their counterparts that do not (Cherif, 2020:530). However, due to financial constraints (Tamrat & Teferra, 2020) and the neglect of the significant role of HR departments (Al-Twal, 2022), it is becoming increasingly difficult for PHEIs to implement effective HRM practices. These issues challenge academic staff's job performance and institutions as they strive to improve their academic reputation.

In providing a glimpse into the realm of HRM practices in higher education, this chapter lays a solid foundation upon which the study is constructed. Through the background of the study, the context within which the study is situated is articulated, giving the relevance and significance of the private higher education sector. This chapter further defines the problem statement and highlights specific challenges facing the management of academic staff in PHEIs. To establish a clear sense of the study, the aims and objectives of the study are elucidated, while a brief overview of the research approaches and tools employed offers an insight into the chosen research methodology. Furthermore, a short review of the existing body of knowledge on PHE is provided, upon which further exploration is built. Lastly, the demarcation and limitations of the study is outlined, setting the boundaries for what can be expected. Holistically, the chapter provides a foundational framework for the study, while setting the stage for what lies ahead.

The next section provides the contextual background of the study. A brief historical evolution of the higher education sector in Namibia is provided, shedding light on the factors that have shaped the emergence of PHEIs.

1.2 Background of the study

Globally, there has been a growing demand for higher education, resulting in the proliferation of PHEIs (Stander & Herman, 2017). Africa and Namibia are no exception to this growth. Although HE in Namibia is young and relatively new (Matengu, Likando & Kangumu, 2014:83), this growing demand has resulted in entrepreneurs establishing small private institutions. This unprecedented growth and the rise of PHEIs has generated much debate (Odjidja, 2020:21, Stander & Herman, 2017) as the image and quality of private education have been at the forefront of the HE sector (Lilemba, 2022; Ramalachan, 2019:2).

In 2023, Namibia's HE environment comprised two public universities, while PHEIs constituted four private universities and ten accredited private institutions (NCHE, n.d.). The growing demand for HE has resulted in the proliferation of private higher education providers. However, entrepreneurs who at times overlook the significance of HRM in their operations are often responsible for establishing

these institutions (Uyar & Deniz, 2012). As a result, the role of HR departments in these institutions has become neglected (Al-Twal, 2022).

Although the provision of HE by private educators is a growing phenomenon in Namibia, several issues plague its development, including its image and the quality of education provided (Lilemba, 2022). Private educators have been under scrutiny because of perceived low-quality offerings and, generally, PHEIs suffer from poor infrastructure, poorly qualified academic personnel and inefficient management systems (Stander & Herman, 2017:209). Even though they serve as an immediate safety net in addressing the growing demand for HE (Teferra & Altbach, 2004), PHEIs are still perceived as offering inferior higher education compared to their public counterparts. Even when some private HE providers hire the best academic staff and maintain state-of-the-art infrastructure, a strong perception persists in the country that public institutions are better academically than private institutions (Lilemba, 2022).

PHEIs are faced with mounting challenges (Tamrat & Teferra, 2020:687). Many operate with limited resources or poor infrastructure and struggle to hire and retain qualified personnel because of financial constraints, as most of them rely on privately generated funds (Anis et al., 2019:489). As a result, HRM in these settings is neglected (Ashraf, 2019:154). Chaudhari (2019) recounts that students in higher institutions are taught HRM and expected to apply these techniques in the corporate world once they graduate. However, HEIs themselves are unable to manage their human resources effectively. Wujie (2016:64) highlights some of the predicaments facing PHEIs as low enthusiasm for developing HRM initiatives. HRM departments are not playing a significant role and they employ low-quality personnel. Likewise, Al-Twal, Rowlands and Cook (2019:10) argue that HRM in private institutions is ineffective, perceived as traditional, and operates poorly.

1.3 Problem statement

Academic staff performance in HEIs is critical for achieving academic excellence and institutional goals (Mattjik, Akbar & Yasin, 2020). However, PHEIs in Namibia face significant challenges in managing human resources effectively. These challenges include low staff qualifications, inadequate recruitment systems and insufficient work experience among academic staff (Kaimu, 2005). Additionally, issues such as poor learning outcomes and low educational standards further undermine the credibility of PHEIs in Namibia (Kambanzera, 2020). Institutional credibility is closely tied to the performance of academic staff, whose experiences have a direct impact on instructional effectiveness, student learning, and the institution's reputation. Human Resource Management practices, including recruitment, compensation, performance appraisal, and training, are critical in

influencing these experiences. There is a limited empirical understanding of the implementation of HRM practices in Namibian PHEIs and their effects on academic staff performance.

Despite increased efforts by higher education regulators to ensure quality assurance within PHEIs (Kadhila & Iipumbu, 2019), there is no comprehensive strategy to guarantee the employment of qualified and experienced personnel. Current regulations primarily require PHEIs to maintain records of staff qualifications and experience (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 2003) without offering explicit directives for HRM practices. This gap has led to public concerns about the credibility and academic quality of PHEIs (Lilemba, 2022). Arising from this is the essence to examine the impact of HRM practices on academic staff performance in Namibian PHEIs to address these challenges, enhance academic reputation and build public confidence in these institutions.

1.4 Research questions

The study sought to explore the impact of HRM practices in a PHEI, explicitly targeting the perceptions and experiences of academic staff. Stemming from the identified HRM challenges such as improper recruitment processes, inexperienced academics, low staff qualifications and poor student learning outcomes, this study seeks to address these negative perceptions of PHEIs. Against this background, the study aims to probe the underlying dynamics for the identified issues, which are as follows:

Main research question:

- What is the impact of HRM practices on academic staff performance in Namibian PHEIs?

Sub-questions:

- What is the nature of HRM practices in a Namibian PHEI?
- How are HRM practices implemented concerning academic staff?
- What challenges does the PHEI encounter in implementing HRM practices?
- What factors would enhance academic staff job performance in the PHEI?
- What measures should the PHEI put in place to improve its HRM practices?

1.5 Aim and objectives of the study

The main aim of this study was to explore the impact of HRM practices on academic staff performance in Namibian PHEIs and develop a framework that would assist the institution in enhancing its academic staff performance. Ultimately, behind the development of this framework was

belief that with enhancement of academic staff job performance the tainted image of other private educators would be improved. The objectives of the study were to:

- explain the nature of HRM practices in a Namibian PHEI.
- investigate the implementation of HRM practices in the PHEI among academic staff.
- identify the barriers facing the PHEI in managing academic staff job performance.
- identify the factors that enhance academic staff job performance in the PHEI.
- propose an integrated HRM practices framework that addresses the unique characteristics of the PHEI.

1.6 Significance of the study

This study contributes significantly to the body of literature in HRM practices in PHEIs in Namibia. A search of the literature on Google Scholar indicated a lack of research on HRM practices in Namibian PHEIs. Hence, this study is an effort to develop and expand current knowledge on PHE, given that private education is the fastest-growing segment of HE.

There is a significant national concern regarding the academic reputation found in PHEIs in Namibia (Lilemba, 2022). Despite this concern, the number of PHEIs continues to increase (NCHE, 2020: IX). The NCHE report (2020: ix) indicates that the country had sixteen HEIs in 2020, of which thirteen were PHEIs. Despite being the majority, these are generally smaller than their publicly funded counterparts. The study emphasises the importance of implementing effective HRM practices in these settings to enhance performance. Additionally, addressing HRM quality in PHEIs could enhance their academic reputation.

Specifically, the study proposes an HRM practices framework that could become a guide for other developing countries experiencing the proliferation of PHE and its associated issues. In addition, the study highlights the importance of effective HRM practices in these settings to ensure high-level job performance among academic staff. Lastly, the study aims to generate greater awareness among higher education stakeholders about the significance of having effective HRM practices, enabling PHE to respond to the needs of Namibian society.

1.7 Demarcation of the study

The study was restricted to PHE and explored one PHEI in Namibia. This choice was based on its reliance on full-time academic staff, student enrolment, and having campuses in different towns. Relying more on full-time academic staff can influence various HRM practices such as attraction, recruitment, compensations and training. In addition, a large student body may require distinct HRM

practices such as effective faculty-student ratio that can impact on teaching quality. Furthermore, having campuses in different towns may pose challenges related to coordination and maintaining consistency of HRM practices across multiple towns. Although there are fourteen registered PHEIs in the country (NCHE, 2022), most are small private institutions with few full-time academic staff, and some are remote distance-based institutions. The chosen institution offers full-time courses, relies more on full-time academic staff, and has higher student enrolment rates than its counterparts.

1.8 Preliminary literature review

1.8.1 Theoretical framework

Various theories are used in studying the HRM-performance relationship, such as the contingency framework, the resource-based view and the ability-motivation-opportunity theory (Mutahi & Busienei, 2015:705). However, literature on HRM practices considers the Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Sibian & Ispas, 2021) and the Ability, Motivation and Opportunity (AMO) Theory (Azungah et al., 2018:696) to highlight the relationship between HRM practices and performance. Inherent in the SET are efforts to induce reciprocation, which suggest that employer-initiated support may be interpreted as an obligation on the employee to reciprocate, resulting in beneficial expected outcomes (Sungu et al., 2019:1411).

The SET suggests that effective HRM practices may cause academic staff to reciprocate with higher performance. An underlying assumption of the current study is that effective HRM practices are central to reciprocating employee behaviour, such as higher performance. The SET provides a robust theoretical basis for testing such a premise (Selvanathan et al., 2019:260). It argues that HRM practices signal an organisation's intentions to its employees. If those HRM practices signal an employer's generosity, they should induce positive employee reactions (Jahan & Kim, 2021:86).

The SET, the AMO Theory has been linked to the origin of the HRM discipline. The theory splits HRM practices into three sub-dimensions: ability, motivation, and opportunity enhancement, which target employee performance (Sokolov & Zavyalova,2021). Although there is no consensus on what constitutes HRM practices, a consensus suggests that a bundle of HRM practices should be used to achieve performance (Burhan et al., 2020). This study maintains that HRM practices are more effective when combined in a contextual framework to influence performance (Oloruntoyin et al., 2020:4). Therefore, the study used the A to explain the linkage between HRM practices and performance by identifying HRM practices that can enhance ability, motivation, and work opportunities for better performance.

Due to the nature of this study, the AMO Theory serves as a better analytical lens to understand HRM practices and its employee antecedents. The theory is based on the premise that employee performance is enhanced through a bundle of HRM practices which work in concert (Ferrarini & Curzi, 2022). The premise of the AMO Theory is the employee's capacity to enhance performance due to possessing the necessary skills, appropriate motivation and the opportunity to participate in key organisational initiatives (Fawehinmi et al., 2020:882). The AMO Theory is often associated with HRM practices that enhance employee behaviour and attitude for greater job performance (Al-Shahwani, 2020:1828).

The AMO Theory further proposes that a vital component is the interrelation of HRM practices, implying that enhanced employee performance is better achieved through well-designed HRM bundles of practices working in concert (Ferrarini & Curzi, 2022). Nor et al. (2021:1603) postulate that if employers understand the A, they will better understand the problems associated with HRM practices, which can assist them in managing their employees effectively with AMO as a mediating mechanism on performance.

Marin-Garcia and Tomas (2016) extend the AMO, suggesting that the component of interrelation between HRM practices and employees' subjective perceptions of these practices is equally important in the performance process. They maintain that AMO's influence on employee performance becomes very complicated because it depends on employees' understanding of these practices. In the integrated approach, focusing on employees' perspectives is also a crucial factor in adopting the AMO model. Hence, actual and expected HRM practices need to be differentiated when implementing HRM systems aiming at enhancing employee performance (Mahdy & Alhadi, 2021). In addition, effective design of HRM practices considers line managers' ability to execute these practices, their drive to empower employees and the organisational aid to make the necessary changes (Al-Shahwani, 2020:1828).

Although elevating employee performance is the main feature of the AMO theory, the model can also be adapted to any dependent variable under study (Al-Tit, 2020:4). The theory has been used by several researchers examining issues such as green employee behaviour (Iftikar et al., 2022; Sabian & Ispas, 2021; Fawehinmi et al., 2020), proactive behaviour (Al-Tit, 2020), open innovation (Ferrarini & Curzi, 2022), sustainable competitive advantage (Al-Shahwani, 2020) and employee commitment among Generation Y (Nor et al., 2021). The current study examines the effect of AMO-HRM practices on academic staff job performance. Consequently, ability, motivation and opportunity-enhancing practices in PHE were explored.

Drawing on the AMO theory, the current study argues that HRM practices play a crucial role in the job performance of academic staff. Employees react with appropriate behaviour and attitudes depending on what their employers offer in terms of HRM practices (Nor et al., 2021:1603), and this reciprocal act illustrates the fundamental features of the SET. The theory emphasises the efforts to induce reciprocation, suggesting that the employer initiates support initiatives, which may beget an obligation on the employee to reciprocate, resulting in the expected outcomes (Sungu et al., 2019. This view implies that when HRM practices are implemented, they signal the organisation's intentions to its employees. If those HRM practices signal an employer's generosity, they should induce positive employee reactions (Jahan & Kim, 2021:86). Based on the social exchange theory perspective, this study postulates that the HRM practices of PHEIs can drive the job performance of academic staff through signalling the institution's good intentions to its employees.

1.8.2 The State of PHE in Namibia

Although remarkable changes and advancements have emerged in HE sectors in Namibia, with PHEIs comprising 81.3% (*N* = 14) of the Namibian HE sector (NCHE, n.d.), but only 29 % (*N* = 19304) of the total student enrolment (*N*= 66 656) was enrolled in PHEIs in 2020 (NCHE, 2020: ix).

Whereas the provision of HE by private educators is a growing phenomenon in Namibia, several issues plague its implementation, including its poor image and quality of education (Lilemba, 2022). PHEIs suffer from poor infrastructure, poorly qualified academic personnel and inefficient management systems (Stander & Herman 2017:209). Even though they contribute to the country's development by providing HE (Ramlachan, 2019), this mission is often hindered by their inability to attract and retain motivated employees, given their limited physical and financial resources (Al-twal, 2022:1; Anis et al., 2019:359; Stander & Herman, 2017). It is also unsurprising that PHEIs are labelled as second-class compared to their public counterparts (Tamrat & Teferra, 2020). The significant role of HRM in these settings is often neglected (Al-Twal, 2022), with owners/management having limited understanding and dedication towards implementing HRM practices. Quite often, the founders of these institutions have abundant knowledge of their respective disciplines, but lack HRM knowledge and understanding (Brown, 2017:2). However, as these institutions evolve to meet the demand for higher education, recognising the need for effective HRM approaches in higher education becomes paramount.

1.8.3 The Need for HRM in Higher Education

Cherif (2020:530) defines HRM practices as organisational practices that create work environments and conditions wherein employees commit to doing their best. Similarly, Simon (2020:173) describes

HRM as a collection of harmonious practices and policies planned and implemented to ensure that employees contribute to attaining organisational goals. In addition, HRM practices can also be referred to as a collection of procedures used by institutions to manage their human resources to gain and maintain superior results (Mondejar & Asio, 2022:1631).

Al-Twal (2022:1) states that HRM practices are significant in HEIs as they are important role players in the social and economic development of countries (Zaleniene & Pereira, 2021; Khan et al., 2019:80) and, as such, great attention should be paid to HRM (Al-Twal, 2022:10). However, HEIs around the world are faced with challenges such as unqualified teachers (Menon & Suresh, 2020) and poor academic programmes (Tamrat & Teferra, 2020). As the pressure increases, the need for a unique management approach to ensure having high-quality academic staff is more critical than ever before, as the role of academics in society is ever-changing (Susanj et al., 2020). HRM practices must be responsive to academics' diverse roles (Susanj et al., 2020). HEIs are often viewed as struggling to manage academic staff regarded as top-level knowledge workers (Susanj et al., 2020:484). This has brought to the fore the call for new HRM approaches to the management of academic staff (Susanj et al., 2020:477; Naeem, 2019). HEIs administrators must have an in-depth understanding of HRM practices and be dedicated to driving them in their institutions (Shehata et al., 2020).

That being said, effective HRM practices are necessary in both corporate and academic settings. HE is seen as a business sector; hence business principles are becoming acceptable in these settings (Al-Twal et al., 2019:2). In the PHE sector, HRM practices relate to policies and procedures that lead towards achieving institutional objectives (Simon, 2020). These HRM policies must assist HEIs in attracting, developing and managing their academic staff (Susanj et al., 2020), who are core to the success of academic businesses.

1.9 Research methodology

1.9.1 The research paradigm

This study falls within the interpretivism paradigm as it aimed to explore HRM practices in private institutions in Namibia, of which little is known. When little information is known, interpretivism allows researcher to work with qualitative data to generate rich descriptions of social constructs (Nguyen, 2019) from the different perceptions participants have about the nature of HRM practices in PHEIs, how they are implemented, and what barriers exist in managing academic staff. Al-Ababneh (2020:80) argues further that those studies using that type of philosophy consider situations in each organisation as unique and different from others. The fact that the private education sector is unique

and managed differently from public universities is acknowledged in this study. Thus, the study sought to understand the experiences, perceptions and uniqueness of HRM practices within a particular social context (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020:42). In addition, using the interpretivism philosophy enables in-depth semi-structured interviews (Nguyen, 2019:9) to collect data from multiple stakeholders (Singh et al., 2020:1293) to investigate participants' experiences of HRM practices.

1.9.2 Research approach

Creswell (2014) notes that expanding the body of knowledge warrants a qualitative study when there is limited information about a topic, as is the case with the unknown nature of HRM practices in PHEIs. As the study sought to understand and explore phenomena, rather than merely to manipulate variables, it lends itself to a qualitative approach (Nassaji, 2020:427). The business world is dynamic, and each business situation is unique (Al-Ababneh, 2020:80). Consequently, developing knowledge in a complex and nuanced context, such as PHE, requires qualitative methods (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020:42).

1.9.3 The research design

Qualitative research is typically defined by exploratory, explanatory, or descriptive designs that establish the study's purpose and methodology, employing various strategies, including narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study, for data collection and analysis. (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018:6). Since the study aimed to solicit the lived experiences of academic staff in connection with HRM practices in PHE, a phenomenological design was appropriate to conduct in-depth exploration within specific contexts (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020:42). Halakias and Neurbert (2020:49) indicate that phenomenology studies aim to understand lived meaning of experiences within a particular context. Hence, the study recognises that implementing HRM practices in private universities, as opposed to public universities, may be done in different ways, as these sectors are distinct. Thus, there is a need to understand them in-depth within PHE (Tomaszewski et al., 2020).

There are fourteen registered PHEIs in Namibia (NCHE, 2020). Eight of these institutions have a staff complement of <50 academic employees. Of those with >50 academic staff members, three have limited full-time academic staff and predominantly rely on part-time academic staff, (NCHE, 2020).

The participants comprised full-time academic staff, academic management and HRM personnel. HRM practices in HEIs are implemented to address the specific needs of different categories of employees. Since full-time academic staff have long-term commitment with their institutions than

part-time academic staff, HRM practices are implemented and applied to them to foster engagement and performance. Including academic management in the study was crucial since they are responsible for managing academics' performance. HRM personnel formed part of the participants because they are the custodians of HRM practices in organisations.

Participants in qualitative research may be selected using various methods, but they must be purposefully defined to include the most suitable participants in the most relevant contexts to answer research questions (Johnson, Adkins, & Chauvin, 2020). Ensuring sample diversity results in diverse and detailed descriptions of the phenomena experienced by various stakeholders (Schoch, 2019). Purposeful sampling is a non-random sampling method in which subjects who have knowledge or experiences of the issue being investigated are selected for the study (Oppong, 2013:203)

The study participants were selected using purposeful sampling by carefully choosing departments and individuals that were most relevant to the research objectives. This approach ensured that academics, Deans, HRM department and academic heads were identified as key potential participants to provide valuable insights into HRM practices in PHEIs. In addition, the researcher considered the appropriate sample size. Several authors provide guidelines on appropriate sample sizes for qualitative interviews for meaningful comparisons.

Cash, Isaksson, Maier and Summers (2021:10) recommend conducting qualitative interviews with fewer than twelve participants. Fugard and Potts (2015) also suggest a maximum of twelve participants when conducting qualitative interviews. Although the sample size varies depending on the study context, Given (2008:195) states that saturation of themes can be reached with a sample size of 15 to 20 participants. Therefore, for this study, a sample of 19 participants comprising academics, faculty Deans, heads of departments, higher education regulators and a participant from the PHE association was considered sufficient for the scale of this study and subsequent data analysis. Academic staff were included as participants because the study aimed to examine how HRM practices are applied in PHEIs towards enhancing academic staff job performance. Academic management, such as heads of departments and Deans, were included as participants because they are the direct supervisors of academics and responsible for managing their performance. The study included the HRM personnel because they are the custodians of HRM functions and policies in institutions. The association of private higher education institutions in Namibia (APHEIN) and higher education regulators (NCHE) as external stakeholders were also included in the study as they are information-rich for the study and also to support maximum variation sampling (Halkias & Neubert, 2020).

1.9.4 Data collection instruments

Since the research approach was qualitative, semi-structured and open-ended interviews were deemed the most appropriate data collection instruments (Xiong, 2022:957; Rashid et al., 2019:6). As Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019:434) argue, an interview is a process of social interactions between the researcher and the participants to describe the meanings of central themes in the participants' world. With the aid of interviews, the study explores and describes the HRM practices in detail. An interview guide containing questions that are flexible to suit the category of participants was used to ensure consistency of the interviews (Schoch, 2019:251).

Halkias and Neubert (2020:55) further argue that interviews permit the use of multiple data methods to get different measures of a phenomenon. Hence, the study recognised document reviews as a supplementary data collection instrument (Tomaszewski et al., 2020:4) with HRM policies of institutions and official government publications of PHEIs serving as a data source for the study.

In qualitative research, data is collected from participants in their everyday situations. The study conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with key persons (Ugwu et al., 2021:119). The Interview guides were used to ensure the main research questions were covered and to keep the interview sessions on track (Reissner & Whittle, 2022:66; Rashid et al. (2019:7). Although the interview protocol guided the process, there were different interview questions (Johnson et al., 2020:142) that fitted categories of participants. The first interview guide (Appendix C) was for internal stakeholders, namely: academic staff, academic management and HRM personnel, while the second interview guide (Appendix D) was for external stakeholders (HE regulator and association of private higher education providers).

1.9.5 Data coding and analysis

An interpretivist framework uses analysis to identify themes and patterns of meaning (Berryman, 2019:274) and, thereafter, draws categories from the data (Hameed, 2020:10). The recorded responses of participants were transcribed, and ATLAS.ti was used to code and analyse field notes. The documents were analysed by going beyond the content of the documents to understand the document as a symbolic representation of the person or organisation it belonged to (Rule & John, 2011:81). To generate actual value from the qualitative research, comparison of data was executed by recognising similar outcomes from the different participants (Forero et al, 2018:7; Shenton, 2004:66. This approach increases the study's validity and reduces bias (Stahl & King, 2020). The study collected data from diverse academic staff with varying experiences, roles and perspectives and also captured varied perceptions and viewpoints from HRM personnel, higher education

regulators and academic management, thus creating an in-depth picture of the research questions (Forero et al., 2018:7).

1.10 Ethical considerations

Ethics approval was sought from the participating institution and the university's ethics committee. Stenfors et al. (2020:598) stress that a study should first have ethics committee approval or a waiver. Participation was voluntary, and participants' role in the study was explained to them (Rashid et al., 2019:7). Consent was first obtained before commencing with interviews (Schoch, 2019:252) by asking participants to sign the Faculty of Business and Management Sciences informed consent form or to agree to the recording of the session for those who were interviewed virtually. Furthermore, it was emphasised that participants could withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences. Data was kept confidential (Sim & Waterfield, 2019:3008) by strictly controlling access to ensure that participants were not identifiable from the information they provided (Sim & Waterfield, 2019). The participating institution was protected by removing all identifiable characteristics of the participants or institution. The institution was referred to as institution one, and all respondents were allocated pseudonyms to use when analysing the data. Due diligence was exercised to respect the participants' wellbeing throughout the research process, so their information could be shared securely (Singh et al., 2020:1303).

 To effectively manage data, all interviews conducted followed a standardised set of questions and were structured carefully to ensure privacy and consent of the participants. Data was kept confidential (Sim & Waterfield, 2019:3008), encrypted, and stored on the researcher's password-protected external drive and Microsoft One Drive. Obtained documents and other records were systematically catalogued, stored and encrypted to protect the confidentiality of the information. The University retained copyright of the findings and stored them under CPUT data repositories.

1.11 Outline of the thesis

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter One sets the context of the study by providing a comprehensive introduction of HRM practices and their influence on academic staff job performance. While establishing the foundation of the study, Chapter One presents the necessary background context for understanding the study. It specifies the research problem and clearly outlines the objectives and questions that the study aims to address. An overview of the research methodology that was employed in the study was provided. Typically included in Chapter One is a short literature review section that justifies the current study's need. This chapter also presents theoretical and conceptual frameworks grounded in relevant

theories from the existing literature. In addition, Chapter One includes a brief discussion on the academic and practical relevance of the study. By serving the above several functions, Chapter One establishes the foundation, while concluding with the demarcation and limitations of the study.

Chapter 2: Private higher education landscape in Namibia

This chapter thoroughly discusses the context of the study, specifically the private higher education sector, and provides a comprehensive understanding of the role of PHEIs within the higher education landscape. The chapter begins by first examining characteristics of the global private higher education landscape, before zooming in on the Namibian dual higher education sector, consisting of both public and private HEIs. This Namibian PHE sector overview is discussed in relation to its historical development, tracing its footsteps to the higher education conditions prevailing in the country before independence. The chapter concludes with a snapshot of its current status in a post-independence era.

Chapter 3: Human resource management practices and academic staff performance

HRM practices and their significance in organisations is the focus of Chapter Three. Since the study focuses on HRM practices, it is necessary first to ground it with the HRM foundation and then discuus HRM approaches adopted by organisations. After providing an overview of HRM as a field of study, the chapter discusses the theoretical framework (Ability-Motivation-Opportunity) underpinning the study.

This is followed by the need to understand the nature of HRM practices in PHEIs and a discussion of their implications for academic staff job performance. This chapter, a review of the literature, concludes with an in-depth discussion of linking HRM practices in PHEIs to the framework utilised in the study by illustrating the key concepts of the AMO and their relevance to the study.

Chapter 4: Research methodology

Chapter Four outlines the overall approach and procedures employed in collecting and analysing the qualitative data. A detailed discussion of research paradigms and motivation for adopting the interpretivism paradigm is presented. The interpretivist paradigm was essential because it guided the adoption of a qualitative study and a phenomenological design in answering the research questions. The qualitative approach is restricted by data collection tools, that is, interviews and document reviews. Upon obtaining consent from the institutions and participants, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants. The chapter also outlines the thematic analysis

employed in analysing the data and concludes with a discussion on trustworthiness, rigour in qualitative studies, and ethical issues associated with the study.

Chapter 5: Presentation and discussion of findings

Interview scripts and audio recordings from the data analysis process are presented in Chapter Five. The data are presented in relation to the research objectives informing the study. The presentation also includes actual words and quotes from the participants, which capture key insights and perspectives relevant to the study. Data concerning the research questions are interpreted in conjunction with the literature and documents collected during the data collection phase. The findings for each research question are summarised and explained within the context of the study and other relevant literature.

Chapter 6: **Integrated HRM practices framework for academic staff in PHEIs in Namibia**.

Using the study findings, this chapter discusses the HRM practices framework to enhance academics' job performance.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and recommendations

A summary of the study is provided in this chapter. Recommendations derived from the research findings are also provided. Additionally, the implications of the research and suggestions for further study are discussed.

1.12 Summary

In any organisation, whether profit or non-profit oriented, HRM is a crucial function that enhances employee performance by deploying a highly committed and capable workforce (Storey, Ulrich & Wright, 2019). The present study examines the nature of HRM practices in PHEIs, where management is urged to execute effective HRM (Al-Twal, 2021:12) to enhance the job performance of academic staff. The study examines the nature of HRM practices and how they can be enhanced to improve academic staff performance in PHEIs in Namibia.

This chapter provided the orientation for the study, outlining the research problem, research questions and objectives of the study. A brief review of the literature on the state of PHEIs is provided. The literature review also briefly discussed the importance of HRM practices in higher education. An overview of the research methodology and data analysis was also presented. The scope of the study and ethical considerations were also briefly discussed. Lastly, the limitations and the organisation of the study were outlined.

The chapter has highlighted the significance of exploring HRM practices in Namibian PHEIs, setting the stage for understanding the crucial role that these institutions play in shaping the Namibian higher education landscape. The next chapter delves deeper into the Namibian PHEIs context, offering an analysis of their historical development, current state and unique challenges. This discussion will provide the foundation for understanding the subsequent exploration of HRM practices and their impact on the performance of academic staff within these institutions.

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CHAPTER TWO

THE PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE IN NAMIBIA

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2.1 Introduction

PHEIs have long been critical players in the higher education sector, owing to their contribution to skills development and general education (Alsharari, 2019:367). In some countries, PHEIs are the largest sector in terms of students' enrolment and sources of employment. However, the academic quality and performance of PHEIs in some countries have been very low compared to those of public institutions (Tamrat & Teferra, 2020: 685).

As the educational paradigm shifts and demand for higher education intensifies, these forces do not rule out PHE's continued growth and role in the higher education sector. This chapter embarks on a comprehensive exploration of the PHE landscape, specifically investigating its manifestation within the Namibian context.

The first part of the chapter provides an overview of the PHE sector at large. It outlines the fundamental views of PHE, tracing its remarkable growth and importance on a global scale. The complex interplay between innovation and tradition within PHE underscores its unique position in reshaping the higher education landscape. However, these advancements are not without hurdles. Therefore, the chapter also examines multifaceted challenges that have accompanied PHE's expansion. From issues of unqualified academic staff (Rehman et al., 2019:3), finance, inadequate infrastructure (Stander & Herman, 2017:211), and poor HRM practices (Hossain & Rahman, 2019:827), the landscape of PHE is as complex as it is promising.

Subsequently, the chapter zooms in by directing its focus towards the Namibian higher education landscape, where the exploration of PHE unfolds. In this section, the historical development of PHE in Namibia is examined in detail, tracing the footsteps that have led Namibia's PHE sector to its present state. After the historical reflection, the chapter extends into the contemporary landscape of Namibia PHE, presenting a snapshot of its current status. The chapter elucidates the various factors, such as student enrolment, staff complement, finance, and governance, that collectively form Namibia's PHEIs mosaic.

2.2 PHE Overview

Every country recognises the role of higher education in promoting national development (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021). Backman et al. (2019:139) state that higher education is a crucial

instrument for promoting the sustainable development of any nation. Governments recognise the need to expand access to higher education and the PHE providers' role in supporting governments' efforts to expand university enrolments (Qureshi & Khawaja, 2021:179).

The higher education sector of most countries consists of public and private education institutions, with the government establishing and funding public HEIs. Besides tuition fees, public institutions receive government subsidies on approved student numbers (Rehman et al., 2019:5). On the contrary, PHEIs are established, owned and managed by private individuals. Their funding primarily comes from tuition fees and investments by owners, as well as from venture capital or private donors (Rudhumbu & Du Plessis, 2020). Unlike their counterparts in the public sector, PHEIs do not receive government subsidies (Ramlachan, 2019:9).

The contribution of PHEIs to the higher education sector has become a global reality. For instance, Eastern European countries, such as Germany and Russia, have started to adopt higher education provisions by PHE providers, thus challenging those countries' past administrative culture (Kajawo, 2020:384). Leading this trend is China's PHE, which has become an international academic centre (Kajawo, 2020:384), and according to Maruyama (2008), cited in Kajawo (2020:384), 20% of the student population in HE was found in the United States' private universities in 2008. This expansion is also evident in countries such as India, with 229 private universities, and Japan, which has 582 private institutions (Kajawo, 2020:385). The rapid growth of PHE providers is also evident in countries such as Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia (Qureshi & Khawaja, 2021:173). This shows that the expansion of PHE in many countries is more rapid than in the public sector (Qureshi & Khawaja, 2021:173). Although private institutions depend mainly on self-funding, governments support the creation of a conducive legislative framework, thus allowing PHE providers to widen access and enrollment in higher education. As a result, PHE enrolments account for 30% of students globally (Levy, 2018, cited in Qureshi & Khawaja, 2021). Indeed, the rise of PHE is a remarkable development, creating prestigious institutions in countries such as the United States, Pakistan, and others (Qureshi & Khawaja, 2021:173).

In Africa, the monopoly that public universities have enjoyed is fading rapidly. Traditionally, public institutions dominated HE. However, the continent has experienced the rise of PHE providers since the 2000s (Van Schalkwyk et al., 2021:80). Recently, there have been PHEIs offering various courses in countries like Kenya and South Africa (Qureshi & Khawaja, 2021:173). Continental developments and changes favouring the privatisation of higher education have contributed to the rise of PHE providers (Tamrat & Teferra, 2020:680). Consequently, PHE is emerging as one of the most robust segments of HE. In Ethiopia, where PHE did not exist in 1992, 76 PHEIs are present to date (Van Schalkwyk, 2021:80). Furthermore, PHE accounts for one-third of the students' population in

universities in sub–Saharan Africa (Van Schalkwyk et al., 2021:81). In Namibia, the student enrolment in PHE is relatively small compared to public institutions. Nonetheless, the NCHE (2022) indicates that there are two public universities, two private universities, and thirteen accredited PHEIs, all of which focus on niche markets. Undoubtedly, PHE participation in tertiary education has eased the demand for higher education.

It is undeniable that the establishment of PHEIs has changed the nature of higher education in many countries. As indicated earlier, in some countries, the contributions of PHEIs are remarkable, while in others, they still occupy a lower level of the hierarchy. Nevertheless, today, PHE is one of the fastest growing segments of higher education due to deregulation and policies (Van Schalkwyk et al., 2021:81). This phenomenal growth can be further attributed to the excessive demand for higher education, unavailability of some programmes at public institutions, inefficiency of public institutions (Van Schalkwyk, 2021:80) as well as PHE's ability to cater for students who do not quality for entry to public HEIs (Myburgh & Calitz, 2022:92).

Entrepreneurs have also seen a business opportunity in the higher education segment. This has brought competition and dynamism to the sector, making higher education more market-oriented (Van Schalkwyk et al., 2021:81). For instance, PHE caters for diverse students' modes of study, admits students twice a year and has flexible delivery schedules. They also actively establish international partnerships with universities (Myburgh & Calitz, 2022:101) and offer demand-driven programmes as well as targeted labour market programmes (Gwari, 2016, cited in Schalkwyk et al., 2021:81). These initiatives significantly contribute to their growth and broader importance in the educational landscape.

2.2.1 Growth and importance of PHE

It is evident that PHE providers are playing a vital role in promulgating HE (Singh & Tustin, 2022; Nukunah et al., 2019:297) and improving access to it by offering opportunities to students who would otherwise not have had access to HE (Kajawo, 2019:49). This is because PHEIs offer programmes that are timely, customer-oriented and quicker to adapt programmes to respond to global changes (Ramlachan, 2019:10). Their programmes are innovative and have flexible teaching and learning arrangements (Kajawo, 2020:388). In addition, their mission is to meet specific industry needs and occupy niche areas (Nukunah et al., 2019:286). They provide an environment that is conducive to holistic education. This is the niche area in higher education that PHEIs occupy. Furthermore, many African governments face financial and resource limitations in funding and expanding public higher education (Tamrat & Teferra, 2020). Consequently, calculated decisions to encourage the growth of

PHE can ensure fair access and HE opportunities to marginalised groups in societies (Qureshi & Khawaja, 2021:178).

As societies move towards more knowledge-driven economies, the demand for higher education expands exponentially. To thrive in this economy, societies need human capital with high qualifications and skills. Similarly, many people seek to invest in their own personal growth and marketability to improve their living standards (Mpolomoka et al., 2018:99). The perception that a higher degree holder is more likely to find a job and be remunerated better has also contributed to the rise of PHEIs globally (Nukunah et al., 2019:285). As many people seek higher education opportunities, public institutions can no longer keep up with this demand (Qureshi & Khawaja, 2021:179). The importance of PHEIs seems infinite. Their growth has promoted higher education globally. Today, one out of every three students is in a private higher learning institution (World Bank, 2019).

In a dual-sector provision, PHE has experienced significant growth (Levy, 2018:701). The World Bank (2019) report notes that the development of PHE is so dominant that, to date, almost no country has experienced any decline in this sector. Acknowledging PHEIs as a pivotal driver of access to higher education, Kajawo (2020:389) and Nukunah et al. (2019:286) note that an increase in PHEIs has contributed to equality issues, as their tuition fees may be affordable only to some social classes in communities. Singh and Tustin (2022) add that the high tuition fees, coupled with a lack of government support for students enrolling at PHEIs, perpetuate exclusion. In addition, reduced government funding of public HE has widened the access gap, making it difficult for the less privileged to enter these institutions (Nukunah et al., 2019:287). Thus, PHEIs have taken advantage of this opportunity to provide this service. If PHE is to become an integral part of the higher education sector, then governments must find creative solutions to support PHEIs.

In playing their role, PHEIs have brought increased competition, thereby increasing choice, efficiency, and value for money in the higher education sector (Qureshi & Khawaja, 2021: 180). The demanding competition faced by higher education is not only found between public and private institutions, but also within the private sector. PHEIs compete in terms of the types of degrees offered, student entry requirements, funding aid provided to students, and the quality of faculty (Krishnaswamy et al., 2019, p. 618). As a result, the emergence of PHEIs has brought diversity to the higher education landscape. As the labour market has become more dynamic, new programmes are developed to meet the market's needs. Following this trend, PHE providers, like their public counterparts, have established business schools (Gill et al., 2022:275) to provide specific and specialised programmes tailored to business needs and corporate entities.

The presence of PHEIs is extremely important, as shown by the literature. All insights on the nature of PHEIs bring a new perspective on adding value to the higher education sector, through producing an educated workforce. The dynamic growth and value-addition of PHEIs are closely intertwined with their distinct characteristics, differentiating them from their public counterparts.

2.2.2 Unique characteristics of PHE

While the landscape of higher education comprises two types of providers, their management and institutional autonomy differ. PHEIs are mainly self-financed and profit-oriented. As a result, they tend to offer market-demand type of programmes (Gwari, 2016, cited in van Schalkwyk, 2021:81). Such programmes include business, management and commerce (Van Schalkwyk et al., 2021:83). Moreover, these programmes are cost-effective as their delivery does not require sophisticated equipment and infrastructure. While public institutions, particularly in developing countries, are battling with excessive student enrolment, student unrests, inadequate funding and a brain drain of academic staff, their private counterparts enjoy more freedom to enrol students, charge market-related tuition fees and utilise part-time lecturers to cut labour costs (Van Schalkwyk, 2021:81). Besides relying on tuition fees to support their operations (Singh & Tustin, 2022:44), in some instances, students in PHEIs also receive financial aid from the government.

Relying on one source of income, namely tuition fees, especially from international students, has become more perilous than ever for universities. The new global coronavirus has challenged the way universities are managed. Managing universities using market mechanisms has proven ineffective due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The coronavirus's knock-on effect has hit universities and colleges that rely heavily on tuition fees. The pandemic presented a financial threat and decreased revenue, particularly at universities with a high proportion of international students (Blankenberger & Williams, 2020: 409). For instance, in the UK alone, 56 per cent of students in the academic year 2018/2019 were new-entrant international students. In Australia, Canada and America, international students generally comprise 10-20 per cent of the student population (Pan, 2021:326). Private institutions with limited or no government support were hardest hit, some even at the risk of collapse. Decreasing enrolment numbers and revenue drops threaten universities' survival (Pan, 2021:326).

Since individuals establish PHEIs, their degree of autonomy is higher than that of their public counterparts. It has been established that PHEIs are less prone to many interruptions, such as staff or student strikes, and, as such, have stable academic calendars (Kajawo, 2020:387). They are more student-friendly (Van Schalkwyk et al., 2021:83), culturally diverse, and offer extracurricular activities and programmes for students (Kajawo, 2020:389). Since students' enrollment numbers in PHEIs are lower than in public institutions, it is often possible to create student-lecturer interaction through

various programmes, enabling students to build a strong rapport with both academic and non-academic staff. Generally, there is a greater sense of community among the stakeholders in PHEIs than in public institutions (Garwe, 2016:234). This can be attributed to the fact that PHEIs are easier to manage, as their student populations are smaller than those of public institutions (Kajawo, 2020:388).

The significance and influence of PHE on the HE sector cannot be overlooked. They have transformed the higher education landscape. In strengthening higher education, PHE has developed demand-driven programmes for the labour market (Kajawo, 2020:390). They are more innovative in both their pedagogical methods and the content of their programmes (Kajawo, 2020:388). Furthermore, they admit students of all types, that is, full-time, working students, entrepreneurs, vocational students and women entering the labour market after motherhood, thereby responding better to the needs of the diverse student population (Ramlachan, 2019:8).

Being privately owned, the uniqueness of PHEIs extends to various dimensions, such as organisational flexibility, widening access to higher education, and providing flexible and demand-driven programmes (Kajawo, 2020: 387). PHE caters for the student population which could otherwise not be enrolled in public institutions (Kajawo, 2019:49). They appeal more to non-traditional students (Qureshi & Khajawa, 2021:171) as they offer flexible and stable academic schedules (Kajawo, 2019:50). By enabling a broader range of individuals to pursue higher education, PHEIs remain a viable alternative to public institutions (Qureshi & Khajawa, 2021:171). However, the danger of absorbing a large student population in PHEIs may inadvertently perpetuate insufficient academic resources and student support (Rehman et al., 2019:3), as they often operate with limited financial assistance from governments (Tamrat & Teffera, 2020:687). This can also make PHE vulnerable to economic fluctuations due to their dependence on student enrolment revenue, given inadequate student funding (Rehman et al., 2019:3).

Another unique characteristic of PHEIs is their flexibility in administration and management, enabling them to adapt to organisational changes and innovations (Suleiman et al., 2017). This flexibility allows them to introduce innovative learning options and new curricula and programmes that are more client-oriented (Nukunah et al., 2019:289). This agility in implementing strategic decisions further allows PHEIs to diversify into niche programmes that address market needs, thereby not only creating a competitive advantage for themselves (Nukunah et al., 2019:289) but also improving student experiences (Qureshi & Khawaja, 2021:171). However, organisational flexibility may result in trade-offs with academic standards. To meet the market-demanded needs of programmes, PHEIs often employ part-time lecturers, who are frequently without academic credentials (Tamrat & Teffera, 2020: 685). This, unfortunately, results in poor academic quality, culminating in accreditation and monitoring

issues between higher education regulators and PHEIs (Kajawo, 2019:50), as noted by Nukunah et al. (2019:289).

Irrespective of their status, accreditation bodies in their countries regulate their operations. Education regulators must protect consumers as well as other education stakeholders to ensure quality education. Although private institutions operate in a strict external environment, it is beneficial for them to adhere to these conditions to provide quality education (Singh & Tustin, 2022:45). If this were not the case, it might have resulted in the ineffective implementation of curricula in private institutions. This would have had implications for the quality of education delivery in countries (Rudhumbu & Du Plessis, 2020).

Regulating PHEIs is necessary to ensure that they produce quality services. Rudhumbu and Du Plessis (2020) suggest that the issue of quality in private institutions will be assured when these institutions comply with the requirements of regulators. However, PHEIs appear to be burdened with excessive regulatory requirements from both higher education councils and qualification authorities. Stander and Herman (2017: 212) note that compliance costs are very high, making it difficult for small institutions to remain viable. Furthermore, registering and getting programmes accredited is long and cumbersome (Stander & Herman, 2017:208). The authors further explain that if PHEIs cannot get their programmes certified on time, they are not allowed to market or recruit students into these programmes. As a result, they lose income due to this overstretched accreditation process (Stander & Herman, 2017:212).

To protect the public against dubious PHE providers, there is a need for government HE stakeholders to regulate and oversee the PHE sector. In doing so, regulators must be careful not to treat and evaluate all PHEIs in a similar manner (Rudhumbu & Du Plessis, 2020). While regulating, they must not make the process more difficult or penalise PHEIs that are trying to operate legally and legitimately. However, for many of the PHEIs, this process has become costly, complex and time-consuming. They feel victimised by the whole process. Often, they think that the regulators are more lenient with public HE providers and that the PHE industry is over-regulated (Stander & Herman, 2017:220).

Institutions of higher learning must ensure that students are equipped with the right skills, knowledge and graduate attributes to become employable. University education and experiences are crucial for transforming students' skills to contribute to the economy and improve their social status. Nukunah et al. (2019:288) believe that the registration and regulation of PHE is necessary to ensure delivery of quality qualifications. Although PHE has made access to higher education possible, scepticism still prevails, particularly about the standard of educational programmes and the cost charged to students

(Ramlachan, 2019:2). Thus, regulations and accreditations by relevant authorities, although considered onerous, are necessary to ensure quality systems for private institutions (Ramlachan, 2019:6) and to mitigate the many challenges faced by these institutions.

2.2.3 Challenges facing PHEIs

PHEIs face several unique challenges that have tarnished their image and led to a negative reputation in society (Lilemba, 2022). Among those investigated, the toughest challenge facing PHE providers is providing and maintaining quality as required by the regulatory agencies (Nukunah et al., 2019:289). Adverse reports and issues concerning the quality of education they offer are prevalent. For instance, many have complained about their substandard educational services, registration of unqualified students and inadequate physical infrastructure (Kajawo, 2020:384). Similarly, Ramlachan (2019:4) reiterates that conflict between the State and PHE providers about the quality of their qualifications is one of the challenges faced by PHEIs. The author further states that PHEIs believe that state compliance affects institutional autonomy. Rudhumbu and Du Plessis (2020) concur with Ramlachan (2019) that PHEIs operate in a highly structured and externally focused environment.

