


# Implications of organisational change on academics' job commitment within higher education



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**Orientation:** The higher education sector has experienced significant advancements and competitive advantages, compelling numerous universities – including those in Saudi Arabia – to pursue reorganisation and sustainability initiatives. These often require alterations to the organisational framework, which may entail strategic, technological, people-centric and structural modifications.

**Research purpose:** This article investigates the influence of organisational change on academics' job commitment at the University of Jeddah, given that the country has undergone significant changes since April 2016.

**Motivation for the study:** In the light of Vision 2030 and the post-pandemic context, this study explores how organisational change impacts academics' job commitment in Saudi institutions.

**Research approach/design and method:** This investigation implemented a quantitative methodology using a questionnaire-based method. Data were collected from 67 academics using a survey and assessed using SPSS software.

**Main findings:** The results indicated that structural and technological changes did not have a statistically significant impact on academics' job commitment; however, a people-centric change had a statistically significant influence on their job commitment.

**Practical/managerial implications:** The study contributes to the improvement of the work environments of higher education institutions, increasing academics' opportunities to enhance their skills and thus also increasing their job commitment to their college or university.

**Contribution/value-add:** This research enhances the understanding of organisational change and job commitment among academics. It provides valuable insights for policymakers developing sustainable higher education institutions, focusing on various aspects of organisational change – structural, people-centric and technological – to promote job commitment among academics.

**Keywords:** organisational change; structural change; people-centric; technological; job commitment; academics.

## Introduction

### Orientation

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic forced companies to face the reality that the ability to modify, customise and react swiftly is crucial in today's dynamic business climate. Companies encounter operating issues on a daily basis. An organisation's objectives, vision, mission and goals are achieved by employees who can quickly adapt to the complex changes that occur in their work environments. Indeed, an organisation's purposes and objectives for change implementation should align with employees' psychological and behavioural perspectives (Abrell-Vogel & Rowold, 2014).

The process of organisational change involves transitioning from the current state to the intended state, which may be either intentional or unintentional. Organisational change is essential for sustainable development, and change management is crucial to achieving sustainability objectives (Olafsen et al., 2021). Marchalina et al. (2021) suggested that organisational change requires adjustment to new situations and obstacles and that dedication to change increases an organisation's capacity to adapt.

Employees are an essential component of an organisation, particularly regarding the performance of the business and the modification process. Organisational change often encounters resistance,

but strategic planning may mitigate barriers to change (Banerjee et al., 2019). In this context, commitment is a behavioural connection that ties employees to the firm and drives their performance, attendance and conduct (Göbel & Burkert, 2023). Employees who resist organisational change may choose to leave, resulting in significant financial costs to the firm. Consequently, the function of human resources in organisational change should be leveraged by managers, leaders, communication, training, and empowerment. In particular, individuals within human resource departments play a significant role in the human resource management of organisational transformation.

## Research purpose and objectives

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of organisational change on academics' job commitment within higher education institutions, particularly considering the significant transformations that have transpired during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the changes in Saudi universities since the inception of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. Vision 2030, initiated by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on 25 April 2016, is the nation's blueprint for transitioning to a post-oil economy. This ambitious effort aims to fluctuate the Saudi economy and reduce its dependence on oil. It is a long-term plan that utilises Saudi Arabia's distinctive assets and competencies to address the difficulties in evolving from a mono-product economy (Belloumi & Alshehry, 2020). Education – both general and higher education – is fundamental to Vision 2030, as the plan promotes education and training to equip students for success. It highlights the training of academics and the development of curriculum (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016). Universities are adopting governance principles through decentralisation, enabling colleges and departments to proficiently manage their material and human resources while fostering a heightened focus on research, development, and innovation. However, the execution of these initiatives necessitates a reassessment of the existing organisational structure. Universities' structure, employees, and technology create a robust environment for innovation and creativity, and changes in organisational structure and restructuring are occurring at universities in Saudi Arabia.

