






Precarious employment, job engagement and workers' quit intention in Chinese firms in Zimbabwe



Authors:

Sharon T. Rugotwi¹ 
 Nhamo Mashavira¹ 
 Munyaradzi Chikove² 
 Frank R. Matenda³ 
 Mabutho Sibanda³ 

Affiliations:

¹Department of Human Resources Management, Julius Nyerere School of Social Sciences, Great Zimbabwe University, Masvingo, Zimbabwe

²Department of Human Capital Development, Faculty of Commerce, Lupane State University, Lupane, Zimbabwe

³School of Accounting, Economics and Finance, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa

Corresponding author:

Frank Matenda
 frmatenda@gmail.com

Dates:

Received: 04 Nov. 2024
 Accepted: 21 Jan. 2025
 Published: 25 Feb. 2025

How to cite this article:

Rugotwi, S.T., Mashavira, N., Chikove, M., Matenda, F.R., & Sibanda, M., (2025). Precarious employment, job engagement and workers' quit intention in Chinese firms in Zimbabwe. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management/SA Tydskrif vir Menslikehulpbronbestuur*, 23(0), a2879. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v23i0.2879>

Read online:



Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

Orientation: Chinese-owned businesses in Zimbabwe are affected by high labour turnover. High labour turnover in these businesses reduces productivity, causes low employee morale, and augments recruitment and training costs.

Research purpose: The study assesses the association between precarious employment, job engagement and employees' intention to quit in Chinese-owned businesses considering the Midlands Province in Zimbabwe as a case study.

Motivation for the study: There is limited literature on the connection between precarious employment, job engagement and employees' intention to quit in Chinese-owned businesses.

Research approach/design and method: This assessment is quantitative. Employing the Employment Precariousness Scale, Utrecht Work Engagement Scale and employees' intention to quit scale, the data implemented in this study were collected from 211 workers employed by Chinese-owned businesses. Structural equation modelling was adopted to examine the connection between precarious employment, job engagement and employees' intention to quit and to test the structural model.

Main findings: The study results indicate that precarious employment is negatively connected to job engagement, job engagement is negatively connected to employees' intention to quit and precarious employment positively influences employees' intention to quit.

Practical/managerial implications: Precarious employment, job engagement and employees' intention to quit are linked. Interventions and strategies are required to address these issues.

Contribution/value-add: This assessment adds a voice to the existing discourse by illuminating the connection between precarious employment, job engagement and employees' intention to quit.

Keywords: precarious employment; job engagement; employees' intention to quit; Chinese-owned businesses; structural equation modelling; Zimbabwe.

Introduction

Economic and political associations between Africa and China have been escalating since the start of the new millennium, resulting in the formation of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in October 2000 to encourage infrastructure connectivity, industrialisation and expedited trade (Carciotto & Chikohomero, 2022). Similarly, Gukurume and Matsika (2022) postulate that China-Africa relations have been intensifying, increasing small-scale Chinese entrepreneurs investing in African nations. Nonetheless, the swift growth of Chinese-owned corporations in Africa has concerned practitioners, academics and activists (Carciotto & Chikohomero, 2022).

Ideally, Carciotto and Chikohomero (2022) further indicate that environmental and labour conditions, a lack of transparency and Chinese corporates' practices are some of the major concerns. For instance, existing research has indicated that Chinese-owned firms in several African countries, including Zimbabwe, are characterised by hazardous working conditions and abusive labour practices (see, e.g. Carciotto & Chikohomero, 2022; Matsika, 2024;

Copyright: © 2025. The Authors. Licensee: AOSIS. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.

Ofori & Sarpong, 2022). Interestingly, Gukurume and Matsika (2022) propound that there is limited research on daily workplace encounters, styles of management and labour dynamics in these corporations.

This study assesses the association between precarious employment, job engagement and employees' intention to quit in Chinese-owned businesses considering the Midlands Province in Zimbabwe as a case study. Precarious employment refers to 'atypical' employment that is different from the 'Standard Employment Relationship', which is characterised by full-time, steady and socially protected employment with a solitary employer (Bosch, 2004). Irvine and Rose (2024) postulate that precarious employment includes numerous insecure contractual classes, incorporating casual, temporary agency, fixed-term, gig or platform work, zero-hours, self-employment and freelancing. Thus, precarious work describes non-standard or temporary employment that may be poorly paid, insecure, unprotected and above all unable to support a household.

Job engagement encompasses a person's emotional and cognitive connection with their job, personified by outstanding commitment, enthusiasm and absorption in job responsibilities (Zhou et al., 2022). Job engagement therefore refers to a positive motivational condition symbolised by putting cognitive, emotional and physical energy into an individual's work functions.

Chinese-operated companies in Zimbabwe have faced accusations of unfair labour practices, severe human rights violations and poor worker safety standards. The mistreatment of employees by Chinese companies' owners has highlighted the exploitation of local workers and the unethical behaviour of these employers. Chinese investors are often accused of subjecting their employees to verbal and physical abuse and openly disregarding laws. In some circles, Chinese business ventures in Zimbabwe are referred to as 'the darkest side of capitalism'. This is also supported by the fact that precarious employment has increased in these businesses.

This study is organised as follows. The 'Literature review and hypotheses development' section reviews relevant literature and outlines the formulated hypotheses. The methodology used in the study is detailed in the 'Method' section. The 'Results' section presents the findings, while the 'Discussion' section interprets and analyses these results. Finally, the study is concluded in the 'Conclusions' section.