Generally, PHEIs suffer from poor infrastructure, poorly qualified academic personnel and limited study programmes (Kajawo, 2020:384). Even though they serve as an immediate safety net in addressing the growing demand for higher education (Qureshi & Khawaja, 2021, p. 178), PHEIs are still perceived as offering inferior higher education compared to their public counterparts. Even when a few PHE providers hire the best academic staff and maintain state-of-the-art infrastructure, a strong perception persists in the country that public institutions are academically superior to private institutions (Osman & Saputra, 2019:145). This prevalent attitude may have originated from the rigorous student admission process in public institutions, prompting most students to seek admission into PHEIs (Singh & Tustin, 2022:44). As a result, only the most academically accomplished students make their way into public universities. Commonly, PHEIs admit students with lower points or those who could not gain admission to public institutions due to stiff entry competition (Kajawo, 2020: 388), and these continue to affect the image of private institutions.

Rehman et al. (2019:3) further highlight the negative context within which PHEIs operate in South Africa. They face challenges such as academics without doctoral qualifications, poor infrastructure, insufficient resources for academic development and student support, and inadequate funding. Furthermore, Kajawo (2019:56) points out the challenges hindering the successful provision of PHE in Malawi. These include insufficient financing, unqualified teaching staff and poor remuneration.

Operating in this kind of environment affects the delivery of quality education, hence Kajawo (2019:48) calls for governments to strengthen their monitoring and evaluation efforts in PHEIs.

Besides issues of quality education discussed, private providers are confronted with limited financial resources. Since they typically rely on private funding and tuition fees, this funding formula is unstable and subject to student enrolment and economic conditions (Tamrat & Teferra, 2020:685). Inadequate financial constraints often result in increased workloads for academic staff in PHEIs, leading to decreased performance (Miller, 2019:634). This challenge is further compounded by PHEIs' inability to offer competitive remuneration, which, in turn, hampers their ability to attract and retain experienced and high-quality academic staff (Tamrat & Teferra, 2020:685). Consequently, these financial constraints necessitate that PHEIs adopt innovative HRM strategies, partner with industry, and seek alternative funding sources to enhance staff support (Al-Twal, 2022:2). Moreover, exploring cost-effective innovations, such as leveraging online teaching and learning platforms, can supplement limited resources (Fumasoli & Rossi, 2021:206).

Financial constraints also contribute to the inability to recruit and retain talented academic staff in PHEIs. They face difficulty in obtaining and retaining talented faculty (Tamrat & Teferra, 2020:685) who are increasingly attracted to better remuneration offered by public institutions or the private sector. This is further compounded by various factors, including a lack of staff vacancy advertisements, induction policies, a vague appraisal system, low salary packages and limited freedom for academic managers (Khan et al., 2018:108). Staffed by unqualified academic staff, most private institutions tend to hire part-time academic staff from public institutions, a trend known as moonlighting, where academic staff from public universities work on part-time contracts with private universities, while maintaining their full-time employment in public universities (Teferra & Altbach, 2004:36). PHEIs must, therefore, differentiate themselves by offering unique employee value propositions, such as flexible work arrangements, supportive work environments, and opportunities for innovation (Nukunah et al., 2019:291). However, findings from a study by Ashraf (2019:150) suggest that many PHEIs struggle to create attractive employment packages due to budgetary constraints, administrative challenges and unfavourable academic working conditions.

Due to the lack of conducive working conditions for academics in private universities, there is a high turnover rate among faculty members (Ashraf, 2019). The departure of their best scholars can have grave, immediate, and future consequences for capacity building issues (Teferra & Altbach, 2004:41) and negatively impact the quality of education (World Bank, 2019). Unfortunately, most PHEIs still struggle to overcome some of the challenges that hinder their mission of providing quality higher education (Nukunah et al., 2019: 289), which negatively impacts their reputation.

Many factors hinder PHEIs' mission for excellence, including a lack of professional development opportunities and career advancement (Naeem et al., 2019:500). Academic staff in PHEIs often indicate inadequate resources for publication, research and conference participation (Rudhumbu & Du Plessis), which are critical to career progression. PHEIs must, therefore, intensify their investment in professional development programmes to meet the needs of both the institution and individuals. As noted by Jaskiene and Buciuniene (2021:159), providing research grants, sabbaticals, and mentorship programmes can enhance retention and job performance among academic staff. Furthermore, investing in professional development for academic staff leads to increased research output, which, in turn, enhances institutions' reputation and image (Al-Twal, 2020: 2).

The image of academic institutions is vital because it determines their economic gains and sustainability (Osman & Saputra, 2019:146). More specifically, the regular call for PHEIs to improve their image is widely acknowledged as necessary to build a strong bond between institutions and their students (Kaushal et al., 2021). Students are sensitive to an institution's reputation; hence, they research the institution before enrolling. Attracting students in a competitive HE education sector requires PHEIs management to enhance their reputation and image to improve student loyalty (Rosoolimanesh et al., 2021:13). It is for this reason that private higher educators should strive to enhance institutional factors such as infrastructure and poor educational services as these have a bearing on students' choice of enrolment (Kajawo, 2019:55). Nukunah et al. (2019:289) established that poor quality and high costs contribute to low demand among prospective students. To remain relevant, PHEIs must evolve and mitigate the challenges they face as these can significantly impact their reputation.

The challenges facing PHEIs can be mitigated by being more client-oriented, flexible and supportive than their counterparts (Nukunah et al., 2019:291). PHE providers can leverage these as a competitive advantage strategy. Nukunah et al. (2019:289) reiterate that potential competitive advantage factors held by PHEIs include high student satisfaction, small classes with more lecturer-student interactions, a higher level of student support and flexible learning opportunities. PHEIs are renowned for diversifying into various programme offerings, having business-oriented operational structures, and being agile at making and implementing strategic decisions (Nukunah et al., 2019:289). All these attributes can be leveraged further to mitigate the challenges facing PHEIs. Transitioning from the discussion on the challenges of PHEIs, it is essential to explore the Namibian PHE landscape. It is necessary to examine this landscape because it provides valuable insights into the context in which the study was conducted.

2.3 Namibia PHE landscape

The development of PHE in Namibia cannot be framed separately from the context and conditions of higher education, which were prevalent in the country before independence (Coombe, 1993:61). Thus, providing the historical development and the status of PHEIs in Namibia is essential to gain a holistic picture of the evolution of the country's educational landscape. By tracing the historical trajectory, the subsection below unpacks the motivations and roots that paved the way for the establishment of PHEIs in the country.

2.3.1 Historical development of PHEIs in Namibia

Namibia's pre-independence (1990) higher education system comprised one Academy of Tertiary Education in Windhoek, the UNAM, the Technikon and the College for Out-of-School Training. After some diagnostic and exploratory analysis of educational needs in post-independent Namibia, the academy was dissolved, leaving only Namibia's national university and the Polytechnic. All the other HEIs were to be associated with the university or the polytechnic, at least, for the foreseeable future (Coombe, 1993:65).

The case of Namibia's PHEIs can be traced back to its national independence. In recognition of the importance of education as a driving force for sustainable economic development, Article 20(4) of the Namibian Constitution protects the rights of private educators stating: "all persons have the right to establish and maintain institutions of tertiary education subject to being registered under the law, upholding acceptable standards of education and maintaining non-discriminatory admission of students and staffing practices" (Namibia, 1990:12).

Soon after independence in 1991, a Commission on HE was appointed to advise the government on the country's needs, demands and scope. The Commission was tasked with guiding the structure and funding of higher education and determining its relationship with the government. In the absence of a national system for HE in Namibia at that time, the Commission set a new vision and mechanism for implementing one. Immediate measures were to be taken to accelerate access to higher education for young and adult citizens disadvantaged by the discriminatory and exclusion-driven apartheid system (Coombe, 1993:64).

Despite the many recommendations, the Commission reiterated that the government cannot and should not be the only provider of higher education and training. Thus, it was decided that the interests of all partners in the provision of higher education and training should be represented in the new national system of higher education. A dynamic partnership between many small and large higher education providers should be the vision of the new national system of higher education.

Interestingly, the Commission predicted the growth of PHEIs and their public service provision in areas where the government or employers had hitherto been unable to offer such services. As a result, the Commission recommended that recognition and accreditation procedures of PHEIs should be conveyed within the framework of higher education policy and regulation (Coombe, 1993).

Currently, according to the Higher Education Act (No. 26 of 2003), Namibian HEIs mean any institution that provides HE and which is established by or under any law or registered as a PHEI under the Act. The right to establish and maintain a PHEI is subject to legal constraints, but marks crucial aspects of the Namibian higher education landscape. This approach reflects the government's commitment to expanding opportunities in higher education. By allowing private individuals to register PHEIs, the Namibian government acknowledges expansion of the overall educational framework. Therefore, this approach is commendable as it demonstrates the government's effort to mitigate critical skills shortages, alleviate unemployment and solve inequality (Nukunah et al., 2019:290).

The requirement to register a PHEI with the Ministry of Education, overseen by the Executive Director for NCHE (Higher Education Act, 2003), aims to strike a balance between autonomy and accountability. This aims to reconcile the pursuit of educational autonomy with the imperative to maintain academic standards, safeguarding the interests of all stakeholders and the country's academic standing. The rigorous declarations by NCHE for the establishment and registration of PHEIs in the country establish a robust framework that underscores the responsibilities and obligations of these institutions, serving as a foundation for ensuring accountability and transparency. By requiring PHEIs to commit to non-discriminatory practices in student admission and staff recruitment, the government demonstrated its commitment to inclusivity and equality. Furthermore, to maintain academic standards and foster a conducive learning environment, PHEIs must seek accreditation from the NCHE (Namibia: Ministry of Education, 2009:3).

To prevent compromised education quality, PHEIs are discouraged from registering a student population that exceeds their capacity. This pragmatic approach by the higher education regulator underscores the significance of institutional efficiency and learner success. Furthermore, the declarations require PHEIs to maintain comprehensive student records, signifying the importance of tracking learning outcomes (Namibia: Ministry of Education, 2009:3). The NCHE's commitment to monitoring and evaluating PHEIs signifies its dedication to quality assurance.

It is the primary responsibility of PHEIs to establish and implement their own policies and procedures regarding the quality and standards of their programmes and qualifications (NCHE, n.d.). Once registered, the PHEI is granted legal authority to offer higher education programmes. In addition,

registration status enables the institution to comply continuously with the requirements of the Act and the regulations for registration of PHEIs (2003).

The increase from nine PHEIs in 2014 to fourteen in 2020 (NCHE, 2020) indicates that the PHE sector in Namibia has taken an active role in improving the HE level for all. Student numbers have grown from 14,002 in 2016 to 19,304 in 2020, a growth rate of 38% (NCHE, 2020: ix). Despite an increase in the number of PHEIs, most students are still at public institutions. Although there are only two public HEIs in the country, their enrolment rate is considerably higher than the PHE enrolments, with the public group representing 71% of the total higher education enrolments (NCHE, 2020:4), including NAMCOL because it also offers higher education programmes.

The entrance of PHE providers into the sector has not only helped minimise the pressure on higher education demand, but also created employment for many, complementing government efforts of skills enhancement, job creation, and socio-economic development of the nation (Jellenz et al., 2020:1). In 2020, employment distribution in Namibian HEIs showed that 81% (4759) staff members were in public institutions, whereas 19% (1142) were in PHEIs (NCHE, 2020:28), indicating PHEIs involvement in solving the challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality.

It is worth highlighting the active role of PHEIs in providing employment opportunities by underscoring the substantial contributions of some of the leading private institutions outlined in Table 2.1. Additionally, although the study targets academic staff, the table shows a diversified workforce, consisting of academic staff, academic support staff, and skilled and unskilled administrative staff. While this breakdown provides a critical understanding of the operational dynamics and strategic focus of PHEIs, it equally offers a comprehensive perspective on how HRM practices can be tailored to meet the needs of diverse groups within these institutions. It further provides the contextual HR environment in which academic staff operate, highlighting its potential impact on academic staff performance. The table further highlights the ratio of academic staff to other staff categories, offering insights into PHEIs' prioritisation of academics versus non-academic staff.

Table 2.1: Staff complement at leading PHEIs in Namibia

Institution	Type of staff				
	Academic	*Academic support staff*	*Skilled Admin*	*Unskilled Admin*	*Total*
IUM	133	82	67	23	305
IOL	119	30	15	-	164

Triumphant	64	4	24	19	111
Monitronics	25	2	23	2	52
Lingua	20	24	20	18	82
Welwitchia	164	6	38	38	246
Total	**525**	**148**	**187**	**100**	**960**

Source: NCHE (2021:43)

Academic staff are the primary educators and researchers, including lecturers, professors and other teaching staff. Their proportion relative to other categories of staff demonstrates PHEIs' commitment to delivering quality academic standards. Often, HRM practices for this category focus on competitive hiring processes, professional development opportunities and rewards practices designed to attract and maintain high-quality academic staff.

Academic support staff are an essential supporting workforce in maintaining educational activities and include faculty officers, library staff, lab technicians, IT support staff, etc. For this category, HRM practices may include specialised training to ensure well-equipped staff to support the core functions of PHEIs. Skilled administrative staff are trained staff with no instructional responsibilities and include professional, technical staff, computer operators and clerical staff. They work as supporting departments such as the Vice-Chancellor's Office, HR, IT or Finance, et cetera. Unskilled administrative staff include manual workers such as cleaners, drivers, security guards, and gardeners (NCHE, 2020:28).

This mixture of staff complement is a cornerstone for academic excellence and institutional reputation. By employing a diverse staff, as is the norm in HEIs, these institutions contribute to the socio-economic development of Namibia (Jellenz et al., 2020:4). Academic staff are the largest, followed by support staff and sometimes by skilled administrative staff, which not only sheds light on operational priorities but also highlights diverse HRM practices within PHEIs. It, therefore, calls for the implementation of effective HRM practices to achieve institutional performance and academic quality in this mixed segmentation.

2.3.2 Current state of PHE in Namibia

The development of higher education in Namibia, like all other sectors, was significantly influenced by the apartheid system. Thus, a major transformation was needed to ensure that every Namibian has equal access to higher education. The changes began with the appointment of the Presidential Commission on Higher Education of 1991 (Hangula et al., 2017:1). The Commission's main aim was

to design a policy that would revolutionise the Namibian higher education sector. The nation was in a hurry to overcome its apartheid legacy of skewed education and development.

As a result, the Commission advanced the creation of UNAM in 1992 and the Polytechnic of Namibia in 1994, now NUST, as state-funded public HEIs (Hangula et al., 2017:1). This transformation signalled that the government recognised the importance of the HE system to produce human resources with the necessary knowledge and skills needed for the promotion of social and economic progress of the country (Hangula et al., 2017:2).

Higher education in Namibia is young and relatively new (Matengu et al., 2014:83). In 2023, the HE environment in Namibia comprised two public universities, namely, the University of Namibia (UNAM) and Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), while PHEIs constituted four private universities, namely: International University of Management (IUM), Welwitchia Health Training Centre, Botho University of Namibia, and Limkokwing University of Creative Technology. Ten accredited private institutions (NCHE, n.d.) complement them. Then, there is the Namibia College of Open Learning (NAMCOL), which the government established to provide learning opportunities for adults and out-of-school youth. Although NAMCOL is not classified as an HEI, it offers HE programmes.

PHE in Namibia is not solely limited to the universities mentioned in the preceding paragraph, but encompasses other types of HEIs in the country, such as Lingua, Triumphant and Monotronic, among others (NCHE, 2020:1). They offer a range of courses for school leavers, including vocational training. The NTA supports several of these institutions regarding their vocational training. Besides their headquarters in Windhoek, these HEIs have branches in other parts of the country.

The first private university in Namibia, IUM, was established in 2017 (International University of Management, 2018). Before then, several private institutions not classified as HEIs were registered. According to the Higher Education Act No. 26 of 2003, HE means all learning programmes offered by HEIs leading to qualifications equivalent to the NQF level 5 and higher (Namibia, 2018: v). This effectively means HE does not include vocational schools, as well as open learning provided by NAMCOL. Instead, they are part of the tertiary education system that offers post-secondary education (Matengu et al., 2014:83).

It is important to note that PHEIs in Namibia are different. Besides all being registered as private providers of higher education (under the regulation for registration of PHEIs), PHEIs are different in terms of their academic activities, infrastructure, and student enrolment. For instance, while four private universities are in the country, their academic work scope differs. On the one hand, IUM, the

first private university in the country, founded by the former Minister of Education, has its academic scope firmly rooted in management sciences and ICT, while Welwitchia Health Training Centre has a special focus on Health, Social and Management Sciences (Welwitchia, n.d.). On the other hand, Botho University, with its headquarters in Botswana, has recently opened an international campus in Namibia with a portfolio of programmes such as Accounting, Business, Computing and Health (Botho University Namibia, n.d.). In addition, a new Malaysian university, Limkokwing, commenced its operations in Namibia in 2021 as a technical and vocational education and training university. This dynamic institute has a mission to change the country's education landscape with its training emphasis on digital mastery and an entrepreneurial approach. The university aims to offer industry-focused skills programmes such as interior design, graphic design, electronic commerce, fashion, retail, digital film, and television, among others (Limkokwing, 2021).

It is important to point out the expansion of student enrolment in PHEIs. Since the student pool and infrastructure is generally good in capital cities, most universities' main campuses are based in Windhoek. Leading private universities such as IUM and Welwitchia have expanded beyond the capital city's boundary by establishing campuses in other parts of the country. For instance, IUM commenced with one student in 1994, compared with an enrolment of more than 13000 students in 2023 (International University of Management, n.d.). Welwitchia, founded in 2013, managed to establish seven campuses countrywide by 2019 (Welwitchia, n.d.).

In recent years, student enrolment expansion in PHEIs is notable, signifying remarkable developments in the Namibian higher education landscape. As students choose to pursue higher education goals, PHEIs successfully attract large number of mature students (Qureshi & Kawaja, 2021:179). Table 2.2 shows student enrolment at some of the leading PHEIs (NCHE, 2020:4) in a descending order from 11 409 to 283, serving as a critical indicator of not only institutional growth, but potentially the scope of HRM practices in these institutions. Institutions with higher enrolments are likely to face HRM challenges due to their size. Managing a large student enrolment necessitates a sizable academic staff which, in turn, requires effective HRM practices to enhance academic staff job performance. This also implies that the institution needs structured HRM practices to manage the staff effectively, as opposed to smaller institutions, which might adopt more flexible and personalised HRM practices. Larger institutions may offer a wider range of professional development opportunities to their staff due to their greater resources. Conversely, smaller institutions might offer more personalised development opportunities, directly addressing the individual needs of staff.

Table 2.2: Student enrolment at leading PHEIs in Namibia, 2021

Institution Name	Student enrolment
IUM	11,409
IOL	3,815
Welwitchia	2,552
Triumphat	1,245
Lingua	684
Monitronic	283

Source: NCHE (2021:10)

Table 2.2 further highlights the growth of PHEIs in Namibia, gauging the competitive landscape within which PHEIs operate. As they compete to attract students, so is the need to have experienced academic staff to maintain high-quality education, consequently necessitating the need for effective HRM practices in managing staff performance. Lastly, the enrolment figures have impact on academic workload, directly influencing resource allocation and academics' working conditions.

The emergence of PHE as a business-like enterprise and its client-oriented nature is a growing phenomenon (Nukunah et al., 2019:289) and Namibia is no exception. This is reflected in substantial growth in student enrolment, with IUM, IOL and Welwitschia continuing to enrol most of the students in PHEIs (Table 2.2). This growing phenomenon may be attributed to factors such as an upsurge in demand for HE, the declining capacity of public institutions (Qureshi & Khawaja, 2021), the need for a highly skilled workforce and the beginning of partnership-interest from foreign providers (Teferra & Altbach, 2004).

Although the government of Namibia remains the biggest funder of public higher education in terms of infrastructure, development and operational costs (Hangula et al., 2017:1), it does not fund PHEIs operations. Overall, PHEIs remain heavily dependent on tuition fees as a primary source of revenue. As a result, the cost of education in this sector may be higher than that of its counterparts. However,

it is reassuring that the government subsidises PHEIs in terms of student fees and tuition (Hangula et al., 2017:2). To ensure dedicated, prioritised, and systematic funding for students, a funding scheme, NSFAF, is available to both public and private aspiring students (Hangula et al., 2017:2). Although tarnished by maladministration and infighting between board members and executives, NSFAF administers most student loans. However, the challenge of recovering loans from funded students continues to trouble it.

With less dependence on public funds, Namibian PHEIs continue to assist the government in providing HE to the masses. Tuition fees or sponsors from organisations remain the primary sources of financing their operations and activities (Tamrat & Teferra, 2020:681). Mugabi (2009), cited in Kajawo (2020:388), comments on African PHEIs' ability to provide higher education with no or less public funding. Establishing and maintaining a university is a costly exercise. It requires enough resources to build adequate facilities and acquire sufficient qualified personnel (Kajawo, 2019:57).

Government support for the growth of PHE in the country is notable with the state subsidising registration and tuition fees even for students studying at PHEIs (Sazita et al., 2018:3). Given the financial limitation of the masses and with finance being the primary factor to entering higher education (Singh & Tustin, 2022), it is justifiable for the government to support PHEIs to avoid creating differential access to higher education.

Tamrat and Teferra (2020:684) caution that there are risks associated with over-reliance on tuition fees and minimal government support. Financial limitations may affect the provision of quality education to students (Kajawo, 2019:53). When PHEIs face financial challenges, quality education may be compromised, reflected in PHEIs' inability to procure resources, fund educational activities (Kajawo, 2019:55) and failure to execute their strategic and operational goals (Tamrat & Teferra, 2020:685). Sazita et al. (2018:1), writing in the context of Namibia, observes that the private sector is reluctant to fund students, leaving the government to take the lead in this task. With little to no financial support from the government, PHEIs are compelled to employ innovative strategies to remain competitive (Van Schalkwyk, 2021:83), which in turn impacts their decision-making processes and governance structures.

The current governance structure in PHEIs reflects the Governing Council as the highest decision-making body with the ultimate authority and power for strategic vision, policy formulation and performance monitoring of institutions (Garwe & Tirivanhu-Gwatidzo, 2016:147). While governing councils of public HEIs experience challenges of rubberstamping institutional management's decisions and succumbing to directives from the parent Ministry, PHEIs' councils are more autonomous in making decisions that benefit institutions (Garwe & Tirivanhu-Gwatidzo, 2016). The

owners or Boards of Trustees appoint Council members in PHEIs, unlike in public HEIs, where the appointing body is primarily composed of government-appointed members. The Council of PHEIs comprises both internal and external members. External members are sourced from relevant stakeholders, such as academia, government, the private sector, or professional bodies, while internal members usually comprise a Vice-Chancellor, a Senate, and a student representative. Generally, the length of tenure for these members is three years, although they can be re-elected if the appointing authority deems it fit (Garwe & Tirivanhu-Gwatidzo, 2016:147)

While the chancellor, a symbolic position in public HEIs is appointed by the president/government (Teferra & Altbach, 2004:29) or it might be the president himself, in PHEIs, the appointment is left in the hands of the owners/or the Board of Trustees. The chain of administrative power starts with the Vice-Chancellor (Teferra & Altbach, 2004:30), then moves to Pro/Deputy Vice-Chancellors and then Directors of various administrative units. While the locus of authority for financial and business models is in the hands of the Governing Council, several other academic governing bodies are mainly tasked with developing academic policies and delivering academic programmes.

The mandatory quality assurance structure of the higher education regulators elevates the importance of good governance in aiding PHEIs to improve their quality and position themselves in the current higher education context in Namibia. Good governance enables institutions to be accountable and efficient. Governance is also about how tertiary institutions relate to each other, the government and industries in the country (Sazita et al., 2018:5). While government involvement in the governance of public HEIs is the norm (Teferra & Altbach, 2004), self-governance is the distinctive nature of PHEIs. Through self-governance, PHEIs have embraced autonomy and capitalised on it as a tool to create a positive brand image for themselves. For instance, to improve their reputation in the market, PHEIs in Namibia have formed the Association for Private Higher Education Institutions in Namibia (APHEIN). The association serves as a mechanism to discuss and resolve issues pertaining to HE, while providing a platform for PHEIs to share good practices and engage the government as one voice (APHEIN, 2019). By working together under the association, PHEIs can improve the quality of the higher education sector in Namibia.

There has been a rapid growth of the Namibian higher education sector. More PHEIs than public higher universities have been established in the last few years. Indeed, the upsurge of PHEIs is one of the remarkable developments in the Namibian higher education sector, which signals the importance of higher education in providing a competitive advantage for the country. The sector drives sustainable economic growth and is highly influential regarding a nation's human capital and economic performance (Jellenz et al., 2020:4). Thus, PHEIs significantly impact economic development in Namibia.

2.4 Summary

This chapter explored the dynamic landscape of PHE. It commenced by highlighting the overarching significance of PHE, tracing its remarkable growth and highlighting its essential role in shaping the higher education landscape. The distinct characteristics that set PHEIs apart from their public counterparts were discussed alongside the complex challenges they encounter.

In subsequent sections, the focus narrowed to the Namibian PHE context, where the historical development of PHEIs was scrutinised. Namibian higher education has evolved from its apartheid legacy to one that offers equal and inclusive opportunities for higher education. This transformation was needed to ensure every Namibian had equal access to higher education. Therefore, a comprehensive overview of the PHE in the country, focusing on its growth, expansion and governance, is provided. The present state of Namibia's PHEIs has been explained, emphasising their diverse offerings, institutional uniqueness and contributions to the country's development. While the expansion of PHE has widened access to higher education, many still believe they occupy a low hierarchy level in the higher education landscape. Another school of thought suggests that entrepreneurs have identified a business opportunity in this market segment and, rather than prioritising academic quality, they focus more on business-driven initiatives. Despite this, the significance of PHEIs in improving the country's economic prosperity is imminent.

The need for this research study focusing on PHEIs is a perfect example of the ongoing transformation process in Namibia's higher education sector, which started from humble beginnings and has experienced rapid growth. However, PHEIs have experienced several challenges, such as the lack of a recruitment system, staff relevant work experience, performance management, and staff development (Kaimu, 2005). Nevertheless, the establishment of PHEIs is more visible than before. At the same time, state control of higher education in the form of institutions tasked with steering higher education has remained significant. Establishing institutions such as NQA and NCHE make it possible for the state to exercise control over HEIs. This approach aims to elevate HEIs, addressing two key challenges: transforming Namibia into a knowledge-based economy and improving the quality of life to match the standard of living in first-world countries (Matengu et al., 2014:83).

This chapter provides an informative assessment of both global and Namibian PHEIs, encompassing their historical development, growth, and current state. It focuses on highlighting their distinctive characteristics, challenges and contributions to the higher education sector. This contextual review is necessary to understand how HRM practices are uniquely implemented within these settings. The next chapter examines HRM practices in detail and investigates their impact on academic staff performance.

CHAPTER THREE

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND ACADEMIC STAFF PERFORMANCE

3.1 Introduction

HRM has emerged as a critical component of organisational success (Elrehail et al., 2020:126), encompassing a wide range of practices and approaches that focus on effectively managing the workforce. This chapter explores HRM, beginning with its foundation. At the onset, fundamental definitions and core concepts underpinning HRM are explained with a particular focus on the private higher education landscape. Since what works in one organisation may not work in another, different organisations adopt various approaches to managing their workforce. Three distinct HRM approaches are explored: universalistic, contingency and configurational (Boselie et al., 2021:484).

Regardless of whether an organisation adopts a contingency, universalistic or configuration approach to HRM, AMO is a common framework that bridges the different HRM approaches (Boselie et al., 2021:485). It serves as a holistic lens through which to view the management of employees' performance in organisations (Alba et al., 2021:125). It is a guiding framework that shapes HRM practices, enabling organisations to design and implement practices that optimise employees' abilities, motivation and opportunities to enhance job performance (Marin-Garcia & Tomas, 2016:1043). By implementing effective HRM practices, rooted in a strong theoretical foundation, PHEIs can maximise academic staff potential and achieve greater performance. Based on this, this chapter also explores HRM practices adopted in PHE to attract, develop and retain the academic workforce.

While exploring HRM practices in PHE, this chapter identifies specific practices pertinent to the context of PHEIs, clearly outlining how they influence the academic scope of work. As the chapter explores these key aspects, it becomes evident that the practices are closely tied to the AMO framework. Consequently, a discussion on the alignment between HRM practices and the AMO framework is provided. Finally, in organising the constructs and variables that guide the study through the conceptual framework, this chapter not only provides the relationship among these concepts but also gives a roadmap for what to expect in the next chapter on research methodology.

3.2 Human resource management foundation

HRM is an essential organisational function, aiming to shape the success and effectiveness of any organisation (Kerdpitak & Jermsittiparsert, 2020:444; Obeidat et al., 2019:328), including academic institutions. Organisations take a strategic approach to managing and optimising their workforce to achieve organisational objectives (Alfawaire & Atan, 2021:3). HRM embraces a wide range of activities aimed at attracting, developing and retaining employees, while ensuring compliance with relevant laws and regulations (Obeidat et al., 2019:327).

Oloruntoyin et al. (2020:3) define HRM as the ultimate activities by which organisations procure, develop, and maintain human resources to enable them to do their job effectively and efficiently, thereby meeting organisational targets. These authors acknowledge the key elements of workforce recruitment, training, development, motivation and evaluation to perform tasks required to reach organisational objectives. In contrast, Radtchenko-Draillard (2021:6) highlights the importance of aligning employees' needs with the organisation's fundamental needs. Both perspectives highlight the importance of HRM in improving work efficiency and performance. While Oloruntoyin et al. (2020) provide a broader definition of HRM that encompasses HRM activities, Radtchenko-Draillard (2021) highlights the essence of balancing employee interests with organisational needs. Van Beurden et al. (2020:4) also introduce the idea that HRM influences psychological contracts, which in turn explicitly affects the employment relationship.

Sweis et al. (2020:3) and Ismail et al. (2019:134) further define HRM as a coherent and strategic approach of managing employees individually and collectively to achieve organisational objectives. This definition highlights the importance of aligning HRM activities with organisational objectives, underscoring the fact that HRM is more than just administrative tasks. To optimise the potential of its employees, an organisation needs to manage and engage its workforce effectively. This sentiment is acknowledged by Meyer and Kruger-Pretorius (2018:10), emphasising the HRM continuum process of nurturing employees throughout the employment lifecycle. These definitions stress the strategic and lifecycle-oriented aspects of HRM, while highlighting the essence of HRM in contributing to organisational success.

As HRM continues to gain popularity in research (Boselie et al., 2021:483), its role in PHE is crucial in building a conducive learning environment and ensuring the overall success of academic institutions. A skilled and diverse workforce is a cornerstone for PHEIs (Mohammadi & Karupiah, 2020:1094). HRM is, therefore, essential in attracting and recruiting faculty to deliver quality education (Joarder et al., 2020:201). It is also through implementing HRM activities such as training and development programmes that faculty are kept up to date with the pedagogies and technological

advancements (Alfagira & Zumrah, 2019:27). When faculty are empowered, they excel in their role (Jaskiene & Buciuniene, 2021:157), thereby creating good student learning experiences.

HRM further establishes organisational processes, such as performance management (Blom et al., 2019:2; Omojola, 2019:4), which hold academic staff accountable for meeting the institution's operational and academic goals. Through this process, performance targets are set, and academic staff are recognised for their exceptional contributions (Omojola, 2019:4). When implemented effectively, performance management can create an engaged academic staff who are likely to display organisational commitment (Aboramadan et al., 2020:158; Kerdipitak & Jermsittiparsert, 2019:444).

While it is important to create an engaged workforce, it is equally essential to create a culture of integrity and academic freedom among faculty and students (Susanj et al., 2020:485). Simultaneously, the HRM framework in PHEIs should play a dual role in creating a learning environment cognisant of ethical values while ensuring that institutions adhere to regulatory compliance (Hossain & Rahman, 2019:826). This creates an academic environment of accountability and integrity, contributing significantly to academic quality and the institution's reputation. Given the importance of creating an ethically responsible academic community within PHEIs, HRM approaches are essential in shaping organisational culture and ensuring institutional compliance. This interrelatedness highlights the significance of HRM approaches in creating an environment characterised by integrity and academic freedom. The following subsection explores various HRM approaches employed to achieve these goals within PHEIs.

3.2.1 HRM approaches and employee performance

As scholars continue to question how HRM impacts performance, three approaches have emerged within HRM (Boselie et al., 2021:484; Oloruntoyin, 2020:3). These approaches, universalistic, contingency and configurational, shape how organisations manage their employees. The universalistic approach assumes a one-size-fits-all approach in HRM (Boselie et al., 2021:484), implying a bundle of best HR practices that can be applied universally by all organisations in all circumstances. To yield organisational performance, organisations must adopt certain practices such as recruitment and selection, training, performance appraisal, rewards and employee involvement (Sweiss et al., 2020:1; Otoo, 2019:957). Referred to as the best practice approach, the universalistic perspective led to conceptualising a set of HRM practices that can be applied across all sectors and countries (Ismail et al., 2019:134). The implication of this in an academic environment is adoption of standardised HRM practices. For instance, academic institutions may implement a generic performance appraisal or workload practice for all academic staff without being cognisant of the

unique characteristics of different academic departments. This may create challenges, given a diverse faculty and unique culture of academic institutions.

The contingency approach postulates that HRM practices are influenced by external and internal organisational contexts and, hence, to be effective, they need to be aligned with the specific organisational and environmental factors (Tumwesigye et al., 2020:542; Gahlawat & Kundu, 2019:485). This supposition implies that the success and failure of applying HRM practices depend on the context in which the organisation operates (Ismail et al., 2019:133). Described as a vertical fit (Oloruntoyin et al., 2019:4), the contingency approach implies that what works effectively in one institution may not work as well in another. The consequence for this approach in academia could mean implementing tailor-made HRM practices based on factors such as the faculty members' career stage, size of the institution and overall institutional strategy. For instance, a research-focussed university may prioritise research-oriented HRM practices compared to a teaching-focussed institution (Alshaikhmubarak et al., 2020).

The configurational approach takes the contingency approach further by emphasising the importance of configuring HR practices holistically and interconnectedly to create synergy. It denounces the "best practice" approach and rather suggests that different sets of HR practices can lead to different outcomes (Boselie et al., 2021:485). This implies that HEIs could identify a combination of HRM practices that work effectively together to achieve specific outcomes. For instance, combining and implementing HRM practices that promote teaching excellence, faculty autonomy or collaborative research to cater for academic institutions' unique characteristics.

Oloruntoyin et al. (2020:4) acknowledge the relevance of all three perspectives in exploring the relationship between HRM practices and organisational performance. In practice, organisations often blend these perspectives, creating a management strategy that best fit own context (Xia et al., 2020:598). In a dynamic academic environment, striving for a balanced approach involving universal standards while allowing flexibility to cater for a unique environment may be the way to go. This means implementing HRM practices that align with the institution's mission and values. Ultimately, successful management of academic staff requires an effective approach that can adapt to changing circumstances (Faeq, 2020:62).

In the realm of HRM research, the implementation of HRM approaches is crucial for effective employee performance. One of the most popular frameworks is AMO, on which HRM approaches or practices are often built (Boselie et al., 2021:485; Al-Tit, 2020:2; Kerdipitak & Jermsittiparsert, 2019:444). The AMO framework proposes that when employees possess the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities, are motivated and empowered, they display higher performance (Nor et al.,

2021:1606; Ismail et al., 2019:137). When examining HRM practices using the AMO theory, various practices such as recruitment, selection, training, and coaching enhance employee abilities (Boselie et al., 2021:485; Maydy & Alhadi, 2021:1757). An organisation can create a motivated workforce through performance appraisal, compensation and promotion opportunities (Boselie et al., 2021:485). The opportunity element of the AMO theory refers to organisational factors and the work environment that can facilitate or restrict job execution (Alba et al., 2021:128). Under the AMO framework, HRM practices can be designed to create synergy and leverage employee performance.

The AMO framework is often utilised to explain the effectiveness of HRM practices (Iftikar et al., 2022:3; Mahdy & Alhadi, 2021:1756; Azungah et al., 2018:957). Boselie et al. (2021:485) emphasise that the AMO framework serves as the theoretical foundation upon which HRM practices are often built. The authors further emphasise that the AMO model may be considered to specify HRM practices. The model explicitly explains the HRM practices that enhance employee performance (Kerdipitak & Jermsittiparsert, 2019:444) through three factors: ability, motivation, and opportunity.

Given the unique characteristics of the PHE environment and its diverse disciplines, departments and faculty profiles, the notion of best-fit proposition is even more relevant for PHEIs (Boselie et al., 2021). This requires contingency and configurational approaches, as suggested by Ismael et al. (2019:133) and Alshaikhmubarak et al. (2020), to tailor HRM practices to fit the environment in which institutions operate. By customising HRM practices and adopting the A, academic institutions can better understand academic staff job performance.

3.3 Ability-Motivation-Opportunity framework

Appelbaum et al. (2000) produced the AMO model, focussing primarily on HRM practices that enhance employee discretionary behaviour. This model originated in industrial and social psychology (Mahdy & Alhadi, 2021:1756) and is intended to observe individual performance through a bundle of HRM practices. The framework is based on the premise that employee performance is enhanced through a bundle of HRM practices which work in concert (Ferrarini & Curzi, 2022). The model's premise is that an employee's capacity to enhance performance is due to possessing the necessary skills, appropriate motivation, and being provided with an opportunity to participate in key organisational initiatives (Fawehinmi et al., 2020:882). The AMO model is often associated with HRM practices that enhance employee behaviour and attitude to accomplish greater job performance (Al-Shahwani, 2020:1828).

The AMO theory posits that effective individual performance is a function of abilities, motivation, and opportunity (Azungah et al., 2018: 696). The first element of the AMO model is ability to perform. For

academic staff to perform effectively, they must possess the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities. Through HRM practices such as effective recruitment strategies (Oloruntoyin et al., 2020:4) and training and development (Otoo, 2019:952), PHEIs can enhance academics' ability to perform. For instance, providing academic staff with research opportunities, writing retreats, and conference attendance can enhance their research skills, thereby improving their ability to perform academic roles (Alshaikhumubarak et al., 2020).

Motivation as a second element of the AMO model refers to employee willingness and effort towards the achievement of work objectives (Alshaikhumubarak et al., 2020). HRM practices such as improved work design (Alshaikhumubarak et al., 2020), rewarding performance, good performance management practices (Al-Tit,2020:4) and fostering a sense of belonging (Ferrarini & Curzi, 2022) are found to be practices that influence employee motivation to perform. Therefore, a collegial work culture can improve academic staff performance.

The third element of the AMO model considers that individual performance also depends on the opportunities offered by their work environment (Alba et al., 2021:125) and the necessary avenues for expression (Nor et al., 2021:1606). For academic staff to perform effectively, universities must provide the required support, resources and a conducive work environment (Adebayo 2022:318). HRM practices such as job rotation, job design, job autonomy and involvement can facilitate opportunities for engagement behaviour (Imdad et al., 2022:658). In an academic context, reducing administrative duties and meetings can create opportunities for academic staff to focus on their core responsibilities of teaching and research, thereby excelling in these roles (Alshaikhumubarak et al., 2020).

The AMO framework proposes a vital component of interrelated HRM practices, suggesting that promoting employee performance is more effectively achieved through well-designed bundles of HRM practices working in concert (Ferrarini & Curzi, 2022). This then becomes the guide for implementing HRM practices. Nor et al. (2021:1603) postulate that if employers understand the AMO model, they will better understand the problems associated with HRM practices, which can assist them in managing their employees' performance effectively. The authors further maintain that the AMO framework is a mediating mechanism through which HRM practices affect performance.

Although elevating employee performance is the main feature in the AMO Theory, the model can also be adapted to any dependent variable under study (Al-Tit, 2020:4). Many researchers use the model in subjects like employee green behaviour (Iftikar et al., 2022; Sabian & Ispas, 2021; Fahehnmi, 2020), HRM practices and proactive behaviour (Al-Tit, 2020), open innovation (Ferrarini & Curzi, 2022), sustainable competitive advantage (Al-Shahwani, 2020) and employee commitment

among Generation Y (Nor et al., 2021). The current study examines the impact of AMO-HRM practices on the job performance of academic staff. Consequently, ability, motivation and opportunity-enhancing practices in private higher education were explored.

Marin-Garcia and Tomas (2016:1043) extended the AMO by incorporating interrelated HRM practices; employees' subjective perceptions of these practices are equally important in the performance process. The authors' insistence that the AMO framework influences employees' performance becomes very complicated because it depends on an employee's personal understanding of these practices. In the integrated approach, the focus on employees' personal factors is also influential when adopting the AMO model (Azungah et al., 2018:696; Marin-Garcia & Tomas, 2016:1041). Hence, a differentiation should be made between actual and expected HRM practices when implementing HRM practices in relation to employee performance (Mahdy & Alhadi, 2021). In addition, the effective design of HRM practices considers line managers' ability to execute these practices, their drive to empower them, and organisational support to make the necessary changes (Al-Shahwani, 2020:1828).

Furthermore, while the AMO framework has gained popularity in the field of HRM, its perspective predominantly focuses on performance as skills and motivation that the individual is required to possess to perform (Nor et al., 2021:1606). It emphasises individual characteristics and their impact on performance outcomes, neglecting the influence of environmental and contextual factors that may also influence employee performance (Alba et al., 2016:1076). Whereas the focus of this model is on measuring and operationalising the construct of ability, motivation and opportunity, it is narrow and ignores the role of contextual barriers in terms of employee management practices (Imdad et al., 2022:649).

Drawing on the AMO framework, this study argues that HRM practices play a crucial role in the job performance of academic staff. Employees react with appropriate behaviour and attitudes depending on what their employers offer in terms of HRM practices (Nor et al., 2021:1603), and this reciprocal act illustrates the fundamental features of the social exchange theory (SET). The theory emphasises efforts to induce reciprocation, suggesting that the employer initiates support initiatives, which may beget an obligation on the employee to reciprocate, resulting in the expected outcomes (Sungu et al., 2019:1415). This view implies that when HRM practices are implemented, they signal the organisation's intentions to its employees. If those HRM practices signal an employer's generosity, then they should induce positive employee reactions (Jahan & Kim, 2021).

A key shortcoming in the A literature is that it generally does not address individual circumstances (Marin-Garcia & Tomas, 2016, p. 1076). This is problematic given that individuals have diverse

motivations, abilities and opportunities, and these interactions can vary based on personal affinities. The effective implementation of HRM practices and their subsequent outcomes can, therefore, be influenced by individual beliefs and personal circumstances (Marin-Garcia & Tomas, 2016: 1076). Moreover, choosing the right bundles of HRM practices is essential to better performance as a similar combination may result in negative outcomes, depending on the context in which the institution operates (Blom et al., 2020:21). Consequently, organisational context is a crucial element to consider when implementing HRM practices (Al-Twal, 2022:1391). Therefore, in PHEIs, the application of HRM needs to be considered in terms of the challenges encountered in this environment.

3.4 HRM practices in PHEIs

This subsection deals with how HRM practices are implemented in PHEIs in managing academic staff to ensure institutions' success. The key HRM practices such as recruitment, performance appraisal, training and compensation are covered (Alfagira & Zumrah, 2019:18; Matimbwa & Ochumbo, 2019:2; Otoo, 2019:950).

Attracting and selecting qualified academic staff is a starting focus of any institution. HRM departments in PHEIs often collaborate with academic departments to execute the recruitment and selection process, attracting candidates with the required qualifications, experience, and skills for various academic positions. Unfortunately, PHEIs underestimate the importance of HRM functions in their establishments and often have ineffective HRM policies and procedures (Ashraf, 2020:410), which may affect their recruitment drives. Often, their recruitment processes are characterised by a lack of transparency, nepotism and ineffective selection methods (Al-Twal, 2022:1393). However, fair and transparent recruitment practices are needed to ensure PHEIs attract, recruit and retain competent staff (Susanj et al., 2020:477). Supporting this sentiment are Taamneh et al. (2021), who emphasise that PHEIs should employ objective and relevant recruitment techniques to prompt a pool of talented staff.

Although effective recruitment practices ensure that new hires blend with the new working environment quickly for job performance enhancement (Naeem et al., 2019:501), PHEIs must implement further performance management practices to manage academic staff. When implemented fairly, these practices are more valued by employees and significantly affect employee retention (Mondejar & Asio, 2022:1634). PHEIs implement performance management practices where line supervisors, academic management and students assess academic staff performance and identify performance-related issues (Elsharkawi & Shehata, 2020:291). However, Taamneh et al. (2021) found that performance management practices are not fully appreciated in private universities, where they are conducted only once a year and managed only by supervisors.

Professional staff are the main differentiating factor for many organisations (Taamneh et al., 2021). Recent studies have shown that the capacity development of academic staff is essential to boost performance (Ssemugenyi et al., 2020:135), which is true for PHEIs. Although training and development initiatives have dominated HR agenda with no tangible results, this raises a question of whether training initiatives really address the training needs of staff (Ssemugenyi et al., 2020:137). The authors further stress that many young private universities offer unfocused and pointless academic training. Tamrat and Teffera (2020:687) emphasise that PHEIs face the risk of faculty turnover due to limited training opportunities.

Poor compensation and rewards/benefits is another HRM risk facing PHEIs (Ashraf, 2020:411). This is not surprising because PHEIs are self-funded and rely on tuition fees to fund their operations (Rehman et al., 2019:4). Despite their efforts to attract many students (Qureshi & Khawaja, 2021:180), the continued poor compensation packages within the PHE sector have been a critical factor in attracting as well as retaining academic staff (Ashraf, 2020:153). Joarder et al. (2020:190) also highlight this challenge, stressing that compensation has a pivotal influence on providing quality education. When faculty members receive non-competitive compensation packages and benefits, not only does it have a significant effect on satisfaction level, but it, in turn, affects their intention to perform (Alfagira & Zumrah, 2019:19).

