



An Investigation into the Relationship between Workplace Friendships, Affective Organisational Commitment, Helping Behaviour, and Intention to Stay

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of Master of Commerce in Organisational Psychology

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Abstract

Orientation: In order to effectively engage in the so-called ‘war for talent’, organisations need to understand the various factors which result in desirable organisational outcomes, such as those related to employee engagement and retention. As human beings are inherently social, their access to and experience of workplace friendships may introduce the various emotional, cognitive and behavioural benefits associated with friendships in one’s personal life to the workplace.

Research Purpose: To conduct an empirical study using a sample obtained from the general working population to investigate the direct relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay, as well as the indirect relationship mediated by helping behaviour and affective organisational commitment.

Rationale for the Study: Developing a better understanding of the relationship between workplace friendships and employees’ intention to stay may assist organisations in putting interventions in place to increase employees’ intention to stay, ultimately reducing employee turnover. Despite compelling evidence that having a friend at work holds several potential benefits for both individuals (e.g., lower levels of stress) and organisations (e.g., improved job and organisational performance), approximately 40% of employees report not having a friend in the workplace. Therefore, there is room for an investigation into this phenomenon which, although seemingly scarce, holds the potential to provide various benefits to both individual employees and organisations.

Method: A descriptive research design and quantitative cross-sectional research approach were employed to investigate the direct relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay and the indirect relationships mediated by helping behaviour and affective organisational commitment. Based on evidence found in the literature, personality was considered an important extraneous or confounding variable in these relationships, and, therefore, the analyses were conducted both by controlling for personality and not. An online questionnaire was designed, and judgement sampling was employed to collect data across the general working population (n = 216). The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation analyses and multiple regression analyses.

Main Findings: A significant positive relationship was found between workplace friendships and intention to stay. It was further found that affective organisational commitment significantly mediated the indirect relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay. The indirect relationship mediated by helping behaviour was not found to be significant. Workplace friendships and helping behaviours were, however, found to be significantly correlated with one another. Furthermore, albeit slightly weaker, statistically significant relationships between the constructs of interest were found after controlling for personality.

Contribution: The current study has contributed to organisational behaviour literature on the role of, and associated benefits of, workplace friendships for both employees, as well as organisations, being an antecedent of intention to stay, affective organisational commitment and helping behaviour. Importantly, by considering the confounding role of personality on the relationships of interest and viewing personality as a covariant, the current study further contributes to the literature by considering the above-mentioned relationships while controlling for the effect of personality. Furthermore, the current study's findings may be pertinent to human resource management practitioners, general managers, and industrial/organisational psychologists in pursuit of the various benefits associated with workplace friendships. These results will, hopefully, be used to make recommendations to organisations on how they could encourage the establishment and maintenance of workplace friendships, as well as the benefits thereof, in such that workplace friendships become a positive contributor to employee well-being and organisational effectiveness.

Recommendations for Future Studies: The current study illuminates several additional questions which could be addressed in future studies, such as, why employees do not make friends at work to the same extent that they do in their personal lives. Furthermore, the impact of Covid-19-related changes on how employees work and interact should be investigated by researching workplace friendships in alignment with employees working in a hybrid or fully remote arrangement. Whether the associated benefits deem the associated efforts of each friendship type worthwhile, as well as negative individual and organisational outcomes or consequences of workplace friendships should also be addressed by future studies to gain a more holistic understanding of the potential costs and benefits of workplace friendships. The inclusion of a qualitative component to the research, could allow future researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that relate to the constructs of interest. Finally, future

research should investigate variables of interest across different countries, cultures and contexts to contribute to literature and expand the understanding of these relationships in the workplace.

Managerial Implications: By developing organisational strategies aimed at creating opportunities for friendships formation and nurturing such friendships once formed, employers may be able to increase the presence of helping behaviour, as well as the level of affective organisational commitment among employees, ultimately increasing talent retention and mitigating the direct and indirect turnover-related costs.

Keywords: *workplace friendships, intention to stay, helping behaviour, affective organisational commitment, personality, employee well-being*

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Human beings are social by nature, and forming and maintaining social connections, such as friendships, is a key aspect of the human condition. A sense of love and belonging, obtained from close friendships and social connection with others, has been positioned as one of the basic human requirements in Abraham Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. Moreover, McClelland's theory of needs (1985) presents affiliative motives as one of the three primary human motives. McClelland describes affiliative motives as the desire to build and maintain close, personal relationships with others (Li et al., 2012).

Given that working adults spend a large portion of their waking hours in work settings with others, it can be expected that friendships will also form among colleagues. Therefore, forming friendships is not only confined to the personal domain (Zarankin & Kunkel, 2019). As described above, individuals strive to form meaningful relationships with others due to an inherent psychological human need for belonging and social affiliation, irrespective of whether it is in a personal or professional context (Zarankin & Kunkel, 2019).

Friendships, characterised by a strong, positive emotional attachment to others, provide individuals with various emotional, cognitive, physiological and behavioural benefits. Such benefits include, for example, improvements in their physical health, overall happiness, emotional well-being, feelings of support and security and companionship (Anderson & Fowers, 2020; Hartup & Stevens, 1999; Sias & Bartoo, 2007; Vitaro et al., 2009; Wentzel et al., 2018). As suggested above, the importance of being socially connected and the substantial physiological, psychological and performance benefits derived from friendships are not confined to a person's personal life and extend to one's professional or work life.

Having a friend at work, as is the case in one's personal life, holds several benefits for employees and organisations. Employees who have a friend(s) at work have reported lower levels of stress, found to exhibit higher levels of advice and information sharing, exhibit greater supporting behaviours, as well as positively impacting job and organisational performance (Kram & Isabella, 1985; Morrison, 2004; Song & Olshfski, 2008). In a recent study, Charaba (2022) found that 70% of employees report having a friend at work as the most crucial element to a happy work life.

Several studies have found support for positive relationships between workplace friendships and desirable organisational behaviours (OBs) and outcomes, such as

organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) and organisational commitment (Dietz & Fasbender, 2022; Methot et al., 2016; Rumens, 2017; Wentzel et al., 2018). In a Gallup survey, employee engagement was found to be seven times higher among employees who report having a friend at work compared to those who do not (Rath & Harter, 2010). For this reason, one of the 12 items in Gallup's Q12 scale, which is widely used to measure employee engagement, is "*I have a best friend at work*" (Crabtree, 2005, para. 10).

Workplace Friendships and the 'War for Talent'

In the current digital and knowledge-driven economy, human capital, or human resources (HR), colloquially referred to as 'talent', has become a key source of sustainable competitive advantage for organisations (Delery & Roumpi, 2017; Mir & Mufeed, 2016). Access to 'talent', in other words, individuals who hold scarce, strategically essential skills and competencies are, in the current labour market, a major source of competitive advantage for organisations. As a result, talent management strategies, policies and practices that focus on the attraction, motivation/engagement, and retention of 'talent' have become vital for organisational performance and sustained organisational success (Mir & Mufeed, 2016).

Several reasons have fuelled a growing demand for much-needed and scarce 'talent' on a global scale, resulting in increased competition among organisations - a situation often colloquially referred to as the 'war for talent'. Reasons for this turn of events include rapid advances in technology, the increased mobility of 'talent' willing to work in other countries across the globe to pursue lucrative opportunities, and even being able to do so remotely from their country of origin, which means that local organisations are not only competing within a local labour market but rather a global one; universities and higher education institutions not able to provide the numbers of skilled professionals needed to supply rapidly expanding technology-based industries, to name a few (Mir & Mufeed, 2016). Therefore, a question arises: "Could the benefits derived from workplace friendships extend to winning the 'war for talent' by playing a valuable part in talent retention?"

Workplace Friendships and Talent Retention

An organisation's employees' intention to stay is a crucial element of talent retention and organisational effectiveness. Workplace friendships may offer organisations an avenue to improved talent retention, among other desirable outcomes, such as increased helping behaviour among colleagues and employees' affective organisational commitment.

Workplace Friendships and Intention to Stay

Based on the assumption that an individual's intention to act in a particular way is considered the best predictor of actual behaviour (Shahid, 2018), scholars and practitioners alike have focused on understanding and mitigating turnover intentions (i.e., intention to quit) and promoting the inverse intention (i.e., intention to stay) given the impact of actual employee turnover on organisational performance, profitability and sustained success. It is widely accepted that voluntary employee turnover results in substantial direct costs (incl. recruitment costs, investments in training and development that are lost and need to be made again, and sign-on bonuses which are at times required), as well as indirect costs (incl. loss of productivity, disruptions within teams and departments, loss of relationships with internal and external clients, loss of tacit knowledge, and decreased levels of employee morale), for organisations (Chiat & Panatik, 2019). Due to the costly and destructive effect of employee turnover on organisational processes and success, organisations must devise and promote proactive mechanisms for mitigating turnover intentions before such intentions manifest themselves in actual turnover behaviour.

As a result of the importance of employee retention for organisations described above, there is a growing body of research that has investigated various affective, cognitive and behavioural antecedents of intention to stay/intention to quit that include, for example, job satisfaction, affective organisational commitment, perceptions of organisational support, career success, work-life balance/conflict, organisational identification, and well-being at work, amongst others (Steil et al., 2019). The intention to stay/quit literature also offers critical insights and potential opportunities for leaders and managers to intervene and create conducive conditions for employees to stay and, hopefully, ensure that turnover intentions do not become undesirable voluntary employee turnover.

Although a wide range of antecedents of intention to stay/quit has been investigated, workplace friendship(s) has, to date, yet to be one of them. There is, however, a compelling argument that having a friend at work may lead to higher levels of intention to stay and result in higher levels of employee retention. As suggested above, friendships have been found to offer individuals various desirable outcomes, such as being a source of social support, improved overall well-being, and increased security, which, one could argue, can be conducive to wanting to remain in such a situation (e.g., Anderson & Fowers, 2020). By investigating the

proposed relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay¹, it is hoped that the present research study will provide further support for this notion and add to the growing research into workplace friendships' role in talent retention. The strong relationship between workplace friendships and employee engagement, and employee engagement and intention to stay suggest that there may be both a direct and indirect or mediated relationship between these constructs, motivating the present study.

Workplace Friendships and Organisational Commitment

Affective Organisational Commitment (AOC) is one of the key correlates of intention to stay/quit and a key antecedent of employee retention. Perceptions of affective organisational commitment emanate from positive feelings or beliefs that lead an employee to hold an organisation in high regard (Meyer & Allen, 1991). High levels of affective commitment (i.e., affection for one's job) are positively related to the intention to stay and *vice versa*. Employees who feel positively towards their job, workplace, colleagues, and organisation are more likely not to want to leave voluntarily (Addae et al., 2006).

Workplace friendships are a source of social support for those participating in the friendship relationship, and according to Rousseau and Aubé (2010), social support in the workplace plays an essential role in fulfilling an individual's need for esteem, approval, and affiliation, thus, creating and encouraging emotionally satisfying work experiences. Furthermore, with time and exposure to positive and emotionally satisfying work experiences, employees are likely to develop an emotional attachment to their organisation, in other words, develop higher levels of affective organisational commitment (Rousseau & Aubé, 2010).

Therefore, based on the notions described above, we argue that there is both a direct relationship between workplace friendship and intention to stay and an indirect relationship being mediated by affective organisational commitment. Although the relationship between affective organisational commitment and intention to quit/stay has been extensively investigated by previous research (e.g., Addae et al., 2006), few studies have considered the relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay, specifically investigating the role of affective organisational commitment as a mediator in the relationship. Furthermore, studies into the direct relationship between workplace friendship and intention to stay are also

¹ The Intention to Quit and Intention to Stay constructs are synonymous and inverses of one another (Nancarrow et al., 2014). For the purposes of the present research study, it was decided to focus on the Intention to Stay construct as the outcome variable. We consider it to be more positive and aligned with Positive Psychology/Positive Organisational Scholarship (POB/POS). High levels of Intention to Stay can, however, be understood to be indicative of low levels of Intention to Quit.

limited. Finding support for these relationships would contribute to this organisational behaviour (OB) field of research and hopefully motivate scholars and practitioners to consider workplace friendships as an essential component of affective organisational commitment promotion and, ultimately, talent retention.

Workplace Friendships and Helping Behaviours

It is further argued here that workplace friendship may be related to the prevalence of helping behaviours among employees. By engaging in prosocial behaviours, such as helping, individuals can actively assist others while experiencing various associated benefits themselves, including experiencing positive feelings related to altruism, stress reduction and mood enhancement (Raposa et al., 2016). Therefore, helping behaviours may augment benefits for both the individual(s) being helped and those doing the helping. Furthermore, desirable prosocial behaviours within organisations, such as employees providing one another support and helping one another, have been found to further lead to more positive work experiences and organisational climates, as well as higher levels of motivation, employee engagement, commitment to the organisation, and employee's intention to stay in employment relationships with organisations (Bell & Sheridan, 2020; Rousseau & Aubé, 2010). Additionally, research has found workplace friendships to encapsulate an element of care and a likelihood of assisting a colleague in need (Ferris et al., 2009).

Hamilton (2007) found that employees reporting positive workplace friendships tend to engage in helping behaviours by providing their workplace friends with assistance, guidance, suggestions, recommendations, feedback and information on work-related matters. Ferris et al. (2009) further suggest that people are more likely to engage in positive prosocial behaviours, such as helping, when they are fond of or like the recipient of such behaviours. Liking is considered inherent to voluntary social ties, such as friendships.

As suggested above, there is evidence that employees who report having friendships at work are more likely to demonstrate helping behaviours and support for one another. There is also an argument that some individuals would be more likely to stay in an organisation when they have a friend at work to nurture and sustain the associated benefits, such as social support, companionship and positive workplace experiences and climate (Bell & Sheridan, 2020). Based on these arguments, there may be both a direct relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay, as well as an indirect relationship being mediated by helping behaviour.

However, the relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay, as well as helping behaviours possibly mediating this relationship, has yet to be investigated. If support can be found for this relationship, the present study can assist individuals and organisations in promoting and nurturing workplace friendships in an attempt to not only encourage positive prosocial helping behaviours but also to increase intention to stay. Furthermore, the present study may contribute to a gap identified in organisational psychology literature by investigating both the direct and indirect relationship, given that previous studies of this nature could not be identified.

Personality as a Confounding Variable

Previous research has positioned personality as an important individual differences variable that plays a crucial role in the formation of friendships, as well as the likelihood that individuals will engage in prosocial behaviours such as helping and being loyal or committed - both in and outside the workplace (Doroszuk et al., 2019; Sias et al., 2003). We argue here that the confounding role that personality dimensions, such as the 'Big Five' dimensions of personality: 1) extraversion, 2) neuroticism, 3) conscientiousness, 4) agreeableness, and 5) openness to experience, potentially play in the relationships between workplace friendships, helping behaviours, affective organisational commitment, and intention to stay should be further investigated, given the nature of these behaviours. Something which has to date not been the case in extant OB literature.

It is readily apparent that, for example, based on their inclination to socialise and their gregarious nature, more extroverted individuals might have more opportunities to make friends and even make friends more quickly and easily than those who are less extroverted (Harris & Vazire, 2016). Furthermore, Harris and Vazire (2016) argue that individuals high on agreeableness are seen as warm, caring, and collaborative and are more likely to adhere to reciprocity norms that assist with friendship formation and maintenance. Furnham et al. (2009) and Alam and Asim (2019) suggest that more conscientious individuals are likely to display stronger levels of job satisfaction and organisational commitment and would be more prone to helping behaviours as they feel compelled to do it, as it is the 'right thing to do'. Moreover, lower levels of openness to experience are related to higher levels of intention to stay given the comfort of the familiar (Kumar & Bakhshi, 2010). Finally, higher levels of neuroticism have been found to relate to more negative affect and less tolerance, potentially limiting friendship formation opportunities (Harris & Vazire, 2016).

Despite this apparent effect personality may have on the relationships under investigation, as described above, these have yet to receive sufficient attention in previous research. By doing so, the current research study could contribute to the literature by being one of the only research studies that have attempted to account for the role of personality in the relationships between workplace friendships, helping behaviours, affective organisational commitment, and intention to stay by including personality as a covariant. In other words, which has statistically controlled for and removed the effect of personality from the relationships under investigation to isolate them and, in doing so, better understand the relationships for what they are.

Aim and Purpose of the Present Study

Despite compelling evidence that having a friend at work holds several potential benefits for both individuals and organisations, 40% of employees report not having a friend in the workplace (Stevens, 2022). Therefore, there is room for further investigation into this phenomenon which holds the potential to provide benefits for both individuals and organisations. The aim of this research study was, therefore, to investigate the relationship between workplace friendships and employees' intention to stay and to assess whether this direct relationship is also mediated by affective organisational commitment and helping behaviour. Given that it was believed that personality could be a confounding or extraneous variable in these relationships, they were assessed both by statistically controlling for personality as well as not doing so to ascertain whether support could be found for this notion.

The present study makes several important contributions to OB theory and practice. First, as suggested above, there is a dearth of studies that have investigated both the direct and indirect relationships between workplace friendships, helping behaviours, affective organisational commitment, and intention to stay, and it is hoped by doing so that the present research study will contribute to closing an important gap in the literature. Further, by investigating the abovementioned relationships in a South African context, the present study contributes to developing an understanding of the variance between similar studies conducted internationally. Moreover, the present study makes an even more unique contribution by investigating these relationships while controlling for personality, which is acknowledged to impact these relationships but has yet to receive the necessary attention in empirical research studies.

By gaining a better understanding of the relationships between workplace friendships and the selected key organisational behaviours (OB), the present study provides valuable insights and recommendations to organisations on how friendships in the workplace can be encouraged, as well as showing the benefits that can possibly be derived from workplace friendships for individuals and organisations when doing so. Moreover, it is further hoped that the insights gained in the present research study will provide a much-needed impetus for organisations to pay more attention to this important aspect of organisational life, encourage practices and policies which support and even promote workplace friendships given the potential individual and organisational benefits associated with it. It is hoped that the current research study will focus leaders and managers within organisations more keenly on the importance of creating conducive conditions and opportunities for workplace friendships to form and, once established, to nurture such friendships to the mutual benefit of both employees and organisations.

Problem Statement

Friendship formation is a naturally occurring phenomenon that meets essential social needs (Li et al., 2012). Having close positive friendships has further been found to hold substantial physical, cognitive, and psychological benefits for individuals (Anderson & Fowers, 2020; Hartup & Stevens, 1999; Sias & Bartoo, 2007; Vitaro et al., 2009; Wentzel et al., 2018). Furthermore, the benefits derived from friendships can be expected to transcend into one's professional life (Zarankin & Kunkel, 2019). Individual and organisational benefits associated with workplace friendships include reduced stress levels, higher levels of helping and social support, and improved job and organisational performance (Morrison, 2004; Song & Olshfski, 2008).

Retaining human capital or 'talent', in other words, individuals that possess scarce skills, competencies and experience that are strategically important for organisational performance and sustained success, has become a critical organisational imperative and source of competitive advantage in a highly competitive marketplace (Delery & Roumpi, 2017). Moreover, substantial direct and indirect costs are associated with voluntary employee turnover (Chiat & Panatik, 2019; Heinz, 2022). As a result, better understanding and managing employees' intention to stay/quit, which is the best predictor of actual turnover behaviour, has gained prominence amongst scholars and practitioners alike (Shahid, 2018).

In this paper, we argue that having a friend at work will lead to higher levels of intention to stay and, in doing so, result in higher levels of employee retention. In support of this notion, friendships have been found to offer individuals various desirable outcomes, such as being a source of social support, improved overall well-being, and increased security that can be conducive to wanting to remain in such a situation (for example, Anderson & Fowers, 2020). Furthermore, in a Gallup survey, employee engagement, an attitude or sentiment that is a known antecedent of intention to stay/quit, was found to be seven times higher among employees who report having a friend at work compared to those who do not (Rath & Harter, 2010). It is further well-established that employee engagement is an antecedent of turnover intentions, as well as being related to key organisational constructs that, in their own right, are also related to turnover intentions, including, for example, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and organisational citizenship behaviour (Bailey et al., 2017). Based on these and other arguments presented below, we propose a (direct) relationship between workplace friendships and the intention to stay.

Affective Organisational Commitment (AOC) is another key antecedent of intention to stay/quit (Addae et al., 2006; Meyer & Allen, 1991). Workplace friendships have been found to be a source of social support and play an essential role in fulfilling an individual's need for esteem, approval, and affiliation, thus, creating and encouraging emotionally satisfying work experiences (Rousseau & Aubé, 2010). With time and exposure to positive and emotionally satisfying work experiences, employees are likely to develop an emotional attachment to their organisation, in other words, develop higher levels of affective organisational commitment (Rousseau & Aubé, 2010). Based on these and other arguments, we propose that there may also be an indirect relationship between workplace friendship and intention to stay being mediated by affective organisational commitment. Although the relationship between affective organisational commitment and intention to quit/stay has been largely investigated by previous research (e.g., Addae et al., 2006), few studies have considered the mediated relationship proposed here.