Research objectives

- To examine the relationship between precarious employment and job engagement in Chinese-owned businesses in Zimbabwe.
- To determine whether there is a positive relationship between job engagement and employees' intention to quit in Chinese-owned businesses in Zimbabwe.

- To assess the extent to which precarious employment leads to employees' intention to quit in Chinese-owned businesses in Zimbabwe.

Literature review and hypotheses development

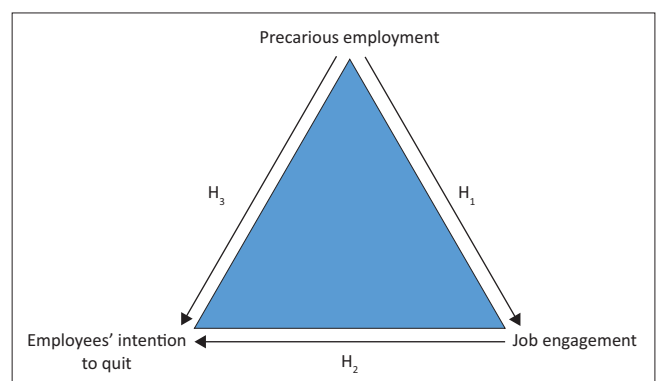
Theoretical framework

Schaufeli et al. (2002) model of job engagement

This model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding job engagement by incorporating three key components: vigour, dedication and absorption. Vigour refers to high levels of energy and mental resilience at work, dedication involves being intensely involved in one's work and experiencing a sense of significance, and absorption reflects being concentrated and engrossed in one's tasks (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The model offers practical implications for enhancing organisational job engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). It can be applied across different cultural contexts, making it suitable for studying job engagement in Chinese-owned businesses. The Schaufeli et al. (2002) model has been widely validated through empirical research in diverse settings, demonstrating its reliability and validity as a theoretical framework for studying job engagement (Kwon et al., 2024). Existing literature propounded that the model emphasises the importance of psychological well-being in the workplace, highlighting how factors such as demands, job resources and personal resources influence employees' engagement and intention to quit. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) opine that the model considers individual and organisational factors contributing to job engagement, including job characteristics, personal characteristics and organisational support. Therefore, the model can help researchers uncover the relationship between precarious employment, job engagement and employees' intention to quit.

Conceptual framework

Figure 1 presents a conceptual framework adopted in this study.



H, hypothesis.

FIGURE 1: Conceptual framework.

Hypotheses development

Precarious employment and job engagement

Existing literature has indicated that precarious employment and job engagement are negatively correlated (Irvine & Rose, 2024; Jindain & Gilitwala, 2024; Trappmann et al., 2024). This is unsurprising because precarious employment hurts workers' well-being, financial stability and job satisfaction. Moreover, insecure employment conditions, such as high job demands, low job control and limited job resources, can hinder employees' ability to engage fully in their work. Atta et al. (2024) propound that job engagement indicates a worker's willingness to put effort habitually, leading to more outstanding organisational commitment, productivity, and job satisfaction. Employees engaged within the organisation are more proactive, encourage innovation and make efforts to improve the organisation's results (Kerti et al., 2024). Extant literature also indicated that job engagement could lead to more excellent employees' job performance and well-being and offer a competitive advantage to organisations. Based on the reviewed literature, the following hypothesis is designed:

H1: Precarious employment is negatively associated with job engagement.

Job engagement and employees' intention to quit

When employees are engaged in their work, the turnover rates and intentions to quit the organisation are reduced as employees will be motivated and satisfied with what they are doing. Bakker (2011) discovers that higher levels of job engagement are associated with lower intentions to quit across various industries, for example, healthcare, financial services and manufacturing. In the service and manufacturing industries, Khan et al. (2024) expose that higher levels of job engagement are associated with lower intentions to quit. Alarcon and Edwards (2011) indicate that higher levels of job engagement are associated with lower intentions to quit among healthcare professionals. Premised on the examined literature, the following hypothesis is developed:

H2: Job engagement is negatively related to employees' intention to quit.

Precarious employment and employees' intention to quit

Precarious employment and employees' intention to quit are closely linked. Specifically, precarious employment is associated with higher job dissatisfaction, stress and turnover intentions among employees (Sora et al., 2019). In other words, precarious employment and employees' intention to quit are positively connected (Eduardo & Lacap, 2018; Irvine & Rose, 2024; Solomon & Du Plessis, 2024). Employees in precarious jobs often face uncertainty about their income, job security and future prospects; work-life balance challenges; lack of access to benefits such as healthcare or retirement plans; and limited opportunities for career advancement, which can lead to feelings of job insecurity and dissatisfaction (see, for instance, Kerti et al., 2024; Trappmann et al., 2024). These factors contribute to their intentions to quit their current jobs in search of more stable and secure employment opportunities. Precarious employment significantly impacts

an individual's psychological well-being and job attitude (Bodin et al., 2020; Irvine & Rose, 2024; Oh & Chhinzer, 2021). It is associated with lower levels of organisational commitment as employees in precarious positions are less likely to identify with the organisation's goals and values resulting in reduced loyalty and engagement. Based on the analysed literature, the following hypothesis is generated:

H3: Precarious employment is positively related to employees' intention to quit.

Method

Positivism research philosophy

The positivist research paradigm is a philosophical and methodological approach to research that emphasises using empirical evidence and scientific methods and a belief in objective reality (Bhangu et al., 2023; Verma et al., 2024). Positivism is commonly associated with experiments and quantitative research (Verma et al., 2024). Fundamentally, positivism relies on the hypothetico-deductive method to test predefined hypotheses, often quantitatively, establishing functional relationships between causal variables and outcomes (Marshall et al., 2021). Positivism seeks to maintain objectivity in research by minimising the influence of personal biases and subjective interpretations (Munce et al., 2021).

