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**ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT AND ITS
CONSEQUENCES: A QUALITATIVE STUDY
AMONGST SOUTH AFRICAN INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY PROFESSIONALS**

**Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for:
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ABSTRACT

Information technology (IT) professionals are highly skilled and mobile. They are also not generally considered to be committed to the organisations in which they work. This research study explores the commitment of IT professionals to their organisation and the relationship thereof to specific antecedents and work outcomes. The three-component model of organisational commitment developed by Allen and Meyer (1990) served as the conceptual basis for this investigation. Participants consisted of forty-four IT professionals across five IT organisations in the Western Cape. Data was gathered by means of five semi-structured focus groups, and five individual interviews with HR managers of these groups. Transcriptions of focus group discussions as well as individual interviews were analysed by means of thematic analysis. Results confirm those of previous research studies in the field of organisational psychology, and also indicate that other possible antecedents and consequences previously not explored may be important factors to consider in future empirical analyses.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This research explores the commitment of information technology professionals (in the Western Cape, South Africa) to their organisations, and the relationship thereof to specific work outcomes. Whilst some recognition is given to the development of organisational commitment for contextual purposes, the intention was to focus primarily on the more neglected area of commitment research being the outcomes or consequences of commitment. A qualitative research paradigm was adopted in order to facilitate an in-depth investigation into this topic. It was hoped that a more holistic and explanatory set of data would be gathered using a qualitative approach compared with that of previous quantitative studies which dominate the field of organisational commitment research (see chapter 2, table 1 for a list of quantitative verses qualitative studies on the commitment construct).

Dissertation outline

This dissertation is structured into five separate chapters. Chapter one presents a brief introduction to the research. Chapter two reviews the available literature on the more recent approach to organisational commitment and specifically focuses on the behavioural consequences of this construct, an area that has been largely neglected in the organisational commitment literature.

Chapter three outlines the method used to gather data for the research study. Chapter four presents a thematic analysis of the research data and discusses these themes in the context of past research. Lastly, chapter five outlines the limitations of this study, as well as some recommendations for future research areas on the organisational commitment construct.

Research Context

In an era where technology has become a necessary part of the every day functioning of organisations, South Africa is currently experiencing a skills deficit of professional Information Technologists. Due to demand far exceeding the supply of such professionals, organisations have become willing to offer pay increases that will attract IT professionals to join them. This has encouraged a culture of 'job-hopping' as opposed to loyalty or organisational commitment, where the more an IT professional changes jobs, the more their salary increases (IT Web, 2001). This is further perpetuated by organisations when headhunting those IT professionals who are seen to be highly valuable in terms of their expertise.

The South African professional IT skills deficit is also increasing where these employees are emigrating for reasons such as the perception that 'pastures are greener' in America or European countries. Many of them are also offered opportunities elsewhere by international organisations to work and gain additional experience (IT Web, 2001).

The above thus emphasises the need for organisations to gain a greater understanding of an employee's commitment to the organisation and how to influence this commitment positively, in order to retain their limited pool of IT professionals. This is best achieved through an analysis of the behavioural outcomes of employees' commitment to the organisation, which was the intention of this research study.

The following description by an IT professional further emphasises this point:

There's a lot of work out there so you can move around a lot. And the salary just goes up. And if the company doesn't want to give you increases you just go somewhere else...IT in general is just a sector of people that move around a lot.

The conceptualisation of organisational commitment has evolved over the last fifty years from a uni-dimensional construct, to a multi-dimensional one. One of the more recent models of commitment was designed by Allen and Meyer in 1990. They defined commitment to be "a psychological state that (a) characterises the employee's

relationship with the organisation and (b) has implications for the decision to continue or discontinue membership in the organisation" (Meyer, Allen & Smith, 1993, p.539). Such a psychological attachment thus has clear implications for decisions made by employees in terms of their commitment to the organisation, and their subsequent behaviour toward their organisation. In order to have influencing power over these outcome behaviours, organisations need to have a better understanding of them and what causes them. It is this aspect of organisational commitment that has received minimal attention, nor in-depth exploration.

Several behavioural outcomes may occur as a result of an employee's strength and form of commitment to the organisation. This study made use of Allen and Meyer's (1990) commitment model which is comprised of three components of organisational commitment, to identify the behavioural outcomes of IT professionals' commitment in South Africa. Some behavioural outcomes previously hypothesised and found to be significantly related to commitment were job performance (Allen & Meyer, 1996), absenteeism (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Steers, 1977), intent to quit, turnover (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), and organisational citizenship behaviour (Burns & Collins, 2001; Morrison, 1994).

The following chapter reviews the literature concerning organisational commitment with a specific focus on Allen and Meyer's commitment model, and the behavioural outcomes thereof.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of relevant literature pertaining to organisational commitment, its dimensions and outcomes. However, focus was intentionally placed more on the consequences of organisational commitment as this is a neglected area of research. Section one below, outlines the construct of organisational commitment, specifically a definition and description of each commitment component, as well as a brief description of how they develop. Allen and Meyer's model of commitment is used as a framework here since it has been widely researched, summarises the theories on organisational commitment, and is fairly well known. Section two is more specific to the consequences of the commitment construct. Section three provides some reflection on the previous two sections, including a table summarising previous studies of organisational commitment.

The process of literature collection included a number of wide searches on relevant CD-ROM resources in Jagger library at the University of Cape Town. Indexes include, South African Studies, African Studies, ABI INFORM, Social Science Index, EBSCO host, and Psychlit. These included journals found locally and abroad, as well as internet searches using keywords relevant to this current study such as organisational commitment, work commitment, corporate commitment, commitment, affective commitment, continuance commitment, normative commitment, as well as variations on the word commitment in conjunction with the various outcomes or consequences thereof.

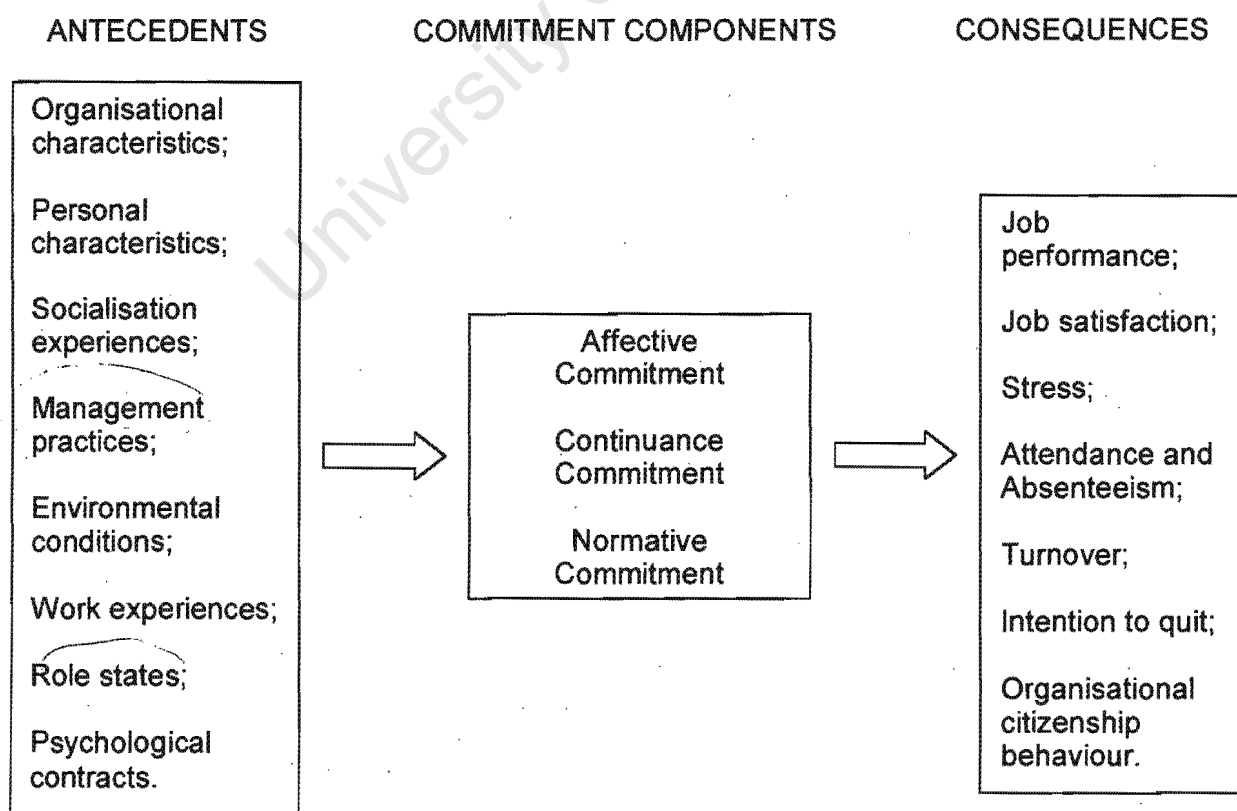
Allen and Meyer's Three-Component Model of Commitment

In the early 1980's, Allen and Meyer reviewed over three decades of research on organisational commitment and discovered little consensus on the meaning of commitment. After further exploration, in 1990 they concluded that organisational commitment is a multi-faceted construct being comprised of three broad themes.

The following section will discuss the basic elements of Allen and Meyer's three-component model of organisational commitment, and what it means for an employee to have an affective, continuance, and normative commitment to their organisation. Focus will be specifically on defining each of the three components, their characteristics, as well as the development thereof. A large proportion of research was conducted on commitment prior to Allen and Meyer's three-component theory. The findings will nevertheless be incorporated into this discussion as much of it adds emphasis to the findings of research conducted post Allen and Meyer.

A predominant conceptualisation concerning the characteristics of the organisational commitment construct stems from the traditional perspective that it reflects three main themes namely, a cognitive, emotive, and conative attachment, or more recently as Allen and Meyer (1990) have termed these components, an affective attachment, perceived costs, and obligation. In fact, Allen and Meyer's (1990) model ties these three separate themes together succinctly under one umbrella term of OC, which in each case refers to a psychological state on the part of the employee binding them in some way to the organisation (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

Figure 1: Diagrammatic layout of Allen and Meyer's organisational commitment model



Affective commitment (AC)

An affective attachment to the organisation is characterised by an emotional feeling or attachment experienced by an employee (Allen & Meyer, 1990). These stem from the organisation in return for the contributions made by the employee (rewards received, or punishments avoided), where the employee becomes committed to the organisation (Ko, Price, Mueller, 1997). For an employee to be affectively committed to their organisation, they feel a sense of identification with, involvement in, and membership of the organisation, which leads them to want to stay with their organisation (Ko et al., 1997).

Affective commitment has been conceptualised as developing due to motivation, work experiences, job and employee characteristics, rewards, the notion of exchange, affiliations, attributions and other such perceptions. Most of these have in fact been identified as significant antecedents of affective commitment, but may be linked with antecedents of continuance commitment, and normative commitment as well, all describing psychologically different orientations towards the organisation (Allen & Meyer, 1996).

Motivation

The concept of affective commitment promulgates that motivation is the driving factor that commits an employee in some way or another to the organisation, and compels them to produce work. This motivation may be seen to be derived from either an employee's "willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organisation" and, or a "belief in and acceptance of the goals and values of the organisation" (Mayer & Schoorman, 1992, 672).

Exchange

The notion of exchange purports that individuals enter an organisation with a specific set of skills, desires, and goals which they in turn expect to be able to use, satisfy, and achieve in these organisations. If the organisation is perceived as facilitating such skills, desires, and goals, affective commitment is likely to increase, and if not, affective commitment will more than likely decrease (Mottaz, 1988). The notion of exchange

suggests that affective commitment is a function of work rewards (intrinsic and extrinsic benefits that workers receive from their jobs, also seen as the key determinants of affective commitment), and values (what the worker wants, desires or seeks to attain from work and help the employee assess or judge the work situation), once again linking in with the definition of affective commitment (Mottaz, 1988).

Work rewards

Work rewards have been divided into three main categories namely task rewards (intrinsic rewards directly associated with doing the job, or the task itself, such as interesting and challenging work, self-direction, responsibility, variety, opportunities to use acquired skills and abilities); social rewards (extrinsic rewards acquired when interacting with others on the job and focus on the quality of such interpersonal relationships, for example, having friendly, helpful, and supportive co-workers and supervisors); and organisational rewards (extrinsic but tangible rewards pre-empted by the organisation in order to facilitate or motivate performance and maintain membership, such as pay, promotion, benefits, security, and good working conditions) (Mottaz, 1988).

Whilst rewards may be core to the notion of exchange theory, (that rewards are the key determinants of commitment), these rewards vary in terms of their effect and are thus dependent on employees' work values to determine their importance (Mottaz, 1988). The more an employee perceives the congruence between rewards and values to be significant, the greater the degree of commitment. One advantage of this exchange theory is that it incorporates both organisational and individual characteristics in the analysis of commitment, as opposed to emphasising one over another (Mottaz, 1988). Results of this study showed that while work rewards are the key determinants of commitment, individual rewards vary significantly in terms of their impact.

Personal characteristics, job characteristics and work experiences

Steers (1977) also proposed that commitment developed as a result of environmental and individual influences including personal and job characteristics but added a third dimension namely, 'work experiences'. His dimensions were not specifically based on rewards or values, but could be paralleled with the theory of exchange.

Work experiences are said to influence commitment in terms of the nature and quality of the experience as perceived by the employee during membership in an organisation. Such experiences may also contribute in terms of a major socialising force, and may therefore be seen as an indicator of the influence to which psychological attachments are formed with the organization. Examples of work experiences are group attitudes toward the organisation, organisational dependability and trust, perceptions of personal investment in, and importance to the organisation, as well as rewards, or the realisation of expectations in the organisation (Chusmir, 1988; Steers, 1977). Chusmir (1988) summed such work experiences up as 'need satisfaction' where needs of employees at work are satisfied by such experiences.

Job characteristics are variables such as job satisfaction, job challenge (autonomy, variety, task identity, feedback, job enrichment, redesign, and rotation), opportunities for social interaction, and the amount of feedback provided on the job which may influence the degree to which an employee becomes committed (Chusmir, 1988; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Mottaz, 1988; Steers, 1977).

Work experiences that increase an employee's level of comfort, that is, psychological comfort (for example perceived reward equity, organisational support, clarity of role, minimal or zero conflict, and supervisor interaction) and competence (such as job challenge, advancement, accomplishment, autonomy, self-expression, and decision-making) have been found to be the most consistent in their relationship with affective commitment. The same strength of relationship has been expected between an employee who's expectations and basic needs have been met and are consistent in terms of their work experiences, and their affective commitment to the organisation (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Dunham, Grube, Castaneda, 1994; Gellatly, 1995; Hackett, Bycio, Hausdorf, 1994; Steers, 1977), thus all being factors producing the most significant influence on the development of affective commitment (Dunham et al., 1994; Hackett et al., 1994).

Personal characteristics related to affective commitment are education (inversely related, perhaps due to the notion that the higher the level of education, the more difficult it may be for the organisation to provide sufficient rewards as perceived by the

employee), age ($r = .17$), and tenure ($r = .19$ to $.26$) (Steers, 1977; Dunham et al., 1994). Employee age and tenure will exhibit a positive relationship with affective commitment where it may be assumed that employees with low affective commitment will choose to leave the organization, whereas those with higher affective commitment will determine to remain with the organisation due to their belief in the organization and its mission (Dunham et al., 1994).

Steers' (1977) three categories (as discussed above) were all found to be significantly related to commitment, where $r = .55$ (personal characteristics); $r = .64$ (job characteristics); $r = .71$ (work experiences), the strongest relationship thus being found between work experiences and commitment.

Other variables found to be strongly significantly related to commitment were the need for achievement, group attitudes toward the organisation, personal importance to the organisation, and task identity, opportunities for optional interaction, met expectations, and feedback (Steers, 1977; Dunham et al., 1994).

Dunham et al. (1994) carried out a study which identified positive correlations between affective commitment and organisational dependability ($r = .50$), participatory management practices ($r = .33$ to $.56$). Mathieu and Zajac (1990) in a meta-analysis, found affective commitment to be highly correlated to satisfaction with work itself, promotional opportunities, and pay, as well as tenure ($t(6) = 3.88$, $p < .05$), age ($r = .201$), and education ($r = -.092$). On the other hand however, Mottaz (1988) found age and education to have little or no effect on commitment.

Continuance commitment (CC)

A continuance attachment to the organisation is characterised by an employee's consistently active role in the organisation due to the employee being aware of the costs (such as the loss of seniority privileges, above average compensation and benefits, and the acquisition of non-transferable skills) with their incumbent implications, should they decide to leave the organisation for any particular reason or the lack of job alternatives (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Allen & Meyer, 1996; Gellatly, 1995; Ko et al., 1997; Shore,

Barksdale, Shore, 1995). Continuance commitment is believed to increase when the employee feels that suitable alternatives are not evident, and the personal costs of leaving are too high, or as a result of an employee's perception of their investments in the organisation, such as time and effort (Allen & Meyer, 1996).

Becker considered continuance commitment to be behavioural since it involves the accumulation of 'side bets' on the part of the employee (1960, as cited in Meyer & Allen, 1984). Side bets are anything of value that an employee has invested in the organisation (such as time, effort, or money) that would become invaluable or not be useful should the employee ever leave the organisation, thus resulting in a cost to the employee (Meyer & Allen, 1984). These side bets were to 'tie' the employee into the organisation to the extent that they may feel they have to stay with their particular organisation (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1984).

Allen and Meyer (1990) however argue that continuance commitment is attitudinal. Their reasoning for this is that Becker emphasised the need for an employee to recognise the cost associated with discontinuing a certain course of action. Allen and Meyer classified this type of recognition as a "psychological state reflecting the employee's relationship to the organisation" (p. 4), and therefore not as something that has been behaviourally acted on. It is for this reason that they included it in their three-component model of organisational commitment as a form of attitudinal commitment.

Particular variables that contribute to the development of continuance commitment are rewards, organisational actions, financial opportunities, and personal characteristics outlined below.

Rewards

Mottaz (1988) conducted research in the area of exchange theory, and found that intrinsic rewards are the most powerful determinants of continuance commitment (that is, job content) followed by extrinsic, social, and extrinsic-organisational rewards (Mottaz, 1988).

Organisational actions and financial opportunities

Continuance commitment may also develop as a result of organisational actions (such as socialisation) and financial opportunities that are made available to the employee for example, stock options and profit sharing. A greater investment in such financial opportunities is likely to increase an employee's continuance commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

Personal characteristics

Personal characteristics leading to the development of continuance commitment are age, tenure (indicative of non-transferable investments such as career, retirement, and skills investments), and career satisfaction (Dunham et al., 1994; Shore, 1995).

This supports Becker's side-bet theory, which suggests that investment in the organisation increases with age (thereby increasing the costs of leaving the organisation), opportunities for achievement, education (inverse relationship), and central interest (all found to be related to commitment) (Chusmir, 1988; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Mottaz, 1988; Steers, 1977).

Chusmir (1988) noted socio-economic status also to be an influencing variable of commitment where the higher the social or economic background, the more likely an employee is to be committed to the organisation.

Normative commitment (NC)

A normative attachment to the organisation may be characterised by an employee's sense or belief that to stay with their organisation is the correct, appropriate, or moral thing to do (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Ko et al., 1997). In other words, the employee may remain with their organisation out of a sense of duty or obligation (Wiener, 1982 as cited in Ko et al., 1997).

Whilst minimal literature of studies on the normative commitment component has been published, socialisation has been found to be a primary factor influencing its development.

Socialisation

Normative commitment is influenced by early familial and cultural socialisation experiences (as well as organizational value and belief systems, or personal norms) that encourage sustained commitment to one's employer and loyalty to the organisation. Organisational socialisation also aids in the development of normative commitment (albeit a lesser affect than familial or cultural socialisation) where an employee responds to the organisation's investment in them (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Dunham et al., 1994).