It is further argued here that workplace friendship may be related to the prevalence of helping behaviours among employees. By engaging in prosocial behaviours, such as helping, individuals can actively assist others while experiencing various associated benefits themselves (Raposa et al., 2016). Workplace friendships encapsulate such an element of care and a likelihood of assisting a colleague in need (Ferris et al., 2009). Hamilton (2007) found that employees who reported positive workplace friendships tended to engage in helping behaviours by providing their workplace friends with assistance, guidance, suggestions,

recommendations, feedback and information on work-related matters. Ferris et al. (2009) further suggest that people are likely to engage in positive prosocial behaviours, such as helping, when they like the recipient of such behaviours. Such liking is inherent to voluntary social ties, such as friendships.

Desirable prosocial behaviours within organisations, such as employees providing one another support and helping one another, have been found to lead to more positive work experiences and organisational climates, as well as higher levels of motivation, employee engagement, commitment to the organisation, and employee's intention to stay in employment relationships with organisations (Bell & Sheridan, 2020; Rousseau & Aubé, 2010). There is, therefore, an argument that some individuals would be more likely to stay in an organisation when they have a friend at work to nurture the associated benefits, such as social support and positive workplace experiences (Bell & Sheridan, 2020). Based on these and other arguments, we propose that there may be an indirect relationship between workplace friendship and intention to stay mediated by helping behaviour, a mediated relationship that has not yet been investigated. If support can be found for this mediated relationship, the present study can assist individuals and organisations in promoting and nurturing workplace friendships in an attempt to encourage positive prosocial helping behaviours.

Despite a large and still growing body of research that has investigated various affective, cognitive and behavioural antecedents of intention to stay/intention to quit that include, for example, job satisfaction and organisational commitment, as described above, workplace friendship(s) has, however, not been one of them. Given the benefits of workplace friendships described above, a question arises: "Could the benefits derived from workplace friendships extend to winning the 'war for talent' by playing a key role in employee retention?" The current research study set out to answer this question.

Previous research has positioned personality as an important individual differences variable that plays a key role in the formation of friendships, as well as the likelihood that individuals will engage in prosocial behaviours such as helping and being loyal or committed (Doroszuk et al., 2019; Sias et al., 2003). The confounding role that personality dimensions, such as the 'Big Five' dimensions of personality: 1) extraversion, 2) neuroticism, 3) conscientiousness, 4) agreeableness and 5) openness to experience, potentially play in the relationships between workplace friendships, helping behaviours, affective organisational commitment and intention to stay has, however, not yet received attention in research studies to date. By including personality as a covariant, the current research study contributes to the literature by being one of the only studies that attempt to account for the confounding role of

personality in the relationships between workplace friendships, helping behaviours, affective organisational commitment and intention to stay.

Despite the compelling evidence that having a friend at work holds several potential benefits for both individuals and organisations, 40% of employees report not having a friend in the workplace (Stevens, 2022). There is, therefore, clearly room for further investigation into this phenomenon which holds the potential to provide benefits for both individuals and organisations.

The aim of this research study was, therefore, to investigate the relationship between workplace friendships and employees' intention to stay and to assess further whether this direct relationship is also mediated by affective organisational commitment and helping behaviour. Given that it was believed that personality could be a confounding or extraneous variable in these relationships, they were assessed both by statistically controlling for personality as well as not doing so to ascertain whether support could be found for this notion.

The present study makes several important contributions to OB theory and practice. First, as suggested above, it is hoped that by investigating both the direct and indirect relationships between workplace friendships, helping behaviours, affective organisational commitment and intention to stay, the present research study will contribute to closing an important gap in the literature. Further, by investigating the abovementioned relationships in a South African context, the present study contributes to developing an understanding of the variance between similar studies conducted internationally. Moreover, the present study makes an even more unique contribution by investigating these relationships while controlling for personality, which is acknowledged to impact these relationships but has yet to receive the necessary attention in empirical research studies.

By gaining a better understanding of the relationships between workplace friendships and the selected key organisational behaviours (OB), the present study further provides valuable insights by showing the benefits of workplace friendships for individuals and organisations. Moreover, it is hoped that the insights gained in the present research study will provide a much-needed impetus for organisations to pay more attention to this important aspect of organisational life and encourage practices and policies which support and even promote workplace friendships given the potential individual and organisational benefits associated with it. Therefore, it is hoped that this research study will focus leaders and managers within organisations on the importance of creating conducive conditions and opportunities for workplace friendships to form and, once established, to nurture the friendships to the mutual benefit of both employees and organisations.

Research Aim and Objectives

As previously stated, the current research study aimed to investigate both the (direct) relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay, as well as the indirect relationship mediated by affective organisational commitment and helping behaviour. Given that it was believed that personality could be a confounding or extraneous variable in these relationships, they were also assessed so that personality could be statistically controlled for as a covariate in the proposed relationships.

In support of the substantive aim of the current study, several theoretical and empirical research objectives were formulated to achieve the stated aim.

Theoretical Objectives

- Review current literature that has included the constructs under investigation (i.e., workplace friendships, helping behaviours, affective organisational commitment, and intention to stay).
- Based on arguments and previous studies found in the literature substantiate the hypothesised direct relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay.
- Based on arguments and previous studies found in the literature substantiate the hypothesised indirect relationships between workplace friendships and intention to stay as mediated by affective organisational commitment and helping behaviour.

Empirical Objectives

- Design an empirical research study in such a manner as to reduce biases and ensure the external and internal validity of the research study and its findings.
- Investigate and assemble an evidence-based instrument that can be used to collect valid and reliable measures (primary data) of the constructs under investigation (i.e., workplace friendships, helping behaviours, affective organisational commitment, and intention to stay).
- Using the measurement instrument designed for the purposes of the present study, collect, collate, clean and, using appropriate statistical techniques, estimate the relationships under investigation.

Based on the results obtained, come to appropriate conclusions, and make substantiated recommendations that organisations can consider.

Conclusion

In this chapter, a brief overview of the background, motivation and necessity of this research study was presented while also outlining the research aim and objectives. The proceeding chapters will focus on furthering the research with Chapter 2, in which the literature review, including the research hypotheses and the theoretical model, is presented. Following this, the research methods, indicating how the presented hypotheses were tested, will be covered in Chapter 3. The results will be discussed in Chapter 4, and finally, the findings will be discussed and evaluated in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

A review of the extant literature relating to the key constructs under investigation (i.e., workplace friendships, affective organisational commitment, helping behaviour and intention to stay) is presented in this chapter. Each construct is defined, followed by a theoretical/conceptual overview thereof. Arguments for the formation of researchable hypotheses are further provided.

Workplace Friendships

Workplace friendships are informal and voluntary relationships between two or more individuals within a workplace who are interested in one another as ‘whole’ individuals, not just as colleagues (Dickie, 2009; Ferhat, 2018; Gates et al., 2021; Ibrahim & Dickie, 2010; Zhang et al., 2021). Bridge and Baxter (1992) depict workplace friendship as a dynamic, naturally occurring phenomenon amongst colleagues in a work setting. Work colleagues who become friends do so without being formally asked or instructed to by any other member of an organisation (Zhang et al., 2021). Voluntary ties, such as friendships, as opposed to orchestrated work-based relationships (e.g., mentors or coaches), are established based on a genuine liking of and interest in one another.

Benefits of Workplace Friendships

Workplace friendships hold various benefits for organisations and are considered good predictors of an individual’s job-related attitudes and sentiments, such as job satisfaction, job involvement, job performance and individual well-being (Akila & Priyadarshini, 2018; Venkataramani et al., 2013). In addition, friendships in the workplace are vital in establishing employee emotional support mechanisms (Kram & Isabella, 1985). In a recent study, Charaba (2022) found that 70% of employees report having a friend at work as the most crucial element to a happy work life.

Friendships within the workplace have further been found to be positively related to desirable organisational attitudes and behavioural outcomes, such as organisational commitment, employee motivation, improved career well-being, higher levels of trust and respect among employees, and reduced feelings of job insecurity and uncertainty (Berman et al., 2002; Crabtree, 2005; Hamilton & Marton, 2008; Nielsen et al., 2000; Riordan & Griffeth,

1995). Moreover, workplace friendships are beneficial for organisations in such that workplace friendships have been shown to relate to increased productivity, maintenance of organisational goals, increased employee retention and information sharing (Dickie, 2009; Nielsen et al., 2000). Furthermore, workplace friendships play an important role in increasing support and information sharing, which helps individuals do their jobs, reducing stress and ultimately improving the quality of work (Berman et al., 2002).

Antecedents of Workplace Friendships

Two related constructs that are important to our understanding of the antecedents of workplace friendships have emerged in recent years: 1) workplace relationships and 2) workplace friendships. Ferris et al. (2009) examined various workplace relationships, including a category they termed 'positive connections', which closely resemble informal workplace relations (workplace friendships) as they involve an interest in another employee as a whole individual, in other words, beyond just their work role. Ferris et al. (2009) noted trust, commitment to a relationship, positive affect, accountability, and instrumentality as key antecedents of positive connections. In other words, positive connections are built based trusting and liking the other individual with whom they share a connection and being committed to such a relationship. Additionally, each individual holds accountability for their role in maintaining the relationship, and each individual receives tangible benefits from their participation in the relationship.

A mutual interest in one another, beyond job tasks and physical work boundaries, is referenced as a key contributing factor to the formation of workplace friendships, distinguishing them from other workplace relationships, such as mentorships or formally assigned team members, as workplace friendships likely arise from shared values or interests rather than organisational needs (Winstead et al., 1995). Morrison and Cooper-Thomas (2016) further found trust, support, and positive affect to be essential antecedents for forming workplace friendships. Various authors have also identified reciprocity and mutuality as prominent antecedents of workplace friendships (for example, Berman et al., 2002; Harris & Vazire, 2016).

The antecedents considered to play a role in the successful formation and maintenance of workplace friendships found in the current literature are summarised in Table 1 (see below).

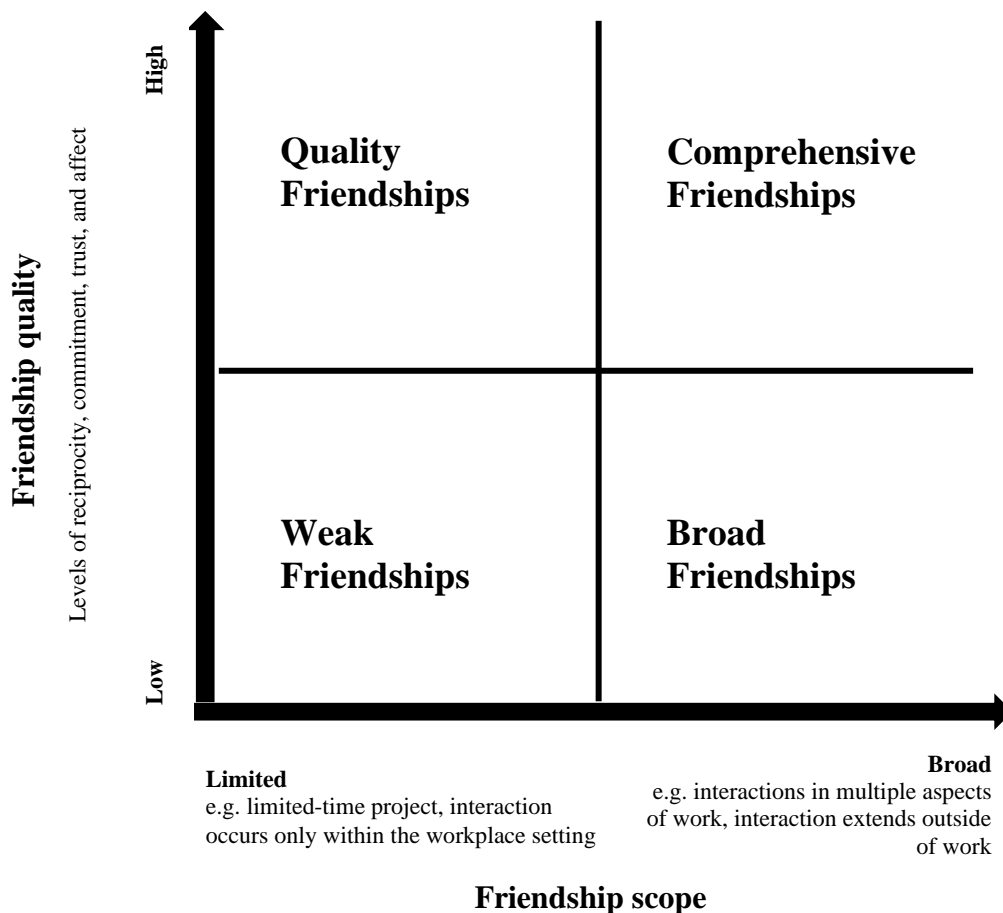
Table 1
Antecedents of Workplace Friendships reported in Current Literature

Citation	Workplace Friendship Antecedents								
	Accountability	Commitment	Instrumentality	Mutuality	Perceived similarity	Positive affect	Reciprocity	Support	Trust
Berman et al. (2002)		√	√	√		√	√		√
Ferris et al. (2009)	√	√	√			√			√
Morrison and Cooper-Thomas (2016)		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Harris and Vazire (2016)						√	√		√
Winstead et al. (1995)				√	√				
Zarankin and Kunkel (2019)		√				√	√		√

A Typology of Workplace Friendships

Zarankin and Kunkel (2019) argue that workplace friendships consist of at least two dimensions: 1) friendship quality and 2) friendship scope. To a varying degree, the quality of workplace friendships consists of reciprocity, commitment, trust, and positive affect (Zarankin & Kunkel, 2019). The scope of workplace friendship, on the other hand, captures the frequency of interpersonal interactions and is operationalised as the amount of time spent with another person and the diversity of interactions (Zarankin & Kunkel, 2019).

Based on varying degrees of friendship quality and scope, Zarankin and Kunkel (2019) proposed four types of workplace friendships. In other words, using the two dimensions of workplace friendships (i.e., friendship quality and friendship scope) and plotting them on two axes creates four quadrants. The four types are: 1) Weak Friendships (low quality and limited scope); 2) Quality Friendships (high-quality friendships, but limited scope); 3) Broad Friendships (low quality and broad scope); and 4) Comprehensive Friendships (high quality, as well as broad scope) (Zarankin & Kunkel, 2019). The typology of workplace friendships, depicted as a 2x2 matrix, can be found in Figure 1 (see below).

Figure 1*The Workplace Friendship Typology*

Source: The workplace friendship typology. Reprinted from “Colleagues and Friends: A Theoretical Framework of Workplace Friendship,” by T. G. Zarankin and D. Kunkel, 2019, *Journal of Organisational Psychology*, 19(5), 162.

Zarankin and Kunkel (2019) define a ‘weak friendship’ as a friendship with low levels of the quality factors of reciprocity, commitment, trust, and positive affect (these are discussed in more detail below). Weak friendships are typical of limited scope and limited to the workplace setting (e.g., one-time interaction or several infrequent, focused interactions). It is argued that weak friendships will likely hold little significance to those involved (Zarankin & Kunkel, 2019).

A ‘quality friendship’ is defined as one that is valuable to all involved and is the more abundant of the four determinants of quality, the higher the quality of a friendship - and *vice versa* (Zarankin & Kunkel, 2019). Furthermore, the quality dimension also considers the four determinants: 1) reciprocity, 2) commitment, 3) trust, and 4) positive affect. Therefore, one can assume that higher quality is desired and instrumental in reaping the benefits associated with friendships, not only in general but also when it comes to workplace friendships.

A ‘broad friendship’ is depicted as a friendship with low levels of the quality factors of reciprocity, commitment, trust, and positive affect; however, the interaction in multiple aspects of work classifies them as broad in scope. As the name suggests, broad friendships are typical of broad scope and may even expand outside of the workplace setting (e.g., frequent interaction or multiple diverse interactions). However, due to the low levels of quality, it is argued that broad friendships will likely hold little significance to those involved (Zarankin & Kunkel, 2019).

On the high end of both dimensions (i.e., upper right-hand side quadrant), a ‘comprehensive friendship’ is characterised by high levels of friendship quality and scope. Therefore, in comprehensive friendships, individuals experience high levels of reciprocity, commitment, trust, and positive affect, as well as the opportunity to interact frequently and possibly in multiple different contexts, both at work and possibly even outside of work in their personal time. Comprehensive friendships are believed to yield the most benefits compared to the other types of friendships (Zarankin & Kunkel, 2019).

Friendship Quality

Friendship quality relies on reciprocity, commitment, trust, and positive affect.

Reciprocity. Reciprocity is defined in the APA Dictionary of Psychology as “the quality of an act, process, or relationship in which one person receives benefits from another and, in return, provides an equivalent benefit” (Vandenbos, 2015, p. 889). Reciprocity is a social norm, in other words, behaviour deemed socially appropriate, polite, or correct within a given context, and the violation of which is generally frowned upon (Burger et al., 2009). Consistent with the norm of reciprocity, individuals expect others to reciprocate a gesture, favour, or any other act of kindness (Burger et al., 2009). Falk and Fischbacher (2006) posit that expected reciprocation is a powerful determinant of behaviour and is instrumental in reciprocity theory, which purports that people reward kind and punish unkind actions (Falk & Fischbacher, 2006).

Additionally, according to the social exchange theory (SET), people tend to feel indebted by gestures of goodwill and attempt to repay such debt (Burger et al., 2009). Consistent with social exchange theory, reciprocity is also related to mutuality, as individuals are thought to feel an inherent need to reciprocate and repay others who have offered them kindness or assistance. Furthermore, mutuality and reciprocity are important in the achievement of mutually beneficial friendships, as effort in the initiation and maintenance of

the friendship is required from both parties. Ingram and Zou (2008) combine reciprocated behaviours, such as formal respect present between colleagues and a benevolent concern found between friends, to promote the establishment of positive relationships within a workplace. Based on the above, it can be understood that high levels of reciprocity and mutuality are associated with high-quality friendships (Zarankin & Kunkel, 2019).

Commitment. The APA Dictionary of Psychology defines commitment as “the obligation or devotion to a person, relationship, task, cause, or other entity or action” (Vandenbos, 2015, p. 214). As friendships involve interpersonal interaction and positive emotional exchange, the individuals involved in the dyadic relationship need to invest resources, such as time and emotional labour, to form and maintain friendships successfully. In the workplace, such interpersonal interactions could involve assistance on work-related tasks and sharing ideas. At the same time, a positive emotional exchange could allow the individuals to offer each other social support. According to Zarankin and Kunkel (2019), one’s commitment to offering various resources is essential for a friendship to flourish, and the more committed the friends are, the higher the experienced quality of the friendship.

Trust. Rousseau et al. (1998) define trust as one’s willingness to assume vulnerability or risk due to attributing integrity and benevolence to another person. Similarly, the APA Dictionary of Psychology defines *trust* as a “reliance on or confidence in the dependability of someone or something” (Vandenbos, 2015, p. 1110). Trust is essential in successfully forming and maintaining many types of positive interpersonal relationships (Rousseau et al., 1998). Regarding workplace friendships, trust is essential in sharing thoughts and emotions, and individuals are more likely to seek assistance and guidance from those they trust (Jones & George, 1998).

Methot et al. (2016) highlight the importance of trust linked to job productivity, as individuals are more willing to engage in positive, cooperative activities with those they trust. Furthermore, individuals who trust their colleagues or friends at work do not need to unnecessarily expend resources, such as time and energy, on monitoring others and guarding themselves that could otherwise be focused on performing job-related tasks (Methot et al., 2016). Engagement in cooperation, information sharing, and mutual assistance improve productivity while also benefiting the individuals involved. Based on this notion, Zarankin and Kunkel (2019) argue that the greater the level of trust experienced among friends, the higher the friendship quality will be.

Positive Affect. Positive affect is synonymous with the internal feeling state that occurs when a goal has been attained, a source of threat has been avoided, and/or the individual is satisfied with the present state of affairs (Vandenbos, 2015, p. 809). As such, *positive affect* has been defined as an essential component encouraging active involvement in pursuing one's goal and is commonly associated with other characteristics considered to promote quality interpersonal interactions and positive relationships, such as optimism, prosocial behaviour, likability, confidence and self-efficacy (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Such characteristics, as well as an overall positive effect, are attractive to people and assist in forming and maintaining relationships within the workplace. When considering workplace relationships, personal liking and genuine care for one another are key components which set workplace friendships apart from other workplace relationships (Ferris et al., 2009). In addition, the association with positive affect signals that workplace friendships are cooperative rather than competitive and have been found to be influential in the production of a work environment in which employees are more open to new ideas, willing to help, and trusting of one another (Methot et al., 2016).

Zarankin and Kunkel (2019) found that positive emotions (such as caring and liking) have numerous positive outcomes, including fostering trust. Affect-based trust refers to the emotional bond experienced between individuals based on genuine care and concern for each other's welfare (McAllister, 1995). As described above, trust is beneficial for individuals as it facilitates collaboration, information sharing and enjoyment (Zarankin & Kunkel, 2019). In addition, affect-based trust is associated with empathy, affiliation, and rapport (Schaubroeck et al., 2011). Zarankin and Kunkel (2019) propose that higher-quality friendships are associated with a higher degree of positive affect.