HRM practices should be implemented in PHEIs to foster employee performance. These practices create a conducive work environment needed to maintain an adequate academic workforce for an institution (Ashraf, 2020:153). To contribute to the institution's academic excellence, HRM practices have become an essential strategy for PHEIs (Naeem et al., 2019:499). These HRM practices are designed to attract, develop and retain faculty members, ultimately contributing to the institution's success (Cherif, 2020:530).

Paradoxically, there have been no meaningful attempts to address the problem of poor HRM practices, particularly among private education providers (Tamrat & Teferra, 2020:687). In facing this challenging scenario, with increasing demands for better management practices, effective HRM plays a crucial role in removing such barriers. After all, focusing on people management is the key determinant of business success (Al-Tawal et al., 2019: 1393). For these reasons, studying and applying HRM in the context of private institutions of higher learning, where most entrepreneurs are now operating, is particularly important (Nukunah et al., 2019:284).

Universities, particularly private ones, face competition for both students and funding (Rehman et al., 2019:2). This competition must be addressed through effective strategies for attracting and retaining employees (Ashraf, 2019:153). Therefore, a focus on implementing effective HRM practices is crucial

for PHEIs to create positive employee attitudes, which in turn result in improved individual and organisational performance (Aydogan & Arslan, 2020). Hence, institutions that adopt programs aimed at remunerating, motivating, and promoting employees are more likely to enhance academic staff performance (Alfagira & Zumrah, 2019:18).

3.4.1 HRM practices and HEIs scope of work

This subsection focuses on HRM practices that specifically influence the academic scope of work. In an academic context, it is essential to understand how HRM practices shape employee performance through academic staff main scope of work, encompassing teaching, research and community service. This section, therefore, provides an understanding of the challenges faced by academic staff in balancing the teaching commitment with research and community service obligations. It explores specific HRM practices that influence academic staff ability to excel in the three academic work domains.

The higher education industry encompasses various activities and purposes, including teaching and learning, research and community engagement (Amini-Philips & Okonmah, 2020:112; Kenny & Fluck, 2019:21). Employees, particularly academic staff, are considered a focal point in fulfilling these activities and purposes (Singh, 2019:622). Generating a high employee performance requires consideration of practices that best leverage these assets (Otoo, 2019:949). Several studies (Sweis et al., 2020; Alfagira & Zumrah, 2019; Gahlwat & Kunda, 2019; Otoo, 2019) support the notion that HRM practices influence employee performance. Consequently, measuring academic staff performance involves evaluating the three domains: teaching and learning, research and publications, and community services (Abdullah et al., 2020:5841; Amini-Philips & Okonmah, 2020:131). As the call to improve quality education is increasing, so is the increasing demand on the work of an academic staff.

Teaching and learning remain one of the core areas of HEIs, hence the increased demand for qualified and competent faculty members (Singh, 2019:622) to deliver its knowledge generation and dissemination mission. Thus, academics must possess competencies that enable them to transfer knowledge to students. As far back as 1983, Bell already proposed that a higher-performance trainer should possess efficiency, effectiveness and excellence in planning, teaching and learning. In the context of this discourse, it is clear that the effective management of academic staff can significantly impact an institution's competitiveness, both as a workplace and a place of study (Maryam et al., 2021: 366). Maryam et al. (2021) further reiterate that competent, qualified, and committed academic staff are crucial to the success of a university. However, despite those embedded attributes in people, appropriate conditions should be created by implementing HRM practices that ensure employee

performance (Tumwesigye et al., 2020:540). According to Oyewole et al. (2019), these HRM practices serve as guiding standards for enhancing teaching and learning.

Omojola (2019:17) singles out the need for stakeholder communication channels to enhance teaching performance. This implies that a positive work environment promotes academic staff productivity. In agreement, Rudhumbu and Du Plessis (2020) highlight the role of institutional environment in curriculum implementation. They argue that staff development, provision of teaching resources, a collaborative culture, and training opportunities equip educators with the necessary skills to implement the curriculum and teach effectively. In contrast, Alfagira and Zumrah (2019), and Jawaad et al. (2019) present a distinct perspective on factors that affect teaching and learning, emphasising the importance of job satisfaction. When academic staff are satisfied with their work, they are committed, creative, and passionate about teaching. It is then critical for HEIs' management to develop HRM practices that can increase academic staff job satisfaction (Khan et al., 2019:91).

Generally, great effort should be put into enhancing the teaching and learning domain in HEIs, but unfortunately, this aspect is usually neglected. Teaching and learning are important areas and should be considered strategic priorities in higher education. Often, the success and reputation of universities are mainly measured in research outputs, and the resultant research performance receives a lot of attention in HEIs (Abdullah et al., 2020:5840). At the practical level of lecture rooms, teachers are the most critical resource for effective teaching delivery (Amini-Phillips, 2020:112). Amini-Phillips strongly believes that upholding and improving higher education standards is only possible when academic staff specifically prepare and produce students for their chosen profession. Tunio et al. (2021:473) stress that poor academic staff leads to a flawed education system. Therefore, HRM practices can be used to create a workforce with the necessary behaviour that can contribute to the success of higher education. Specifically, the provision of instructional materials and a conducive work environment creates a conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning (Oyewole et al., 2019: 55). These efforts require a fundamental transformation in the way academic staff are managed, taking into consideration their individual characteristics (Tunio et al., 2021, p. 476). The authors further postulate that HRM practices, combined with individual traits, can enhance the quality of educational services.

The second core activity in academia is research and publications, which are frequently the focus of HEIs. The output from these activities aims at adding value to institutions and is a primary criterion of success in an academic career (Alshaikhmubarak et al., 2020). The authors state that research quality is a significant focus of performance evaluation of academics in both public and private institutions (Alshaikhmubarak et al., 2020). Despite research outputs being an essential part of faculty appraisal systems, individual research productivity and excellence remain challenging for HEIs. To

enhance research excellence, HEIs must examine how management practices may enhance research productivity and, in turn, further institutional and societal objectives in higher education (Alshaikhmubarak et al., 2020). The authors believe that developing academic performance through enhancing knowledge, skills, and motivation contributes to high job performance. In addition, Jaskiene and Buciuniene (2021:149) call for customised HRM practices for research productivity in HEIs. The authors developed a model of enhancing HRM practices that fosters the necessary knowledge and skills appropriate for research outcomes.

Applying specific HRM practices for research-oriented work is a crucial issue (Jaskiene & Buciuniene, 2021:153), but research attention dedicated to the enhancement of research productivity of academic staff has not attracted much attention to date (Alshaikhmubarak et al., 2020). This is surprising because Abdullah et al. (2020:5840) reveal that research output measures were the most used method of identifying academic performance levels. Analysing the particularities of research performance, Alshaikhmubarak et al. (2020), and Jaskiene and Buciuniene (2021:160) used the AMO approach to identify research-enhancing HRM practices and categorised them into three distinct groups: ability-enhancing, motivation-enhancing and opportunity-enhancing HRM practices. While each group has its associated practices, it is important to note the interplay among these three groups. For instance, motivation-enhancing practices like career advancement and performance appraisal may also influence academic staff abilities. In addition, contextual factors must be considered since what works in one institution may not be that effective in another. Furthermore, differences in research can also be attributed to personal factors such as academic staff research training and skills (Abdullah et al., 2020:5841).

While fully examining the role of HRM practices on academic research performance, Alshaikhmubarak et al. (2020) suggest specific practices that directly influence research outputs and factors necessary to facilitate superior academic research performance. Their study found that only training and recognition practices predict academic research performance. These results reaffirm the view that developing academics' research skills can enhance research performance and training as skill-enhancing practices (Boxall et al., 2011, cited in Alshaikhmubarak et al., 2020), and recognition as motivation-enhancing practices (Jiang, Hu, Liu & Lepak, 2012, cited in Alshaikhmubarak et al., 2020) lead to improved job performance. In Nguyen's (2016) view, institutions should provide adequate ongoing training opportunities to support faculty members' knowledge, skills, and abilities. Specifically, they could conduct research-training workshops focusing on the management of research publications and publication strategies. Concerning recognition as motivation-enhancing practices, HEIs must implement cost-effective formal and informal practices to recognise academic research achievements (Alshaikhmubarak et al., 2020). For Naeem et al. (2019:499), this means

devising reward packages for faculty members to increase knowledge-sharing behaviour. Non-financial options include praising them, mentioning them in bulletins and branding them at academic conferences. Financial recognition involves offering incentives, such as salary bonuses, accelerated promotions, and funding for conference attendance. If HEIs want to respond effectively to the mission of human and social development by increasing research outcomes, then focusing on the implementation of suggested HRM practices is fundamental.

The third core responsibility of academics is contributing to community service. Practitioners and academics alike have come to realise that academic citizenship is crucial in higher education (Kenny & Fluck, 2019:22). For instance, Lew (2009), cited in Aboramadan et al. (2019:155), points out that community service is among the areas that are pivotal for enhancing university rankings. Given its importance, several HEIs have capitalised on HRM to achieve high performance (Aboramadan et al., 2019:155). The quest to improve universities' rankings puts pressure on educational institutions to implement modern HRM practices to boost performance (Jaskiene & Buciuniene, 2021, p. 149).

The effective implementation of certain HRM practices empowers academic staff and enhances their performance (Jouda et al., 2016: 1080). The authors note that through community service, employees enhance the university's positioning by increasing research contributions to the community and preparing their students to become future leaders. Furthermore, Podgorodnichenko et al. (2020) propose that employees are community representatives and contribute to resolving social issues. Hence, organisational treatment of employees should positively influence community and social sustainability. HRM policies and practices, specifically recruitment, training, performance management and reward practices, should be developed to recognise employees' needs and interests and create value beyond organisational boundaries (Podgorodnichenko et al., 2020).

To succeed and survive in academia, HEIs should demand responsiveness from academics. The opportunity to engage in community services must be considered equally important, as it is also a source of excellence in HE. Through HRM practices, HEIs can improve community development initiatives. While analysing the effect of HRM practices on service innovation, Alosani et al. (2020) advise organisations to create a friendly working environment, encourage activities that facilitate the exchange of information, promote ideas, and establish an innovative environment that contributes to the development of an innovative culture. However, Amini-Phillips and Okonmah (2020:131) caution that spending too much time on community engagement can negatively affect academics' productivity.

3.4.2 The ==impact== of HRM practices on academic staff performance

Academic staff play a pivotal role in educational institutions, hence understanding factors that influence their performance is essential in optimising faculty performance. The discussion that follows examines specific HRM practices that influence the job performance of academic staff in higher education settings.

The effectiveness and success of educational organisations depend on the quality and performance of their academic staff (Omojola, 2019:2). This calls for organisations to pay more attention and invest in developing employees' skills at the workplace to stand a better chance of increasing their competitive advantage (Imran & Atiya, 2020:197). Similarly, Lew (2009, cited in Nguyen et al., 2022:43) postulates that HEIs should strive to attract well-trained academics who are enthusiastic and dedicated to carrying out research and training for the benefit and development of humanity. Previous studies have found that the successful and thorough implementation of effective HRM practices empowers employees and improves their performance (Aydogan & Arslan, 2020; Oloruntoyin et al., 2020, p. 9).

Khan et al. (2019:78) established in their study examining the impact of HRM practices on employee performance that academic job performance can be attributed to HRM practices such as effective recruitment and selection procedures, training opportunities, fair performance appraisal, and attractive compensation. However, Oyewole et al. (2019:54) focus on the role of the work environment and instructional facilities in predicting academic staff job performance. While exploring the impact of these constructs on employees' performance at Nigerian universities, the authors found that providing instructional facilities, such as lecture rooms and theatres, for academics to teach effectively enhances academic staff performance.

Alfagira and Zumrah (2019:27) share a similar viewpoint, highlighting the importance of good university facilities, such as library subscriptions to international journals and multimedia classrooms, in positively enhancing academic staff performance. Universities' management should, therefore, pay adequate attention to the academic work environment to improve standards and the quality of their output.

In contrast to the conventional view, Alshaikhmubarak et al. (2020) focus on cultivating a culture of high research performance. By providing research skills training and recognising the achievements of faculty members, HEIs can boost high performance (Alshaikhumubarak et al., 2020). Practically, this means that if universities are to increase their research outputs, they have to provide ongoing developmental opportunities to reinforce academic staff's research skills. This must also be

complemented by various cost-effective incentives to acknowledge academics' research achievements. Interestingly, in the same study, Alshaikhumubarak et al. (2020) found that participation in decision-making harmed research performance, as it meant taking time away from research activities, thus reducing research outputs. This approach also undermines academic freedom, which is why Jaskiene and Buciuniene (2021:155) call for greater autonomy in research activities to enhance research performance from an HRM perspective.

Otoo (2019:951) delves into the realm of HRM, examining specific HRM practices that effectively enhance employee competencies. These practices include implementing targeted recruitment and selection, training, and development initiatives to attract employees with the right competencies. These results align with the findings of Ssemugenyi et al. (2020:141), who emphasise that experiences, competencies, and academic background are key elements in shaping academic performance. Alfagira and Zumrah (2019:27) emphasise that training not only enhances academic staff motivation but also fosters high performance in teaching and publication. Overall, these studies provide insights into the potential benefits of human resource development for enhancing competencies, enabling scholars to perform optimally.

The critical contribution of HRM practices in attracting, motivating and retaining academics for organisational performance has been recognised (Alfagira & Zumrah, 2019:18). One area of interest is the effect of lecturers' remuneration on performance. By offering financial and non-financial rewards (Khan et al., 2019:83) and promotional opportunities (Alfagira & Zumrah, 2019:28), academic institutions create an incentive scheme for faculty performance. These findings have practical implications for the key performance areas of academic staff, namely: teaching, research and publications. This is supported by Szromek and Wolniak (2020:31), who, in their study, identified key issues associated with academic researchers' satisfaction with their scientific work.

Factors that positively influence academic staff performance and satisfaction with their work include feeling appreciated for their work, the prestige and respect associated with the profession, and the time allocated to academic research work, as opposed to administrative work. If their efforts in teaching and research activities are adequately rewarded, this will elevate their motivation levels and inspire others to work hard. Interesting conclusions can be drawn from this study that can help HEIs' top management to enhance academic staff performance.

While it is evident that HRM practices influence academic staff job performance, certain HRM practices harm it. Amini-Phillips and Okonmah (2020:111) point out that excessive teaching and marking workloads, excessive participation in research and community service, and supervision of students' projects are factors hindering academic staff performance. The authors caution that these

factors result in negative consequences, including overworked academics, physical and mental pressure, compromised instructional delivery, a decline in student achievement, and low productivity. Therefore, minimising these factors will enhance academic staff commitment to learning activities and create a challenging and nurturing environment for students. Adebayo (2022:323) highlights the impact of role ambiguity, long working hours, and poor working conditions on the job performance of academic staff. The author proposes a reduction of additional responsibilities to increase job performance. Yousefi and Abdullah (2019:564) support these findings, adding role conflict as an additional organisational stressor that negatively affects academic staff job performance. Although all these authors highlight the negative consequences of some HRM practices on academic staff job performance, Adebayo (2022) and Yousefi and Abudullah (2019) emphasise work-induced factors, while Amini-Phillip (2020) concentrates on personal factors, specifically lecturers' workload.

While the previous authors like Amini-Phillips and Okonmah (2020), Adebayo (2022), and Yousefi and Abdullah (2019) highlight the negative impact of some HRM practices on job performance, Szromek and Wolniak (2020:23) take a different perspective by examining academics' satisfaction with their scientific work. The authors report that most academic staff consider their scientific work not only their work, but also their passion and a source of pride and satisfaction. Therefore, when there is a lack of proper recognition for their scientific work, excessive administrative duties, and an increased workload without a corresponding increase in remuneration for additional work, their job performance decreases. Other identified shortcomings that negatively affect academic staff job performance are office politics, corruption in the form of academic titles, nepotism and unfair research practices. Therefore, management of HEIs must engage in activities that enhance both the prestige of researchers and the recognition of teaching, research, and scientific work. Building on Szromek and Wolniak (2020),

Mohammadi et al. (2020:1102) consider another relevant factor: the quality of work life (QWL). This perspective shows that a high level of powerlessness and a low level of tolerance among academic staff lead to low work performance. When academics experience bureaucracy, primarily found in public universities, they lose job autonomy and develop a sense of powerlessness over their work (Mohammadi & Karupiah, 2020:1104). To minimise the feelings of powerlessness among academic staff, the authors suggest that management increase autonomy at different levels of organisations to reduce bureaucracy. Similarly, since universities are inherently multi-racial and multi-religious, the authors urge respect for academic staff from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds to enhance academic work performance (Mohammadi & Karupiah, 2020:1104).

The multitude of research evidence indicates that there is not only a strong positive linkage between HRM practices and job performance, but also that other HRM bundles negatively affect academic

staff job performance. However, there are strategies to help university managers reduce their adverse impact on academics' job performance. Optimising academic staff job performance through the AMO framework can mitigate these negative impacts. The subsection that follows explains the AMO framework and its application to HRM practices in enhancing job performance.

3.5 HRM practices linkage to the AMO framework

As discussed earlier, the AMO model provides a valuable lens through which to examine the context of HRM practices in private higher education. This section examines how this framework applies to HRM practices in this context.

The most critical component for creating a successful academic institution is perhaps the recruitment of academic staff (Aboramadan, 2020:155; Naeem et al., 2019:501; Omojola, 2019:9). The hiring of effective faculty determines the success of developing and maintaining academic programmes, ultimately influencing student success. For academic staff who serve as the face of institutions, they must be sourced in the best possible manner. The ability element of the AMO framework refers to the skills and knowledge of employees that enable them to perform better in their work (Nor et al., 2021:1617). This process begins with attracting and selecting academic staff who possess the necessary qualifications (Naeem et al., 2019, p. 501).

Recruiting academics with a strong subject knowledge is essential, but efforts to attract academics who possess pedagogical skills are more critical (Jacob et al., 2021:232). As PHEIs strive to maintain academic excellence (Joarder et al., 2020:194), competition for experienced academic staff with other institutions also intensifies. Hence, PHEIs must attract top-notch academics to remain competitive (Ashraf, 2019:153). In addition, aligning career aspirations of academic staff with the institution's objectives is essential in achieving a person-job fit, which can enhance performance. According to Singh (2019:634), there is a need to consider the dual-objective career of academics, implying that some academics prefer research while others prefer teaching. Therefore, recruitment strategies must align with the institution's objectives, structure and culture (Singh, 2019:635). Professional development programmes, training, workshops on pedagogy, and mentorship have been found to be practices that ensure academic staff achieve their career aspirations and enhance their ability to perform better (Naeem et al., 2019:501).

The recruitment drive for PHEIs must also aim to create a diverse academic workforce that can effectively respond to the needs of a diverse student population (Tunio et al., 2021:475; Osman & Saputra, 2019:158; Singh, 2019:624). This not only creates an environment where every employee is respected, valued and feels accepted (Tunio et al., 2021:475), but also fosters an inclusive and

enriching educational experience. Ssemugenyi (2020:141) reiterates that a diverse workforce of employees with different cultures, academic backgrounds and competencies significantly contributes to institutional visibility. However, embracing a diverse workforce should be accompanied by non-discriminatory HRM practices so that employees perform well at their workplace (Tunio et al., 2021:476). Inclusive hiring strategies (Tunio et al., 2021:477), diversity training (Al-Twal 2021:4; Jacob et al., 2021:238; Schofer et al., 2021:8) and creating a multicultural environment (Schofer et al., 2021:6) are some of the HRM practices that enhance academic staff job performance.

The ability-enhancing HRM practices of the AMO framework also depend on the implementation of performance appraisal. When faculty members' abilities are regularly evaluated, areas for additional training or support to improve their skills can also be identified (Omojola, 2019:17). Hence, academic institutions design appropriate development plans for their academic staff. In addition, a good performance appraisal programme enhances job performance and encourages poor performers to do better (Omojola, 2019:17).

In HEIs, research and scholarship are essential components of academic staff roles. In fact, academic ranks correlate strongly with research performance (Jaskiene & Buciuniene, 2021:154). Hence, to enhance ability in these areas, the criteria for recruiting faculty should include seeking scholars with a doctoral degree, research experience, and academic writing skills (Jaskiene & Buciuniene, 2021:158). Furthermore, institutions should provide resources and scholarship opportunities to enhance research performance (Jacob & Musa, 2020:93; Tamrat & Teferra, 2020:687). Similarly, by investing in technological infrastructure such as laboratories and research facilities (Oyewole et al., 2019:48), academic institutions can empower their faculty to excel in their academic pursuits.

Ssemugenyi et al. (2020:136) emphasise that academic staff should possess competencies, knowledge and skills for better performance. As a result, academic institutions of higher learning have begun to consider improving their HRM practices to maintain excellence among their academic practitioners (Susanj et al., 2020:484). The role of effective recruitment in academic institutions contributes significantly to the performance of academics (Elsharkawi & Shehata, 2020:289). Specifically, utilising effective recruitment strategies (Singh, 2019:622), providing necessary training opportunities (Alshaikhmubarak et al., 2020; Jacob & Musa, 2020:94) and having effective appraisal programmes (Faeq, 2020:60; Omojola, 2019:3) enhance faculty's knowledge and skills, thereby contributing to the development of high-level academic performance.

The AMO model also includes motivation as a mediating variable in employee performance. Adopting an employee-based perspective, the motivation element in the framework refers to employees'

willingness to perform their work (Mahdy & Alhadi, 2021:1756). Cherif (2020:537), in a recent study, shows that HRM practices are methods whereby organisations can increase employee motivation and job satisfaction. Alfagira and Zumrah (2019:18) show that job satisfaction, promotions, salaries, and rewards influence academics' motivation and performance. Szoromek and Wolniak's (2020:1) interesting findings show that academic job satisfaction depends on employment conditions such as appreciation of one's work, job seniority, working experience, free-stress environment and level of remuneration. The two authors recognise various HRM practices as key determinants of employee motivation.

Additionally, by providing constructive feedback to academic staff through an effective performance management system (Ismail et al., 2019:135, Kellner et al., 2019), PHEIs can enhance employee motivation. Furthermore, Alkadash (2020:5321) agrees that by recognising academic staff contributions using both monetary and non-monetary rewards, academic institutions can boost their willingness to perform well. Finally, Mousa and Ayoubi (2019:833) found that when institutions foster a positive culture that values employees, faculty motivation is enhanced. When employees have the ability and motivation to perform, there might be no effect on performance if institutions do not create a conducive environment (Alba et al., 2021:128).

The opportunity-enhancing element refers to support systems that enable academic staff to perform effectively (Kellner et al., 2019). In the context of PHE, these HRM practices include effective leadership (Alkadash, 2020:5320), conducive work environment (Jacob et al., 2021:231; Ashraf 2020; Oyewole et al., 2019:48) and collaborations among faculty for knowledge sharing (Naeem et al., 2019:500). To excel in their roles, academic staff need an environment of academic freedom where they can explore innovations (Ferrarini & Curzi, 2022; Ashraf 2020) in teaching and research.

Academic freedom is central to good practices in higher education (Chankseliani et al., 2021:113; Joarder, 2020:197). As academic staff pursue research, teaching, and community service, academic freedom and autonomy become critical factors that affect academic staff's job performance. However, Chankseliani et al. (2021:109) have established that finding a balance between institutional goals and academic freedom is a critical challenge facing HEIs.

This impedes intellectual curiosity and the full realisation of higher education potential. Consequently, PHEIs must ensure academics pursue their academic work without unnecessary interference by promoting academic freedom and accountability (De Wit & Altbach, 2021:33).

The working environment is a vital factor influencing job performance (Joarder et al., 2020: 193; Naeem et al., 2019: 503). In the context of PHEIs, where student population and funding can be more

variable (Anis & Islam, 2019:482), job security is often a concern for academic staff. This concern must be addressed through HRM practices related to contract renewals, fair evaluation system (Al-Twal 2022:1396), fair recognition and rewards and appropriate developmental programmes (Naeem et al, 2019:509). Ensuring job security in a potentially challenging financial environment is crucial for attracting and retaining experienced faculty to enhance university teaching and research (Al-Twal, 2022: 1402; Joarder et al., 2019: 201).

Generally, ability, motivation, or opportunity-enhancing practices may equally affect employees across sectors (Blom et al., 2020:19). However, this does not imply that certain HRM practices cannot have differential effects. Specific conditions, organisational size, or culture are important elements in creating an HRM-performance link (Blom et al., 2020:4; Marin-Garcia & Tomas, 2016:1057).

This highlights the importance of contextual understanding when analysing the relationship between HRM and organisational outcomes (Boselie et al., 2021, p. 485). Hence, choosing the right bundles of HRM practices is essential to better performance as similar combinations may result in negative outcomes, depending on the organisation's context (Ismael et al., 2019:133). Furthermore, a key shortcoming within the A literature is that it generally does not address the individual circumstances (Marin-Garcia & Tomas, 2016:1076).

Given that academic institutions have diverse staff and different work environments, the interactions between contextual factors and individual circumstances can affect the implementation of HRM practices and their subsequent outcomes (Marin-Garcia & Tomas, 2016:1043). Therefore, the study proposes a systematic review of the model, which supports contextual factors and individual circumstances. This underscores the importance of a tailored approach to managing academics in PHEIs, highlighted in the conceptual framework in the section that follows.

3.6 Conceptual framework

The Namibian private education environment is characterised by unique factors, particularly from the academic perspective. Key factors such as academics' expertise, the institution's academic programmes, research opportunities, funding opportunities and teaching methodologies are challenges associated with the pursuit of academic quality in PHE (Kambanzera, 2022). This is coupled with students' diverse educational backgrounds and academic preparedness within the PHE (Tamrat & Teferra, 2020:685).

At the same time, academic staff are regarded as pillars of academic institutions (Omojola, 2019:2) and expected to address the many academic challenges in higher education. This is particularly important given that by actively fulfilling their roles, academic staff can contribute to addressing the

challenges in PHE and create a conducive academic environment for students (Al-Twal, 2022:2). This thesis adopted a broad conceptualisation of HRM practices as incorporating individual and contextual factors based on the A developed by Appelbaum et al. (2000). The AMO framework outlines how ability, motivation and opportunity impact on employee performance. The central focus of the model is on understanding and fostering individual factors in HRM practices as antecedents to performance outcomes, while also highlighting the contextual environment that may affect employee attitudes and performance outcomes. The central tenet of the broader AMO framework developed for this thesis is that individual and personal circumstances affect the implementation of HRM practices and subsequent outcomes (Marin-Garcia & Tomas, 2016). The model also incorporates contextual factors (Alba et al., 2021), suggesting that various contextual factors influence performance outcomes. These are depicted in the conceptual framework for this study presented in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Impact of adoption of AMO theory on job performance
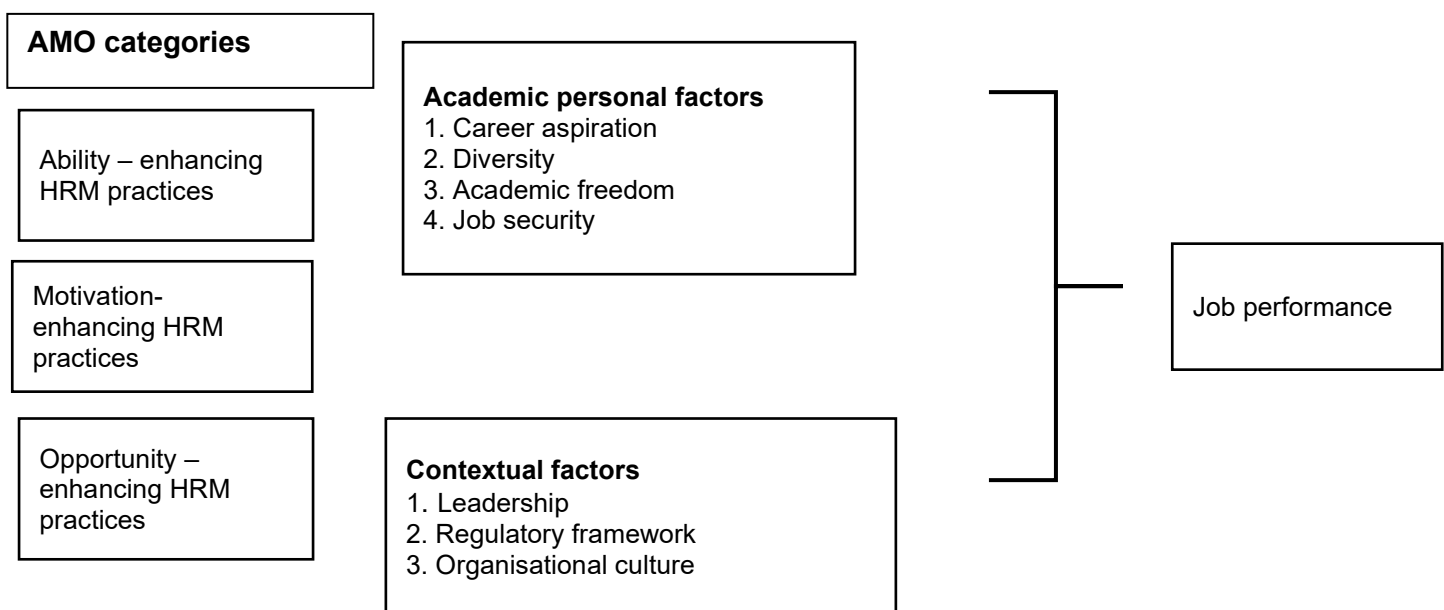
Source: Adopted from Marin-Garcia and Tomas (2016)

The variables in the model are defined as follows:

HRM practices are classified into three categories as per the AMO Theory (Mahdy & Alhadi, 2021:1758):

- Ability-enhancing HRM practices: Practices that aim to improve the knowledge, skills and abilities of academic staff.

- Motivating-enhancing HRM practices: Practices that aim to foster adequate motivation in academic staff to perform.
- Opportunity-enhancing HRM practices: Appropriate opportunities and support at work provided to academic staff.

These practices are influenced by academic personal factors (Ssemugenyi, 2020:141) and contextual factors (Marin-Garcia & Tomas, 2016:1076).

Academic personal factors:

- Career aspiration: individual career aspirations of academic staff
- Diversity: taking into consideration the diverse backgrounds of academic staff
- Academic freedom: autonomy in pursuing one's own work
- Job security: employment stability for academic staff

Contextual factors:

- Leadership: academic support provided by the head of department and administrators
- Regulatory framework: expectations from the external regulators
- Organisational culture: institutional values and expectations regarding academic staff roles

By applying the AMO theory, this study examines how HRM practices influence the abilities, motivation and opportunities of academic staff, by identifying the specific practices in the academic context that enhance abilities, increase motivation and create opportunities for improved performance. This framework also highlights the importance of considering individual and contextual factors while providing HRM practices to academic staff. The way the constructs in the model are measured and operationalised is discussed in the research methodology chapter following this.

3.7 Conclusion

Effective management of employees is at the heart of any organisation's success. This chapter presented the relationship between HRM practices and employee performance. It began by establishing the foundation of HRM and emphasised its importance as the backbone of any organisation's human resource management strategy. The significance of aligning HRM practices with organisational goals has been highlighted. Understanding the HRM foundation is crucial for establishing a solid foundation for the subsequent discussion.

The three distinct HRM approaches — best fit practices, universalistic, and configurational —are discussed to contextualise HRM practices within a broader historical and conceptual framework. As

a result, the AMO framework is introduced as a central model for this study. It explains that individual performance is influenced by their abilities, motivation, and opportunities provided by the work environment (Imdad, 2022:651). This model serves as a theoretical lens for understanding the dynamics between HRM practices and academic staff performance.

A specialised focus on HRM practices in the context of PHEIs was explored to acknowledge that HRM practices must be tailored to specific sectors and contexts. PHE presents unique challenges and opportunities, making it crucial to adapt HRM practices accordingly. This was followed by an in-depth discussion of HRM practices that influence academic staff performance. Recruitment and selection, performance evaluation and training developments are discussed in the context of the academic environment.

This chapter further explored the relationship between HRM practices and the AMO framework. It illustrates how HRM practices can optimise the three AMO framework elements, namely: abilities, motivation and opportunities, demonstrating their role in enhancing academic staff job performance. Building on the AMO framework, the chapter presented a conceptual framework for conducting this research and analysis in the academic environment. The framework integrates the AMO model, explores HRM practices aimed at improving academic staff job performance, while considering the personal circumstances and contextual environment in which PHEIs operate.

While exploring HRM practices and their impact on academic staff performance, this chapter highlighted several key challenges and themes specific to PHEIs. This suggests the need for a methodological approach to investigate these dynamics further. Chapter 4 outlines the study's research methodology and expounds the qualitative approach adopted in the study. By outlining the research design, study participants, data collection and analysis, this chapter sets the foundation for presenting the empirical findings of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

Research means different things to different people. However, the typical academic definition is that research is a targeted and systematic study and an analysis of materials and sources to solve an identified problem (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020:1). This implies that researchers need to use appropriate methods for collecting and analysing research data (Nguyen, 2019:2).

Research methodology is a crucial component of any study, as it helps the researcher answer research questions and generate knowledge. It outlines the entire research process of posing a question, collecting data to answer research questions and presenting an answer to the question (Bell & Waters, 2018:11). Equally, research methodology focuses on the sampling process, collecting and analysing data, and the overall interpretation of the study's findings (Saunders et al., 2019:174). In addition, the research methodology explains the reasons behind the approach used in a research study (Okesina, 2020:62). In this chapter, it is essential to outline the methodology used to demonstrate how the research outcomes were obtained to meet the study's objectives.

First, the research questions and objectives of the study are reiterated to provide an understanding of how the research methods align with the research goals. Secondly, the research design is then discussed to present the philosophical assumptions underpinning the study. Thirdly, an explanation of the research approach adopted in the study is provided, including the research design, which serves as the blueprint for the study. Next, the chapter outlines the procedures used to select research participants and justifies the sample and sampling methods. Further, procedures regarding how data was collected and analysed are outlined, followed by a discussion on various techniques employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. Finally, ethical issues associated with the study are addressed.

4.2 Research questions and objectives

HRM practices have evolved over the years, and practitioners and researchers have tried to create awareness of their importance in workplaces (Aydogan & Arslan, 2020; Elrehail et al., 2020). It is acknowledged that HRM practices are catalysts for managing employees effectively (Otoo, 2020:950). Every organisation must adopt effective HRM practices that meet the needs of both employees and employers (Xia et al., 2020:601). In doing so, positive organisational outcomes such as motivation (Alfagira, 2019), commitment (Aboramandan et al., 2020; Aydogan & Arslan, 2020),

job satisfaction (Cherif, 2020), innovative work behaviour (Singh et al., 2020) and job performance (Alfagira, 2019) are encouraged.

Previous research studies have highlighted the importance of HRM practices in both public and private universities (Al-Twal et al., 2019). A review of the literature conducted indicates that the focus of HRM researchers in PHEIs in Namibia is minimal. PHEIs have unique characteristics and face different challenges. Hence, the findings of HRM practices in public institutions cannot be widely generalised to PHEIs.

As outlined in Chapter 1, this study set out to investigate the impact of HRM practices on academic staff performance in Namibian PHEIs. The research questions were designed to explore the nature, implementation, and challenges of HRM practices, as well as the factors that enhance academic staff performance.

Guided by these questions, the study pursued the following objectives:

- To explain the nature of HRM practices in a Namibian PHEI.
- To investigate the implementation of HRM practices for academic staff in the PHEI.
- To identify the barriers facing the PHEI in managing academic staff job performance.
- To identify the factors that enhance academic staff job performance in the PHEI.
- To propose an integrated HRM practices framework that addresses the unique characteristics of the PHEI.

4.3 Research Design

Research design is a blueprint for guiding the process of collecting, analysing and interpreting data in scholarly investigations. It ensures that research questions are answered effectively and systematically and that evidence obtained enables the researcher to address the research problem credibly (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018:6; Saunders et al., 2019). In qualitative research, research designs are often classified as exploratory, explanatory or descriptive, depending on the study's purpose (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018)

Given the objectives of this study, an exploratory research design was adopted. Exploratory designs are particularly suitable for investigating phenomena that have not been extensively studied, where researchers seek to understand meanings, experiences, and perspectives (Saunders et al., 2019). In the context of Namibian PHEIs, there is limited empirical research on the impact of HRM practices on shaping academic staff performance. Therefore, by probing participants' experiences and

perspectives, an exploratory design provided the flexibility to uncover new insights that may not have been anticipated at the outset of the study.

Within this exploratory design, a case study strategy was employed. This strategy enabled an in-depth examination of a single entity within its natural context, utilising multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2018). Additionally, case studies are well-suited for exploratory research, as they enable the investigation of "how" and "why" questions in real-world settings (Yin, 2018). In the context of this study, the case study enabled the exploration of HRM practices and academic staff performance within the lived reality of a specific PHEI, generating rich and contextualised evidence.

An exploratory research design was, therefore, chosen and operationalised through a qualitative case study strategy. This approach was deemed appropriate for addressing the main research question, which sought to explore the impact of HRM practices on the performance of academic staff in Namibian PHEIs. The research design ensured that the study remained context-sensitive and capable of generating new insights that contribute both theoretically and practically to HRM practices and higher education literature.

4.3.1 Philosophical framework

Within research studies, reality can be interpreted from different philosophical perspectives. This worldview interpretation is referred to as a paradigm, which can be understood as a set of beliefs and values that researchers uphold as they define reality and operate within the world (Kamal, 2019: 1389). While interpreting reality, a study adopts a philosophical orientation to decide on the ontology, epistemology, methodology, and methods to be used (Singh, 2019).

Ontology is a philosophical study of the nature of reality and what a researcher believes can be known about that reality (Bleiker et al., 2019:S5). Researchers embrace these interpretations about the world and the people that guide them in formulating the research question (Berryman, 2019:273). Researchers seek answers to the question of whether the real world exists independently of their beliefs and constructions (Ugwu, 2021:118). This implies that there are two viewpoints to reality, namely: objectivism and subjectivism (Manus et al., 2017; Saunders et al., 2019:134). On the one hand, objectivism views the phenomenon under study as tangible and quantifiable (Ugwu, 2021:118; Manus et al., 2017) and posits that the world is external to the social actors within it (Saunders et al., 2019:135). Quantitative methods align with this view, as the researcher is perceived as external to the subject being studied.

On the other hand, subjectivists regard perceptions and actions of social actors as essential elements in inquiries. Socially constructed events influence reality and, therefore, consequent actions of social actors give meaning to reality (Bell et al., 2019:12). This view is particularly suitable for the extended AMO framework adopted in this study, as it examines how individual and contextual factors shape understanding and interpretation of the HRM practices and their influence on job performance. Consequently, the ontological stance of the study recognises that HRM practices and academics' job performance are socially constructed and subjective.

Conversely, epistemology describes the nature of knowledge or what knowledge incorporates (Ugwu et al., 2021:118). It is a set of suppositions regarding how researchers can learn about knowledge to uncover reality (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020:40). The choice of epistemology affects why the researcher views reality either as objective or subjective in nature (Rashid et al., 2019:3). In this study, it is argued that knowledge is supplemented by participants as actors within their social world (Bleiker et al., 2019: S5) and the subjective lived experiences and meanings these actors attribute to HRM practices are acknowledged. Hence, the epistemology behind this study is interpretivism, which sees knowledge as socially constructed and relational (Singh, 2019). By adopting an interpretivist epistemology, the study acknowledges that while job performance is influenced by HRM practices, it is also shaped by individual and contextual nuances prevailing in the work environment.

Three main paradigms are used to examine the philosophical assumptions mentioned in the preceding section: positivism, interpretivism and pragmatism (Saunders et al., 2019:108). Positivism is characterised by a belief in the existence of an objective reality that can be studied through empirical observation and measurement (Singh, 2019). It represents the assumption that causes determine effects or outcomes, and these assumptions are more accurate for quantitative research than for qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This worldview employs the scientific method of investigation; therefore, it advocates for quantitative research methods (Kamal, 2019: 1390). In the context of HRM practices for academic staff, these philosophical assumptions may not be suitable since HRM practices in PHE often involve context-specific and complex factors that cannot be easily quantified.

Interpretivism emphasises that reality is construed by participants' subjective experiences of the external world (Al-Ababneh, 2020:80). It is rooted in the belief that social phenomena are shaped by human meanings and interpretations (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020:42). While relying on qualitative methods such as interviews, interpretivism explores rich, context-specific meaning attached to social phenomena (Halkias & Neubert, 2020:48). Since interpretivism studies, describes and elaborates phenomena in-depth, it provides the reader of the study with a deep understanding of the phenomena from the individual's perspective, rather than from universal laws (Ugwu, 2021:120). Interpretivism is

well aligned with this study, which focuses on understanding the subjective perceptions, experiences, and meanings associated with HRM practices in PHE. This approach allows for exploring complexities and contextual variation within the private higher education sphere.

The third approach is pragmatism, which rejects the notion of a single paradigm as proposed by positivism and constructivism paradigms (Singh, 2019). It is not committed to philosophical orientation and reality; instead, the pragmatist paradigm looks at what works and possible solutions to problems. Similarly, a study is free to use any methods and procedures that best meet its needs and purpose (Ugwu et al., 2021:121). In addition, pragmatism encourages researchers to integrate diverse worldviews in their research to achieve a more practical approach and provide the most effective solution to the problem (Singh, 2019). Although it recognises that other situations may require different approaches, pragmatism is too flexible for a study like this as it focuses on understanding academic staff's underlying meanings and subjective experiences.

Given the preceding discussion on the main paradigms widely used in social science research, this study's philosophical assumption is the interpretivist paradigm. Adopting an interpretivist paradigm provides valuable insights into the complex and subjective nature of human interactions and behaviour in the workplace (Al-Ababneh, 2020:80). PHEIs have distinct contexts and cultures; hence, the interpretivist approach allows the researcher to delve deeply into this context to explore the unique HRM practices in these settings.

HRM practices do not exist in a vacuum but are influenced by various contextual factors and organisational settings (Wang et al., 2020:128). The interpretivism paradigm acknowledges this fact by highlighting the importance of context in shaping an individual's experiences and behaviour (Okesina, 2020:62). By adopting this approach, the study investigates how organisational context, such as leadership, higher education framework and organisational culture, interact with HRM practices to influence academic staff job performance. This understanding sheds light on the unique contextual factors that contribute to or hinder job performance.

Being a more suitable paradigm for social science and education research (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020:41), the interpretivism paradigm provides enormous scope for in-depth investigation to try to understand individuals' interpretations and the world surrounding them (Ugwu, 2021:120). It recognises unique perspectives, experiences and interpretations that individuals form about the world around them (Berryman, 2019:274). In the context of this study, interpretivism acknowledges that perceptions of academic staff are influenced by their own subjective experiences and personal values. By adopting an interpretivism approach, the study explores the individual factors, namely: career aspirations, diversity, academic freedom and job security that can shape academic staff

reaction, interpretations and understanding of HRM practices and how this influences job performance.

While recognising individual unique perspectives, experiences, and interpretations of the world around participants, the interpretivist paradigm emphasises the importance of social interaction and meaning-making (Kankam, 2020:172). In the realm of this study, HRM practices involve human relationships, interactions and emotions, which can be best explored using qualitative methods. This paradigm provides the tool to examine the meanings academic staff attach to different HRM practices and interventions, and how these perceptions influence their job performance. Interpretivism offers a more comprehensive understanding of this complexity by examining social interactions and meaning-making between academic staff and HRM practices.

Interpretivism enables the study to work with qualitative data to generate rich descriptions of social constructs (Nguyen, 2019:6). Berryman (2019:273) further asserts that the interpretivist paradigm seeks multiple truths, explanations, and understandings of phenomena through the interaction of the knower with the known. This is achieved by relying on a combination of different methods (Singh, 2019). Since there are many direct and indirect stakeholders in managing PHEIs and academic staff affairs, it was deemed fit to collect data from multiple sources. These explanations justified the choice of the interpretivism paradigm as the philosophical rationale for the study.

While positivism, realism and pragmatism have their own merits, adopting an interpretivism paradigm provided a holistic understanding of human behaviour's subjective and context-dependent nature. It allows the study to explore the lived meanings academic staff attach to HRM practices and investigate the individual and contextual factors that influence academic staff job performance.

4.3.2 Research Approach

The interpretivism framework is closely related to qualitative research methods (Al-Ababneh 2020:86; Tomaszewski et al., 2020:1; Ugwu, 2021:122; Nguyen, 2019:6) as it addresses essential features of participants constructing the meaning of the world in which they live and work.

Several distinctive features of qualitative research exist. For instance, Nassaji (2020:431) points out that qualitative research takes place naturally, allowing for in-depth exploration of topics and providing rich and valuable insights into phenomena. Actual experiences and an in-depth understanding of social phenomena are obtained by exploring and interpreting collected data (Schindler, 2019:124). As a result, several aspects emerge during data collection, rather than what happens in quantitative research, where aspects are tightly predetermined (Kamal, 2019: 1387). This implies that the instruments used for data collection are less structured (Okesina, 2020:64) as these

methods and procedures are interactive and humanistic (Aspers & Corte, 2019:146). Data collection involves verbal, video or pictorial descriptions (Schindler, 2019:123) and objects (Okesina, 2020:64). Usually, qualitative research selects small samples using a purposive sampling technique (Ugwu 2021:119; Okesina, 2020:64) to have a holistic view of the phenomena, while discovering and understanding the meaning specific individuals ascribe to a phenomenon in a particular context (Johnson et al., 2020:141).

Understanding the nature of HRM practices and how these practices shape employees' outcomes is better done by studying the employees' perceptions to whom the HRM practices are applied (Van Beurden, 2020:2). Thus, obtaining detailed descriptions of these events is more valuable than addressing the research questions through collection of quantifiable data using specific statistical methods (Bell & Waters, 2018:313). Employees formulate their own perceptions and interpretations about their organisations' motivation to implement HRM practices; hence, human behaviour and actions are best explored using a qualitative method in their natural settings (Al-Ababneh, 2020:82; Johnson et al., 2020:143), as it is difficult to predict with absolute accuracy the behaviour of individuals due to human complexity. Using quantitative research could conceal some of the perspectives and experiences of participants and contextual factors that the study needs to understand to unpack how HRM practices are implemented in PHEIs.