The employee may thus believe (or has been led to believe through socialisation), that they have a responsibility to the organisation to remain there (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Ko et al., 1997). An element of these socialisation processes that lead employees to feel obligated may be the principle of exchange where an employee receives some form of reward or investment in them from the organisation to which they 'must' or 'should' reciprocate (Scholl, 1981 as cited in Ko et al., 1997). Normative commitment may thus be conceptualised as some form of organisational loyalty (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

Other variables influencing the development of normative commitment are co-worker commitment, organisational dependability ($r = .18$ to $.34$) and participatory management practices ($r = .14$ to $.35$) (both likely to instil a sense of moral obligation to reciprocate to the organisation) (Dunham et al., 1994), age ($r = .35$), and tenure ($r = .23$ to $.36$) (Dunham et al., 1994; Hackett et al., 1994).

In summary of the above discussion on the three components of organisational commitment, Meyer and Allen believed that it is better to consider all three components of commitment in conjunction to gain a more holistic and broader understanding of the commitment construct, since it is possible for employees to experience each form of commitment to varying degrees (Allen & Meyer, 1990). All three forms of commitment increase the likelihood that an employee will remain with their organisation, but are still

independent variables (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1984; Meyer, Allen & Smith, 1993). However, each form of commitment is associated with differing antecedents and consequences that cause this commitment to have either positively (affective and normative commitment) or negatively (continuance commitment) affected outcomes. As a result, it is important for organisations to note the type of commitment they are encouraging in their workplace (Irving, Coleman, Cooper, 1997).

Measuring Organisational Commitment

There have been a number of scales developed to measure organisational commitment. The organisational commitment questionnaire (OCQ) developed by Mowday, Porter, and Steers (1974); a modified version of Porter's organisational commitment index (OCI) (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990); and Allen and Meyer's (1990) organisational commitment scale (OC), are three of the more common measurement scales. However, for the purposes of this study, focus will be placed on Allen and Meyer's measurement scale.

Originally, the Allen and Meyer (1990) OC scale consisted of three sets of eight items to measure each of the components of their organisational commitment model. These were taken from an initial pool of items developed on the basis of definitions of the three components. These items were verified after being administered to a sample population across occupations and organizations. Decisions to include the items in the three sets were based on a number of statistical rules including the response distribution, item-scale correlation, content redundancy, and the objective of including both positive and negatively weighted items.

In 1993, this scale was modified to consist of six items each (Meyer et al., 1993), where two items were removed from the affective commitment component (ACS), three were removed from and a new item added to the continuance commitment component (CCS), and six completely new items were developed for the normative commitment component (NCS) so that the selected items would adequately capture the meaning of the three separate components, where previously some overlap was evident.

This modified scale has generally acceptable levels of reliability (above .60), convergent validity, and construct validity. However, the NCS and the ACS are still in some cases highly correlated ($r = .74$). Whilst Allen and Meyer (1997) confirm that the three components are indeed distinctly separate from each other due to the nature of the findings of numerous studies conducting both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, the result noted above suggests that the ACS and NCS are not distinct from each other, or lack discriminant validity (Ko et al., 1997; Meyer et al., 1993).

From the traditional perspective where organisational commitment was typically measured in a stable and well-established organisation, the measurement of organisational commitment is problematic. The reason being that measuring scales used may have questionable reliability in situations where significant change exists in any organisation, and where the validity of the organisational commitment construct and its measurement instruments may be questioned, since the construct is not easily definable in theory, nor to survey respondents (Larkey & Morrill, 1995).

Consequences of Organisational Commitment

Much research has been conducted on organisational commitment, with little focus on its consequences. In this section, consequences of organisational commitment will be discussed in relation to the three components of commitment, having been determined by the frequency with which they were reported on in other literature studies, and the significance of the relationships found between these consequences and commitment. As an initial point, it is important to note that the link between organisational commitment and behavioural outcomes may vary depending on the strength of the three components namely affective, continuance and normative commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

Several specific behavioural outcomes or consequences may be derived from an employee's commitment to the organisation (Steers, 1977). Firstly, an employee that is highly committed to the organisation should experience a strong desire to remain there, as is evident in the definition of organisational commitment. Secondly, an employee's commitment should relate to the organisation's goals. Such an employee would be expected to exhibit positive attitudes toward the organisation and be committed to

contributing to the attainment of these organisational goals at work (Steers, 1977). Thirdly, organisational commitment relates to employee job performance in light of the above, thus also suggesting that organisational commitment may be a useful indicator of the effectiveness of an organisation (Steers, 1977).

Whilst the general assumption may oftentimes be that high organisational commitment is beneficial to the organisation, this is dependent on the form of commitment being encouraged and quality of this commitment. Organisational commitment may also be seen to be dysfunctional for employees and organisations at times. It also relates to additional variables such as desire to remain ($r = .36$ to $.44$ at the significant level, $p < .001$), intent to remain ($r = .31$ to $.38$, $p < .001$), attendance ($r = .28$, $p < .01$), inversely related to employee turnover ($r = -.17$, $p < .01$) (Steers, 1977).

Chusmir (1988) noted that while employees are assisted by an increased sense of belonging, security, and rewards, they often suffer higher levels of stress and reduced career advancement. Also since they are often so tied to their organisation, they are not inclined to leave in spite of this. In addition he believed that while organisational effectiveness may increase, long-term organizational commitment may result in a loss of innovation leading to staleness (Chusmir, 1988). Understanding these dynamics, as well as the particular variables that are related to organisational commitment and how they interact, may assist in finding the desired balance between functional and dysfunctional commitment to suit each individual organisation.

In the following section, consequences relating to affective, continuance and normative commitment will be outlined.

Consequences of Affective Commitment

In this section, affective commitment will be discussed in relation to its theoretical and empirical correlations with various behavioural outcomes or consequences. Overall, it was found to have strong significant correlations with turnover, organizational citizenship behaviour, and intent to remain.

Affective commitment is expected to be associated with affective links to the organisation that reflect positive attitudes and perceptions concerning the organisation to which there is an emotional tie (Randall & O'Driscoll, 1997). Allen and Meyer (1990) found that employees who exhibit more of an affective commitment to the organization, also express other positive attitudes to the organisation in the context of a working environment (Randall & O'Driscoll, 1997). Hence, their overall job satisfaction and involvement, as well as satisfaction with supervisors and co-workers are related to affective commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Randall & O'Driscoll, 1997).

It may also then be anticipated according to theory, that an employee who expresses an affective commitment to the organisation will perceive a greater degree of support, agreement with policies and procedures in the work environment within the organisation (Randall & O'Driscoll, 1997). They are also likely to have broad based ties to various facets of the organisation, and the goals and values of both are likely to be congruent (Randall & O'Driscoll, 1997).

Job Performance

Job performance may be related to commitment, where the relationship would indicate that highly committed employees are inclined to perform well to the extent that their organisation places emphasis on achievement along with good employee relations, where passive commitment or loyalty becomes active commitment, and where relevant skills and abilities, and a good understanding of organisational roles are entrenched (Steers, 1977).

Meyer and Allen (1991) as well as Hackett et al. (1994) proposed that employees with an affective commitment (or desire to belong) would be more likely to exert effort to perform since they identify with and are involved in the organization. To this end, Mayer and Schoorman (1992) found performance to be positively related to affective commitment (a partial correlation of $r = .28$, $p < .001$; a zero order correlation of $r = .17$, $p < .01$). Meyer, Paunonen, Gellatly, Goffin, and Jackson (1989) also found performance to relate to affective commitment where $r = .25$, $p < .05$, and Cohen (1996) found a weak but significant correlation between affective commitment and perceived performance ($r = .14$, $P < .05$).

Mayer and Schoorman (1992) and Randall and O'Driscoll (1997) found affective commitment to correlate positively with *supervisors'* ratings of overall performance and promotability of subordinates. Shore, Barksdale, and Shore (1995) found it to relate to manager-rated affective commitment as well ($r = .39, p < .01$).

In such situations where commitment was related to performance, a greater degree of emphasis was placed on satisfying customers and continuous performance improvement which may have given employees clear guidance as to the best way in which to express their commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1996).

On the other hand, there have been exceptions to the above, where commitment has been unrelated to job performance regardless of the measures taken (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Somers & Birnbaum, 1998; Steers, 1977). Slocombe and Dougherty (1998) proposed two reasons why the relationship between commitment and performance was not found as originally hypothesised. Firstly, they noted that an affective commitment to the organisation does not necessarily relate to a 'willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organisation which would weaken the relationship between the two variables, since by itself, the desire to remain a member leads only to the behaviours necessary to remain a member. Secondly, the attractiveness of the result of being a high performer (an important determinant of effort) is not included in the commitment construct, which would also weaken the relationship.

Somers and Birnbaum (1998) measured three facets of job performance specifically, supervisor rated task proficiency, performance beneficial to organisations, and performance detrimental to organisations. These facets were assessed with indicators taken from employee records (not lending itself to any reliability factor) of one hundred and nine hospital staff drawn from a university teaching hospital in southeastern United States. Results were unanticipated and indicated that performance was unrelated to affective commitment regardless of the dimension of performance under consideration. In analysis, it was noted that general correlations of performance with affective commitment are usually modest in nature, and that a non-significant relationship between the variables in one study is not unusual. However, this finding does correspond with other findings noted above in that the relationship between affective

commitment and job performance is either weak or unrelated (regardless of the measures taken).

Overall, it seems that while higher levels of commitment may relate to improved job performance in some situations, it does not necessarily have much of a direct influence on performance in many situations (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

Attendance and Absenteeism

When attempting to understand the concept of absenteeism, it is valuable to conceptualise it in two states namely, involuntary absenteeism (which would constitute certified sickness, and funeral attendance), and voluntary absenteeism (including vacation and uncertified sickness) (Sagie, 1998). Voluntary absence is controlled by the employees themselves and is said to be used for personal purposes such as seeking alternative employment opportunities, whereas involuntary absence could be an indicator of job dissatisfaction and a reduction in organisational commitment. By the same token, voluntary absence of a highly satisfied employee is not expected to further decrease as commitment increases, due to a threshold effect (Sagie, 1998).

Theoretically, when an employee finds their experiences at work to be personally rewarding, their affective commitment should increase and voluntary absenteeism should decrease, especially since this employee's primary motivation at work is usually to engage, become involved and identify with their work (Gellatly, 1995).

However, little difference has been found between voluntary or involuntary absenteeism and commitment. Randall (1990) and Sagie (1998) found correlations for voluntary absence to range from $r = -.52$ to $-.54$ ($p < .001$) and involuntary absence ranging from $r = .00$ to $-.04$ (not significant). Conversely, commitment and job satisfaction were found to be strongly related to the aggregated duration of voluntary absence as opposed to involuntary absence. This indicates that an employee who expresses high levels of commitment or job satisfaction comes to work more often than employees with low commitment or job satisfaction (Sagie, 1998; Savery, Travaglione, Firms, 1997). In addition, an employee who expresses low commitment, may see absence as an opportunity to avoid negative emotions associated with work (Sagie, 1998).

Alternatively, commitment is perceived as a pressure that affects attendance. Actual attendance behaviour may also be affected by perceived absence norms (Gellatly, 1995). For example, an employee's beliefs concerning their co-workers absence was found to impact individual absences one year later, indicating that employees perceiving a higher absence norm in their work units or departments should exhibit more absenteeism than employees who perceive a lower absence norm (Gellatly, 1995). The same study also found evidence to suggest that employees with high affective commitment are absent less than those with low affective commitment (Gellatly, 1995). Significant negative correlations were found by Gellatly (1995) between affective commitment and total number of days absent over twelve months ($r = -.14, p < .05$), and absence frequency in terms of number of absence incidents ($r = -.18, p < .05$).

In summary, there does not seem to be much empirical evidence to suggest a significant difference between voluntary and involuntary absence. However, affective commitment is negatively related to absenteeism (indicating that the higher the affective commitment of employees, the lower their absenteeism) and the nature of this relationship seems also to be influenced to a degree by external factors such as an absence norm.

Turnover

In their meta-analysis, Mathieu and Zajac (1990) found that the strongest and most predictable behavioural consequence of commitment had been predicted as lower turnover rates ($r = -.277$). It was also proposed that "various aspects of the work environment (such as, supervision practices and job content factors) influence employees' affective responses (such as job satisfaction and organisational commitment), which in turn may initiate withdrawal cognitions and decision processes that are then related directly to an individual's likelihood of turnover" (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990, 185).

Individuals who leave the organisation typically have less favourable attitudes than employees who remain and are characterised by lower commitment and satisfaction (Porter, Steers, Mowday, Boulian, 1974). This may be a reflection of the extent to which expectations on the job have been met. A decrease in organisational commitment has

also been found to occur amongst employees before they leave the organisation (Porter et al., 1974).

Since organisational commitment, and more specifically affective commitment, has been found to be significantly correlated to turnover (correlations range from $r = -.29$ to $-.61$ at the significant level), it may be suggested that one of the most significant outcomes of increased commitment is a more stable workforce (Hackett et al., 1994; Steers, 1977).

Somers (1995) assessed turnover using a population sample of four hundred and twenty-two staff nurses drawn from a large urban hospital located in the north-eastern United States. A measure of three items was used. Specifically, 'I intend to stay in this job for the foreseeable future', 'I will probably look for a new job within the next year', and 'I do not intend to pursue alternate employment in the foreseeable future', all rated on a 5-point scale. Results indicated that affective commitment was the sole predictor of turnover in comparison with the other commitment components. The correlation value was modest and negative in nature ($r = -.24$, $p < .01$). This finding was consistent with others, which seems to indicate that commitment has a limited effect on employee retention (Somers, 1995), and that an employee or workforce with strong affective commitment should exhibit low turnover (the opposite also being true).

Overall, affective commitment exhibits consistently strong negative correlations with turnover of a significant nature, implying that affectively committed employees are less likely to leave the organisation and as such make for a more stable workforce.

Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

Organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) has been defined as representing "constructive or co-operative gestures that are neither mandatory nor directly or contractually compensated by formal reward systems" (Organ & Konovsky, 1989, as cited in Burns & Collins, 2001). It consists of five dimensions namely, helping or altruism (the assistance of an employee by another to finish tasks in unusual situations), conscientiousness (an employee exceeding agreed expectations for the job), sportsmanship (stressing positive organisational aspects over negative), courtesy (problem solving or prevention), and civic virtue (support for organisational

administration function) (Burns & Collins, 2001; VanYperen, van den Berg, Willering, 1999).

Whilst there has been some confusion between what constitutes in-role and extra-role behaviour, employees who defined their jobs more broadly or exhibited extra-role behaviour also had strong affective commitment (strong emotional attachment) (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Morrison, 1994). However, it may be argued that an employees' commitment changes the way they define their job requirements, rather than the traditional idea that their commitment leads them to exceed the boundaries of their job requirements (Morrison, 1994). Alternatively, organisational commitment has been characterised as 'a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organisation' thus lending itself to the assumption that the employees would go above and beyond their job requirements, although this is not explicit (VanYperen et al., 1999).

An employee who exceeds the required standards and performance levels for the job, thus exhibiting OCB, has strong emotional attachment to the organisation, in other words, strong affective commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Shore et al., 1995). OCB has been examined with the result of being found to be consistently correlated in a positive manner with affective commitment ($r = .10$, $p < .05$) (Meyer et al., 1993) and ($r = .32$, $p < .001$) (Mayer & Schoorman, 1992), ($r = .28$, $p < .001$ for co-worker rated OCB) and ($r = .24$, $p < .001$ for supervisor rated OCB) (Bolon, 1997).

VanYperen et al. (1999) assessed organisational citizenship behaviour on a population sample of one hundred and forty-two employees holding white collar and professional positions, across ten departments of a medium-sized distributive trade company. Data was gathered by means of a measurement scale developed by Podsakoff and MacKenzie in 1989. This measure asks supervisors to rate subordinates' OCBs based on the five dimensions noted above. Cronbach's alphas were $\alpha = .91$, $.79$, $.89$, $.86$ and $.76$. Results indicated a significant positive correlation between commitment and the civic virtue dimension of OCB ($r = .28$, $P < .01$). In analysis, they concluded that enhancing organisational commitment may not be the best way to increase citizenship behaviour among employees (as rated by their supervisors). They also noted that at the group level, higher aggregate scores on OCB (particularly the sportsmanship, civic virtue, and conscientiousness dimensions) are observed in departments or working

environments in which employees share feelings of organisational commitment. "Possibly a shared identification with and involvement in, the organisation is accompanied by a greater collective willingness to exhibit behaviours that contribute to organisational effectiveness" (VanYperen et al., 1999, p.389).

In summary, affective commitment correlates positively with organisational citizenship behaviours. Whilst commitment is partially defined by a willingness to exert considerable effort in the organisation, this does not imply extra-role behaviour. In addition it seems that affective commitment may be more directly related to particular aspects of OCB (such as civic virtue) and not the dimension as a whole. Alternatively, employees are more likely to exhibit OCB in their organisation when feelings of commitment are mutual.

Desire or Intent to remain

Porter et al. (1974) and Steers (1977) both noted organisational commitment to be linked with an increase in an employee's desire or intent to remain a member of their organisation. This assumption has been empirically confirmed by Mayer and Schoorman (1992) amongst others, who found affective commitment to be positively correlated with intent to stay ($r = .39, p < .001$).

Begley and Czajka (1993) assessed intention to quit in relation to organisational commitment. Their population sample consisted of eighty-two clinical staff in the Psychiatric Division of a general and mental health hospital in a large midwestern city in the United States. Measures used were a 2-item scale where respondents indicated the extent of agreement on a 7-point rating scale: 'As soon as I can find a better job, I'll quit' and 'I often think about quitting my job at (the hospital)'. Results indicated a negative correlation between commitment and intention to quit with correlations ranging from $r = -.54$ to $-.61$. In analysis, one may assume then, that this finding supports the above theoretical hypothesis and finding that affective commitment should have and has been found to exhibit a positive significant relationship with an intent to remain in the organisation.

Consequences of Continuance Commitment

In this section, continuance commitment will be discussed in relation to its theoretical and empirical correlations with various behavioural outcomes or consequences. Overall, it was found to have strong significant correlations with turnover, albeit inconsistent at times.

Theoretically, it may be anticipated that an employee who expresses a continuance commitment to the organisation will perceive a lesser degree of support, agreement with policies and procedures in the work environment within the organisation (Randall & O'Driscoll, 1997).

An employee who exhibits more of a continuance commitment to the organisation is likely to have very narrow and specific ties to facets of the organisation, (or a less intimate relationship with the organisation), which are related to the magnitude and number of investments. This employee is specifically interested in organisational survival (Randall & O'Driscoll, 1997).

This supports general empirical findings that continuance commitment is negatively related to *job* involvement and satisfaction (factors influencing performance), as well as satisfaction with supervisors and co-workers (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Randall & O'Driscoll, 1997), and where an employee's level of continuance commitment is expected to be independent of any attitudes, feelings and perceptions concerning the organisation (Randall & O'Driscoll, 1997).

Job Performance

Employees with a continuance commitment (or a need to belong) are theoretically not as likely to exert effort to perform, since commitment here is primarily on the basis of a recognition of costs (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Hackett et al., 1994).

This theory was perpetuated where continuance commitment was found to correlate negatively with supervisors' ratings of overall performance and promotability of subordinates (Mayer & Schoorman, 1992; Randall & O'Driscoll, 1997), and negatively

relate to innovativeness which impacts on performance (Randall & O'Driscoll, 1997), and job performance was negatively associated with manager-rated continuance commitment ($r = -.27, p < .01$) (Shore et al., 1995).

Cohen (1996) measured perceived job performance using a 3-item measure developed by Hall and Hall in 1976, and rated on a 6-point scale. The sample population consisted of two hundred and thirty-eight nurses from two hospitals (one medium sized and the other small) in western Canada. Cohen had theoretically noted that commitment has been found to be a predictor of job performance. However, his results showed perhaps a different correlation where continuance commitment was not found to be related to perceived job performance. As an analysis, one could thus assume that (as already noted above) continuance committed employees' performance is not based on or influenced by their level of commitment to the organisation, since their form of commitment is purely focussed on organisational survival and job sustainability as opposed to having any desire to achieve anything remarkable at work.