Research has explored the factors influencing employee commitment within the industrial and commercial sectors (Chua et al., 2016; Meyer & Allen, 1991). However, the existing literature is inadequate in addressing the impact of organisational change on academics' job commitment in higher education institutions. In particular, further investigation is needed to thoroughly assess the influence of organisational change – encompassing structural, technological, and people-centric change – on academics' job commitment. Thus, this study examines the impact of organisational change on academics' job commitment in a university setting by answering the following research question: *What is the impact of organisational change, including its specific dimensions (structural, people-centric and technological), on the job commitment of academics in universities?*

Specifically, the study examines the impact of organisational change (including the structural, people-centric, and technological dimensions) on academics' job commitment at the University of Jeddah College of Business. It is conducted in the context of Saudi Vision 2030 and its congruence with the fifth element of the National Transformation Program, which aims to achieve excellence in government performance by researching the influence of organisational change on academics' job commitment at the College of Business. To the best of the author's knowledge, there are no studies that determine the impact of organisational change on academics' job commitment in higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia.

The rest of the article is organised as follows. The next section reviews the relevant literature. Then, the research design of the study is presented. After that, the statistical analysis is presented, and then the results are discussed. Finally, the conclusion is provided.

## Objectives

The study aimed to examine the impact of organisational change, including its dimensions, on academics' job commitment at the College of Business in the University of Jeddah.

## Literature review

Key theories in this study for understanding organisational change and commitment include Meyer and Allen's (1991) commitment theory and social exchange theory (SET). Meyer and Allen's (1991) model delineates three primary components: affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Affective commitment signifies employees' emotional bonds to the organisation, which fosters supportive behaviours towards change. Employees with strong emotional ties are more inclined to favourably accept change initiatives. Continuance commitment pertains to the perceived costs of leaving the organisation, which potentially results in retention despite change-related dissatisfaction. Normative commitment reflects the obligation employees feel to stay, which can enhance loyalty and facilitate acceptance of organisational changes (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Social exchange can be conceptualised as intentional behaviours executed by individuals or groups with the anticipation that the other party will reciprocate in a comparable manner (Blau, 1964). Given the profound implications of organisational change on individuals, technology, and structure, SET serves numerous purposes and maintains relevance in various contexts of organisational change. The theoretical underpinnings of SET highlight 'power and reciprocity', which can be strategically employed to sway the behaviours of others (Blau, 2017). Social exchange theory also emphasises the reciprocal interactions inherent in organisational affiliations.

Institutions of higher education are obligated to effectively respond to external pressures such as globalisation, technological advancements, and modifications in policy frameworks.

In the context of Saudi Arabia, this necessitates adaptation to the socioeconomic transformations instigated by Vision 2030, which aims to elevate educational outcomes and align them with the demands of the labour market (Almanie, 2023). Organisational change that improves job autonomy and processes seeks to augment employee job commitment, whereas structural and technology-driven changes lacking adequate change management and training may diminish employee job commitment. Within the realm of Saudi higher education, a conducive work atmosphere and collaborative leadership may enhance academics' commitment through constructive interpersonal engagements (Alghamdi, 2024).

An employee's commitment to their firm is shaped by the affective, continuance, and normative components of commitment as identified by Meyer and Allen (1991). This conceptual framework closely correlates with SET, which asserts that relationships are founded on mutual exchanges of support and appreciation (Yamao, 2024). In the context of higher education, employees are more inclined to cultivate a profound affective commitment, experiencing emotional attachment and engagement with their institution, when they recognise a substantial degree of organisational support – manifested through professional advancement avenues, enhanced technology utilisation, training and development programmes, and a constructive work atmosphere. In contrast, their level of commitment is likely to decline when they perceive that the organisation is failing to reciprocate their contributions, resulting in sentiments of obligation rather than authentic attachment. Consequently, the theoretical framework was constructed to illustrate the ramifications of organisational change and academics' job commitment within higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia (Figure 1).

## Organisational change

Organisational change is a common phenomenon in all entities and has become a focal point in the advancement of information technology within business operations and on a global scale. A significant foundation for understanding organisational change is found in Lewin's (1947) theory and philosophy. The main objectives of organisational change are to meet environmental challenges, bolster the organisation's capacity and adaptability, and improve its effectiveness and efficiency. Organisational change encompasses the adoption of new standards, regulations, procedures and values across various sectors, addressing the challenges and opportunities presented by both internal and external factors. The concept of 'change' signifies the continuous development and transformation of organisational structures or processes to meet increasing customer expectations and technological advancements (Marín-Idárraga & Hurtado González, 2021). Lewin (1947) proposed a three-step model for change: unfreeze, change, and refreeze. In the higher education sector, organisational change involves adapting governance structures to promote independence, competitiveness, and innovation in learning, teaching, and service management (Erlyani et al., 2022).