Studying HRM practices for academic staff in PHEIs using a qualitative approach allowed for deep exploration of complex and context-dependent phenomena. Since the research aim was to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of individuals, a qualitative approach was best suited for exploring how these practices are perceived and experienced by academic staff, providing insights into their impact on job performance. Unlike quantitative methods, which aim to quantify variables and establish statistical relationships, the qualitative approach emphasises understanding the interpretations and meanings that participants attach to their experiences (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020:42).

The qualitative research approach is advantageous when research questions are open-ended and exploratory, as it enables the investigation of how and why human behaviour and social interactions occur (Nassaji, 2020:431). In this study, the focus was to explore how HRM practices are implemented in PHEIs, which required an approach that could capture the richness of these experiences. Since qualitative research enables the researcher to collect detailed data through interviews, it is regarded as the best approach to uncover the underlying dynamics of HRM practices and their implications for job performance.

Another critical factor for the suitability of the qualitative approach is its emphasis on context. Various contextual factors, including policies and institutional culture, influence HRM practices in PHEIs. As a result, the qualitative approach enables in-depth exploration of these contextual influences and how they shape the lived experiences of academic staff. Focusing on contextual factors enabled the capture of the full range of perspectives and experiences, revealing the interplay between individual experiences and the broader institutional environment (Borgstede & Scholz, 2021:1).

Furthermore, qualitative research is valued for its flexibility, particularly during data collection (Kankam, 2020:167). This flexibility allows researchers to respond to emerging insights and refine the research focus as the study progresses. For example, during interviews with academic staff, a recurring theme regarding professional development opportunities was identified. Interestingly, there were discrepancies in participants' experiences: some academic staff reported that adequate professional development opportunities existed, while others felt these opportunities were lacking. These discrepancies were explored in greater depth in subsequent interviews with HRM personnel and academic managers. In this way, qualitative research ensured that the study captured the most relevant and meaningful aspects of participants' experiences, which may not have been possible if the quantitative method had been adopted.

In view of the preceding discussion, selecting a qualitative approach to investigate the impact of HRM practices on academic staff job performance provides a range of justifications. This method allows for the exploration of contextual factors (Johnson et al., 2020:143), captures participants' lived experiences (Halkias & Neubert, 2020:48; Tomaszewski et al., 2020:1), uncovers unexpected variables (Xiong, 2022:957) and provides an understanding of the process and mechanisms through which HRM practices can impact job performance.

When a study adopts a qualitative approach to answer the research questions, various research designs are recommended as appropriate for this approach. These include narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case studies (Ugwu et al., 2021:119; Tomaszewski et al., 2020:1). Narrative research focuses on collecting and analysing personal stories from participants (Stahl & King, 2020:26; Saunders et al., 2019:209). Phenomenology explores the lived experiences of participants regarding a particular phenomenon, uncovering the underlying meanings participants attribute to them (Tomaszewski et al., 2020:2). Grounded theory utilises open coding and constant comparison to explain a particular phenomenon and develop a theory thereof (Saunders et al., 2019:205). A case study design examines a specific phenomenon in detail, in a holistic manner, and within the real-world context (Rashid et al., 2019:5).

Since this study aimed to gain a deep understanding of HRM practices in PHE, a phenomenological research design was adopted. This design explores and understands individuals' lived experiences (Berryman 2019:274) and the meanings they attach to them (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:30). Using this design in the context of studying HRM practices on academic staff, phenomenology is well-suited to capture the subjective perceptions and experiences of academic staff regarding various HRM practices. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018:30), phenomenology studies uncover lived experiences by extensively studying a small number of participants. This aligns with exploring how academic staff in PHEIs perceive and experience HRM practices, providing a thorough understanding of their impact on job performance.

As noted by Al-Ababneh (2020:80), phenomenology is particularly effective for exploring complex phenomena where participants' meanings are central. The impact of HRM practices on academic staff performance involves complex interactions that cannot be easily quantified. These interactions include personal and professional dimensions of academic staff experiences; hence, phenomenology allowed for an in-depth understanding of these interactions.

Furthermore, phenomenology is effective in capturing context-specific experiences of participants (Al-Ababneh, 2020:80; Halkias & Neubert, 2020:57), which is vital for understanding how cultural and local factors affect phenomena. In this study, cultural and contextual factors influencing HRM practices in Namibian PHEIs are crucial. Therefore, phenomenology allowed for an exploration of how these factors shape academic staff perceptions and experiences of HRM practices.

Findings from phenomenological research offer valuable insights that can inform policy and practice (Johnson et al., 2020:141), making it a useful research design for addressing HRM practices in PHEIs. By understanding participants' rich and detailed lived experiences, the study developed an HRM framework tailored to PHEIs to enhance academic staff performance.

Phenomenological design uses in-depth interviews as the most common method to collect detailed descriptions of participants' experiences (Tomaszewski et al., 2020:2). In this study, document analysis was also used during the interpretation phase. This is aligned with the two stages or layers of interpretations, that is, the first layer is to interpret meanings as related by the participants themselves, and the second layer is interpretation by the researcher (Bleiker et al., 2019: S7). In this way, the study captures the essence of HRM practices as described by participants themselves, before being subjected to creative interpretations by the researcher (Ugwu et al., 2021:122).

4.4 Data Collection

4.4.1 The Study Participants

While each study must define which groups or cases are involved (Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020:183), sampling decisions in qualitative research begin with broadly defining the sampling plan and identifying participants from whom rich data can be collected (Mehrad & Zangeneh, 2019). Participants are deliberately sampled to identify key informants who have experienced the phenomenon being examined (Tomaszewski, 2020:2). Samples may be selected using various methods. Still, participants must be defined purposively to include the most appropriate individuals in the most relevant contexts, thereby answering the research questions (Johnson et al., 2020). Ensuring sample diversity yields diverse and detailed descriptions of the phenomena as experienced by different stakeholders (Schoch, 2019: 251).

Purposive sampling is non-random sampling in which subjects with unique characteristics or who have knowledge or experiences of the issue being investigated are selected for the study (Schindler, 2019:127). Elements in the population do not have any probability of being chosen as sample subjects (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019). In the study context, based on the research questions (Saunders et al., 2019:321) and predetermined criteria (Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020:190), only full-time academic staff employed in registered PHEIs formed part of the study. Using purposive sampling, other participants were targeted, specifically HRM practitioners and academic management with direct experience in HRM practices and policies. Academic staff were included as participants because the study aimed to examine the lived experiences and meanings that academic staff attach to HRM practices in their institutions, with the goal of enhancing academic staff performance. Academic management, such as heads of departments and Deans, were included as participants because they are the direct supervisors of academics and are responsible for their performance. The study included HRM personnel because they are the custodians of HRM functions and policies in institutions. The association of private higher education institutions in Namibia (APHEIN) and HE regulators (NCHE) as external stakeholders were also included in the study, as they are information-rich for the study and also to support maximum variation sampling (Halkias & Neubert, 2020:58).

The NCHE was selected as a participant in the study because it is an oversight body responsible not only for the registration of PHEIs but also for regulating the higher education sector in the country. At the same time, the APHEIN is an association of PHEIs, providing a platform for them to discuss issues related to higher education. Selecting these specific participants enabled the collection of insightful data on how HRM practices are implemented in the PHE sector.

While studies must consider a suitable sample size to generate valid results closer to the population parameters (Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020:181), it is equally essential to include a wide variety of subjects to uncover diverse perceptions and to add rigour, richness and depth to the study (Rashid et al., 2019:6). These authors further caution that individual characteristics such as age, affiliations, gender, social networks etc. can account for different perceptions and experiences. Hence, attention must be paid to these aspects when deciding on sample size. Given these, this study purposively chose a sample that included different stakeholders, namely: academic staff, academic management, HRM personnel, the association of PHEIs and HE regulators to maximise diversity and variation within the primary data (Halkias & Neubert, 2020:58). These participants have different levels of responsibility in managing the affairs of academic staff in PHEIs.

As alluded to earlier, the study included multiple and diverse stakeholders who play a role in managing academic staff, thereby providing a diversity of ideas and opinions. The institution represented in the sample was legitimate and registered with higher education regulators. The student population and scope of course offerings were also taken into consideration. Lastly, the decision to participate in the study was based on the institution's willingness to share its experiences with the research project (Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020: 191). Potential interview participants included those with some level of responsibility for managing the job performance of academic staff at their institutions.

In qualitative studies, the most critical step is not only finding participants for the study, but also locating participants with diverse characteristics to ensure maximum variability in the research data (Halkias & Neubert, 2020:58). In this study, purposive sampling was employed to select participants such as academic staff, head of departments, Deans and HRM practitioners who possess first-hand experience with HRM practices for academic staff. Furthermore, these participants have direct and indirect responsibilities for managing the performance of academics at their institutions, making them well-suited to provide in-depth perspectives (Boyce & Neale, 2006:4) to understand the nature of HRM practices in PHEIs. Participants' selection was not only based on each participant's unique perspectives, but also aimed at capturing a holistic understanding of HRM practices for academic staff within a PHE. A diverse range of academics, from lecturers to Deans of faculties, were the main participants as they are directly impacted by HRM practices. They possess critical perspectives on the effectiveness of current HRM practices at the selected institution. HoDs are responsible for managing academic staff job performance through implementing HRM practices at the departmental level. Their perspectives provided an understanding of operationalising HRM practices while bridging the gap between higher-level management decisions and academic staff. Senior academic leaders, the Deans, provided a lens through which the strategic alignment between HRM practices and

institutional goals can be understood. A HRM practitioner, being the custodian of HRM practices in an institution, was included in the study to provide insights into the implementation, challenges and successes of HRM practices, providing a complementary view to the academics' experiences.

Including an NCHE representative in the study provided an external viewpoint of the higher education regulator, focusing on the broader policy environment influencing HRM practices. This perspective contextualised institutional HRM practices within the regulator's expectations and standards. The APHEIN participant enriched the study by offering a macro perspective on HRM practices across the PHE sector. This insight allowed for benchmarking HRM practices against sector-wide best practices. This comprehensive approach, encompassing macro- and micro-perspectives, provided a detailed understanding of HRM practices for academic staff.

Qualitative studies are participant-oriented; hence, participants who were willing to contribute to achieving the purpose of the study by sharing their experiences on HRM practices were selected. Several authors provide guidelines on an appropriate sample size for qualitative interviews for meaningful comparisons. Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2007), cited in Cash et al. (2021:10), recommended conducting qualitative interviews with fewer than twelve participants, while Saunders et al. (2019:317) suggest a group of between four and 12 participants when conducting qualitative interviews on a homogenous group. Although sample sizes vary depending on the study context, Saunders et al. (2019:317) and Kankam (2020:175) note that saturation of themes can be reached with sample sizes of 12 and 30 participants for a heterogeneous group.

Since data collection and analysis were conducted concurrently, constant refinement of data and exploration of emerging themes were central to the study. This approach allowed for the saturation of themes when no new information or themes emerged among a purposively heterogeneous sample of 19 participants. For instance, during interviews with academics, recurring themes such as "intrinsic motivation" consistently emerged by the 11th interview. Participants repeatedly highlighted factors such as a passion for teaching, commitment to success, and fulfilment derived from seeing one's students graduate. Furthermore, "the importance of academic freedom" was consistently mentioned without introducing new sights. Participants frequently emphasised the presence of autonomy in their institutions, allowing them to pursue their research interests and design their curricula without institutional constraints. Similarly, during interviews with heads of departments, recurring themes such as "collaboration and knowledge sharing" and "the importance of professional development" were frequently mentioned without introducing new insights. Since the researcher systematically analysed the data after each set of interviews, when new data no longer yielded additional variations in the themes identified, it was concluded that data saturation had been reached.

4.4.2 Data collection instruments

Interviewing is the most used source of evidence in a phenomenology study (Ugwu, 2021:122, Kankam, 2020:174) where there are constant interactions with participants to describe the meanings of central themes in the participants' world (Saunders et al., 2019:439). Since the paradigm underpinning this study is the interpretivism of assessing HRM practices in PHE sector, semi-structured and open-ended interviews became the primary data collection technique (Ugwu et al., 2021:122; Rashid et al., 2019:6). Face-to-face-interviews-were conducted to elicit participants' feelings, experiences, perceptions and thoughts (Moser & Korstjens, 2018:12). The interviews were conducted as guided conversations and comprised fluid, instead of structured questions (Yin, 2018:118; Rule & John, 2011:64). Yin (2018:118) refers to these types of interviews as intensive interviews, in-depth interviews or unstructured interviews, which should be an integral source of evidence for qualitative research. To facilitate detailed exploration, a dialogue with participants was aimed at avoiding strict question-answer sessions (Moser & Korstjens, 2018: 13).

While exploring the nature of HRM practices in the PHE using in-depth interviews, an interview guide containing the interview questions (Appendix C) was compiled. As an investigative tool, the interview guide was developed considering the aim of the study and the underpinning theoretical framework (AMO). The questions were developed based on AMO dimensions found in the literature review and grouped into two categories, with questions corresponding to each of the AMO dimensions and to the study objectives. Two interview guides were used to operationalise the variables found on the study's conceptual model. The first interview guide (Appendix C) was for internal stakeholders, namely: academic staff, academic management and HRM personnel, while the second was for external stakeholders (HE regulator and association of private higher education providers). Different questions were directed at each group (Schoch, 2019:251) for relevance. Depending on the data source (for example, Academic, Head of department, HRM, et), the order of questions could be changed or some questions passed over. The interview protocols were necessary to keep the study within the line of inquiry and to ensure interview consistency across participants (Schoch, 2019:251).

The first interview guide measured the lived experiences of academic staff, HoDs, Deans and HRM personnel regarding HRM practices at their institutions, with particular focus on dimensions found in the study's conceptual model. It started with demographic information, which is essential in analysing its relationship with job performance. Analysing and segmenting the demographics data can help interpret the findings in a broader context by identifying differences and patterns in how HRM practices affect academic staff with different roles, educational backgrounds or levels of experience.

The second part of the interview guide encompassed individual factors, namely: career aspirations, diversity, academic freedom and job security, and aims to determine how individual expectations are aligned with institutional HRM practices. Each question was designed to measure a specific construct relevant to HRM practices found in the conceptual model. For instance, questions like "*What is your personal interest and passion for your work in academia*"? And *"In what ways is your institution supporting you in pursuing your career goals/aspirations within the institution"* was asked to understand academics' long-term career goals and aspirations, as well as explore how HRM practices in the institution support or hinder their career aspirations.

The second construct was diversity, and participants were asked a question *like "What is your institution currently doing to promote diversity among its academic staff"?* Aimed at exploring institutional efforts in promoting diversity among academic staff and assessing how HRM practices acknowledge diverse academic backgrounds. The next construct, academic freedom, was measured by key questions such as *"How can you describe the level of academic freedom in your current role'?* and *"Can you share a scenario of how academic freedom has influenced your teaching or research"?* These questions aimed to assess the level of autonomy academics have in performing their academic activities and whether any HRM practices limit them while pursuing their work. The last construct under the individual factor was job security. A typical question was, *"What does the institution do to make academic staff feel secure in their employment"?* This question aimed to examine perceived job stability among academic staff and inquire how HRM practices influence job security.

The third construct was contextual factors, namely: leadership, regulatory framework, and organisational culture. These factors were intended to assess their influence on academic staff job performance in the sampled institution. Under this category, leadership was the first construct explored, and participants were asked the question *"What kind of resources or opportunities or support are provided to academic staff by your leadership (HoD, Deans, et) to enhance their abilities"?* This question examined the effectiveness of academic support, resources or opportunities provided to academic staff by their HoD and Deans. The participants were also asked to mention specific expectations and compliance requirements from higher education regulators that impact their job performance. This construct was measured by a question like "*What are the specific expectations or compliance requirements imposed by higher education regulators (NCHE, NQA), and how does this affect your performance"?* The last construct, organisational culture, was operationalised by exploring participants' understanding of the values and expectations that the institution emphasises and how these expectations influence their work. Example of questions were: *"How does the*

institutional culture impact your motivation to excel in your academic career? and *"What values and expectations regarding academic staff roles do you think are emphasised within your institution"?*

The second instrument was an interview guide for external stakeholders (Appendix D). It consisted of two main sections; Section One measured participants' biographical information to understand how their position or work aligns with PHE in the country. This was operationalised by asking questions like, *"What is your position at the institution'?; "How does your position relate to private higher education institutions in the country (PHEIs?) and "What role does NCHE/APHEIN play in the private higher education sector"?*

The last section assessed participants' (NCHE and APHEIN) expectations on academic staff and their performance. For instance. questions such as *"What are the key indicators that you use for measuring quality in PHEIs"?* and *"How would you describe the quality of academic staff in PHEIs"?* were asked to examine the involvement of regulators in overseeing HRM practices and enquire about the regulator's expectations and compliance standards related to HRM practices in PHEIs. Furthermore, this section focused on the regulators' and associations' involvement in addressing HRM challenges faced by PHEIs. The questions posed to participants were: *"Having been working with PHEIs, what do you think are the most challenging issues encountered while managing academics in PHEIs?"* and *"In which way is your institution involved in mitigating these challenges"?* These questions aimed to explore how the regulator and association assist in addressing HRM challenges faced by PHEIs, while adhering to the set standards.

Similarly, the second interview guide explored how the association of PHE providers supports member institutions in implementing HRM best practices. An example of a question was: *"In which way is your institution involved in supporting PHEIs to overcome HRM challenges"?* The question explored challenges faced by the sampled institution in managing academic staff and how the association supports it in finding solutions.

The interview guides, structured in this way, effectively covered each construct in the conceptual framework and elicited comprehensive insights into how HRM practices influence academic staff performance in PHEIs. It also ensured that the data collected was relevant to address the research objectives. The items choice in the interview protocol was guided by the Appelbaum et al. (2000) AMO framework together with Marin-Garcia and Tomas' article (2016) "Deconstructing AMO framework: A systematic review".

4.4.3 Validating the research instruments

After obtaining ethics approval, the interview guides were piloted with five participants from other HEIs who mirrored the diversity and roles of the broader study group, including a head of department, three academic staff and a NCHE's member, to test and refine the study methodology. The primary objective of piloting the guides was to assess and refine them and determine the feasibility of the research design (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018:149). Furthermore, the research supervisor and coordinators from other institutions were asked for suggestions on the structure and suitability of the questions, as suggested by Saunders et al. (2019:540). This served the purpose of ascertaining the coverage and relevance of the questions and eliminating ineffective questions (Venny et al., 2021:2306).

The pilot study clarified and enhanced the interview questions for greater and in-depth responses. For instance, the questions "Does your institution provide resources*? and *"Can you tell me what those resources are and how they influence your performance"?* were combined into one question: *"What kind of resources or opportunities or support are provided to academic staff by your leadership (HoD, Deans, et) to enhance their abilities"?* Additionally, the pilot study highlighted the need to clearly separate the questions and link them to the categories of the interview guide, that is, the individual factors and contextual factors. This implies that the first category in the internal interview guide was individual factors, assessed by ten questions and the second was contextual factors assessed by five questions. The number of questions in the interview guides was also adjusted. Participants highlighted that there were too many questions, particularly in the category of contextual factors. They also suggested that it is better to ask the regulator some of the questions, like: *"How would you describe the quality of academic staff in PHEIs"?* The participants felt it would be beneficial if that question is posed to external participants for a fair response. This resulted in the refinement of the contextual category from ten to five questions. Some questions were also refined and moved to the second interview guide for the external participants (NCHE & APHEIN). A request from participants to consider using virtual interviews emerged during the pilot phase. This suggestion had implications for obtaining consent digitally and for participants' privacy and confidentiality. Both methods were adopted by first requesting participants their preferred interview method. A small number of participants opted for virtual interviews, which were held in private Microsoft Teams channels. Explicit consent was sought to record the interviews, which were stored safely using an encryption method.

4.4.4 Data collection process

Upon completing the pilot study, the study commenced with sending an invitation message to Deans of Faculties and HoDs outlining the study objectives. To facilitate the recruitment of participants (academic staff), their email addresses were obtained through the assistance of Deans and HoDs. These academic management personnel played an essential role not only in providing essential contacts but also in actively encouraging their subordinates to participate in the study. Upon securing participants, data collection with sampled participants commenced in October 2023 and concluded in early December 2023. Potential participants were contacted via email with the interview guide, a consent form outlining the purpose of the study and participants' rights in the study (Anabo et al., 2019:140) and the University's permission letter to conduct the study. Participants were given the option to choose their preferred mode of interview, either face-to-face or virtual interviews. The interview guide was sent to the participants before the interview sessions to help them prepare for the interviews. Participants were given a one-week window period from the receipt of the email to express their interest in participating and a suitable time for the interview. This timeline ensured a systematic approach to collecting data within a defined period. After this process, the interviews commenced. To provide convenience for participants (Aspers & Corte, 2019:149), face-to-face interviews were conducted in confidential settings within the institution's premises. Virtual interviews were conducted via MS Teams for participants who preferred it and those from remote locations. The interviews followed the guidelines by Boyce and Neale (2006:6) that divided them into phases.

Phase 1: Set up the interview with participants (approximately 5 minutes)

Interviews started with a professional greeting to establish a friendly atmosphere. I introduced myself and provided a brief context of the study. To establish rapport with the participants, I initiated a light conversation by asking for their thoughts on trending social media topics or current national issues. This helped create a relaxed environment and encouraged open communication.

After this initial conversation, I reiterated the study's purpose by explaining that it aimed to explore HRM practices among academic staff in PHEIs. This ensured participants were made aware of the study objectives. Furthermore, I clarified why the participant was chosen for the study, emphasising their unique perspectives that were valuable to the study. For instance, I mentioned their position or job role as academic staff, being relevant to research questions. Additionally, I informed the participant about the estimated duration of the interview, indicating that it would take approximately 50-60 minutes. I also indicated to them that they could take breaks if needed.

Phase 2: Seek informed consent for the interview (approximately 5 minutes)

During this phase, I invited participants to read and sign the consent form (hard copy) which was sent via email beforehand. Before proceeding with virtual sessions, I asked for permission to record the session. I reiterated the importance of information confidentiality, their right to withdraw from the interview at any point without consequences and explained how the recordings would be securely handled and stored.

Phase 3: Conduct the interview (approximately 45 minutes)

After the interviewees consented and I confirmed their understanding, I transitioned into the central part of the interview by starting with background information questions. These questions were:

- What is your position and tenure at this institution?
- What is your level of qualification?
- Can you briefly describe what your job entails?

The questions below were relevant only to external stakeholders (that is, NCHE and APHEIN).

- What is your position at the institution?
- How does your position relate to private higher education institutions in the country (PHEIs?)
- What role does NCHE/APHEIN play in the private higher education sector?

Interview sessions continued with open-ended questions to facilitate in-depth exploration of the topics. The pre-formulated questions in interview guides ensured that the main research questions were covered and kept interview sessions on track. Although interview protocols guided the process, I remained flexible and adjusted and added probing questions as necessary.

To maintain objectivity and ensure that I abstain from prior knowledge and personal experience of higher education, I employed a technique of bracketing. This involved engaging in a reflective exercise before, during and after interviews by consciously putting aside my views as a practitioner in the higher education sector in Namibia. This helped me acknowledge my viewpoints and provided a suitable mental space during data collection. For instance, during one interview, a participant said: *"Honestly, 20 hours of teaching a week is right and enjoyable as it allows me to engage with students".* My initial reaction was to question how this could be enjoyable as this conflicted with my preconceptions. However, I reminded myself of the purpose of bracketing and then immediately paused to understand the participant's viewpoint. Instead, I responded by saying: *"That is interesting*

to hear that you enjoy teaching so much, can you elaborate more on how you manage your workload and with what support systems assist you"? Throughout the data collection process, I continually engaged in reflective exercises, aiming to maintain a neutral stance as recommended by Stahl and King (2020:28).

Phase 4: Summarise key data (approximately 5 minutes)

Key data from the conversations were summarised immediately by providing a brief recap of the main points discussed. For instance, I would say, *"To summarise our interview, we talked about several important aspects regarding HRM practices for academic staff at this institution such as the importance of collaboration, professional development and the need to have adequate academic support". "Additionally, you mentioned the significance of academic freedom in your work and discussed how the NCRST affects your work".* To confirm if the summary was accurate, I would ask: *"Did I accurately reflect what we discussed here today"; "Is there anything you would like to clarify or add"?* Thereafter, I would thank participants for their valuable time and contributions.

Phase 5: Information Verification

Following interviews, verification of some information provided by participants was performed by cross-checking it with tangible evidence such as the lectures' timetable. Information verification was also carried out during interview sessions with HoDs and Deans. The verified information pertained to aspects such as weekly teaching hours, class sizes, and workload, among others. The study was particularly interested in comparing participants' experiences with the documented reality. These documents were reviewed to back up or confirm some of the data obtained during the face-to-face interviews.

4.5 Data analysis

In phenomenology, data are collected from participants and analysed based on their lived experiences. In the present study, interviews were conducted with key persons in the space where the phenomenon occurred, and data analysis considered the experiences relayed by the participants. There are no prescriptions for how PHEIs should implement HRM practices, and it is, thus, those implementing and affected by HRM practices who are best positioned to provide accurate reflections.

A thematic approach to HRM practices shaped the data analysis, aligning with the study's research questions and the theoretical framework guiding the study, namely, ability-enhancing HRM practices, motivation-enhancing HRM practices, and opportunity-enhancing HRM practices. Atlas.ti (23.3.4.28863™) software package was used to extract, compare, explore and aggregate the study

data and further delineate relationships among derived themes and emerging sub-themes. This software enables a practical, systematic approach to sorting chunk or unstructured data that formal, statistical approaches cannot meaningfully analyse (Friese, 2021). An essential aspect of data analysis in the phenomenological approach is the search for the meanings of what is experienced and reported by participants themselves (Kankam, 2020:174), which is facilitated through the process of thematic analysis that begins with the very first interview. This process is imperative, enabling the identification of emerging patterns as early as possible and providing a foundation for reasoned decisions about later data creation and analysis (Friese, 2021). The data analysis process followed in the study was partly informed by Creswell's (2005:185) analysis as well as the level of analysis by Miles and Huberman (1994). Given the six steps of data analysis outlined by Creswell (2005:189), the analysis process is described here in order of linearity but is recursive in practice. Table 4.1 shows the various steps and how they were used in the study.

Table 4.1: The six steps of qualitative analysis and its application in the study

Step	Description	Application in the study
1	Prepare and organise the data	Transcribed the media file into text documents and uploaded it to Atlas.ti Software
2	Read all the data to comprehend it.	The researcher interactively read the data to comprehend what the participants said
3.	Commence the coding process of analysis.	The researcher employed an open coding system, descriptive in its sense, to code the text documents. The process was conducted by assigning labels (codes) to data segments (quotations) to summarise in a small phrase. This was the first cycle of coding to initially summarise the segments of the data as indicated in Figure 4.2
4	Using the coding process to generate categories (groups) or themes	Here, the second coding cycle or pattern coding was conducted through axial coding techniques, grouping the summaries into several sub-themes (categories). The main themes were deductively derived from the study research questions. This can be observed in Figure 4.3
5	Determine how the themes and sub-themes are represented in a qualitative narrative	At this stage, a tabulated representation of the themes and sub-themes were developed as presented in Table 5.2 (Chapter 5)
6	Interpreting and making meaning of the data	The study's findings were compared with the literature, and the researcher added her knowledge and experience to interpret or find meanings in the data concerning what lessons had been learnt (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This process was conducted in chapters 5 and 6

Source: Creswell (2005:189)

The section below provides a detailed description of how each of the six steps was applied in the study. This explanation offers the systematic approach taken to ensure rigorous analysis of the data.

As the study commenced with data analysis, all audio recordings were transcribed verbatim into text using Microsoft Word. However, there were a few grammatical and spelling errors. These could be due to participants' speaking style, background noise or limitation of the transcription software to capture speech nuances accurately. The transcripts were manually reviewed and edited to correct errors by carefully listening to audio recordings and making adjustments to the transcripts accordingly, ensuring that the text accurately reflected the participants' words. This process ensured the credibility of the data, reflecting the participants' actual words. For instance, *"Honestly, 20 hours of teaching a week is right and enjoyable as it allows me to engage with students"*. This was transcribed precisely to capture the participant's exact words.

Once all the audios were transcribed, all the transcripts were read through several times to comprehend their content. This step helped familiarise me with the depth of the data. Significant statements or recurring ideas were highlighted. For example, while taking initial notes of the transcriptions, it was noticed that many academic staff participants find teaching fulfilling because of the impact they make on someone's life or the reward they get from seeing their students succeed.

The following action was to commence the coding process. This involved identifying and labelling segments of the data that are relevant to the research questions. Both predetermined codes based on the research questions and emergent codes that arose during the review of the transcripts were used. For example, the predetermined code of "*Nature of HRM practices* was applied to statements related to various aspects of HRM within the institution, leading to emergent code, for example, compensation and benefits, performance management and professional development.

The next step was to use the codes to group all related codes into broader categories or themes. This involved identifying patterns or connections among the codes that formed coherent themes. For instance, under the theme "*Challenges in implementing HRM practices*", categories such as contextual political concern, technology divide and job insecurity were identified.

Next, the themes and sub-themes were represented in a qualitative narrative by weaving the themes into a coherent story that reflects participants' perspectives. Direct quotes were extracted to illustrate key points in the narrative. For instance, participants repeatedly mentioned their passion and love for teaching. One participant explained: "*My interest is just to work with the students, I am very, very happy whenever I am seeing them*''. This sentiment was echoed by several academic staff, highlighting an intrinsic motivation as a sub-theme.

The last step was to interpret the data and make meaningful insights by reflecting on themes and considering their implication for HRM practices in PHEIs. This further involved relating the findings to

existing literature to draw broader conclusions. For example, despite the degree of academic freedom prevalent, as illustrated by research findings, the work autonomy of academic staff is at times hindered by institutional control and higher education regulators. This aligns with existing research on a diverse regulatory environment and its impact on job autonomy (Hossain & Rahman, 2019:827).

Following Creswell's six steps in detail ensured a systematic approach to data analysis. Furthermore, this process aided in organising and interpreting the data effectively and ensured that the findings were grounded in the participants' actual experiences.

As alluded to earlier, the data coding and presentation process was equally partly steered by Miles and Huberman's framework (1994). The framework comprises a three-tiered analytical process, an adaptation of Creswell's version of the six-step coding process and data analysis, outlined earlier. Table 4.2 shows a descriptive tabulation of Miles and Huberman's (1994) framework with its three-tiered data analysis process.

Table 4.2: Miles and Huberman's three-tiered data analysis framework

LEVEL	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
1	Summarising and packaging the data	**Getting the raw data for analysis by:** Transcribing audio-recorded files (interviews) into text Organising documents for reviews Coding of interview data to form categories (group) Documents review to form categories (groups) Writing analytical notes on linkages to the study's research questions Revealing where the emphases and divergences are by reviewing the data
2	Repackaging and aggregating the data	**Identifying themes, trends, and patterns in the data by:** Reviewing all categories (groups) to establish relationships in the data concerning patterns and themes Writing analytical memos Reviewing the data to reveal where the emphases and divergences are **Data reduction and refinement by:** Identifying themes and presentation Cross-examining data for errors and repetitions
3	Synthesise the data to form an explanatory framework	**Explaining the data by:** Presenting synthesised data in response to research questions and objectives Evolving an explanatory framework regarding literature

Source: Miles and Huberman (1994)

Level 1 in Miles and Huberman's framework concerns itself with the initial task of preparing raw data for the coding process to generate themes and sub-themes and is comparable to Creswell's first three steps, which pertain to preparing and organising data, comprehensively reading data and commencing the first cycle of the coding process. Moreover, Level 2 in Miles and Huberman's

framework (1994), which involves repackaging and aggregating data by identifying trends, patterns, and themes, is also reflected in Creswell's fourth and fifth steps, as the latter relate to forming categories and themes.

Similarly, whilst the last level of Miles and Huberman's framework relates to data synthesis and interpretation to develop an explanatory framework, the sixth and last level of Creswell centres around the same issue of interpreting and finding meanings in data. Undoubtedly, both Creswell's and Miles and Huberman's frameworks illustrate similar principles as both converge on a crucial juncture where the need to find explanations and meanings to data obtained becomes imperative. This analysis process is described in detail in the next section.

4.5.1 Integrating Miles and Huberman's Three-Tiered Data Analysis Framework

While Cresswell's framework provided a solid ground for data analysis, it is equally essential to further elaborate on Miles and Huberman's three-tiered data analysis framework. This complementary approach provided additional perspectives that enhanced the overall rigour of the data analysis process.

The first step of the Miles and Huberman three-tiered data analysis is summarising and packaging the data. This tier involves the initial stages of data preparation and comprehension, which correspond with Cresswell's steps 1 and 2. As mentioned earlier, the interview recordings were transcribed using Microsoft Word. Numerous grammatical and spelling errors due to background noise or unclear speech were corrected manually by listening to the audio and editing the transcripts accordingly. For instance, the transcripts captured: "*The workload is manful instead of manageable*" or while referring to the number of students registered in the class, the audio captured "*England*" but the correct word is "*enrolment*", as in "*enrolment numbers have increased these years*".

The second tier involves repackaging and aggregating the data, which corresponds with Creswell's steps 3 and 4. After correcting the transcripts and reading through them several times, they were saved accordingly. To protect participants' confidentiality, any personal identifiers from transcriptions, such as names, specific job titles, departments or other identifiable information, were removed. For example, *"I am Dr Helena from the lower primary department*" was anonymised as "Participant 1, *Faculty of Education".* Following this, the transcripts were uploaded onto the software, separating the transcripts and notes into two folders of individual factors and contextual factors as per the interview guide. After all personal indicators were removed from the interview records, the document was denoted with a pseudo letter 'D' and a document number such as D1, D2, etc., for each participant.

After importing the interview transcripts into the qualitative data analysis software, Atlast ti. the process of first-cycle coding commenced (also known as level 1). The uploaded documents were inductively coded, allowing for sub-themes to emerge from the data naturally. For instance, a code like "*career aspirations'* was applied to text where participants mentioned their academic professional goals. This approach, as highlighted by (Guest et al., 2014:6), involved reading the text closely and assigning codes to significant sentences and phrases without preconceived notions. For instance, while coding, I identified a recurring sub-theme of *"job security"* when participants discussed their professional challenges.

Simultaneously, the main themes were generated deductively in response to the research questions. This implies that while sub-themes emerged from the data itself, the main themes were guided by predefined research questions. For example, one of the main themes was "*nature of HRM practices",* which was a central focus of the study.

In line with Miles and Huberman's framework (1994), the next step involved repackaging these codes into broader themes or categories. While organising the data into meaningful categories, codes such as *"inclusive recruitment practices"* or *"skills enhancement workshops"* were aggregated under the theme "Nature of HRM practices". Similarly, codes such as *'wellness day"* or "*mentorship programmes"* were aggregated under the theme *"Enhancing academic staff performance".*

The first cycle of coding generated a total of 150 codes and approximately 700 quotations. The main objective was to thoroughly review the text for a clear understanding and extract the data without initially searching for patterns. For example, "*workload*" emerged as a code when participants discussed the number of hours they teach per week or number of papers they must mark per class or the assessment workload from students' portfolios. A specific quotation is "*When students come from practice or internship, they come with files which the lecturers need to mark. And then these lecturers also have their students already that they are marking. These question papers can be 900 that they need to mark*".

The researcher continued reading the transcripts several times to immerse in the data, trying not to miss out any phrases or responses. This ensured the codes generated were grounded in the participants' actual words. This step was crucial for maintaining the data's authenticity. For example, repeatedly encountering phrases about "*academic leadership support*" led to the solidification of this code. Repetitive codes, both across and within the dataset, were deliberately generated, as this is a natural feature of qualitative coding (Rashid et al., 2019). This ensured that essential themes were consistently recognised and captured. For instance, the code "*collaborative environment*" appeared multiple times across different interviews, indicating its significance to many participants.

Given the third tier of Miles and Huberman's framework, the data were synthesised to be meaningful. This involved linking the themes and sub-themes to the research questions. For example, the theme "*HRM implementation for academic staff*" was explored in depth, with a participant's quotation such as, "*We are academically free, so as long as what you teach is under the policies and curriculum put up, you can teach*", being used to illustrate its significance. The synthesising process not only explained the meaning of data, but also underscored valuable lessons learned. For example, it became evident that academic leadership support is essential for promoting a positive work environment.

Participants' quotations like these confirmed it: "*There are some HOD or Dean, instead of helping the colleagues to do the work they were like spies of the top management*" and *"But there are some HODs who are supportive. I must point out that in my first two years, I had one good colleague who, when I was pursuing my PhD was my HOD and she was helpful because at some point she would come and ask how I am progressing.*"

It is rare in qualitative research for data to be perfectly categorised in the first cycle of coding. As Saldana (2009:111) notes, the initial coding often requires recoding and refinement of data to filter it into its most salient features. Upon further refinement and review, it became evident that many of the initially generated codes and quotations were either redundant or not adequately descriptive to capture the essence of participants' responses. As a result, a second-round coding was performed to streamline the codes and focus more accurately on the most relevant data. A thorough review of the initial 150 codes was conducted to determine each code's relevance and specificity in capturing the participants' perspectives.

Codes that were vague or extremely broad were either eliminated or merged with more descriptive codes. For instance, the initial codes of *"salary dissatisfaction"* or *"inadequate benefits"* were refined into "*compensation and benefits*" code. Similarly, quotation numbers were refined from 700 to 660 to clarify and provide meaning to the data. Figure 4.1 is a screenshot of the generated codes and quotations from transcribed interview documents in Atlas.ti.

Figure 4.1: Screenshot of generated codes and quotations from transcribed interview documents in Atlas.ti
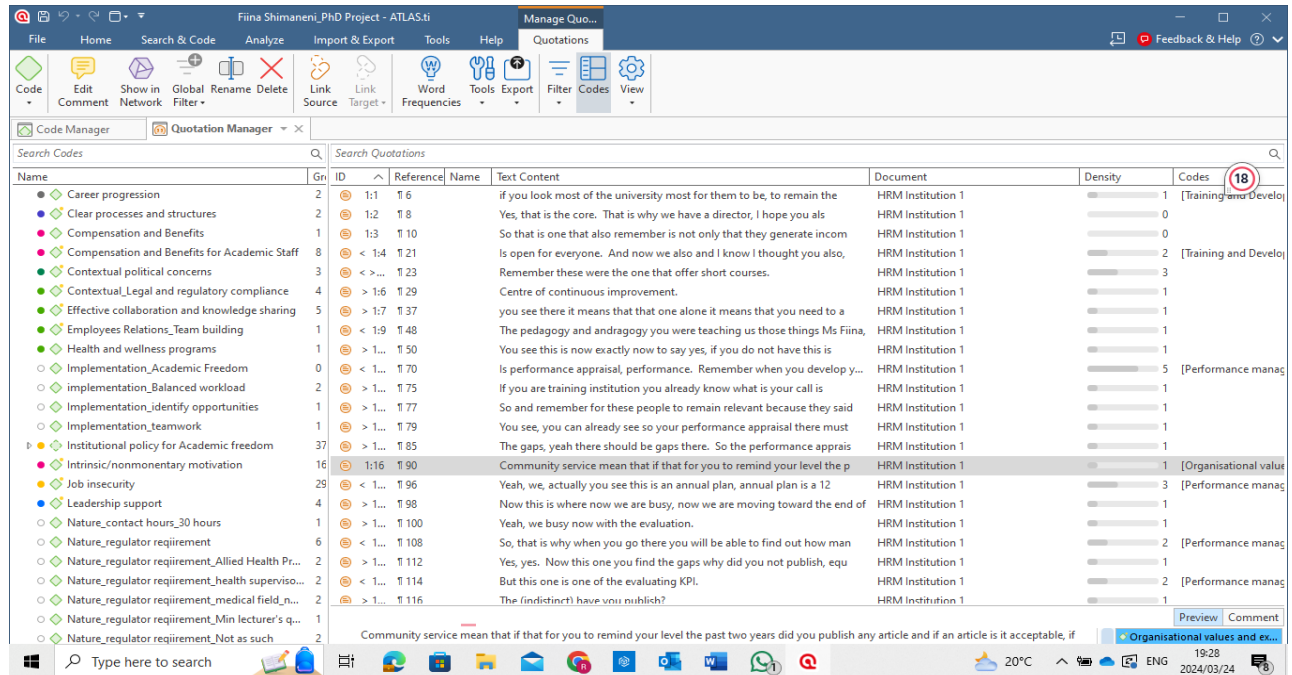
Source: Author's own (2024)

As indicated in Figure 4.1, some generated codes are c*areer progression; clear processes and structures; compensations and benefits; contextual political concerns; contextual legal and regulatory compliance; effective collaboration and knowledge sharing, et cetera.* The vertical pane at the centre-right indicates some generated quotations such as: *if you look most of the university for most of them to be, ...; Yes, that is the core, that is why we have director, ...; so that is one that also remembers is........; Is open to everyone. And now we also......; etc.*

Once the codes and quotations were refined, the next step was to generate broader categories and themes essential for building a coherent narrative around the research questions. This involved comparing the relationship between various codes and grouping related codes into sub-themes. As previously discussed, while sub-themes were inductively generated from the data, the main themes were deductively derived from research questions. Despite some sub-themes being associated with a few codes, it was necessary to aggregate and retain these codes in their respective sub-themes to preserve the diversity and richness of the data. For instance, the sub-theme "*Health and wellness programme*", despite having a few codes, namely "*fitness programs*" and "*wellness day*", is significant to understand factors that enhance academic staff performance. As a result, aggregating them into a sub-theme "*health and wellness program*" ensures that the analysis captures the full spectrum of performance-enhancing related factors.

As sub-themes emerged naturally from the data during the inductive coding process, insights that might not have been anticipated were observed. For example, initial codes such as "*Difficulty using online platforms*", "*Reliance on traditional teaching methods*", "*Disparity in technology proficiency*", "*Lack of proficiency in basic software*", reflect different aspects of using online platforms for teaching and administrative tasks. By grouping them into the sub-theme "*Technology divide*", the analysis captures a comprehensive picture of the challenges associated with teaching and administrative responsibilities.

As alluded to earlier, the main themes were deductively derived from the research questions to ensure the analysis remained aligned with the study objectives. Additionally, the deductive approach was necessary to assist in structuring the analysis around key areas of interest defined at the outset of the study. For instance, the theme "*HRM implementation for academic staff*" was derived from the research question: *How are the HRM practices implemented concerning academic staff*? By deriving the main theme from the research question, the data analysis directly addressed the core inquiry of the study. Sub-themes such as "*Academic leadership support*", "*Diversity in recruitment*", "*Institutional policy for academic freedom*" or "*Workload and job satisfaction*" further break down this broad theme into specific areas relating to the theme. Therefore, five main themes (code groups) and 41 sub-themes were generated from the interviews as indicated in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2: Screenshot of main themes and sub-themes generated from transcribed interview documents in Atlas.ti
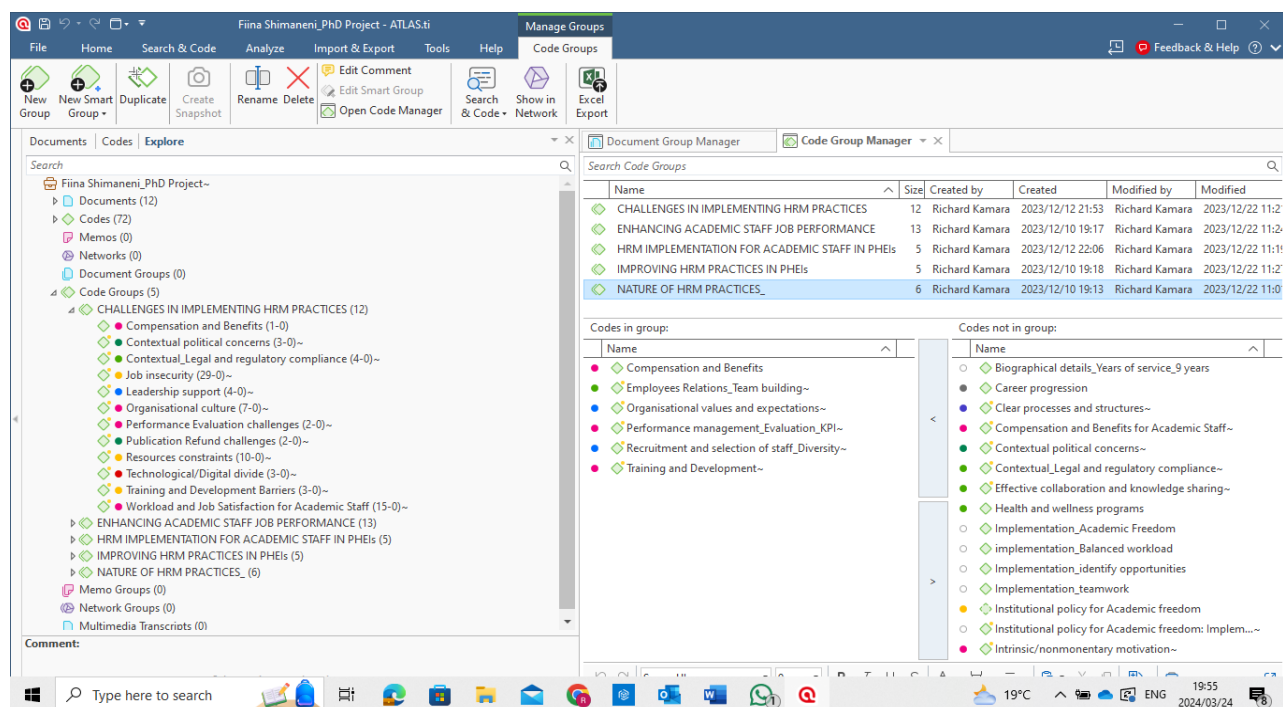
Source: Author's own (2024)

Figure 4.2 indicates some generated main themes and sub-themes. As shown in the figure, the main themes are (reading bottom-up in the left pane) *Nature of HRM practices; improving HRM practices in PHEIs; enhancing academic staff job performance; and challenges in implementing HRM practices.*

Grouping related codes into sub-themes and deriving main themes from research questions are fundamental in deductive qualitative data analysis (Fife & Gossner, 2024:6; Xu & Zammit, 2020:3) This process of combining inductive and deductive methods enhances the clarity and depth of the findings, providing valuable insights into HRM practices for academic staff and their impact on job performance.