Quantitative research approach

Quantitative research is a systematic empirical investigation using statistical, mathematical or computational techniques to collect and analyse numerical data (Verma et al., 2024) to precisely and objectively measure, quantify and compare variables (Bhangu et al., 2023). Quantitative research typically aims to quantify relationships, patterns and trends in data, often using statistical analysis to identify correlations, associations or causal relationships between variables. This study gathers data through a questionnaire and analyses it using statistical methods to test hypotheses and draw conclusions. Quantitative research allows researchers to generalise findings to larger populations, make predictions based on data analysis and provide objective and replicable results (Dehalwar & Sharma, 2024; Yamany et al., 2024). The objectivity of quantitative research enhances the credibility and reliability of the study's results.

Explanatory – Case study research design

A case study research design is a strategy of inquiry that involves an in-depth investigation of a phenomenon within its real-world context (Hunziker & Blankenagel, 2024). An 'explanatory – case study research design' helps researchers understand perspectives regarding the object of research inquiry and assists them in obtaining a more holistic sense of the topic or issue. Hence, it yields comprehensive, in-depth and richly contextualised insights about the phenomenon of interest. This illuminates the readers' understanding of the phenomenon beyond its abstract statistical or theoretical explanations.

Research population and research sample

The target population of Chinese-run companies was derived from the Midlands Province in Zimbabwe. Specifically, the target population consisted of managerial and non-managerial employees from different departments. Researchers conveniently selected a sample of 220. Midlands Province is situated at a central point in Zimbabwe, and it is home to a myriad of Chinese-run companies. This is not surprising because the Midlands Province is mineral-rich. For instance, the mineral-rich Great Dyke is part of the Midlands Province. Fundamentally, identifying a sufficient sample size in this study was determined by Etikan and Bala (2017); 10% or more of the target population is regarded as a sample because the population is homogeneous. Hence from a target population of 2200 employees, a sample size of 220 participants was selected to participate in the study.

Convenience sampling technique

Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method whereby the researcher selects the participants because of their locality and convenient accessibility (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024). Participants were selected because of their accessibility, physical proximity, readiness at a specific time and willingness to partake in the examination. Convenience sampling allows researchers to quickly and conveniently select participants (Munce et al., 2021). It streamlines the recruitment process, reducing costs associated with extensive participant outreach, screening and data collection (Marshall et al., 2021).

Data collection

We developed online questionnaires and sent the respective links to participants through WhatsApp and email. The participants were given 2 months to complete the questionnaire (i.e. June 2023 and July 2023). A sample of 220 employees was selected for the analysis, and questionnaires were sent to them over 2 months. Out of the 220 questionnaires sent, only 215 were returned, giving a response rate of 97.70%. Here are factors that can lead to a high response rate during online interviews. The high response rate was attained because of the robust strategies that the authors employed such as ensuring that the invitation was concise, clear and relevant to the participant's interests and above all, the participants were told to attempt the questions at their own convenient times over a period of 60 days. In addition, a user-friendly platform such as WhatsApp was used. The participants were also provided with clear instructions on how to join the interview.

The authors also established a warm and welcoming tone during the introduction and there was clarity of purpose, duration and format of the interview. Lastly, closed-ended questions designed using the Likert Scale encourage swift responses from the participants. Ultimately, 211 questionnaires remained after we removed invalid and incomplete questionnaires. Male responses contributed 75.24% and female responses contributed 25.76% of the total number of valid responses. Most of the responses came from

the 30–39-year research group. The majority of the participants (68.57%) had 2–3 years working experience. Most of the respondents had certificates (48.60%) when it comes to qualifications.

Procedure

Only Chinese-owned companies' employees were allowed to participate in this study. Participants were contacted through their human resources departments. Researchers recruited participants by personally talking to them and articulating the study's aim. Respondents were requested to sign the informed consent forms before attempting the questionnaires. Participants were notified that their responses were confidential and anonymous and would be used for academic intentions only. Hence, they were notified not to indicate their names on the questionnaires. The objectivity and accuracy of the research outcomes were augmented. Researchers advised the participants that their participation in the study was voluntary. Thus, they can discontinue the survey at any time if they want to. This study involved human participants. Therefore, all procedures agreed with the ethical principles of the institutional research committee, and all methods were implemented in accordance with the applicable protocols and guidelines.

Instruments

Precarious employment: This study examines precarious employment using the Employment Precariousness Scale (EPRES) (Vives et al., 2010). The EPRES is a multidimensional scale that incorporates the following six aspects: disempowerment (negotiation level of the employment conditions), temporariness (contract length), vulnerability (defencelessness against workplace authoritarianism), low wages, workplace rights, and the ability to exercise them (Padrosa et al., 2021). In this study, we dropped two elements of the EPRES and focussed only on vulnerability (VU), wages (WA), rights (RI) and exercise rights (ER). The EPRES has been extensively implemented and validated in various studies.

Job engagement: The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli et al., 2002) was used to assess job engagement with a particular focus on three components (i.e. vigour, absorption and dedication). Conceptually, the UWES is structured into three subsections which assess the three core dimensions of job engagement in essence, vigour (six items), dedication (five items) and absorption (six items), each rated on a five-point frequency scale. The UWES has been widely used and validated in numerous countries.