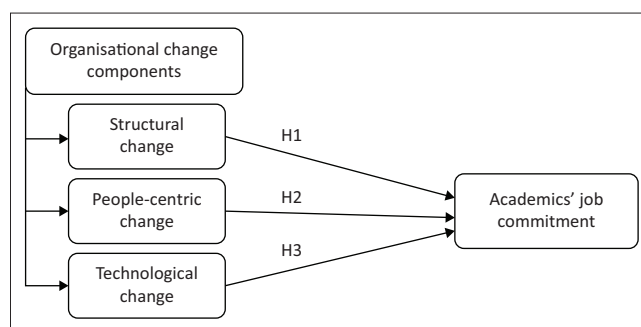


FIGURE 1: Model of the study.

In Saudi Arabia, both external influences (e.g., globalisation and technological advancements) and internal factors play a role in organisational change. Organisations are increasingly focusing on integrating change management strategies that foster innovation and adaptability within their workforce as they strive to keep pace with the ambitious goals set by Vision 2030 (Mihoubi, 2025). Globally, universities have pursued structural transformations, including decentralisation, reducing hierarchies and creating interdisciplinary units to boost adaptability and creativity (Altbach et al., 2019). Both Saudi and international universities are prioritising structural flexibility to meet changing educational needs and compete on the global stage. However, changes in Saudi Arabia are heavily influenced by national strategic plans and cultural factors, reflecting a more centralised policymaking environment compared to the more independent frameworks that are prevalent in Western countries (Alowaid, 2024).

## Structural change

Organisations may be described as multifaceted social systems comprising individuals, diverse resources and subsystems that collaboratively engage in the transformation of inputs into appropriate outputs. Alterations in organisational structure are fundamental to the efficacy, strategic orientation, goals, and cultural dynamics of an organisation. Martin and Fellenz (2017) explored different types of organisational frameworks, making a distinction between horizontal and vertical structures. They classified horizontal frameworks into the categories of functional structures, process-oriented structures, matrix structures, and project-based structures.

An organisational structure is meticulously crafted to align with the institution's strategic vision, promote the realisation of its specified outcomes and objectives, adjust to a dynamic environment characterised by transformation and technological progress, and possess the capacity to shift to a decentralised framework during crises, despite its standard operation of a centralised model under typical circumstances. The development of horizontal organisational structures, such as centres devoted to student achievement and unified curricular provisions, aspires to synchronise academic programmes with labour market expectations and bolster institutional performance (Wyszomirska et al., 2022). The shift from traditional hierarchical structures to more integrated organisational structures, as exemplified by

certain universities, seeks to transcend fragmented disciplinary perspectives and foster interdisciplinary alliances (Wyszomirska et al., 2022). In this respect, higher education institutions are experiencing systemic transformations aimed at enhancing independence and adaptability within educational policy and administration (Jilkishieva et al., 2019).

The evolution of organisational structures within the Saudi higher education sector is propelled by a confluence of strategic initiatives and external influences while concurrently confronting substantial obstacles. Vision 2030 aims to synchronise educational outcomes with labour market demands, aspiring to position Saudi universities among the top 200 institutions globally by the year 2030 (Kumar, 2023). Nevertheless, there exists significant resistance to transformation within higher education establishments, which adversely affects performance metrics. This resistance is frequently attributable to a deficiency in strategic foresight and the mediating impact of entrenched organisational cultures (Hamid et al., 2023). Furthermore, the movement towards the privatisation of public universities engenders anxiety and trepidation among academics, potentially hindering the transformation process (Graham, 2022). This study thus proposes the following hypothesis:

**H1:** Structural change significantly influences academics' job commitment at the College of Business.

## People-centric change

The prioritisation of individuals can profoundly influence the success or failure of organisational change. Joseph (2019) defines 'people-centredness' as an approach that prioritises the needs and objectives of persons. This includes behaviours, strategies, interactions, and initiatives. People-centred strategies – such as professional development, involvement in decision-making and acknowledgement – have demonstrated an enhancement in academics' job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Azmy, 2019). A crucial component of organisational change is establishing relationships with employees around change tactics, goals and objectives within the organisation. It is essential for employees to understand the rationale and purpose of the change, as they are responsible for its implementation. In addition, Chawla et al. (2023) identify essential factors affecting faculty retention that are crucial to people-centric models in higher education: leadership, training, corporate culture, chances for advancement, and valued roles. Institutions can improve faculty recruitment and retention by creating an atmosphere that supports their needs and goals. These models promote professional development through constant support and collaboration, thereby cultivating a robust academic community and assisting organisations in attaining their long-term academic objectives. This study thus proposes the following hypothesis:

**H2:** People-centric change significantly affects academics' job commitment at the College of Business.

## Technological change

Information technology (IT) constitutes an essential component in the operational efficacy and overall success of organisations. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the imperative for all organisations around the world to leverage technology as a means of securing competitive advantages and fostering growth. Martin and Fellenz (2017) characterise technology as the systematic application of knowledge and skills aimed at the attainment of objectives. Organisations are compelled to integrate considerations of technology when implementing modifications to various organisational dimensions, such as strategic initiatives or procedural protocols. Saudi higher education institutions have significantly augmented their e-learning infrastructures and virtual educational environments, particularly in response to the exigencies posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, empirical research reveals disparate levels of digital literacy among both faculty and students, underscoring the imperative for continuous professional development and support to fully leverage the advantages of technological integration (Aldogihier et al., 2025). For an organisation to implement change effectively, organisational change must be aligned with technology and data integration and accompanied by a well-defined strategy and strong leadership commitment (Schwertner, 2017). According to Hussain et al. (2018), technological advancements significantly impact the ways in which organisations undergo change, and they stress the importance of this transformation in today's competitive environments. The study thus proposes the following hypothesis:

**H3:** Technological change significantly impacts academics' job commitment at the College of Business.

## Academics' job commitment

According to Khuzwayo et al. (2023), commitment is rooted in a psychological bond formed through organisational benefits. Meanwhile, Pepple et al. (2023) assert that an employee's loyalty is influenced by the organisation's advantages. Commitment is a deep organisational identification, driving employees to pursue the organisation's goals (Mitonga-Monga et al., 2023). Academics' job commitment may be influenced by both extrinsic and intrinsic incentives, and intrinsic rewards are more significant to them than extrinsic ones (Jishnu & Harendrakumar, 2021). An organisation's performance is adversely affected by employees' lack of commitment, which is affected by their job contentment and engagement (Wolor, 2023). The initial and most frequently cited model of commitment was introduced by Meyer and Allen (1991), who identified three types: (1) affective commitment, which is characterised by an emotional attachment to the organisation; (2) continuance commitment, which is characterised by the costs associated with leaving; and (3) normative commitment, which is characterised by an employee's perception of commitment as a duty and their view of departure as unethical.

In the context of Saudi higher education, organisational support, knowledge sharing, and the extent of work

involvement are all factors that impact the level of academics' commitment (BinBakr & Ahmed, 2018). Academics' job commitment is defined by their strong commitment to the organisation's objectives and their desire to preserve their membership, which in turn improves the performance of educational institutions and reduces turnover (Hussain et al., 2020). However, the imperative of publication, conflicting temporal responsibilities, and the strain of administrative tasks can unfavourably affect academics' job commitment in higher education (Naidoo-Chetty & Du Plessis, 2021). This study uses Meyer and Allen's (1991) model because of its relevance to the working environment examined.

## The connection between organisational change and job commitment

The relationship between organisational change and academics' job commitment is crucial to the successful adoption and implementation of change initiatives. Because change is influenced by a variety of factors (e.g., technology, people, production, organisational structure, and performance), the degree of commitment to change will differ among individuals. The degree of academics' job commitment can be influenced by organisational change, depending on the way it is managed. When changes resonate with faculty values and foster engagement, academics exhibit enhanced commitment (Oreg et al., 2018). Adenan et al. (2023) indicate that organisational change has a profound impact on job commitment in higher education, emphasising aspects of leadership, organisational culture, and motivation. According to Al-Mahdy et al. (2022), academics are less likely to leave their jobs when they feel supported by their leaders. In Saudi Arabia, higher education institutions must effectively manage change to improve operational efficiency and educational performance. Higher education institutions must be adaptable and innovative when blending innovation with traditional values to produce high-quality results in managing change (Jamal Al-Lail & Mohamed, 2019). Resistance to organisational change is common, as some employees may not accept or engage with the changes because of uncertainty. Change is a gradual process that may span several years. Thus, comprehending the purpose of the change and the level of employee commitment are crucial for the success of the process. Figure 1 depicts the conceptual model used in this research.