Friendship Scope

As suggested above, Zarankin and Kunkel (2019) propose friendship scope (the frequency and the diversity of interactions) as the second important component of workplace friendships. While colleagues may share a high-quality friendship, their interactions may only be within a limited context. Furthermore, colleagues may collaborate on many or a few work-related tasks, while the friendship may remain limited to the workplace setting and not extend outside of it.

Various friendship scope combinations are possible. For example, co-workers who developed a strong personal bond during onboarding or induction programmes may continue to socialise on weekends but not work together on job-related tasks or even in the same teams,

divisions, or business units. An alternative scope combination may see individuals who work together frequently on job tasks and develop strong emotional ties through these regular interactions; however, they do not make an effort to socialise outside of work and therefore limit their scope to the workplace setting.

With many possible variations of friendship scope, Zarankin and Kunkel (2019) propose those workplace friendships with a broad scope, whether within the workplace setting or in combination with other settings outside of the workplace, have the potential to offer individuals a deeper mutual understanding and a stronger emotional bond. Additionally, Zarankin and Kunkel (2019) argue that individuals learn more about each other when they interact in a variety of settings (i.e., a broader scope), as opposed to when they only work in a single setting. Similarly, Morrison and Cooper-Thomas (2016) position proximity as a key driver in the establishment of workplace friendships, suggesting that the more time spent with a colleague, or the more available opportunities to witness and identify a colleague's behaviours and similarities to oneself, the stronger the foundation for friendship formation. For example, Morrison and Cooper-Thomas (2016) argue that collaboration on several different projects allows individuals to showcase different skills, enabling their counterparts to learn more about them as a whole individual, potentially enabling the formation of an emotional bond and compelling friendship.

The Intersectionality of Friendship Scope and Friendship Quality

Arguably, considering the varying types of friendships previously mentioned, namely, 1) Weak Friendships; 2) Quality Friendships; 3) Broad Friendships; and 4) Comprehensive Friendships, friendships of high quality and broader scope can be expected to be most strongly related to the individual and organisational benefits of workplace friendships described above. That is to say; it would be expected that although friendships of higher quality and broader scope may require more personal resources, they may carry greater benefits for both individual employees and organisations at large (Zarankin & Kunkel, 2019). Such benefits may include affective organisational commitment, helping behaviour among colleagues and ultimately, employees' intention to stay.

To better manage workplace friendships and effectively promote the associated individual and organisational benefits, the comprehensive workplace friendship type may be the most important for consideration by scholars and practitioners. Additionally, once workplace friendships and the related benefits are more fully understood, organisations will need to play an active role in encouraging the formation of friendships that align with the

desired organisational benefits. There are many factors which can be considered instrumental in the encouragement of workplace friendship formation, both from the organisation's perspective as well as from the involved individuals themselves.

Organisational Factors and Workplace Friendships

Work settings are a place (space) that allows individuals to meet and engage with one another, share interests, ideas, and experiences, pursue common interests and work together to solve problems (Hsu et al., 2020). As suggested above, there are various benefits associated with workplace friendship for the organisation. Although workplace friendships are voluntary and not formally instructed by the organisation, there are various roles organisations can play in facilitating the opportunity for and even encouraging friendship formation. In turn, these organisations may reap the associated benefits and rewards. However, as stated above, despite the compelling evidence that having a friend at work holds several potential benefits for both individuals and organisations, 40% of employees report not having a friend in the workplace (Stevens, 2022). Therefore, there seems to be substantial potential for organisations wishing to pursue this route.

Various scholars have identified several factors that play a crucial role in forming and encouraging workplace friendships which are under the control and influence of organisations, for example, 1) the proximity of co-workers and the design of the physical workspace (Griffin & Sparks, 1990; Morrison & Cooper-Thomas, 2016); 2) fostering an organisational culture which encourages employee engagement by placing value on collaboration and support (Ibrahim & Dickie, 2010); 3) a sense of community, wherein employees feel as if they belong and are valued by their colleagues and the organisation at large (Blatt & Camden, 2017). In addition, Settoon and Mossholder (2002) suggest that by fostering trust amongst co-workers, offering support, and encouraging empathy, organisations can further promote interpersonal citizenship behaviours, such as courtesy, kindness and help. Positive interpersonal citizenship behaviours may further aid in developing workplace friendships.

While effective teamwork is dependent on various factors, such as the nature of the task and the nature of the roles of the team members, organisations can create an opportunity for the development of trust among employees by, for example, ensuring team diversity, choosing team tasks and creating social exchanges which allow employees to form deeper emotional connections due to being exposed to their counterparts' personality and varied skills while working on them (Methot et al., 2016). The development of trust and exposure to positive

emotional connections are key antecedents for workplace friendships (Morrison & Cooper-Thomas, 2016; Zarankin & Kunkel, 2019) and the benefits that occur as a result.

Perceived Similarity and Workplace Friendships

McPherson et al. (2001) found that individuals are more likely to initiate friendships with others they view as sharing traits similar to their own. Similarity or perceived similarity has been considered an important factor in friendship formation as it is associated with an increased understanding between friends and aids in effective communication (Runkel, 1956). The role of perceived similarity is supported by Schneider's (1987) Attraction-Selections-Attrition framework within the organisational context, which validates the assumption that individuals are attracted to forming positive relationships, such as friendships, with other individuals with whom they share similarities. The Attraction-Selections-Attrition framework further posits that individuals are attracted to organisations associated with people whom the individual perceives as similar to themselves, in terms of personality, values and culture, among other organisational attributes.

Cultural fit analysis, often included in hiring processes, is based on the Attraction-Selections-Attrition framework. *Cultural fit* has been defined as the likelihood that an individual will reflect and be able to adapt to the core values and behaviours currently found within an organisation (Bouton, 2015). In other words, during the hiring process, a candidate is assessed in terms of their potential fit with an organisation's values, culture, vision, and mission, increasing the likelihood of shared similarities among employees considered appropriately fitting.

It is, therefore, apparent that various aspects or factors of an individual play a role in their attraction to an organisation and their attractiveness to the hiring personnel. Additionally, an individual's personality traits will likely impact their selection of friends, as well as the subsequent friendship formation and maintenance required for friendships to occur and exist within the workplace. Once friendships are formed and maintained, and even mature further within the workplace to a point where there is a strong sense of belonging, it becomes harder for individuals to give these relationships up and they begin to contribute to an increased likelihood of staying within the organisation.

Intention to Stay

Intention to stay, considered the inverse of intention to quit, has been defined as the intention to remain in one's current employment relationship on a long-term basis (Nancarrow et al., 2014; Shahid, 2018). In other words, it is described as the estimated probability that an individual is likely to permanently stay (or leave) their current organisation within the near future (Johari et al., 2012). Similarly, Yao and Huang (2019) defined intention to stay as a willingness to stay at and continuously work for an organisation.

The intention to behave in a particular fashion is a key psychological antecedent for that actual behaviour (Shahid, 2018). In this way, an individual's intention to quit/ stay in their job is considered the critical determinant and best predictor of employees actually quitting (or staying in) their job. Moreover, what causes a rise in the intention to stay causes a reduction in the intention to quit and *vice versa* (Nancarrow et al., 2014).

The negative consequences of employee turnover for organisations include employee disengagement, deviance, accidents, and absenteeism (Christian & Ellis, 2014; Cohen et al., 2016). According to several authors (for example, Chiat & Panatik, 2019), employee turnover is a crucial concern for organisations as it carries substantial direct costs for organisations, such as those related to recruitment and training new hires. For example, Heinz (2022) argues that an employee's replacement costs can accumulate as much as twice the monetary value of the employee in question's salary. Furthermore, high turnover is also associated with various indirect costs (i.e., disruptions within established relationships with clients, amongst teams and departments, and negatively influencing employee morale) (Chiat & Panatik, 2019).

The Relationship between Workplace Friendships and Intention to Stay

Consistent with social support theory, social support in the workplace may come from various sources, such as the overall organisational culture and relationships with supervisors or colleagues (Leahy-Warren, 2015). Workplace friendships may be such a source, offering individuals social support at work. Prior studies have shown that friendships at work and social support in the workplace have a positive influence on numerous work outcomes, including job satisfaction (Morrison, 2004; Savery, 1988), which is an important predictor of intention to stay (Alam & Asim, 2019; Tett & Meyer, 2006). Furthermore, Charaba (2022) found that 70% of employees indicated that having a friend at work was the most crucial element to a happy work life, and 50% of employees with a workplace friend reported feeling a stronger emotional connection to their organisation. Such data suggest that the presence of workplace friendships

among colleagues is positively related to both job satisfaction as well as organisational commitment.

Alam and Asim (2019) were among various researchers who found job satisfaction to predict the intention to stay statistically. Further, a strong emotional connection to an employee's organisation, interpreted as a component of organisational commitment, has been found to be positively related to an employee's intention to stay (for example, Shanker, 2018). In support of these notions, Hsu et al. (2020) found a significant negative relationship between workplace friendships and an intention to quit.

Based on the various arguments presented above, the following hypothesis, and sub-hypotheses, were formulated:

***H₁:** A statistically significant positive (direct) relationship exists between workplace friendships and intention to stay*

***H_{1.1}:** A statistically significant positive (direct) relationship exists between workplace friendship scope (opportunity) and intention to stay*

***H_{1.2}:** A statistically significant positive (direct) relationship exists between workplace friendship quality (prevalence) and intention to stay*

Helping Behaviour in the Workplace

The term helping behaviour in the workplace refers to the voluntary assistance of fellow organisational members, which is related to the performance of work-related tasks or problems (Podsakoff et al., 2000; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998; Williams & Anderson, 1991). Psychologists have used the term helping behaviour interchangeably with terms such as prosocial or altruistic behaviour (Krebs, 1975). Furthermore, helping behaviour has been regarded by scholars in the field of OB as being synonymous with a significant component of Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB), which focuses on individual interactions amongst employees, and leads to efficient and smooth-running organisational functions and positive performance results for the organisation (Anderson & Williams, 1996; Organ, 1997; Williams & Anderson, 1991). Additionally, Williams and Anderson (1991) refer to Organisational Citizenship Behaviours-Individual (OCBI) as the behaviours that immediately benefit specific individuals within an organisation and, thereby, have been considered to contribute indirectly to overall organisational effectiveness (Mohammad et al., 2011). Various organisational aspects, such as employee job satisfaction levels (Zeinabadi, 2010) and

leadership styles which lift morale (Bilgin et al., 2015), have been found to meaningfully enhance desirable inter-employee behaviours, such as OCBI and helping behaviours, in turn encouraging more of such behaviours.

As described above, *friendships* are reciprocal, suggesting that the presence of kindness and the occurrence of helping behaviours are likely to initiate and encourage more kindness and helping behaviours (Zarankin & Kunkel, 2019). Arguably, the strong, positive emotional connection integral in friendships can be expected to encourage people to assist and help their friends, initiating the positive cycle where helping behaviour promotes more helping behaviour.

Additionally, through the use of various theories, such as the social exchange theory, researchers have argued that positive social interactions, such as workplace friendships and helping, can result in various desirable organisation outcomes, such as increased productivity, retention rates and information sharing (Dickie, 2009). The social exchange theory, intellectualised by Homans (1958), is considered to aid in understanding the role helping behaviour plays in organisations.

Workplace Friendships and Helping Behaviour: The Role of Social Exchange Theory

Friends help and support each other, often reciprocating beneficial acts voluntarily for one another (Zarankin & Kunkel, 2019). In relation to this reciprocity, Homans (1958) conceptualised social exchange as two individuals engaging in exchange behaviour to pursue positive personal returns. Therefore, employees are considered more likely to assist or help their colleagues if they perceive this to result in some form of reward for them. While in many cases helping behaviour does not directly equate to remuneration or other immediate tangible rewards, such behaviours often lead to a promotion or recognition and so can be seen to provide employees with rewards or recognition indirectly. Additionally, according to social exchange theory, the establishment of friendships can in itself be considered a reward.

Suppose employees form friendships and begin caring for each other and taking each other's feelings into account. In that case, they are more likely to respect each other and behave accordingly with others in the workplace. Examples of such behaviours include assisting a colleague experiencing a high workload or avoiding taking extra breaks to prevent burdening on one's co-worker. Therefore, building positive friendships among colleagues may improve the working atmosphere; enhance organisational members' emotional connection; strengthen mutual trust; and promote shared values, work experience, and joy at work (Berman et al., 2002; Ferhat, 2018).

Positive feelings of care and respect associated with friendships, in turn, are likely to increase the level of helping behaviour within the organisation and, in doing so, create an organisational culture or practice of helping and collegiality. Such an organisational culture may foster positive interactions among employees, creating the opportunity for the development of emotional connections and care embodied within the definition of friendship, both in and outside the workplace. Naturally, individuals show concern and assist friends who encounter difficulties (Padilla-Walker et al., 2015).

As described above, social exchange theory supports a positive relationship between employee friendships and helping behaviour. According to Paul et al. (2016), employees experiencing positive social exchanges within the organisation are likely to reciprocate with higher levels of organisational commitment and contribute through other ways, for example, by exhibiting higher levels of helping behaviour. Furthermore, McClelland's theory of needs (1985) considers high levels of affiliation to be a motivator for individuals, encouraging them to be sympathetic and accommodating to others. Sympathy towards, and the accommodation of, others should foster a positive organisational culture, initiating a constructive, productive, and helpful cycle among employees.

Several researchers, including Padilla-Walker et al. (2015) and Zarankin and Kunkel (2019), have found support for a positive relationship between personal friendships and helping behaviours. Moreover, such relationships can be expected to transcend into the workplace, as evident in Paul et al.'s (2016) findings. Therefore, it can be assumed that workplace friendships and helping behaviours generally share a positive relationship.

Furthermore, the occurrence and presence of helping behaviours within the workplace are likely to create a more positive working atmosphere, environment, and organisational culture (Berman et al., 2002; Ferhat, 2018) and, in turn, increase employee satisfaction and intention to stay (Alam & Asim, 2019; Morrison, 2004). Therefore, although indirect, there may be a positive relationship shared between workplace friendships, helping behaviour and the intention to stay.

Based on the arguments presented above, the following hypothesis, and sub-hypotheses, were formulated:

H₂: *Helping behaviour significantly mediates the (indirect) relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay*

H_{2.1}: *Helping behaviour significantly mediates the (indirect) relationship between workplace friendship scope (opportunity) and intention to stay*

H_{2.2}: Helping behaviour significantly mediates the (indirect) relationship between workplace friendship quality (prevalence) and intention to stay

Workplace Friendships and Affective Organisational Commitment

According to Meyer and Allen (1991), organisational commitment emanates from employees' feelings or beliefs about their organisation. Shanker (2018) posits organisational commitment as a multidimensional construct incorporating an employee's faithfulness, desire to maintain association and value congruency with their organisation. One of the three components of organisational commitment, theorised by Meyer and Allen (1991), is that of affective organisational commitment, which reflects an individual's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in their organisation. Therefore, affective organisational commitment reflects an employee's emotional relationship with an organisation and has implications for their behaviour and decision to continue employment in the organisation, in other words, their intention to stay. Furthermore, Porter et al. (1974), through their presentation of organisational commitment as an attitudinal inclination towards the organisation, position employees' emotional attachments to their organisation as an important component influencing their level of organisational commitment and subsequent intention to stay.

According to a recent study, 50% of employees with a workplace friend reported feeling a stronger emotional connection to their organisation (Charaba, 2022), suggesting a positive relationship between workplace friendships and stronger affective organisational commitment. The relationship between workplace friendships and affective organisational commitment can be explained by the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model and the role of social support.

The Job Demands-Resources Model

In brief, the JD-R model suggests that to do a job successfully, an individual requires specific resources to effectively meet the demands of the job or task (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). Therefore, when job demands are high and job resources are low, individuals may experience stress, strain and health impairments and risk burnout, amongst other negative consequences, due to an imbalance between demands and resources (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). However, when job resources are high, equalling or exceeding the job demands, individuals can successfully achieve job completion with the least amount of stress and strain (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). Additionally, Schaufeli and Taris (2014) further highlight that high job resources often lead to increased motivation as well as higher productivity, among other benefits. Finally,

the JD-R model demonstrates that as a job resource, social support can assist employees in completing their job-related tasks successfully and ultimately influences positive organisational outcomes such as commitment, engagement, and organisational citizenship behaviour (Bakker et al., 2007).

Collective positive behaviours are believed to generate organisational resources and, as a result, produce positive organisational outcomes. Individual resources, such as workplace friendships, can, therefore, be considered in relation to positive outcomes, such as increased affective organisational commitment and intention to stay. Further, organisational resources, such as high employee retention and friendships fostering a positive culture, can be considered to benefit organisational outcomes, such as reduced loss of talent and avoidance of the associated costs (Bakker et al., 2007).

Social Support and Affective Organisational Commitment

Social support, broadly defined by Leavy (1983), is the availability of high-quality helping relationships. How social support is defined varies, with some definitions including, for example, actual support received, while others focus on the perception of the availability of support, which may or may not be accurate (Walen & Lachman, 2000). Despite the various definitions, access to support is considered to hold value for individuals in relation to reducing their level of stress and strain (Viswesvaran et al., 1999), as well as being associated with various positive effects such as well-being and physical health (Walen & Lachman, 2000).

While social support has been studied in relation to various constructs, such as stress and social networks (Viswesvaran et al., 1999), its role in the workplace may be necessary for promoting an individual's well-being, as well as a healthy and productive workforce (Rousseau & Aubé, 2010). Zarankin and Kunkel (2019) position social support, such as friendships, as an outcome of positive workplace relationships. According to Rousseau and Aubé (2010), social support may increase employees' comfort within an organisation by fulfilling their needs for esteem, approval, and affiliation, thus, creating and encouraging emotionally satisfying work experiences. With time and exposure to emotionally satisfying work experiences, employees are more likely to develop an emotional attachment to their organisation (Rousseau & Aubé, 2010).

Given that positive workplace friendships are argued to increase an employee's commitment to their organisation, it is suggested here that it will, in turn, increase the level of intention to stay. For example, previous studies have shown that individuals with friends at work display lower levels of absenteeism and are less likely to voluntarily leave the

organisation (Morrison, 2004). These lower levels of absenteeism and intentions to leave are arguably due to a sense of belonging and emotional attachment towards their workplace friends who have accepted, understood, and assisted them at work (Sias & Cahill, 1998). Further, such a sense of acceptance, assistance and feeling of being understood, associated with social support, may play a role in fostering a positive culture, ultimately benefiting the organisation at large due to the spread of positive emotions among employees.

The current study draws on the social support theory to consider workplace friendships between colleagues in relation to employees' affective commitment to their organisation, understanding that once employees gain a sense of belonging and support, they will likely display a stronger tendency and intention to stay.

Based on the arguments presented above, the following hypothesis, and sub-hypotheses, were formulated:

H₃: *Affective organisational commitment significantly mediates the (indirect) relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay*

H_{3.1}: *Affective organisational commitment significantly mediates the (indirect) relationship between workplace friendship scope (opportunity) and intention to stay*

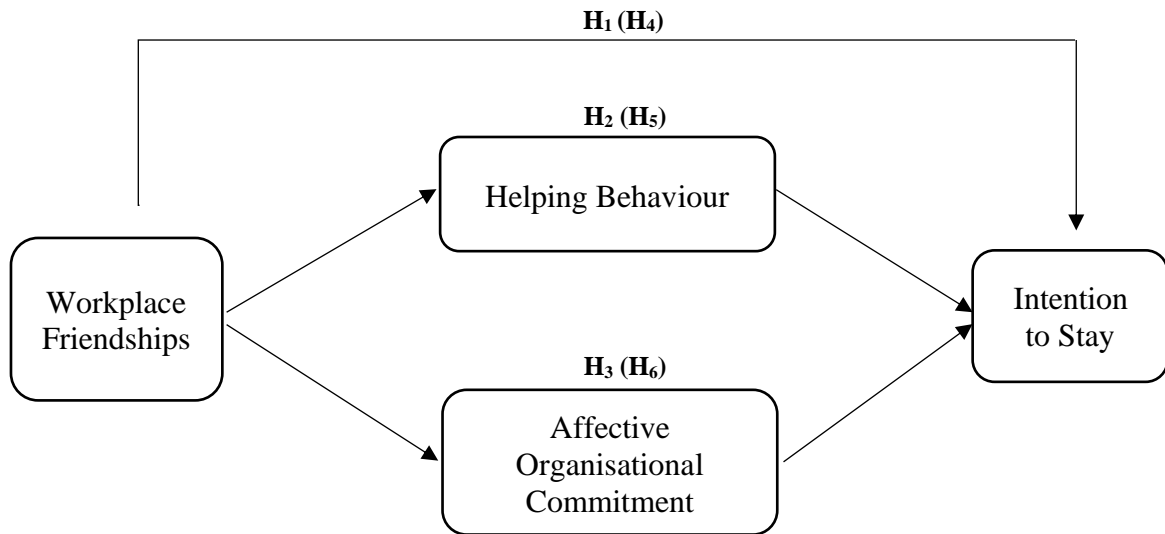
H_{3.2}: *Affective organisational commitment significantly mediates the (indirect) relationship between workplace friendship quality (prevalence) and intention to stay*

Theoretical Model under Investigation

The arguments presented above and used to substantiate the stated hypotheses can be combined into a theoretical model presented in Figure 2 (see below). The theoretical or conceptual model comprises workplace friendships as an independent variable, intention to stay as the dependent variable and affective organisational commitment and helping behaviour as the mediating variables. Therefore, we in the current research study hypothesise that there is both a direct and indirect or mediated relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay, being mediated by affective organisational commitment and helping behaviours.