Employees' intention to quit: Employees' intention to quit was measured using a two-item intention to quit scale based on a five-point scale (Firth et al., 2004). We adopted this because of its simplicity and efficiency. Simplicity is helpful in settings where time and attention are restricted, such as busy workplaces. Moreover, the scale can be applied in different contexts in a reliable manner.

Plan for data analysis: The study assesses the relationship between precarious employment, job engagement and employees' intention to quit. The smart partial least squares (PLS) software was employed, and the PLS path modelling approach was implemented to estimate the structural equation model of interest. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 28.0 and Microsoft Excel were also employed in the analysis. Partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was implemented because of its efficiency in parameter forecasting (Andrade, 2021). The relationships between the variables were examined through path analysis in the framework of the structural model test. Several measures were employed to examine the reliability and validity of the outcomes and the model's goodness-of-fit.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the Julius Nyerere School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (reference no.: 07/05/2023).

Results

Study results are outlined in this section.

Measurement model testing

We used Cronbach's alpha (CA), composite reliability (CR) and average extracted variance (AVE) to evaluate the internal consistency of the constructs, which enabled us to check the reliability and validity of the research instrument.

Results outlined in Table 1 support the internal consistency of the constructs. Values for CA and CR exceed the recommended threshold of 0.7 indicating that the data are reliable (Hair et al., 2010). Average extracted variance values surpass the recommended 0.5 level (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2010; Nunnally, 1994), indicating good convergent validity. To ensure the dependability of the model, items with factor loadings below 0.70 were excluded from the model.

Table 2 displays the results of discriminant validity analysis as indicated by the Fornell–Larcker criterion. These results indicate that discriminant validity is established because AVE's square roots are greater than the correlation coefficients between constructs (Wan & Duffy, 2022). This indicates an apparent distinction between the constructs, which are said to measure diverse concepts.

We also used a heterotrait–monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) technique to assess further the discriminant validity between constructs (see Table 3). Discriminant validity has been established because the HTMT values are below the recommended cut-off threshold of 0.90.

We assessed the existence of multicollinearity using the variance inflation factors (VIFs) for latent variables in the model. Table 4 shows that all the VIF values are below the recommended cut-off threshold of 3.3 (Hair et al., 2011). This implies that our model is not affected by multicollinearity.

When variables are not highly correlated, the model can precisely forecast the distinct influence of each construct. This leads to more trustworthy results.

Goodness-of-fit metrics

We analysed the goodness-of-fit of our model using the normed fit index (NFI) and standardised root mean square residual (SRMR). Table 5 shows the values for NFI and SRMR.

Table 5 indicates that the value of SRMR is 0.077, which is below the recommended cut-off value of 0.08 (Goretzko et al., 2024). An SRMR value below 0.08 indicates a fit model. Existing literature indicates that the value of NFI close to 1 means a good fit (Sathyanarayana & Mohanasundaram, 2024). Therefore, the NFI value of 0.910 (greater than the threshold of 0.9) indicates a good fit.

TABLE 1: Reliability and convergent validity.

Variable	CA	CR	AVE
A	0.759	0.856	0.670
D	0.666	0.804	0.584
EIQ	0.752	0.834	0.504
JE	0.815	0.873	0.587
PE	0.711	0.833	0.626
VI	0.837	0.892	0.677

CA, Cronbach's alpha; CR, composite reliability; AVE, average extracted variance; PE, precarious employment; JE, job engagement; VI, vigour; D, dedication; A, absorption; EIQ, employees' intention to quit.

TABLE 2: Correlation coefficient matrix and discriminant validity.

Variable	A	D	EIQ	JE	PE	VI
A	0.819	-	-	-	-	-
D	-0.280	0.764	-	-	-	-
EIQ	-0.291	0.201	0.710	-	-	-
JE	0.052	-0.205	-0.554	0.766	-	-
PE	-0.199	0.087	0.260	-0.431	0.791	-
VI	0.054	-0.202	-0.541	0.591	-0.443	0.823

Note: The number in bold is the square root of AVE.

PE, precarious employment; JE, job engagement; VI, vigour; D, dedication; A, absorption; EIQ, employees' intention to quit.

TABLE 3: Heterotrait–monotrait discriminant validity.

Variable	A	D	EIQ	JE	PE	VI
A	-	-	-	-	-	-
D	0.334	-	-	-	-	-
EIQ	0.409	0.233	-	-	-	-
JE	0.076	0.258	0.665	-	-	-
PE	0.248	0.143	0.342	0.522	-	-
VI	0.082	0.236	0.646	0.175	0.551	-

PE, precarious employment; JE, job engagement; VI, vigour; D, dedication; A, absorption; EIQ, employees' intention to quit.

TABLE 4: Variance inflation factor results.

Links	JE -> A	JE -> D	JE -> EIQ	JE -> VI	PE -> EIQ	PE -> JE
VIF	1.000	1.000	1.228	1.000	1.228	1.000

VIF, variance inflation factor; PE, precarious employment; JE, job engagement; VI, vigour; D, dedication; A, absorption; EIQ, employees' intention to quit.

TABLE 5: Goodness-of-fit results.

SRMR	NFI
0.077	0.910

SRMR, standardised root mean square residual; NFI, normed fit index.

Structural equation model and hypotheses testing

In this study, we employed a structural equation model to assess the relationship between precarious employment, job engagement and employees' intention to quit as indicated by the conceptual framework. Table 6 presents the path analysis results.