## Research design

### Research approach

This study used a descriptive method to test the hypotheses, analysing statistical data as part of a quantitative research approach. The research is descriptive in nature, intended to evaluate the state of organisational change and the job commitment of academics. In addition, the study was carried out on a cross-sectional research design basis.

### Research method

A structured questionnaire was developed using Google Forms to facilitate data collection. The constructs were

measured using 30 survey items. The survey entailed three sections, with the first one dedicated to gathering demographic data. The independent variables, including aspects of organisational change, are addressed in the second and third sections, which examine academics' job commitment.

## Research participants

The participants in this study were academics at the College of Business. The study population consisted of 141 faculty members employed at the College of Business as of Fall 2024 holding the academic rank of assistant professor, associate professor or professor. To ensure that the data were suitable, the assumptions of multiple regressions were tested before the final analysis. Hair et al. (2019) proposed a minimum participant-to-variable ratio of 15 to 20 for each independent variable. In this study, there are three independent variables that satisfy the minimum sample size of 45 or 60 participants. Furthermore, this study confirmed the significance of the collected data by utilising the formula proposed by Khamis and Kepler (2010) to ensure that the participant count was suitable for regression analysis. The formula is  $n \geq 20 + 5k$ , where  $k$  denotes the number of predictors. Given three independent variables,  $n = 20 + 5(3) = 35$  responses. According to Hair et al. (2019), it is essential to have at least five responses for every independent variable. This resulted in 15 responses. The study included 67 randomly selected participants. Given that the population is composed of academics who possess key demographic and relevant characteristics that are comparable to those of the general population, it is still possible to obtain valid and generalisable insights. Indeed, the literature suggests that a randomly selected sample of 30%–50% of the target population can be sufficient for generalisation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

## Measuring instruments

Based on the existing literature, a structured questionnaire was developed, and a 5-point Likert scale was used to assess participants' opinions as follows: 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree) and 5 (strongly agree). Table 1 displays the constructs and the corresponding number of items utilised for the measurement, along with the relevant literature. From May to the end of October 2024, the questionnaire was disseminated electronically through mobile applications and email, with follow-up notifications to ensure that the respondents were engaged promptly and effectively, as advised by Dillman et al. (2014). All completed surveys were coded, and the data were analysed using SPSS software. Data analysis included regression analysis to assess the hypotheses, descriptive statistics, and multicollinearity tests. The reliability (Cronbach's alpha) and face validity of the instrument were also confirmed.

## Statistical analysis

### Reliability and validity

The calculation of reliability using Cronbach's alpha is common practice. The consistency of the questionnaire is established by Cronbach's alpha exceeding the acceptable

threshold of 0.50, as recommended by George and Mallery (2003). The guideline indicates that an  $\alpha$  value greater than 0.9 is classified as excellent, greater than 0.8 as good, above 0.7 as acceptable, greater than 0.6 as questionable, greater than 0.5 as poor, and less than 0.5 as unacceptable. Table 1 presents the results of the Cronbach's alpha test, which assesses the reliability of a measure. The study tool's reliability was validated through the Cronbach's alpha results pertaining to the components of organisational change, which ranged from 0.770 to 0.912, indicating acceptable to excellent reliability. The elements for academics' job commitment ranged from 0.556 to 0.863, indicating acceptable to good reliability, with a normative commitment dimension of approximately 0.6 – within an acceptable range.

Moreover, face validity was examined through an extensive assessment of the questionnaire items by several experts actively engaged in the field. A preliminary iteration of the questionnaire was developed and assessed by domain experts to ascertain its face validity. The questionnaire was subsequently restructured to incorporate five closed-ended questions pertaining to each element of organisational change in addition to five closed-ended questions addressing the dependent variable, which encompasses the dimensions of faculty members' job commitment. The research questionnaire comprises 30 closed-ended questions.