Figure 2

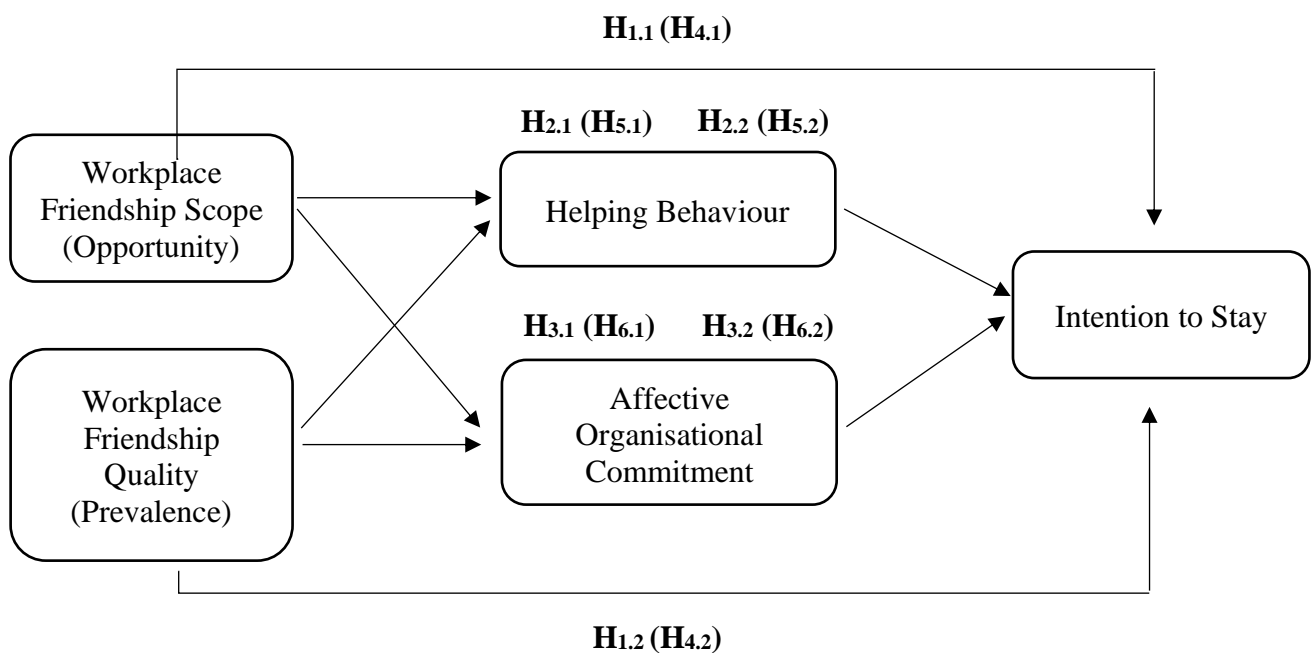
Theoretical Model based on the Selected Constructs under Investigation



The second theoretical model (see Figure 3 below) results from considering Zarankin and Kunkel's (2019) workplace friendship scope and workplace friendship quality as the two dimensions of workplace friendships.

Figure 3

Theoretical Model based on the two Dimensions of Workplace Friendships



The Role of Personality in the Relationships between Workplace Friendships, Helping Behaviour, Organisational Commitment and Intention to Stay

Personality plays an important role in determining one's social preferences and interactions and, therefore, in engagements and efforts with regard to friendships - both in and outside the workplace setting. Harris and Vazire (2016) investigated the role of personality traits in friendship formation and maintenance using the 'Big Five' theory of personality traits. The theory posits that there are five basic personality traits, namely, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience, initially developed by Fiske (1949) and later expanded upon by various other researchers, including McCrae and Costa (1999). The so-called 'Big Five' personality traits are briefly explained, and Harris and Vazire's (2016) findings are summarised below.

Extraversion. An individual high on extraversion is identifiable as someone who feels energised when in the company of other people (Cherry, 2022). This preferred source of energy, amongst other traits, typically including talkativeness, assertiveness, and high amounts of emotional expressiveness, has made extraverted people widely recognisable in terms of social interaction. Individuals with high levels of extraversion tend to thrive on being the centre of attention, enjoy meeting new people and often have many friends and acquaintances (Cherry, 2022). On the other end of the continuum, introverted people generally prefer solitude and display less energy in social situations. Therefore, introverts may take longer to form friendships and are less likely to actively engage in multiple friendships (Cherry, 2022).

In friendship formation, extraversion was positioned as the most influential of the 'Big Five' personality traits. Harris and Vazire (2016) posited that extroverted people would likely seek out, establish and maintain friendships more naturally. Additionally, based on their inclination to socialise and be around others (Watson et al., 1992), extroverted people are likely to facilitate more opportunities for themselves to make friends.

Agreeableness. People who exhibit high levels of agreeableness are likely to show signs of trust, altruism, kindness, and affection to those which whom they interact (Cherry, 2022). Such positive traits are likely to encourage positive social interactions, promoting friendship formation and maintenance. Highly agreeable people further display a tendency to have high prosocial behaviours and are, therefore, likely to be more inclined to help others,

further promoting the formation and maintenance of friendships. Various positive traits, such as sharing, comforting, and cooperating, lend themselves to highly agreeable personality types.

Further, empathy is commonly understood as another form of agreeableness. It is, therefore, easy and even more enjoyable to spend time with individuals with a high level of agreeableness. Conversely, the opposite of agreeableness is disagreeableness, which manifests in socially undesirable behaviour traits, such as manipulation and a lack of caring or sympathy, which are likely to discourage friendships (Cherry, 2022).

Similar to extraversion, higher levels of agreeableness have been found to predict better relationship quality because of the general association between agreeableness and better relationship skills (Harris & Vazire, 2016). People high in agreeableness report more emotional closeness with friends than those low in agreeableness do (Berry et al., 2000). This emotional closeness may result from the collaborative, warm and helpful traits usually associated with high agreeableness that assist in satisfying friendships (Harris & Vazire, 2016).

Conscientiousness. High levels of conscientiousness are typically associated with high levels of thoughtfulness, good impulse control, and goal-directed behaviours. In addition, a highly conscientious person is likely to plan ahead and analyse their own behaviour to see how it affects others (Cherry, 2022). Such analysis and consideration of how one's behaviours affect others are likely to promote positive interpersonal interactions and assist with forming and maintaining friendships.

Although considered somewhat less influential on interpersonal relations, conscientiousness may play a role in the successful maintenance of friendships, as following through on commitments made to others will likely build a base of trust and commitment, forming a foundation for friendship (Harris & Vazire, 2016).

Neuroticism. High levels of neuroticism are characterised by sadness, moodiness, and emotional instability. Individuals with high levels of neuroticism are often perceived as somewhat anti-social. Individuals who exhibit high levels of neuroticism tend to experience mood swings, anxiety and irritability, while individuals with lower levels of neuroticism are likely to exhibit a more stable and emotionally resilient attitude to stress and situations (Cherry, 2022). As a result, individuals with high levels of neuroticism often experience greater difficulty forming and maintaining friendships.

Individuals with high levels of neuroticism tend to report experiencing more negative affect and tend to be more emotionally reactive (Costa & McCrae, 1995). These traits could

manifest as behaviours which threaten friendship formation and maintenance, such as holding grudges (Balliet, 2010), which make it more difficult for individuals to maintain friendships (Harris & Vazire, 2016).

Openness to Experience. An individual's level of openness to experience includes imagination and insight. Traits such as getting to know and experience the world and other people and an eagerness to learn and experience new things are prominent among individuals with high levels of openness to experience (Cherry, 2022). Therefore, high levels of openness to experience can be considered important in an individual's eagerness to engage in social interactions, interpersonal engagements and positive relationship building, such as friendships.

Similarly to conscientiousness, there is little concrete evidence of the role openness to experience plays in forming and maintaining friendships. However, Harris and Vazire (2016) report higher levels of openness to experience in association with a more extensive friendship network and an openness to social interaction and connection, which may allow for more friendship-forming opportunities.

As described above, Harris and Vazire's (2016) findings revealed that each of the 'Big Five' personality traits is influential in friendship formation and maintenance, however, to varying degrees. In summary, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism, the traits one might expect to be associated with friendship due to their content and association with other socially relevant outcomes, were found to have the most substantial impact on friendships (Harris & Vazire, 2016). While conscientiousness and openness to experience were also found to impact friendships, their effects were interpreted as concentrated and specific rather than having broad, sweeping effects (Harris & Vazire, 2016). The abovementioned five personality traits have all been found to influence friendship formation; in other words, an individual's personality is related to their preference for and the amount of effort they are likely to put into friendship formation and maintenance (Harris & Vazire, 2016). Similarly, personality may also play a role in an individual's organisational commitment and intention to stay.

The Role of Personality in the Relationship between Workplace Friendships and Intention to Stay

Furnham et al. (2009) considered the role of personality traits in workplace motivation and found conscientiousness to be a significant correlate of job satisfaction. Several researchers have found job satisfaction to be a significant predictor of intention to stay (for example, Alam

& Asim, 2019; Tett & Meyer, 2006). In support of this notion, Ganu and Kogutu (2014) considered the effect of the 'Big Five' personality traits on job satisfaction and organisational commitment, which are considered to be key determinants of one's intention to stay (Alam & Asim, 2019; Tett & Meyer, 2006; Yücel, 2012). Findings revealed significant relationships between the traits of openness to experience, conscientiousness, neuroticism and extraversion, and job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Ganu & Kogutu, 2014). Kumar and Bakhshi (2010) found extraversion to be the most reliable predictor of organisational commitment, which is a key predictor of intention to stay. Additionally, Kumar and Bakhshi (2010) found the personality traits of openness to experience and neuroticism to negatively predict organisational commitment, while agreeableness and conscientiousness were found to predict organisational commitment positively.

Importantly, when considering the typical behaviours associated with various personality traits, the relationship such traits share with an individual's level of commitment or intention to stay becomes predictable. For example, individuals with high levels of conscientiousness are more likely to follow through on their contractual commitment and believe staying with their organisation is the right thing to do (Harris & Vazire, 2016). Further, those individuals with high levels of openness to experience may be more inclined to voluntarily seek out new experiences (Harris & Vazire, 2016). The findings from the abovementioned studies and behavioural predictions suggest that individuals' personalities are related not only to workplace friendship formation but also to organisational commitment and intention to stay. So, we believe that personality traits should not be ignored – which has primarily been the case in similar research studies up to now.

As personality seems to be related to both the independent and the dependent variables in the current study (i.e., workplace friendships and intention to stay) and can be argued to play a role in the relationship discussed here, an individual's personality should be considered as an important confounding or extraneous variable in this relationship (Frank, 2000). Therefore, to better estimate and understand the relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay, personality was treated as a confounding variable which was statistically controlled for.

Based on the arguments presented above, the following hypothesis and sub-hypotheses were formulated:

H₄: *A statistically significant positive (direct) relationship exists between workplace friendship and intention to stay while controlling for scores on the 'Big Five' personality scale.*

H4.1: A statistically significant positive (direct) relationship exists between workplace friendship scope (opportunity) and intention to stay while controlling for scores on the 'Big Five' personality scale.

H4.2: A statistically significant positive (direct) relationship exists between workplace friendship quality (prevalence) and intention to stay, while controlling for scores on the 'Big Five' personality scale.

The Role of Personality in the Relationship between Workplace Friendships and Intention to Stay mediated by Helping Behaviour

As an individual's personality traits predict their typical reactions, perceptions, and attitudes, the consideration thereof provides information on the individual's motivations and likely behaviours in a particular situation (Youshan & Hassan, 2015). Similar to personality playing a role in the relationships between workplace friendship formation and maintenance and intention to stay, various individual factors, such as an individual's personality, are believed to play a role in their participation in helping or organisational citizenship behaviours. Various researchers have found significant, positive relationships between personality traits, in particular conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience, and OCB (Udin & Yuniawan, 2020). On the other hand, neuroticism has been found to be negatively related to OCB (Hashim et al., 2017). Notably, no significant relationship has been reported between extraversion and OCB.

Additionally, Habashi et al. (2016) found that agreeableness has a significant relationship with prosocial emotions and that such prosocial emotions are connected to higher levels of helping behaviour. The findings suggest that higher levels of agreeableness are related to higher levels of helping behaviour. Moreover, Habashi et al. (2016) also found that high levels of neuroticism are negatively related to an individual's decision to engage in helping behaviour. Arguments that personality plays a role in the relationship between an individual's inclination to engage in helping behaviour justify the need to deal with personality as a confounding variable.

Based on the arguments presented above, the following hypothesis and sub-hypotheses were formulated:

H5: Helping behaviour significantly mediates the (indirect) relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay while controlling for scores on the 'Big Five' personality scale.

H5.1: Helping behaviour significantly mediates the (indirect) relationship between workplace friendship scope (opportunity) and intention to stay while controlling for scores on the 'Big Five' personality scale.

H5.2: Helping behaviour significantly mediates the (indirect) relationship between workplace friendship quality (prevalence) and intention to stay while controlling for scores on the 'Big Five' personality scale.

The Role of Personality in the Relationship between Workplace Friendships and Intention to Stay mediated by Affective Organisational Commitment

As suggested above, an individual's personality is argued to play a significant role in their affective organisational commitment. Youshan and Hassan (2015) and Erdheim et al. (2006) are among many researchers who identified the 'Big Five' personality traits as helpful in understanding typical behavioural tendencies. Given that, as covered previously, affective organisational commitment represents an individual's positive emotional connection with their organisation, Erdheim et al. (2006) posited that individuals with high levels of extraversion often experience higher levels of affective commitment due to the positive emotionality associated with the personality trait of extraversion. Erdheim et al. (2006) could, however, not find support for significant relationships between neuroticism, openness to experience and agreeableness and affective organisational commitment. Chandel et al. (2011) found similar results, with extraversion being the strongest of the 'Big Five' personality traits to predict affective organisational commitment. However, unlike Erdheim et al. (2006), Chandel et al. (2011) found neuroticism to have a significant relationship with affective organisational commitment.

Importantly, the relationship individuals' personality traits share with their level of organisational commitment can be considered somewhat predictable when considering the typical behaviours associated with various personality traits. For example, individuals with high levels of agreeableness are less likely to deviate from the norm, often allowing for and promoting harmonious working environments, which allow for positive workplace experiences and an emotional attachment to the organisation (Harris & Vazire, 2016; Morrison, 2004; Rousseau & Aubé, 2010). Further, those with high levels of neuroticism may likely experience

negative emotional associations and become anxious or irritable, possibly overloading their job demands. and threatening their organisational commitment (Harris & Vazire, 2016; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). So, while previous findings have been somewhat inconsistent in assessing and evaluating the effect of personality on affective organisational commitment, we argue here that an individual's personality is related to their affective organisational commitment disposition and typical levels, deeming personality an important confounding variable worth consideration.

Based on the arguments presented above, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H₆: *Affective Organisational commitment significantly mediates the (indirect) relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay while controlling for scores on the 'Big Five' personality scale.*

H_{6.1}: *Affective Organisational commitment significantly mediates the (indirect) relationship between workplace friendship scope (opportunity) and intention to stay while controlling for scores on the 'Big Five' personality scale.*

H_{6.2}: *Affective Organisational commitment significantly mediates the (indirect) relationship between workplace friendship quality (prevalence) and intention to stay while controlling for scores on the 'Big Five' personality scale.*

The hypotheses related to personality acting as a covariate in the relationships represented in the theoretical model under investigation are also depicted in Figure 2 and Figure 3 (see above).

Multivariate Hypotheses

The hypotheses stated above and depicted in the theoretical model under investigation (see Figure 2 and Figure 3) are bivariate; in other words, are made up of one independent and one dependent variable. Estimating the mediated relationships is also based on the various bivariate relationships constituted by it.

Based on the hypotheses stated above, taken together to produce the theoretical model under investigation depicted in Figure 2 and Figure 3, can further be used as the bases of several multivariate hypotheses; in other words, consider two or more independent variables

and one dependent variable at a time. The multivariate hypotheses which were formulated using the arguments presented above are as follows:

H_{7.1}: A regression model consisting of workplace friendships, helping behaviour, and affective organisational commitment significantly explains variance in the dependent variable intention to stay while controlling for selected demographic variables (age, tenure)

H_{7.2}: A regression model consisting of workplace friendships, helping behaviour, and affective organisational commitment significantly explains variance in the dependent variable intention to stay while controlling for selected demographic variables (age, tenure), as well as the 'Big Five' personality variables (extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness to experience)

H_{8.1}: A regression model consisting of workplace friendship scope (opportunity), workplace friendship quality (prevalence), helping behaviour, and affective commitment significantly explains variance in the dependent variable intention to stay, while controlling for selected demographic variables (age, tenure)

H_{8.2}: A regression model consisting of workplace friendship scope, workplace friendship quality, helping behaviour, and affective commitment significantly explains variance in the dependent variable intention to stay while controlling for selected demographic variables (age, tenure), as well as the 'Big Five' personality variables (extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness to experience)

H_{9.1}: A regression model consisting of workplace friendship scope (opportunity) and workplace friendship quality (prevalence) significantly explains variance in the dependent variable helping behaviour, while controlling for selected demographic variables (age, tenure)

H_{9.2}: A regression model consisting of workplace friendship scope (opportunity), workplace friendship quality (prevalence) significantly explains variance in the dependent variable helping behaviour while controlling for selected demographic variables (age, tenure), as well as the 'Big Five' personality

variables (extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness to experience)

H_{10.1}: A regression model consisting of workplace friendship scope (opportunity) and workplace friendship quality (prevalence) significantly explains variance in the dependent variable affective organisational commitment while controlling for selected demographic variables (age, tenure)

H_{10.2}: A regression model consisting of workplace friendship scope (opportunity), workplace friendship quality (prevalence) significantly explains variance in the dependent variable, affective organisational commitment, while controlling for selected demographic variables (age, tenure), as well as the 'Big Five' personality variables (extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness to experience)

Conclusion

In this chapter, evidence-based arguments are presented to substantiate hypotheses that the four constructs selected for the purposes of the current study (i.e., workplace friendships, helping behaviour, affective organisational commitment, and intention to stay) are related. It was also argued above that personality plays an important role in these relationships, and to better understand the proposed relationships, the impact of personality needs to be removed as far as possible. The hypotheses, taken collectively, were further used to propose an integrative theoretical model that could be investigated empirically.

Chapter 3

Method

The methodological approaches used to address the aim of the study are described in this chapter. Firstly, the research design, data approaches and research procedures, development of the measuring instrument, and sampling approaches utilised to collect data are set out here. Secondly, the realised sample is discussed, followed by a discussion of the ethical and data management considerations taken into account in executing the research study. Finally, the data collection procedures and the statistical techniques used to analyse the data are described.

Research Design and Approaches

A descriptive research design was utilised to assess the direct relationship between workplace friendships and employees' intention to stay and the indirect or mediated relationship with affective organisational commitment and helping behaviour as mediators. A descriptive design is most appropriate when the study aims to discover relationships between selected variables (Dulock, 1993), as was the case with the current study.

Given time and cost constraints, a cross-sectional approach to data collection was utilised. In other words, the data was collected at a single point in time rather than conducting a longitudinal study (Olckers, 2011). Furthermore, primary quantitative data was collected, utilising a self-report field survey based on established scales used to measure the constructs of interest (Haynes & Heiby, 2004).

The current study can be further described as being of the *ex-post facto* variety. Verma (2019) describes *ex-post facto* (i.e., after the fact) as a systematic empirical enquiry in which the researcher does not directly control the independent variable. This approach is appropriate as the selected variables in the current study and the relationships between them were already established or existed before the study and were not manipulated or controlled by the researcher in any way.

Measuring Instruments

For the purpose of the present research study, a composite electronic survey consisting of six sections was developed. The first four sections consisted of scales used to measure the

variables of interest (i.e., workplace friendships, affective organisational commitment, helping behaviour, & intention to stay); the fifth section consisted of a scale to measure the ‘Big Five’ personality traits as they were considered to be a covariant; and the sixth section was used to collect respondents’ beliefs of the direct and indirect relationships presented previously using open-ended questions. Additionally, optional items were included in the survey used to collect respondents’ demographic information. The demographical and employment items were dispersed between the various sections of the questionnaire to increase respondent engagement, increase the item-response rate, and reduce response fatigue (Teclaw et al., 2012). However, responses to the demographical questions were not used in any research objective but instead collected so that the realised sample could be described.