The results in Table 6 indicate that precarious employment hurts job engagement ($\beta = -0.43, p < 0.001$), suggesting that as precarious employment rises, job engagement declines. Hence, **H1** is supported. Job engagement was found to negatively influence employees' intention to quit ($\beta = -0.542, p < 0.001$), implying that as job engagement increases, employees' intention to quit falls. Therefore, **H2** is supported. Lastly, precarious employment has a positive and insignificant effect on employees' intention to quit ($\beta = 0.026, p = 0.743$). Consequently, **H3** is not supported.

Figure 2 indicates the fitted model containing coefficients and factor loadings. The model shows the associations between the variables of interest and their strengths. Factor loadings exceeding 0.60 indicate strong convergent validity, suggesting a robust model.

Discussion

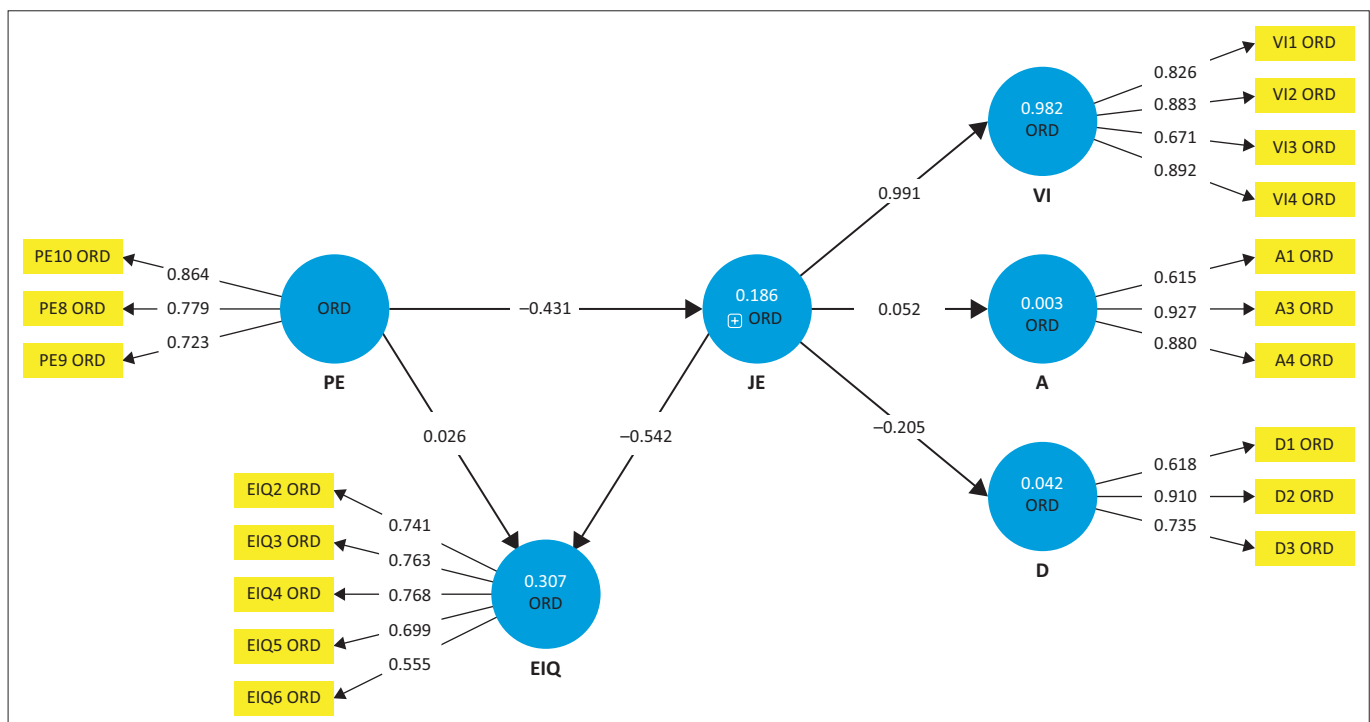
Precarious employment and job engagement

Study results indicate a significant negative relationship between precarious employment and job engagement. This is not surprising because precarious employment can result in financial distress (which can reduce occupational self-efficacy), insecurity, loss and instability, emotional stress (which adversely affects mental health and well-being), weak social connectedness, increased intention to quit, burnout, job dissatisfaction and can influence family decisions (Solomon & Du Plessis, 2024; Trappmann et al., 2024). Further, existing literature indicates that precarious employees can be exposed to inadequate rewards, poor job resources, high job demands, weak occupational health and safety measures, and under-protection from social risks (Weston & McMunn, 2023). Zhong and Xu (2023) postulate that precarious employment adversely affects career success, especially by augmenting financial stress and lessening occupational self-efficacy. Zheng et al. (2021) articulate that job precariousness is positively associated with workers' withdrawal behaviour (where employees disengage from work, either psychologically or physically) through increasing job insecurity. Irvine and Rose (2024), Jindain and Gilitwala (2024) and Jung et al. (2021) are some

TABLE 6: Path analysis results.

Hypothesis	Relationship	Std Beta	SE	T	p	Decision
H1	PE → JE	-0.431	0.065	6.661	< 0.001	Supported
H2	JE → EIQ	-0.542	0.069	7.906	< 0.001	Supported
H3	PE → EIQ	0.026	0.079	0.328	0.743	Not supported

Std, standard; SE, standard error; PE, precarious employment; JE, job engagement; EIQ, employees' intention to quit.



PE, precarious employment; JE, job engagement; VI, vigour; D, dedication; A, absorption; EIQ, employees' intention to quit; ORD, ordinal data.

FIGURE 2: Structural equation model.

of the authors who indicate that there is an adverse association between precarious employment and job engagement.