### Hypotheses testing

Before evaluating the hypotheses, a multicollinearity test was performed on the independent variables in the regression analysis, as shown in Table 2. This Table 2 presents the tolerance levels for the variables and the findings of the variance inflation factor (VIF). Multicollinearity arises when the independent variables within a regression model exhibit significant interrelationships. Variance inflation factor values exceeding 10 indicate the existence of multicollinearity, with higher values reflecting stronger correlations among independent variables (Clark-Carter, 2019). Furthermore, there is a substantial connection between the independent variable of interest and another independent variable when the predictor's tolerance is 0.1 or less. The data presented in

**TABLE 1:** Survey constructs, number of items, Cronbach's alpha and related literature.

| Constructs                 | Number of items | Cronbach's alpha | Related literature                          |
|----------------------------|-----------------|------------------|---|
| Structural change          | 5               | 0.770            | Pugh (1973); Bergeron et al. (2004)         |
| People-centric change      | 5               | 0.912            | Dunham et al. (1989); Bah et al. (2024)     |
| Technological change       | 5               | 0.856            | Bergeron et al. (2004); Islam et al. (2015) |
| Academics' job commitment  |                 |                  |   |
| 1 – Affective commitment   | 5               | 0.863            | Allen and Meyer (1990)                      |
| 2 – Continuance commitment | 5               | 0.766            | Allen and Meyer (1990)                      |
| 3 – Normative commitment   | 5               | 0.556            | Allen and Meyer (1990)                      |

Source: See full reference list of this article: <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v23i0.3136> for more information

Table 2 show that the VIF for the variables fell between 2.017 and 2.535, remaining below the threshold of 10. Additionally, the tolerance values ranged from 0.395 to 0.496, exceeding the minimum requirement of 0.1. These results suggest that multicollinearity was not an issue that negatively impacted the independent variables.

### Ethical considerations

The ethical clearance for the study was approved by the Bioethics Committee of Scientific and Medical Research of the University of Jeddah (Registration no. HAP-02-J-094, Application no. UJ-REC-231). All procedures in this study were performed in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee. A structured questionnaire created using Google Forms was used to gather data online. Prior to completing the questionnaire, the participants were given an explanation of the study's objectives and its optional nature. Additionally, they received instructions along with the researcher's contact information. The participants were also advised that they could terminate the survey by closing the browser or ceasing to respond to the questions (Central University Research Ethics Committee, 2021).

## Results

### Demographics description

The findings presented in Table 3 indicate that 46 individuals (accounting for 69% of the total) were male, and 21 individuals (31%) were female. Among the 67 contributors, 58 (87%) were faculty members, and nine (13%) held positions as academic leaders. Table 3 provides further detail, indicating that among the participants, 62 (93%) had 6–10 years of experience, while five (7%) had 11–15 years of experience at the college.

The model summary (Table 4) provides a comprehensive overview of the goodness-of-fit metrics and the impact of the independent variables on the model's effectiveness. The adjusted R-squared value is a measure of the extent to which a predictor accounts for the variance in the dependent variable; it is used to evaluate the performance of a

**TABLE 2:** Multicollinearity test for organisational change components.

| Independent variables | Tolerance | VIF  |
|-----------------------|-----------|------|
| Structural change     | 0.50      | 2.02 |
| People-centric change | 0.39      | 2.53 |
| Technological change  | 0.43      | 2.30 |

VIF, variance inflation factor.

**TABLE 3:** Frequencies and percentages of the participants.

| Variable            | Demographics    | Frequency | %  |
|---------------------|-----------------|-----------|----|
| Gender              | Male            | 46        | 69 |
|                     | Female          | 21        | 31 |
| Job title           | Faculty member  | 58        | 87 |
|                     | Academic leader | 9         | 13 |
| Years of experience | 6–10            | 62        | 93 |
|                     | 11–15           | 5         | 7  |

regression model when additional variables are included. Table 4 demonstrates that the correlation between the elements of organisational change and academics' job commitment was 0.749. The  $R^2$  value was 56.0%, indicating that the elements associated with organisational change accounted for 56.0% of the variation in academics' job commitment.

To determine if the predictors had a statistically significant impact on the dependent variable, the  $F$ -statistic and its associated  $p$ -value were used, as illustrated in Table 5. A  $p$ -value of 0.000, which is below the threshold of 0.05, along with an  $F$ -statistic of 26.759, indicates that the components of organisational change collectively influence faculty members' job commitment – or that at least one component does so.