4.6 Trustworthiness of the study

The criteria to appraise the findings from qualitative research are different from those of quantitative research. While reliability and validity are the main criteria in quantitative research, trustworthiness is the criterion for evaluating qualitative findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018:1380). As qualitative inquiries strive to gain rigour, Guba and Lincoln, in the 1980s, contextualised the terms 'reliability' and 'validity' from quantitative language into trustworthiness (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018:1379). Trustworthiness refers to how a researcher persuades readers that the study findings are worth paying attention to (Nassaji, 2020:428) by carefully paying attention from the outset until the end of the inquiry, assessing rigour at all levels of the study (Erciyes, 2020:191). Several strategies of evaluating qualitative research exist to enhance trustworthiness, namely: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018:1380).

4.6.1 Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research equates to validity in quantitative studies. This is defined as the extent to which the findings reported accurately represent what was being studied (Johnson, 2020:141). Stahl and King (2020:22) confirm this and interpret credibility as congruent with internal validity in quantitative studies. According to the authors, credibility is the extent to which the findings are congruent with reality.

Reality in qualitative research is constructed and, as a result, qualitative studies do not aim to achieve the exact validity as in quantitative studies but to provide the reader with a sense of confidence in what the study is reporting (Stahl & King, 2020:26). To promote credibility, member checking, peer debriefing (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018:1380), methodological and sources triangulation, and prolonged engagement in the site (Stahl & King, 2020:27) are some of the criteria a researcher can employ. Member checking makes room for other outside people or participants to validate the findings, while

peer debriefing (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018:1382) involves colleagues or co-researchers providing the field researcher with feedback on research procedures and findings (Stahl & King, 2020:27). Engaging in a site for a prolonged time solidifies evidence as the researcher builds trust with participants.

The current study achieved credibility through methodological triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing and prolonged engagement. With methodological triangulation, the study semi-structured interviews were conducted with academics, Deans of Faculties and Heads of Departments. In lieu of direct access to confidential institutional HRM policies, an interview was conducted with an HRM practitioner who possesses knowledge of these policies. This interview served as an alternative document analysis method to obtain detailed information about the implementation of these policies. This approach aligns with qualitative research principles of document analysis (Xu & Zammit, 2020). For instance, during the interview, some participants made statements about the lack of professional development, which were cross-verified with the HRM practitioner and compared with the content of the training schedules provided. Similarly, academic staff shared their perceptions on the lack of staff development funds and publication fees. These too were cross-verified with academic management and HRM, who acknowledged these challenges and provided context on the constraints affecting professional development policies and publication funds.

Additionally, member checking involved providing participants with the opportunity to verify the accuracy of the data. After transcribing the audio recordings, transcripts were shared with participants (who indicated willingness) for their review. For example, a participant reviewed a transcript and noted that the comment on workload was inaccurately captured. The transcript stated: "*I have a reasonable workload*"; instead, the participant corrected to "*I have an unreasonable workload*". The transcripts were then corrected before proceeding with data analysis. Additionally, various colleagues, including the research supervisors, were consulted to provide feedback not only about the findings but also about the initial research procedures (Stahl & King, 2020:27).

Although the researcher did not spend prolonged time at the site, her extensive engagement with numerous PHEIs as a consultant provided her with a deep understanding of certain practices at these institutions. Over the years, the researcher has built professional relationships with practitioners in the PHE sector. These relationships facilitated open and honest discussions about participants' perspectives and challenges, enriching the researcher's understanding of their HRM practices. For example, serving as a curriculum development consultant and training facilitator allowed the researcher to work with HR departments of various PHEIs, providing an opportunity to have an eagle eye on HRM practices. Specifically, the researcher collaborated with HRM practitioners and

academic management from some PHEIs to design and implement training programmes on setting and marking examination papers.

Furthermore, the study enhanced credibility by interviewing higher education regulators and a representative from the association of PHEIs. These interviews provided valuable insights that were cross verified with information from other participants such as academic staff and heads of departments. During the interview with the NCHE representative, expectations for academic staff, including qualifications and performance standards, were outlined. "*We require higher learning institutions to ensure that their academic staff possess a qualification higher than the level they are teaching and at least engage in research*" (regulator's quote). With the head of department, this was noted, "*As faculty we are under pressure to publish or else we perish*". "*We have to combine these with the teaching workload*".

Similarly, the interview with the association provided information on practices promoting recruitment of a diverse faculty. "*We encourage our member institutions to ensure diversity and inclusion in their recruitment drives*" (association's quote). This was confirmed by the Dean of Faculty, "*We try to recruit a diverse faculty, following encouragement provided by the association, but also looking at the trends in the higher education sector*".

The process of cross-verification of information obtained from interviews with data from the regulator and the association ensured accurate understanding of HRM practices and their impact on academic staff performance. This process further assisted to triangulate the information, enhancing the credibility of the findings.

4.6.2. Transferability

Transferability indicates whether the study findings are applicable to other situations (Johnson, 2020:141). Research results are transferable when identified patterns and descriptions from one context apply to another (Stahl & King, 2020:27). Transferability is comparable to external validity or generalisability. However, Stahl and King (2020:26) note that transferability in qualitative inquiries is considered a major challenge, as the goal of qualitative research is not replication. Furthermore, subjectivity negatively affects transferability as the researcher is the main data collection instrument in qualitative studies (Alpi & Evans, 2019:2).

Although the study was conducted at a single institution, this institution is a mid-sized private institution, located in an urban area with campuses across the country. The institution offers a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and has a diverse student body. The faculty size is moderate, and the institution has a formal HR department. The challenges identified in the

study such as limited professional development opportunities and a lack of publication fees are consistent with those reported in other studies in PHEIs. These challenges are relevant to similar institutions. For instance, Kajawo (2019:56) indicates that PHEIs struggle to provide adequate support for faculty, suggesting that these challenges are widespread.

Furthermore, data was collected from diverse participants, namely: academic staff at various stages of their careers, heads of department, dean of faculty and HRM practitioners. This diversity ensures that the findings are applicable to similar roles in other institutions. In the same line, NCHE, as a regulator for higher education and the APHEIN, were interviewed to explore their expectations of PHE academic staff.

In other words, the findings presented are not only from the primary data sources (internal stakeholders), but also from influential stakeholders in higher education. When a study uses multiple sources of evidence, in-depth insights of the findings can be attained (Rose & Johnson, 2020:10), which may make generalisability possible when those insights point to common or central themes.

4.6.3 Dependability

The third dimension of research evaluation is dependability, which is parallel to reliability in quantitative research. According to Nassaji (2020:428), dependability implies that research should be reported in a way that allows for the possibility of reaching similar conclusions if other researchers review the dataset. This calls for consistency of explanation across the data (Lemon & Hayes, 2020:605). However, given the nature of human behaviour, which is influenced by various factors and can be highly contextual, reliability can be problematic.

To address dependability and create trust in the findings, peer scrutiny was employed by presenting the study and work in progress during the faculty research day in September 2022 and by seeking feedback from trusted scholars. Similarly, during a departmental research workshop early in 2022 at the researcher's university, participants' selection strategy was discussed with a group of colleagues. The discussion centred on whether the selected participants adequately represented diverse perspectives. Colleagues suggested including a mix of junior and senior academic staff as well as the higher education regulator to ensure a broader range of perspectives. Based on this feedback, the selection of participants was revised to include such categories. Another aspect in addressing the dependability of the study is that at inception of the study, the research proposal was presented during a workshop organised by the host university in 2021. One of the senior academic staff expressed concerns about the feasibility of obtaining a large sample size for a robust quantitative analysis and suggested shifting the study from a quantitative to a qualitative approach. He

emphasised the valuable and rich insights that a qualitative study could provide in understanding the nature of HRM practices in the Namibian context. As a result, the study's research design was re-evaluated, and a qualitative approach was adopted. This involved developing comprehensive interview guides to explore various participants' experiences in-depth.

Meanwhile, document analysis of academic staff's timetables offered evidence of how HRM practices manifest in workload management. For instance, this analysis revealed that academic staff teaching load range between 18-20 hours per week, indicating a potential imbalance with time for research responsibilities. Additionally, heads of departments had designated administrative hours, showing the structured approach to assigned supervisory responsibilities. Comparison of this convergence of findings from interviews and document analysis allowed for better understanding of HRM practices in PHE.

4.6.4 Confirmability

The fourth dimension to evaluate qualitative research is confirmability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) associate it with objectivity in science, referring to the degree to which others can confirm findings of the study. Stenfors et al. (2020:598) stress that the study must ensure the findings reported are clearly linked to the data. Critical to confirmability is the process of having an audit trail. It is suitable for a study to archive all collected data that are retrievable should the need arise. Exposing the study to auditing enables the observer to determine how the data was carried out and how the study arrived at conclusions (Carcary, 2020:167). Thus, an audit trail is a transparent description of the study decisions and its methodological and analytical processes, allowing others to confirm its findings (Carcary, 2020:175).

To increase the rigour of the current study, research activities such as data collection, coding and analysis (audit trail) are recorded. During data collection, detailed records of participants' recruitment and interview guides were kept. In addition, the coding process was meticulously documented, including the development and refinement of codes and coding criteria. This facilitated reproducibility in data analysis for a clear insight into decision making process behind coding application. Furthermore, an audit trial, documenting key analytical decisions was maintained throughout the analysis phase.

Confirmability in qualitative studies also refers to the extent to which the study findings are shaped by participants' and not researcher bias, interest or motivation (Stenfors, 2020:598). One common method that enhanced confirmability of this study was the use of direct quotations from participants to illustrate findings and key themes while presenting the data. For example, when discussing

employee relations sub-theme, a participant remarked, "*We do have team building activities where we just sit and address issues that may be affecting us as a team and working through that*".

This direct quote provides a clear voice from the participant, ensuring that the study findings are grounded in their actual perspectives and experiences. Furthermore, the interview information was verified with data obtained from document analysis. Specifically, a participant's comment about excessive teaching responsibilities was corroborated by their timetables, which showed a consistent teaching load of 18 hours.

To further ensure confirmability, a detailed description of the findings was provided in the discussion and conclusion chapters by linking the findings to existing knowledge or previous research. In addition, while concluding the findings, the study did not go beyond the data it presented, as reiterated by authors such as Stenfors et al. (2020:599). Deliberate efforts were made to address the research questions through standardised interview guides administered to all participants, and the findings were placed within the context of the existing literature.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

As researchers strive to ensure the quality of their studies, ethical considerations become a critical component of any scientific endeavour (Sobocan et al., 2019:806). It is generally recommended that research be reviewed by university institutional review boards (IRBs), human research ethics committees (HRECs), research councils or any other organisation to avoid ethical and legal challenges (Asiedu et al., 2021; Anabo et al., 2019; Sobocan et al., 2019). This study met the first requirement of ethical conduct by ensuring that ethics clearance was granted by the ethics committee before commencement (Stenfors et al., 2020: 598). First, to ensure that the study was conducted ethically, a formal letter requesting permission to conduct the study was sent to the chairperson of the research ethics committee of the host institution (Appendix A).

This letter outlined the purpose of the study and was accompanied by the research proposal. The next requirement was to obtain consent from the University's Ethics Committee to ensure that the study met the university's ethical standards. An application for ethics approval was submitted to the University ethics committee, detailing the study's objectives and methodology. Ethics clearance was granted, and an ethics certificate issued in this regard (Appendix B). Once permission was granted, the study commenced with data collection at the institution that granted the ethics clearance certificate. *

A study should also demonstrate best ethical conduct by ensuring that participants are aware of their role and participation in the study (Rashid et al., 2019:7). For this reason, each interview was

preceded by obtaining participants' permission to participate in the study via the consent form supplied by the university. Participation in this study was voluntary. As interview appointments were made, the purpose of the study was explained. Consent (see Appendices C and D) was obtained from the study participants before commencing with interviews (Schoch, 2019:252) by asking participants to sign consent forms, after the purpose of the study was clearly explained. Furthermore, before commencing with the interview, it was emphasised that participants could withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences (Sobočan et al., 2019:809). The consent to be interviewed indicated that participants would be debriefed after the end of the session by explaining once more the purpose of the study.

It is imperative to keep data confidential once in the researcher's possession (Sim & Waterfield, 2019:3008). In this study, proper steps were taken to keep data confidential and access to it was strictly controlled. Pseudonyms were used to ensure that participants could not be identified by the information they provided (Sim & Waterfield, 2019: 3008). This process began by assigning pseudonyms to all participants to protect their identities. To enhance confidentiality, all identifiable characteristics of participants, such as names or institutional affiliations, during the interviews were removed at the transcribing stage. This ensured data remained confidential and that participants' identities were protected in all data records, analysis and reporting.

Ensuring data security is not only paramount in protecting participants' rights but also maintains the research process integrity (Anabo et al., 2019:144)). In this study, since personal devices were used for data collection and storage, it was essential to safeguard the data. A smartphone used to record interviews was equipped with a secure password and a fingerprint. This was supplemented by additional features such as the phone locking automatically after a short period of inactivity. This ensured interview records always remained protected.

After each interview, data were transferred immediately from the smartphone to a personal laptop for secure storage and analysis. The transfer was done using a USB cable to minimise the risk of data interception. Hence, no data was transferred over wireless channels to prevent unauthorised access during transfer. The personal laptop used for data storage and analysis was password-protected, consisting of a mix of upper- and lowercase letters, special characters, and numbers. Additionally, an up-to-date antivirus was installed in the laptop to protect it against viruses, malware and unauthorised access attempts.

All audio recordings and interview transcripts were saved in a dedicated and encrypted folder on the laptop. To prevent data loss due to unforeseen events or hardware failure, files were regularly backed up to an encrypted external hard drive. All these measures ensured the data remained secure

throughout the research process. Research on human subjects is primarily concerned with protecting the study participants from harm (Eyal et al., 2018). Singh et al. (2021:1296) note that since interviews involve a close relationship between the subjects and the researcher, it is crucial to ensure participants' well-being to ensure honest dialogue.

Although HRM practices may not involve physical harm, some participants may experience emotional distress when discussing their experiences, particularly if they have faced job insecurity. Thus, due diligence was exercised to ensure the participants' well-being throughout the research process, allowing them to share more information securely (Singh et al., 2021: 1303). Participants were informed that if they experienced discomfort of any nature, they had the option to omit questions they did not want to answer or withdraw from the study without any repercussions.

Lastly, in this study, participants were offered an opportunity to verify the accuracy and relevance of their contributions. A summary of the interview transcripts was ready at any time after the interview process for participants to provide feedback or seek clarification.

4.8 Summary

The study adopted an interpretivist philosophy not only to provide the theoretical foundation for selecting the most appropriate research approach and method for this study, but also to understand the lived experiences and meanings that participants attribute to HRM practices in PHE. A qualitative research method was adopted to collect rich and in-depth data through semi-structured interviews and document analysis, which enabled the study to reveal the nature of HRM practices in PHEIs. A phenomenological design was deemed appropriate for the study, enabling it to explore participants lived experiences within their unique contexts.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with academics in both institutions using a purposive sampling method. In contrast, other extensive semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders such as Deans of Faculties, HoDs and HRM practitioners, using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Interviews with internal stakeholders aimed to elicit the views of academics, management, and HRM practitioners on the nature of HRM practices. Meanwhile, interviews with external stakeholders (NCHE & APHEIN) provided an opportunity to draw on the views of external stakeholders who have indirect interests in the affairs of academic staff.

Two data collection instruments were used, namely: semi-structured interviews and documentary reviews. Semi-structured interviews were used to encourage participants to share their perspectives and experiences regarding HRM practices in PHE and their impact on the job performance of academic staff. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the qualitative data, and themes and

sub-themes were identified while analysing the interview data. At the end of the process, to ensure trustworthiness of the data, measures such as credibility, dependability and confirmability were employed. This was particularly achieved through techniques such as seeking participants' feedback on findings, consulting with other scholars and maintaining an audit trail of the research process.

Lastly, ethical considerations were prioritised by obtaining ethics clearance from the University Ethics Committee and obtaining informed consent from participants before the interview commenced. The study adhered to the ethical guidelines and regulations set by the ethics committees, ensuring participants' confidentiality and anonymity, protection from harm, and freedom to withdraw from the study without any repercussions. Having discussed the research methodology, the empirical findings are presented in Chapter Five, where the focus is on presenting and discussing the findings in detail, offering a discourse on HRM practices and their impact on academic staff performance in PHEI. This exploration gives insight into the complexity of HRM in the PHE context, providing a foundation for developing a tailored HRM framework, which is discussed in the subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter, the research methodology was explored. This chapter presents the findings derived from meticulous data analysis based on interviews conducted with 19 participants. As noted in Chapter One, the study's point of departure was the HRM challenges within a PHEI that can undermine academic staff job performance. Against this background, the study aimed to explore current HRM practices in a PHEI and develop a framework that would assist the institution in enhancing the job performance of its academic staff. This aim serves as a lens through which the study delved deeper into the nature of HRM practices, how they are implemented, the challenges encountered in their execution and the ways through which academic staff job performance can be enhanced.

This chapter outlines the core findings of the research organised through themes and sub-themes, each aligning with a specific research question. The sub-themes divide the broader categories into more specific areas of focus, allowing for a granular analysis that sheds light on the complexities of HRM practices in the PHEI. This thematic organisation is a deliberate methodological approach to ensure a comprehensive exploration of participants lived experiences regarding HRM practices in the institution. By presenting and discussing the findings under distinct themes, the study effectively highlighted the nature of HRM practices, their implementation, the challenges encountered during implementation, and the potential avenues to enhance academic staff job performance. To enrich the discussion, each theme and sub-theme is presented with relevant findings drawn from participants' narratives and direct quotations, anchoring the analysis in the PHE context. In this way, the study ensured that each research question is addressed thoroughly, providing a holistic understanding of HRM practices in the PHEI.

5.2. Demographic characteristics of participants

The study participants included academic staff, heads of departments, Deans, HRM practitioners, higher education regulator and a representative from the association of PHEIs. This diverse group of participants was selected to capture and provide a holistic understanding of a broad spectrum of HRM experiences in PHEIs. Each participant was chosen for their unique perspectives to contribute to the in-depth exploration of the nature of HRM practices. Academic staff were the primary study participants as HRM practices directly influence them, and their lived experiences are valuable in understanding HRM practices' effect on job performance. Heads of departments and deans comprise

the academic management team; hence, their viewpoints provide insights into how HRM practices are executed at the departmental and institutional levels, offering insights into the challenges of managing academic staff. Being the custodian of HRM policies in the institution, HRM practitioners' perspectives helped to understand the intentions behind HRM policies and the challenges of tailoring these practices to the unique PHE environment. NCHE and APHEIN participants provided an external viewpoint on the regulatory expectations on academic staff in PHEIs, the benchmark for HRM practices in higher education and the impact of practices on the quality and credibility of PHEIs in the country.

The study participants comprised diverse demographic characteristics, including position, gender, qualifications and tenure. This was fundamental to ensure the eliciting of participants' rich lived experiences regarding HRM practices, influencing the study's findings and its contribution to HRM literature. These demographic characteristics uncovered how participants' different roles, gender and experiences influence the effectiveness of HRM practices in PHE. Table 5.1 presents a demographic profile of the 19 participants who took part in the study.

Table 5.1: Participants' demographic profile

	Position	Gender	Qualification	Years of experience
Participant 1	Lecturer	Male	PhD	8 years
Participant 2	Lecturer	Male	Masters	1 year
Participant 3	Faculty officer/Academic	Female	Masters	2 years
Participant 4	Lecturer	Male	Masters	1 year
Participant 5	Lecturer	Female	Masters	5 years
Participant 6	Lecturer	Female	Masters	2 years
Participant 7	Lecturer	Male	Masters	2 years
Participant 8	Lecturer	Male	MBBS	3 years
Participant 9	Lecturer	Male	Masters	7 years
Participant 10	Lecturer	Female	Masters	7 years
Participant 11	Lecturer	Female	Masters	6 years
Participant 12	HoD	Female	Masters	3 years
Participant 13	HoD	Female	PhD	9 years
Participant 14	HoD	Female	Masters	8 years
Participant 15	Dean	Male	PhD	9 years
Participant 16	Dean	Female	Masters	6 years
Participant 17	HRM practitioner	Male	Masters	2 years
Participant 18	Deputy Director	Male	Masters	9 years
Participant 19	APHEIN representative	Male	PhD	3 years

The table provides a snapshot of the demographics of participants who were involved in exploring HRM practices within the PHEI. Lecturers were the majority, reflecting the core academic workforce and likely to be significantly impacted by HRM practices. Their lived experiences were essential in understanding day-to-day HRM implications on the teaching and learning environment. Moreover, the faculty officer, HoDs and Deans enriched the dataset with administrative and leadership viewpoints, offering a more rounded understanding of HRM practices.

In the table, a near gender balance (male: 52.6%; female: 47.4%) is seen, suggesting a gender-inclusive perspective of HRM practices in this PHEI. This balance provided gender-specific experiences and challenges within the academic realm. Academic qualifications held by respondents predominantly included master's degrees and a considerable number of PhDs, indicating the calibre of the study respondents. Experience levels ranged from one to nine years, portraying a satisfactory level of experience of the respondents in their respective jobs. This profile offers a detailed and diverse ground for analysing HRM practices within the PHEI.

5.3 Analysis and discussion of findings

Interviews are popular data collection methods in qualitative studies. Their popularity stems from their ability to elicit rich participants' experiences on a phenomenon. In-depth interviews are flexible and can be presented in several ways (Boyce & Neale, 2006:8). In this study, interviews were conducted with diverse participants to obtain a comprehensive understanding of their lived experiences regarding HRM practices.

It is essential to consider the kind of data collected (Boyce & Neale, 2006:8) in presenting the findings. The findings are presented in a structured manner, organised around key themes and sub-themes that emerged during the data analysis process. The research questions were deductively adapted to generate the main themes, enabling a focused discussion of the study's central inquiry. With each theme, the study delved into specific sub-themes on how HRM practices are implemented. To support the analysis and highlight participants' voices, direct quotations are utilised. This presentation method not only aligns with the study objectives but also illuminates the complexity of HRM practices in PHE. The study aimed to gain an understanding of participants' experiences in the Namibian PHEI regarding the nature of HRM practices. A phenomenological study was conducted to gain insight into the following research question: What is the impact of HRM practices on the performance of academic staff in Namibian PHEIs?

The research question was supplemented with five sub-questions, namely:

- What is the nature of HRM practices in a Namibian PHEI?
- How are HRM practices implemented concerning academic staff?
- What challenges does the PHEI encounter in implementing HRM practices?
- What factors would enhance academic staff job performance in the PHEI?
- What measures should the PHEI put in place to improve its HRM practices?

As shown in Table 5.2, the results emanating from the data were categorised and grouped to identify the emerging sub-themes inductively. The research questions were deductively adapted to generate the main themes. Subsequently, five themes and 41 sub-themes were developed. The themes are the nature of HRM practices in PHEIs, HRM implementation for academic staff in PHEIs, challenges in implementing HRM practices, enhancing academic staff for job performance, and improving HRM practices in PHEIs.

Table 5.2: Emerging themes and sub-themes

THEMES	SUB-THEMES	RESEARCH QUESTION (RQ)
NATURE OF HRM PRACTICES	Compensation and benefits Organisational values and expectations Performance management Recruitment and selection of staff Training and development Employee relations	RQ1
HRM IMPLEMENTATION FOR ACADEMIC STAFF	Academic leadership support Institutional policy for academic freedom Diversity in recruitment and selection of academic staff Training and development for academic staff Workload and job satisfaction for academic staff	RQ2
CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING HRM PRACTICES	Contextual political/cultural concerns Technology/Digital divide Compensations and benefits Contextual legal and regulatory compliance Job insecurity Leadership support Organisational culture	RQ3

	Performance evaluation challenges	
	Publication refund constraints	
	Resource constraints	
	Training and development barriers	
	Workloads and job satisfaction for academic Staff	
ENHANCING ACADEMIC STAFF JOB PERFORMANCE	Balancing workload	RQ4
	Career progression	
	Compensation and benefits for academic staff	
	Health and wellness programme	
	Intrinsic/non-monetary motivations	
	Organisational drive	
	Professional development	
	Collaboration and knowledge sharing	
	Promoting accountability	
	Leadership support	
	Provisions of resources	
	Recognition of achievements	
	Working environment	
IMPROVING HRM PRACTICES FOR ACADEMIC STAFF	Clear processes and structures	RQ5
	Effective collaboration and knowledge-sharing	
	Performance evaluation systems	
	Policy revisions on terms of employment	
	Training and development for HR personnel	

Considering the kind of data sought and collected, the presentation of findings is organised according to the research questions. For each research question, a central theme is identified and explained, with sub-themes subsequently emerging. These sub-themes are contextualised within the scope of the study and supported by relevant literature. This layered approach is presented in section 5.3.1.

5.3.1 Research question one: What is the nature of HRM practices in a Namibian PHEI?

5.3.1.1 THEME ONE: NATURE OF HRM PRACTICES

The results of the study, as they relate to the nature of HRM practices in PHEIs, are categorised into six sub-themes: Compensation and Benefits, Organisational Values and Expectations, Performance

Management, Recruitment and Selection of Staff, Training and Development, and Employee Relations. Figure 5.1 shows a network diagram for the existence of sub-themes that support the nature HRM practices in PHEIs. Each of these sub-themes is further discussed.

Figure 5.1: Network diagrams of sub-themes: nature of HRM practices
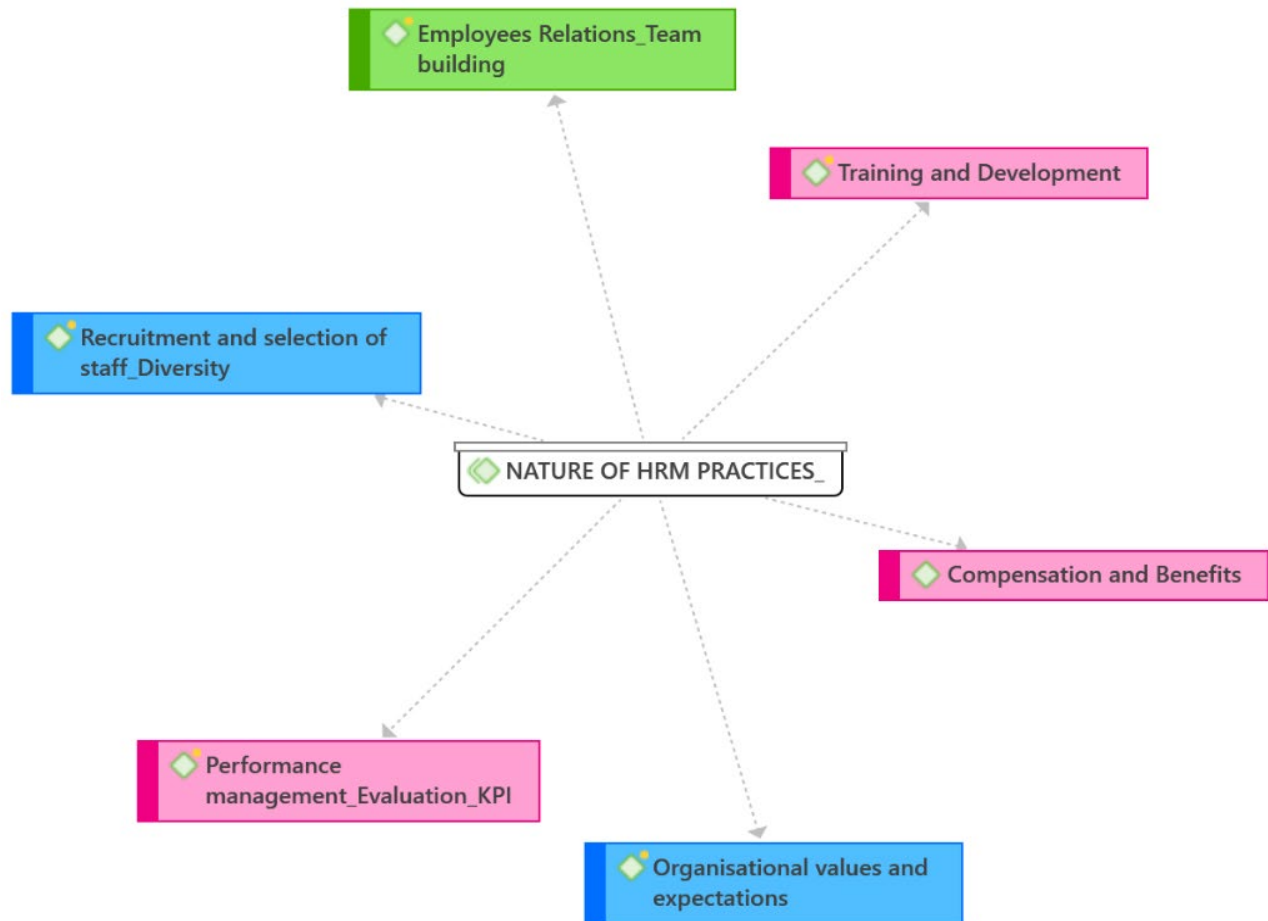
Source: Author (2024)

5.3.1.1.1 Compensations and Benefits

Concerning data emerging from the interviews as it relates to the nature of HRM practices in the PHEI with specific reference to compensation and benefits, participants lamented the poor level of their compensation and benefits as reflected in the meagre emoluments being paid by the private institution. This is evident in the following statement from the respondent:

"One would have an interest in something but looking at the private institution you are working for, what you earn and everything, you might not be able to upgrade yourself and you remain at the level you are, that you cannot even afford to publish" [D12]

This finding is linked to the research question aiming to uncover the nature of HRM practices in PHEIs. In the realm of HRM, compensation and benefits are crucial factors in shaping employee performance and organisational effectiveness. Several participants expressed discontent with the inadequacy of compensation and benefits, which is noteworthy. Low salaries hinder the ability of academic staff to afford and engage in professional development activities, undermining their ability to acquire essential competencies that support institutional objectives. Research by Omojola (2019:6) indicates that the salaries and benefits of academics are linked to job performance, making it imperative for the institution to address dissatisfaction within the academic workforce. On the other hand, some academic staff may choose to remain at their current salary level to maintain their focus on research, which is a core focus of their professional identity. This is because career advancement often means increased administrative duties, which can be unattractive to academics who prioritise research (Alshaikhmubarak et al., 2020:682).

This finding can be further analysed through the theoretical framework underpinning the study, the AMO, which posits that employee performance is driven by three components: Ability, Motivation and Opportunity. The ability component means that the skills and competencies of employees influence job performance. Given this finding, low salaries impact academic staff's ability to develop these skills and competencies. This, in turn, can affect their performance. Therefore, creating a compensation framework aligned with employees' expectations contributes to a more performing and motivated workforce (Basnyat & Lao, 2020:452).

5.3.1.1.2 Organisational values and expectations

The prevalent views of the participants indicated the existence of appreciable levels of organisational values and expectations in their respective institutions. Organisational values and expectations play a crucial role in enhancing staff job performance. Participants attested to the existence of organisational values and expectations, as supported by the following quotations from participants:

"So, in terms of values I spoke of integrity, I talk of excellence and one key one is also loyalty, our institution is very keen on loyalty and as a staff, I am expected to be loyal to my institution despite the challenges that may arise here and there". [D4]

'' And if I remember very well there is even a day that our Rector had a meeting with us and said efficiency and effectiveness. I remember those words. And remember we have a vision, mission and there are values that you are supposed to uphold'. [D10]

These quotations not only unveil a notable presence of appreciable levels of values within their institutions but also reveal the significance of aligning HRM practices with institutional values and

expectations. This is supported by Fathima and Umarani (2020), who highlight the significant role of organisational values and expectations in shaping employee behaviour, thus enhancing institutional effectiveness. Moreover, studies by Simon (2020: 173) and Jawaad et al. (2019:17) underscore the significance of creating a strong organisational culture that fosters coherence and commitment among workforces. This serves as a guiding framework, influencing employee performance and the overall philosophy of the institutions.

This finding further aligns with research by Elsharkawi and Shehata (2020:289), who emphasise the need for a well-defined and communicated set of organisational values in academic institutions to impact employee behaviour and attitudes. When institutions clearly articulate their values and expectations (Al-Twal et al., 2023), employees often experience a higher level of performance, satisfaction, and commitment (Jacob et al., 2021: 232). Furthermore, Basynat and Lao (2020:455) suggest that shared values contribute to the attraction and retention of employees who align with these values. This is particularly relevant in the context of the PHE sector, where institutions frequently strive to establish a distinctive brand and identity to attract both faculty and students.

Being appreciative of organisational values and expectations can be linked to both the AMO and SET theories discussed earlier in the literature review chapter. Through the lens of the AMO, strong organisational values and expectations enhance employee motivation by aligning individual goals with organisational objectives (Nor et al., 2021:1606), thereby encouraging academics to perform at their best. Additionally, the SET suggests that the existence of appreciable levels of institutional values and expectations can lead to reciprocity (Sungu et al., 2019: 1414). This signifies a mutual exchange of value between employees and the organisation, which can lead to increased job performance and a positive work environment.

5.3.1.1.3 Performance management

Performance management is a strategic and systematic approach to enhancing the effectiveness of individuals and teams in an organisation. When implemented effectively, performance management can significantly enhance staff job performance. Concerning data emerging from the interviews as they relate to the nature of HRM in the PHEI with specific reference to performance management, a small number of respondents reported on it in the interviews. The lack of overwhelming views emphasising the importance of performance management in the context of PHE may be indicative of the unique challenges and priorities faced by this institution.

"Yeah, we, actually see this as an annual plan, the annual plan is 12 months, from January to December" [D1].

As alluded by the respondent, performance management encompasses goal setting, performance review, feedback and development. In the context of PHE, where competition for resources and students is fierce (Rehman et al., 2019:2), effective annual plans for academic staff become a cornerstone for achieving academic performance. These plans are not only vital in ensuring alignment of academic staff goals with institutional objectives, but also foster a culture of high performance in these settings.

The relatively low-key findings on performance management seem to point to a profoundly inadequate performance management process. This may stem from various factors, such as a lack of attention, resource/expertise constraints, or differing institutional priorities. Research indicates poor performance management in academic institutions (Omojola, 2019:3). However, PHEIS need to recognise the strategic value of a performance management system to ensure sustained performance.

The implications of performance evaluation through annual plans are multifaceted. On a positive note, setting annual plans can clarify work expectations and determine performance levels (Faeq 2020:60). It can provide opportunities for continuous improvement and professional development. However, it has been noted that performance evaluations in HEIs focus more on quantifiable metrics, such as publications (Szromek & Wolniak, 2020:5), while overlooking other essential aspects, including innovative teaching practices and community services. Hence, if not carefully implemented, it can fail to capture the full scope of academic contributions.

5.3.1.1.4 Recruitment and selection of staff

Several participants, in this context, indicated a satisfactory practice of diversity in the recruitment and selection of staff in their respective institutions. The following quotations from respondents support this attestation:

''All of us, we are regarded as equal and one, regardless of your colour, regardless of your age, regardless of your gender, we are all equal as long as you meet the requirements to be at the institution, you are welcome to be here''.[D9]

'' I think diversity is there even though not much at greater level but of course, we have quite a lot of colleagues from other countries, many from African countries we have quite a lot, I do not think there is any campus of us that do not have them''.[D11]

'' I am not sure whether we have a policy because of course I did not go into the policy of recruitment but of course, this credit can go to HR because you can see that they are doing quite a great job when it comes to diversity and, I think they are not bias". [D12]

One of the noteworthy findings uncovering the nature of HRM practices within the participating institution is the satisfactory practice of diversity in recruitment and selection of staff. Attracting a diverse academic workforce is crucial for promoting a variety of ideas and perspectives, thereby enhancing the quality of education and research (Naeem et al., 2019, p. 510). This aligns with the Motivation component of the AMO theory. When academic staff see that the institution values diversity, they feel more respected and valued, which in turn boosts their motivation. In addition, to address the complexities associated with higher education, institutions require interdisciplinary teams and innovative solutions (Schofer et al., 2021:7). However, it is not enough to recruit a diverse workforce; it is equally important to create an inclusive culture that supports staff retention. As noted by some participants, it appears that while there has been some progress in employing a diverse academic staff, especially in terms of recruiting expatriates, sustaining an inclusive environment seems to be lagging. The following quotation attests to this:

'' Diversity is there for example maybe to employ different people from different parts of the world or parts of the country, but the main issue is the retention, in as much as there is sometime attraction of those people, they always also find a way to kick them out''. [D2]

These findings suggest that attracting a diverse academic staff is only the first step, which aligns with the literature that points to challenges in retaining a diverse academic workforce (Ssemugenyi et al., 2020:133; Singh. 2019:623), attributed to factors such as institutional culture (Sweis et al., 2020:7), inadequate career development opportunities (Grobler et al., 2019:10) and a lack of inclusivity. A retention problem can disrupt continuity and lead to a loss of institutional knowledge (Ashraf, 2019:153), which can have dire implications for academic staff performance and overall academic output.

5. 3.1.1.5 Training and development

Additionally, respondents indicated the implementation of training and development programmes to orient staff in their institution. This is clear in the following statements:

''There are sometimes training on university learning system or training on policies. Otherwise, colleagues are also able to assist if you get stuck." [D3]

"There is a lot of training for example when you start as a new employee, you go through training on assessments, you go through the policies, you go through how things are done." [D10]

It is essential to orient new employees and familiarise them with institutional policies for effective job performance. Providing general training to academic staff is crucial for creating a positive impression and helping employees integrate into the institutional culture (Ssemugenyi et al., 2020:685). For instance, in HEIs, these programmes ensure that academic staff are well-acquainted with administrative procedures, institutional values and available resources, thereby facilitating smooth transitions and reducing turnover (Tamrat & Teferra, 2020:685).

Despite the appreciation of these training programmes, some participants noted a disconnect between training policy and practice, with one stating, *''Paper wise on policy, it seems the policies are there for career guidance and growth, but the institution is doing nothing to say.'' [D11].* This reflects a common issue where training programmes are inadequately executed, leading to gaps in staff development. These findings raise a critical concern about the effectiveness of training initiatives within this institution. The disparity between perceived opportunities and practical implementation highlights common challenges faced by institutions in translating training investments into tangible skills development. This disconnection may stem from factors such as lack of managerial support, lack of resources or inadequate training programmes design (Ssemugenyi et al., 2020:132; Hossain & Rahman, 2019:827; Naeem et al., 2019:510; Omojola 2019:5).

Studies by Aboramadan et al. (2020) and Hossain and Rahman (2019) highlight the importance of training and development; hence, the disparity between perceived opportunities and practical outcomes suggests a potential gap in creating a learning culture. To enhance the effectiveness of staff development, HEIS must include feedback mechanisms and a continuous evaluation process to improve training programmes over time. This aligns with Bingwa and Ngibe's (2021) findings that training participants' feedback is crucial in achieving training outcomes.

5.3.1.1.6 Employee relations

Employee relations are crucial in shaping the work environment and can significantly impact staff job performance. Data emerging from the interviews indicate the existence of employee relations as manifested in the institutions through team building. This is seen in the following statements from the respondents:

"Again, I spoke about the opportunities that the university gives us to study and not only that, but we also have team building especially in our faculty, we do have team building where we just sit and

address issues that may be affecting us as a team and working through that. Yeah, I think team building has been one of the things that have been helping us as a faculty." [D5]

"Yeah, have become a concern. And with team building and different communication channels that are put in place, I think we are getting there." [D4]

Cultivating positive interpersonal dynamics among academic staff is beneficial to both employees and employers. The emphasis on team building is a sign of a focus on fostering a cohesive work environment that enhances performance. When such initiatives are strategically integrated into HRM practices, cooperation and trust among employees are enhanced (Hossain & Rahman, 2019:824).

Team-building activities within HEIs can take various forms such as retreats, collaborative projects (Jaskiene & Buciuniene, 2021:156) and social events designed to strengthen working relationships. These activities promote a sense of belonging and unity among academia, which can lead to increased performance. Team-building efforts are supported by research, highlighting their positive impact on effective problem-solving and knowledge sharing (Naeem et al., 2019:500). Within the AMO theory, particularly the opportunity element, team-building initiatives provide academic staff with opportunities to engage in meaningful interactions. By participating in these initiatives, academic staff can collaborate with colleagues and engage in the decision-making process.

Ashraf (2020) emphasises the importance of leadership in creating a conducive work environment, a point also supported by Aboramadan et al. (2020:156), who highlight the role of leadership in fostering collaboration and commitment among teams. On the contrary, Jacob and Musa (2020:92) note that many academic leaders lack good human relations needed for effective leadership.

As a result of the poor leadership, staff welfare is often neglected. Suppose leadership takes the lead by promoting good employee relations that resonate with the dynamics and diverse needs present within PHEIs. In that case, academic institutions are highly likely to create collaborative work environments.

5.3.2 Research question two: How are HRM practices implemented concerning academic staff?

5.3.2.1 THEME TWO: HRM PRACTICES IMPLEMENTATION FOR ACADEMIC STAFF IN PHEIs

The study's findings provide insights into and an understanding of how HRM practices are implemented within the context of academic staff in PHEIs. This focused approach allows the study

to explore the practical aspects, challenges, and effectiveness of HRM practices as they pertain to academic roles within the educational setting of PHEIs in Namibia. The following sub-themes emerged in this context: academic leadership, Institutional policy for academic freedom, diversity in recruitment and selection of academic staff, training and development for academic staff, and workload and job satisfaction for academic staff.

Figure 5.2 illustrates the network diagram for the existence of sub-themes that support the implementation of HRM practices. Each of the sub-themes is presented in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2: Network diagrams of sub-themes: implementation of HRM practices
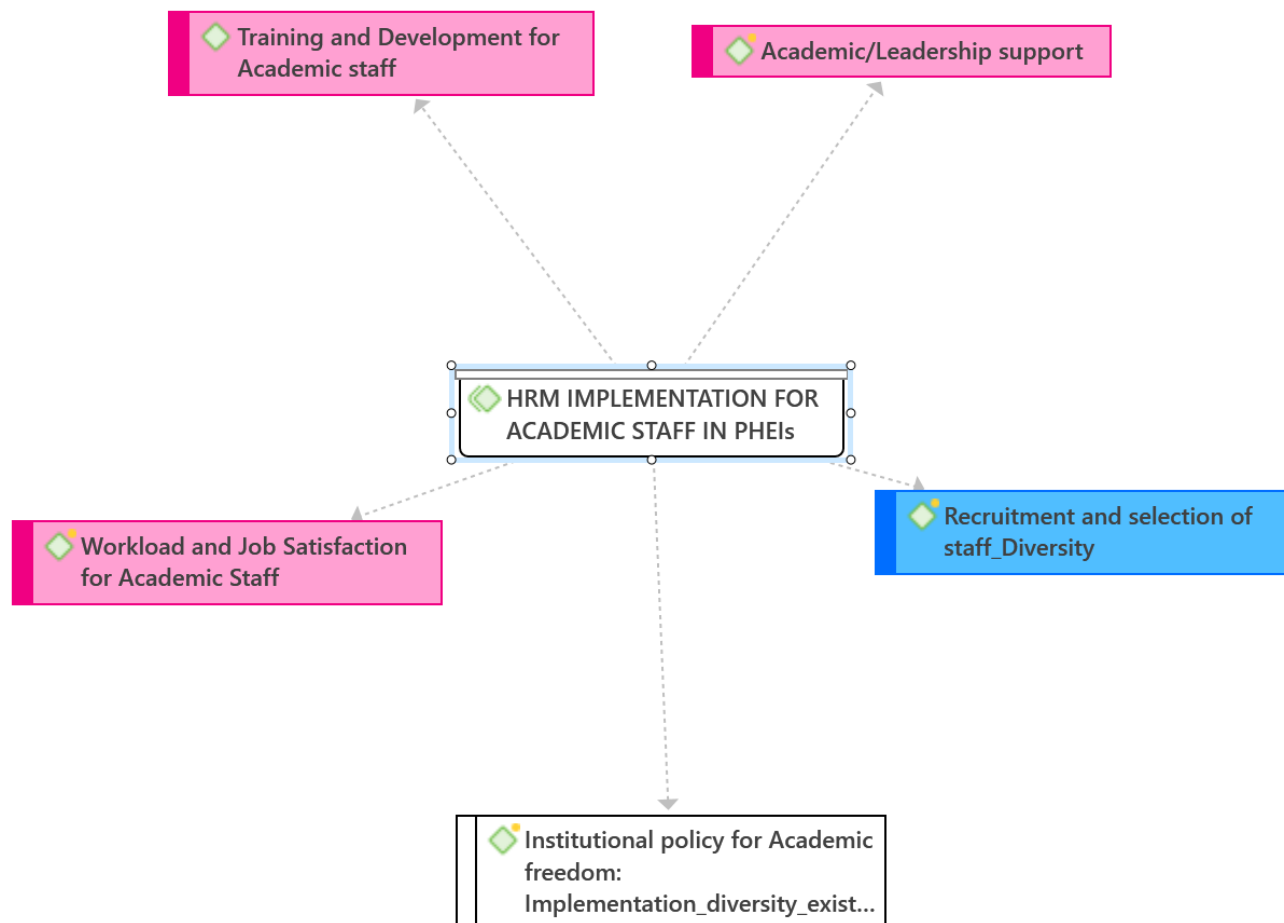
Source: Author (2024)

5.3.2.1.1 Academic leadership support

Academic leadership support is essential in fostering a positive and productive work environment within educational institutions. Based on the data from the interviews, participants in this context reported on the type of academic leadership support they received in their institution. There were some mixed feelings in this regard. Whilst the respondents do believe they are receiving one kind of

leadership support, the inadequacy of such support was also lamented. The following quotations reflected these claims:

''What we do is our HODs will call schools or principals to help us with our students' teachers' placement. We also do that for our students. [D5]

"There is a lot of support that is provided by the leadership, but you know our support mostly comes from the Dean." [D7]

''In practice, in some departments effective leadership is lacking, leaving staff on their own". [D1]

Academic leadership support has a significant impact on academic staff performance, which is one of the key factors in the success of educational institutions. Academic leaders, such as departmental heads and deans, play a crucial role in shaping institutional strategic directions and are responsible for providing resources and mentorship to staff (Rudhumbu & Du Plessis, 2020). Without supportive leadership, PHEIs may struggle to meet their goals.