Job performance was found to be negatively related to continuance commitment ($r = -.11$, not at a significant level) (Mayer & Schoorman, 1992), and in some instances completely unrelated to continuance commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Somers & Birnbaum, 1998; Steers, 1977).

Meyer et al., (1989) examined the relationship between performance of one hundred and fourteen first-level managers in a large food service company and their affective commitment (amongst other variables). The results of their study indicated that continuance commitment was negatively related to composite and overall performance where correlations ranged from $r = -.26$ to $-.27$ ($p < .05$) respectively. They indicated that the value of commitment to the organisation may be dependent on the nature of that commitment (in comparison to affective commitment). "When commitment is primarily on the basis of a recognition of the costs associated with leaving, as Becker (1960) described it, the benefits of reduced turnover may be obtained at the price of relatively poor performance" (p. 155).

Since many companies purposefully implement policies to bind employees to the organisation, thus creating a lack of motivation for the employee to contribute to

organisational effectiveness by performing well, but makes it difficult for them to leave the organisation (Meyer et al., 1989). Those employees who desire to leave the organisation but have few alternatives or external opportunities for employment, may desire to perform only at minimal levels required by them to maintain their jobs on which they have come to depend (Meyer et al., 1989).

In summary, continuance commitment is regularly found to be negatively correlated with performance. However, this relationship is often not significant since the employee's primary motive is to maintain employment in the organisation devoid of any emotional attachment, as opposed to being motivated to achieve or excel in the organisation because they subscribe to its goals and values.

Attendance and Absenteeism

Theoretically, it has been hypothesised "that the primary motivation of the continuance committed employee is to maintain membership in the organisation. It is reasonable to speculate then, that employees who continuance commit will be aware of the absence norm in their work units, and be less likely to permit their personal absences to exceed the level which jeopardises organisational membership. Across work situations, employees who report higher continuance commitment should absent themselves from work, on average, to a greater degree than employees reporting lower levels of continuance commitment, but this relation may be negligible when the relevant absence norm is controlled" (Gellatly, 1995, 471).

No significant correlations were found between absence and continuance commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1996). However, in a study by Gellatly (1995) on four hundred and twenty-five nursing and food services employees of a mid-sized chronic care hospital in central Canada, data was gathered from hospital records during a twelve-month period immediately following an employee survey, where information regarding involuntary absence was excluded. Gellatly hypothesised and found that the higher an employee's continuance commitment, the greater their absence frequency. In analysis, this finding may indicate that a continuance committed employee is willing to be absent from the organisation on a voluntary basis to a certain degree until such time as it may begin to affect their employment status with the organisation. This absence frequency is more

than likely to be influenced by the absence norm in the employee's department or working environment.

Mayer and Schoorman (1992) conducted a longitudinal field study on two hundred and eighty-eight employees of a financial services organisation where they measured amongst other variables, commitment and absenteeism. The correlations that were elicited between these two variables were unexpected in that they were insignificant and very weak ($r = -.05$). They noted that there was some evidence that the organisational policies may have confounded the results for absenteeism. If the organisation has a clear policy which states that a disciplinary procedure will be put in place after relatively few absences on the part of an employee, the relationship with commitment is likely to be different from that where more leeway is permitted. This was the case in the financial institution under study, where a clear and well communicated policy on absence was implemented after a considerable amount of unexcused absence (Mayer & Schoorman, 1992).

Both of these case studies provide evidence for the theory that continuance committed employees aware of the absence norm in their working environment will not exceed that norm by their own absence and that such employees will not be absent to a degree that places their job on which they depend in jeopardy.

Turnover

Randall and O'Driscoll (1997) typically found continuance commitment to be a weak predictor of turnover. Meyer and Allen (1996) in their review of commitment literature found correlations between continuance commitment and turnover to range from .00 to -.42. Mayer and Schoorman (1992) confirmed this negative relationship where correlations were found to be $r = -.21$, $p < .001$.

Although the relationship between continuance commitment and turnover is less consistent, it is negative in nature. This is theoretically logical on the basis that continuance commitment exists in relation to side bets, or perceived costs that render themselves too great for the employee to be able to leave the organization. Therefore it is possible to assume that external factors such as 'side bets' heighten employees'

continuance responses which in turn may decrease withdrawal cognitions and decision processes that are then related directly to an individual's likelihood of turnover (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

It has also been stated above, that individuals who leave the organisation typically have less favourable attitudes than employees who remain and are characterised by lower commitment and satisfaction. This may be a reflection of the extent to which expectations on the job have been met (Porter, Steers, Mowday, Boulian, 1974). However, an affectively committed employee may leave the organization to pursue career progression in another organisation, but may have a better attitude toward their previous organization (depending on the manner in which their exit from the organization was handled) than the employee who is still tied (or continuance committed) to that organization due to perceived costs that keep them from leaving.

Turnover was assessed in a study by Jaros, Jermier, Koehler, and Sincich (1993) in conjunction with all three components of commitment. The sample population consisted of two hundred and seventy employees of an aerospace firm located in a major metropolitan area in the southeastern United States. The measure used consisted of totalling the number of participants who had left the organisation after a period of ninety-nine months since the questionnaires for other measures were administered. Those who had voluntarily left were coded with a '1' and those who remained were coded with a '0'. Results indicated low correlations of all three commitment components with turnover. However, the correlation between continuance commitment and turnover was the only significant relationship ($r = -.19, p < .05$). This negative correlation supports the theoretical assumption that a continuance committed employee or workforce will exhibit low levels of turnover since they are not in a position to voluntarily leave the organisation due to greater alternate costs.

In summary, whilst continuance commitment was found to relate to turnover, the results were inconsistent and moderate in nature. Such relations suggest that commitment affects turnover only indirectly through withdrawal intentions (Jaros et al., 1993).

Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

It is possible to infer that a continuance committed employee is likely to exhibit no organisational citizenship behaviour (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Shore et al., 1995). Theoretically this should occur since the continuance committed employee is intent on remaining with the organisation because they 'have to' and are therefore unlikely to have the desire to do any work or activity beyond that which is required of them in the job.

Organisational citizenship behaviour has been found to be either unrelated, weakly related or negatively related to continuance commitment ($r = .05 - .14, p < .05$) (Moorman, Nichoff & Organ, 1993 as cited in Allen & Meyer, 1996; Bolon, 1997; Morrison, 1994; Randall & O'Driscoll, 1997). This may thus indicate that either a continuance committed employee does not feel compelled to go above and beyond what is required of them at work, or feel compelled to exhibit a certain degree of OCB in situations where it is necessary to give the impression or idea that they *are* doing extra work, commonly known as impression management (Bolino, 1999).

Shore and Wayne (1993) investigated the relationship between commitment and employee behaviour on a sample population of two hundred and seventy-six pairs of employees and their direct supervisors working in a large multinational firm headquarters in the southeastern United States. They measured OCB with a 16-item scale developed by Smith, Organ, and Near in 1983 which assess two dimensions of OCB: altruism and compliance. Cronbach alpha reliabilities were .88 for altruism and .87 for compliance. Their results showed that continuance commitment is associated with lower levels of OCB. This suggests that employees who feel bound to their organisations due to an accumulation of side-bets are less likely to engage in extra-role behaviours that support organisational goals. In addition, since both the side bet theory and the theory of exchange are based on the notion of exchange, that employees working in terms of an economic exchange conceptualisation would engage in OCB if it was *directly* rewarded. Employees working in terms of a social exchange would engage in OCB even if there was no immediate or direct reward (Shore & Wayne, 1993).

Desire or Intent to remain

Theoretically, one may assume that since the continuancely committed employee is not vigorous in their desire to be employed by their organisation but remains on the basis of greater perceived costs, the relationship between continuance commitment and intent to remain would be moderate.

A study conducted by Somers (1993b, as cited in Allen & Meyer, 1996) which made use of a large sample of nurses, revealed findings that indicate continuance commitment to be weakly, but significantly positively related to intent to remain where correlations equalled $r = .13$ ($p < .05$).

Mayer and Schoorman (1992) in their study on two hundred and eighty-eight employees of a financial services institution found the correlation between continuance commitment and intent to stay to be fairly strong, positive and significant ($r = .38$, $p < .001$).

Intent to *quit* one's job was assessed in a study by Hackett, Bycio, and Hausdörf (1994) which consisted of two population samples namely, two thousand three hundred and one registered nurses, and one hundred municipal bus drivers. Details of the bus driver sample have already been discussed in this study (see page 34, 'job performance' below). It was measured using a 3-item scale with an internal consistency of .82. However, intent to quit was specifically related to the sample of nurses where a significant negative correlation was found between continuance commitment and intention to quit ($r = -.13$, $p < .05$).

These findings emphasise that a continuancely committed employee is more likely to have intentions to remain with their organisation than not, due to a greater set of perceived costs or lack of alternatives preventing them from leaving the organisation and thus, heightening their intentions to stay with their organisation.

Consequences of Normative Commitment

In this section, normative commitment will be discussed in relation to its theoretical and empirical correlations with various behavioural outcomes or consequences. Overall, it

was found to have strong significant correlations with desire or intent to remain with the organisation.

Theoretically normative commitment should not influence work behaviour in terms of the quantity or quality with which the work is performed but rather by the tone with which the work is done (Allen & Meyer, 1996). Thus, it is credible that Mayer and Schoorman (1992) found a measure of person-organisation fit based on shared values to be significantly related to normative commitment (Mayer & Schoorman, 1992).

Job Performance

According to Meyer and Allen (1991), employees with a high level of normative commitment are theoretically unlikely to want to exert effort to perform (those with a felt obligation to belong which may carry with it an underlying yet pervading resentment of the organization, or a feeling of not needing to do anything beyond what is required of them in their jobs) (Hackett et al., 1994). Job performance was found to be either unrelated or negatively related to normative commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Hackett et al., 1994; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer et al., 1989).

Hackett, Bycio and Hausdorf (1994) measured both 'rated performance' and 'nonrated performance' of two thousand three hundred and one registered nurses who belonged to a nursing association and a second sample of one hundred bus operators employed by a large municipal transit authority. Rated performance was assessed using in-service rating checklists developed by Hackett et al. from a job analysis of the bus operator position. The 43-item ISRC score was the total number of performance standards the operator passed while under observation by a trained rater on a single occasion (internal consistency was .65). Nonrating performance was based on obtaining indices of performance having wide acceptance in the transit industry for bus operators. These were specifically, (a) frequency of culpable absences per year over the previous five years, (b) frequency of nonculpable absences per year over the previous five years, (c) accidents per year from the date of hire, (d) commendations per year (from both passengers and supervisors), from the date of hire, and (e) complaints per year (from both the passengers and supervisors), from the date of hire. Results indicated there to be no zero-order or partial correlations between normative commitment and the various

measures of job performance. This may either be indicative of the fact that none of the bus operators assessed felt normatively committed to their organisation or that the bus operators' intentions to stay with their organisation, as a result of a sense of obligation, were not based on, indicative of or influenced by their performance.

Attendance and Absenteeism

Theoretically one may hypothesize that a normatively committed employee would have an average record of attendance at work, due to their inherent sense of obligation that 'it is the right thing to do', as is their commitment to the organisation.

Empirically however, in most instances no significant correlations were found between absence and normative commitment, and in some instances were not even investigated due to such trends in previous research (not to the exclusion of affective and continuance commitment) (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Gellatly, 1995).

However, Meyer et al. (1993), found a significant but weak negative correlation between absenteeism and normative commitment in terms of voluntary absences ($r = -.15$, $p < .05$). This may indicate that in some cases, the less normatively committed an employee, the more likely they are to be absent from work (the opposite being true as well).

Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993) assessed the absenteeism of six hundred and sixty-two student nurses at Queens University, Ontario, and a second sample of six hundred and three registered nurses from the membership of the College of Nurses in Ontario. Data was gathered by asking participants to indicate how many days in the past year they had been absent from scheduled work (a self-report measure). Results indicated that normative commitment was significantly negatively correlated with voluntary absence ($r = -.15$, $p < .01$). In analysis, this finding seems to confirm the above theoretical hypothesis that a normatively committed employee should be voluntarily absent from work on a minimal basis depending on the strength of their commitment or sense of obligation toward the organisation.

Turnover

Theoretically, it may be assumed that the turnover rate of normatively committed employees would be low or non-existent due to their obligation to remain with their organisations. Hence, one would expect no or negative relationships between the two constructs.

Based on an empirical sample of eleven studies, normative commitment has been found to be negatively related to turnover intentions, where correlations range from $r = -.20$ to $r = -.38$ at the significant level ($p < .05$) (Allen & Meyer, 1996).

Turnover itself was also found to be significantly negatively correlated to normative commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1996). This relationship was examined in a sample from one study conducted by Somers (1993b, as cited in Allen & Meyer, 1996) being administered to a large population sample of nurses. Correlations found were $r = -.17$ ($p < .05$) (Allen & Meyer, 1996). In 1995, Somers again studied this relationship between normative commitment and turnover on a sample of four hundred and twenty-two staff nurses in the United States where a correlation of $r = -.25$, $p < .01$ was found.

These consistent findings of negative correlations between normative commitment and turnover confirm the hypothesis that an employee or workforce who are normatively committed to their organisation are not likely to leave their organisation due to their sense of obligation to remain.

Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

Whilst there has been some confusion between what constitutes in-role and extra-role behaviour, employees who defined their jobs more broadly or exhibited extra-role behaviour also had strong normative commitment (seen as the 'right and moral' thing to do) (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Morrison, 1994).

An empirical study conducted by McDonald (1993, as cited in Allen & Meyer, 1996) found a correlation between normative commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour to be negative in nature ($r = -.12$, $P < .05$).

However, Bolon (1997) also assessed organisational citizenship behaviour amongst a sample population of two hundred and two nursing personnel, laboratory personnel, secretarial, and environmental services personnel from a large (six hundred and twenty-seven beds) tertiary hospital located in the southeastern United States. Data was collected on organisational OCB (OCBO) and individual OCB (OCBI). OCBI was measured using an eight-item scale, three items of which were developed by Smith, Organ, and Near (1983, as cited in Bolon, 1997), three by Graham (1986, as cited in Bolon, 1997), and two items by Williams (1988, as cited in Bolon, 1997). OCBO was measured using an eight-item scale, four items being selected from a measure by Smith, Organ, and Near (1983, as cited in Bolon, 1997), and four items selected from a measure by Graham (1986, as cited in Bolon, 1997). Due to construct validity concerns, OCBO was eliminated from the study. Results indicated that normative commitment correlated significantly and positively with OCBI on co-worker ratings where $r = .18$ ($p < .01$), and was unrelated to supervisor ratings. On analysis, Bolon suggested that "this significant and positive relationship between [normative commitment and co-worker ratings of OCB] may best be explained by suggesting that these individuals assist other employees with organisationally relevant tasks and problems simply because they believe it is the correct and appropriate thing to do" (1997, p.237).

Desire or Intent to remain

Theoretically, one may assume that since the normatively committed employee has a moderate albeit a strained desire or obligation to be employed by the organisation, the relationship between continuance commitment and intent to remain would therefore be positive in nature.

In a review of the literature on organisational commitment, Allen & Meyer (1996) found that normative commitment was significantly positively related to intent to remain where $r = .32$ ($p < .05$), and $r = .39$ ($p < .01$). Hackett et al. (1994), and Jaros et al. (1993) both found a significantly negative correlation between normative commitment and intent to quit ($r = -.12$, $p < .05$; $r = -.45$, $p < .05$).

These empirical results thus confirm the above theoretical hypotheses that a normatively committed employee is likely to intend to remain with their organisation. Therefore, commitment which is duty-based specifically influences job withdrawal intentions (Somers, 1995).

Reflections on current organisational commitment theory

Measurement

As noted in the above discussion, there still remain some overlaps between the affective commitment and normative commitment measurement scales developed by Allen and Meyer in 1990, subsequent to the re-writing of the normative commitment dimension. This suggests that feelings of affective attachment to the organisation and sense of belonging are not as independent from one another as originally hypothesized (Meyer & Allen, 1997). As a result, research around these three components will require intensive factor analyses prior to conducting the research in all situations and contexts, as well as an objective perspective on the analyses of results where such a fine line exists between the boundaries of various components. Ko et al. (1997) conducted a study using Allen and Meyer's measurement scale of organisational commitment and found the affective and normative commitment dimensions to be highly correlated, suggesting once again that these components of commitment are not distinct from one another and therefore lack discriminant validity.

Ko et al. (1997) also found that whilst the overall results for the relationships of the affective commitment scale with its determinants and consequences support its construct validity because most of the correlations are significant and in the predicted direction, the normative commitment scale lacks construct validity. In addition, due to the suggestion that factors leading to the development of normative commitment are similar to those of affective commitment, normative commitment may be considered a redundant concept (Ko et al., 1997).

In a study conducted by Allen and Meyer (1996), concern was raised around the continuance commitment construct and its uni-dimensionality (see 'measuring

organisational commitment' under discussion of Allen and Meyer's commitment model). It seems that a number of studies have indicated that continuance commitment could possibly consist of two dimensions as opposed to one, the first being based on perceptions that few alternatives exist and the second on high personal sacrifice associated with leaving the organisation. It is thus believed, after further research, that a model hypothesizing a two-dimensional continuance commitment scale structure could prove a better fit to the data than would a uni-dimensional model, although the two factors are highly related (Allen & Meyer, 1996). Ko et al. (1997) however suggest that due to the high correlations between these subscales ('lack of alternatives' and 'high personal sacrifice'), the continuance commitment measurement dimension should rather be treated as unidimensional. As it stands at present, the continuance commitment component is likely to exhibit levels of reliability below the acceptable norm of .70 as found by Ko et al. (1997).

Changing organisations

The traditional perspective on organisational commitment assumes that the individual, or employee, is believed to be a somewhat non-active entity who "gets committed as a result of immediate situational factors either directly or indirectly manipulable by the organisation" (Larkey & Morrill, 1995, p.195); an employee's personal characteristics (often not under their control) may also influence whether they become organisationally committed; and lastly that organisational commitment has been studied in relatively stable and established organisations. Therefore, in terms of the traditional perspective, relatively stable organisations confer upon the employee (Larkey & Morrill, 1995).

Traditionally, organisational commitment was considered from the perspective of trying to understand the 'human' element, or 'person' in the organisation, and how these 'people' (or employees) need to be managed in order for an organisation to run consistently and effectively for lengthy durations (Larkey & Morrill, 1995). It was suggested that an employee's 'efforts' were important commodities that needed securing in an attempt to develop employees' sense of obligation toward their organisation, and its mission, vision, or strategic goals. This perspective led to the further perception that an employee's commitment may be influenced by an external entity, just as a person

may be influenced by social groups, or has the ability to influence (Salancik, 1978 as cited in Larkey & Morrill, 1995).

These early or traditional assumptions need to be taken into account in present day research on organisational commitment where employees are very much active entities who are in more of a position to manipulate the organisation as opposed to being manipulated (to a certain degree). Organisations in the present also exist as continuously changing organisms in an effort to survive, as opposed to being static where they would not be able keep abreast of current rapid change.

Research context

Firstly, much of the research conducted on organisational commitment as published in literature has been largely in the context of the working population of the United States of America. A few studies conducted in Europe have been published, with those in South Africa being virtually non-existent (see summary table below). Secondly, a large proportion of the population samples of previous studies conducted consist of large groups of nurses. This has implications for generalisation across populations, where it is not possible to infer that behaviour exhibited in one cultural context or profession will be the same as another.

Thirdly, as noted above, acceptable levels of reliability for measuring scales are required to be above .70. Reflecting on the reliabilities of studies conducted on organisational commitment (as noted in the table below), the majority of scale reliabilities fall below the requisite .70. This suggests that the findings of such studies are likely to be considered redundant.