Table 6 presents the calculated coefficients and their significance levels. The  $t$ -values and significance levels indicate the statistical significance of the coefficients. The (Constant) score was significant (0.000), suggesting that the dimensions of organisational change, collectively or through certain components, influenced academics' job commitment. In addition, the analysis revealed that people-centric change exhibited  $p$ -values below 0.05 (0.000), indicating a significant effect on academics' job commitment. However, the  $p$ -values for structural and technological change were above 0.05 (0.149 and 0.410, respectively), indicating that these two dimensions did not significantly influence academics' job commitment at the College of Business.

## Discussion

### Outline of the results

This study investigated the impact of organisational change on academics' job commitment, drawing from existing theories and literature on organisational change and

commitment within higher education. In particular, this study explored the effects of organisational change – encompassing the aspects of structural, people-centric, and technological change on academics' job commitment – at the College of Business at the University of Jeddah. Contrary to expectations, the study revealed that structural change and technological change did not have a significant influence on academics' job commitment. However, people-centric change had a considerable effect on academics' job commitment.

Previous research regarding the influence of organisational change on academics' job commitment within higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia remains insufficient, as few studies have investigated this specific impact. Nonetheless, the outcomes of this study can be juxtaposed with those of existing research addressing similar dimensions of organisational change, albeit with varying dependent variables. For example, Al-Amri (2017) explored the impact of organisational change on organisational excellence and found that both technology and human resources significantly influenced the forecasting of employee excellence. Moreover, organisational structure did not exert any influence (Al-Amri, 2017), aligning with the findings of this study regarding structural change and employees.

Regarding structural change and technological change, the results of this study conflict with previous research concluding that structural change and technological change influence academics' job commitment (Khan et al., 2024). Several reasons may explain why structural change and technological change did not have any impact on academics' job commitment. Notably, the organisational structure of universities is clear and uncomplicated. For example, the organisational structure in a college is sequenced from the college council at the first level, then the dean of the college at the second level, and then the agencies affiliated with the college and the departments of the college at the third level. Given the few levels and the ease of sequencing, the effect of change in organisational structure on faculty members' job commitment was not statistically significant. Moreover, the clarity of the organisational structure sequence as well as the academic work environment are different from those of the industrial and economic sectors.

In terms of the technological change impact, the daily work of academics using the Blackboard platform and the Odus system requires familiarity with technology, and any type of update is in the same programme and may not require any substantive changes in technology for the college. In addition,

**TABLE 4:** Model summary‡.

| Model | $R$   | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R$ square | SE of the estimate |
|-------|-------|-------|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1     | 0.75† | 0.56  | 0.54                | 0.27               |

SE, standard error.

†, Predictors: (Constant), Organisational Change Dimensions.

‡, Dependent variable: Academics' Job Commitment.

**TABLE 5:** Anova† results.

| Model          | Sum of Squares | $df$ | Mean Square | $F$   | Sig.   |
|----------------|----------------|------|-------------|-------|--------|
| 1 Regression   | 5.57           | 3    | 1.86        | 26.76 | 0.000‡ |
| Residual Total | 4.37           | 63   | 0.07        |       |        |
|                | 9.95           | 66   |             |       |        |

$df$ , degrees of freedom; Sig., significance.

†, Dependent variable: Academics' Job Commitment. ‡, Predictors: (Constant), Organisational Change Dimensions.

**TABLE 6:** Coefficients†.

| Model                 | Unstandardised coefficients |      | Standardised coefficients | $t$  | Sig. |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|------|---------------------------|------|------|
|                       | B                           | SE   | Beta                      |      |      |
| 1 (Constant)          | 2.04                        | 0.21 |                           | 9.54 | 0.00 |
| Structural change     | 0.11                        | 0.08 | 0.17                      | 1.46 | 0.15 |
| People-centric change | 0.22                        | 0.05 | 0.54                      | 4.04 | 0.00 |
| Technological change  | 0.04                        | 0.05 | 0.10                      | 0.83 | 0.41 |

SE, standard error; Sig., significance.

†, Dependent variable: Academics' Job Commitment.

the COVID-19 pandemic, the subsequent large-scale use of the Internet, and the total shift to distance education have prompted universities to offer intensive training courses on how to use different technologies to accomplish work and deliver lectures. Bin Harah and Alamrawi (2022) found that organisational structure, individuals, and technology significantly influenced the quality of higher education – an outcome that corresponds to the results of this study regarding the impact of individuals on faculty members' commitment, with consideration of the varying dependent variables involved.