We discovered that job engagement has a negative effect on employees' intention to quit. This implies that investing in initiatives to foster higher levels of job engagement reduces turnover intentions among employees in Chinese-owned businesses in the Midlands Province. Hur and Abner (2024) postulate that workers who are more engaged in work endeavours, more satisfied with their jobs and more emotionally devoted to their organisation are less expected to quit. In the same vein, employees who are highly engaged in their work are more committed to their organisations and are less likely to have intentions of quitting. Kerti et al. (2024) emphasise that investing in initiatives to foster higher levels of job engagement among precarious employees can help reduce turnover intentions. Trappmann et al. (2024) highlight the importance of promoting job engagement to reduce turnover intentions among precarious employees. They suggested that job engagement can enhance worker well-being, productivity and organisational commitment, leading to lower turnover rates. Irvine and Rose (2024) and Shuck and Reio (2014) proffer that job engagement and employees' intention to quit are negatively related.

The study results indicated an insignificant positive relationship between precarious employment and employees' intention to quit. Allan et al. (2024) articulate that employees in precarious employment arrangements are likelier to quit their jobs than those in stable employment, suggesting a positive relationship between precarious employment and intention to quit. Under the same reasoning, Ali and Anwar (2021) highlight that addressing precarious conditions is essential to reduce intentions to quit among employees because precarious employment is associated with higher levels of job insecurity, a lack of job control and limited opportunities for career development. These factors lead to decreased job satisfaction, lower organisational commitment and higher turnover intentions. Hult et al. (2024) and Irvine and Rose (2024) are some of the authors who indicate that precarious employment and employees' intention to quit are positively related.

Conclusions

This study used the SEM to examine the association between precarious employment, job engagement and employees' intention to quit in Chinese-owned businesses considering the Midlands Province in Zimbabwe as a case study. Employing the EPRES, UWES and employees' intention to quit scale, the data implemented in this study were collected from 211 workers employed by Chinese-owned businesses. The study results indicate that precarious employment is negatively connected to job engagement, job engagement is negatively connected to employees' intention to quit, and precarious employment positively and insignificantly influences employees'

intention to quit. This shows that precarious employment, job engagement and employees' intention to quit are linked. Hence, interventions and strategies are required to address these issues. To achieve organisational goals, Chinese-owned firms must adopt strategies that enhance job engagement and reduce precarious employment and employees' intention to quit.

The results of this study reveal that precarious employment and employees' intention to quit can be termed employee engagement. This is closely associated with Schaufeli et al. (2002) model of job engagement which is premised on the notion that employee engagement leads to increased productivity. In this regard, employee productivity is crucial for any business. The more productive employees are, the more likely the business will succeed. Employers in Chinese-owned firms ought to realise that the most critical solution in retaining personnel is employee engagement. Engaged employees have a positive attitude towards their organisation as they strongly believe in the company's mission and vision. This makes them like what they do and find their work meaningful. All in all, such employees work harder and with more enthusiasm to proactively reach their goals.

The results of this study are specific to Chinese-owned businesses in the Midlands Province. Therefore, the respective results may not be generalised to other areas of the economy. Future studies can consider Chinese-run corporations in other provinces to allow for the generalisability of the results beyond the Midlands Province. More variables can be included in future studies to enhance the credibility and reliability of the study results. This current study is quantitative. It would be prudent for future studies to adopt mixed methods by introducing a qualitative component. Integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches makes the study more comprehensive, resulting in reliable and applicable results in real-world settings.

Acknowledgements

The authors thank the reviewers for their positive recommendations, remarks and propositions that have enhanced our manuscript substantially and significantly, as well as all the participants who contributed to the study.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

S.T.R., N.M., M.C., F.R.M. and M.S. contributed equally to this work.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, F.R.M., upon reasonable request.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and are the product of professional research. It does not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated institution, funder, agency or that of the publisher. The authors are responsible for this article's results, findings and content.