Fourthly, many of the past research studies have focussed on white collar (service and professionals) workers (Randall, 1990) (see table below). This will have implications for the South African context where a large proportion of the labour force consists of unskilled workers. A distinction needs to be drawn between the possible differing organisational commitments and subsequent behaviours between white and blue-collar workers. Generalisations of past behavioural findings should also not be inferred upon blue-collar workers unless they are specific to this category of employee.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the theoretical assumptions according to literature and empirical research findings of the three components of organisational commitment, its development and consequences

Organisational commitment has been conceptualised in a number of different ways. For the purposes of this study, the chapter focussed specifically on the model of commitment developed by Allen and Meyer (1990) which describes commitment in terms of three separate components: affective, continuance, and normative commitment.

Affective commitment describes an emotional attachment to the organisation where the employee desires to be committed. Continuance commitment is determined by the accumulation of perceived costs of leaving the organisation on the part of the employee. Normative commitment is characterised by a sense of obligation to remain with the organisation due to a degree of familial or cultural (or other) socialisation.

Each component of commitment has been theoretically linked to a number of consequences which research has either confirmed or refuted empirically. Thus, overall affective commitment is empirically related most frequently to turnover, organisational citizenship behaviour and intent to remain. Continuance commitment is empirically related most frequently to turnover. Normative commitment is related most frequently to intent to remain.

Whilst the theoretically perceived consequences of commitment consisted of many more variables (as summarised in table 1 below), these accumulative findings may stand to prove that either the measurement scales of commitment are more fraught with problems in terms of their statistical composition, or that organisational commitment is a variable that relates most consistently on an indirect basis with such theoretically propositioned consequences, or that an insufficient amount of empirical research has been conducted in the area of the consequences of affective, continuance and normative commitment.

The following chapter provides methodological details of the qualitative approach employed in this study on the analysis of Allen and Meyer's (1990) three component model of commitment and the consequences or outcomes amongst professional IT employees.

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Table 1: Summary of behavioural outcomes, measures used, population samples and cronbach alpha reliabilities.

Behavioural outcome	Author	Year	Measure	Cronbach α reliability	Sample type and size
Job Performance	Ashforth & Saks	1996	R.J. House's 6-item self-appraisal scale	$\alpha = .81, .82$	295 graduating students of Concordia University's undergraduate business program
	Somers & Birnbaum	1998	3 facets of job performance included in the study were assessed with indicators taken from employee records: supervisor rated task proficiency; performance beneficial to organisations; performance detrimental to organisations.	---	109 hospital employees drawn from a university teaching hospital in southeastern United States.
	Benkhoff	1997	3 measures were used: Overall sales targets; subtarget for private savings; change in operating profit.	---	179 employees from 34 branches of a high street bank in Germany.
	Keller	1997	Ratings were obtained from the immediate supervisor of each scientist and engineer 1 year after measurement. Supervisors rated on 5 criteria: quality of performance, quantity of performance, ability to get along with other employees, dependability, total performance (on a 5-point response scale).	$\alpha = .91$	532 scientists and engineers of four corporate R & D organisations.
	Cohen	1996	3-item measure developed by Hall & Hall (1976), using a 6-point rating scale.	---	238 nurses from 2 hospitals – one medium sized and one small – in western Canada.

	Wright, Bonett, & Sweeney	1993	5-point scale of 3 performance dimensions	$\alpha = .86$	33 human services supervisory personnel from one USA organisation
	Darden, Hampton, & Howell	1989	Modified self-rating scale developed by Pruden & Reese (1972)	$\alpha = .86$	261 retail salespeople
	Meyer, Allen, & Smith	1993	2-item self-report measure	---	662 student nurses at Queens University, Ontario; 603 registered nurses from the membership of the College of Nurses, Ontario
Turnover (intentions)	Adkins	1995	Data from employee records	---	171 mental health specialists employed by 7 inpatient facilities in a USA state
	Irving, Coleman & Cooper	1997	3 items: 'I intend to stay in this job for the foreseeable future', 'I will probably look for a new job within the next year', and 'I do not intend to pursue alternate employment in the foreseeable future'. Rated on a 5-point scale.	$\alpha = .73$	232 regional employees of a Canadian governmental agency.
	Somers	1995	Data was collected from personnel records approximately 12 months after initial administration of a survey of work attitudes.	---	422 staff nurses drawn from a large, urban hospital located in the Northeastern United States.
	Major, Kozlowski, Chao, & Gardner	1995	3-item measure (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1989, 1992)	$\alpha = .90$	224 graduating seniors from a large mid-western University in the USA
	Burke	1994	2-items	---	828 police workers in Canada
	Sawyer	1992	Assessed through monthly reports provided by personnel departments of organisation 6 months after survey	---	Institution #1: 171 mental health aides and assistants; 102 mental health specialists and management co-ordinators; 65 nurses. Institution #2: 79 mental health aides and assistants; 15 mental health specialists; mental health workers in 2 USA in-patient institutions

	Jackson	1983	Assessed by their responses to the question: "are you planning to quit your job at 'X' in the near future?"	---	126 employees from an outpatient facility affiliated with a university hospital: registered nurses, clerical workers, nursing assistants, and technicians
	Larwood, Wright, Desrochers, & Dahir	1998	6-item scale adapted from 2 validated scales: Intention to Turnover Scale, & Lyon's Propensity to Leave Scale	$\alpha = .85$	Wide range of employees (259 in total) from companies in areas of broadcasting, retail, hospitality, finance, etc.
	Vandenberg & Scarpello	1994	1-item, self-report, consistent with that of Mobley (1982), & Mowday (1982)	---	100 management information systems (MIS) professionals
	Mueller & Price	1989	Measured using company records	---	950 employees from 115 work units in 5 voluntary, short-term, general hospitals in the USA
Intention to Quit	Holton & Russell	1997	Blau's (1988) 3-item scale	$\alpha = .91$	378 Spring 1990 bachelor's graduates from a large state University in the USA
	Sagie	1998	Spector and Jex's (1991) one-item scale: 'to what extent do you intend to quit your job during the next year?'. An ascending 5-point answer scale was used.	---	140 Israeli municipality employees.
	Ashforth & Saks	1996	Colarelli's (1984) 3-item scale	$\alpha = .86, .82$	295 graduating students of Concordia University's undergraduate business program
	Cohen	1996	Measured by 3 items following Mobley, Griffith, Hand, and Meglino's (1979) definition. 'I think a lot about leaving the organisation'; 'I am actively searching for a substitute for the organisation'; 'As soon as it is possible I will leave the organisation'.	---	238 nurses from 2 hospitals – one medium sized and one small – in western Canada.

	Jones	1986	2-item scale	$\alpha = .81$	Sample #1: 127 and sample #2: 102 MBA students from 2 successive annual graduating classes of a midwestern University in the USA
	Sawyer	1992	3-items adopted from Mobley et al (1978)	---	Institution #1: 171 mental health aides and assistants; 102 mental health specialists and management coordinators; 65 nurses. Institution #2: 79 mental health aides and assistants; 15 mental health specialists; mental health workers in 2 USA in-patient institutions
	Hackett, Bycio, & Hausdorf	1994	3-item scale	$\alpha = .82$	Sample #1: 2301 registered nurses Sample #2: 100 municipal bus operators
	Meyer, Allen, & Smith	1993	3-item scale	$\alpha = .83$	662 student nurses at Queens University, Ontario; 603 registered nurses from the membership of the College of Nurses, Ontario
Alienation	Wittig-Berman & Lang	1990	Korman et al (1981) Philosophy of Life Scale	$\alpha = .79, .67$	270 evening MBA students at an eastern USA university employed full time by organisations in managerial/professional positions
Stress Symptoms	Ashforth & Saks	1996	7-item physical symptoms scale from Patchen (1970)	$\alpha = .78, .76$	295 graduating students of Concordia University's undergraduate business program
	Wittig-Berman & Lang	1990	2 indices developed by Patchen (1970)	$\alpha = .69$	270 evening MBA students at an eastern USA university employed full time by organisations in managerial/professional positions
Job Satisfaction	Holton & Russell	1997	Hackman & Oldham's (1975) 3-item short form measure	$\alpha = .85$	378 Spring 1990 bachelor's graduates from a large state University in the USA
	Adkins	1995	Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS; Hackman & Oldham 1975) short version	$\alpha = .55, .69, .70$	171 mental health specialists employed by 7 inpatient facilities in a USA state

Major, Kozlowski, Chao, & Gardner	1995	Developed by Ironson, Smith, Brannick, Gibson, Paul (1989)	$\alpha = .90$	224 graduating seniors from a large mid-western University in the USA
Ashforth & Saks	1996	Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh's (1983) 3-item scale	$\alpha = .93, .93$	295 graduating students of Concordia University's undergraduate business program
Jones	1986	7-point faces scale	---	Sample #1: 127 and sample #2: 102 MBA students from 2 successive annual graduating classes of a midwestern University in the USA
Judge, Boudreau, & Bretz	1994	Gallup Poll measure of satisfaction; G.M. Faces scale; Fordyce Percent Time Happy Item	$\alpha = .85$	1388 male USA executives
Burke	1994	5-items	---	828 police workers in Canada
Marais & Schepers	1996	Short form of the Facet-free Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (JSQ) of Quinn & Staines (1979)	$\alpha = .917$	310 employees from a large financial institution in South Africa: clerical, secretarial, marketing, accounting, management
Sawyer	1992	Job in General Scale	$\alpha = .91$	Institution #1: 171 mental health aides and assistants; 102 mental health specialists and management co-ordinators; 65 nurses. Institution #2: 79 mental health aides and assistants; 15 mental health specialists; mental health workers in 2 USA in-patient institutions
Stout & Posner	1984	25-items derived from Work Motivation Inventory	$\alpha = .89$	138 direct service workers employed in mental health, mental retardation, physical restoration and rehabilitation facilities
O'Driscoll, Ilgen, & Hildreth	1992	6-point scale based on the work of Schnake (1983)	$\alpha = .85$	120 unskilled, skilled blue-collar workers, or white-collar employees from a residential area in Michigan, USA

Jackson	1983	Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) 20-items	$\alpha = .90$	126 employees from an outpatient facility affiliated with a university hospital: registered nurses, clerical workers, nursing assistants, and technicians
Lord & Hartley	1998	Single item used by Lydka (1994)	---	26; 240 employees from a representative cross-section of a national public service organisation in London
Darden, Hampton, & Howell	1989	IND-SALES developed by Churchill, Ford, & Walker (1974)	$\alpha = .91$	261 retail salespeople
Hackett, Bycio, & Hausdorf	1994	Job in General (JIG) Scale	$\alpha = .91$	Sample #1: 2301 registered nurses Sample #2: 100 municipal bus operators
Irving, Coleman, & Cooper	1997	20-item short form of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire	$\alpha = .92$	232 employees of a Canadian governmental agency: radio operators, air traffic controllers, technical, clerical, executive-financial-administration
Meyer, Allen, & Smith	1993	Quinn & Staines's (1979) 5-item Facet-free measure	$\alpha = .85$	662 student nurses at Queens University, Ontario; 603 registered nurses from the membership of the College of Nurses, Ontario
Iverson & Roy	1994	Developed from measures of Hoppock (1935)	$\alpha = .75$?
Porter, Steer, Mowday, & Boulian	1974	Job Descriptive Index (JDI)	---	60 psychiatric technician trainees
Witt	1993	15 items taken from previous military surveys. Schnake, 1983; Hendrix, 1979; Keller, 1986	$\alpha = .96$	49 military training centre employees (mixed ranks); 76 employees of a military research and development laboratory in the USA

Absenteeism	Jackson	1983	Organisational records were examined to assess absenteeism	---	126 employees from an outpatient facility affiliated with a university hospital: registered nurses, clerical workers, nursing assistants, and technicians
	Savery, Travaglione, & Firms	1997	Data provided by Westrail (organisation under study) for each participant	---	Category #1: 38 employees selected by senior management at Westrail (Western Australian Government Railways Commission) to attend a course Category #2: 34 employees nominated by senior management Category #3: 72 employees randomly selected from Westrail
	Gellatly	1995	Data gathered from hospital records. Information regarding involuntary absence was excluded.	---	425 nursing and food services employees of a mid-sized chronic care hospital in central Canada.
	Meyer, Allen, Smith	1993	Asked participants to indicate how many days in the past year they had been absent from scheduled work. – self-report measure.	---	662 student nurses at Queens University, Ontario; 603 registered nurses from the membership of the College of Nurses, Ontario
	Sagie	1998	Objective (personnel records) and subjective (self-report) – these tapped the number of workdays during a 3 month period that were taken off.	---	140 Israeli municipality employees
	Somers	1995	Data was taken from personnel records. Two measures were used: total (frequency of absences in a 12 month period) and annexed absences (number of absences attached to weekend and holiday periods for the same 12 month interval).	---	422 staff nurses drawn from a large, urban hospital located in the Northeastern United States.

Organisational citizenship behaviour	Mayer & Schoorman	1992	Williams & Anderson's (1991) 10-item altruism scale	$\alpha = .72$	330 employees from 5 different departments in a major national financial institution
	Bolon	1997	OCBI: measured using an 8-item scale, 3 items coming from a measure developed by Graham (1986), 2 from Williams (1988), and 3 from Smith, Organ, and Near (1983). OCBO: measured using an 8-item scale, 4 items coming from a measure by Smith, Organ, and Near (1983), 4 items from Graham (1986).	OCBO eliminated due to construct validity concerns. OCBI reliability above .70	202 employees from a large (627 beds) tertiary hospital located in southeastern United States. The sample consisted of nursing personnel, laboratory personnel, secretarial, and environmental services personnel. This sample was drawn from 26 work groups where each work group reports to their own supervisor.
	Meyer, Allen, & Smith	1993	Scale developed by authors specifically for their study	---	662 student nurses at Queens University, Ontario; 603 registered nurses from the membership of the College of Nurses, Ontario

Note. No attempt to collate such information in tabular form has ever been done before.

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

This chapter describes the research method within this study. It includes a description of the participating sample, measures used to capture data, the process of data collection including a rationale for this procedure, and a brief description of the data analysis process.

Approach to research

This section outlines some demographics of the participating sample, their job characteristics, as well as a brief description of the organisation in which they were employed. The purpose is for future comparison of data and the replication of this study.

The participants in this study were all practitioners in the field of Information Technology (IT), working for private sector IT organisations in Cape Town. A total of forty-four individuals participated in the study ($n = 44$). Of these, a total of thirty-nine participated in the five focus group discussions that were held. Five Human Resources managers from the participating organisations were interviewed after the focus groups were conducted.

Participants were employed in a variety of different IT areas, which, depending on the organisation focused on a specific area of IT. Overall the functions were network support (which included installation of software and hardware, adjusting client and company networks when any moving takes place, organisations expand, breakages occur, as well as trouble-shooting); programming; support; systems administration; project management; sales (responsible for bringing in new business and client service); technical consulting; hardware and software design; and systems engineering.

The nature of their work often requires them to work as a team, each having a different, but interlinked role with others. Some employees are based on-site with the

organisation's clients and others are required to move from site to site where problems occur, or where projects arise.

Tenure ranged from approximately two months to ten years and in minimal instances extended beyond a ten-year period. However, the majority of participants had been employed for less than two years by their organisation.

Organisational Background

Organisational size of participating organisations ranged from approximately ten to at least eight hundred employees in the Cape Town region, South Africa. Turnover rates of all companies under study were reportedly very low. Whilst interviewed participants knew no specific turnover rates, their low turnover rate estimates were sometimes given as a reflection of the number of employees that they were aware of that had left their organisation in the past twelve months. For example, in one of the sections of a participating company in a department which employs sixty-five people, only two people had left in the past twelve months.

All participating organisations reported low levels of labour turnover. This is unusual for the IT industry where it is typical for employees to move to another company or position as often as is desired if they perceive it to be 'better' or more valuable to themselves. Such IT specialists are also headhunted by international organisations.

Organisation A: a fairly new and small organisation, was in the process of setting up their surroundings as well as equipment that they felt would better enable them to perform their function. As a result, their surroundings were quite bland. Members totaled approximately ten. The organisation specialized in the development of software, in conjunction with other people based internationally.

Organisation B: a fairly small organisation was in the process of moving and redecorating to a more luxurious and professional working environment and was located in a large house. Members totalled between twenty and thirty. The organisation specialized in the provision of software.

Organisation C: a fairly large and established organisation was equipped with state of the art machinery and technology, as well as modern décor, lighting and coffee areas. The dress code here was very informal. Members totalled over one hundred and fifty, being spread across branches in Johannesburg (head office), Durban, Port Elizabeth, and Cape Town. The organisation specialised in the provision of network facilities.

Organisation D: a moderately sized organisation, located in a high rise building environment gave the appearance of being very bright, neat, and clean on the outside in comparison to surrounding buildings. Offices were very luxurious particularly on the ground floor. Members totaled approximately eighty, being spread across branches in Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth, and Cape Town (head office). The organisation provides IT services to the public.

Organisation E: a very large organisation was located near a large shopping complex and gave the impression of being corporate in nature with a strong emphasis of security. Offices were designed with open-plan working areas. Members totaled approximately four thousand being located in branches in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban, Bloemfontein, Port Elizabeth, and Cape Town. The organisation specialized in the supply of computer solutions.

Research Rationale

The following section outlines the type of research study conducted, tools used to collect data, and the handling of those tools.

Frame of reference

The study was conducted to explore the area of organisational commitment on a strictly qualitative basis. As a result, Allen and Meyer's (1990) OC scales are not tested or used in this study, but their conception of organisational commitment being comprised of three separate components is still maintained and measured or probed for using a series of questions to stimulate conversation around the various types or components of organisational commitment, as outlined by Allen and Meyer (1990).

Qualitative research is concerned with the exploratory, descriptive or explanatory analysis of individuals, themes, contexts, and situations from an in-depth, non-numerical perspective (Neuman, 1997).

By making use of qualitative research, one is able to discover meaning from data and conceptualise it in the form of themes, motifs, generalisations and taxonomies using various data collection methods. Measures used are often created in an informal manner specific to the research context and need of the researchers themselves. Upon analysis, the researcher typically extracts themes from the data and organises it into a coherent, consistent framework (Neuman, 1997). In this study, focus groups and interviews were used to gather data, and thematic analysis was used as a tool for analyses. The majority of research conducted in the area of organisational commitment has been quantitative in nature.

This study was conducted in order to explore the components of organisational commitment (specifically the consequences or outcomes thereof) within the IT industry in South Africa as perceived by professional IT employees themselves. The ontological assumption underpinning this research is that of the belief that the environment is subjective to the individual, and they themselves attach labels to it in order for them to make sense of or understand reality (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The epistemological assumptions of this study are that knowledge is best gained from the direct experience of the individual. The researcher assumed that human beings are autonomous and free-willed (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). From a methodological perspective, this study adopted an ideographic approach which purports that one is only able to understand the social world by obtaining first hand knowledge of the subject under investigation such as background and historical information (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

Research Process

The following section outlines tools used for the collection of data, with a specific focus on the procedure followed in each research session.

Focus groups

Data for this study was gathered by use of five focus groups and five interviews. The objective of the focus groups was to draw out any perceptions that illustrated what it meant for employees to be committed to their organisation, ways in which they could be committed, and the reasons for their commitment.

Participating organisations were selected as a result of the researcher's contacts in these organisations. Initially, the researcher approached IT organisations randomly, but they were not willing to participate due to the fact that the IT industry is a pressurised working environment and that this field work was being conducted at the end of a year which was an extremely busy time for the IT industry in terms of having to complete projects for clients and so forth. As a result, organisations that volunteered to participate in the study did so due to them having either a direct or indirect connection to the researcher. Nonetheless, participating organisations represented a diverse and representative sample of IT organisations in South Africa.

The focus group is a form of group interview that is usually used for qualitative research where a particular issue needs to be explored (Neuman, 1997). The focus group was first used during the second world war in order to examine the persuasive effects of propaganda, the effectiveness of various training programmes and the factors that affected the productivity of work groups (Morgan, 1997). Despite its frequent use, the method itself was not widely known since it was never reported in research reports until recently (Morgan, 1997).