The survey was prefaced with an informed consent question, asking whether the respondent consented to participate in the research, was 18 years old or older, and had read and acknowledged the purpose of the research. If the “No” response to the declaration question was chosen, the questionnaire defaulted to a page on which the respondent was thanked for their interest in the study and informed that we required their informed consent to complete the questionnaire.

Workplace Friendships

Nielsen et al.’s (2000) Workplace Friendship Scale (WFS) was used to measure respondents’ perceptions of workplace friendships within their organisation. The WFS is a self-report instrument consisting of 12 items, which has been found to have satisfactory measurement properties. Asgharian et al. (2015) reported Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of 0.84 and 0.95, which indicates satisfactory internal consistency (i.e., Cronbach’s alpha > .70, Nunnally, 1978). In the current study, 10 of the original 12 items were used, with six items measuring the dimension of *friendship opportunity* and four items measuring the *friendship prevalence* dimension.

The Item “*I can confide in people at work*” was excluded as it closely resembled the item regarding the respondent’s trust in their colleagues (i.e., *I feel I can trust at least one of my co-workers*) and was deemed to be repetitive and redundant and removed to shorten the scale in the hope it would reduce response bias. The exclusion of the abovementioned item was justified as respondents have been recorded admitting that they find repetitive items burdensome. Robinson (2018) found repetitive items to reduce the response rate. Furthermore, we viewed the language as somewhat vague, deeming the item challenging for some respondents to comprehend fully. Excluding items based on comprehensiveness allows for

potential misunderstanding or confusion to be avoided (Robinson, 2018; Survey Research Center, 2016).

The item “*I do not feel that anyone I work with is a true friend*” is measured on a reverse scale and was excluded as more advanced linguistic skills are necessary to aid the comprehension of a reversed item than are required in the comprehension of a positive item (Suárez-Álvarez et al., 2018; Survey Research Center, 2016). Following a review of South African literature, Posel and Zeller (2011) suggest that language proficiency and literacy skills, particularly in English, are low among South Africans. Furthermore, having to alternate between positive and reversed items within the same measure further aggravates difficulty with comprehension (Suárez-Álvarez et al., 2018).

An additional four items were written and included in the section on workplace friendships to distinguish between and identify the type of friendships respondents reported based on Zarankin and Kunkel’s (2019) workplace friendship typology. The four additional items are presented, explained, and justified in Table 2.1 (see below).

Table 2.1 (see below) summarises the 14 workplace friendship items that were used for the purposes of the current research study, the adaptations and reasons for adapting items, as well as each item’s intended associated dimension in Nielsen et al.’s (2000) Workplace Friendship Scale (WFS) (i.e., friendship opportunity or prevalence) and intended associated domain in Zarankin and Kunkel’s (2019) workplace friendship typology (i.e., friendship scope or quality). All items were responded to on a six-point Likert-type response scale where “1 = Strongly Disagree” and “6 = Strongly Agree.”

Importantly, it is acknowledged that adapting a scale will call the scale’s measurement properties into question. To address this concern, the construct validity and reliability of the adapted scale were assessed based on the data collected in the current study to ensure appropriate measurement, transparent research and the internal and external validity of the study. The results of validity and reliability analyses for each scale utilised in the current study are reported in Chapter 4.

Table 2.1

The Original and Adapted Workplace Friendship scale items, the Reasons for Adaptation, and the Intended Associated Dimensions and Domains

Original item	Adapted item	Reason for Adaptation	Intended Associated Dimension	Intended Associated Domain
<i>1) I have formed strong friendships at work</i>	N/A	N/A	Friendship prevalence	Friendship quality
I have the opportunity to know my co-workers	<i>2) I have the opportunity to know my co-workers on a personal level</i>	Improve or guide comprehension	Friendship opportunity	Friendship scope
<i>3) I have the opportunity to develop close friendships at my workplace</i>	N/A	N/A	Friendship opportunity	Friendship quality
<i>4) I am able to work with my co-workers to solve problems</i>	N/A	N/A	Friendship opportunity	Friendship scope
Being able to see my co-workers is one reason why I look forward to my job	<i>5) Seeing my co-workers is one of the main reasons I look forward to my job</i>	Improve or guide comprehension	Friendship prevalence	Friendship quality
<i>6) Communication among employees is encouraged by my organisation</i>	N/A	N/A	Friendship opportunity	Friendship scope
I feel I can trust many co-workers a great deal	<i>7) I feel I can trust at least one of my co-workers</i>	Improve or guide comprehension	Friendship prevalence	Friendship quality
I can confide in people at work	N/A	Item excluded due to similarity and repetitiveness with the previous item and to improve overall measurement scale comprehensiveness	N/A	N/A

I do not feel that anyone I work with is a true friend (R)	N/A	Item excluded due to reversed items demanding stronger linguistic skills and to improve overall measurement scale comprehensiveness	N/A	N/A
<i>8) I socialise with co-workers outside the workplace</i>	N/A	N/A	Friendship prevalence	Friendship scope
<i>9) Informal talk is tolerated by my organisation as long as the work is completed</i>	N/A	N/A	Friendship opportunity	Friendship scope
In my organisation, I have the opportunity to talk informally and visit others	10) In my organisation, I have the opportunity to interact with my workplace friend(s) on a regular basis	Improve or guide comprehension	Friendship opportunity	Friendship scope

Additional items designed to improve understanding and distinguish between types of friendships

<i>11) I believe my friendships with my co-workers are mutually beneficial</i>	Distinguish between and identify the type of friendship	Friendship prevalence	Friendship quality
<i>12) I am committed to my friend(s) at work</i>	reported and to better understand the construct	Friendship prevalence	Friendship quality
<i>13) I am energised by my friend(s) at work</i>	within the current studies context	Friendship prevalence	Friendship quality
<i>14) I have a friend at work who I miss when they are absent</i>		Friendship prevalence	Friendship quality

Note. The purpose of this table is to demonstrate the adaptations made to the original WPS scale items. The 14 items used for the purposes of the current study are **bold** and *italicised*. (R) indicates a reversed item.

Source: Survey Research Center. (2016). *Guidelines for Best Practice in Cross-Cultural Surveys*. Ann Arbor, MI: Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan. Retrieved November 16, 2022, from <http://ccsg.isr.umich.edu/>

Intention to Stay

An adapted version of Roodt's (2004) three-item Turnover Intention Scale (TIS) and three items from Clary et al.'s (1998) Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) was used to measure respondents' perceptions of their likelihood to stay. Clary et al.'s (1998) study focused on participants' likelihood to continue volunteering in their current volunteering role and asked respondents about their intentions and the timing of their plans to continue volunteering at their current site. The current study included three items, adapted from Clary et al.'s (1998) VFI, which asked respondents about their intentions and the timing of their plans to continue their employment relationships.

Responses were collected on a six-point Likert-type response scale where "1 = Strongly Disagree", and "6 = Strongly Agree." An example item adapted from Roodt's (2004) TIS is "*My current job satisfies my personal needs.*" Jacobs and Roodt (2008) reported satisfactory measurement properties for the TIS, revealing a Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which suggests satisfactory internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.91, i.e., > .70, Nunnally, 1978). One of the items, adapted from Clary et al.'s (1998) items, is "*I plan to continue working at this organisation for the next twelve months.*" Clary et al. (1998) validated their volunteer questionnaire by finding Cronbach's alpha = 0.88, which is considered to be satisfactory (> .70, Nunnally, 1978).

The six (6) items used in the current study were further adapted from those found in the original scales presented above to reduce repetition and aid comprehension (Survey Research Center, 2016). Furthermore, the language of the item was adapted to align with the response options of "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree", as indicated above, unifying the items to the response categories used in other sections of the questionnaire. Such unity or consistency of response scales in a composite survey assists in the completion thereof, avoids unnecessary confusion, and reduces response fatigue (Couper, 2000). However, it is acknowledged that scale adaptations will most likely call the scale's measurement properties into question. As stated above, to address this, the construct validity and reliability of the adapted scale were assessed based on the data collected in the current study to ensure appropriate measurement and transparent research. The results of such analysis are reported in Chapter 4.

The six items, as described above, are summarised in Table 2.2 (see below).

Table 2.2 1
The Original and Adapted items used to measure Intention to Stay

Original TIS item	Adapted item	Reason for Adaptation
How satisfying is your job in fulfilling your personal needs?	1) My current job satisfies my personal needs	Unifying the response scale with other scales used in the current study and to guide comprehension
How often are you frustrated when not given the opportunity at work to achieve your personal work-related goals? (R)	2) I am given the opportunity at work to achieve my personal work-related goals	Item reversed to a positive statement to improve comprehension and to unify the response scale
How often do you look forward to another day at work?	3) I look forward to another day at work	Unifying the response scale with other scales used in the current study and to guide comprehension
Original VFI item	Adapted item	Reason for Adaptation
I will be a volunteer 1 year from now	4) I plan to continue working at this organisation for the next twelve months	Guides comprehension and unifies the response scale with other scales used in the current study
I will be a volunteer 3 years from now	5) I am likely to still be working at this organisation three years from now	Guides comprehension and unifies the response scale with other scales used in the current study
I will be a volunteer five years from now	6) I plan to continue working at this organisation for as long as possible	Guides comprehension and unifies the response scale with other scales used in the current study

Note. The purpose of this table is to clarify items used, adaptations made, and the reasons for such adaptations to Roodt's (2004) Turnover Intention Scale (TIS) and Clary et al.'s (1998) Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI). The 6 items used for the purposes of the current study are **bold** and *italicised*. (R) indicates a reversed item.

Source: Survey Research Center. (2016). *Guidelines for Best Practice in Cross-Cultural Surveys*. Ann Arbor, MI: Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan. Retrieved November 16, 2022, from <http://ccsg.isr.umich.edu/>.

Helping Behaviour

Respondents' helping behaviour was assessed using an adapted version of Lee and Allen's (2002) Organisational Citizenship Behaviour-Individual (OCBI) Scale. The OCBI scale consists of eight (8) items responded to on a six-point Likert-type response scale where "1 = Extremely Unlikely" and "6 = Extremely Likely" to determine how likely respondents are to participate in organisational citizenship behaviours. An example item from the OCBI Scale is "How likely are you to help others who have been absent?" Lee and Allen (2002) reported satisfactory measurement properties, revealing a Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which indicates satisfactory internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.83, i.e., > .70, Nunnally, 1978).

To better align the items with the focus of the current research study on workplace friendships, i.e., rather than on organisational citizenship behaviours, the language of the eight OCBI items was adapted to refer to respondents' 'friend(s)' rather than referring to more general terms such as 'others' or 'co-workers'. For example, instead of using the original item presented in the example above, i.e., "*How likely are you to help others who have been absent?*", the adapted item focuses the question on friendships by editing the language to ask, "*How likely are you to help your friend(s) who has been absent?*" Such adaptations to language are believed to assist with and guide the comprehensiveness of the item while also appropriately contextualising the item and measurement scale to the current study (Survey Research Center, 2016). The eight items, as described above, are summarised in Table 2.3 (see below).

It is, however, acknowledged that any adaptation made to an existing scale may call the scale's measurement properties into question. To address this, the construct validity and reliability of the adapted scale used to measure helping behaviour were assessed based on the data collected in the current study to ensure appropriate measurement and transparent research. The results of such analysis are reported in Chapter 4.

Table 2.3 2

The Original and Adapted items used to measure Helping Behaviour

Original OCBI item	Adapted Helping Behaviour item	Reason for Adaptation
How likely are you to...	How likely are you to...	
Willingly give your time to help others who have work-related problems?	1) <i>Willingly give your time to help your friends who have work-related problems?</i>	Guides comprehension and aligns item with the focus of the current study
Help others who have been absent?	2) <i>Help your friend who have been absent?</i>	Guides comprehension and aligns item with the focus of the current study
Share personal property with others to help their work?	3) <i>Share personal property with your friend to help their work?</i>	Guides comprehension and aligns item with the focus of the current study
Assist others with their duties?	4) <i>Assist your friend with their duties?</i>	Guides comprehension and aligns item with the focus of the current study
5) <i>Show genuine concern and courtesy towards co-workers, even under the most trying business or personal situation?</i>	N/A	N/A

Adjust your work schedule to accommodate other employees' requests for time off?	6) Adjust your work schedule to accommodate your friends' requests for time off?	Guides comprehension and aligns item with the focus of the current study
7) Go out of the way to make newer employees feel welcome in the work group?	N/A	N/A
Give up time to help others who have work or non-work problems?	8) Give up time to help your friend who has work or non-work problems?	Guides comprehension and aligns item with the focus of the current study

Note. The purpose of this table is to clarify items used, adaptations made, and the reasons for such adaptations to Lee and Allen's (2002) Organisational Citizenship Behaviour-Individual (OCBI) Scale. The 8 items used for the purposes of the current study are **bold** and *italicised*. **Source:** Survey Research Center. (2016). *Guidelines for Best Practice in Cross-Cultural Surveys*. Ann Arbor, MI: Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan. Retrieved November 16, 2022, from <http://ccsg.isr.umich.edu/>.

Affective Organisational Commitment

Respondents' affective organisational commitment was measured using the five affective organisational commitment items developed by Meyer and Allen (1991) to measure respondents' emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in their organisation. Responses to the five (5) items were captured using a six-point Likert-type response scale where "1 = Strong Disagree" and "6 = Strongly Agree". An example item includes "*This organisation has a great deal of personal meaning for me*". Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.77 to 0.88 (i.e., > .70, Nunnally, 1978) have been reported, indicating satisfactory internal consistency (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Three of the original items are measured on a reverse scale. As more advanced linguistic skills are necessary to aid the comprehension of a reversed item than are required in the comprehension of a positive item, the items were adapted and rephrased as positive items (Suárez-Álvarez et al., 2018; Survey Research Center, 2016). As previously discussed, the low language proficiency and literacy skills typically found among South Africans, particularly in English (Posel & Zeller, 2011), as well as the difficulty with comprehension which arises when required to alternate between positive and reversed items within the same measure (Suárez-Álvarez et al., 2018) justifies such adaptations. The adapted items are presented, and the adaptations are explained and justified in Table 2.4 (see below).

Importantly, it is acknowledged that adapting a scale will call the scale's measurement properties into question. To address this concern, the construct validity and reliability of the adapted scale were assessed based on the data collected in the current study to ensure appropriate measurement, transparent research and the internal and external validity of the study. The results of validity and reliability analyses for each scale utilised in the current study are reported in Chapter 4.

Table 2.4 3
The Original and Adapted items used to measure Affective Organisational Commitment

Original AOC item	Adapted AOC item	Reason for Adaptation
1) I really feel as if this organisation's problems are my own.	N/A	N/A
I do not feel like part of the family at my organisation. (R)	2) I feel like part of the family at my organisation.	Item reversed to a positive statement to improve comprehension and to unify the response scale
I do not feel emotionally attached to this organisation. (R)	3) I feel emotionally attached to this organisation.	Item reversed to a positive statement to improve comprehension and to unify the response scale
4) This organisation has a great deal of personal meaning for me.	N/A	N/A
I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organisation. (R)	5) I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organisation.	Item reversed to a positive statement to improve comprehension and to unify the response scale

Note. The purpose of this table is to clarify items used, adaptations made, and the reasons for such adaptations to Meyer and Allen's (1991) five affective organisational commitment items. The 5 items used for the purposes of the current study are **bold** and *italicised*. (R) indicates a reversed item.

Source: Survey Research Center. (2016). *Guidelines for Best Practice in Cross-Cultural Surveys*. Ann Arbor, MI: Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan. Retrieved November 16, 2022, from <http://ccsg.isr.umich.edu/>.

Personality

A 10-item adapted version of John et al.'s (2012) 'Big Five' Inventory (BFI) questionnaire was used to gather data on respondents' personalities. Responses to the ten personality items were captured using a six-point Likert-type response scale where "1 = Strong Disagree" and "6 = Strongly Agree" to determine how respondents viewed themselves with regards to the 'Big Five' personality traits (i.e., extraversion, openness to experience, neuroticism, conscientiousness, and agreeableness).

John et al. (2008) reported satisfactory measurement properties, revealing a range of Cronbach's alpha coefficients, which indicate satisfactory internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.75 to .90, with a Mean of .85, i.e., > .70, Nunnally, 1978). Additionally, an analysis of DeYoung's (2006) data set containing BFI self-reports and BFI rating by three of the respondents' peers, done by John et al. (2008), indicated acceptable validity.

For the purposes of the current study, only 10 of the 44 items were used to capture a brief insight into the respondents' personality traits, as personality is considered an important confounding variable in the current study. As such, ten items, two per trait, were considered

adequate before data collection. Additionally, the reduced set of personality items reduced the survey completion time, condensing the threat of response fatigue and discontinuance (Couper, 2000). It is, however, recommended that future research measures personality more thoroughly to establish more concrete conclusions regarding the role personality traits play in the relationships under investigation in the current study.

However, it is acknowledged that any adaptation made to an existing scale may call the scale's measurement properties into question. To address this, the construct validity and reliability of the adapted scale were assessed based on the data collected in the current study to ensure appropriate measurement and transparent research. The results of such analysis are reported in Chapter 4.

Additionally, in promoting transparency, Table 2.5 displays the ten personality items selected by the researcher from John et al.'s (2012) 44-item BFI to be used verbatim in the current study and each item's associated personality dimension.

Table 2.5 4
Big Five Inventory Personality items and Associated Dimensions

Item	Associated Dimension
I see myself as someone who...	
1) ... <i>talks a lot</i>	Extraversion
2) ... <i>is helpful</i>	Agreeableness
3) ... <i>does things quickly and carefully</i>	Conscientiousness
4) ... <i>worries a lot</i>	Neuroticism
5) ... <i>comes up with new ideas</i>	Openness to experience
6) ... <i>is outgoing</i>	Extraversion
7) ... <i>usually trusts people</i>	Agreeableness
8) ... <i>keeps working until things are done</i>	Conscientiousness
9) ... <i>gets nervous easily</i>	Neuroticism
10) ... <i>has an active imagination</i>	Openness to experience

Source: John, O., Donahue, E., & Kentle, R. (2012). Big Five Inventory. *Psychtests Dataset*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/t07550-000>

Open-ended Questions

Three items were used to gather data on respondents' beliefs of the hypothesised direct and indirect relationships between workplace friendships and intention to stay. Textboxes accompanied the six-point Likert-type response scales, where "1 = Strong Disagree" and "6 = Strongly Agree", to better understand the responses. These three items were:

1. *My workplace friendships are related to my intention to stay with my current organisation,*
2. *My workplace friendships are related to the feelings or beliefs I have about my organisation, and*
3. *My workplace friendships are related to my level of helping behaviour at work.*

Demographics

Finally, optional demographics items were included to collect data about respondents' age, gender, race, education level, employment status and length of time at their current employer. The demographic questions were also used to gather information concerning respondents' lifestyles, such as their marital status, number of siblings, children and people living in their current residence. The demographic data collected is not used to address any research objectives but rather to be able to describe the realised sample.

Data Collection Procedure

The Qualtrics software package was utilised to create an electronic questionnaire that could be distributed online. The University of Cape Town's Faculty of Commerce Ethics in Research Committee approved the research project and the questionnaire. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. Organisations were contacted via e-mail to briefly present the aim of the research and gain permission to conduct research within the respective organisations. Once an organisation approved, an e-mail containing the URL to the survey was sent to the organisation, with the request and permission for them to distribute the survey to their employees. Furthermore, the link to the survey was posted to employee associations and groups on the professional social media platform LinkedIn to broaden and diversify its reach to more potential respondents. Additionally, respondents were encouraged to share the survey with other eligible respondents to broaden the study's reach, assisting in data collection.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants and confirmed by utilising a digital consent form completed before the commencement of the survey. The consent form consisted of an explanation of the purpose of the study, the research procedures, confidentiality, participation and withdrawal, identification of the researcher, and stated the rights of the research respondents.

A monetary incentive, a lucky draw for one R1,500 online shopping gift voucher, was offered, and the survey link was distributed to encourage participation. Contact details of

participants who wished to participate in the lucky draw were separated from the rest of the survey responses to preserve confidentiality and anonymity. This list of cell phone numbers was only used to select and notify a lucky winner. The numbers were deleted once this was done and were not stored.

Sampling

Judgement sampling methods were initially utilised as the sample was selected according to the researcher's needs. Judgement sampling allows a researcher to employ judgement in selecting respondents with a specific purpose in mind (Olckers, 2011). Given the absence of a sample frame, of the individuals who met the researcher criteria, a non-probability convenience sampling strategy was then utilised. The consequence of such a sampling approach is that generalisations about the findings cannot be made about the population (Acharya et al., 2013). However, despite this limitation, this approach to conducting research in the social sciences is considered sufficient when faced with time and cost restraints (Olckers, 2011). Additionally, in an attempt to obtain a larger sample, a snowball sampling technique was utilised. Finally, respondents who completed the questionnaire were requested to share the survey with others fitting the research criteria (Olckers, 2011).