References

- Aларсон, G.M., & Edwards, J.M. (2011). The relationship of engagement, job satisfaction and turnover intentions. *Stress and Health, 27*(3), e294–e298. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smi.1365>
- Ali, B.J., & Anwar, G. (2021). An empirical study of employees' motivation and its influence job satisfaction. *International Journal of Engineering, Business and Management, 5*(2), 21–30. <https://doi.org/10.22161/ijebm.5.2.3>
- Allan, B.A., Kim, T., & Pham, J. (2024). Disentangling underemployment and precarious work: A latent profile analysis. *Journal of Career Assessment, 32*(3), 560–577. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10690727231212187>
- Andrade, C. (2021). The limitations of quasi-experimental studies, and methods for data analysis when a quasi-experimental research design is unavoidable. *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine, 43*(5), 451–452. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02537176211034707>
- Atta, M.H.R., Zoromba, M.A., El-Gazar, H.E., Loutfy, A., Elsheikh, M.A., El-Ayari, O.S.M., Sehseh, I., & Elzohairy, N.W. (2024). Climate anxiety, environmental attitude, and job engagement among nursing university colleagues: A multicenter descriptive study. *BMC Nursing, 23*(1), 133. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-024-01788-1>
- Bakker, A.B. (2011). An evidence-based model of work engagement. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 20*(4), 265–269. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721411414534>
- Bakker, A.B., & Demerouti, E. (2007). The job demands-resources model: State of the art. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 22*(3), 309–328. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940710733115>
- Benach, J., Vives, A., Amable, M., Vanroelen, C., Tarafa, G., & Muntaner, C. (2014). Precarious employment: Understanding an emerging social determinant of health. *Annual Review of Public Health, 35*(1), 229–253. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-032013-182500>
- Bhangu, S., Provost, F., & Caduff, C. (2023). Introduction to qualitative research methods – Part I. *Perspectives in Clinical Research, 14*(1), 39–42. https://doi.org/10.4103/picr.picr_253_22
- Bodin, T., Çağlayan, Ç., Garde, A.H., Gnesi, M., Jonsson, J., Kiran, S., Kreshpaj, B., Leinonen, T., Mehlum, I.S., Nena, E., & Orellana, C. (2020). Precarious employment in occupational health – An OMEGA-NET working group position paper. *Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment & Health, 46*(3), 321–329. <https://doi.org/10.5271/sjweh.3860>
- Bosch, G. (2004). Towards a new standard employment relationship in Western Europe. *British Journal of Industrial Relations, 42*(4), 617–636. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8543.2004.00333.x>
- Buchholz, S., Hofäcker, D., Mills, M., Blossfeld, H.P., Kurz, K., & Hofmeister, H. (2009). Life courses in the globalization process: The development of social inequalities in modern societies. *European Sociological Review, 25*(1), 53–71. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcn033>
- Carciotto, S., & Chikohomero, R. (2022). Chinese labour practices in six southern African countries. *Institute for Security Studies Monographs, 2022*(207), 928–961. <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/ejc-isimono-v2022-n207-a1>
- Dehalwar, K., & Sharma, S.N. (2024). Exploring the distinctions between quantitative and qualitative research methods. *Think India Journal, 27*(1), 7–15. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10553000>
- Eduardo, M.M., & Lacap, J.P.G. (2018). The role of transformational leadership on employees' intention to quit. *PREO Journal of Business and Management, 1*(1), 39–53.
- Etikan, I., & Bala, K. (2017). Sampling and sampling methods. *Biometrics & Biostatistics International Journal, 5*(6), 215–217. <https://doi.org/10.15406/bbij.2017.05.00149>
- Firth, L., Mellor, D.J., Moore, K.A., & Loquet, C. (2004). How can Managers Reduce Employee Intention to Quit? *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 19*(2), 170–187. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940410526127>
- Fornell, C., & Larcker, D.F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research, 18*(1), 39–50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224378101800104>
- Goretzko, D., Siemund, K., & Sterner, P. (2024). Evaluating model fit of measurement models in confirmatory factor analysis. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 84*(1), 123–144. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00131644231163813>
- Gukurume, S., & Matsika, F.T. (2022). Labour dynamics in Chinese Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs): Everyday encounters and relations in Harare, Zimbabwe. *Africa Review, 14*(3), 305–331. <https://doi.org/10.1163/09744061-bja10030>
- Hair, J.F., Black, W.C., Babin, B.J., & Anderson, R.E. (2010). *Multivariate data analysis* (7th ed.). Prentice Hall.
- Hair, J.F., Sarstedt, M., Ringle, C.M., & Mena, J.A. (2011). An assessment of the use of partial least squares structural equation modeling in marketing research. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 40*, 414–433. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-011-0261-648>
- Huang, S.Y., Huang, C.H., & Chang, T.W. (2022). A new concept of work engagement theory in cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and physical engagement. *Frontiers in Psychology, 12*, 663440. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.663440>
- Hult, M., Ring, M., Siranko, H., & Kangasniemi, M. (2024). Decent and precarious work among nursing and care workers: A mixed-method systematic review. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 111*(1), 16572. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.16572>
- Hunziker, S., & Blankenagel, M. (2024). Single case research design. In *Research design in business and management: A practical guide for students and researchers* (2nd ed., pp. 141–170). Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.
- Hur, H., & Abner, G. (2024). What makes public employees want to leave their job? A meta-analysis of turnover intention predictors among public sector employees. *Public Administration Review, 84*(1), 115–142. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13601>
- Irvine, A., & Rose, N. (2024). How does precarious employment affect mental health? A scoping review and thematic synthesis of qualitative evidence from western economies. *Work, Employment and Society, 38*(2), 418–441. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09500170221128698>
- Jindain, C., & Gilitwala, B. (2024). The factors impacting the intermediating variable of employee engagement toward employee performance in a hybrid working model. *Rajagiri Management Journal, 18*(2), 167–179. <https://doi.org/10.1108/RAMJ-08-2023-0237>
- Jung, H.S., Jung, Y.S., & Yoon, H.H. (2021). COVID-19: The effects of job insecurity on the job engagement and turnover intent of deluxe hotel employees and the moderating role of generational characteristics. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 92*, 102703. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2020.102703>
- Kerti, K.A., Van Engen, M., Szabó, O., Kroon, B., Bleijenbergh, I., & Freese, C. (2024). Precarious employment amidst global crises: Career shocks, resources and migrants' employability. *Career Development International, 29*(2), 220–233. <https://doi.org/10.1108/CDI-10-2023-0357>
- Khan, A.Y., Bilal, A., Daud, N., Daniyal, M., Ahmed, B., & Ishaq, A. (2024). Factors affecting early retirement intentions with the mediating mechanism of job engagement. *Gadajah Mada International Journal of Business, 26*(1), 55–82. <https://doi.org/10.22146/gamaijb.72284>
- Kwon, K., Jeong, S., Park, J., & Yoon, S.W. (2024). Employee development and employee engagement: A review and integrated model. *Career Development International, 29*(2), 169–184. <https://doi.org/10.1108/CDI-04-2023-0117>
- Marshal, C., Rossman, G.B., & Blanco, G.L. (2021). *Designing qualitative research* (7th ed.). Kindle Edition. Sage.
- Matsika, F.T. (2024). *Workers' understanding and experiences of labour practices in Chinese owned construction companies in Harare, Zimbabwe*. Doctoral dissertation, Sol Plaatje University.
- Munce, S.E.P., Guetterman, T.C., & Jaglal, S.B. (2021). Using the exploratory sequential design for complex intervention development: Example of the development of a self-management program for spinal cord injury. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 15*(1), 37–60. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689820901936>
- Nunnally, J.C. (1994). *Psychometric theory 3E*. Tata McGraw-Hill Education.
- Nyimbili, F., & Nyimbili, L. (2024). Types of purposive sampling techniques with their examples and application in qualitative research studies. *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies, 5*(1), 90–99. <https://doi.org/10.37745/bjmas.2022.0419>
- Ofose, G., & Sarpong, D. (2022). The evolving perspectives on the Chinese labour regime in Africa. *Economic and Industrial Democracy, 43*(4), 1747–1766. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0143831X211029382>
- Oh, J., & Chhinzar, N. (2021). Is turnover contagious? The impact of transformational leadership and collective turnover on employee turnover decisions. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal, 42*(7), 1089–1103. <https://doi.org/10.1108/LOJ-12-2020-0548>
- Padrosa, E., Bolibar, M., Julià, M., & Benach, J. (2021). Comparing precarious employment across countries: Measurement invariance of the employment precariousness scale for Europe (EPRES-E). *Social Indicators Research, 154*(3), 893–915. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-020-02539-w>
- Rettrisunz, A., Panjaitan, P.I.M., Sjarifudin, D., Panatap, J., Indonesia, U., Bhayangkara, U., & Raya, J. (2023). Analysis function human resource management: Recruitment, training, career development, industrial relation. *East Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, 2*(3), 1261–1272. <https://doi.org/10.55927/eajmr.v2i3.3601>
- Rich, B.L., Lepine, J.A., & Crawford, E.R. (2010). Job engagement: Antecedents and effects on job performance. *Academy of Management Journal, 53*(3), 617–635. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2010.51468988>