Focus groups are multi-functional in that they may be used either as a self-contained method (here the focus group is the primary source of qualitative data collection); a supplementary method (the focus group is used in conjunction with another more primary data collection source); or as a multi-method approach (the focus group is used as one of two or more means of gathering data where no primary source of data collection exists) (Morgan, 1997).

The self-contained method often leads to a research design emphasis, and assists with the accurate matching of data and research goals to ensure that they are met (Morgan,

1997). The supplementary method is used more frequently in qualitative research studies where it may serve as a function to design questionnaires around specific content, or as a means of following up on collected data, for example, when the data collected is unclear or needs to be probed (Morgan, 1997).

The multi-method is used as an approach to add to data already gathered through other qualitative means such as observation or interviews. The goal here however, is to use each method of data collection in a way that it adds unique value to the researcher's understanding of the subject matter under scrutiny. Thus, the probable use of focus groups will be dependent on the researcher's data needs, opportunities, and limitations of the field setting (Morgan, 1997).

Focus groups in a sense are no different from any other research method whether qualitative or quantitative, in that they are all used as a tool to gather data, although the researcher may or may not prefer to use specific methods in varying situations (Morgan, 1997). The technique of a focus group is reliant on the researcher's attention and concentration, as well as the group's interaction. This is a strength in that it enables one to produce concentrated amounts of data around the exact topic of interest (Morgan, 1997). This data may also give one an insight into topics that are perhaps not otherwise observable, as well as an individual's opinion and experiences. These are also then compared in the group discussion, at times, motivating or stimulating further discussion around the topic or area of interest. A focus group also enables one to gather as much data as a number of interviews equally as efficient (Fern, as cited in Morgan, 1997), and timeously in terms of conducting the research and analysis.

On the other hand, because focus groups are driven by the interests of the researcher, and are hence driven by the researcher into discussion around specific areas, the technique becomes less natural than some other data gathering techniques such as participant observation (Morgan, 1997). In instances where the researcher is assisted by a moderator (as in the case of this study), the moderator will often times also influence the group's interactions to maintain the group's interview focus. Although this problem of influence is common in most social science methods, it does affect the quality of the data (Morgan, 1997).

By the same token, the group itself may also influence the nature of the data it produces. That is to say that group interaction affects what each participant or group member will contribute to the discussion, what is left out of discussion, as well as the typical direction in which the discussion flows naturally (Morgan, 1997). Focus groups include both a tendency toward conformity (withholding of information that may be shared in private or under confidential terms) as well as polarisation (more extreme views expressed in a group environment) (Morgan, 1997). If the participants have little involvement with the topic, the researcher may only collect scattered instances of the desired material. On the other hand, if the participants are highly involved with the topic, the moderator may have to work hard to control the discussion (Morgan, 1997).

When the researcher controls the interaction in the setting of a focus group, it tends to create an unnatural environment (Morgan, 1997). The focus group is also limited to verbal behaviour, consists only of interaction in discussion groups and consists of self-reported data, which is known for its degree of subjectivity. On the other hand, there is more room for control to be exerted in individual interviews, as well as more time to share information as opposed to the focus group (Morgan, 1997). There is also potentially less depth and detail, privacy and confidentiality in focus groups than in interviews, thereby enabling the researcher to attain a smaller amount of information from focus groups than from individual interviews (Morgan, 1997).

A further set of problems arise if the topic is highly controversial or if there is real potential for disagreement amongst the participants (Morgan, 1997). For example, in this present study, the conversation may have moved to potentially controversial in-house issues such as promotions, recognition and working environments. Thus, the researcher needed to carefully facilitate such a discussion ensuring that focus was maintained, as well as eliciting the relevant information simultaneously.

Prior to the actual running of each focus group in this study, the brief that organisations were given in terms of the content of the group interview was that it would be a discussion around an employee's commitment to the organisation, for approximately sixty to ninety minutes, and that muffins would be served. The purpose for serving food or a light snack during the focus group session is that it is expected to improve the effectiveness of the session (Greenbaum, 1998). This was again explained at the

beginning of each focus group along with what the function of a focus group was, and the purpose of the research. Following this explanation, the researcher and moderator would introduce themselves, offered muffins to each participant and explained that each session needed to be tape recorded (the primary method of data capturing in focus groups (Morgan, 1997)), in order to capture all the ideas as opposed to only a few when writing them down and strict confidentiality was ensured. Each participant then introduced themselves and gave a brief overview of their function in the organisation as well as how long they had been there for.

Being comprised of a series of questions beginning with one general question such as 'if your company could do one thing to make you feel more committed to it, what would that be?' to other questions focused around loyalty, absenteeism, satisfaction, performance, alienation, organisational citizenship behaviour, to yet a further set of questions based on an example of three 'characters' who epitomised employees having a desire to remain with the organisation because they want to (affective commitment), those who remain because they need to due to some alternative perceived cost (continuance commitment), and those who felt that they ought to remain with the organisation because they believed it was the right and loyal thing to do (normative commitment).

Questions such as 'who do you think is more likely to remain with the organisation and why?' and 'who is most likely to leave and why?' were then posed around this example. Questions in the focus groups and interviews were used as a tool to guide the conversation in a specific direction to maintain a focus on the topic of the study but not in such a manner that it broke the conversation at any point around the various issues. They were not always asked in a strict order or manner but were more flexible, especially if the question had already been covered in conversation. In some cases, clarity was required and probed for, especially when organisational scenarios were raised.

At the conclusion of each focus group despite any reservations they may have had, participants expressed their surprise as to how much they had learnt especially about their colleagues and the different departments, functions, and groups within their organisations and had also felt at times that the open, honest, and confidential environment created for discussion around the issue of organisational commitment had

enabled some interpersonal barriers to be broken, clarity to be achieved on other related issues, and for others a learning experience on why they worked where they did, performing the function that they were employed to fulfill.

Each focus group ranged in size from seven to nine participants and lasted in duration of between sixty and eighty minutes. According to Greenbaum (1998), maximum duration should not be more than ninety minutes. General 'rules of thumb' concerning the number and size of focus groups for maximum effectiveness have been that each group should consist of between six to ten participants and conduct between three to five groups per project, since 'more' focus groups do not necessarily provide 'more' information (Morgan, 1997). However, further issues to consider here, are that the more heterogeneous one's groups are, the more focus groups one needs to conduct, since there is the potential for more varying information to be elicited. This study's participants were mostly homogenous, in that each group consisted of employees from a particular organisation, all of whom worked as a specialist in the field of IT, and whom in terms of organisational status were, for the most part, on a par with each other.

Secondly, the less structured one's session, the greater the number of groups one will need to conduct. It is for the same reason that no specific set of information is required and, as a result, one may collect a wide variety of thoughts and perceptions relevant to the area or variable of interest (Greenbaum, 1998; Morgan, 1997). Overall, one should conduct as many focus groups as time and cost constraints allow until saturation of useful information has been achieved (Morgan, 1997). The process followed during each focus group was also structured in that the researcher ensured a specific and standardised line of questioning was covered in order to address particularly important issues around the concept of organisational commitment. This also aids in the comparability of data when analysing (Morgan, 1997).

At the end of each focus group session, the researcher asked the participants if there was anything else they would like to add, and 'what had been the most beneficial or interesting part of the session for them and why'. It was found that on most occasions, participants would offer (perhaps unconsciously) further relevant information with regards to organisational commitment and often gave some good examples to illustrate

their points. These questions also served as a form of debrief session which allowed the candidates to come to some form of closure on the subject of discussion.

Finally, after conducting a total of five focus groups, the researcher perceived common themes to be emerging from the groups with no new information being elicited by the fifth group.

Individual interviews

When using focus groups in conjunction with another data collection method, such as individual interviews, it is important to identify which technique needs to be used first to add value to data that will be collected (Morgan, 1997). For example, the focus group may be used initially to identify some general trends around a certain issue or topic. Individual interviews may be used as a secondary technique to probe participants for further, more specific information around that same topic, but with a more focused view or target point (or vice versa) that would provide a more detailed set of data. This may be known as a follow-up approach (Morgan, 1997). Alternatively, the researcher may choose to use focus groups and individual interviews for example, as a checking device, where two different techniques are used to measure the same issue or topic, and the data then compared to see if there are any differences, and what these are. In this instance, individual interviews may be used as a device to learn more about perspectives that were under-represented in the focus groups (Morgan, 1997).

Thirdly, focus groups often allow the group to control the direction of the discussion. This is especially useful in exploratory research where the researcher may not know much about the area of interest, nor what questions would be appropriate to ask in this regard. The focus group is also a good technique for studying group behaviour, unlike individual interviews (Morgan, 1997). It is also possible to observe direct similarities and differences in the focus group as opposed to doing post hoc analyses from interviews (Morgan, 1997).

However, the primary goal of combining any data collection methods is to ensure that the total research project is strengthened, regardless of which method is identified for primary usage.

In this study, individual interviews were used as a means to follow-up on the content of focus group discussions. Appointments were made with either the human resources manager (or the equivalent) of the team from the focus group for each participating organisation, to discuss similar questions or issues from the focus groups. The duration of each individual interview was approximately sixty minutes in total. The same process from the focus groups was followed in the individual interviews in terms of briefing the candidate and line of questioning. Each session was also tape-recorded for the purposes of being able to capture maximum information as opposed to handwriting information during the interviews. The objective of each individual interview was to elicit the perspectives of a manager with respect to an employee's commitment to their organisation, and to compare this information to that of the focus group participants showing whether it differed or confirmed the information elicited from the respective focus group.

Data Analysis

This section gives a brief overview of the method of data analysis, more generally referred to as *thematic analysis* (Morgan, 1997).

For the purposes of more efficient and effective data analysis, each recorded focus group and individual interview was transcribed on a word-for-word basis. As a second phase of analysis, each transcription was manually coded and the transcripts were entered in to a number of files created, one for each of the themes expected and found during each research session. Following this, the data was weighted according to importance, consistency within the group, and frequency of occurrence across groups and participants (Morgan, 1997). This information was then interpreted by the researcher and compared to research discussed in the literature review (see chapter two).

The interpretation of data in the transcripts was dependent on three primary factors which influence how much emphasis a particular theme is given namely, the number of groups referencing the topic or theme, the number of people within each group who referenced the theme, the degree of energy and enthusiasm that was generated amongst participants as a result of the theme (Morgan, 1997). A combination of all

three is known as group-to-group validation. Thus the higher the number of groups and participants referencing a particular theme and the higher the degree of energy in these discussions (that is, consistency of and within groups), the more valid that theme is in relation to the research context. This weighting of themes is commonly known as thematic analysis (Morgan, 1997).

The data in this study is then reported in a style that is conducive to giving an indication of its particular weighting in comparison to other data collected with respect to the group and the individual. Excerpts from a variety of transcriptions that were particularly useful in describing or making reference to a theme as found in chapter four (the results chapter), the frequency thereof depending on the importance of the theme (Morgan, 1997).

Summary

Although not much qualitative research has previously been conducted on organisational commitment. The purpose here was to be able to explore the value of organisational commitment and its consequences in a qualitative, in-depth manner.

This chapter outlined the research rationale, research sample and research context for this study. The measurement tools, process of data collection (focus groups and individual interviews), and the data analysis process were outlined.

The following chapter details the results as well as a discussion and analysis of these various themes in the context of IT professionals as well as literature reviewed in chapter two.

CHAPTER FOUR

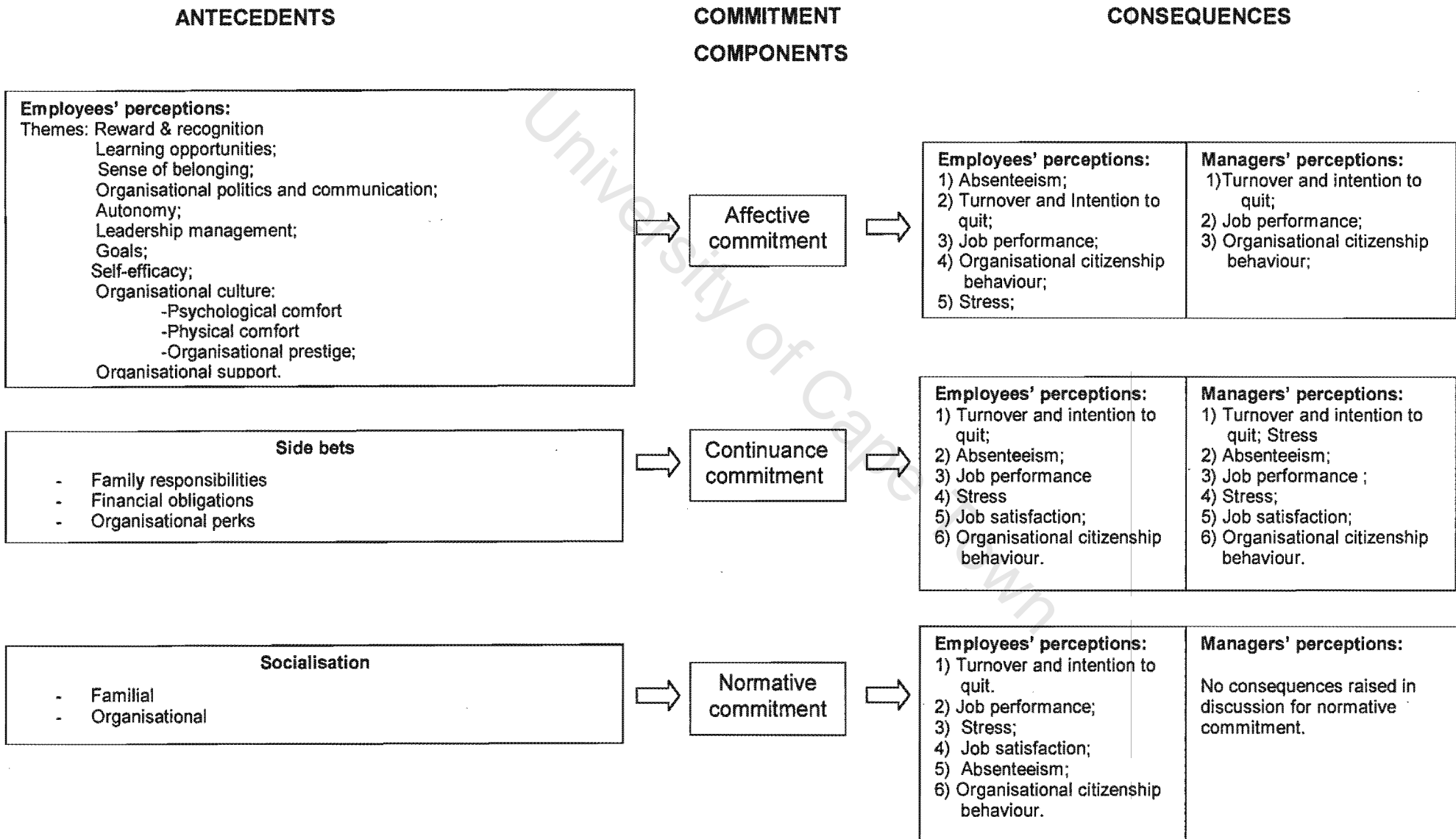
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents an integrated summary of the results of the present research study identified from thematic analysis (see chapter three on methods), as well as a discussion on these results. The reasoning for such integration was to limit the degree to which results may have been repeated in a further chapter of discussion, especially given the size of the data set. The main focus of this chapter is placed on consequences of commitment.

For contextual purposes, participants' conceptualisation of organisational commitment is also discussed. Thereafter, themes are presented and discussed under the headings of affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. On occasion during the presentation of results, a portion of the original transcript may be quoted to highlight and emphasize a particular point or theme of relevance.

The following table illustrates the layout of this chapter as well as the themes and sub-themes under which the results have been discussed according to participating groups of employees and managers interviewed. Antecedents of affective commitment are ordered according to themes and sub-themes. Consequences of all three components are listed according to their perceived relevance. Differences between employee perceptions and management perceptions are also highlighted.

Figure II: Diagrammatic Representation Of Results



Conceptualisation of Organisational Commitment

During the process of data collection, the concept of organisational commitment was introduced to participants in terms of loyalty to one's organisation. Participants were asked how they perceived employee loyalty to the organisation and if they believed it to exist for professionals in the IT industry.

Employees described their experience of developing a perceived commitment to remain with an organisation as something that one is taught.

'...comes from upbringing. Your parents are loyal to you – same concept. The organisation needs to do this as well so employees feel secure. You've got a job (this is security). It is a form of urgency almost...comfort zone...As tenure increases, loyalty increases because you know what's happening in the future. When change comes, you need to decide if you should be loyal. You need to separate loyalty and emotion. If you don't feel loyal, you can't really come to work in the morning...'

In this case, the employee has been led to believe through various socialisation processes such as family, culture, or organisational value and belief systems or personal norms that they have a responsibility to remain there (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Ko et al., 1997).

They also believed that loyalty (or commitment) towards the organisation does not exist, but loyalty towards one's profession, programme and customer does exist *'because you become part of it. Someone must fight for the customer'*. However, if the organisation is small, there is more loyalty towards it because one enjoys working with the people in the company.

On the other hand, some employees felt that loyalty to the organisation is a useless activity and that one should rather look after oneself because when the organisation is at a low, they will retrench you. Even so, they acknowledge that there are still some employees who feel a sense of loyalty towards the organisation even if the organisation

is not loyal in return. This indicates that some may perceive commitment to be reciprocal between the employee and the organisation.

However, commitment or loyalty was also described as a behaviour that is no longer possible for an employee. Organisations were noted as not being loyal anymore *'because they are here to make money... not like the old days where they looked after you'*.

Various managers when discussing the issue of loyalty to the organisation noted the following:

'Most of the people are proud to work for the organisation especially in the competitive environment IT is in...they boldly wear their badges on site...they see it [the organisation] as almost like a family that they belong to. It's like a family loyalty. And if they hear anything in the market place that's negative, they will bring it back with the hope that it gets fixed because they want to be proud to work for the company. So if they see anything wrong, they will bring that back and say 'let's fix that, let's be better'. So they will want to belong to a successful company...'

This wearing of company badges stands to confirm the notion that organisational commitment has been viewed previously as a symbolic process where employees identify themselves within the organisation via a shared set of symbols and may impact on an employee's sense of obligation toward the organisation (Larkey & Morril, 1995).

They also noted that the longer an employee tends to stay with their organisation (five years for example), they will probably stay for life because they start to feel the loyalty or commitment aspect much stronger. The longer they stay, the harder it becomes to leave and they start to gain a sense of security. This may indicate that commitment to the organisation evolves over time (see figure 2).

Other employees who have *'invested their life in building up that company to being where it is'* were also identified by various managers as having a heightened sense of loyalty. Therefore, managers concluded that loyalty does still exist as a result of personal

circumstances individual to each employee. Loyalty to other people also exists because of their input to each other.

One manager noted commitment to have a domino-type effect where it was perceived that if everyone were committed, others would be drawn in to committing by virtue of the fact that employees are interacting with each other.

When asked if a particular IT company's professionals were committed, the manager responded in terms of various behaviours describing such commitment:

But I think that people are extremely committed from the point of view that they (a) work very long hours if and when it's necessary. We have, there's a lot of socializing between staff, which indicates that they are happy. We've managed to get the culture fit generally right. We're employing more of the right type of people and I think the quality of what we produce – where we have a – there's – a customer solution needs to be done or whatever people's enthusiasm, creativity, commitment to getting it right I think is huge. So ja I mean I think the fact our business is growing as rapidly is attested to the people in it that are – we are very committed.

There is a distinct divergence of opinion in these results between employees and management, where the predominant response from employees is that loyalty to the organisation does not exist or is not possible because the organisation is no longer loyal to the employee. This confirms the proposal that organisational dependability is a factor aiding in the development of commitment (Dunham et al., 1994; Hackett et al., 1994). Management conversely was of the opinion that loyalty to the organisation is still strongly in existence due to high tenure and thus a sense of relatedness with the organisation and its history.