The sample included all ages, genders, races, and professions; however, respondents were required to be employed to participate in the current research study, as their responses need to be based on their experiences within their current role and organisation.

An electronic questionnaire was shared on professional networks. The survey was also distributed to the heads of Human Resources of four companies, in various industries, including retail, education, and production, for distribution within their organisations with a request to participate in the study. In this way, the researcher hoped to reach employees varying in industry and role in order to increase the number of respondents and the diversity of the realised sample. As a result, a total of n=216 usable responses were recorded.

Realised Sample

Table 3 below summarises the demographic characteristics of the realised sample. As stated above, the information below was used only to understand the sample better and was not used in any statistical inferences.

Table 3
Biographical Details of Respondents

Biographical Variable	Number	Percentage
Gender		
Female	153	70.8
Male	61	28.2
Non-binary	1	0.5
Missing	1	0.5
Total	216	100
Age		
20 to 25 years of age	74	34.3
26 to 30 years of age	57	26.4
31 to 35 years of age	23	10.6
36 to 40 years of age	18	8.3
41 to 45 years of age	8	3.7
46 years of age and older	31	14.4
Missing	5	2.3
Total	216	100
Race		
Asian	1	0.5
Black	9	4.2
Coloured	25	11.6
Indian	7	3.2
White	167	77.3
Other	2	0.9
Missing	5	2.3
Total	216	100
Years employed in the current organisation		
Less than 1 year	55	25.5
1 to 2 years	72	33.3
3 to 5 years	41	19
6 to 10 years	25	11.6
More than 10 years	20	9.3
Missing	3	1.4
Total	216	100
Years employed in the current department		
Less than 1 year	67	31
1 to 2 years	80	37
3 to 5 years	37	17
6 to 10 years	13	6
More than 10 years	16	7.4
Missing	3	1.4
Total	216	100
Highest level of education		
No formal schooling	0	0
Grade 12 / Matric	15	6.9
First undergraduate degree	45	20.8
First postgraduate degree	100	46.3
Master's degree	47	21.8
Doctorate	2	0.9
Other	4	1.9

Missing	3	1.4
Total	216	100
Current employment status		
Full-time	180	83.3
Part-time	13	6.0
Contract	21	9.7
Missing	2	0.9
Total	216	100
Marital status		
Single	122	56.5
Married	68	31.5
Divorced	6	2.8
Widowed	0	0
Other	16	7.4
Missing	4	1.9
Total	216	100
Number of siblings		
0	17	7.9
1	91	42.1
2	68	31.5
3 or more	35	16.6
Missing	5	2.3
Total	216	100
Number of children		
0	154	71.3
1	15	6.9
2	24	11.1
3 or more	13	6
Missing	10	4.6
Total	216	100
Number of people living in current residence		
Living alone	42	19.5
2 people living in the residence	70	32.4
3 people living in the residence	37	17.1
4 or more people living in the residence	59	27.4
Missing	8	3.7
Total	216	100

Biographical data from the survey (n=216) indicates that the majority of respondents were female (70.8%). Although the female labour force participation rate in South Africa is currently approximately 46.2% (Statista, 2022a), Smith (2008) suggests that more female research participants are to be expected, especially when the research topic entices empathy or emotional closeness, such as the case with friendships.

Furthermore, a large portion (77.3%) of the sample racially classified themselves as White, which does not represent the racial diversity of the general South African population, of which only approximately 8% are racially classified as White (Statista, 2022b). The lack of racial representation is likely due to self-selection or voluntary response bias (Bethlehem, 2010). Future studies should endeavour to collect more representative samples.

The most frequent length of tenure in the current organisation, as well as the most frequent length of employment in the current department, was 1 to 2 years (33.3% and 37% of the sample, respectively). The majority of the sample (83.3% of respondents) were employed full-time, and the most frequent education level was the first postgraduate degree (46.3%).

The data suggest that the realised sample consists of mainly young knowledge workers having recently entered their organisations and departments, as evidenced by their age (34.3% of the sample indicated they were 25 years old or younger), education level and a relatively short tenure with the current employer and within the current department. Such findings are likely due to the data collection method, as employee associations and groups on social media platforms, such as LinkedIn, are predominantly populated by young, knowledgeable workers entering the workforce from university.

Considering the respondents' lifestyles, most identified as single (56.5%) and did not have children (71.3%). Such findings seem to relate to the relatively young age of most respondents.

Ethical and Data Management Considerations

As is the case with all research studies of this nature, key ethical considerations need to be taken into account as the study involves information gathered directly from human participants. Accordingly, ethical clearance to conduct the study was granted by the University of Cape Town's Commerce Faculty Ethics in Research Committee (EiRC), and permission to collect data was obtained from all participating organisations and respondents before commencing with data collection.

The research study was designed and implemented in such a manner that it was compliant with accepted codes of ethics in research, including voluntary participation and participants' right to refuse participation and to withdraw from the study at any time, without any consequence to them. This information, as well as a detailed description of the nature of the study, was outlined on the first page of the survey. Further, the first page also informed respondents that their participation held no known risks or benefits and that their data was to be kept confidential, as only group trends were reported.

All data was collected and stored anonymously and confidentially in accordance with ethical and privacy guidelines and legislation. The appropriate steps to ensure that the personal data and completed survey responses have been and continue to be kept private and secure have been upheld, as responses are stored on a password-protected computer in an encrypted

folder, only accessible by the researcher and research supervisor. No personal identification information was stored. The data was not disposed of, nor will it be for at least five years after it has been used for the present study, ensuring that data is accessible if required.

Statistical Techniques used in Data Analysis

Once the survey was closed, the raw data was exported from Qualtrics into the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS, version 28) for analysis. The data was then cleaned and collated so that it could be analysed.

The analysis began with frequency tables being used to assess the completeness of the data, and histograms, along with descriptive statistics, were used to investigate the distribution of the data. Next, exploratory factor analysis was used to assess the construct validity of the scales (Field, 2018). Each scale's reliability or internal constancy was further investigated by calculating Cronbach's alpha coefficients. Once validity and reliability were established, composite scores for each latent variable were computed, and descriptive statistics were calculated to summarise each of them.

Inferential statistics were then utilised to test the hypotheses, which included Spearman's rho correlation coefficient to estimate bivariate relationships and hierarchical multiple regression for estimating multivariate relationships. Partial correlation coefficients were used to investigate the bivariate relationships of interest while controlling for the effect of personality on the variables in question. Additionally, PROCESS (v3.5; Hayes, 2013), a statistical software add-on to the SPSS package, was used to examine the mediation hypotheses and the role of personality as a covariant.

Conclusion

The research design and approaches, as well as the research method chosen for the purposes of the current study to address the stated research aim and objectives, are described and justified in this chapter. Furthermore, in this chapter, an overview of the development of the measurement instrument used, the data collection process followed, the sampling approach, and the ethical and data storage considerations are provided. Finally, a brief overview of the various statistical analyses utilised for the purposes of the current study is summarised here.

Chapter 4

Results

The results obtained from the various statistical analyses performed on the data collected using the questionnaire described in the previous chapter are reported in this chapter. Firstly, the results of the validity and reliability studies are reported. Next, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was utilised to assess the construct validity of each scale. After that, the EFA-derived scale's reliability or internal consistency was investigated by calculating Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Once the measures of the constructs under investigation were considered valid and reliable, descriptive statistics were calculated to summarise the data, followed by employing inferential statistics to assess the stated hypotheses.

Psychometric Evaluation of the Measurement Scales

Assessing Construct Validity

Before employing inferential statistics to assess the hypotheses that were stated above, the measurement properties of each of the scales utilised in the current study were assessed to ensure that the scores obtained could be considered valid and reliable measures of the constructs (or latent variables) and so ensure the internal and external validity of the current research study. To do this, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was used to assess construct validity, while Cronbach alpha coefficients (α) were calculated to assess the reliability or internal consistency of the scales. The Statistical Programme for the Social Science (SPSS, ver. 28) was employed to conduct these statistical analyses.

EFA is a statistical technique used extensively by researchers involved in developing and evaluating measurement scales to reduce or summarise items into factors for further analysis (Pallant, 2020). EFA identifies clusters of variables to understand the underlying structure of a scale's items (or set of variables) in an attempt to produce a smaller number of linear combinations of the original variables while accounting for as much of the variability in the pattern of correlations as possible (Pallant, 2020).

For the purposes of the current research study, Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) was used as the factor extraction method when conducting EFA, given that it focuses on the latent variable by indicating the shared variance between items (Field, 2018). Furthermore, where multi-dimensional scales were assessed (i.e., consisting of more than one factor or dimension), an oblique rotation, more specifically Direct Oblimin rotation, was employed to simplify the

interpretation of the extracted factors given that there is theoretical evidence suggesting that the factors within each scale are correlated (Field, 2018).

In conducting the EFA analyses, the following four steps were followed to assess the construct validity of each scale:

Step 1. Assessing the factorability of the data. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistic were calculated to assess the factorability of the data (Bartlett, 1950; Kaiser, 1974). The KMO statistic, which ranges from 0 to 1, indicates whether the data is adequately distributed, while Bartlett's Test of Sphericity indicates whether the items found in each scale are correlated (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014). According to Watkins (2018), the application of EFA is justified, and the data is considered adequate for factor analysis if the KMO statistic is found to be at least $\geq .5$ (although KMO values $\geq .7$ are desired), and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity produces a statistically significant chi-square value ($p < .05$).

Step 2. Deciding on the number of factors to be extracted. For the purposes of the current study, three approaches were employed to decide the number of factors that should be extracted. Firstly, Kaiser's (1960) criterion was utilised, which requires factors to have Eigenvalues greater than one (>1) to be interpretable and, therefore, to be retained.

Secondly, parallel analysis (Horn, 1965) was conducted using the *paran* package in R to estimate the number of factors which should be retained. In a parallel analysis, the Eigenvalues of the determined factors in randomly simulated data sets are compared to those of the factors in the actual data set. The focal point in this process is how many of the factors obtained from the actual data have an Eigenvalue greater than that of the simulative data. The number of factors is decided accordingly. The number of factors at the point where the Eigenvalue in the simulative data is greater than that of the actual data is considered significant (Çokluk & Koçak, 2016).

Thirdly, the so-called 'Scree plot test' was used as a subjective approach to estimate the number of factors to extract (Field, 2018). Scree plots have a distinct shape and graphically represent the number of factors against their corresponding Eigenvalues. The number of factors to be retained is subjectively determined by locating the point of inflexion and retaining the factors to the left of that point (Field, 2018). In other words, the suggested number of factors to be retained can be calculated by subtracting one (1) from the factor number at the point of inflexion or the point at which the graph shows a distinct change in the slope (Field, 2018).

Step 3. Obtaining a final 'clean' factor structure. For items to be retained, two inclusion/exclusion criteria need to be met: 1) factor loadings needed to be greater than .30, and 2) when two or more items were found to have factor loadings greater than .30, and the

factor loadings differed by less than .25, that item(s) was considered to have cross-loaded and was removed. According to Field (2018), when items appear to have cross-loaded, it is difficult to discern which factor it loads on, and, therefore, such items should be omitted from further analysis. Iterative rounds of EFA were conducted until, based on the inclusion/exclusion criteria described above, no items needed to be removed and a ‘clean’ factor structure was established.

Step 4. Labelling factors. Once established, the resultant factors that were extracted were then examined and assigned a label depending on the wording of the items that made up each factor. In doing so, the original dimension labels were first considered, and if all the items came from the same dimension, the original label was retained. If, however, items in the current study loaded on different factors or dimensions that had been the case originally, new labels were considered that best described the latent construct the factor seemed to represent.

Assessing Reliability

As suggested above, to assess each EFA-derived scale's internal consistency or reliability, Cronbach's alpha (α) was calculated. For a scale to be considered reliable, the Cronbach alpha coefficient needed to be $\geq .70$ (Nunnally, 1978). Additionally, to further interpret the Cronbach alpha coefficient obtained, George and Mallery's (2019) guidelines were used where:

- Cronbach $\alpha < .50$ = unacceptable;
- $.50 >$ Cronbach $\alpha < .60$ = poor;
- $.60 >$ Cronbach $\alpha < .70$ = acceptable or satisfactory;
- $.70 >$ Cronbach $\alpha < .80$ = good; and
- Cronbach $\alpha > .90$ = excellent.

Furthermore, item-total correlations were assessed to determine the extent to which items correlate with the total score. According to Field (2018), if any of the item-total correlations are less than .30, it indicates that a particular item does not correlate well with the overall scale and should rather be omitted. Therefore, where items were found to have item-total correlations of less than .30, they were removed in an attempt to increase Cronbach's alpha (α) further.

Workplace Friendship scale

Assessing the Construct Validity of the Workplace Friendship scale

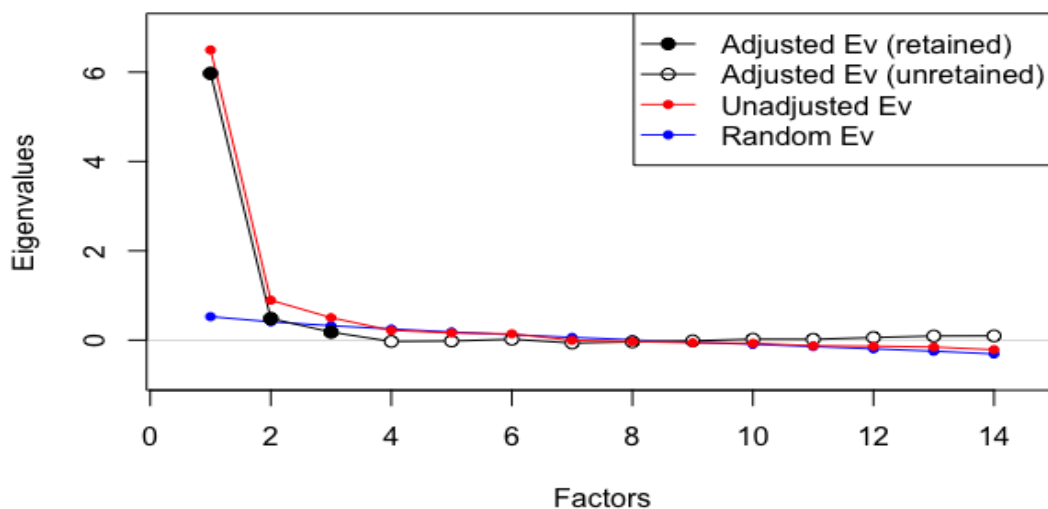
The 14 items used to measure the workplace friendship construct in the current study were subjected to EFA to assess its construct validity. As described above, EFA was conducted using the PAF extraction method, and the Direct Oblimin rotation method (i.e., an oblique rotational method) was employed.

Step 1. Following the previously discussed four steps, KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were first calculated to assess the factorability or suitability of the data for EFA. KMO was found to be .910, in other words, exceeding the recommended value of 0.7 (Watkins, 2018). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was further found to be significant ($\chi^2(91) = 1733.20, p < .01$). These results suggest that it was appropriate to conduct EFA on this data.

Step 2. As described above, to decide the number of factors to extract: 1) Kaiser's criterion, 2) Horn's (1965) Parallel Analysis, and 3) the so-called 'Scree plot test' were employed. Based on Kaiser's criterion, two (2) factors were found to have Eigenvalues greater than 1 (Eigenvalue Factor 1 = 6.90; Eigenvalue Factor 2 = 1.42).

Results of Horn's (1965) Parallel Analysis for factor retention, based on 5000 iterations, and using the Mean Eigenvalue of parallel data as the estimate, suggested that three (3) possible factors should be retained based on Adjusted Eigenvalues > 0 : Adjusted Eigenvalue for third factor = 0.180; estimated bias = 0.323. A visual representation of the parallel analysis is presented in Figure 4 (see below).

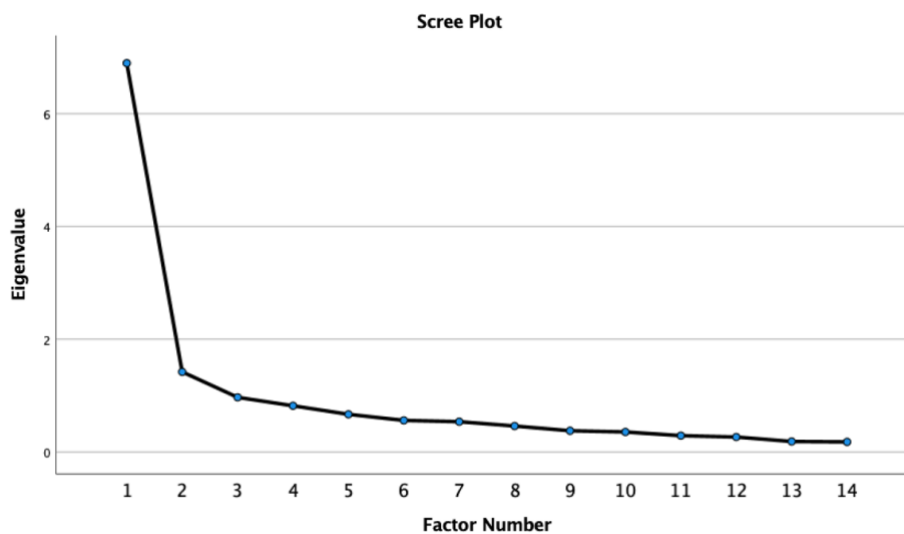
Figure 4
Workplace Friendship scale Parallel Analysis Plot



Notably, the third factor's Eigenvalue in the simulative data is only marginally greater than that of the actual data. Therefore, although it is considered by Çokluk and Koçak (2016) to be significant, we chose to proceed with two factors due to the small difference and outcomes of both Kaiser's criterion and the 'Scree plot test', which revealed a marked change in slope at the third factor, suggesting that two (2) factors should be retained (see Figure 5 below).

Figure 5

Workplace Friendship scale Scree Plot



Therefore, based on the Parallel Analysis, Kaiser's criterion (i.e., Eigenvalues > 1) and the 'Scree plot test' presented above, it was decided that a two-factor structure would be justified.

Step 3. Based on the inclusion/exclusion criteria discussed above, in the first round of EFA, the following item, "*I have the opportunity to get to know my co-workers on a personal level*", was removed as it had factor loadings of .334 and .557 on two factors and deemed to have cross-loaded (i.e., the difference between the factor loadings = .223; i.e., < .25; Field, 2018).

In the next round of EFA, the items "*I have the opportunity to develop close friendships at my workplace*" and "*I feel I can trust at least one of my co-workers*" were removed as items were deemed to have cross-loaded (.364 - .505 = .141; .303 - .395 = .092, respectively, i.e., both < .25; Field, 2018). The subsequent round of EFA, comprising 11 items, revealed a 'clean' factor structure; in other words, all the items met the inclusion/exclusion criteria, and no other items were removed, which is presented in Table 4.1 (see below). The factor loadings are also visually represented in the Factor loadings plot depicted in Figure 6 (see below).

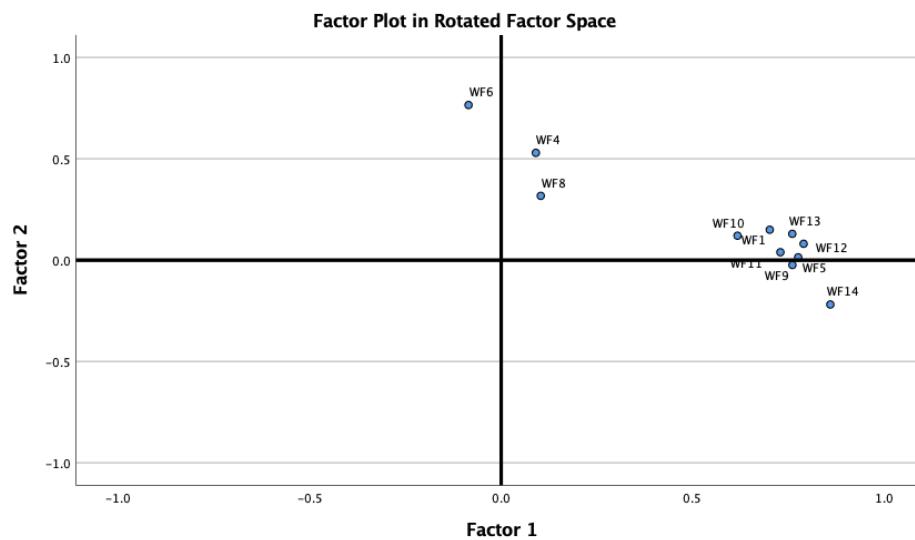
Table 4.1
Final Two-Factor EFA for the Workplace Friendship scale (n = 216)

Items	Factor 1: Workplace Friendship Prevalence	Factor 2: Workplace Friendship Opportunity
I have a friend at work who I miss when they are absent	.86	
I am committed to my friend(s) at work	.80	
Seeing my co-workers is one of the main reasons I look forward to my job	.78	
I socialise with co-workers outside the workplace	.76	
I am energised by my friend(s) at work	.76	
I believe my friendships with my co-workers are mutually beneficial	.73	
I have formed strong friendships at work	.70	
I have the opportunity to interact with my workplace friend(s) on a regular basis	.62	
Communication among employees is encouraged by my organisation		.77
I am able to work with my co-workers to solve problems		.53
Informal talk is tolerated by my organisation as long as the work is completed		.32
	Eigenvalues	5.51
	% Variance explained	50.11%
		1.28
		11.65%

Extraction method: Principal Axis Factoring. Rotation method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization (Rotation converged in 4 iterations).