- Sathyanarayana, S., & Mohanasundaram, T. (2024). Fit indices in structural equation modeling and confirmatory factor analysis: Reporting guidelines. *Asian Journal of Economics, Business and Accounting*, 24(7), 561–577. <https://doi.org/10.9734/ajeba/2024/v24i71430>
- Schaufeli, W.B., & Bakker, A.B. (2004). Job demands, job resources, and their relationship with burnout and engagement: A multi-sample study. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 25(3), 293–315. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.248>
- Schaufeli, W.B., Salanova, M., González-Romá, V., & Bakker, A.B. (2002). The measurement of engagement and burnout: A two sample confirmatory factor analytic approach. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 3(1), 71–92. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1015630930326>
- Shuck, B., & Reio, T.G. (2014). Employee engagement and well-being: A moderation model and implications for practice. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 21(1), 43–58. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1548051813494240>
- Solomon, S., & Du Plessis, M. (2024). Precarious employment practices in South African universities. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, 22(1), 2490. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v22i0.2490>
- Sora, B., Höge, T., Caballer, A., & Peiró, J.M. (2019). Employment contract, job insecurity and employees' affective well-being: The role of self- and collective efficacy. *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 40(2), 193–214. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0143831X18804659>
- Trappmann, V., Umney, C., McLachlan, C.J., Seehaus, A., & Cartwright, L. (2024). How do young workers perceive job insecurity? Legitimising frames for precarious work in England and Germany. *Work, Employment and Society*, 38(4), 998–1020. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09500170231187821>
- Verma, R., Verma, S., & Abhishek, K. (2024). *Research methodology*. Booksclinic Publishing.
- Vives, A., Amable, M., Ferrer, M., Moncada, S., Llorens, C., Muntaner, C., Benavides, F.G., & Benach, J. (2010). The Employment Precariousness Scale (EPRES): Psychometric properties of a new tool for epidemiological studies among waged and salaried workers. *Occupational & Environmental Medicine*, 67(8), 548–555. <https://doi.org/10.1136/oem.2009.048967>
- Wan, W., & Duffy, R.D. (2022). Decent work and turnover intention among new generation employees: The mediating role of job satisfaction and the moderating role of job autonomy. *Sage Open*, 12(2), 21582440221094591. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440221094591>
- Weston, G., & McMunn, A. (2023). Precarious work and health. In M. Wahrendorf, T. Chandola, & A. Descatha (Eds.), *Handbook of life course occupational health* (pp. 319–341), Handbook Series in Occupational Health Sciences. Springer.
- Yamany, M.S., Kamal, L., Elshaboury, N., & Hosny, H.E. (2024). Quantitative and qualitative review of material waste management in construction projects. *Asian Journal of Civil Engineering*, 25, 5033–5054. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42107-024-01097-7>
- Zheng, S., Ding, T., Chen, H., Wu, Y., & Cai, W. (2021). Precarious job makes me withdraw? The role of job insecurity and negative affect. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(24), 12999. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph182412999>
- Zhong, H., & Xu, J. (2023). Precarious employment and subjective career success during the school-to-work transition. *Psychology Research and Behavior Management*, 16, 2327–2339. <https://doi.org/10.2147/PRBM.S418017>
- Zhou, F., Zhang, N., & Mou, J. (2022). Universities as incubators of innovation: The role of a university playfulness climate in teachers' sustainable teaching innovation. *The International Journal of Management Education*, 20(3), 100693. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2022.100693>