If loyalty to the organisation is minimal, it is possible that commitment as typically conceptualised may become null and void in the IT profession. This may lead to a need for the redevelopment or replacement of this commitment construct, defining it more in terms of professional loyalty or commitment. The following manager's quote highlights the unpredictability of current commitment to the organisation amongst IT professionals:

I think the IT industry is known for people moving jobs and I think people do because – especially if you're skilled and there's a shortage in the company you can get higher, you know, better pay and better opportunities if you move. And also I think it depends on the company. If there's not always like a special thought box. If there's not always upwards promotion, you know. If you want to really progress you can move to another company. Maybe develop in that sense. I think the bigger IT companies – like I went to a conference up in Jo'burg about two weeks ago. Microsoft and all those big companies and they were talking a lot about how people get poached and they have a huge turnover of staff there. So I think IT industry is generally bad for that. I think though if you're at a smaller company it's easier to manage that because you know your staff better and you can kind of, I don't know you have, I think a better sense of where they aren't happy and you can maybe try and do something about it. I mean here as well IT's got a very low staff turnover. In the last year – okay they've had seven people leave when the company was sold to start a new company but on the whole they've had maybe one or two – three people leaving in the last four years.

Antecedents of Organisational Commitment

Affective Commitment (AC)

This section will outline the antecedents of affective commitment considered likely to increase commitment, as identified by employees and managers at the IT organisations in this study.

Employees were asked what would make them feel more committed to their organisation; and what would make IT employees more committed to the organisation. Their responses varied across focus groups but were categorised by the researcher under the following headings: opportunities for learning, autonomy, goals, reward and recognition, self-efficacy, sense of belonging, organisational politics and communication,

organisational culture, leadership management. The primary theme highlighted by employees was reward and recognition, including learning opportunities. Managers on the other hand identified learning opportunities as the core theme, including self-efficacy being part of the primary theme. Three interesting findings were employees' and managers' perceptions of organisational culture, politics as well as reward and recognition, which were of opposite priority for both (see figure 11 above).

Culture may have been perceived as such since it is considered to be a 'soft' issue which employees in the IT industry do not pay much attention to. However, their managers are skilled in this area and are therefore more likely to identify it as being of more importance. Politics being a fairly new finding may be a factor that is newly emerging in the IT industry and therefore experienced first hand by the employees themselves and has not yet been brought to the attention of management as a pending organisational 'issue'. Whilst employees ranked reward and recognition as being the core theme, managers ranked it to be of secondary importance. This could once again be as a result of managers being more focused on 'soft' organizational issues, or it could be denial on their part that to keep their employees they need to pay them more (as is highlighted by the IT Web survey outlined in chapter one).

Opportunities for learning

Opportunities for learning concerns the organisational potential for an employee to be able to grow in their working environment in terms of their knowledge and skill, as well as their individual career path.

Four out of five focus groups noted the particular importance of being offered learning opportunities by the organisation to enhance their commitment toward or desire to stay with the organisation. Further discussion gave the indication that employees, particularly in the IT industry, are highly motivated by having the opportunity to constantly enskill themselves due to the constant and rapid change or technological development within the IT industry. Thus, in order for them to keep abreast of the latest technological advances and to be able to perform at peak levels, these employees believe that they need to be in a state of constant learning.

Three focus groups noted the ability for them to grow in their learning capacity (or having the space to grow in terms of skill and job opportunities, and an organisational interest in their personal development and training) within the organisation would add to their feeling of being more committed to the organisation possibly due to an increase in variety. However, *'if this stops, it's time to move on'*. This finding echoes the results of the IT survey outlined in chapter one where if another organisation offers the employee what they are not able to get at their current organisation, as well as higher pay, they will change organisations.

These findings may be understood in terms of 'job characteristics' and 'work experiences' that increase an employee's level of competence and influence the degree to which an employee becomes committed, more specifically, in terms of job challenge, variety, task identity, job enrichment, redesign and rotation (Chusmir, 1988; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Mottaz, 1988; Steers, 1977). Such factors, both theoretically and empirically increase the degree to which an employee is able to grow in skill, knowledge, understanding and job responsibility, thus meeting their expectations of having opportunities to facilitate individual learning and development.

These variables were mirrored in the follow up interviews, where the core theme for all participating managers was that employees would feel more committed to the organisation if they were given a sense of career movement (including a variety of development opportunities), training (even internationally if beneficial), as well as generally investing in the development of their employees from and including the lowest to the highest ranking level employee.

Of particular interest was managers' perception that an employee is often consciously tied to an organisation due to training debt that they need to repay for example, as a result of some learning opportunities. This however, leads to more of a continuance commitment as defined by Becker's side bet or perceived alternative cost theory as opposed to affective commitment. Therefore, whilst expectations need to be met in terms of learning opportunities for employees, the manner in which these opportunities are offered is of significance in determining the type of commitment that will result as a consequence.

Autonomy

Autonomy concerns the degree to which employees are given freedom to do their work in their manner and pace of choice.

Autonomy has been empirically found to be a job characteristic that influences the degree to which an employee becomes organisationally committed (Chusmir, 1988; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Mottaz, 1988; Steers, 1977). A possible reason for this is that employees who are affectively committed are already driven and motivated and do not necessarily need someone ensuring that they do their work, since they are able to motivate themselves to complete it and do much more than was originally expected. It also enables them to have the freedom to take initiative (their judgement being trusted in the process). In other words, *'being consulted...not just having things thrown at you.'*

Three highly rated variables perceived to increase an employee's commitment were: the freedom to express oneself and to improve on or make changes to systems (was raised as an issue by three focus groups); being given the freedom to use their initiative rather than waiting for someone to tell them what should be done (noted by four focus groups), and lastly, the freedom to set their own pace at which to work, as well as their own work goals and target outcomes (noted by four focus groups).

Autonomy was summarised aptly by an employee with the following statement:

'You don't have to wait for someone to give you your worksheet or tasks for the day; you get to choose things that you are responsible for rather than tasks that need to be performed so you get to use your initiative and to accomplish what you want to achieve.'

Autonomy was also ranked as a secondary antecedent theme by management (three out of five) who perceived a relative autonomy necessary to increase an employee's commitment to the organisation. This would be awarded on condition that employees display minimal clock watching, be task oriented and not time oriented, and ensure that their work is completed. In a sense, such a finding leads one to believe that these managers do not necessarily trust their employees to use their autonomy effectively and

efficiently for the benefit of the business. One would thus have to question whether or not they are really prepared to give their employees the freedom they require.

Goals

Goals include the employee's goals and ability to set goals, as well as those of the organisation itself and the link between the two. The following findings as they relate to commitment, may be understood in terms of the notion of exchange, where individuals enter an organisation with a specific set of goals which they expect to be able to achieve. If the organisation is able to assist them to achieve these goals, affective commitment is likely to increase (Mottaz, 1988).

The ability for IT professionals to be able to set and prioritise their own work, as well as the individual and team having attainable and challenging goals was perceived to be of importance by forty percent of focus groups. These would positively influence the employees' commitment to the organisation and lead to a higher standard of performance since both the goals of the individual and the organisation would be achieved, one in conjunction with and perpetuating the other (thus perhaps indicating a level of goal congruency).

'I think it's a problem of where everybody's goals differ. My goals are different to what his goals are and therefore my goals are more important to me than her goals and I think at the end of the day to get everybody committed – basically to get people committed you've got to keep them happy. And to keep them happy obviously you've got to have some sort of a mutual goal for everybody to achieve. Although we've got our own personal set of goals but in order for us to get there I would say definitely look at something like – you would set a target for instance and have a performance – at the end of that if you've reached a target at least give somebody that something so that they see at the end of the day it's all worth it. Then [your] goals are just as important as my goals.'

Thus, it is a necessary priority for such employees to align their own individual goals to a common organisational goal in order for them to achieve a success indicator in terms of the broader picture and one that adds value to the organisation.

Management perceptions were in agreement with those of employees on a secondary theme level, although more specific in terms of goals necessary to increase employees commitment to the organisation. Two managers felt that employees would feel more attached to the organisation if they were involved in the strategy of corporate decision-making. Employees, in this instance, would then identify with and help formulate the organisation's goals and goal setting process and not just be followers thereof. An additional goal for employees was identified to be 'having a solution orientation' and 'problem-solving' perspective.

Organisational Goal Congruence Theory (Chusmir, 1988) reflects these findings as it indicates that when an employee identifies with and exerts effort toward the organisation's goals and values, their organisational commitment increases (once again indicating a motivational affect).

Reward and recognition

Reward and recognition includes all direct and indirect monies and recognition incentives awarded employees. An affectively committed employee's emotional attachment to the organisation is as a result of a return from the organisation for the contributions made by the employee, where the employee becomes committed as a result of rewards received, or punishments avoided (Ko et al., 1997).

This study's findings on rewards may be understood in terms of three categories namely, task (intrinsic rewards related directly with doing the job or the task itself), social (extrinsic rewards acquired when interacting with others on the job and focus on the quality of such interpersonal relationships) and organisational rewards (extrinsic but tangible rewards pre-empted by the organization in order to facilitate or motivate performance and maintain membership) (Mottaz, 1988). Employees and managers both identified forms of organisational rewards to be of significance in influencing their affective commitment. This may be unique to professionals in the IT industry where emphasis is placed on working for financial gain (see chapter one).

'More money' was perceived by all employee focus groups to be the major factor in influencing their organisational commitment. No specific form (either direct or indirect) was mentioned. However, some caution was offered to employees who are, in a sense, overcome by the desire to earn large amounts of money, letting this desire dictate where and to what extent they are prepared to work:

I think that your major interests are always going to be cash...You've got to strike a balance between what you do and what you earn otherwise you're basically going to be a victim for everyone trying to pull you into their company.

Employees specified reward and recognition to those who work hard and achieve results, especially in the form of profit sharing. This was aptly described by one to be the 'main incentive because you know that in ten years time you will be better for that.' However, employees noted that an increase in salary, being encouraged and recognised for taking initiative at work, being sent overseas for learning if perceived to be beneficial, as well as the organisation investing money in employees by way of sending them to conferences, would also be satisfactory rewards. Thus, whilst some employees may perceive salary based rewards to be a priority, others placed a higher priority on recognition within the organisation as a reward or additional personal development in areas that were of interest to themselves and would be beneficial in terms of their profession.

Although three managers also perceived money to be a motivating factor toward employee commitment, they downplayed it more to the extent that employees should be awarded a market related or 'good' salary. The increase in employee benefits either financial and, or non-financial such as pension funds, stock options, medical aid, employee wellbeing programmes and possibly, the incorporation of a commission structure within the organisation, were distinguished by managers to promote employee commitment.

Relating to these stipulated rewards is the theory of exchange, where individuals attach themselves to an organisation in order to receive payments from it (Mottaz, 1988). Mottaz thus proposed that rewards (variable in terms of their effect) are the key determinants of organisational commitment, and have a more consistent affect on the

employee's commitment to the organisation, compared with individual rewards, which vary significantly in terms of their impact (1988).

Self efficacy

Self-efficacy incorporates those variables that give employees a personal sense of value, which would in turn give them a sense of being more committed to their respective organisations. Much like self-efficacy belief where the individuals themselves believe that they are capable of performing in a specific manner and the more they believe this, the higher their motivation to be committed (Robbins, 1996). Therefore, the more employees believe they are of value to the organisation, the higher their propensity to commit to the organisation.

Four employee focus groups and four managers ranked perceived value to the organisation as being of primary influence on affective commitment.

Sense of belonging

Sense of belonging concerns an employee's perception that they '*belong*', '*fit in*', or '*are part of*' an organisation. Perceived sense of belonging is characteristically explained in terms of workplace cohesiveness (Robbins, 1996), which defines the extent to which employees are attracted to, and desire to stay in or unite with a group or organisation. This may be affected by factors such as the time spent in that organisation, the size of the organisation, gender of group members, previous successes, effort required to become part of the group.

But I think once you feel like part of a family and that sense of belonging then you are likely to stay. There are people that started working with me years ago and I've worked with the same people in four different companies and if they had to phone up tomorrow and they've started up another company, sooner or later I would be there because there are about ten or twenty people that always work together. They are good together and they really – they rock and roll together. To be part of something dynamic like that – there's nothing like the

best and that's why I say the sense of belonging and like the sense of being part of the family I feel is – there's nothing to beat it.

Satisfaction of their sense of belonging and need for affiliation was also perceived by employees to be fulfilled in terms of teamwork and a general effort to create a sense of cohesion amongst employees using a number of techniques such as socialising or social events and perpetuating commonalities between employees, thereby increasing their relatedness. This teamwork or sense of cohesion being perpetuated by common interests between employees (and as a result being able to work towards a common goal), as well as fun employee interaction.

Managers, mirroring employee perceptions, listed monthly social events to increase general organisational communication and awareness in terms of events, recognising birthdays, special achievements, natural socialising between staff to be key factors in increasing employees' affective attachment to the organisation.

The value of social interaction to develop psychological attachments to the organisation has been identified in the literature (Chusmir, 1988; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Steers, 1977). One needs to remember that the affect of such experiences are largely perceived by the employees themselves, thus varying between individuals.

Organisational politics and communication

Organisational politics and communication as a theme is unique to this study and has not been mentioned in previous empirical studies. It concerns the degree to which group and individual politics influences the effectiveness of communication within the organisation.

Two key factors were perceived to influence employee commitment namely, that the politics within the organisation are kept to a minimum (four out of five focus groups), and that the employees themselves are able to communicate freely in the workplace (rated by three focus groups).

It is possible that politics and communication are linked in the sense that the more organisational politics between employees is minimised, the more effective the communication in that there will be a decrease in ulterior motives, hidden agendas, employee cliques and more of a relaxed and comfortable working atmosphere. This may be facilitated by employees increased understanding and awareness of each other, which they perceived would enable them to work together more effectively, knowing how and why their colleagues behave in various situations and circumstances and how to pre-empt potential conflict situations, thus facilitating a successful working environment.

This relationship between communication and politics (and potential problems thereof if neither are handled appropriately) is illustrated in the following dialogue between technical and sales employees:

'The big problem between technical and sales and you're going to get it everywhere is that the industry runs themselves. So I'm going to sell a box and to help them sell that box we throw in technical services kind of free and these kinds have got a budget to meet and automatically sales people say "don't worry you can buy R10 000 from us worth of machinery and we will throw in the support, okay". And that has been the biggest problem because they're not getting the revenue.

We don't get any revenue from that. And the cost you make on a machine is probably about five hundred Rand whereas they are charging their time at two hundred and fifty Rand an hour and it might take three hours to install it which is seven hundred and fifty Rand.

So that has always been the biggest conflict because sales people expect the support to support their sales. And it should actually work the other way around. They should give a box away at cost price to bring in the technical side.

I don't see – Okay this is my own theory in business. I don't see why a technical guy has to sit around and wait for a sales person to give him work.

No they don't.

Why can't we go out and get our own work?

Because they've instructed us to support them.

We've had major problems there where they say there's a call for a new client. We have to follow procedure where – to fill in an application form and if that is not done we can't do the support before hand because we've been reprimanded.

And it's also – also there's been – particularly at [this company] there's been a, like an ongoing battle between technical and sales because technical is not allowed to have their own clients because you're taking sales away from sales and sales people are trained to sell and technical people aren't trained to sell so techies can't sell to their clients but the sales people can go and sell for the techies clients. See what I mean?

There's basically a lack of procedures...and somebody needs to sit down and define this stuff.

This makes technical people feel like second-class citizens.

[It also causes divisions in the company because] you're going to be sitting downstairs doing no work because the sales guys don't really want to give it to us [technical guys] and we're not going to give the leads to the sales guys because we hate the sales guys.'

Managers noted that when employees all like each other and get on well together, in conjunction with a determination to communicate and *not opting to resolve an issue on their own because of pride* will positively affect their commitment toward the organisation (two out of five managers). Others noted factors such as *voicing one's opinion if not happy*, and *asking for help* as having an affect on the increase in an employee's organisational commitment. Some managers felt that it would also be appropriate for their organisations to have an employee communication forum (a voice for the employee in their environment).

This indicates that managers also perceive the link between communication and organisational politics to be a hindering factor for commitment, thus mirroring the responses of the participating employees but to a much lesser degree. They possibly, do not realise the potential severity of it at present.

The preferable absence of politics in organisations indicates a desire for the freedom to say what they think and articulate themselves in any way they choose in order to be direct, open and honest with others, rather than to avoid of such issues due to concerns that they will be penalised in some manner for being candid. However, individuals may need to be more amenable to positive criticism in order to facilitate such a climate of open communication. Management would also need to view any feedback from the context in which it is given, rather than as a direct personal criticism.

Organisational Culture

Organisational culture concerns three dimensions of culture namely, physical comfort within the organisation relating specifically to the tangible work environment; psychological comfort which concerns the degree to which employees are psychologically at ease with the intangible organisational culture norm; and organisational reputation concerning the prestige associated with the organisation. These three issues are reflected in the literature as affecting an employee's level of commitment to the organisation (Allen & Meyer, 1996, Dunham et al., 1994; Gellatly, 1995; Hackett et al., 1994; Steers, 1977).

Physical comfort

Employees noted three variables perceived to influence their level of physical comfort within the organisation. Firstly, a comfortable organisational dress code would enable the employee to wear to work whatever they felt most comfortable with as opposed to regulatory suit attire, thus increasing their productivity.

Secondly, investment by the organisation in terms of suitable equipment, IT network, and customer facilities. These were perceived to enable the employees to work at a more efficient and effective level, to provide the necessary customer service, and were a further sign that the organisation valued them or the quality of work they were able to provide.

Microsoft...well in terms of our economic needs our work stations should be taken home. Also at the end of the day your arms are tired from typing...just a small thing...R270 and it just shows that people listen to you.

The working environment has not always been as good as it is now, it has increased since last year, there has been more money funded for equipment, network facilities to the people...

Thirdly, an open-plan working layout of office areas. This was linked to creating ease of communication and an atmosphere of openness or perhaps, visibility.

Managers also noted three variables perceived to increase commitment namely, a quality working environment (*there were nice offices to work in*) with the required equipment. Secondly, provision is made for employees to travel where the company places a focus on staff development and thus send some employees overseas once a year for training and business. Lastly, a minimal or non-existent dress code was perceived to be preferable.

The other thing is probably the flexible working environment. We don't really have a corporate dress code. There is some kind of dress policy but I mean

they do feel casual enough to know to be able to not have to wear a suit and tie every day...

Psychological comfort

Employees noted a number of variables that would increase their psychological comfort or ease at work. A relaxed, comfortable, open, fair, honest, and friendly atmosphere was perceived to be important to facilitate working relationships, which would enhance productivity. A good, fast and busy working pace was also important since '*one misses the pressure when times are slow or quiet*' (eu-stress or stress that positively affects the performance of an individual). Trust between staff was perceived to influence commitment:

...there is trust between management and staff and vice versa (this makes you want to stay and them keep you longer).

Employees felt that they should be involved in organisational decision-making (facilitated by a good and appropriate organisational structure) and in the organisation as a whole since it would increase their organisational awareness and ease with which they are able to make informed decisions related to their work and would make the organization more democratic.

Okay I think as well being involved in the decision making of the business, being consulted as well, not just having things thrown at you. I'm not talking about major decisions like who owns the company. I'm talking about minor things, the way the company's going on, stuff like that...

Three managers were of the opinion that a fun workplace as well as good communication would increase commitment.

I think communication. If they improved communication a little bit from say for example our CEO. That side of things I think. A lot of people were unhappy with the way [the CEO] dealt with staff and that kind of thing. So, I think from that level, I think communication.

Better communication, feedback, and information.

Other important variables perceived by various managers to increase commitment were: good company atmosphere where people get on well together characterised by trust, flexibility, and stability; and accommodating environment in terms of time with the option of flexible working hours.

Managers felt that if employees believed in what the organisation was doing, they experienced minimal change with respect to retrenchments, and an organisationally sound employment equity structure that would make them feel more committed to the organisation.

I think the atmosphere is very nice. The people on the whole get on very well together. I think also the fact that the company's quite committed to – something I forget but I've just remembered now – you know the whole employment equity stuff. The Black Empowerment group and that kind of thing. I think the people that sort of, the coloured and black people in the company really appreciated that, you know.