Figure 6

Workplace Friendship scale Factor Loading Plot



Step 4. The factors presented in Table 4.1 and Figure 6 were interpreted with reference to Table 2.1, which includes the intended associated dimension derived from Nielsen et al.'s (2000) WFS, as well as the intended associated friendship type derived from Zarankin and Kunkel's (2019) Workplace Friendship Typology described in Figure 1. The two factors can

be seen to, for the most part, separate workplace friendship *prevalence* and *opportunity*, as well as workplace friendship *quality* and *scope*.

Based on the results presented in Table 4.1 and Figure 6, all seven of the original workplace friendship prevalence items, as well as one workplace friendship opportunity item loaded on Factor 1. The items relating to quality can be seen to cluster together, with all six items associated with workplace friendship quality, as well as two items associated with workplace friendship scope, loading on Factor 1. Therefore, Factor 1 was labelled ‘Workplace Friendship Prevalence (Quality)’.

The items that loaded on Factor 2 comprised three items, all of which were part of the original six items used to measure workplace friendship opportunity. The three items loaded onto Factor 2, all theoretically associated with workplace friendship scope, was, therefore, labelled ‘Workplace Friendship Opportunity (Scope)’.

Cumulatively, the two factors explained approximately 62% of the variance in workplace friendships and which, based on these results, is considered a valid measure of the workplace friendship construct.

Assessing the Reliability of the Workplace Friendship scale

The reliability of the 11 items of the workplace friendship scale that emerged after conducting EFA was calculated next. The Cronbach alpha (α) coefficient for all 11 items taken together was found to be satisfactory (Cronbach $\alpha = .892$; i.e., $r > .7$; Nunnally, 1978). Based on George and Mallery’s (2019) guidelines, the reliability of all 11 items was considered to be approaching ‘excellent’ (i.e., Cronbach $\alpha > .90 = \text{excellent}$).

The Cronbach alpha coefficient for Factor 1 was found to be satisfactory (Cronbach $\alpha = .92$; i.e., $r > .7$; Nunnally, 1978). However, the Cronbach alpha coefficient calculated for Factor 2 indicated poor reliability (Factor 2 Cronbach $\alpha = .55$; i.e., $r < .7$; Nunnally, 1978). Based on George and Mallery’s (2019) guidelines, Factor 1’s reliability is considered to be ‘excellent’ (i.e., Cronbach $\alpha > .90$), while Factor 2’s reliability is categorised as being ‘poor’ (i.e., $.50 > \text{Cronbach } \alpha < .60$).

Despite one item, namely “*Informal talk is tolerated by my organisation, as long as the work is completed*”, which was found to have an item-total correlation of .29, all item-total correlations were above Field’s (2018) suggested cut-off of $r = .30$. However, it was decided to retain the abovementioned item as it had been found to have an acceptable factor loading ($r = .32$) and an item-total correlation was considered close enough to .30 to justify its inclusion.

Based on the evidence presented above, the WFS used to measure workplace friendship prevalence (quality) and workplace friendship opportunity (scope) was considered to be valid and reliable and appropriate for use in further analysis.

Intention to Stay scale

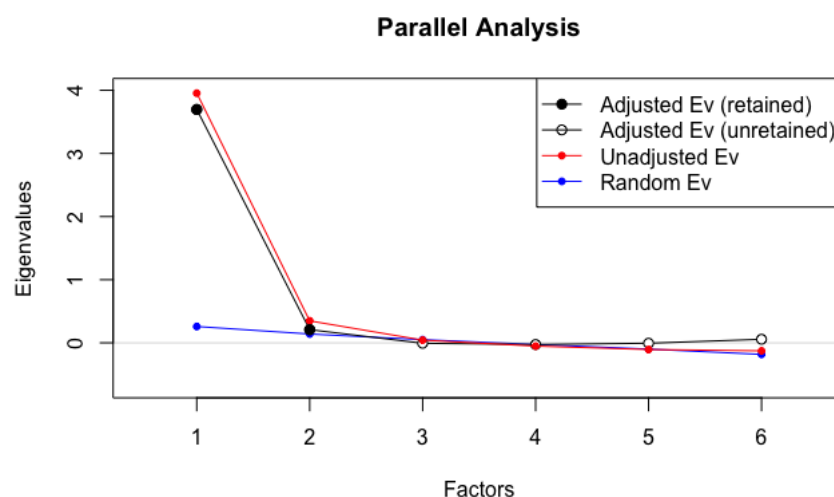
Assessing the Construct Validity of the Intention to Stay scale

Step 1. The data gathered using the six intention to stay items that were selected from Roodt's (2004) Turnover Intention Scale (TIS) and Clary et al.'s (1998) Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI), and that were further adapted for the purposes of the current study, were assessed to ensure its factorability. KMO was found to be satisfactory (KMO = .845, i.e., > .7; Watkins, 2018), and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was found to be significant ($\chi^2(15) = 987.52$, $p < .01$), indicating the factorability of the data.

Step 2. Results from Horn's (1965) Parallel Analysis for factor retention with 5000 iterations and using the Mean Eigenvalue of parallel data as the estimate suggested that two factors ($p = 2$) be retained based on adjusted Eigenvalues > 0: adjusted Eigenvalue for second factor = 0.209; estimated bias = 0.139. A visual representation of the parallel analysis is presented in Figure 7 (see below).

Figure 7

Intention to Stay scale Parallel Analysis Plot

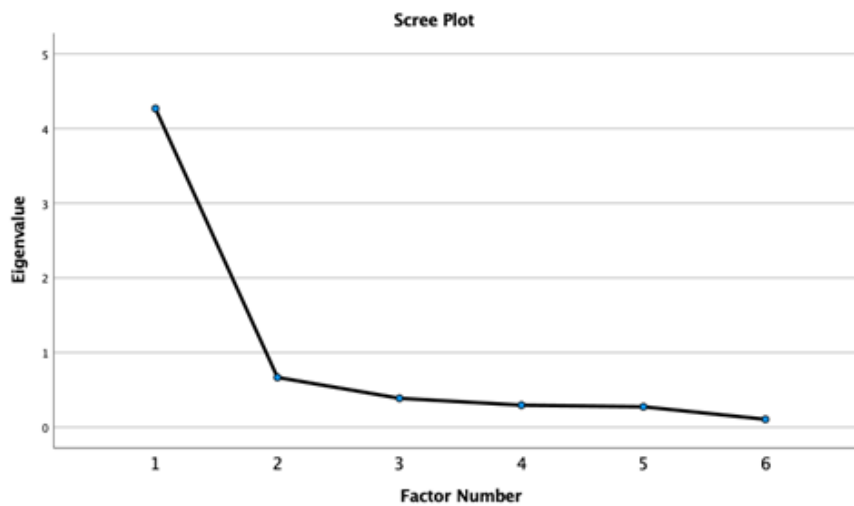


Notably, the second factor's Eigenvalue in the simulative data is only marginally greater than that of the actual data. Therefore, although it is considered by Çokluk and Koçak

(2016) to be significant, we chose to proceed with one factor due to the small difference, as well as due to the outcomes of both Kaiser's criterion, which suggested a single factor (Factor 1 Eigenvalue = 4.27, i.e., > 1) and the 'Scree plot test', which revealed a marked change in slope at the second factor, suggesting that one (1) factor should be retained (see Figure 8 below).

Figure 8

Intention to Stay scale Scree Plot



Based on the Parallel Analysis results reported above, as well as Kaiser's criterion (Eigenvalues > 1) and the 'scree plot test', it was decided that a single factor or unidimensional measurement model had emerged. The results of the EFA are summarised in Table 4.2. As all six (6) items loaded on Factor 1, they were considered a valid measure of intention to stay.

Table 4.2

Final Single-Factor EFA for the Intention to Stay scale (n = 216)

Items	Factor 1: Intention to Stay
I am likely to still be working at this organisation three years from now	.89
I plan to continue working at this organisation for as long as possible	.83
My current job satisfies my personal needs	.82
I plan to continue working at this organisation for the next twelve months	.81
I am given the opportunity at work to achieve my personal work-related goals	.76
I look forward to another day at work	.74
	Eigenvalue
	4.27
	% Variance explained
	71.13%

Extraction method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Step 4. Based on the results presented in Table 4.2 above, all six of the original intention to stay items loaded on Factor 1 and it was, therefore, labelled ‘Intention to Stay’.

Assessing the Reliability of the Intention to Stay scale

The Cronbach alpha (α) coefficient for the unidimensional six-item Intention to Stay scale was found to be satisfactory (Cronbach $\alpha = .92$, i.e., $r > .7$; Nunnally, 1978). According to George and Mallery (2019), the internal consistency can be considered to be ‘excellent’ (i.e., Cronbach $\alpha > .90$; George & Mallery, 2019). No items were removed as it would not lead to any further increase in the Cronbach alpha coefficient (Field, 2018). Furthermore, all item-total correlations were greater than the accepted standard ($.53 < r < .76$; i.e., $r > .3$; Field, 2018).

Based on the basket of evidence presented above, the intention to stay scale utilised for the purposes of the current study was considered to be a valid and reliable measure of the construct.

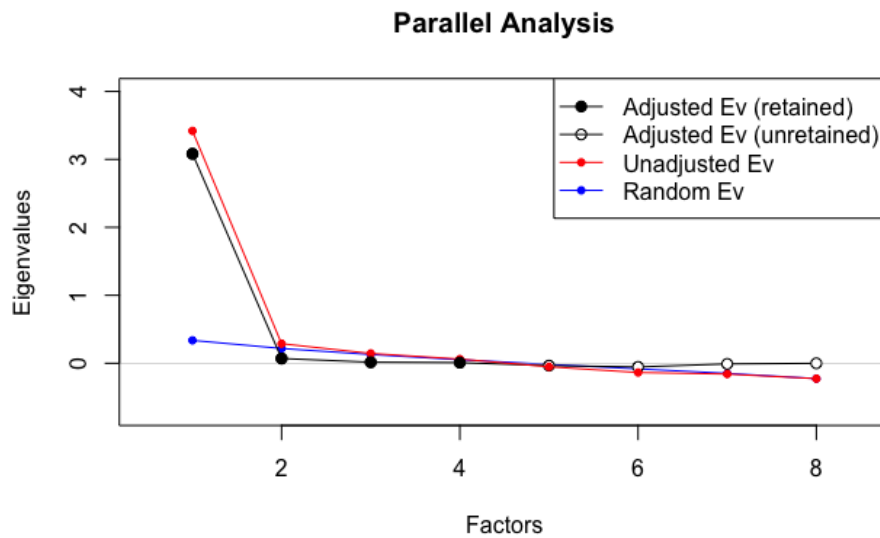
Helping Behaviour scale

Assessing the Construct Validity of the Helping Behaviour scale

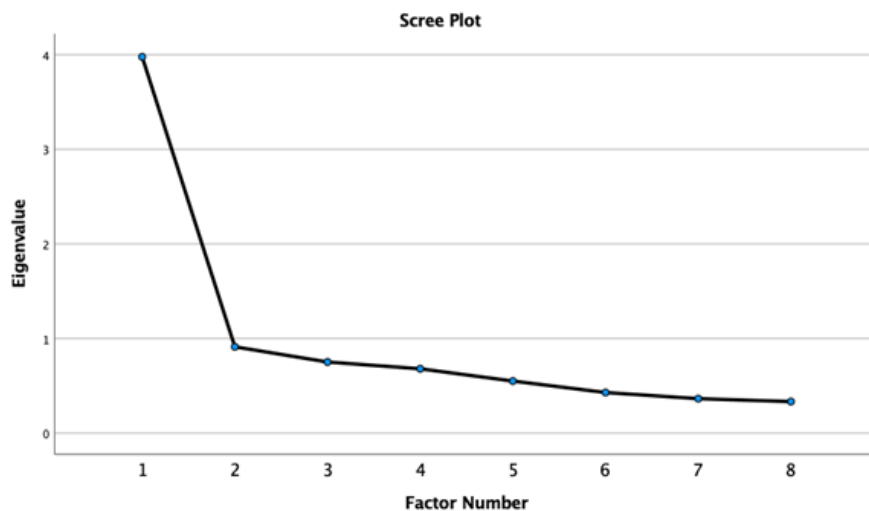
The eight helping behaviour items obtained from Lee and Allen's (2002) Organisational Citizenship Behaviour-Individual (OCBI) scale, which were adapted for the purposes of the current study to measure the helping behaviour construct was subjected to EFA to assess its construct validity.

Step 1. KMO was found to be satisfactory (KMO = .864; i.e., $> .7$; Watkins, 2018), and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was found to be significant ($\chi^2(28) = 617.37, p < .01$), indicating the factorability of the data.

Step 2. Results of Horn's (1965) Parallel Analysis for factor retention with 5000 iterations and using the Mean Eigenvalue of parallel data as the estimate suggested that four ($p = 4$) factors should be retained based on adjusted Eigenvalues > 0 : adjusted Eigenvalue for fourth factor = 0.009; estimated bias = 0.052. A visual representation of the parallel analysis is presented in Figure 9 (see below).

Figure 9*Helping Behaviour scale Parallel Analysis Plot*

Despite the Parallel Analysis results suggesting four (4) factors, which Çokluk and Koçak (2016) would consider to be significant, the second, third and fourth factor's Eigenvalues in the simulative data are only marginally greater than that of the actual data. We, therefore, chose to proceed and extract one (1) factor due to the marginal differences, as well as given the outcomes of both Kaiser's criterion and the 'Scree plot test', which suggested a single factor (Factor 1 Eigenvalue = 3.98; i.e., > 1). The Scree plot revealed a marked change in slope at the second factor, therefore, suggesting that there is one (1) interpretable factor (see Figure 10 below).

Figure 10*Helping Behaviour Scale Scree Plot*

Based on the parallel analysis results reported above, as well as Kaiser's criterion (Eigenvalues > 1) and the so-called 'Scree plot test', it was decided that a single factor or unidimensional measurement model had emerged. The results of the EFA, extracting for one (1) factor, are summarised in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Final Single-Factor EFA for the Helping Behaviour scale (n = 216)

Item	Factor 1: Helping Behaviour
How likely are you to help your friend(s) who has been absent?	.75
How likely are you to willingly give your time to help your friend(s) who have work-related problems?	.71
How likely are you to give up time to help your friend(s) who has work and/ or non-work problems?	.69
How likely are you to adjust your work schedule to accommodate your friend's request for time off?	.69
How likely are you to show genuine concern and courtesy towards co-workers, even under the most trying business or personal situations?	.67
How likely are you to assist your friend(s) with their duties?	.65
How likely are you to share personal property with your friend(s) to help their work?	.62
How likely are you to go out of the way to make newer employees feel welcome in the workgroup?	.42
	Eigenvalue
	3.98
	% Variance explained
	49.73%

Extraction method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Step 4. Based on the results presented in Table 4.3 above, all eight (8) of the original helping behaviour items can be seen to have loaded on Factor 1 and it was, therefore, labelled 'Helping Behaviour'.

Assessing the Reliability of the Helping Behaviour scale

The Cronbach alpha (α) coefficient for the eight (8) item unidimensional scale was found to be satisfactory (Cronbach $\alpha = .841$, i.e., $r > .7$; Nunnally, 1978) and considered to be 'good' (i.e., $.70 > \alpha < .80 = \text{good}$; George & Mallery, 2019). No items were removed as it would not lead to an increase in Cronbach alpha (Field, 2018). Moreover, all item-total correlations were greater than the accepted standard ($.38 < r < .67$; i.e., $r > .3$; Field, 2018).

Based on the basket of evidence, the adapted helping behaviour scale utilised for the purposes of the current study was considered to be a valid and reliable measure of the construct.

Affective Organisational Commitment scale

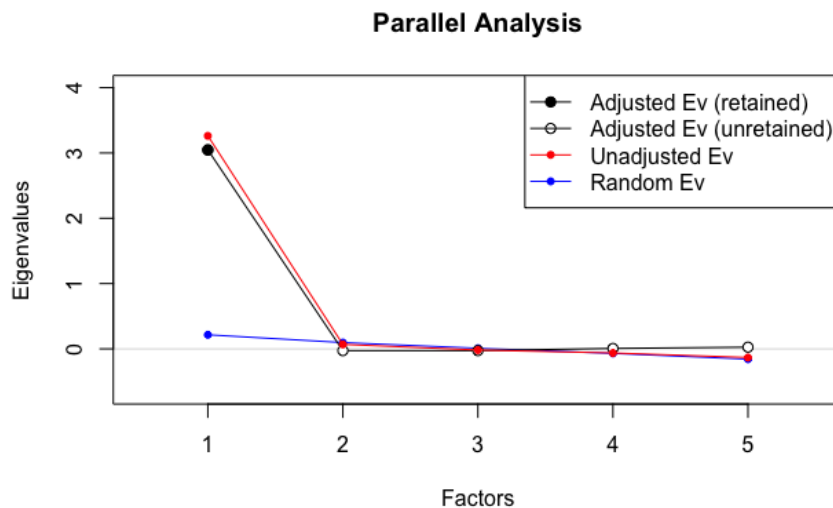
Assessing the Construct Validity of the Affective Organisational Commitment scale

Step 1. The data gathered using the five affective organisational commitment items developed by Meyer and Allen (1991) to measure respondents' emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in their organisation was assessed to ensure the factorability of the data. KMO was found to be satisfactory (KMO = .858, i.e., > .7; Watkins, 2018). Furthermore, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was found to be significant ($\chi^2(10) = 748.30$, $p < .01$), indicating the factorability of the data.

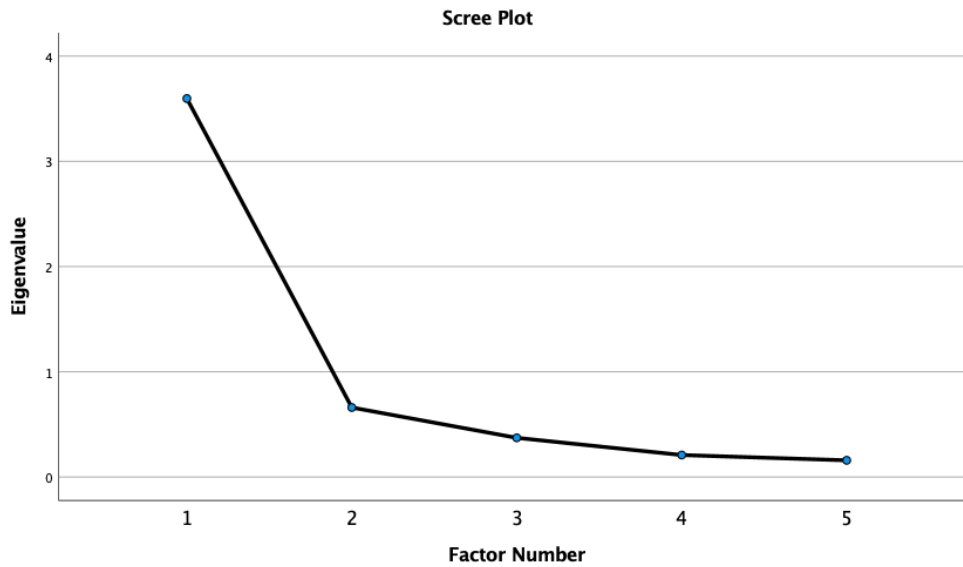
Step 2. Results of Horn's (1965) Parallel Analysis for factor retention with 5000 iterations and using the Mean Eigenvalue of parallel data as the estimate suggested that one factor ($p = 1$) should be retained based on adjusted Eigenvalues > 0: adjusted Eigenvalue for first factor = 3.047; estimated bias = 0.215. A visual representation of the parallel analysis is presented in Figure 11 (see below).

Figure 11

Affective Organisational Commitment scale Parallel Analysis Plot



Further, when considering Kaiser's criterion, one factor was found to have an Eigenvalue greater than 1 (Factor 1 Eigenvalue = 3.60; i.e., > 1). The Scree plot (see Figure 12 below) revealed a drastic change in slope at the second factor, also suggesting that there is one (1) interpretable factor.

Figure 12*Affective Organisational Commitment scale Scree Plot*

Based on the parallel analysis results reported above, as well as Kaiser's criterion (Eigenvalues > 1) and the so-called 'Scree plot test', it was decided that a single factor structure or unidimensional measurement model was supported. The results of the EFA are summarised in Table 4.4 (see below).