However, to perform effectively, leaders must be provided with resources and autonomy. According to the AMO theory, effective leadership requires not only individual abilities but also the platform to apply these attributes in practice. However, many PHEIs face challenges in providing adequate opportunities for academic leaders to excel. Reasons such as limited resources (Kajawo, 2019:390), top management interference and bureaucratic constraints (Tamrat & Teffera, 2020:683) have been identified as factors that continue to contribute to the differing experiences with academic support. Conversely, when leaders are allowed to lead, as indicated by the study findings, they can foster a conducive environment for job performance.

5.3.2.1.2 Institutional policy for academic freedom

Institutional policies that support academic freedom create an environment that nurtures intellectual exploration, critical thinking, and high-quality scholarship. This, in turn, attracts and retains talented faculty, fosters a culture of learning and open discourse, and contributes to the institution's overall reputation and success, positively impacting the job performance of staff members. Based on the data collected from the interviews, most participants in this context believed in the existence of academic freedom within their respective institutions, although a small number of respondents agreed that such freedom is limited. These claims are reflected in the following quotations:

"And when it comes to research, they do not have any boundaries to say you should just associate with this person and you should not publish with this person from A or B institution. So, you can.

They even encourage us to participate in whatever that any institution is putting up there that can be able to grow our academic, our knowledge and skills and improve us as well''. [D12].

'' If I understand you well on academic freedom, I can say I think is superb, is very good and we are academically free. I am someone who likes changes and I am innovative. So as long as of course what you teach is under the policies, and curriculum put up and you can teach. There is no one who can say do not do this in such a way''. [D12]

'' But of course, with the syllabus and the outline, course outlines must be followed, academic freedom is there''. [D11]

However, some respondents reported the existence of limitations to academic freedom within their institutions in individual interviews. The following attestations can buttress these claims:

"To a certain degree, the academic freedom is there but at some point, you would see that there is a little bit of interfering with your work sometimes from the top management".[D2]

'' So the freedom there is quite limited. Yes, also there are limitations when it comes to research supervision". [D10]

As illustrated in the literature chapter, autonomy to pursue research and engage in intellectual discourse is a major contributor to academic staff job performance. As highlighted by the findings, academic freedom enables scholars to engage in research, innovation and critical thinking without constraints or undue interference (Szromek & Wolniak, 2020:1). In this way, academic staff can challenge complex and controversial issues.

The existence of academic freedom has implications for accountability. While it empowers academic staff to contribute and produce scholarly work, it also requires them to maintain ethical standards in executing their work. This implies that academic freedom must be balanced with accountability to ensure that scholarly outcomes are relevant and of high-quality standards (Chattopadhyay, 2020:10)

Achieving a balance between institutional control and academic staff independence is a challenge. Since PHEIs are self-governed, owners and top management sometimes interfere in their operations (Chattopadhyay, 2020:11). These complex and varied findings can also be attributed to a diverse regulatory environment (Hossain & Rahman, 2019:827), which in turn impacts academic freedom.

5.3.2.1.3 Diversity in recruitment and selection of academic staff

Many participants appreciated the diversity in the recruitment and selection of academic staff within their institution. This can be observed in the following quotations:

"Yeah, yeah, is obvious, yes and we are very serious with diversity, very, very serious and especially in academics". [D1]

"In the context of our community, diversity is significant. It's essential to recognise the richness of cultures, both local and those from various regions and countries". [D3]

These findings on diversity reveal both opportunities and challenges. Having a diverse academic staff brings in a range of experiences and perspectives that can significantly improve educational outcomes. However, despite intentions to promote diversity, the challenge lies in exploiting expatriates who often accept lower salaries due to their circumstances. This practice can undermine fair labour practices and set a precedent for lower salary expectations in the local job market. This situation can further create resentment and a sense of inequality among staff, potentially impacting their performance.

Additionally, linking these findings to the AMO theory provides insight into how diversity affects academic staff performance. With a diverse workforce, the institution taps into a broader range of competencies and skills. If these skills are aligned to their specific needs, PHEIs are likely to enhance employee performance. Additionally, when PHEIs embrace diversity, they can foster an environment of inclusivity and belonging, which can boost academic staff's motivation.

Moreover, the recruitment drive for PHEIs must always create a diverse academic workforce to respond effectively to the needs of a diverse student population (Tunio et al., 2021:475; Osman & Saputra, 2019: 158; Singh, 2019:624). Ssemugenyi (2020:141) reiterates that a diverse workforce, comprising employees with diverse cultures, academic backgrounds, and competencies, significantly contributes to institutional visibility. This, in turn, brings to the institution a wide range of perspectives and experiences needed to produce the twenty-first-century graduates.

5.3.2.1.4 Training and development for academic staff

In contrast to the general training discussed earlier, this study also explored professional training and development opportunities for academic staff. Although this was reported by a few participants in this context, there appears to be a particular indulgence of this kind of capacitation among academic staff in the institution represented in the study. This is clear in the following quotations:

"There are sometimes, for example, publication opportunities or writing opportunities or conference opportunities but, there is little exposure on these opportunities. Nobody asks who is interested? Who wants to go and yeah, so that happens, that exposure happens sometimes." [D3]

''Currently one of my job is to coordinate research. What do I do I encourage, motivate, and support research activities. Supporting and encouraging staff for example means identifying different available opportunities. I identify the needs of my colleague or the department needs, or the different campuses needs, then we train them.''[D4]

Professional development activities that support academic staff include opportunities for engaging in research, scholarly publications and participating in academic conferences. As Rudhumbu and Du Plessis (2020) note, HEIs should strive to provide continuous professional development for improved performance. In contrast, Bingwa and Ngibe (2021:26) state that training and development are not the only solutions and that academic staff need to adapt to the latest technology for optimal performance.

The literature emphasises the importance of research and publications as core activities in academia, which are integral to academic staff performance evaluation. The findings just outlined point to a positive relationship between training and development and research performance.

Applying specific HRM practices to research-oriented work is crucial (Jaskiene & Buciuniene, 2021, p. 153) to improve research outcomes. For instance, providing research grants, collaborative research opportunities, writing retreats, and mentorship programmes can significantly impact academic staff performance.

 The findings from this study indicate a gap between policy and practice. While the institution recognises the importance of professional development, participants reported that they had insufficient resources or institutional support to pursue these opportunities.

This discrepancy underscores the need for PHEIs to provide sufficient professional development opportunities that align with both individual and institutional objectives. By doing so, PHEIs not only contribute to the broader academic community but also enhance their image and reputation in society (Jaskiene & Buciuniene, 2021:152).

5.3.2.1.5 Workload and job satisfaction for academic staff

A concern for workload and job satisfaction emerged from the study. Workload and job satisfaction for academic staff are interconnected factors that can significantly influence staff job performance. A balanced workload can contribute to enhanced job satisfaction for academic staff.

This, in turn, positively influences their motivation and effectiveness in fulfilling their roles, ultimately enhancing overall job performance. As reported by several participants, the workload problem could affect the job satisfaction of affected academic staff. This is evident in the following responses:

"So, there is that push factor to perform, but I will say workload is too much, because sometimes you find yourself in a situation where you cannot attend to both full-time and part-time students. It can also make you stay in the office from morning hours until 9:30 in the evening to also attend to part time students" [D3]

"This HOD duty is a lot of work but at least I do not enjoy it very much. At least lecturing is more flexible than any other thing". [D7]

The work of an academic staff extends beyond the classroom. These findings demonstrate academics' commitment to support a diverse student body enrolled in their institution. By working long hours, academic staff ensure that all students have equal access to guidance and support. However, this practice highlights a heavy workload, as managing such a large student body requires substantial energy and time.

These demands not only lead to burnout (Adebayo, 2022:318; Abdullah et al., 2020:5843) but can also result in poor performance. That is why; to maintain performance levels, institutions must adequately compensate and offer support to their academic staff.

Meanwhile, the position of HoD, though prestigious, is often burdened with extensive administrative tasks and lacks sufficient financial reward. While lecturing offers more autonomy in work schedules, HoDs are required to work more rigid hours and meet deadlines.

These findings highlight that the lack of flexibility, adequate compensation, and administrative pressures make this position less appealing to academics. On the contrary, this highlights systematic imbalances within PHE, where administrative roles lack flexibility, leading to poor performance.

These findings suggest that excessive workload may hinder the performance of academic staff. As PHEIs attempt to double their efforts in student enrolment, limited resources, coupled with administrative demands, can lead to excessive academic workload. However, scholars have

emphasised the importance of balancing workload to ensure academic staff have the resources and time needed for effective performance (Adebayo, 2022:323; Harun et al., 2020:308).

5.3.3 Research question three: What challenges does the PHEI encounter in implementing HRM practices?

5.3.3.1 THEME THREE: CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING HRM PRACTICES

Given the data obtained related to challenges in implementing HRM practices, the following sub-themes emerged from the study: contextual political concerns, technological/digital divide, compensation and benefits, contextual legal and regulatory compliance, job insecurity, leadership support, organisational culture, performance evaluation challenges, publication refund constraints, resources constraints, training and development barriers, and workloads and job satisfaction for academic staff. These sub-themes are visually presented in Figure 5.3 and explained further.

Figure 5.3: Network diagrams of sub-themes: challenges in implementing HRM practices
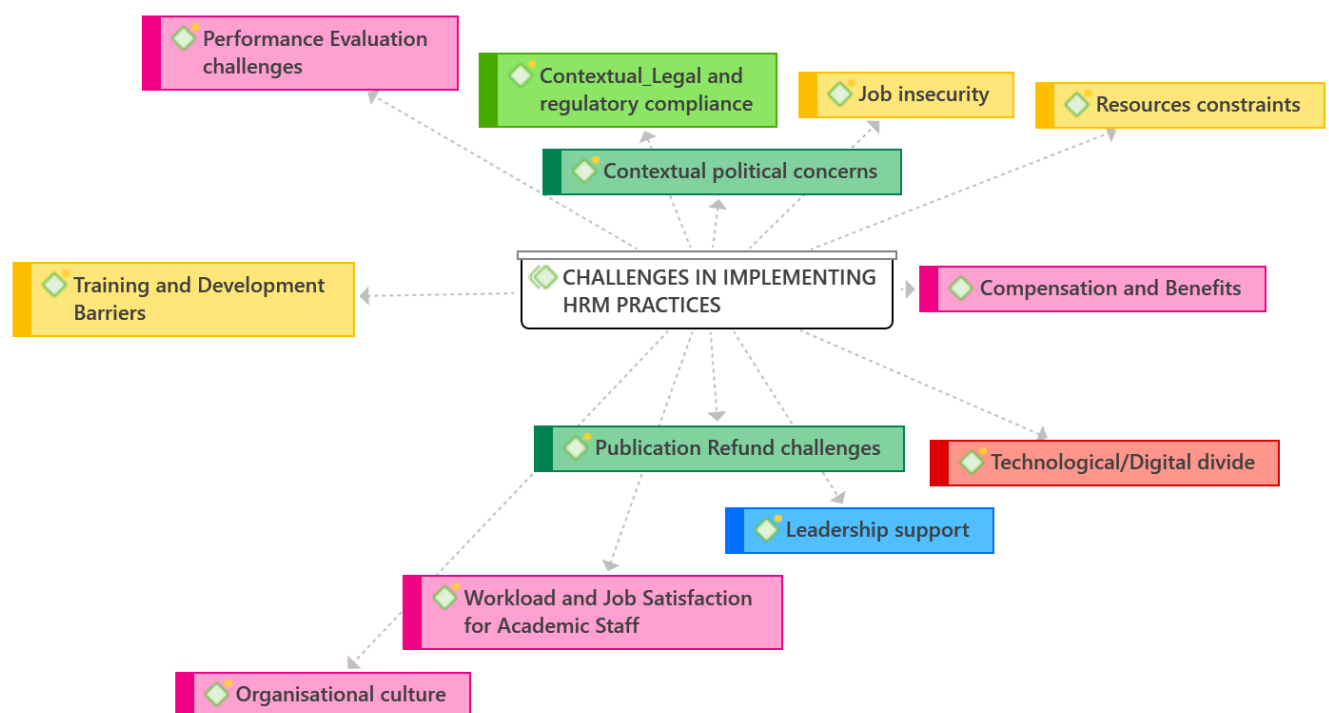
Source: Author (2024)

5.3.3.1.1 Contextual political/cultural concerns

Contextual political and cultural issues can, indeed, have a significant impact on job performance in PHEIs. Participants highlighted instances of political concerns. For example, they expressed frustration over the municipality's refusal to approve their institution's developmental plans. Additionally, respondents lamented the cultural mindset of people towards PHEIs. The following quotations substantiate these claims:

"I remember when we wanted the auditorium room to be built and we want the sports field to be built, I mean constructed but then because of these politics it was an issue of municipality rejecting to approve that requisition." [D2]

''Another issue that as an institution we can say is a challenge but not a major one, I think is just a misconception that some public institutions still have over private institutions. Misconception, in terms of the quality of programs that we are offering at the institution''. [D4]

'' Yeah, and then there is also one aspect that people do not know between private and public institutions. You know private is based on the tuition fees that the students are paying, so the students are the clients and the boss here and there. There are certain things you cannot do because they are the ones paying you. Those aspects also are some of the challenges''. [D6]

The findings showed that participants highlighted the municipality's challenges related to institutional development plan approval have implications for academic staff job performance. This means initiatives such as academic infrastructure and faculty development are hampered. The absence of these facilities limits the institution's ability to offer a comprehensive student experience. Often, it is a challenge to navigate and adhere to municipalities' specific guidelines for building infrastructure, which hampers the effective performance of faculty and institutional growth.

Moreover, the importance of institutional reputation in attracting and retaining experienced academic staff cannot be overemphasised. The negative public perceptions of PHEIs (Lilemba, 2022) can discourage potential candidates from joining them and influence the motivation and commitment of existing academic staff, potentially affecting their performance. Such a reputation can equally affect student enrolment, as potential students may perceive PHEIs as inferior compared to their public counterparts. When student numbers are low, PHEIs may face budget constraints, limiting their teaching and research resources. This can hinder academic staff from delivering quality education.

The findings also highlight the complex dynamics between lecturers and students. While students are the most important clients, emphasis on meeting their demands may compromise academic

integrity and educational standards (Jacob et al., 2021:234). Moreover, these dynamics can undermine the authority of academic staff and their commitment to delivering good education.

5.3.3.1.2 Technological/digital divide

The technological or digital divide can indeed hinder academic staff's job performance. There are several ways in which this divide can pose challenges. As revealed by the study's data, participants identified the challenge of unequal access to resources, such as computers and high-speed internet, among staff. This disparity can hinder their ability to carry out tasks efficiently. Additionally, respondents expressed concerns about variations in digital literacy and technological skills among staff, which can impede the adoption of new technologies. Those with limited skills may struggle to integrate digital tools into their teaching, research, or administrative responsibilities. The following quotations highlight potential effects of the digital divide:

"In Namibia, we face the digital divide, particularly among students who have registered for online learning. Many encounter difficulties related to internet issues, which often lead to challenges such as missing assignments or being unable to participate in various activities. For instance, some students may approach coordinators expressing concerns like, 'I missed this' or 'I was not able to write.' Addressing internet accessibility emerges as a primary issue in this context". [D3]

''The connectivity issues and other things but the skills also''. [D3]

''Not every lecturer is fully versed in integrating technology into teaching and learning. Despite possessing qualifications, some may primarily focus on areas such as curriculum development, and integrating technology can be a challenge. [D3]

In contemporary education, technology plays a crucial role in offering tools for effective learning. Academic staff who are not proficient in integrating technology into their teaching may deprive students of the full benefits of technology-enhanced education. This gap is detrimental as it limits academic staff's ability to engage students effectively. The situation is exacerbated when both parties lack technological proficiency, resulting in a less dynamic learning environment. Students will struggle to utilise digital tools for optimal learning, while academics will find it challenging to integrate digital tools into their teaching practices. This misalignment can prevent the institution from leveraging technology to enhance teaching and learning. Furthermore, the technological challenge has profound implications for improving academic staff job performance. Given the contemporary higher educational landscape, technology plays a significant role in teaching and learning. Al-Twal (2022:1394) and Nicolas-Agustin et al. (2022:398) underscore the transformative potential of technology, while also acknowledging its associated challenges. It is, however, essential for faculty

members to be well-versed in digital literacy, adapt to new tools, and integrate technology into their pedagogical practices.

5.3.3.1.3 Compensations and Benefits

Reasonable compensation and benefits are generally considered key factors that contribute to job satisfaction and improved performance. However, it is essential to acknowledge that even in situations where compensation and benefits are favourable, challenges can still arise. The data from the interviews indicated a challenge related to participants' expectations of receiving the same benefits as those in public institutions. This expectation is reflected in the following comments:

'' And we need to be provided with benefits that are found in other public institutions''. [D5]

"One would have an interest in something but looking at the private institution you are working for, what you earn and everything you might not be able to upgrade yourself and you remain at the level you are that you cannot even publish" [D12]

The desire of academics in PHEIs to receive similar benefits as those in public institutions underscores the importance of aligning HRM practices with employee expectations. These findings are consistent with those of Mohammadi and Karupiah (2020:1103), who highlight that financial rewards are an essential factor affecting performance in private universities. To compete effectively and attract top talent, PHEIs must address compensation disparity. While it is true that PHEIs are not subsidised by the government and operate with limited financial constraints compared to their public counterparts, they need to explore creative solutions to address this gap. Meanwhile, the findings indicate that low salaries affect academics' ability to invest in their own professional development. Attending conferences, obtaining a higher qualification or obtaining a certification requires financial investment. If academics are unable to engage in these professional development activities, their job performance is likely to be compromised. Furthermore, salary disparities and inability to engage in professional growth can lead to disengaged and less productive staff (Al-Twal, 2022:11; Jacob et al., 2021:234).

5.3.3.1.4 Contextual legal and regulatory compliance

In this context, participants highlighted challenges related to delays caused by a regulatory authority (NCRST) in processing their submissions. The following statements reflect this concern:

"One challenge I have observed is the delay caused by the NCRST in our students' work. Traditionally, we used to provide students with ethical clearance letters promptly, allowing them to

proceed to the field for data collection and project completion. However, there has been a noticeable change, with students now experiencing delays of approximately 2 or 3 months in obtaining their ethical clearance letters." [D4]

"I was informed that this delay may be attributed to the NCRST's limited capacity to promptly review and process proposals from all institutions". [D4]

It was evident that participants experienced frustration over these delays. The prolonged waiting period may impact the institution's research outputs. These delays by the research commission not only contribute to frustration among students but can also negatively impede academic staff's ability to conduct impactful research, an essential element for career advancement (Alshaikhmubarak et al., 2020). Additionally, delays may jeopardise research grants as many funding institutions have strict deadlines. However, the establishment of quality assurance bodies is necessary to curb dubious quality assurance practices (Myburgh & Calitz, 2022:93). This rigorous process is, therefore, essential in maintaining research integrity.

5.3.3.1.5 Job insecurity

Job insecurity can have implications for job performance among academic staff in PHEIs. Seemingly, academic staff who experience job insecurity may face reduced job satisfaction, which in turn affects their motivation and commitment to their roles. Regarding this concern, the data indicated mixed concerns about job insecurity and security. Some respondents lamented their working contract conditions, which they believed put them in a precarious situation of job uncertainty, as can be seen in the following comments:

"Is demotivating. Some of us are still young. Now if you are working on a contract and my years of teaching here, I am seeing people who are being fired just on the spot who are just told today is your last day. So, that leaves you anxious every time you feel like maybe I am the next, I am the next, I am the next". [D2]

"I would say that having contracts with staff has been a challenge, and I see it as a prevailing trend among higher education institutions." [D4]

However, other respondents dispelled the fear of job insecurity, evident in the following attestations:

'' I do not have that feeling of like you can just be tossed away tomorrow. Having that fear of like I can lose this job tomorrow and then I don't even know where to go and something like that. So, I think maybe I approach such fear differently''. [D3]

'' We are operating on contracts. Those are the contracts that get to be renewed, of course, based on the performance.'' [D4]

''There is one thing I always know; I am a Christian, so I believe that wherever God puts you is temporary and then it is for you to make changes''. [D6]

The mixed evidence found in the study confirmed the complex dynamics regarding employment conditions in the PHE sector. In the context of PHEIs, where student populations and funding can be variable (Anis & Islam, 2019:482), job security is often a concern for academic staff. When academic staff are anxious about job security, it can lead to decreased job satisfaction and diminished focus on their work. This concern must be addressed through HRM practices related to contract renewals, fair evaluation system (Al-Twal 2022:1396), fair recognition and rewards and appropriate development programmes (Naeem et al., 2019:509).

When employers fail to provide job stability, a sense of belonging is compromised, and academic staff can reduce their contribution to institutional goals. This can further undermine the quality of education provided. It is essential to emphasise that job security positively impacts performance, employee well-being, trust, and affective commitment (Alfagira, 2019:13; Naeem et al., 2019:503).

For those lecturers who feel secure in their positions, their sense of security may be attributed to factors such as perceived institutional stability or personal confidence in their value to the institution. For these employees, employment-related worries are unlikely to affect their academic responsibilities. Nevertheless, this contrast highlights the need for the institution to address job security issues to ensure optimal academic staff performance.

5.3.3.1.6. Leadership support

Leadership support is a critical factor that can significantly influence the job performance of academic staff in PHEIs. Effective leadership enhances motivation, provides a clear direction, and supports professional development, contributing to a positive and productive work environment. On the contrary, inadequate or unsupportive leadership can hinder performance and lead to dissatisfaction among academic staff. Given the data from the interviews, mixed responses emerged from the respondents. Some vehemently denounced the nature of leadership support in their respective PHEIs as seen in the following direct quotations:

"So, those are the issues that are not good in terms of leadership because there are some who were given leadership, especially the HOD or Dean but then instead of helping the colleagues to do the work they were like spies of the top management". [D2]

"There are variety of issues that I will point out that are not user-friendly. Some feel threatened by fellow academics especially if you are HOD and you are maybe a Master holder, and I am a lecturer and I am a PhD holder. Sometimes it becomes a fear of the unknown. They would want to kick you out so that there is nobody with PhD on top of them and that create also tension sometimes in different departments because once one person attains higher qualifications than the HOD or the Dean, then it becomes an issue of maybe jealousy or insubordination. Why would you get a PhD while I am your Dean, I am still a Master holder". [D2]

However, there was also an indication from some respondents of the existence of some supportive HODs in their institution, which is clearly evident in the following attestation:

"But there are some HODs who are also supportive. I must point out that in my first two years, I had one good colleague who, at that time I was pursuing my PhD, she was my HOD and she was helpful because at some point she would come and ask how you are progressing". [D2]

The above views, as presented in the study, are also confirmed by the literature, which highlights weak leadership in many HEIs. Jacob and Musa (2020:92) observe that HEIs' leaders lack leadership ability and competencies to manage HEIs. Quite often, they lack good human relations and effective leadership styles necessary for effective leadership. This perceived lack of leadership support can lead to a lack of vision execution and low job satisfaction (Mondejar & Asio, 2022:1631; Alfagira, 2019:10; Obeidat et al., 2019:334).

As the study findings demonstrate, academic leadership support can be attributed to the leader's genuine commitment to addressing faculty needs. Academic leaders who prioritise professional relationships with their subordinates foster a supportive and inclusive environment for academic staff. Furthermore, leadership support is influenced by appropriate leadership style (Al-Twal, 2022:2) and institutional culture. Therefore, active support from academic leaders results in higher levels of performance.

5.3.3.1.7 Organisational culture

Seemingly, if an organisation's culture does not align with the values and expectations of the staff, it can create a disconnect. This misalignment may lead to reduced motivation and job satisfaction among staff, impacting their overall performance. The participants highlighted the demoralising nature of the organisational culture in their respective institutions. They denounced an organisational culture seemingly intoxicated with fear of the unknown and jealousy, which tends to prevail in their work environment, as indicated in the following quotations:

'' Sometimes is demoralising. Our culture is kind of demoralising sometimes, but we keep on pushing. Our culture is different from any other institution, really and is kind of demoralising''. [D7]

''If you are HOD and you are maybe a Master holder, and I am a lecturer and a PhD holder, sometimes it becomes a fear of the unknown. They would want to kick you out so that there is nobody with a PhD on top of them, and that creates also tension. Once one person attains higher qualifications than the HOD or the Dean then it becomes an issue of maybe jealousy or insubordination to feel like why you would get a PhD while I am your Dean, I am still a Master holder''. [D2]

'' Additionally, there are limitations in research supervision. Currently, I am in the field of environmental health, yet I find myself supervising nursing students. Some of the topics they choose are quite challenging, prompting me to delve into unfamiliar areas''. [D10]

Organisational culture is a complex matter that needs to be embraced holistically in a manner that promotes workforce productivity. The desire and will to improve collaboration, knowledge-sharing and mentorship should be developed to foster performance among academic staff. A demoralising organisational culture (Ashraf, 2019:152) characterised specifically by negative competition and jealousy can lead to a decline in overall academic staff job performance. This insecurity may lead to defensive postures that hamper innovative academic settings.

Moreover, a demoralising institutional culture creates a hostile environment, which can further erode staff performance (Mohammadi & Karupiah, 2020:1093). When academic leaders undermine the contribution of highly qualified staff, such a culture decreases staff motivation to perform their roles effectively. Furthermore, the opportunity to perform effectively is compromised when academic staff are inadequately supported when working in areas outside their expertise. Appropriate HRM practices that enable staff to utilise their skills should be implemented; however, in a demoralising culture, these opportunities may be poorly managed.

5.3.3.1.8 Performance evaluation challenges

Performance evaluation challenges in PHEIs can have significant impacts on the job performance of academic staff. There are several ways in which these challenges may affect academic staff. In this context, participants expressed dissatisfaction regarding the scope and efficacy of performance evaluation as it relates to staff progression in their institutions, reflected in the following attestations:

''……. and then if someone is at the place and at the same level for long, they tend to get frustrated and then they tend to leave. At the same time, you will lose the skilled personnel''. [D11]

'' I think we have a lot of areas that maybe we do not evaluate because maybe they are very difficult to evaluate visually. [D11]

"As a lecturer, I feel the performance evaluation is challenging, lacking clear criteria and expectations. One is not sure how your contribution is measured here" [D3]

While performance evaluation is designed to assess and improve performance, failure to implement transparent performance management can lead to staff experiencing ambiguity in understanding the criteria used in performance evaluation. There is evidence that implementing a sound performance management system is crucial for achieving a high level of performance (Faeq, 2020:60). When expectations are clear, it can lead to continuous improvement in academic staff job performance. However, the study findings point to a common source of dissatisfaction: a lack of transparency in the evaluation process. This aligns with Al-Twal's (2022) study, which states that HEIs lack an evaluation process for measuring the performance of academic staff. Instead, the sole evaluation method used by many HEIs is student evaluations, which are not even seriously implemented. A lack of a comprehensive performance evaluation system undermines effective HRM in HEIs.

5.3.3.1.9 Publication constraints

Participants indicated challenges of timeously obtaining publication finance as expressed in the following statements:

'' But now and then I found myself and with other colleagues that we have been publishing with, but when it comes to the finance part, it is a challenge''. [D4]

'' So if you want to acquire something we have a centralised finance. Everything has to go through there. The HR is also centralised so we might have limited help from the main campus''. [D11]

In the academic sphere, the quality of research and number of publications are critical metrics for performance evaluation (Jaskiene & Buciuniene, 2021:152; Taamneh et al., 2021; Susanj et al., 2020:485; Rehman et al., 2019:2). Publications, especially in peer-reviewed journals, are not only viewed as a means of disseminating research findings but also a determining factor in career progression and securing research funding. Academics' performance is grounded in the prevailing culture of "publish or perish" found in many HEIs. As such, the timely release of publication finance, as highlighted by the findings of this study, is crucial in enabling academic staff to participate in academic scholarly publications fully.

However, using publications as a primary performance metric has received criticism in the higher education sphere. The pressure of publishing can result in the neglect of innovative teaching (Taamneh et al., 2021), directly impacting educational quality. Hence, Taamneh et al. (2021) calls for a more balanced approach that values both research and teaching. By so doing, PHEIs can foster a well-rounded culture that supports both publishing and teaching.

5.3.3.1.10 Resource constraints

Resource constraints can significantly impact the job performance of academic staff in various ways. Based on the data gathered from interviews, participants highlighted challenges related to resources, including textbooks, computers, and digital and technological capacity. The following statement can be used to reinforce these assertions:

''Sometimes we design the curriculum then we do not have enough textbooks or facilities to give such training this is a problem''. [D2]

'' I think more can be done for example: these laptops we are using are personal laptops, you bring your own, you use it for your work. If something happens to it you fix it, maybe because the institution cannot afford to buy a laptop for everyone, yes that could be one reason''. [D10]

''Despite possessing qualifications, some may primarily focus on areas such as curriculum development, and integrating technology can be a challenge. In essence, capacity is also an obstacle in this context'' [D3]

'' But with private institutions if we are doing, let me say even the recent one we have a research day on the 31st of October but that research day is not funded by any external agencies or any external government-related institutions it is just the institution try to use the minimum resource it has to make sure that it puts up a good research day''. [D4]

Access to appropriate resources is integral to the daily activities of academic staff and its absence can impede their performance. Resources (physical, digital or financial) are indispensable in the educational process and must be provided adequately. Oyewole et al. (2019:50) lend credence to this observation by stating that it is not enough to have appropriate university programmes in place; if there is a lack of resources, academic staff cannot perform, despite how much they are incentivised.

Resource availability is positively correlated with job performance, including research output and teaching quality. As indicated by the participants cited earlier, resources constraints may impede curriculum implementation (Rudhumbu & Du Plessis, 2020) or hosting of research days, which are

essential for staying abreast with advancements in one's field. However, academics can mitigate this by leveraging creativity and collaborations, such as building networks with other stakeholders outside the university or using open education resources to reduce the need for expensive teaching materials.

5.3.3.1.11 Training and development barriers

Limited access to training and development opportunities can result in academic staff having outdated skills and knowledge. This can affect their ability to engage with contemporary teaching methods, technologies, and research practices. Regarding the challenges of training and development opportunities for academic staff capacitation in PHEIs, participants were dissatisfied with the inadequacy and quality of available workshops open to them in their respective institutions. These assertions are expressed in the following attestations:

''Before at least we used to have maybe some workshop and all that, but now we are just there on our own. Perhaps people are too busy. There is nothing really that enhances our teaching much'' [D7]

'' Even when it comes to workshops on the lower level to improve your skills, they are minimum, but on the other side we collaborate with others, you can say the collaboration is doing us good and possibly in future if this collaboration continues, maybe what we are not getting now like adequate workshops and other things can be supplemented by these collaborations''. [D12]

'' Usually, most of them are free because they are free maybe some are 2-3 hours then they will introduce you to some, that are very free. But of course, the university must try to offer some of the courses online. I heard of a lot of workshops are there, where government contribute and so on but is very rare to see that the university has sent someone to go''. [D11]

"Following up students is quite challenging because for example allocating students, entering question marks and all that it requires Microsoft Excel. There are still colleagues that struggle with the task of online entering of the students' marks". [D11]

The training and development barriers highlighted in the preceding statements have a significant impact on the job performance of academic staff. For instance, if academics are not well-equipped in tools such as Excel, they spend more time in administrative work, which could be better spent on research and teaching. Similarly, a lack of professional development opportunities may hamper the ability to innovate in teaching methodology.

In fact, Amini-Philips and Okonmah (2020:119) reiterate that resource scarcity in a university not only reduces productivity but also results in producing half-baked graduates. This highlights the importance of educational resources, such as those mentioned by the participants. For PHEIs to achieve their mission, educational resources should be made available (Jacob et al., 2021:231), creating a conducive work environment essential for higher performance.

Despite these limitations, the fact that academic staff engage in self-initiated collaborations highlights their commitment to creating a high-performing culture. This approach aligns with Al-Twalwith Al-Twal's (2022:2) sentiment that academic staff are self-motivated, and their work is characterised by a high degree of freedom and autonomy.

This highlights the need for HRM practices that better support these collaborations by allocating time for them and rewarding peer-led initiatives. However, while these self-initiated collaborations are commendable, relying heavily on informal engagement may undermine the quality of learning experiences. Hence, to reap the benefits, these efforts must be sufficiently integrated into the institution's objectives and formally supported by HR and academic leaders.

5.3.3.1.12 Workloads and job satisfaction for academic staff

The relationship between workloads, job satisfaction, and job performance is intricate and has significant implications for academic staff in PHEIs. The study, in this context, provides reports on how workloads and job satisfaction can impact the performance of academic staff in the selected PHEIs. Given the data collected from the interviews, participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the amount of work they are subjected to perform in their institution.

A participant said the following:

'' I think a lot of things that I would mention we as faculty are already solving them. We had an issue, when students come from practice or internship, they come with files which the lecturers need to mark. And then these lecturers also have their students already that they are marking. These question papers can be 900 that they need to mark and then you have again that. So, taking these files from them can help them a lot which we are trying to do". [D5]

The findings related to workload show that academics' workload does not only encompass teaching or research responsibilities, but also includes additional tasks such as assessing students' portfolios who have completed experiential learning.

This increased workload is often cited in the literature as a primary cause of stress for academic staff (Adebayo, 2022:319; Abdullah et al., 2020:5840; Amini-Philips & Okonmah. 2020:112)), impairing not only performance, but also negatively affecting academics' well-being and job satisfaction (Yousefi & Abdullah, 2019:564). On the contrary, excessive assessment workload may result in a lack of detailed and personalised feedback to students, which is essential for good learning experiences.

Various scholars advocate for workload management strategies, such as equitable task distribution (Amini-Philip & Okonmah, 2020:114), realistic deadlines (Yousefi & Abdullah, 2019:572) and providing support for time-intensive tasks (Adebayo, 2022:319). Addressing workload issues is essential not only for educators' health but also for management to minimise exacerbating staffing challenges in academic institutions.

5.3.4 Research question four: What factors enhance academic staff job performance in the PHEI?

5.3.4.1 THEME FOUR: ENHANCING ACADEMIC STAFF JOB PERFORMANCE

In this context, the study aimed to gather the views and experiences of participants by focusing on identifying factors that contribute to job performance enhancement, specifically among academic staff within PHEIs.

The theme is more employee-centric, aiming to understand elements that positively influence academic staff members in their roles. Given the data collected from the interviews, the following sub-themes, presented and explained in Figure 5.4, inductively emerged.

Figure 5 4: Network diagrams of sub-themes: enhancing academic staff job performance
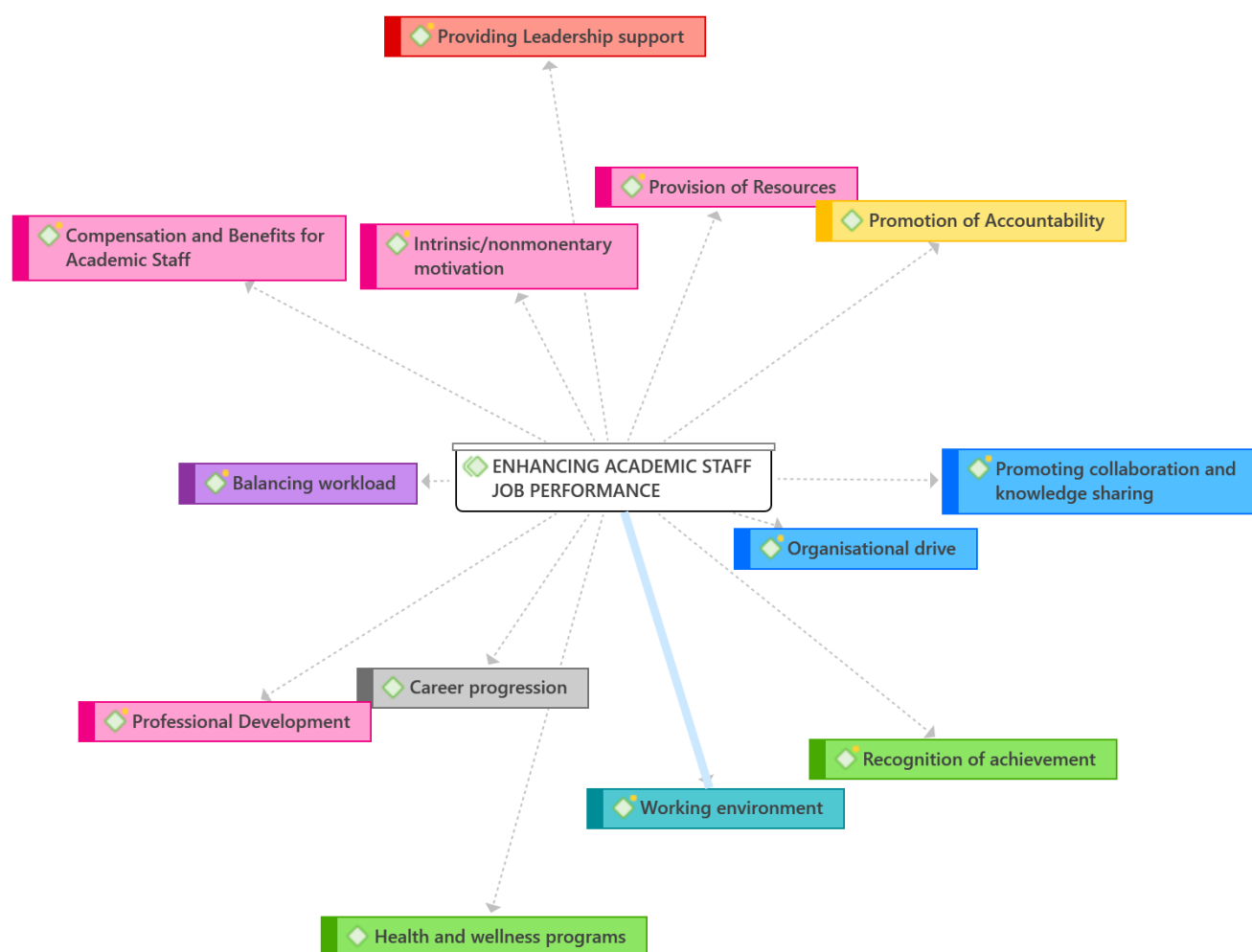
Source: Author (2024)

5.3.4.1.1 Balancing Workload

In addressing workloads and fostering job satisfaction, PHEIs can positively influence the job performance of academic staff by creating an environment conducive to excellence in teaching, research, and institutional contributions. Based on the interview data, participants indicated the deployment of tutors, as well as other management interventions, in addressing the mentioned concerns. The following statements attest to these claims:

'' We appoint tutors, or we also ask our part-time lecturers to help us in assisting our full-time academic staff when it comes to marking''. [D5]

''There are those people that really has a high workload, the high workload is there. You have two semesters; you have a lot of students, and you have a lot of modules to teach. That is also one thing

that management can look into how best to reduce the workload on the lecturers' shoulders so that they can be able to focus on one and master well those modules and improve their expertise.''[D12]

'' Yes, it is easier because management inform us that whoever thinks he/she is overloaded just contact the management so that they can sort out anything, any of your burdens. They do not want us to be burdened with overload of marking many examinations scripts for example.''[D9]

In addressing the research question on factors that enhance academic performance, workload balance emerged as a sub-theme that directly enhances academic staff performance. When academic staff have a balanced workload, they can complete tasks on time, which enhances their overall performance. Conversely, overloaded lecturers may struggle to provide adequate guidance and support to students, resulting in a reduced quality of education. Furthermore, managing large classes and several modules can limit time available for professional development and research.

To address these challenges, effective HRM practices, such as hiring additional staff, can alleviate the burden from full-time academic staff. The study indicates a common strategy employed by PHEIs to address workload challenges. The appointment of tutors and part-time faculty is flexible, allowing for the specific needs to be addressed, and can be a practical solution to alleviate the workload burden on full-time faculty. Managing academic workload ensures a balance between teaching, research and community service. However, while this strategy may offer short-term relief, over-reliance on part-time lecturers or tutors can compromise overall academic quality (Kajawo, 2019:50).

5.3.4.1.2 Career progression

Participants emphasised the fundamental importance of career progression as a key factor in enhancing the job performance of academic staff in their respective institutions. Comments that follow support this:

"In my institution for you to go to the next level you must do more. Like now I am a lecturer, the next one is a senior lecturer, so for you to go to senior lecturer you must have some certain publications and some certain form of research supervision and others. Personally, I think that is the only thing that indeed makes me want to do more" [D8]

''My goal is to build my career. I do not know how and when, but one needs just to have a very good standing CV if I can put it that way. Apart from that, publication becomes important because it also goes with promotion ". [D8]

The professional growth and development of academic staff are essential foundations for career progression within the academic fraternity. Advancement opportunities often come with increased leadership roles, responsibilities and expectations of continued scholarly work. This creates a platform where academic staff can enhance their performance and, in turn, contribute to institutional ranking. HRM practices, such as training programmes, mentorship initiatives, and transparent criteria for promotion, accelerate career advancement.

Participants felt the need for career advancement pathways by building a strong curriculum vitae. Career progression in academic positions is a crucial aspect of the academic profession. Research, teaching, and community service excellence contribute to an individual's professional growth within the broader academic community. As such, the motive for career advancement is worthwhile, as it, to some extent, creates a sense of achievement (Liu, 2020:286), which is vital for maintaining job performance.

5.3.4.1.3 Compensations and Benefits for Academic Staff

Several benefits were highlighted by participants, including publication incentives, study benefits for themselves and family members. However, participants expressed dissatisfaction with the fewer benefits offered compared to those at public universities. The following quotations from the respondents elaborate on these benefits:

"I would say the primary motivation is publication. Recently, in the institution I've observed, there are incentives tied to publishing. The moment you publish, the institution provides an incentive, an appreciation to acknowledge your contribution." [D2]

"There are also other benefits on family members, a child, if studying with us she/he can still be given that benefit" [D4]

''In terms of funding, yes, they are clearly stated in terms of how much can the university pay for all the staff, if you have a child how much the university can cater for.'' [D4]

'' And we need to be provided with benefits that are found in other public institutions''. [D5]

"Currently we get refunds when you publish, you apply towards the end of the year and then you get some refunds to what you have used". [D4]

Access to essential incentives, such as publication fees/refunds, highlights the support of the institution towards scholarly endeavours of academic staff. Acknowledging and recognising publication activities enhance the ranking and reputation of the academic institution. This support can

motivate academic staff to actively engage in publication activities, thereby contributing to the advancement of academic knowledge and enhancing their institution's profile. Szromek and Wolniak (2020:32) acknowledge that the job satisfaction level of academic staff concerning their scientific work depends on the significance of the research carried out, as well as employment conditions such as remuneration. The perceived appreciation of the benefits mentioned demonstrates the positive impact of such HRM practices on the overall professional development and performance of academic staff.

Family-friendly HRM practices, such as tuition waivers for family members, are essential in attracting and retaining academic staff in academia, who are the primary resources in any educational institution. Generating high employee performance requires consideration of practices that best leverage these assets, that is, employees (Otoo, 2019:949). Hence, this support can foster academic staff loyalty and commitment.

5.3.4.1.4 Health and Wellness Programme

Health and wellness programmes often incorporate initiatives that promote physical fitness, such as gym facilities, fitness classes, or wellness challenges. The benefits of improved physical health extend to heightened energy levels, reduced stress, and an overall enhancement of well-being, ultimately leading to increased productivity and improved job performance. In the interview, a few participants emphasised the necessity of such a programme in their institutions. This practice can serve as a model for emulation and replication in other PHEIs, promoting the well-being of academic staff and enhancing high job performance. This sentiment is encapsulated in the following quotation:

"And also, the institution takes care of our health, they do not just care about our physical being they also take care of our mental health. Last week, we had a health and wellness day where we had different speakers just talking about mental health and how we take care of each other and how you work across different offices because sometimes you can be in your own different office and work in silos." [D4]

An appreciation of health and wellness programmes underscores the importance of holistic well-being in academic institutions (Tumwesigye et al., 2020: 542). From an organisational psychology perspective, investing in employee well-being increases job satisfaction and productivity (Alfagira & Zumrah, 2019:28). For instance, Yousefi and Abdullah (2019:564) emphasise that addressing employees' physical, mental and emotional well-being leads to reduced occupational stress.

However, HR must evaluate wellness programmes to meet the diverse needs of academic staff. Not only are they to be accessible, but the programmes must also be inclusive. Additionally, they must

be implemented as integral components of the workplace culture, rather than viewed as a once-off event. This implies that their success depends on careful planning and alignment with broader institutional goals. Therefore, when implemented thoughtfully, these programmes not only promote a sense of community but also enhance job performance.