Lastly, managers perceived a quality person-organisation and job fit to be imperative; minimal bureaucracy and procedural *red tape*; and minimal top-down forcing of communication (*'if you want to know something, you must ask'*) to influence employees' level of commitment.

Organisational reputation

Employees perceived a highly rated organisational reputation (one that they can be proud of) to influence their commitment. This included being part of a company whose growth rate is accelerating, one who provides high quality service to customers and has a strategically and technologically advanced organisation.

Managers perceived that employees' commitment would be affected by being a part of an organisation which has a history of being prestigious, with international links, a good employer, and reciprocates commitment.

...And we've got a history as a good employer. It's one of the things that if you have a history as a bad employer even though you might have a better programmer than the next company, you'll battle to attract and keep staff. It's like giving a hot dog a bad name. And we've got a reputation through the years. We're 21 years old. We've got a reputation as a good employer so people actually seek to come and work for us even though we don't pay the best.

Employees and managers perceive culture differently in terms of importance, but also prioritise within it in an opposite manner. For example, employees want adequate procedure, whilst managers feel that minimal procedure will increase an employee's affective commitment to the organization. Employees perceive organisational reputation to be the highest priority whilst managers perceive it to be less important.

Organisational Support

Organisational support concerns the support desired by employees from the organisation in order for them to perform better overall, which in turn, increases commitment to the organisation. This theme was the lowest ranking by both employees and managers.

Employees described organisational care and support of its workers to be inspirational in motivating employees to perform and hence positively influencing their commitment. This links with a perception of organisational commitment, stating that commitment is an outcome of the motivation to do a particular thing or act in a particular manner (Akhtar & Tan, 1994). Therefore, as the employee receives support from the organisation, they will feel more motivated to do things for the organisation, thus positively influencing their commitment.

I think the company already takes a very personal stand with the people as well. They help them – if the individual needs help somewhere say financially of anywhere in their personal life, the company does.

Managers perceived organisational care of its employees to include helping them to sort out their personal problems. However, not all managers indicated that this responsibility was preferable since it becomes more of an organisational shackle at a time when organisations would prefer to outsource skill and cut down on employee costs (Randall & O'Driscoll, 1997).

...that's actually a very touchy subject you are touching on there because...the work or organization is changing because soon they will start outsourcing, or contracting in individuals for their knowledge because that's what we want. We can't afford to keep training up people and then losing them. I don't want to have to keep sorting out people's problems... that is not my problem...

Leadership Management

Leadership management concerns the behaviours desired by employees of management when performing their roles within the organisation. These findings may be understood in the light of an employee's desire to be successful. In order for this to be optimally and satisfactorily achieved, their employing organisation should set the same standards and lead by example, so as not to frustrate its employees. This would in turn increase the psychological comfort of employees, thus positively affecting their level of affective commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Dunham et al., 1994; Gellatly, 1995; Hackett et al., 1994; Steers, 1977).

Three groups of employees perceived 'good management' (being defined inexplicitly as 'decisive' to a point that employees *know where they stand*), as likely to increase their organisational commitment. Such management skills are facilitating interaction as well as an element of trust between management and staff; taking a genuine and personal interest in employees by helping them; increasing communication and understanding.

Consequently, employees raised the concern that *'shoddy management'* or poor organisational leadership contributed to a loss in market share, thus leaving the organisation in a lull, thus decreasing an employee's commitment to that organization. The alternative would be to employ *'new blood'* in the positions of leadership or management to pull the organisation up from the bottom.

Employees also felt that IT *'organisations need to employ managers that know what they are talking about before they start issuing orders, deadlines, and demands, and have at least some sort of idea of what employees are doing'*. They will also therefore not frustrate the employees so much by phoning every few minutes to aggressively find out *'what the hell is going on'* when a problem occurs.

Participants drew a distinction between managers and leaders. Their reasoning was such that managers do not have management skills although they may be competent leaders. Managers should also not tell the technicians what to do as this causes a heightened sense of frustration on the part of the technician being a specialist in the field. This is seen as undermining the employee's skill by someone who is less competent in the field, (where managers do not always have the necessary IT skills), but should rather have the ability to understand what the technician is doing.

Managers perceived hands on, approachable and down-to-earth management, as well as a good relationship between management and employees to be key factors in increasing affective commitment (thus mirroring the responses of participating employees, although employees ranked leadership management as a secondary theme).

Conversely, various managers felt that having a poor relationship with employees, role uncertainty, and minimal feedback and important information would definitely decrease their commitment to the organisation due to frustration. These suggestions are in line with empirical literature, which indicates an employee's level of psychological comfort (perceived reward equity, organisational support, role clarity, minimal conflict, and supervisor interaction) is directly related to their level of perceived affective commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Dunham et al., 1994; Gellatly, 1995; Hackett et al., 1994; Steers, 1977).

Organisational commitment has been linked to a theory, which states that motivation is the driving factor and commits an employee in some way to the organisation and compels them to produce work (Mayer & Schoorman, 1992). Many theories of motivation may be linked to factors that affect whether or not an employee becomes affectively committed to their organisation. McGregor's theory X and theory Y may be seen as an overall reflection of these factors that increase and decrease commitment respectively, where he proposed that factors such as participative decision making, responsible and challenging jobs and good group relations to be key in the development of an employee's job motivation (Robbins, 1996).

Continuance Commitment (CC)

A continuance committed employee has been identified as one who feels that they need to stay employed by their organisation due to the perceived costs associated with leaving the organisation. These perceived costs are also known as 'side bets' (Becker, 1960 as cited in Meyer et al., 1993).

Employees participating in this study identified various 'side bets' that are likely to influence continuance commitment amongst IT professionals. Two employee focus groups noted family responsibility as an important antecedent of continuance commitment.

Others identified share options (*because one can make a lot of money out of these*) to be side bets, as well as organisational resources such as free internet access, free email, the best internet access in South Africa, equipment and up-to-date software and tools. Opportunities for specific skills training was also identified as a side bet, as well as financial obligations such as being tied in by bonds on one's house and children's educational fees.

....I'm just thinking of my husband's environment. The poor husband has got to stay there because my little one has got to get a bursary. Expensive. You know there are no other choices on his type of job. So he knows that and he says, "okay I'll go into the job and make the best of it. How can I make the best of my

job? And I enjoy it and actually have some fun of it"...but I don't necessarily agree...

They also noted that an employee is continuance committed as a result of these costs or obligations to provide and not necessarily as an emotion or feeling tying them to the organisation (as compared with affective commitment which may be perceived as more of a 'feeling' induced type of commitment).

This finding is interesting as it expresses the key differential between Becker's and Allen and Meyer's conceptualisation of continuance commitment. Becker (1960, as cited in Meyer et al., 1993) argued that it is behavioural in nature since it involves the accumulation of side bets, whereas Allen and Meyer believed it to be attitudinal since they felt Becker emphasised the cost associated with discontinuing an action (and not actually discontinuing them), which would be classified as a psychological state reflecting the employees' relationship to the organisation (Allen & Meyer, 1990). However, this study indicates that an employee may be continuance committed as a result of noted costs, and not necessarily the emotion or feeling (psychological state) tying them to the organization.

Three out of five IT managers raised the issue of education policy as a means of tying employees to the organisation. Employees sign an indemnity for their awards or an acknowledgement of debt that would tie them up to the company for a number of years. Other policies in organisations similar to this one may also exist to achieve the same objective, but which also tie the employee to the organisation for a considerable period of time.

...but they were tied in for two years and for the first year you would be liable to pay back the full amount and then for after a year, every month it would decrease by eight percent or whatever it works out to be.

Managers also noted that some share options, training debt agreements (so that employees are not able to leave for a maximum period of two years) and other mechanisms can be used to tie employees to the organisation.

This adds a new dimension to the understanding of Becker's side bet theory in that these potential costs tying an employee to the organisation are not necessarily as a result of a deliberate act on the part of the employee but may be used as a deliberate technique on the part of the organisation to tie the employee in, suggesting a strategy of enforced commitment.

Normative Commitment

A normatively committed employee has been identified as one who feels that they ought to stay employed by their organisation due to a perceived sense of obligation influenced by early familial or cultural socialisation, as well as a socialisation on the part of their employing organisation. One of the effects of such socialisation is a perceived sense of loyalty to the organisation. It has been suggested that commitment may develop as a result of such individual predispositions (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

This section concerns the effect that socialisation has on an employee's commitment to the organisation in the IT industry.

Employee focus groups in this study identified all employees as having some sense of loyalty to their work and working environment.

'It's human nature to be loyal to who you are close with or build up a relationship with, and loyalty starts from there...don't think one should be loyal to the organisation, rather look after self, but I'm still loyal to the company'.

'There's a sense that we ought to reciprocate to an organisation that has given a person something'.

This finding correlates with literature which notes that the principle of exchange may lead employees to feel obligated to remain with their organisations (to be loyal), where an employees receive some form of reward or investment from the organisation to which they 'must' or 'should' reciprocate (Ko et al., 1997).

CONSEQUENCES OF ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

This section overviews the behavioural consequences of organisational commitment. Six themes were identified to be of perceived relevance in this study:

1. **Job performance:** the manner in which employees perform their work tasks and completes their roles at work.
2. **Turnover and intention to quit:** employees intentions or the potential to leave or terminate employment with their respective organisations.
3. **Stress:** the tension or strain employees may experience as a result of their particular set of circumstances within the organisation.
4. **Job satisfaction:** the degree to which employees feel satisfied with their job in the organisation.
5. **Absenteeism:** the extent to which employees are late for or absent from work, and the total amount of time they take off work.
6. **Organisational citizenship behaviour:** the degree to which employees do more than is required of them within the organisation. That is to say, they go 'above and beyond' their job description or constraints.

These will be discussed as they relate to affective, continuance, and normative commitment with a distinction being made between the perceptions of employees and their managers.

Affective Commitment

Job performance

Two out of five **employee** focus groups identified the behaviour of an employee who is affectively committed to their organisation to be characteristic of spending far more working hours or extra hours working, for which they do not get paid. They do this because they enjoy '*staying around*' or wish to complete unfinished work.

Various other employees described the characteristics of such an individual as being flexible in the way they perform their role, is a team worker, good at their job, and is fairly autonomous (no one watching over their shoulder).

In terms of time management, the affectively committed employee was perceived to enjoy being constantly busy and misses the pressure during quieter times, has more time, will work harder and is more productive. They desire learning opportunities to work on new products, want to learn anything and implement it, will work harder, and are more productive.

The affectively committed employee was perceived to have a strong customer orientation where they are good with clients, friendly and helpful, making sure the right information is passed on to the right people, and will query a problem for a client immediately without purposefully delaying the situation and are valued by clients. This is likely to be aided by their perceived disposition of being lively, innovative, enthusiastic, dedicated, dynamic, eager and vibrant, trustworthy, have a positive demeanour which enhances the working environment.

Of interest here is the fact that most of these behaviours are descriptive of the antecedents required to increase affective commitment. This not only confirms the significance of the aforementioned antecedents, but also highlights the manner in which they affect job performance.

Such behaviours, which indicates a willingness to exert extra effort to perform, was found to correlate partially or weakly with affective commitment (Mayer & Schoorman, 1992), but is not a definite indication of an affectively committed high performer, since affective commitment to the organisation does not necessarily relate to a 'willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organisation', where the desire to remain a member of the organisation leads only to the behaviours necessary to remain a member (Slocombe & Dougherty, 1998). However, in this study, 'exerting extra effort' was identified in terms of specific behaviours such as working extra hours and being overly enthusiastic in response to extra work demands.

Conversely, some employees also felt that an excessively committed individual may become 'a nag' or annoying at times, due to the fact that they are on the move constantly. This may indicate that the performance of an affectively committed employee is not necessarily motivating to other employees to perform.

Managers on the other hand identified the affectively committed employee to be reliable, owning a particular task given them, and constantly working on it until it is resolved or completed. They also felt that the overall performance of an affectively committed employee is good and that they would not wait for things to happen since they are more inclined to make things happen (active pursuit). They are also perceived to be creative, enthusiastic, innovative and happy in their roles and tend not to make excuses for themselves or the work that they are doing.

In instances where commitment has previously been related to performance, a greater degree of emphasis was placed on satisfying customers and continuous performance improvement (Allen & Meyer, 1996). However, it is interesting to note that managers did not make any mention of performance in relation to the customer or client, whereas employees believed this to be an important factor in the performance of an affectively committed individual. In addition, no direct mention was made by employees of continuous performance improvement.

Turnover and Intention to quit

Previous research has indicated that employee turnover is significantly related to affective commitment ($r = -.29$ to $r = -.61$) (Allen & Meyer, 1996). The results of this study indicate that both employees and managers perceive turnover and intention to quit as being significant consequences of affective commitment. However, employees perceived the affectively committed individual to be the most likely to leave the organisation. This is contrary firstly to Allen and Meyer's findings where the affectively committed employee becomes psychologically attached to the organisation and is therefore most likely to remain. Secondly, for an employee to be organisationally committed, they should express a strong desire to maintain membership in their organisation (Akhtar & Tan, 1994; Porter et al., 1974).

Three **employee** focus groups felt that an affectively committed employee is most likely to leave the organisation because of the drive for motivation and the drive to be motivational. Others felt that they would be most likely to leave the organisation if the organisation is slow because they want a faster moving organisation and more challenge, or they are offered the same '*vibey*' position at another organisation, or because they get all the opportunities due to their dynamism (mentioned in two out of five groups) and because affectively committed employees have a good name and reputation out on the market and are headhunted as a result.

Alternatively, various other employees felt that either an affectively committed individual was least likely to leave the organisation because they want to be there, or because of their bonus and because they are happy there and are really enjoying their experience in their current organisation.

Two out of five **managers** identified turnover in their organisations to be low indicating that the majority of their employees do not leave the company.

Other managers felt that the above low turnover was as a result of the fact that these employees want to remain employed by their organisations because the company is young and dynamic and there are opportunities to grow and develop and to be part of current change in progress. If they do leave, it is either because they have decided to emigrate, to get more work experience overseas, or more money.

Stress

Stress was seen by **employees** to be of some significance as a consequence of affective commitment only in that affectively committed employees were a sign of stress to others '*because they want this and they want that, but the stress doesn't make them feel like it is pulling them down*'. **Managers** on the other hand, did not perceive stress to be of any significance.

This links with the employee's experiences at work and the affect stress has on their commitment (Steers, 1977). Stress felt by or placed on other employees is more than

likely to decrease an employee's commitment to the organisation, especially if it is negative in nature.

The perceptions identified in this study regarding stress are interesting in that the behaviours of affectively committed employees may once again (as in job performance) bear a negative impact on other employees. They also parallel those of empirical studies where stress has not been found to be an indicator of affective commitment.

Absenteeism

Absenteeism was perceived by employees to be a highly significant consequence of affective commitment where managers felt it was not significant at all.

Absenteeism has traditionally been conceptualised in terms of voluntary and involuntary absenteeism, where a significant relationship has been found to exist between affective commitment and voluntary absence (Randall, 1990; Sagie, 1998). Theoretically, the affectively committed employee is predicted to exhibit low levels of absenteeism (Gellatly, 1995).

Four **employee** focus groups noted that an employee with high levels of affective commitment is least likely to come in late for example when they are not really sick. Other participating employees felt that this may be as a result of the fact that the affectively committed employee wants to be at work, and they know that the amount of work they are assigned to do will be greater when they return to work. Alternatively there were those employees who noted that the affectively committed individual might take a chance at coming in to work late, since the boss knows they have a good reputation. As a result, if the employee is tired for example, they may feel that coming in late is worth the risk or is low in risk.

These findings relate to those of Allen and Meyer (1996) where significant negative correlations were found between affective commitment and absence. Gellatly (1995) also noted that employees with high affective commitment are absent less than those with lower affective commitment. As a result, it may be fair to suggest that in line with this study's findings, the affectively committed employee who feels that coming in late is

worth the risk may exhibit lower levels of affective commitment than those who do not voluntarily come in late to work at all.

Organisational citizenship behaviour

Organisational citizenship behaviour is characterized by five dimensions namely, altruism (the assistance of an employee by another to finish their tasks in unusual situations), conscientiousness (an employee exceeding agreed expectations for their job), sportsmanship (stressing positive organisational aspects over negative), courtesy (problem solving or prevention), and civic virtue (support for organisational administration function) (Burns & Collins, 2001; VanYperen et al., 1999). On analysis, participants in this study perceive altruism, conscientiousness, and civic virtue to be exhibited by affectively committed employees.

Two participating **employee** focus groups identified the employee with high affective commitment as being likely to do more than what is required of them in their job or organization (task performance). This may be shown in behaviours such as their arrival at work earlier in the morning than is required and making the extra effort. They will also help other employees when they need help, for example, to catch up on their work or will pick up someone else's phone if it is ringing and the person is not at their desk and so forth.

The following quote articulates an employee's rationale for actively doing more than what is required of them. They note that if an employee seeks improvement at work, they will 'do extra'.

'If you like your job and you like the comforts then you're going to do extra things just to make it better. Just make the company better, make yourself better, make the situation better, anything.'

Other individual employees felt that the sharing of information would show such behaviour and giving sales leads.

Managers also identified the behaviour of an affectively committed employee in this category as staying longer at work and working over the weekend if necessary (two out of five managers). Further descriptive behaviours are that they are always willing to put extra effort into the company; will help other staff members if they need help; will take things on that are not their responsibility; will get involved in other areas of the company and are committed to making things work for the whole company. Conversely, some managers believed that being affectively committed does not automatically imply that such an employee will do more than what is necessary.

It may thus be suggested that an affectively committed employee is likely to exhibit significant levels of organisational citizenship behaviour. This links conceptually with commitment, where a committed employee will show a 'willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organisation' (Akhtar & Tan, 1994; Porter et al., 1974).

Continuance Commitment

Job performance

The following findings may be understood from a theoretical and empirical perspective where continuance committed employees are not as likely to exert effort to perform, since they are only committed to perform to the degree that it creates job stability in view of their alternate perceived costs (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Hackett et al., 1994).

Forty percent of **employee** focus groups identified continuance committed employees to be dedicated to their job only between the hours of 09h00 to 17h00 and that they only work for the salary.

Other individual employees described the continuance committed individual as not putting themselves under pressure to perform since '*tomorrow is another day*', as being only fifty-nine percent productive, as doing whatever they want to do, not being proactive, being slack with clients, and as the type of person who observes when things change and then later decide if they are going to follow suit or not.

'They will also show that they are doing things so the organisation won't retrench them...they will do this by trying and getting as much credit as possible..."look what I'm doing"...will market themselves to appear like the affectively committed person'.

These same employees are not excited, uncooperative, may pull other people down, angry, are fairly reliable and stable (*the normal oke working in a normal company*). They know their job so they cannot really be fired and have a fair amount of knowledge so people can ask them questions. These factors all ultimately affecting the performance of the employee and perhaps that of others in a negative manner.

Various **managers** described the overall job performance of the continuancely committed employee as being negative, punitive, de-motivational, and not innovative or of a problem solving type nature. These employees would prefer to stick to how it has always been done. They have a negative attitude, are not customer focussed, do not care and make excuses for their work not being good (shift blame). Managers also identified stress symptoms (see section below) as affecting performance because employees become fatigued and their creativity decreases.

These findings are confirmed by those of other studies, where continuance commitment is negatively related to overall performance of employees, as well as their level of innovativeness (Mayer & Schoorman, 1992; Randall & O'Driscoll, 1997). However, an interesting perception is that the continuancely committed employee does not necessarily perform to the degree required by their job but sometimes at low levels, and also to the detriment of the performance of others.

Turnover and Intention to quit

These findings are confirmed by and should be viewed from the perspective that turnover is not consistently related to commitment. In cases where a correlation does exist, it is negative in nature (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Randall & O'Driscoll, 1997). However, a continuancely committed employee's intent to remain with their organisation is fairly strong (Mayer & Schoorman, 1992).