These findings correspond to the theory of social exchange, which posits that employees are more likely to commit when they perceive a reciprocal relationship with their organisation. Factors such as organisational support, professional advancement, and pay satisfaction enhance this perception, fostering a sense of obligation to reciprocate the organisation's value (Melkamu, 2023). Hence, academics at the college realise that the level of job commitment might be impacted by the percentage of exchange – meaning that when the levels of educational support, pay satisfaction, and overall satisfaction decrease, the level of job commitment will also decrease, resulting in a lower retention rate. Accordingly, the results of this study support Meyer and Allen's (1991) commitment theory, finding that academics' perceptions of support, satisfaction and increased sense of belonging can enhance academics' job commitment. The lack of impact that structural change and technological change had on academics' job commitment might thus be explained by the level of technology and the training provided by the college, as this support might have made academics realise that their level of job commitment might not be impacted by these types of change.

In summary, the impact of organisational change on academics' job commitment is different in the higher education sector than in other sectors, especially the private sector. The study showed that the dimension of people-centric change was statistically significant and had an impact on academics' job commitment, possibly because the nature of relationships in the teaching and research fields is significantly different from relationships in industrial and economic environments because of the academics' different scientific backgrounds. In addition, career promotions depend on scientific research, teaching, and community service. If the college has no interest in academics and their development or in helping them overcome difficulties in carrying out scientific research by providing statistical programmes and research budgets, this negatively affects the commitment of faculty members.

### Practical implications

The findings of this study have several practical implications for decision-makers and educational authorities. Firstly, the results show that academics' job commitment may increase by prioritising people-centric components. Colleges should clearly define their guidelines for training programmes and

financial support while also establishing an annual strategic and operational plan for how academics can utilise such support. Secondly, the insignificant influence of structural and technological elements of organisational change on academics' job commitment suggests that colleges should pay particular attention to these two factors. Although the study indicated no effect on academics' job commitment, since the COVID-19 pandemic and the launch of Saudi Vision 2030, numerous public and private sector organisations – including universities – have implemented programmes or modified their daily operations to better prepare for potential risks at any stage. For example, Saudi universities are increasingly utilising distance learning, enabling a quicker transition to e-learning. Furthermore, most universities adjust their programmes in response to the demands of the labour market; relevant modifications could involve aspects such as organisational structure, employees, and technological advancement. Thus, organisational change may be ongoing, and it is important to regularly assess its effects. The findings of this study can provide valuable insights for decision-makers and academic leaders regarding the implementation of organisational change within higher education institutions.

### Limitations and recommendations

This study has several limitations. Firstly, generalisability, as the study focused on the College of Business at the University of Jeddah, which has a small population. Future studies should consider collecting data from other colleges and universities. Secondly, the study was limited to faculty members who were professors, associate professors or assistant professors. Future studies should include different administrative workers and academics (e.g., lecturers and instructors). Thirdly, questionnaires were used as the primary tool for data collection. In the future, researchers could combine several tools to collect data to overcome any bias that might occur. Finally, there were 67 participants in the study, which is almost half of the population; however, one obstacle for not having more respondents might be the academics' perspectives about participating in questionnaires in general. Future studies might expand the research population to encompass multiple colleges across various provinces in Saudi Arabia, which would enhance the generalisability of the results and increase the number of participants. In addition, comparative studies examining the differences in change management capabilities between male and female academics could yield valuable insights, ultimately contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of these dynamics within higher education.

### Conclusion

This study examined the influence of organisational change – including structural change, people-centric change, and technological change – on academics' job commitment at the College of Business in the University of Jeddah. The results indicated that structural change and technological change had no significant impact, whereas people-centric change had a significant impact on academics' job commitment.

This finding suggests that organisational change should focus on employees working in the organisation, make them a part of the process, and engage them, whether by telling them why the organisation decided to make the change or by asking them what needed to be changed.

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The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationships that inappropriately influenced the writing of this article.

### Author's contributions

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### Data availability

The data of this study are available from the corresponding author, O.A.B., upon reasonable request.

### Disclaimer

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

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