5.3.4.1.5 Intrinsic/non-monetary motivation

The study unveiled the fundamental role and efficacy of intrinsic and/or non-monetary motivation in driving both job satisfaction and job performance. Some participants explicitly identified intrinsic and/or non-monetary motivation as pivotal factors influencing their job performance. These motivating forces include, among other things, a commitment to students' academic success and personal passion. The significance of these driving forces is echoed in the following quotations:

''Usually, as an educator and a teacher by profession, it gives me that courage to see the students excelling in their academic endeavours and it also gives me pride when I see them graduate. So that gives me joy to see them that they are out.'' [D2]

'' But I think motivation at the academic level must come from within because nobody is going to say wake up and 03:00 am and work on that research paper. Nobody is saying travel all over and do those interviews to write a paper. So, the aspect of internal motivation I think also plays a big role because nobody is pushing you to say go and study''. [D3]

'' My interest is just to work with the students, I am very, very happy whenever I am seeing them''. [D9]

'' My passions and my interests for education are what brought me here. Where I was, I had a better salary so what pushes me is more of my passions and interests that I want to see myself in future'. I want to be a professor, one day. [D12]'

Organisational psychology studies emphasise the significance of intrinsic motivation in enhancing job performance. For academic staff in this study, intrinsic motivation is manifested in their genuine passion for teaching, a commitment to excellence and a desire to contribute to the growth of their students.

This validates the view that intrinsic aspects of the academic job (teaching and research) are critical to academic staff performance (Nguyen et al., 2022:42). When employees are intrinsically motivated, they can make career choices that obviously do not maximise their direct economic benefit, as demonstrated by the views expressed by the four participants.

Given these findings, intrinsically motivated academic staff invest time and effort in their roles. Being driven by an inherent desire to excel, academic staff are often willing to go the extra mile. To maximise the benefits of intrinsic motivation, PHEIs should nurture and value this type of motivation. This can be done by promoting job autonomy and providing professional development opportunities.

5.3.4.1.6 Organisational drive

In this context, participants emphasised the instrumental role of the organisation in influencing the job performance of academic staff. They underscored the importance of their institutions driving job performance through organisational culture. These insights are reflected in the following statements:

''The institution must also make sure that they recognise the input that we are bringing and that through motivational factor such as a good working condition and rewarding those who are doing well, academics may improve their performance''. [D2]

''Actually, our institution is just to motivate us to achieve greater heights. They are encouraging us that it is better to teach our students effectively, because it seems like we are competing with other institutions. If your institution is not producing or delivering good quality results it will be a shame I can say.''[D16]

''Of course, open door policy, if you have a challenge you go to academic management to say what your challenge is and they try to provide solutions or improve the work.'' [D10]

Academic staff emphasised the need for recognition of their contributions, motivation to achieve greater heights, and an open-door policy within their institution. These factors align well with the AMO theory, which serves as the guiding framework for the study. The motivation component of the AMO theory underscores the significance of recognition and rewards in enhancing performance (Al-Tit, 2020:4), making it particularly relevant here. As participants expressed a desire for acknowledgement of their efforts, recognising their efforts can encourage academic staff to strive for excellent performance.

Furthermore, the study's findings suggest that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are essential for enhancing academic staff performance. As discussed earlier, on the one hand, regarding inherent motivation, academic staff achieve personal satisfaction and joy when they see their students succeeding. This is further enhanced when they feel recognised and valued. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation is boosted when tangible rewards and incentives are offered (Saad et al., 2021:7), such as public acknowledgement, bonuses or promotions. Recognition is a significant

stimulus for morale, which, in turn, leads to improved performance as academic staff are likely to exert more effort when they feel appreciated.

Another critical element highlighted by participants is an open-door policy. This element fosters a culture of open communication between academic staff and their leadership. It is also aligned with the opportunity component of the AMO theory, as it provides a necessary avenue for effective performance. Having an open-door policy encourages dialogue and builds trust between staff and management, signalling a conducive environment for high performance. Therefore, PHEIS need to sustain a positive organisational culture to impact academic work and motivate faculty to do more.

5.3.4.1.7 Professional development

Providing continuous professional development opportunities to academic staff, encompassing workshops, conferences, and training programmes, plays a pivotal role in enhancing their skills and contributing to job performance. This foundational aspect is substantiated by data derived from the interviews. The following comments from participants elucidate this perspective:

''I see that the institution gives that allocation of training, allowing the academics to grow. But I think within my little exposure as well, I think mostly also the internal motivation of academic staff play a role.'' [D14]

'' Presently, one of my jobs is to facilitate research. What I do, I encourage, motivate, and support research activities.   Support and encourage staff for example I identify different available opportunities, I identify the needs that my colleague needs, or the departmental needs or the different campuses needs then we train them.''[D4]

'Of course, there are other needs that may arise for example in terms of development training where the university sometimes identifies the need for the whole institution and they can train all the institutions, I mean all the staff.''[D12]

The findings highlight the role of academics' intrinsic motivation in fostering employee performance. Coupled with external professional development opportunities and mentorship, academics' internal motivation can drive sustainable performance. Furthermore, providing research guidance to junior staff can accelerate their research outputs and career progression. As a lack of experienced researchers impedes Singh (2019:624) notes, an institution's research capacity. Hence, mentoring early-career researchers can significantly increase institutional research outputs (Alshaikhmubarak et al., 2020). These initiatives can create a conducive working environment, essential for both professional and institutional growth.

Participants noted that the institution actively provides pedagogical training and research mentorship to academic staff, aiming to enhance their teaching and research capabilities. These are key developmental initiatives that equip academic staff with skills to deliver effective instruction in the classroom. According to the AMO theory, the ability component refers to the element of enhancing employees' skills, making pedagogical training and research mentorship crucial initiatives in boosting academic staff performance.

5.3.4.1.8 Collaboration and knowledge sharing

Collaboration and knowledge sharing is one of the remedies put forward by interview participants as a solution to enhance job performance among academic staff. The following comments confirm this claim:

''You know with our lecturers, we even do some collaboration, I do some collaboration with them, we write papers we publish together and all that, with my subordinate. We do also a workshop on just how to set the exam, and how to moderate papers''. [D7]

''When it comes to those, I think the institution is also engaging with other organisations where they put themselves together to organise even a conference'. [D12]

'' I have attended a workshop on LMS that is via collaborations with other institutions." [D12]

The findings align with the literature, which recognises the importance of collaboration and knowledge sharing. For instance, research by Naeem et al. (2019) stresses the importance of knowledge sharing in HEIs, underscoring that collaborative efforts among academics lead to increased performance. In PHEIs, where competition for students and resources can be fierce, promoting a collaborative environment among academic staff and between institutions is crucial. To encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing, initiatives such as interdisciplinary research projects, joining teaching initiatives, and conferences can be promoted.

While collaborations and knowledge sharing are generally perceived positively, trust and power dynamics within institutions can hinder collaborations (Naeem et al., 2019, p. 503). In some instances, junior staff may be undervalued during collaborations, which can reduce the effectiveness of these efforts. Similarly, differences in research interests can lead to conflicts among collaborators. This may hinder progress and negatively impact performance. Lastly, at times, there are no meaningful collaborations, but rather just a mere exchange of ideas without genuine commitment or implementation. This limits the impact of collaboration on performance.

5.3.4.1.9 Promoting accountability

This section of the study highlights the importance of accountability in improving the job performance of academic staff in PHEIs. Based on data from the interviews, participants expressed the belief that, as lecturers, their actions have the power to impact people's lives and, consequently, they are accountable in that regard. This consciousness is evident in the following comments:

'' What keeps me going is the fact that you should know that while lecturing, people are counting on you, especially with knowledge''[D6]

Not many, but some private institutions allow the students to progress without really assessing whether they have gathered enough content. [D17]

In the literature review chapter, it was shown that private educational institutions are characterised by apparent low-quality offerings and often labelled as second-class institutions compared to their public sector counterparts. To change this perception, it is crucial to hold academic staff accountable for their work to improve educational outcomes. This can be achieved by introducing curricula that are aligned to the institutional context. Additionally, PHEIs must establish clear performance expectations for faculty to meet the required curriculum standards. HRM practices such as clear job descriptions and ongoing professional development can enhance accountability among faculty. A study by Rudhumbu and Du Plessis (2020) emphasises the need to train lecturers in curriculum areas to be implemented adequately. These strategies can create a motivating environment for academic staff to meet the expected requirements for implementing the curriculum.

This subtheme, however, raises questions about how academic staff can be held accountable for their performance when their roles are highly autonomous. Often, they have the freedom to design their courses and determine their work schedule. Academic staff are independent, self-directed and have a high degree of autonomy (Al-Twal, 2022:1400). Unlike other professions, academic staff often operate with minimal direct supervision. This makes it challenging for institutions to assess their performance effectively. In line with the AMO framework, ensuring accountability can be achieved by balancing the ability, motivation and opportunity components. PHEIs should, therefore, enhance lecturers' abilities, motivate them through recognition and feedback and offer opportunities for professional development. This approach must respect their professional identity, while ensuring alignment with institutional standards.

5.3.4.1.10 Leadership support

Leadership support plays a crucial role in enhancing the job performance of academic staff in PHEIs. Effective leadership provides a clear vision and direction for an institution, enabling academic staff to understand overarching goals and align their efforts for institutional success. In this context, participants emphasised the essential role of leadership support in enhancing academic staff job performance. The following comments support this:

'' There is a lot of support that is provided by the leadership, but you know our support mostly goes through the dean''. [D7]

''I used to have a dean who was very motivating. He would frequently send messages, particularly regarding publications, always encouraging people to publish. He consistently urged us, asking if any ongoing projects could be published. He held numerous meetings, asking where we could submit our work. However, at present, such initiatives seem to be on hold''. [D8]

As illustrated earlier in the discussion of the nature of HRM practices, these results further demonstrate that strong and supportive leadership within an institution is a crucial ingredient for effective performance. In academia, where intellectual engagement and intrinsic motivation are crucial, supportive leadership can complement employee motivation to perform. When academic staff feel they are adequately supported through an appropriate leadership style, they will perform effectively (Jacob & Musa, 2020:92). Academic management, as illustrated by the findings, is the primary architect of institutional culture. When they provide supportive leadership, they create an organisational culture appropriate for high academic staff job performance.

While management encouragement of research is essential for fostering a culture of research among academic staff, several constraints impede research output in PHEIs. Challenges such as a high staff-to-student ratio, brain drain, inadequate funding, and poor motivation persist, resulting in poor research output (Jacob & Musa, 2020:93). Despite leadership efforts, if these systemic constraints are not addressed, academic staff cannot fully engage in research activities. Thus, PHEIs need to strike a balance between leadership efforts and systematic improvements to enhance academic performance in this area.

5.3.4.1.11 Provision of resources

While resource constraints were identified as a challenge in the implementation of HRM practices, they are also present as a factor for enhancing performance. This reflects the dual nature of resources, both as a factor that hinders and enhances academic staff performance. When addressed

effectively, the provision of resources is crucial to empower academic staff in achieving institutional objectives of improved job performance. As revealed by the study data, addressing issues such as textbook shortages, funding constraints, and the technological divide is imperative. These concerns are evident in comments provided by the participants:

'' One thing that I will point out is the issue of funding, yes at least they have the initiative of helping those who are studying further, they pay I think 30% or something, that for me is also quite a good initiative''. [D2]

'' Resources, books, of course, books are available, there is also where someone can download the softcopies. They have invested to purchase/subscribe to some of the journals so that we can be able to access materials on those sites. Also, I think they should give us data even when I am not here at work, I can have internet wherever I am.'' [D12]

Rehman et al. (2019:3) confirm these findings, highlighting the negative context within which PHEIs operate. They face challenges such as the lack of doctoral qualifications among academics, poor infrastructure, insufficient resources for academic development, and inadequate funding. According to the NCHE report, only 8.3 per cent of the total number of academic and academic support staff in PHEIs in Namibia held doctoral degrees in 2020 (NCHE, 2020:30). By investing in faculty development through funding for advanced degrees, PHEIs can enhance the knowledge and skills of their academic workforce. This, in turn, can enhance job performance in teaching and research, as well as enable PHEIs to expand into postgraduate programmes (Tamrat & Teferra, 2020: 685).

Alfagira and Zumrah (2019:27) also confirm the study findings by highlighting the importance of good university facilities, such as library subscription to international journals and multimedia classrooms, in enhancing academic staff performance. Furthermore, the work of academics has extended beyond the four walls of the classroom, prompting them always to be accessible to their students and employers. In the digital era, where academic staff are increasingly reliant on online platforms and collaborative tools, access to data and wi-fi is indispensable. Consequently, the provision of resources such as instructional facilities and internet accessibility can create a conducive working environment, which is the desire of every employee. Thus, it is clear that a good academic environment can influence academic job performance in universities.

5.3.4.1.12 Recognition of achievements

Participants highlighted the theory and practice of recognising achievements by emphasising the recognition of achievement as a motivating factor to boost their performance. While the sub-theme of organisational drive addressed extrinsic motivation, the focus here is on personal and social

dimensions of recognition. When management, students and parents recognise their efforts, academic staff experience an intense sense of motivation and fulfilment. This is evident in the following statements:

''So, it is a real motivation from the upper management, from the middle management also from the student themselves even from the parents that keeps me going. Some parents when they come in contact with you and know that you are teaching their children or you are lecturer they give some kind of appreciation, even if it is just a verbal one. This is enough for me it can change me.'' [D15]

The motivation component of the AMO theory regards recognition as a key aspect. Acknowledgement by management, students and parents serves as great validation for academic staff contributions and efforts. This recognition fosters a sense of accomplishment and pride, encouraging academic staff to further excel in their roles.

5.3.4.1.13 Work environment

The work environment plays a crucial role in enhancing the performance of academic staff in PHEIs. A positive organisational culture that values collaboration, innovation, and mutual respect fosters a supportive work environment. Academic staff in such cultures are more likely to feel motivated, engaged, and committed to their roles. This is substantiated in the following statements:

'' You know the work environment also plays a role in saying am I being appreciated here? Is my work being recognised here for example and be given that opportunity or that chance to grow?''. [D3]

'' I think is the environment. The environment is so conducive and friendly, the people that I am working with are friendly, there is a lot of teamwork.''[D5]

'' But otherwise, the culture, the environment is good for academia. The small meeting we have and small committees that we have, are encouraging. I think is quite a good environment, the culture is quite good''. [D15]

The achievement of educational outcomes in universities does not only depend on the availability of educational resources, but also on the conducive working environment prevailing among faculty. The results of this study indicate that academic staff perform well in a conducive atmosphere. As such, it is highly imperative to ensure a good working environment that can promote better performance. Initiatives such as teamwork, regular meetings, and committee membership are joint endeavours that can encourage collaboration, communication, and the exchange of ideas among academics. These

forums not only provide a platform for addressing challenges and celebrating achievements, but also create opportunities for performance improvement.

While regular meetings are needed to share ideas and address challenges collectively, extensive or poorly organised meetings reduce productivity. Equally, HEIs often have underequipped meeting rooms or inadequate meeting space (Jacob et al., 2021:234), forcing meetings to be held in less-than-ideal spaces, which negatively affect the quality of discussions. Similarly, if academic staff are overburdened with committee participation, it leaves little time for their teaching and research responsibilities. At the same time, participation must be acknowledged and rewarded accordingly to encourage continued participation.

5.3.5 Research question five: What measures should the PHEI put in place to improve its HRM practices?

5.3.5.1 THEME FIVE: IMPROVING HRM PRACTICES IN PHEIs

The context of this theme delves into a broader organisational perspective, addressing the overall improvement of HRM practices within PHEIs. It seeks to explore measures and strategies that the institution can adopt to enhance its HRM framework, which includes practices related to all staff, not just academic staff. Based on the data collected for the study, the following sub-themes emerged, as illustrated in Figure 5.5.

Figure 5 5: Network diagram of sub-themes: Improving HRM practices
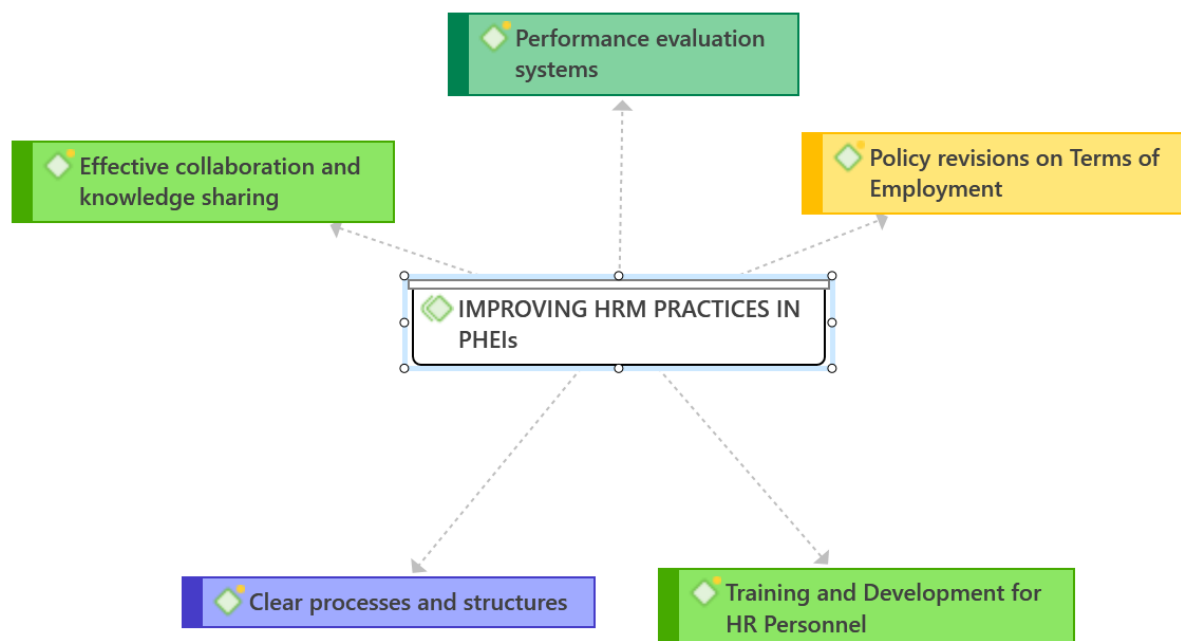
5.3.5.1.1 Clear processes and structures

By implementing and maintaining transparent processes and structures, PHEIs can create an environment where staff members understand their roles, feel supported, and are motivated to excel in their respective positions, ultimately enhancing overall job performance. Participants' acknowledgement of this can be deduced from the following statements:

And one fact is that where there is creativity and innovation, there are supporting structures to help out. As I earlier stated, I have mingled with different colleagues and they will tell you there is too much bureaucracy in our institution, there are too many structures that needs to be followed. For example, I have seen students, majority of our students are students coming from other institutions that got frustrated there as well.'' [D4]

'' To me, the needs of the academic staff of the institution must be acknowledged. I think we need distinct strategy to address these specific needs and see how they can help our academic staff." [D7]

The implementation of processes and structures for managing academic staff in PHEIs proved to be problematic in multifarious ways. The study findings indicated a need for well-defined guidelines in managing the unique and diverse nature of academic work. As mentioned earlier in the literature review chapter, academic staff engage in various activities, including teaching, research, and community services. This multifaceted nature of their work makes it difficult to develop standardised processes and guidelines that can effectively capture the contribution of each academic. As a result, it can be challenging for PHEIs to establish rigid structures that accommodate the diverse responsibilities of academics. These significant challenges are consistent with similar observations made by scholars, such as Al-Twal (2022:12), who stress that HEIs are more bureaucratic than the corporate sector and have lengthy and onerous procedures that impede decision-making.

Another concern is that academic culture places a high value on academic freedom and autonomy. Susanj et al. (2020:485) argue that the culture of autonomy and academic freedom among academic staff often leads to a lack of responsibility and non-transparency. Hence, when processes are introduced without taking cognisance of these cultural degrees, it often leads to resistance among academic staff, particularly if they perceive a lack of communication, involvement and transparency in the development of processes and structures. The study findings, therefore, underscore the importance of transparent processes and structures, while acknowledging the potential challenges that may arise during the implementation process.

5.3.5.1.2 Effective collaboration and knowledge-sharing

Collaboration and knowledge sharing is recurring, underscoring its crucial role in both enhancing academic staff performance and improving HRM practices in PHEIs. To foster effective collaboration and power sharing between academic staff and HR, institutions can create a more inclusive, innovative and supportive work environment, ultimately enhancing the job performance of both academic and HR professionals. While this collaboration is essential to ensure alignment between HR practices and academic objectives, Al-Twal (2022:10) notes that it is challenging for HR and academic staff to work together due to the prevailing professional ethos of autonomy and academic freedom among academics. This makes it challenging to implement HRM practices on these deeply ingrained values (Al-Twal., 2022:2; Al-Twal et al., 2019:11). Additionally, since academic staff are regarded as highly educated people with a high degree of social prestige in society, they often do not accept being controlled by non-academic personnel or support staff members (Al-Twal, 2022:10). Nevertheless, the testaments that follow buttress this claim:

 ''I think exploring the route of HR working closely with faculty. Most of the time there is a working gap between HR personnel and faculties." [D2]

"And also just collaborations between different institutions to work together I think that will really work well. Because I have seen most of the times we are working in silos". [D4]

'' From my side being exposed also to other universities' faculty officers and see how they are doing things, learning from them". [D5]

The findings indicate that, alongside previously mentioned internal collaboration, PHEIs should engage in inter-institutional collaborations, highlighting a notable trend within the academic sector. Inter-institutional partnerships are acknowledged as significant contributors to enhancement and innovation in higher education, encompassing faculty and student exchanges, collaborative research initiatives, and conferences aimed at sharing best practices. Such partnerships may enhance the performance of academic staff, thereby benefiting both faculty and institutions.This aligns with the view of Chankseliani et al. (2021:121) and Ramlachan (2019:20), who emphasise that collaboration networks between institutions contribute to knowledge sharing among academic staff that enhances their skills and expertise.

5.3.5.1.3 Performance evaluation systems

The sub-theme 'performance evaluation' has emerged as both a challenge that hinders effective implementation of HRM practices and a factor to improve HRM practices through performance-

related rewards. This dual role underscores the importance of not only setting clear performance expectations but also aligning rewards with an individual's performance. This reflection relates to how performance-related rewards can impact academic staff performance and address their alignment with the motivation component of the AMO theory. By outlining clear job expectations and rewarding good performance, employees have a well-defined roadmap for success, contributing to improved job performance. This is reflected in comments from the respondents:

'' Some organisations for example have what they call rewards for performances, or rewards for those that have been in the company for long. I have not seen it here. You can have the graduation, but you cannot find someone to say thank you or get an award. I have seen also some institutions not only here but also abroad, so if someone upgrade or adds a new qualification to themselves then they get some rewards. I also have not seen that being done at our institution.''[D11]

'' There is also one very bad issue of academic staff that are trying to study on their own and at least to upgrade but even if they come back their salary remains the same, everything remains the same even after they have qualified. So, maybe if the institution can also investigate those issues because they demoralise the lecturers to put on the best performance one wants.''. [D12]

As rightly maintained by Barkhuizen et al. (2020:178) and Matimbwa and Ochumbo (2019:6), a need exists for performance-based rewards for academic staff in PHEIs. The unique nature of academic work requires distinct and motivating performance rewards to enhance performance. These can go beyond monetary compensation and may include rewards for outstanding teaching, research outputs or community services, which can serve as powerful motivators to enhance performance.

By adopting HRM practices such as incentivising continuous professional development, an institution can gain and sustain a competitive advantage. The literature on employee training and development emphasises the importance of career progression (Barkhuizen et al., 2020:178; Simon, 2020:173; Ssemugenyi et al., 2020:132; Sweiss et al., 2020:12) and its connection to compensation. Rewarding higher qualifications through salary increments acknowledges continuous professional development and incentivises academic staff to pursue continuous learning. This not only benefits both the individual and the institution but also aligns with the broader concept of pay-for-performance.

5.3.5.1.4 Policy revisions on terms of employment

By regularly revising policies related to employment terms, PHEIs can create a dynamic and supportive work environment that aligns with the evolving needs of their staff. This, in turn, will contribute to higher job satisfaction, motivation and, ultimately, improved job performance. These key issues are evident in the following quotations from respondents:

The first thing is to remove the issue of contract because some people now become more demotivated because they know I can go anytime, so this is not home. For every organisation to succeed the first thing you need to do is to make your employees feel at home.''[D2]

'' I think giving them a permanent contract can also give them hope, alleviating insecurity''. [D5]

The complexities of unintended outcomes related to temporary contracts for academic staff in PHEIs cannot be overemphasised. Uncontestably, these outcomes relate to job insecurity and have significant implications for the well-being and performance of academic staff. As stated by Grobler et al. (2019:6), uncertainty regarding employment status may lead to stress and hinder academic staff's ability to engage in their academic responsibilities fully. This can be particularly challenging in the higher education sector, where the pursuit of long-term research processes is common. For instance, a certain level of stability is required to maintain research, publication and grant acquisition.

The concern about temporary employment contracts in academia is echoed by several scholars (Mondejar & Asio, 2022:1636; Malik & Lenka, 2020:732; Xia et al., 2020:599; Grobler et al., 2019:2;), pointing to a trend towards increased reliance on untenured positions. This trend has a negative impact on the morale of academic staff, resulting in lower performance levels and potentially affecting academic outcomes. Recognising the consequences of such employment arrangements is essential in promoting the well-being and performance of academic staff.

Additionally, the lack of transparent evaluation criteria discussed earlier can significantly affect contract employment in PHEIs. Without transparent evaluation criteria, academic staff may experience unfair decisions concerning contract renewal (Al-Twal, 2022:12). A lack of clear performance evaluation can also lead to confusion about how their performance is assessed, exacerbating feelings of job insecurity. This lack of clarity can lead to staff disengagement and mistrust, impacting their performance. Addressing this challenge requires implementing HRM practices that provide contract employees with clear performance standards and the necessary feedback to enable them to perform effectively.

5.3.5.1.5 Training and development for HR personnel

The training and development of HR personnel are pivotal to enhancing their performance and creating awareness of best practices within an institution. By focusing on these training areas, HR personnel can enhance their performance and implement effective HRM practices, thereby fostering a positive image and reputation for the institution. The following statements confirm the importance of training and development:

''I believe a cultural mindset shift is necessary, and this could begin with our institution by raising awareness. This awareness should be supported by numerous testimonials, perhaps tracing the success of our students as evidence of the quality students we are producing. They must appreciate the effort we are investing in lecturers' development.''[D4]

While it is imperative to recognise the crucial role of HR personnel in shaping academic staff success, the role and position of HR departments in many HEIs are undermined. Nevertheless, the competence of HR personnel in understanding the unique dynamics of the academic environment is crucial.

In the academic environment, well-equipped HR professionals are crucial in assisting academic staff with the fundamental skills and tools necessary to navigate the complexities of the academic world. Engaged in various academic responsibilities, academic staff require a tailored approach to professional development. As emphasised by Al-Twal (2022:1398), HR personnel must be equipped to understand the academic environment and the specific needs of academic staff. Given the competitive nature of PHEIs, HR personnel need to nurture the skills and competencies of academics to gain a competitive advantage.

While the role of HR in managing non-academic staff is widely acknowledged, their role in HEIs is often underestimated. A disconnect between HR department and academic staff was noted in this study. Without adequate training, HR practitioners may struggle to apply HRM practices to academic staff effectively. When HR personnel are equipped, they feel empowered to implement HRM practices that align with academic objectives. Al-Twal (2022:1392) advocates this view and argues that supporting and recognising the role of HR can influence academic staff job quality as well as their performance.

5.4 Chapter summary

The chapter presented and discussed findings from analysing the data collected for the study. The results were organised into two key areas: research questions and thematic analysis results of the study. Given the study's objectives, five themes and their corresponding sub-themes were presented and discussed in relation to the existing literature. With respect to the main problem, that is, HRM practices and their impact on academic staff performance within the institution, the findings were:

- Compensation and benefits of academic staff in the PHEI remain low despite an increased level of student enrolment over the years;

- Achievement of a good working environment requires changes to employment status, conducive performance evaluation systems, provision of resources and effective collaboration and knowledge-sharing;
- Intrinsic motivation among academic staff is an indication of genuine and deep passion for imparting knowledge and calls for appropriate organisational drive and leadership support;
- Excessive workload among faculty is an indication of deep underlying structural problems in PHEIs; and
- The presence of bureaucracy, unfit processes and structures indicates several challenges and requires the will to implement streamlined systems to contribute to a responsive academic environment.

The empirical findings discussed in this chapter provide valuable insights into HRM practices and their impact on the performance of academic staff within the concerned institution. Building on these insights, Chapter Six discusses the development of an HRM framework designed to enhance the performance of academic staff within the respective PHEI. This comprehensive framework integrates the study's findings with theoretical perspectives to propose practical HRM practices tailored to the unique characteristics of PHE.

CHAPTER SIX

PRESENTATION OF THE PROPOSED HRM FRAMEWORK

6.1 Introduction

Following the presentation and discussion of the findings in the previous chapter, Chapter Six has two objectives. The first objective is to draw on the findings to develop an HRM framework for enhancing the performance of academic staff. The second objective is to align the proposed HRM framework with the theoretical model underpinning the study as proposed in Chapter One.

6.2 HRM model for enhancing academic staff job performance

The study's findings inform the proposed HRM framework, gathered from multiple and diverse participants. The study revealed a dynamic landscape of HRM practices, characterised by a spectrum of strengths and areas in need of improvement. A few participants highlighted the inadequate compensation and benefits for academic staff, indicating discontent with the financial benefits. Despite this, participants appreciated institutional values, which are well communicated and emphasised across various platforms.

However, performance reviews appeared to be inconsistently implemented, doubting the effectiveness of performance management practices. The recruitment and selection process of academic staff was viewed positively due to the selected institution's commitment to diversity in its recruitment drives. Embracing diversity is essential in cultivating an organisational culture that reflects diverse expertise and experiences (Mondejar & Asio, 2022:1633).

Developmental opportunities elicited mixed responses. While some participants felt that training and development opportunities were not implemented in practice, others acknowledged the employer's provision of professional growth opportunities. Participants acknowledged good employee relations through team building and various communication channels. These findings underscore the nature of HRM practices in this PHEI. The findings indicate several ways in which HRM practices are implemented in the institution where the study was conducted. There were mixed feelings regarding academic leadership support, with the majority expressing sufficient support from their HoDs and Deans. While an overwhelming number of participants appreciated the existence of academic freedom, a cornerstone for a robust scholarly environment, workload concerns, particularly among HoDs, were also raised. These findings suggest the need for HRM interventions that not only uphold academic freedom but also address workload issues to enhance the job performance of academic staff.

Building on the preceding discussion, the study identified several challenges encountered in implementing HRM practices within the PHEI. A prevalent negative mindset towards PHEIs emerged, accompanied by hurdles in obtaining the municipality's approval for institutional development plans. Furthermore, a lack of resources such as computers, high-speed internet, textbooks, publication finances, and digital illiteracy impacts academic staff job performance. Regulatory delays affecting both students and academic activities revealed a systematic issue that negatively impacted scholarly work. The study undoubtedly highlighted the multifaceted challenges facing PHEIs, necessitating a holistic HRM framework that addresses these challenges.

Given the challenges highlighted, several employee-centric practices have emerged to enhance the job performance of academic staff. At the core of these practices is the importance of balancing academic workload and providing professional development opportunities to promote career progression. The introduction of wellness day alongside intrinsic motivation and creating a culture that recognises good performance are seen as essential factors for employee well-being. Moreover, creating a conducive work environment involves maintaining an open-door policy, providing professional development opportunities, fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing, supporting academic leadership, and promoting accountability among academics, all of which contribute to academic excellence.

The study's final findings focused on concrete strategies for improving HRM practices within the PHEI. Central to these strategies is the establishment of transparent processes and structures that enable not only HR personnel to work closely with faculty, but also to eliminate unnecessary bureaucratic structures that hinder effective decision-making. Furthermore, participants emphasised the importance of fostering external collaborations with other local universities to share best practices and resources. The implementation of performance-based pay and tenured employment contracts emerged as key strategies for improving HRM practices with PHEIs. This requires HRM personnel who are well-trained to understand the dynamics of the academic environment to implement HRM practices that meet the evolving needs of academics.

In synthesising the rich findings of the study, it is evident that opportunities and challenges within HRM practices in this PHEI are multifaceted. The thematic analysis of participants' lived experiences, organised into themes and sub-themes, serves as a pillar for the proposed HRM framework. This framework is anchored on the specific and broad HRM practices that emerged from the study. The framework aims not only to address the challenges highlighted but also to capitalise on the positive HRM practices to mitigate challenges and leverage strengths, respectively. This combination ensures a dynamic and balanced approach to enhancing job performance, presented in Figure 6.1 below.

Figure 6.1: Proposed HRM framework for improving academic staff performance
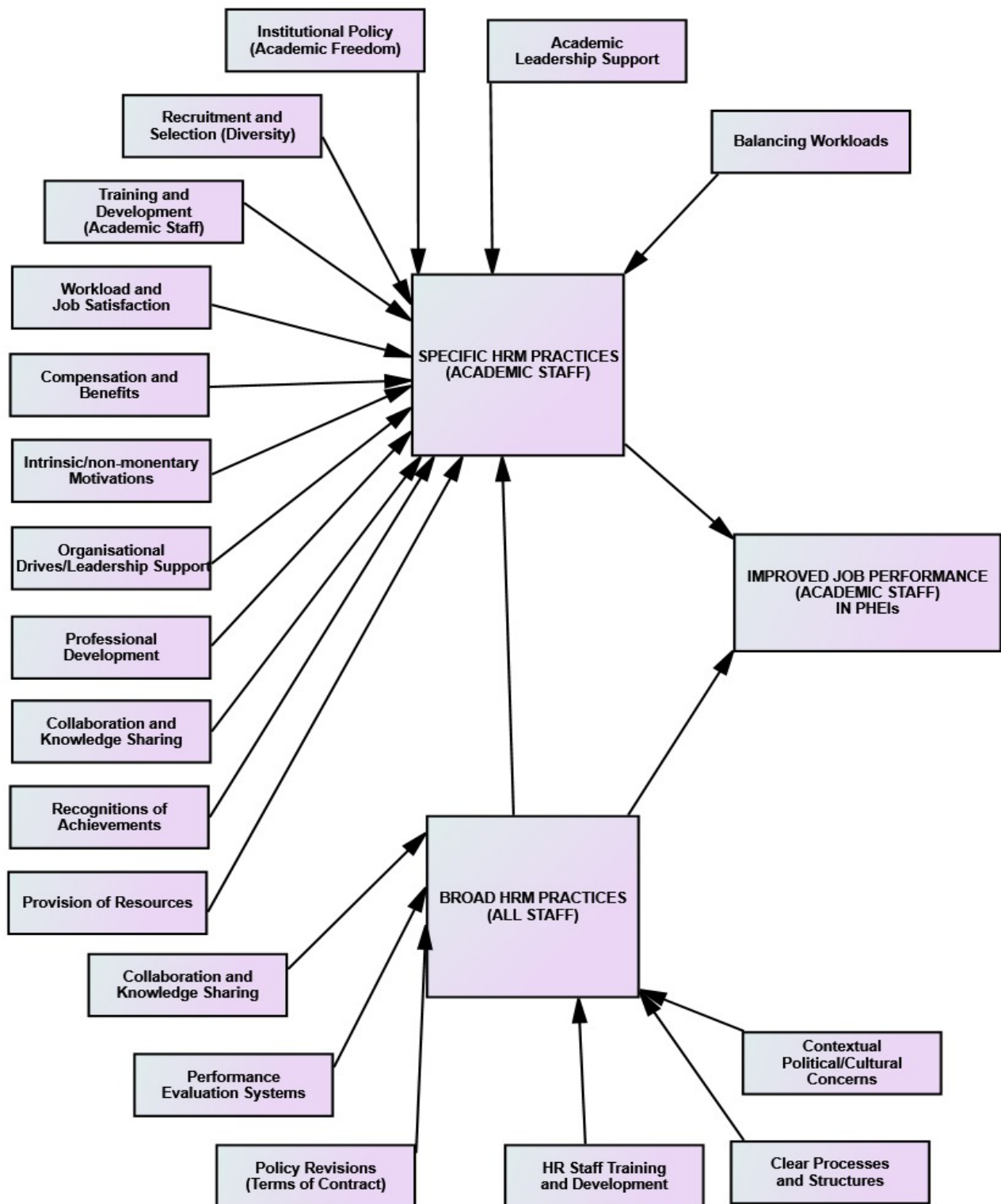
Source: Author's own (2024)

6.3 Description of the framework

Given the fifth objective of the study, it was deemed appropriate to develop a framework that could enhance academic staff performance in Namibian PHEIs. Although the framework may not represent the full spectrum of Namibian PHEIs, it highlights specific practices that are likely to be relevant to similar institutions due to shared characteristics such as regulatory environments, reliance on private funding and academic staff issues. Serving as a starting point for enhancing HRM practices for academic staff in PHEIs, this framework offers a foundation that can be adapted. The framework does not assert a causal relationship between HRM practices and academic staff performance but rather is articulated as a conceptual model that synthesises the perspectives and experiences of primary participants alongside key stakeholders in PHE. As alluded to earlier, the study findings were carefully considered to identify key themes and sub-themes that would inform the design of the framework. These factors were grouped into two main categories: specific HRM practices related to academic staff only and broad HRM practices applicable to all staff.

As indicated in Figure 6.1, the specific and broad HRM practices, along with their corresponding 13 and 6 factors, respectively, are interlinked in a pattern that illustrates their relationships. The combined interactions of these factors are perceived to herald an improved performance of academic staff in PHEIs.

6.3.1 Specific HRM practices

The following factors should be considered in achieving the perceived outcomes of improved performance among academic staff as they relate to specific HRM practices:

- Provision of resources
- Recognition of achievements
- Collaboration and knowledge sharing
- Professional development
- Organisational drive/leadership support
- Intrinsic/non-monetary motivations
- Compensation and benefits
- Workload and job satisfaction
- Training and development for academic staff
- Recruitment and selection
- Institutional policy (academic freedom)
- Academic leadership support

- Balancing workloads

Provision of resources

The study has established the crucial need for adequate resources essential to effective academic staff performance. Concerns were raised that there is unequal access of staff to resources and some of them were using personnel laptops. For example, *''I think more can be done for example: these laptops we are using are personal laptops, you bring your own, you use it for your work. If something happens to it you fix it, maybe because the institution cannot afford to buy a laptop for everyone, yes that could be one reason''* (D10). The study further highlighted a strong need for access to high-speed internet, textbooks, auditoriums, and sports fields for lecturers training student teachers.

It was also established that there is a challenge of digital literacy and technological skills among academic staff, posing a significant challenge to effective teaching, research or administrative tasks. Those with limited skills may struggle to integrate digital tools into their teaching, research, or administrative responsibilities, as alluded to by one of the participants: *''Not every lecturer is fully versed in integrating technology into teaching and learning. Despite possessing qualifications, some may primarily focus on areas such as curriculum development, and integrating technology can be a challenge''* (D3).

Addressing the shortage of resources requires deliberate efforts from institutional management to prioritise the acquisition of appropriate resources because inadequate resources impede academic staff's ability to perform. Moreover, digital illiteracy necessitates developmental initiatives to upskill academic staff in response to the evolving demands of contemporary higher education. Therefore, provision of adequate resources is one of the key determinants of high performance among academic staff.

Recognition of achievements

This theme arose from the observation that it is an inherent nature of every person to feel valued and appreciated. The study established the need to embrace recognition and achievements of academic staff as a motivating factor to boost performance, for instance, *''you know the work environment also plays a role in saying am I being appreciated here?, and the institution must also make sure that they recognise the input that we are bringing''* (D2). Celebrating accomplishments and rewarding good performance, whether in teaching, research or community service, boosts morale and reinforces a culture of performance.

Once PHEIs start to appreciate achievements, it will build a community of scholars who feel valued and appreciated, and strive for excellence. From the literature review conducted earlier in the study, these appreciations can take the form of public acknowledgement, professional development opportunities, awards and honours, all of which promote continuous excellence.

Collaboration and knowledge sharing

The analysis performed in the study has established that the profundity of academic matters lies in their deep-rooted nature; hence, the significance of collaboration and knowledge sharing emerges as an essential factor shaping the academic environment. Such collaborations could be multiple, involving both internal and external collaborations. Internal collaboration can break down departmental silos, enabling interdisciplinary collaboration and knowledge sharing, which ultimately improves the learning experiences of both academics and students.

Apart from internal collaboration, the findings highlighted external collaborations as equally important. Introducing inter-institution partnerships aimed at opening doors for joint research projects, joint research seminars, and shared resources can be valuable for PHEIs operating with limited budgets. Additionally, this collaboration not only enhances the institutional reputation but also benefits students and academic staff by providing exposure and connecting them to a network of professionals. This is reflected by:

"From my side being exposed also to other universities' faculty officers and see how they are doing things, learning from them". (D5)

"And also just collaborations between different institutions to work together I think that will really work well. Because I have seen most of the times we are working in silos". (D4)

Professional development

While it is true that individual academic staff are responsible for personal and professional development, the employer should take a lead by creating a supportive culture that values ongoing learning and growth. Reported professional developmental initiatives such as "*research opportunities", "writing opportunities" and "conference opportunities* (D3) *"publication incentives"* (D2*)* and *"lecturers' training"* (D2; D3*)* on pedagogical content are aimed at achieving better performance.

Organisational drive/leadership support

The study has established the crucial need to maintain a clear understanding of the institutional culture that is conducive to job performance. It was found that a strong institutional culture is one that

provides good working conditions. One of the participants described their experience of the work environment as being conducive: *"The environment is so conducive and friendly, the people that I am working with are friendly, and there is a lot of teamwork."* (D5). The study further highlighted the need for a culture that is motivating, student-centred and has open-door policy. These influence the way academic staff relate to one another, students and administrators, shaping the overall working environment.

A healthy institutional culture promotes harmonious working relationships. Some references were made that there are certain HoDs who feel intimated by their subordinates with higher qualifications or are perceived as management surveillance, as per the following quotes:

"There are variety of issues that I will point out that are not user-friendly. Some feel threatened by fellow academics especially if you are HOD and you are maybe a Master holder, and I am a lecturer and I am a PhD holder. Sometimes it becomes a fear of the unknown. They would want to kick you out so that there is nobody with PhD on top of them and that create also tension sometimes in different departments because once one person attains higher qualifications than the HOD or the Dean, then it becomes an issue of maybe jealousy or insubordination. Why would you get a PhD while I am your Dean, I am still a Master holder". (D2)

"So, those are the issues that are not good in terms of leadership because there are some who were given leadership, especially the HOD or Dean but then instead of helping the colleagues to do the work they were like spies of the top management". (D2).

Therefore, a culture of trust, professional growth and collaboration should be championed to create an inclusive environment.

Intrinsic/non-monetary motivations

Intrinsic motivators refer to internal drivers, such as personal enjoyment and inherent interest, that academics experience while engaging in academic activities. This study found that beyond financial incentives, non-monetary motivation is a powerful driving force for shaping academic staff job performance. This study has identified various intrinsic motivators to enhance academic staff job performance, namely: *"fulfilment derived from student success (*D2)*, "personal passion"* (D12), *"a desire to make a meaningful impact on student's lives"* (D2, D15), *"job autonomy and academic freedom".* (D7*)*

Compensation and benefits

Enhanced compensation and benefits were found in this study to be crucial factors in promoting professional development and employee well-being. Non-financial benefits can play a vital role here. Incentives for publications, funding for higher qualifications and family members' tuition waivers were found to be essential benefits.

To ensure an enhanced benefits scheme for academic staff, a comprehensive academic-friendly policy should be adopted. Such a policy could be a holistic framework, establishing a clear pathway for professional well-being and growth of academic staff. Some participants described their appreciation, for example:

"There are also other benefits on family members, a child, if studying with us she/she can still be given that benefit." (D4)

'' One thing that I will point out is the issue of funding, yes at least they have the initiative of helping those who are studying further, they pay I think 30% or something, that for me is also quite a good initiative." (D2)

Workload and job satisfaction

The study identified excessive workload as one of the major contributors to poor job performance among academic staff in the PHEI. Workload demands include excessive marking, teaching large classes, teaching many modules and teaching both streams (full-time and part-time). In one case, it was mentioned that *"lecturers' have excessive marking from full time and part time students as well marking students' portfolios"* (D5) These challenges require careful management to avoid burnout. Workload management requires role-players to align work expectations with available resources. Another workload issue raised in the study is the dual role of HoD, encompassing both academic and administrative responsibilities (*"This HOD duty is a lot of work but at least I do not enjoy it very much. At least lecturing is more flexible than any other thing'*, D7*)*. Despite the prestige associated with being an HoD, this role often leads to a heavier workload than that of a regular academic staff. The disadvantage suffered by this group means that management must recognise challenges associated with this role and implement ways to make the role more appealing to academic staff.

Training and development

Training and development initiatives appear to be essential in positioning academic staff to contribute meaningfully to their institutions. These initiatives keep academic staff abreast of the latest technological advancements, research trends and latest pedagogical andragogy. The study identified targeted development opportunities that can empower academic staff and enhance their skills and

knowledge. The participants referred to developmental aspects such as *"research workshops"* (D3), *"conference attendance"* (D3), *publication and "research writing opportunities"* (D4). Another required proficiency is digital pedagogy needed to navigate the contemporary digital landscape found in higher education (*"In Namibia, we face the digital divide, particularly among students who have registered for online learning, D3*). As is evident in the findings, the challenge of digital illiteracy can be mitigated by offering training programmes that focus on digital pedagogy and on online course design. This will equip both academic staff and students with skills needed to deliver and navigate virtual learning.

Recruiting and selecting a diverse academic workforce

Diversity in recruitment and selection relates to the ability of academic institutions to make intentional and systematic efforts in attracting and appointing academic staff from a broad range of backgrounds and characteristics. Diversity centres on how efficiently academic institutions respond to increasing international and globalisation dimensions of higher education. This study established that diversity recruitment and selection are characterised by specific features that PHEIs prioritise to ensure an inclusive work environment. These features include equitable policies and practices, inclusive job advertisements, transparent selection criteria and affirmative action quotas:

*"From the information we annually collect, I will say the PHEIs' workforce is quite diverse" (*D18).