Three **employee** focus groups noted that the continuancely committed individual is the most likely to leave the organisation if they have alternative options. Two groups of employees described them as being the least likely to leave because they are getting paid for doing literally nothing at work and have a sense of being in a comfort zone. This is characteristic of an employee who stays with the company because they have no alternatives. These employees are also not necessarily headhunted and therefore become a fallback for stability within the organisation, and are hence paid more by the organisation to retain them until a more competent professional is employed; or because they have responsibilities which need to be taken care of (indicative of personal circumstances).

Additional behavioural examples of such employees were that when they feel they are *not good enough anymore*, they would train or upgrade themselves before leaving to increase their alternate job opportunities. These employees also stay with the organisation on occasion as a result of location, where their organisation is closer to home than one that they would prefer to work for which is further away. Alternatively, if these employees do not move organisations, they are likely to remain there for the next twenty years, since the older they get, the more difficult it becomes to move or take such risks (see figure III below).

Two out of five managers identified these employees to leave if their performance was poor (in these cases they are usually or eventually asked to leave), or in cases where they are not able to work fast enough.

Other individual managers described the continuancely committed employee as one who would remain with the organisation due to their family responsibilities or minimal industry work experience. Alternatively, they would leave the organisation as a result of a decrease in their performance due to increased stress, a lack of necessary skills, are still studying and are young and playful, not ready for the responsibilities that the organisation places on them; low job motivation; alternate job opportunities.

These findings confirm those of literature where continuance commitment is a weak predictor of turnover (Randall & O'Driscoll, 1997), and the continuancely committed employee that does leave the organisation may be characterised as having lower levels

of commitment compared to those who remain (Porter et al., 1974). However, of interest was management's opinion that continuancely committed employees are more than likely asked to leave the organisation because they perform poorly or realise this themselves and hence take the initiative to leave the organisation. Whereas, focus groups were more of the opinion that if the employee leaves the organisation, it was due to them having alternate opportunities, which may also be an indication of unmet expectations by their current organisation.

Stress

Employees perceived stress to be a consequence of the continuancely committed employee when working in a negative environment. This results in them not being motivated to go to work, which consequently adds to their stress levels. However, in spite of this stress, their behaviour will give the impression of them being very laid back. Whilst their overall disposition may be one of relaxation, it is more likely to be a façade due to their lack of desire to work. They will be noticeable at work when things get stressful or problematic, but otherwise will keep to themselves and be only partially visible. In addition when this employee is uncertain as to what the job entails and when the job will end (future uncertainty), their stress increases.

Three out of five **managers** identified stress as being a significant problem. Such reasons for this stress are:

'If they haven't been given the right tools to do the job...if they have an unreasonable client...if a colleague lets them down (if they need the colleague to do something and they don't do it, they have to handle the issues on their own and explain to the customer)...time...organisations continuously wanting more and more out of the employees...work impinges on free and family time...'

These findings were unexpected in that stress symptoms are not a commonly found consequence of continuance commitment. This could be unique to IT organisations where the average continuancely committed employee works at a competent level and endeavours to create a strong balance between this and their alternate responsibilities

and begins to feel pressurised by the organisational demand for higher outputs, increased service provision for which they may not be qualified or are not willing to expend time to perform. Stress results in the decision to either perform at organisational levels or face the possibility of losing their job, which is not preferable due to alternate perceived costs.

Job Satisfaction

Both employees and managers perceived job satisfaction to be of little importance as a consequence of continuance commitment.

Employees identified the continuance committed professional to enjoy going to work because they need to. Alternatively, these professionals perceive themselves as working too hard in proportion to their remuneration received, thus indicating an unsatisfied employee.

Some **managers** described continuance committed employees as not being satisfied in terms of relational issues at work.

Both sets of findings here relate to those of other research studies which indicate that continuance commitment is negatively related to job satisfaction, as well as satisfaction with supervisors and co-workers (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Randall & O'Driscoll, 1997).

Absenteeism

Overall, employees rated absenteeism to be a significant consequence of continuance commitment, whereas managers perceived it to be of no significance.

Theory predicts lateness to be negatively related to a certain degree with organisational commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), and it has also been found to be positively, but weakly related to organisational commitment (Mottaz, 1988). Allen and Meyer (1996) found no significant correlations between continuance commitment and absenteeism.

Two **employee** groups described the continuance committed individual as likely to arrive at work five minutes late or on the deadline because *'they will do anything to get back at the customers'*. Other individual employees characterized the continuance employee to arrive at work on time because they ought to, and *plodding away*; taking a chance at arriving late; and as being the most likely type of employee to be absent from work when they are not genuinely sick.

Managers mirrored the views of the participating employees to a certain extent where they also described the continuance committed employee as arriving at work late; arriving at and leaving work on time (*no more and no less*) even if their work load is high; will take a one hour lunch break as well as two tea breaks methodically every day and as being absent if their motivation is low.

It is believed that the primary motivation of the continuance committed employee is to maintain membership in the organisation. This leads one to speculate that these employees are aware of the absence norm in their department, team or organisation, and are not likely to allow their personal level of absence to exceed the norm as it would jeopardise their organisational membership (Gellatly, 1995). Hence, a possible reason as to why employees described in this finding are most likely to be absent from work, or to arrive late, but not to an extreme extent, lest they be fired. Gellatly (1995) also noted that employees who report higher levels of continuance commitment should be absent from work more frequently than those with lower levels of continuance commitment.

Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

Employees described the continuance committed professional as not exhibiting any behaviour that extends beyond the boundaries of what they are expected to do in their work role or job. Rather, their characteristic behaviours are that they will avoid overtime work; arrive late and leave work early; never work through lunch breaks; do what they have to do or what is necessary; will not pass on messages to others; will not do anything extra or go the extra mile because they do not feel it is in their interests to do so since they 'have' to be at work. When these employees do not want to be retrenched or fired because of their need to be employed by the organisation, only then do they

become more visible in the work that they do, come in earlier, will go the extra mile (not for the organisation, but for themselves).

Two out of five **managers** described these employees as doing just less than enough, never more. Others noted that they might work long hours, but only to impress.

These findings thus indicate that continuance committed employees do not necessarily exhibit organisational citizenship behaviour but rather low levels of performance and satisfaction. Where organisational citizenship behaviour is observed, it may instead be a form of impression management for the benefit of the observer. This concurs with Allen and Meyer's (1996) empirical finding where organisational citizenship behaviour is unrelated or negatively related to continuance commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1996).

Normative Commitment

When interviewed, managers did not raise any comments pertaining to the behavioural outcomes of normatively committed employees. This could be as a result of their perception that normatively committed employees do not consciously exist, or that they are inconsequential in the broader organisational context.

Job performance

This study's findings relate to and may be understood from a theoretical perspective, where a normatively committed employee is unlikely to want to exert effort to perform. Empirically, performance is either negatively or unrelated to normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Hackett et al., 1994; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer et al., 1989).

Employees described the normatively committed professional to be one who is not very productive, but takes every day as it comes; *stuck in a rut*; not innovative or motivated; and *just go with the flow*. They do not even have the *motivation to go out and look for clients... just work to earn a salary... has to know exactly what they are doing from nine to five, but will meet their deadlines*.

Turnover and Intention to quit

Two **employee** focus groups described the normatively committed employee as being the most likely to stay with their organisation, and continue employment there for the next fifty years. Other behavioural characteristics identified were a reluctance to leave the organisation due to a perceived obligation to remain, *'which is a moral thing. Whether you like it or not, you should do it'*; or because the organisation has been *kind enough* to give them a job. They were also described as the type of employee who feels trapped because there are other alternatives (*'in the IT industry, things are pretty vibrant, so no matter who you are or what you do, you're very likely to find another job'*), but they feel that the right thing to do is to stay with their organisation (loyalty). In spite of this loyalty, the normatively committed employee is going to feel happy being employed by their organisation because they are making money and they can *handle their position without a problem*.

In summary, the predominant finding here, was that normatively committed employees are more likely to stay than leave their organisation. This is confirmed by previous research findings indicating that normative commitment is significantly negatively related to employee turnover ($r = -.20$ to $r = -.38$; $p < .05$) (Allen & Meyer, 1996).

Stress

Employees identified the normatively committed professional as creating a negative (and perhaps stressful) impact on other employees around them which could easily cause disturbances. They experience stress as a result of their value system, where stress will result from the conflict between how they feel they want to behave and how they should behave.

Participant employees also noted that stress could result from the fact that the IT industry is constantly changing and the normatively committed employee not liking change may feel threatened by it. This indicates that stress symptoms as a consequence of normative commitment may be unique to the IT profession; also in that it is not a commonly found empirical consequence of normative commitment.

Job Satisfaction

The normatively committed employees were described by **employee** focus groups as being one who does maintenance in the job. They do not have a job specification, do not know what they want, nor does their job role incorporate an element of variation, which may cause intense frustration and dissatisfaction.

Absenteeism

The normatively committed employees were described by **employee** focus groups as being the least likely to arrive at work late when they are not genuinely ill for example. No matter what the situation may be, they will go to work... *'they are the furniture of the organisation'*.

No significant findings were exhibited in previous studies between absence and normative commitment in the meta-analysis conducted by Allen & Meyer (1996; Gellatly, 1995). However, a significantly negative relationship was identified between absenteeism and normative commitment (Meyer et al., 1993), indicating that a normatively committed employee is unlikely to be voluntarily absent from work, thus confirming the above findings.

Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

Participating **employees** identified the normatively committed individual as being the type of person who is of the opinion that they have to work, are thus reluctant to help others and will not do anything extra. Should they be in a situation where they have to help a customer, they will ensure that the customer knows that they are doing them a favour.

This contradicts the finding that employees who define their jobs more broadly or exhibit extra-role behaviour, have strong normative commitment to the organisation (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Morrison, 1994).

The following diagram serves as an illustration of how the participating employees and managers perceive the three types of organisationally committed employees. When considering Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, it may be possible to classify affectively committed employees on a continuum of being satisfied to not satisfied and continuance as well as normatively committed employees as being not dissatisfied to dissatisfied, since the affectively committed employees seem to predominantly motivate themselves (intrinsically) to be committed to their organisation. On the other hand, the continuance and normatively committed employees feel that they have to or are obliged to be committed to their organisations whether they are in agreement or not. In this case extrinsic factors are going to be more motivating or important to them in keeping them at the organisation.

This diagram also serves to indicate and confirm that personal characteristics, (as well as job characteristics, and work experiences as discussed above) are important predictors of one's predisposition to organisational commitment (Steers, 1977). Important to note is the perceived shift in commitment over time as perceived by participants (which may be linked to their career stage), aptly summarised by the following:

'You know I was like that. Then I sort of changed...I would want to work overtime. Now I want time. That is what my biggest hassle is now. I find I don't have time...I need to work to have that time...[commitment is dependent on] your perspective on life and where you're coming from.'

The shift from affective commitment to continuance commitment and thus the increase in perceived costs over a period of time is clearly highlighted by this diagram. Where costs increase, continuance commitment is more likely to develop (Meyer & Allen, 1991). The diagram also shows that all three forms of commitment (as they stand in the form above) increase the likelihood that employees will remain with their organisation but are still independent variables (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1984; Meyer et al., 1993).

The manner in which various personal characteristics (such as age, or socio-economic background) influence the degree to which employees are committed to their organisation is also evident from the above diagrammatical representation. Younger

employees seem to be more emotionally committed to the organisation. As they grow older and acquire more responsibilities, their perceived costs of leaving increase. When nearing retirement, they feel obliged to invest back into the organisation. This may add impetus to Becker's side-bet theory which suggests that investment in the organisation increases with age, opportunities for achievement, education, and central interest, all of which are found to be significantly related to commitment either negatively or positively (Chusmir, 1988; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Mottaz, 1988; Steers, 1977).

Figure III: Commitment In Combination And Over Time

Sometimes the catalyst for frequent change here is the emotional factor and attitude. Hence one can go through various cycles of commitment.

Alternate between commitments



The affectively committed (AC) employee is characterised as being new, young, energetic, innovative, inexperienced, overkeen, inspiring, learning, has no responsibilities, can work long hours because it is easier for them to fit it in, willing to put in extra effort, makes sacrifices for work, not married, comes in early, goal oriented, working their way up, ten percent of all companies have these employees and eighty percent of employees in these companies are AC.

The continuantly committed (CC) employee is characterised as being tied in to the organisation by work commitments as well as a family who they need to provide for, but has also realised the value of a family and wants to spend more time with them, will not sacrifice interests for work and will grumble if they have to, senior person with a stable family life, do not socialise much with others (only enough to keep their job), eighty percent of all companies have these employees and twenty percent of employees in these companies are CC.

The normatively committed (NC) employee is characterised as being almost on pension, old school because loyalty to the organisation doesn't really exist that much anymore in younger generations (fading out), nine to five worker, will not go the extra mile, they do what their job description says, stuck there, feel responsible to so the job thus affecting the way they do their work, is the biggest organisational liability, not too many of them left, it is pre-apartheid when one use to work for a company for twenty or thirty years and get your gold watch, there are a lot of them around in government organisations though.

Note. Participants felt that one moves from one predominant form on to the next (as depicted in the graph), however it is also possible for one to have a combination of all three types of commitment at any one point in time. One may also shift between forms of commitment (as depicted above) where there may be a specific catalyst for this frequent change.

Summary

This chapter presented the results of this study as well as a discussion of these results in the context of the literature review in chapter two. The results and discussion were laid out according to affective, continuance and normative commitment, each beginning with their antecedents and concluding with their consequences.

The development of affective commitment for this study seems to be comprised of a number of antecedents, some being broadly congruent with previous empirical studies (such as work experiences, job characteristics, rewards, and affiliations), and others unique to this population sample of IT professionals (such as organisational politics).

Continuance commitment is predominantly anteceded by side bets as described by Becker (1960, as cited in Meyer et al., 1993). These may be in the form of financial obligations and repayments, family responsibilities, lack of alternative job opportunities and so forth.

Normative commitment typically results due to the manner in which an individual has been socialised or taught by family, or the organisation itself to believe that to remain with their organisation is the 'right and moral thing to do'.

The consequences of all three components were not always in agreement with previous empirical studies, thus uniquely contributing to a scientific body of knowledge in the field of organisational psychology, due to their qualitative description and exploration.

The following chapter presents the limitations of this research study as well as possible future research areas in organisational commitment.

CHAPTER FIVE

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Limitations of the data analysis method used in this study have already been discussed in the methods chapter. This chapter will therefore briefly discuss four other key limitations of this study as a whole and present some recommendations for future research areas in this field of organisational psychology.

Limitations

Firstly, a significant number of participants were included in this study. The sample size is not broad enough to be able to generalise results to the whole of South Africa or other professions beyond that of information technology. Whilst the number of focus groups conducted elicited information beyond saturation point, more interviews could have been conducted with managers at a later point in time to probe for information where perceptions differed significantly with those of employees. Time is thus a further limitation where this study was conducted cross-sectionally due to time imposed research constraints, as opposed to in a longitudinal manner and the value that may have been gained from this. As a result, no causal relationships may be predicted or inferred from the findings of this study.

Secondly, one of the purposes of qualitative research is that it is able to capture a portion of real life and replicate this in some form for the greater understanding of others and to add to an already existent scientific body of knowledge. However, it does bring in to question the subjectivity of the researcher, where the researcher analyses data by identifying themes and sub-themes, which they in turn represent in a form of their choice and analyse according to their understanding. Whilst researcher subjectivity is a qualitative given, it should still be taken into account as such upon retrospection.

Thirdly, one needs to take into consideration the possibility of the social desirability of participants where participants may respond to questions or offer information in a manner that is socially desirable.

Fourthly, limited previous research in the area of consequences allowed for limited comparison of results with previous findings, although rich descriptions were elicited in this study and will hopefully be a base for other researchers to build on and compare with in the future.

Future Research Suggestions

During the course of research, a number of potential areas for future study were identified.

The first specific potential research area was identified in chapter one where the South African IT skills shortage and 'job-hopping' was raised as a concern. There is a real need for organisations to work on a strategy to retain their key employees. This may not ideally be achieved through the retention of affectively committed employees, since they are usually the most likely employees to leave the organisation. However, the focus should be on a comprehensive framework for developing and encouraging greater sensitivity in organisational commitment.

In chapter two, Allen and Meyer's model of commitment (designed in excess of ten years past and most conducive to stable organisations) was outlined. Since it would seem from the results of this study that normative commitment is becoming irrelevant to IT professionals, it would therefore be of considerable benefit to research and design a new model of commitment identifying the more prevalent and relevant components of commitment, specifically along the lines of the rapidly changing organisation. It is possible that the model may include two commitment components, namely one that combines affective and normative commitment (as described above), and the second that splits continuance commitment into two further components (as described in chapter two).

When reflecting on the findings of this study, the normative component of commitment no longer seems to be focussed on commitment to the organisation, but to the customer, the profession, self, and co-workers. Thus, as Reichers (1986) recognised, multiple foci of commitment have been identified. This may be an additional focus for a study on the designing of a new commitment model specific to IT in South Africa.

One participating manager posed a desire to reduce the size of his organisational base into more of a virtual organisation or to outsource many IT functions to contractor professionals. Investigating the future of organisational commitment and the form it may take in the context of the changing nature of organisations would thus be imperative for organisations, in order that they may identify methods to maximise commitment from employees working in virtual offices, as well as those who are not permanent employees of the organisation, and a cost-benefit analysis of such an organisational structure in relation to commitment.

In addition, it may be useful to conduct research in the field of organisational commitment with a stratified sample of IT professionals who are identified and grouped according to what they specialise in (such as programmers, technicians and so forth). This may identify differences specifically between the consequences of commitment.

Organisational commitment was also identified in this study to be something that varies over time as opposed to being static in nature as specified by Allen and Meyer (1990). Further research could be conducted in this area, thus expanding the basic concept of the diagram in chapter four (see figure III).

Once again, the lack of research conducted and published in South Africa on organisational commitment poses a surplus of research potential. Thus, any in-depth research conducted in South Africa on individual consequences of commitment would add understanding as to which components of commitment ante cede specific consequences and possible reasons for this (particularly those prevalent in this study namely, turnover and intention to quit, job performance, stress and absenteeism).

Lastly, for organisational effectiveness to be maximised, there needs to be agreement between managers and employees on those variables that increase and decrease their

commitment, as well as those variables that are considered to be important to employees as outcomes of their commitment. From this present study, such agreement does not exist (see chapter four). Thus a potential area of future research would be to investigate discrepancies between employees' and managers' perceptions of commitment consequences.

The above eight areas are relevant areas for future research on the organisational commitment construct particularly within the context of IT professionals in South Africa. Further qualitative research would extend knowledge, in general, on commitment customised to the South African society.

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CONCLUSION

Organisational commitment has enjoyed increased research attention due to its purported relationship to important organisational outcomes such as job performance, absenteeism, intent to quit, attendance, and organisational citizenship behaviour (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).


Allen and Meyer (1990) reviewed much of this commitment literature and found commitment to consist of three streams. On the basis of this finding, they designed a three-component model of organisational commitment comprising of affective, continuance and normative commitment. The aim of this research study was to specifically explore the organisational commitment of IT professionals to their organisation and the relationship thereof to specific antecedents of commitment and work outcomes. This was achieved through the subjective experience and perceptions of IT employees and managers.

The results of the study confirmed the findings of previous research but highlighted the importance of factors that have not been considered in past empirical research (such as organisational politics and work climate). It also emphasised the need for the future avoidance of specification errors where antecedents and consequences of organisational commitment may vary between contexts and should therefore not be prescribed in research.

Where Allen and Meyer's model of commitment had previously been studied in the context of large stable organisations, with generic samples of nurses, participants in this research study perceived it to be more flexible where components of commitment develop over time and according to age, and may also alternate more frequently as a result of one's emotions or attitude.

It is evident from this study that organisational commitment as perceived by IT professionals and their HR managers is dynamic and open to possible change in either form or focus. Perhaps a more in-depth understanding of organisational commitment and its components on this basis will facilitate the organisational retention of key IT professionals.

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