'' I am not sure whether we have a policy because of course I did not go into the policy of recruitment but of course, this credit can go to HR because you can see that they are doing quite a great job when it comes to diversity and, I think they are not bias" (D12).

"And also, depending on the programs they are offering, we check if they have qualified academic staff to teach on those programmes" (D18).

Alongside the recruitment of a diverse workforce, it is essential to implement effective retention strategies. The study found that while PHEIs attain a degree of diversity in recruitment and selection, there remains a necessity for improvements in staff retention. Retention issues can undermine the effectiveness of diversity initiatives, as alluded to by one participant: *''The first thing is to remove the issue of contract because some people now become more demotivated because they know I can go anytime, so this is not home. For every organisation to succeed the first thing you need to do is to make your employees feel at home'' (*D2).

Institutional policy for academic freedom

Academic freedom was found to be a fundamental principle that promotes the advancement of knowledge and nurtures intellectual exploration. In this regard, some features that promote academic freedom in PHEIS were highlighted. In particular, the right to pursue any research, the right to collaborate with any scholar, the right to respond to research activities from any institution and the freedom to innovate within the confines of the curriculum were distinct examples cited as promoting academic freedom. Although academic freedom is widely promoted, participants felt that they had some limited job autonomy. For example:

And when it comes to research, they do not have any boundaries to say you should just associate with this person and you should not publish with this person from A or B institution. So, you can". (D12)

"To a certain degree, the academic freedom is there but at some point, you would see that there is a little bit of interference with your work sometimes from the top management''. (D2)

Academic leadership support

Another major factor that emerged from the study was concern about academic leadership support. In this regard, the study found mixed responses, pointing to the complex relationship between subordinates and academic leadership within the higher education context. It was established that some academic staff express positive academic leadership support, while others perceived lack of academic leadership support (*"But there are some HODs who are also supportive. I must point out that in my first two years, I had one good colleague who, at that time, I was pursuing my PhD, she was my HOD, and she was helpful because at some point she would come and ask how you are progressing", D2).* The study recommends tailor-made leadership development programmes to enhance transparent communication and supportiveness among academic leaders.

Provided this recommendation, a thorough needs assessment must be conducted to determine specific areas of improvement. Designing and implementing training programmes must be done taking cognisance of unique institutional challenges. This process would help develop targeted leadership programmes to address specific needs and cultivate a supportive academic leadership within the institution.

Balancing workloads

Effective workload was reported in the study as a crucial requirement for the overall performance and well-being of academic staff. Balancing workload is required, where various initiatives ensuring a manageable workload are structured (*"The academics' workload is often a challenge. PHEIs must*

address this for quality education", D19). This includes the appointment of tutors and part-time staff, as well as an equitable workload. This could foster a culture that values work-life balance.

6.3.2 Broad HRM practices

Broad HRM practices go beyond the specific needs of academic staff. While the study primarily focused on HRM practices for academic staff, the wider context of the academic environment emerged, recognising the interconnectedness of various staff functions. These variables, as suggested in Figure 6.1, are discussed next.

Collaboration and knowledge sharing

The study highlighted concerns about power-sharing dynamics between HRM personnel and academic staff, leading to reduced trust and collaboration. Considering the nature of their work, academic staff often have a high degree of autonomy, posing a considerable challenge for HR to implement HRM practices that meet the specific demands of the academic environment. This is demonstrated in the following extract from interview transcripts:

'' To me, the needs of the academic staff of the institution must be acknowledged. I think we need distinct strategy to address these specific needs and see how they can help our academic staff." (D7)

Other factors, such as exclusion from the decision-making process, the specialised nature of academic work, and the perception that academic staff are highly educated, have been identified as factors that continue to reduce collaboration between HR personnel and academic staff. These elements have profound implications for the entire institution; hence, encouraging open communication between these two groups is essential in building an engaging work environment.

Performance evaluation systems

The study highlighted the challenge of poor implementation of performance evaluation systems, leading to unintended outcomes. Some of the identified reasons are a lack of clear performance expectations, incomprehensible performance criteria and a lack of performance-based rewards. The overall improvement of these practices not only enhances the job performance of academic staff but also has profound consequences for the entire institution. Some participants described their experience with performance evaluation systems as:

'' I think we have a lot of areas that maybe we do not evaluate because maybe they are very difficult to evaluate visually. (D11)

"As a lecturer, I feel the performance evaluation is challenging, lacking clear criteria and expectations. One is not really sure how your contribution is measured here" (D3)

' Some organisations for example have what they call rewards to performances, or rewards for those that have been in the company for long. I have not seen it here you can have the graduation, but you cannot find someone to say thank you or get an award. I have seen also some institutions not only here but also abroad, so if someone upgrade or adds a new qualification to themselves then they get some rewards. I also have not seen that being done at our institution.''(D11)

Policy revision in terms of employment contract

The study highlighted the need for greater job security and stability, calling for policy revision regarding temporary employment contracts. To respond to the evolving landscape of higher education and changing student demographics, PHEIs need an adaptable and responsive policy framework. In essence, the revision of temporary employment contracts reflects a proactive approach to minimise uncertainty, impacting the commitment and morale of all staff. The need for job security and stability is reflected in comments such as:

'' We are operating on contracts. Those are the contracts that get to be renewed, of course, based on the performance." (D4)

"There is one thing I always know; I am a Christian, so I believe that wherever God puts you is temporary and then it is for you to make changes". (D6)

HR staff training and development

The theme of HR staff training and development emerging from the study is significant in improving employee performance and implementing best practices within the institution. It appears that the role of HR personnel in fostering student success is overlooked within academic institutions. Undoubtedly, academic staff are primary contributors to student success. However, HR personnel also play a key role in recruiting and retaining academics as well as implementing effective professional development programmes for them. This was confirmed by a participant, who indicated that the institution *"must appreciate the effort they are making in lecturers' development"* (D17). Therefore, well-capacitated HR personnel have a ripple effect that can be felt throughout the entire institution.

It is, thus, clear that HR departments in PHEIs can contribute to student success by working closely with faculty and implementing effective training programmes for academics. The interview sessions confirmed this:

"Of course, there are other needs that may arise for example in terms of development training where the university sometimes identifies the need for the whole institution and they can train all the academics in the institution, I mean all the staff." (D4)

"I think exploring the route of HR working closely with faculty. Most of the time there is a working gap between HR personnel and faculties." (D2)

Clear processes and structures

The study findings demonstrate that poorly implemented institutional processes and structures appear to hinder service delivery. The study established that there is too much bureaucratic procedures and structures to be followed, resulting in a culture that undermines creative thinking. As further explained by a participant, *"there is too much bureaucracy in our institution and too many structures that needs to be followed. For example, majority of our students are students coming from other institutions that got frustrated there as well."* (D4)

On the student front, the study demonstrates that bureaucratic administrative processes result in slow response times to student needs, creating frustrations among students and hindering their ability to focus on learning. For instance, the NCRST procedures for obtaining research ethics clearance were found to delay students for close to three months. Moreover, the study revealed that unclear internal processes erode students' trust in the institution, creating a negative perception of its structures and efficiency. The participants viewed these delays as an obstacle to timely research progress. When questioned about this, the reasons given concerned capacity limitations:

"I was informed that this delay may be attributed to the NCRST's limited capacity to promptly review and process proposals from all institutions". (D4).

Contextual political/cultural concerns

The results from the analysis indicate the challenge of a negative perception towards PHEIs, which shapes the overall work environment for academic staff. Public opinions towards their programme quality, faculty credentials and accreditation status considerably influence institutional reputation. When asked where this stems from, one participant explained: "*is just a misconception that some public institutions still have over private institutions. Misconception, in terms of the quality of programs that we are offering at the institution"* (D4). Navigating these negative perceptions requires adaptable HRM practices that respond effectively to arising contextual and cultural challenges. The study findings also demonstrate that the perception of students as paying clients has implications for the job performance of academic staff. In this regard, academics feel compelled to adopt a more rigid

client-centric approach, which may compromise academic integrity, as students are perceived to yield more power through their tuition payments. This is clear from the following comment:

'' Yeah, and then there is also one aspect that people do not know between private and public institutions. You know private is based on the tuition fees that the students are paying, so the students are the clients and the boss here and there. There are certain things you cannot do because they are the ones paying you. Those aspects also are some of the challenges". (D6)

Participants were unable to provide detailed evidence of how academic integrity is compromised. However, the study suggests that supportive institutional systems should be in place and enforced to ensure high standards of teaching and research are maintained.

6.4 Alignment of the HRM framework with the AMO theory

This study is underpinned by the AMO theory, as discussed in Chapter One and the Literature Review chapter. It provides a lens through which employee performance is understood, by considering the interplay of ability, motivation and opportunity practices. At this point, it is necessary to delve deeper into how the proposed framework and variables from the findings can be aligned with the AMO theory. This alignment not only enriches the theoretical model underpinning the study but also enhances its practical relevance. Moreover, the alignment provides a strategic guide for PHEIs to optimise their academic staff. Figure 6.2 shows how the findings align with the corresponding components of AMO theory.

Figure 6.2: Alignment of the findings with the academic staff
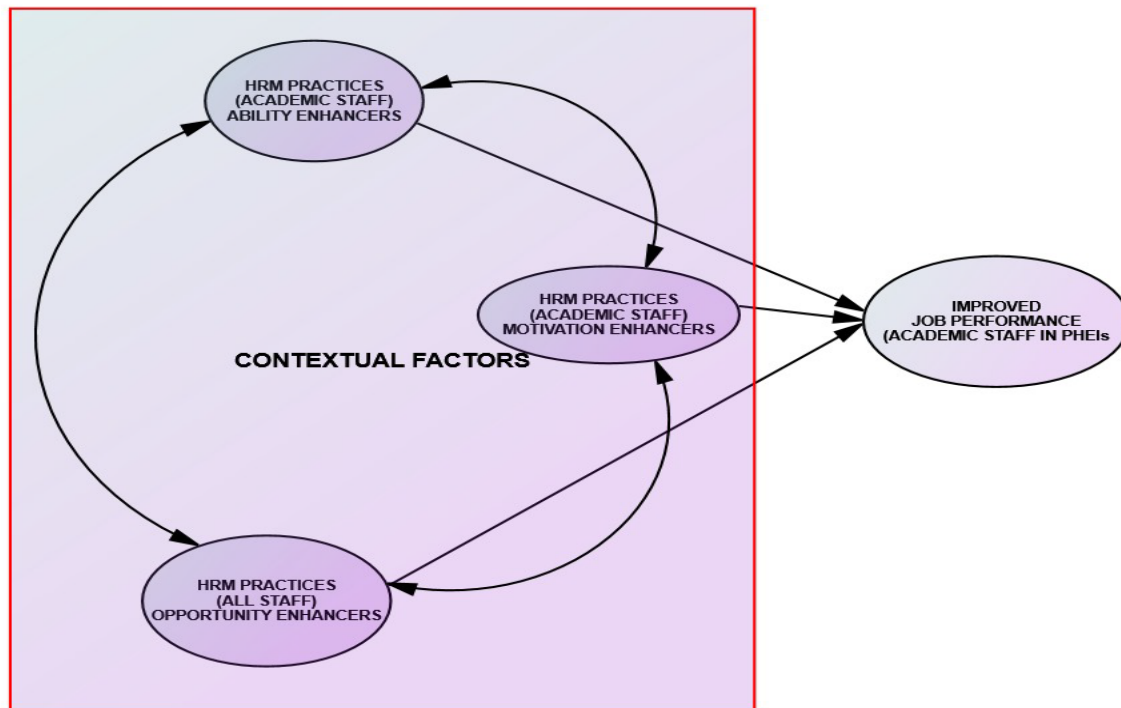
Source: Author's own (2024)

The conceptual framework comprises of three interdependent categories, denoted as ability enhancers, motivation enhancers and opportunity enhancers, illustrating how they can collectively improve academic staff job performance within a specific context. The double arrows between ability enhancers, motivation enhancers, and opportunity enhancers signify reciprocal relationships (Sungu et al., 2019, p. 1411), indicating their interactive nature and implying that these categories influence and reinforce one another.

The ability-enhancers category refers to the individual's capacity to perform effectively. It encompasses practices that can enhance the knowledge, skills and competencies of academic staff (Azungah et al., 2018:696). From the findings of the study, these HRM practices enhancers are:

- Professional Development/Training and Development
- Provisions of resources
- Recruitment and selection (Diversity)
- Academic leadership support
- Collaboration and knowledge-sharing

The second category is motivation enhancers, reflecting the drive, passion, and commitment of academic professionals. The findings showed the following HRM practices as fuelling the motivation of academic staff:

- Recognition of Achievement
- Compensation and benefits
- Intrinsic and non-monetary rewards
- Balanced workload
- Academic freedom
- Career progression

Opportunity-enhancers, the third category, refer to environmental conditions and factors that can either facilitate or constrain (Alba et al., 2021:125) academic staff's ability to perform effectively in their roles. This category recognises that external conditions can significantly impact an individual's performance despite possessing the necessary skills and motivation. From the findings of the study, these include HRM practices such as:

- Collaboration and knowledge sharing
- Clear processes and structure
- Effective performance evaluation systems
- Trained HR staff
- Job security
- Organisational culture
- Organisational values and expectations

Contextual factors, in the middle of the three core categories, acknowledge that academic institutions operate within a specific environmental context. This context interacts with and shapes the dynamics of how academic institutions operate, specifically influencing the management of academic staff. In this study, these contextual factors were found to be:

- Political/cultural factors
- Legal and regulatory requirements
- Academic freedom

The three interconnected categories and contextual factors link to job performance of academic staff in PHEIs as an ultimate outcome. Therefore, to improve academic staff job performance, PHEIs must

aim for a harmonious interplay of enhanced abilities, high motivation, supportive opportunities and a conducive context.

6.5 Extending the AMO framework in PHE

This study extends the theoretical understanding of the AMO framework (Appelbaum et al., 2000) into the underexplored context of PHE in Namibia. Primarily, the AMO framework has been applied in the corporate and public sectors (Boselie et al., 2021: 485), while its application to higher education, particularly in private institutions of developing countries, has been limited. By applying the AMO framework to this unique context, the study integrates critical contextual factors, such as limited institutional resources, regulatory constraints, and the unique organisational dynamics of Namibia's PHE (Shimaneni, 2024; Saruchera & Gie, 2024). The framework, therefore, explains performance outcomes in an educational setting where financial and structural realities constrain HRM practices.

The study's findings highlight that academic staff performance in PHEIs is influenced not only by ability (diversity in recruitment, skills, and professional development) and motivation (recognition, compensation, and career progression), but also by opportunities shaped by contextual factors unique to PHEIs. These include limited state support, reliance on student fees and competition with public universities (Altbach, 2004; Tamrat & Teferra, 2020). Such contextual factors affect the implementation of effective HRM practices, thereby extending the AMO framework to consider institutional resource limitations and regulatory constraints. Furthermore, this model responds to calls for contextually grounded frameworks that balance global HRM paradigms with local realities (Jellenz et al., 2020).

Specifically, this study reveals the role of contextual enablers that have not been fully theorised within the traditional AMO framework. One such enabler that has emerged is academic freedom, which enhances performance by allowing faculty to teach and conduct research with freedom. This finding aligns with the literature emphasising autonomy as a motivator in academic work (Buciuniene, 2021:155; Rudhumbu & Du Plessis, 2020). The other enabler that emerged from the study is regulatory requirements, highlighting the extent to which accreditation requirements and national higher education policies shape HRM practices in PHEIs. Finally, institutional reputation emerged as a crucial contextual enabler, linking individual academic performance to the credibility and legitimacy of PHEIs. This demonstrates that academic staff is not only an individual outcome, but also a collective driver of institutional reputation.

This study, therefore, contributes to theory by proposing a contextualised HRM framework that broadens the explanatory power of the traditional AMO theory. The proposed framework considers the contextual realities of PHEIs, making a theoretical contribution that is both original and relevant to the knowledge of higher education HRM.

6.6 Summary

This chapter discussed the HRM framework for enhancing academic staff job performance, informed by the study's findings. The key components of the framework include specific HRM practices (applicable to academic staff) and broad HRM practices (applicable to all staff). In addition, a conceptual framework aligned with the AMO theory was developed.

PHEIs in Namibia play a dynamic and significant role in the higher education landscape. The HRM framework outlined in this chapter serves as a guideline for PHEIs to navigate the complexities of managing academic staff job performance. By addressing both the specific and broad HRM practices presented in this chapter, the model aims to enhance not only the job performance of academic staff but also the overall reputation and performance of Namibian PHEIs.

The next chapter combines the study's findings, drawing together conclusions that consider the study's objectives. Furthermore, Chapter Seven offers recommendations to institutional leaders, HR practitioners, and policymakers to guide future efforts in fostering excellence in the Namibian PHE landscape.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter showcased the HRM framework for enhancing the performance of academic staff. This chapter concludes on the key findings and insights to guide the institution in fostering a conducive working environment. In doing so, the chapter revisits the study's objectives and consolidates the findings to draw comprehensive insights. To provide actionable suggestions, the chapter presents a series of carefully crafted recommendations that draw attention to HRM practices for academic staff. Lastly, it concludes with a discussion of the study's limitations and suggestions for future research. This study provides theoretical and practical perspectives of HRM practices and contextualises them within the Namibian PHE sector. The review of literature, characterised by an in-depth analysis of the challenges and opportunities within the PHE sector, combined with a phenomenological research design to capture the lived experiences of participants, enabled the researcher to develop a comprehensive HRM framework.

7.2 Key conclusions

This study has explored the impact of current HRM practices on the performance of academic staff, aiming to develop a workplace model that enhances performance. It identified specific HRM practices that influence academic staff job performance, such as intrinsic/non-monetary incentives, professional development, organisational drive, and compensation and benefits for academic staff. The study also found that job insecurity, resource constraints and a demoralising institutional culture exist, creating a disengaged workforce. There were significant views of deep-rooted challenges within the institution and how it operates, hindering the implementation of effective HRM practices.

It seems that deliberate efforts of the PHEI to enhance academic staff is somehow tarnished by the prevailing negative public opinion surrounding private institutions. The study's findings suggest that the institution faces challenges in establishing credibility and managing its reputation. PHEIs in Namibia play a crucial role in higher education, and it is essential that they address relevant issues to ensure their continued positive impact on education.

7.3 Summary of key findings

This section presents a comprehensive summary of findings, structured according to predefined research objectives.

Objective 1: To explain the nature of HRM practices in the Namibian PHEI

This section comprises findings primarily from interviews with academic staff, key stakeholders, and HRM personnel. The study aimed to analyse the current nature of HRM practices within the institution and identify areas for improvement. The key findings in this context centre on organisational values and expectations, recruitment and selection of staff and training development issues. It also includes the extent to which employee relations is manifested in the institution. The fundamental findings on each issue are summarised as follows:

Organisation values and expectations

This study found that institutions prioritise demonstration of institutional values, placing significant emphasis on values such as integrity, excellence, loyalty, efficiency and effectiveness among academic staff.

Recruitment and selection of staff

It was established that the recruitment and selection process for academic staff is performed primarily guided by selection criteria. In addition, the higher education regulator, through the collection of annual statistics, ensures that PHEIs adhere to a transparent recruitment process. Moreover, the findings underscore the commendable level of diversity integrated into recruitment and selection practices. The emphasis on employment eligibility, coupled with a commitment to diversity, suggests an inclusive approach appropriate for enhancing performance. However, a noteworthy concern of poor staff retention emerged. The staff retention issue can be addressed through institutional efforts aimed at successfully recruiting a diverse faculty.

Training and development

The study found that training initiatives, particularly in areas such as research opportunities, conference participation, and publication opportunities, are widely disseminated to academic staff. Furthermore, induction training programmes for newly hired academic staff are also instituted. Nevertheless, academic staff are confronted with financial constraints associated with availing themselves of these opportunities.

This concern seems to hinder effective participation in developmental programmes offered. The study's findings also highlighted concerns about the disconnection between career growth policies and their practical implementation. While the presence of career guidance and growth policies is notable, they appear not to be effectively implemented. This dissonance can have unintended adverse outcomes.

Employee relations

In understanding the institutional landscape, the data highlighted indicators of employee relations within the academic environment. Institutions' engagement in teambuilding activities characterises this manifestation, observance of wellness days and promotion of an open-door policy. These, collectively, contribute to a positive and productive work environment.

Objective 2: To investigate the implementation of HRM practices among academic staff

The findings provided insight into how HRM practices are implemented among academic staff members. The study presented key findings that fall into the following thematic areas: institutional policy for academic freedom, workload and job satisfaction, and academic leadership support.

Institutional policy for academic freedom

While exploring the implementation of HRM practices among academic staff, the study found evidence of academic freedom within the institution. This implies that academic staff are at liberty to engage in research without restrictions, innovate and decide on what to teach, as long as it is within the approved curriculum boundaries. However, the study also identified a perception of occasional interference from management, suggesting some limitations on this freedom. Despite this, the environment supports collaboration with different individuals or institutions, thereby promoting an environment of academic autonomy.

Workload and job satisfaction

In this respect, the study had two key findings. Firstly, there is an obvious emphasis on performance expectations among academics, indicating a drive for increased performance. However, the second finding identified a noteworthy challenge of excessive workload for both scholars and department heads. This suggests a misalignment between performance expectations and the practical demands placed on academic staff, providing insight into the multifaceted dynamics of HRM practices within the institution.

Academic leadership support

From the study findings, the challenge of academic leadership support also emerged. The key finding here was mixed perception among participants regarding academic leadership support. While participants acknowledged a certain level of academic leadership support, the study also highlighted concern about the adequacy of this support. This difference highlights a disparity between expectations and reality regarding the support provided.

Objective 3: To identify the barriers facing the PHEI in managing academic staff job performance

The main barriers to the effective management of academic staff job performance include:

- Existence of a demoralising culture, characterised by a lack of recognition for achievements and hierarchical intimidation based on academic qualifications, where some management staff with lower qualifications feel demoralised in the presence of subordinates holding higher qualifications.
- Job insecurity is related to the prevalence of contract-based employment, which contributes to the uncertainty and instability of academic work relationships.
- High workload and potential job dissatisfaction among academic staff resulting from responsibilities like teaching, grading and research.
- Limited availability of resources for academic staff, with shortages observed in essentials such as absence of textbooks aligned with designed curricula, reliance on personal laptops, inadequate training facilities and varying levels of competence in technology integration into teaching.
- Contextual political/cultural barrier that includes misconceptions about the reputation of the PHEI as well as the quality of their academic programs.
- Commodification of education barrier where students are treated primarily as paying clients, undermining the academic-professional relationship as well as restricting the ability of academic staff to exercise their professional capabilities fully.

Objective 4: To identify the factors that enhance academic staff job performance in the PHEI

The study identified the following key factors that enhance academic staff job performance:

Personal fulfilment: one key factor identified is the intrinsic/non-monetary factor stemming from a genuine passion for teaching, a love of working with students, and satisfaction in seeing them graduate.

Professional development, including the critical role of skills enhancement and continuous learning and development, has also emerged as a key factor in enhancing academic job performance.

Organisational drive: creating a supportive institutional culture characterised by an open-door policy, encouragement for improvement, recognition of contribution and realisation of competition within PHE awareness.

Compensation and benefits for academic staff: The significance of competitive compensation and benefits, such as publication incentives, family study benefits, and salaries comparable to those of public institutions, also emerged as key contributors to enhanced performance.

Balanced workloads: Workloads that allow for optimal job performance by balancing academic, administrative and research responsibilities that can be achieved through the creation of support mechanisms such as appointing tutors and additional part-time faculty staff.

Leadership support: Academic leaders who provide the necessary resources and support academics in their day-to-day job performance.

Knowledge sharing and collaboration: The performance of academic staff can be enhanced through targeted professional development interventions, as well as the facilitation of intra- and inter-institutional collaborations aimed at sharing knowledge and skills.

Incentivising performance through rewards: The need to align remuneration systems with performance to acknowledge and incentivise individual achievements and foster a culture of high performance.

Transparent processes and structures: Well-defined and transparent processes, procedures, and structures should be created to enhance academic staff performance.

Training and development of HR personnel: HR personnel should be empowered to understand the unique circumstances within the academic environment, ensuring their strategies and actions align with the academic goals of the PHEI.

Objective 5: Proposing an integrated PHEI HRM practices framework

HRM practices in PHEIs must be built on robust theoretical frameworks that enable the effective management of academic staff in a complex and challenging environment. As discussed in the literature review chapters, the study is underpinned by the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) theory, aiming to propose an integrated HRM framework deeply rooted in this foundational theory. Based on the belief that an organisation's success centres on the synergy between employee abilities, motivation, and opportunities, this study articulates an HRM framework aligned with the

AMO Theory to enhance academic staff performance. This conceptual framework was discussed in Chapter Six (see Figure 6.2).

7.4 Main contributions of the study

The original contribution of this study lies in the development of a novel HRM framework specifically tailored for academic staff in the Namibian PHEI to improve performance. In addressing the unique characteristics and needs of the Namibian PHE, this framework provides a tailored approach to job performance, including broader and specific HRM practices for academic staff. The specific HRM practices that apply directly to academic staff include professional development, collaboration and knowledge sharing, a balanced workload, academic leadership support, and academic freedom, among others. If implemented effectively, these HRM practices can enhance the performance of academic staff and contribute to the overall effectiveness of the institution. Additionally, the study's findings revealed broader practices that apply to all employees, including policy revisions to employment contracts, a performance evaluation system, transparent processes, HR personnel training, and collaboration between HR and academic staff. The proposed HRM framework, therefore, promotes academic staff performance and institutional excellence by integrating both specific and broader HRM practices.

There is a significant national concern regarding the academic reputation of PHEIs in Namibia. This study addressed this concern by recommending practical HRM practices that can be implemented to enhance the performance of academic staff, ultimately improving the institutional reputation. Since the study was context-focused, it highlighted unique challenges and opportunities faced by Namibian PHEIs, which are underexplored. The study revealed that the PHEI faces challenges, including inadequate technology infrastructure, leadership issues, resource constraints, and excessive workload. It has highlighted the necessity for HRM practices that are innovative and cost-effective, such as collaborative partnerships, resource sharing and tailored professional programmes to overcome these limitations. By focusing on the specific context of the PHE environment, the study directly addresses the needs of academic staff, thereby enhancing both individual and institutional performance.

Another significant contribution of this study is its effective application of the AMO Theory within the Namibian PHE context. The research aligns HRM practices with the AMO framework, offering a comprehensive and synergistic approach to enhance the performance of academic staff. By developing abilities through tailored developmental programmes, enhancing motivation with tailored recognitions, and providing opportunities for professional growth, the integrated framework addresses distinct needs and challenges faced by the PHEI. This tailored application of the AMO

Theory, illustrated by this research, offers a valuable framework for other institutions in a similar context.

7.5 Recommendations

The following are offered based on the findings of the study:

7.5.1 Addressing financial challenges

Financial challenges were identified as a significant obstacle hindering academic staff from participating in key academic activities, including conducting research, attending conferences and publishing books and journal articles. Strategies that could be considered to address these challenges include facilitating the establishment of partnerships with industry and government agencies to fund academic development programmes, including shared research projects, conferences and workshops. However, PHEIs should also share the burden by of supporting academic staff development by establishing staff development funds to finance academic staff development initiatives.

The costs related to academic staff development initiatives can be offset by utilising initiatives such as in-house training, employing industry experts, and tapping into the expertise of senior academic staff. The introduction of sabbatical leave would serve as a notable incentive and opportunity for academic staff to engage in research. The implementation of mentoring programmes would also contribute significantly to staff development by utilising experienced senior academic staff to mentor inexperienced junior academics. These proposed strategies would contribute to promoting collaboration and knowledge sharing between academic staff, while alleviating some of the associated financial burdens.

The academic staff expressed a desire to be remunerated at similar levels to their public sector counterparts, which presents a challenge considering that PHEIs are primarily reliant on tuition fees and limited private funding. A valuable point of departure for addressing this would be salary benchmarking of compensation practices within the PHE sector to align with market trends. Additionally, flexible compensation models could be introduced to allow academic staff to structure their remuneration according to their specific needs, thereby facilitating greater autonomy over their financial resources. It is also necessary to develop additional revenue streams, such as corporate sponsorships, alumni donations, or grant opportunities.

7.5.2 Bridging the implementation gap in career opportunities

A disconnect was also identified between training and development policies and their practical implementation, which can be addressed through the implementation of training needs analyses to identify shortcomings in current competency levels within faculties. This process must be conducted through a consultative dialogue between academics and management to ensure the development of effective training programmes tailored to meet the explicit needs of academic staff in a targeted manner. This targeted approach will enable PHEIs to allocate their limited resources effectively and efficiently, thereby achieving the greatest return on investment.

PHEIs are knowledge-generating institutions that should lead by example and be at the forefront of technological innovation in education and training. They should thus adopt digital tools and e-learning to deliver training programmes to their academic staff, which allow for flexibility and maximised utilisation of limited resources.

Lastly, the HRM function should strive to foster a learning culture within the institution by embracing lifelong learning and facilitating mentoring and coaching opportunities to complement formal training efforts. Academics should be motivated using recognition and reward structures to encourage active participation in professional development initiatives. This would foster a culture that values development and growth and minimises the disconnect between policies and practice.

7.5.3 Striking a balance between academic freedom and non-transparency

Management interference in academic staff work was observed, despite the existence of a high degree of academic freedom. While academic staff place a high value on academic freedom, this is often perceived as leading to a lack of responsibility and a lack of transparency. It is recommended that the roles and responsibilities between academic staff and management be clearly defined. HR can assist in this regard by establishing clear policies and guidelines that define the boundaries between academic freedom and management's role. These guidelines should centre on crucial elements such as research autonomy, curriculum development, student grading, and participation in academic committees, amongst others. Academic staff must engage in scholarly initiatives while adhering to established institutional frameworks.

While clarifying duties is essential, fostering open communication between academic staff and management is equally important. This could be achieved by discussing concerns and issues through channels such as academic forums, joint committees and meetings. When academic staff are involved in governance and decision-making processes related to academic matters, they develop a sense of ownership and less feelings of interference.

7.5.4 Promoting a balanced workload

To ensure performance, it is crucial to promote a balanced workload. Conducting a comprehensive workload assessment to understand the specific tasks performed by academic staff is a step toward achieving a balanced workload. To begin, HR and management should evaluate the current distribution of tasks across teaching, research, and administrative duties. Areas where some academics may be overburdened and others underutilised can then be identified. This approach lays the foundation for informed decision-making about workload distribution.

Building on the insights from the workload assessment, HRM should establish a workload policy. This policy should outline a reasonable number of modules/classes, the number of teaching hours per week, research commitments, administrative duties, and community service responsibilities. With these parameters clearly defined, PHEIs can ensure an equitable workload to prevent overload.

Academics spend a significant portion of their time on their teaching and administrative responsibilities, leaving little time for research. One solution is to leverage the existing learning management system (LMS) to reduce teaching loads. By integrating the LMS into teaching practices, routine tasks such as assignment submissions, grading and content distribution can be automated, thereby freeing up valuable time.

7.5.5 Building a supportive academic leadership environment

The study findings revealed inadequacies in academic leadership support. When academic staff feel supported by their leadership, they are more likely to make meaningful contributions to their institutions. However, many academic leaders are not adequately equipped with the necessary skills needed to provide meaningful support. The HRM department should therefore implement targeted leadership development to prepare and empower academic leaders with practical strategies to manage their staff. Subjects such as communication, delegation, team management, mentorship and conflict resolution will prepare leaders to navigate the complexities of people management.

Heads of department (HoDs) provide operational support within universities. However, they often operate in isolation. Hence, establishing HOD's forums provides a platform for academic leaders to come together and share best practices. By promoting initiatives such as networking events and retreats, HR can facilitate collaboration among departments and help them share experiences in addressing people management challenges.

7.5.6 Fostering job security

Job security cultivates a stable academic environment. When there is no continuity in their employment, academics' morale and performance may decline. To alleviate contract employment stress, PHEIs should establish transparent policies, stipulating clearly the criteria for renewal and potential possibilities of career progression. HR should prioritise a performance evaluation system where clear performance expectations can be communicated. Through performance dialogue, feedback on what works and what needs improvement can be provided. Simultaneously, HR should regularly gather data on the effect of employment contracts on the performance of academic staff and institutional outcomes. This not only promotes staff well-being but can also strengthen the sustainability of the educational environment. Wherever and when possible, transitioning contract-based employment into permanent positions should be considered.

Furthermore, HR can advocate for long-term workforce planning, fair work schedules and staff development. This ensures that employment decisions are based on performance and institutional needs, rather than budgetary constraints alone. By collaborating with academic leadership, HR can create a stable and committed workforce in the PHE sector.

7.5.7 Prioritising resource allocation

The study findings point out the lack of resources such as laptops, auditoriums, textbooks and high-speed internet. While PHEIs face limited funding, prioritising budget allocation to purchase the necessary resources is essential. Without the primary resources such as laptops and the internet, academic staff cannot perform their duties effectively.

While it is still required for HEIs to have available physical space for learning, the shift towards hybrid learning has led to a re-evaluation of physical space needs. It is, therefore, necessary to invest in digital infrastructure that supports virtual and hybrid classes, thereby reducing reliance on auditoriums. However, since the findings also highlighted varying levels of academic staff competence in integrating technology into teaching, it is crucial to provide ongoing support. This can be achieved by establishing a dedicated helpdesk or a support team to assist faculty members. It is also essential to develop a culture of resource-sharing among academic departments and encourage inter-institutional collaboration to optimise resource utilisation.

7.5.8 Elevating institutional reputation

The study has highlighted that the management of academic staff in the PHEI is deeply ingrained, and addressing this issue requires a strategic overhaul of HRM practices. It is essential to implement targeted initiatives needed to navigate the negative reputation associated with PHEIs in general.

Firstly, to ensure that the institution delivers high-quality education, the capabilities of academic staff must be enhanced. HR departments should strengthen the professional development of academic staff to achieve improvement in teaching.

Secondly, HR should implement 360° performance feedback that includes regular reviews, student feedback and peer reviews. In this way, areas for improvement can be identified, and the institution's academic standards can be upheld. Communicating actions taken to address any performance deficiency demonstrates the institution's commitment to maintaining high standards and enhancing its reputation.

Thirdly, showcasing and promoting the achievements of both academic staff and students can significantly enhance performance and positively impact institutional reputation. The HR department and academic leaders should recognise and celebrate achievements through institutional websites, newsletters and conferences. This approach will highlight the institution's commitment to providing high-quality education.

7.6 Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research

A few limitations must be acknowledged to contextualise the findings of this study. The qualitative study adopted a rigorous approach to establish trustworthiness. However, the phenomenological research design employed is inherently context-specific, which tends to limit the applicability of the results to different educational settings. Future studies could incorporate a mixed-methods approach, combining individual and key stakeholder interviews with surveys, for a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon being explored. A further limitation lies in the study's scope, which exclusively focused on a case study of one PHEI. This restricted scope overlooked the diversity of HRM practices across various institutions, including several private institutions and public universities. However, this case study offers in-depth insights that may provide valuable considerations for institutions facing similar challenges. Therefore, future research should consider expanding the sample size to encompass a diverse range of institutions in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of HRM practices within the broader context of higher education.

7.7 Summary

This study aimed to explore participants' experiences and perceptions about HRM practices. While this was being done, the dual challenges and enhancers of academic staff performance emerged. The study highlighted several challenges, such as job insecurity, a demoralising organisational culture, resource constraints, and a negative institutional reputation, among others. Key recommendations have been offered to mitigate these challenges.

The study's findings suggest that PHEIs should foster a nurturing academic environment through targeted institutional practices to enhance the job performance of academic staff. Notable practices in this regard include the creation of professional development opportunities, active support from academic leadership, competitive performance-driven compensation, and equitable, balanced workloads.

While the study primarily aimed to explore the impact of HRM practices on the performance of academic staff in PHEIs, incidental findings also emerged, revealing the universal relevance of certain HRM practices. These practices include collaboration and knowledge sharing, transparent processes, procedures and structures, effective performance management systems and the training and development of HR personnel. These findings signify that while academic staff function in a uniquely challenging environment, there are universal HRM principles that apply to all work environments, such as embracing inclusive practices and recognising the interconnectedness of different roles within the organisation.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Permission to conduct study

3 May 2021

The Registrar

Re: Permission to conduct research

Dear Registrar

I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study at your institution. I am a Doctoral student at Cape Peninsula University of Technology, and in the process of seeking ethical clearance at the Higher Degree Committee of CPUT. The study is HRM practices impact on academic staff private higher education institutions in Namibia.

The importance and increasing popularity of HRM practices in organisations have prompted this study. My research project focuses on HRM practices, with particular interest in understanding how employee management issues are practiced in private higher education institutions. The main objective of the study is to investigate how the HRM practices in PHEIs could be improved to enhance academic staff job performance. It is expected that the successful completion of this research will benefit a range of private institutions of higher learning in Namibia by having a Human resource framework tailor-made to this sector.

The information obtained will we be used for academic purposes only. All information will be treated as confidential and will not be distributed or used for any other reason than for the purposes of this project. Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. You may contact me at my email address: fshimaneni@nust.na
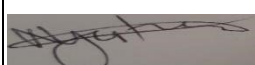
Sincerely,

Fiina Shimaneni – CPUT student

APPENDIX B: Ethics clearance certificate

Office of the Chairperson Research Ethics Committee	FACULTY: BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

The Faculty's Research Ethics Committee (FREC) on **02 May 2023**, ethics **Approval** was granted to **Shimaneni Fiina (220526826)** for a research activity for a **Doctor of Human Resource Management** at Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Title of dissertation/thesis / project:	**Human resource management practices impact on academic staff performance in private higher education institutions in Namibia** Lead Supervisor (s): Dr Jerome Kiley

Decision: APPROVED

	20.05.2023
Signed: Chairperson: Research Ethics Committee	**Date**

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the CPUT Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study requires that the researcher stops the study and immediately informs the chairperson of the relevant Faculty Ethics Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing accompanied by a progress report.

5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, notably compliance with the Bill of Rights as provided for in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (the Constitution) and where applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003 and/or other legislations that is relevant.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
7. No field work activities may continue after two (2) years for Masters and Doctorate research project from the date of issue of the Ethics Certificate. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report (REC 6) will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Clearance Certificate No | 2023_FBMSREC_ST06

Faculty of Business and Management Sciences
Ethics Informed Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Category of Participants (tick as appropriate):

Staff/Workers		*Teachers*		*Parents*		*Lecturers*		*Students*	
Other (specify)		Academic staff, Academic management and HRM personnel of private higher education institutions							

You are kindly invited to participate in a research study being conducted by **Fiina Shimaneni** from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. The findings of this study will contribute towards (tick as appropriate):

An undergraduate project		*A conference paper*	√
An Honours project		*A published journal article*	√
A Masters/doctoral thesis	√	*A published report*	√

Selection criteria
You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about HRM practices at this institution

The information below gives details about the study to help you decide whether you would want to participate.

Title of the research:
Human resource management practices and their impact on academic staff job performance in selected private higher education institutions in Namibia.

A brief explanation of what the research involves:

The importance and increasing popularity of HRM practices in organisations have prompted this study. My research project focuses on HRM practices, with particular interest in understanding how they are practiced in private higher education institutions. The main objectives of the study is to explore how the HRM practices in private higher education could be improved to enhance academic staff job performance.

Procedures

If you volunteer to participate in this study the following will be done:
1. Describe the main research procedures to you in advance, so that you are informed about what to expect;
2. Treat all interviewees with respect by arriving on time for all the interview schedules and well prepared;
3. Conduct an introduction with the interviewee in order to break ice;

Researchers	Name:	Surname:	Contact details:
1.	Fiina	Shimaneni	+264 81 271 7305
2.	Dr Jerome	Kiley (Supervisor)	KileyJ@cput.ac.za

4. All the interviewees will be asked for permission to record the interviews and also take some note where applicable;
5. In a case where there is no clarity, the interviewees will be allowed to ask for confirmation or clarity of words/sentences/phrases to ensure accuracy of the data collected;
6. Participants will be told that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs;
7. Participants will be given the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer or feel uncomfortable with;
8. Participants will be told that questions do not pose any realistic risk of distress or discomfort, either physically or psychologically, to them;
9. At the end of each interview all the interviewees will be thanked for their time and information provided for this study;
10. Participants will be debriefed at the end of their participation (i.e. give them a brief explanation of the study).

You are invited to contact the researcher should you have any questions about the research before or during the study. You will be free to withdraw your participation at any time without having to give a reason.

Kindly complete the table below before participating in the research.

Tick the appropriate column		
Statement	Yes	No
1. I understand the purpose of the research.		
2. I understand what the research requires of me.		
3. I volunteer to take part in the research.		
4. I know that I can withdraw at any time.		
5. I understand that there will not be any form of discrimination against me as a result of my participation or non-participation.		
6. Comment:		

Please sign the consent form. You will be given a copy of this form on request.

Signature of participant	Date

Contact person: Fiina Shimaneni	
Contact number: +264 81 271 7305	Email: fvatuva4@gmail.com

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

Background information

1. What is your position and tenure at this institution?
2. What is your level of qualification?
3. Can you briefly describe what your job entails?

HRM practices in PHE (Individual factors)

1. What is your personal interest and passion for your work in academia?
2. In what ways is your institution supporting you in pursuing your career goals/aspirations within the institution?
3. Can you describe any HRM programs that supported your career aspirations?
4. What motivates you to excel in your academic career?
5. How does the institution support or hinder your motivation?
6. How can you describe the level of academic freedom in your current role?
7. Can you share a scenario of how academic freedom has influenced your teaching or research?
8. What is the institution currently doing to make sure you/academic staff have the necessary knowledge and skills to perform your job?
9. What is your institution currently doing to promote diversity among its academic staff?
10. What does the institution do to make academic staff feel secure in their employment/How confident are you in the job security provided by institutions?/any specific HRM policies/programs related to this?

HRM practices in PHE (contextual factors)
1. What kind of resources or opportunities or support are provided to academic staff by your leadership (HoD, Deans et cetera) enhance their abilities?
2. What are the specific expectations or compliance requirements imposed by higher education regulators (NCHE, NQA), and how does this affect your job performance?
3. How does the institutional culture impact your motivation to excel in your academic career?
4. What values and expectations regarding academic staff roles do you think are emphasised within your institution?
5. What other strategies can your institutions employ to enhance the job performance of academic staff?

Thank you very much for your time.

Faculty of Business and Management Sciences
Ethics Informed Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Category of Participants (tick as appropriate):

Staff/Workers		*Teachers*		*Parents*		*Lecturers*		*Students*	
Other (specify)		National Council for Higher Education Association of private higher education institutions							

You are kindly invited to participate in a research study being conducted by **Fiina Shimaneni** from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. The findings of this study will contribute towards (tick as appropriate):

An undergraduate project		*A conference paper*	
An Honours project		*A published journal article*	√
A Masters/doctoral thesis	√	*A published report*	

Selection criteria
You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about HRM practices at private higher education institutions.

The information below gives details about the study to help you decide whether you would want to participate.

Title of the research:
Human resource management practices and their impact on academic staff job performance in selected private higher education institutions in Namibia.

A brief explanation of what the research involves:

The importance and increasing popularity of HRM practices in organisations have prompted this study. My research project focuses on HRM practices, with particular interest in understanding how employee management issues are practiced in private higher education institutions. The main objectives of the study is to investigate how the HRM practices in PHEIs could be improved to enhance academic job performance.

_____

Procedures

If you volunteer to participate in this study the following will be done:
11. Describe the main research procedures to you in advance, so that you are informed about what to expect;
12. Treat all interviewees with respect by arriving on time for all the interview schedules and well prepared;

Researchers	Name:	Surname:	Contact details:
1.	Fiina	Shimaneni	264 81 271 7305
2.	Dr Jerome	Kiley (Supervisor)	KileyJ@cput.ac.za

13. Conduct an introduction with the interviewee in order to break ice;
14. All the interviewees will be asked for permission to record the interviews and also take some note where applicable;
15. In a case where there is no clarity, the interviewees will be allowed to ask for confirmation or clarity of words/sentences/phrases to ensure accuracy of the data collected;
16. Participants will be told that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs;
17. Participants will be given the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer or feel uncomfortable with;
18. Participants will be told that questions do not pose any realistic risk of distress or discomfort, either physically or psychologically, to them;
19. At the end of each interview all the interviewees will be thanked for their time and information provided for this study;
20. Participants will be debriefed at the end of their participation (i.e. give them a brief explanation of the study).

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Kindly complete the table below before participating in the research.

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Statement	Yes	No
7. I understand the purpose of the research.		
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10. I know that I can withdraw at any time.		
11. I understand that there will not be any form of discrimination against me as a result of my participation or non-participation.		
12. Comment:		

Please sign the consent form. You will be given a copy of this form on request.

Signature of participant	Date

Contact person: Fiina Shimaneni	
Contact number: 264 81 271 7305	Email: fvatuva4@gmail.com

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Personal background

1. What is your position at the institution?
2. How does your position relate to private higher education institutions in the country (PHEIs?)
3. What role does NCHE/APHEIN play in the private higher education sector?

HRM dimensions in PHEIs

1. What are the key indicators that you use for measuring quality in PHEIs?
2. How would you describe the quality of academic staff in PHEIs?
3. Working with PHEIs in the country, how would you describe the working conditions of academic staff in PHEIs?
4. What measures should be in place to improve the above challenges?
5. Having been working with PHEIs, what do you think are the most challenging issues encountered while managing academics in PHEIs?
6. In which way is your institution involved in mitigating these challenges?
7. As a regulatory quality assurance institution, how do you monitor and evaluate the quality of academic staff in PHEIs?
8. Are there any policies/regulations/standards regarding HRM that PHEIs have to adhere to?
    o What are they?
    o Where can I get copies?

Thank you very much for your time.

Documents obtained: _____