Table 4.4*Final Single-Factor EFA for the Affective Organisation Commitment scale (n = 216)*

Items	Factor 1: Affective Organisational Commitment
I feel emotionally attached to my organisation	.90
I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organisation	.90
My organisation has a great deal of personal meaning for me	.89
I feel like part of the family at my organisation	.78
I really feel as if my organisation's problems are my own	.56
	Eigenvalue 3.65
	% Variance explained 71.95%

Extraction method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Step 4. As all the items came from Meyer and Allen's (1991) Affective Organisational Commitment scale, Factor 1 was labelled 'Affective Organisational Commitment'.

Assessing the Reliability of the Affective Organisational Commitment scale

The Cronbach alpha (α) coefficient was found to be satisfactory (Cronbach $\alpha = .90$, i.e., $r > .7$; Nunnally, 1978) and approaching ‘excellent’ (i.e., Cronbach $\alpha > .90 = \text{excellent}$; George & Mallery, 2019). All item-total correlations were greater than the accepted standard ($.53 < r < .84$; i.e., $r > .3$; Field, 2018).

Based on the basket of evidence, the affective organisational commitment scale utilised for the purposes of the current study was considered to be a valid and reliable measure of the construct.

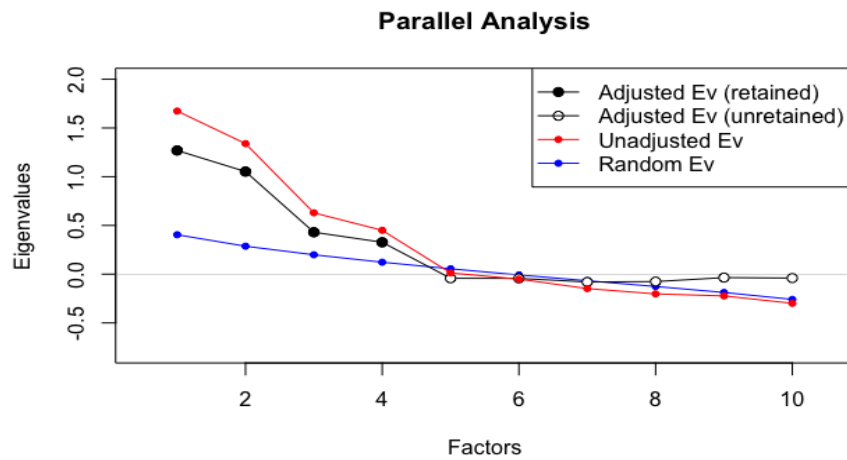
The ‘Big Five’ Inventory Personality scale

Assessing the Construct Validity of the ‘Big Five’ Inventory Personality scale

Step 1. The 10 items adapted from the BFI personality scale (John et al., 2012) used to measure the personality construct in the current study, as presented in Chapter 3, was subjected to EFA to assess its construct validity. KMO was found to be .59, which is satisfactory (KMO $> .5$; Watkins, 2018), and considered acceptable. Additionally, significant results for Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity ($\chi^2(45) = 452.13, p < .01$) were obtained, suggesting that it would be appropriate to conduct EFA on this data.

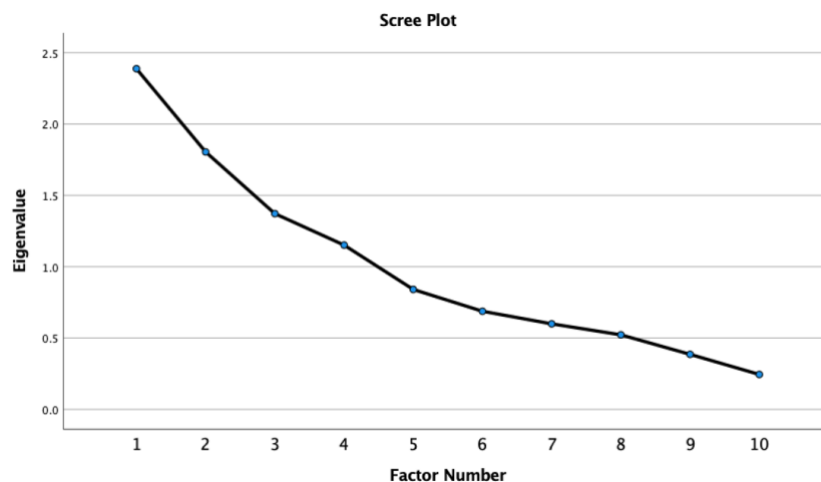
Step 2. Results of Horn’s (1965) Parallel Analysis for factor retention with 5000 iterations and using the Mean Eigenvalue of parallel data as the estimate suggested that four (4) factors should be retained based on adjusted Eigenvalues > 0 : adjusted Eigenvalue for fourth factor = 0.327; estimated bias = 0.123. A visual representation of the parallel analysis is presented in Figure 13 (see below).

Figure 13
'Big Five' Personality scale Parallel Analysis Plot



Additionally, using Kaiser's criterion, four factors were found to have Eigenvalues greater than 1 (Factor 1 Eigenvalue = 2.40, Factor 2 Eigenvalue = 1.81, Factor 3 Eigenvalue = 1.37, Factor 4 Eigenvalue = 1.15; i.e., > 1). Further, the so-called 'Scree plot test' was employed and is presented in Figure 14 (see below), revealing a drastic change in slope at the fifth factor, suggesting that there are four (4) interpretable factors.

Figure 14
'Big Five' Personality scale Scree Plot



Based on the Parallel Analysis, Kaiser's criterion (i.e., Eigenvalues > 1), as well as the 'Scree plot test' presented above, it was decided that a four-factor structure was justified, cumulatively explaining 67.17% of the variance.

Step 3. To aid in the interpretation of the four factors, factor rotation using a Direct Oblimin rotation with Kaiser Normalisation was performed. Direct Oblimin rotation was used

because it is believed that the factors are interrelated (Field, 2018). Based on the inclusion/exclusion criterion previously discussed, one of the items measuring agreeableness, “*I see myself as someone who usually trusts people*”, was removed after the first round of EFA.

The subsequent round of EFA revealed a ‘clean’ factor structure. In other words, all the items met the inclusion/exclusion criteria, and no other items were removed. The final solution consisting of the remaining nine items is presented in Table 4.5 (see below). The factor loadings are visually represented in the Factor loadings plot depicted in Figure 15 (see below).

Table 4.5

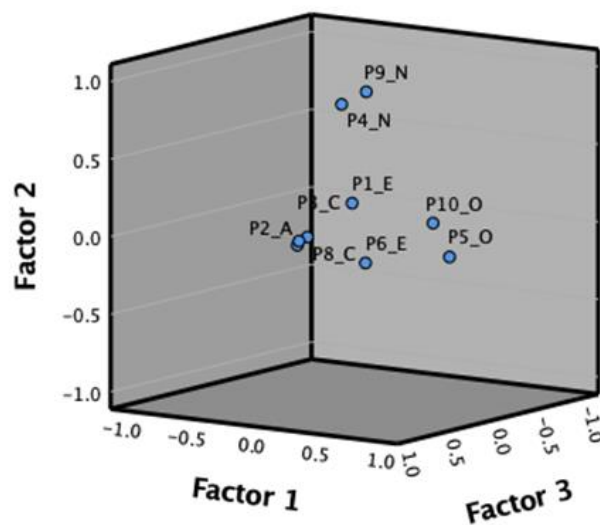
Final Four-Factor EFA for the ‘Big Five’ Personality scale (n = 216)

Items	Factor 1: Extraversion	Factor 2: Neuroticism	Factor 3: Conscientiousness	Factor 4: Openness
I see myself as someone who...				
...is outgoing	.75			
...talks a lot	.68			
...worries a lot		.86		
...gets nervous easily		.84		
...does things quickly and carefully			-.66	
...keeps working until things are done			-.58	
...is helpful			-.53	
...comes up with new ideas				.74
...has an active imagination				.62
Eigenvalues	2.40	1.82	1.37	1.15
% Variance explained	23.88%	18.05%	13.72%	11.52%

Extraction method: Principal Axis Factoring. Rotation method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization (Rotation converged in 6 iterations).

Figure 15

‘Big Five’ Personality Four-Factor Loading Plot



Step 4. Based on the results presented in Table 4.5 and Figure 15, it is evident that two items relating to extraversion clustered together, with both extraversion items loading on Factor 1 and it was, therefore, labelled ‘Extraversion’. The items which loaded on Factor 2 comprised two items, both of which were part of the original two items used to measure neuroticism. Factor 2 was, therefore, labelled ‘Neuroticism’. Further, it can be seen that the two items relating to conscientiousness, as well as the remaining agreeableness item, clustered together, with the remaining agreeableness and both conscientiousness items loading on Factor 3 and was, therefore, labelled ‘Conscientiousness’. The items that loaded on Factor 4 comprised two items, both of which were part of the original two items used to measure openness to experience. Factor 4 was, therefore, labelled ‘Openness’.

Assessing the Reliability of the ‘Big Five’ Inventory Personality scale

The Cronbach alpha (α) coefficients for each of the four EFA-derived factors are reported below in Table 4.6, along with each factor’s label of satisfactory or not (Nunnally, 1978) and strength in terms of George and Mallery’s (2019) guidelines.

Table 4.6

Reliability of the Four-Factor EFA-derived ‘Big Five’ Personality scale

Factors	Cronbach alpha (α)	Nunnally (1978)	George and Mallery (2019)
Extraversion	.64	Approaching satisfactory	Acceptable or satisfactory
Neuroticism	.83	Satisfactory	Good, approaching excellent
Conscientiousness	.61	Approaching satisfactory	Acceptable or satisfactory
Openness to experience	.63	Approaching satisfactory	Acceptable or satisfactory

Although the Cronbach alpha coefficients were below the desired level to indicate satisfactory reliability (i.e., $r > .7$; Nunnally, 1978), Cronbach alpha is sensitive to the number of items in the scale with k (= number of items in the scale) being the denominator in the formula. With the Cronbach alpha coefficients nearing .70 with only two (2) items, it can be reasonably expected that the Cronbach alpha coefficients would have been greater than .70 had there been more items. The Spearman-Brown formula can be used to demonstrate this, but it was decided that reporting the results of these calculations would not add incremental value to the results.

Furthermore, the item-total correlations were calculated for each Factor and found to be consistently greater than the accepted standard of .30 (Extraversion $r = .47$; Neuroticism $r = .71$; Conscientiousness $r = .47$; and Openness to experience = .46; i.e., all $>.30$; Field, 2018).

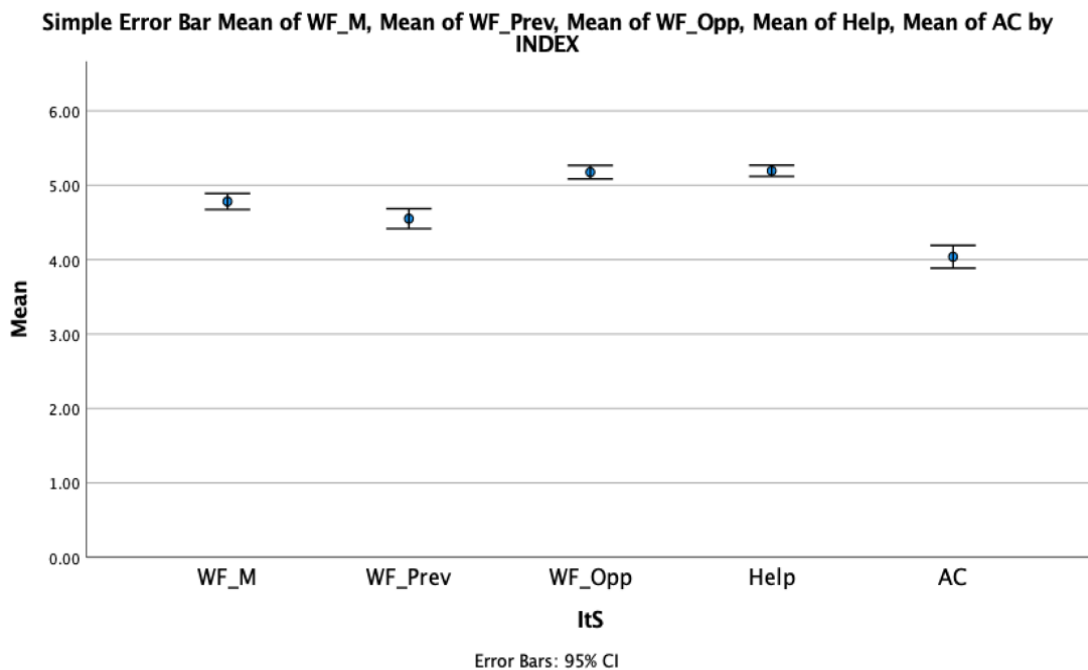
Based on the evidence presented above, the 10 BFI items, adapted for and used to measure personality based on the traits of the 'Big Five' Inventory, were considered a valid and reliable measure of the construct and could be used for further analyses.

Results from Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics (incl. Means, Standard Deviations, minimum, maximum, Skewness, and Kurtosis) were calculated based on the EFA-derived measures of the selected constructs and are summarised in Table 5.1 (see below). A six-point Likert-type response scale was used throughout the questionnaire, and, therefore, the Mean scores reported in Table 5.1 can be compared with one another. The 95% Confidence Interval (CI) for the Mean and Standard Deviation was also calculated and reported in Table 5.2. The 95% CI for the Means are further graphically represented in Figure 16 (see below).

Figure 16

Means and 95% Confidence Intervals for the Mean



Note. WF_M = Workplace Friendship composite score; WF_Opp = Workplace Friendship Scope/Opportunity score; WF_Prev = Workplace Friendship Quality/Prevalence score; Help = Helping Behaviour score; AC = Affective Organisational Commitment score; ItS = Intention to Stay score

Table 5.1*Descriptive Statistics for the scales used in the Current Study*

Scale	n	M	SD	Skewness		Kurtosis	
				Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Workplace Friendships	216	4.8	0.80	-0.92	.166	0.70	.330
Workplace Friendship Opportunities	216	5.2	0.68	-1.09	.166	1.57	.330
Workplace Friendship Prevalence	216	4.6	1.00	-0.92	.166	0.17	.330
Intention to Stay	216	4.0	1.26	-0.37	.166	-0.70	.330
Helping Behaviour	216	5.2	0.56	-0.64	.166	0.85	.330
Affective Organisational Commitment	216	4.0	1.14	-0.46	.166	-0.08	.330
Extraversion	216	4.4	1.08	-0.52	.166	-0.29	.330
Neuroticism	216	4.2	1.24	-0.48	.166	-0.42	.330
Conscientiousness	216	5.1	0.56	-0.21	.166	-0.44	.330
Openness	216	4.8	0.85	-0.62	.166	0.70	.330

Note. Responses to all of the scales were measured on a six-point Likert-type response scale. Bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples. Valid N (pairwise).

Table 5.2*95% Confidence Intervals for the Descriptive Statistics presented in Table 5.1*

Scale	n	M		SD		Skewness Statistic		Kurtosis Statistic	
		95% CI		95% CI		95% CI		95% CI	
		Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper
Workplace Friendships	216	4.7	4.9	0.71	0.89	-1.15	-0.69	0.08	1.46
Workplace Friendship Opportunities	216	5.1	5.3	0.60	0.76	-1.464	-0.70	0.11	3.33
Workplace Friendship Prevalence	216	4.4	4.7	0.89	1.10	-1.17	-0.68	-0.02	1.46
Intention to Stay	216	3.9	4.2	1.16	1.35	-0.56	-0.20	-0.97	-0.34
Helping Behaviour	216	5.1	5.3	0.50	0.63	-1.06	-0.09	-0.80	2.31
Affective Organisational Commitment	216	3.9	4.2	1.03	1.25	-0.66	-0.25	-0.48	0.46
Extraversion	216	4.3	4.5	0.97	1.17	-0.72	-0.28	-0.68	0.20
Neuroticism	216	4.0	4.3	1.13	1.34	-0.69	-0.28	-0.81	0.09
Conscientiousness	216	5.1	5.2	0.51	0.61	-0.43	0.03	-0.82	0.00
Openness	216	4.6	4.9	0.77	0.95	-1.00	-0.17	-0.61	1.94

Note. Responses to all of the scales were measured on a six-point Likert-type response scale. Bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples. Valid N (pairwise).

As summarised in Table 5.1 and Figure 16, respondents reported high scores on all scales, which were within a close range of one another (i.e., indicated by relatively small Standard Deviations). Importantly, although still above the scale midpoints of three (3), on the six-point Likert-type scales used consistently in the current study, both intention to stay and affective organisational commitment scales yielded, relatively speaking, slightly lower Mean scores, while workplace friendship opportunities (scope) and helping behaviour are seen to be, relatively speaking, somewhat higher when compared to the rest of the scales. Furthermore, when considering the Mean scores of the four factors of personality discussed previously, respondents reported high scores on all four personality components.

Estimating The Hypothesised Relationships between the Constructs

With the reliability and validity of the measurement scales having been established, the next step was to explore the direct and indirect (or mediated) relationships between the constructs using bivariate and multivariate statistical analytical techniques. The SPSS statistical software package (ver. 28) was utilised, as well as the SPSS add-on package, PROCESS (ver. 3.5; Hayes, 2013) to estimate relationships in an attempt to find support for the stated hypotheses.

The Bivariate Relationships between the Constructs

Assessing the Assumptions underlying Inferential Statistics for Direct Relationships

Both the Skewness and Kurtosis statistics were calculated and are summarised in Table 5.1 and Table 5.2 (see above). According to Watkins (2018), the Skewness statistic refers to the symmetry of the score distribution, where a Skewness statistic of zero indicates a symmetrical distribution, and a Skewness statistic of -1.09 indicates a larger portion of the sample responded with scores numerically greater than the median. The data collected from the workplace friendship opportunity scale was found to be the most skew (Skewness = -1.09), in a negative direction. In alignment with Curran et al.'s (1996) general rule of thumb, the Skewness statistics found for the current samples' intention to stay and affective organisational commitment scores, -0.371 and -0.457, respectively, indicate approximate symmetrical distributions. The remaining Skewness statistics, however, are considered moderately skewed, while the Skewness statistic for workplace friendship opportunities is greater than -1, deeming it 'highly skewed' (Curran et al., 1996). Additionally, the Skewness statistics obtained for the current samples' personality factors ranged between -0.21 and -0.62, indicating approximately

symmetrical distributions (Curran et al., 1996). The Kurtosis statistics of the personality factors are also found to measure in the range between -7 and $+7$, indicating normal univariate distribution (Curran et al., 1996).

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality was further used to assess whether the scores obtained statistically significantly differed from a normal distribution (i.e., was statistically significantly skewed). Significant Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests of normality statistics were obtained for all of the variables of interest and are presented in Table 6 below.

Table 6
Significant Kolmogorov-Smirnov Tests of Normality Statistics

Scale	Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic	Significance level
Workplace Friendship (Composite)	.095	$p < .01$
Workplace Friendship Opportunities (Scope)	.170	$p < .01$
Workplace Friendship Prevalence (Quality)	.100	$p < .01$
Helping Behaviour	.076	$p < .01$
Affective Organisational Commitment	.102	$p < .01$
Intention to Stay	.078	$p < .01$

The significant Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistics suggest that the null hypothesis, i.e., that the variables follow a normal distribution should be rejected in all instances (Field, 2018). There are arguments to suggest that parametric statistics that are typically used to assess relationships and differences are robust enough to be used with non-normally distributed data. However, the more traditional approach is to use non-parametric statistical analyses, such as Spearman's rho Correlation Coefficient (ρ), to assess relationships in instances where the data is not normally distributed rather than using Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation (r) coefficient (Huth & Pokorn, 2004).

In order to test the assumption that the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable is linear, scatterplots were generated and considered for each independent or predictor variable and the dependent or outcome variable. A scatter plot matrix (see Figure 17) was obtained using the *Psych* package in R (ver. 4.2.2.) to visually represent the relationships between the constructs of interest.

Estimating the (Direct) Bivariate Relationships between the Constructs

As stated above, the data collected in the current study was found to violate the assumption of normality required when using parametric statistics. Accordingly, Spearman's rho (ρ) was employed to estimate the direct relationships between the constructs of interest in the current study, as it is a non-parametric measure that does not assume linearity or normality while also being resistant to outliers (Schober et al., 2018). In support of this assumption, the Scatterplot Matrix (see Figure 17 below) was believed to indicate that the relationships between the constructs of interest are not strictly linear but instead seem to comply with Spearman's monotonic requirement in that the variables increased or decreased together, but not necessarily at the same rate (Schober et al., 2018). Cohen's (2013) guidelines were further used to describe the size of the correlation coefficient. Based on Cohen's (2013) recommendations of effect size values of ρ varying around:

- 0.1 are interpreted as 'low' or 'weak',
- 0.3 as 'medium' or 'moderate',
- and 0.5 or greater as 'large' or 'strong'.

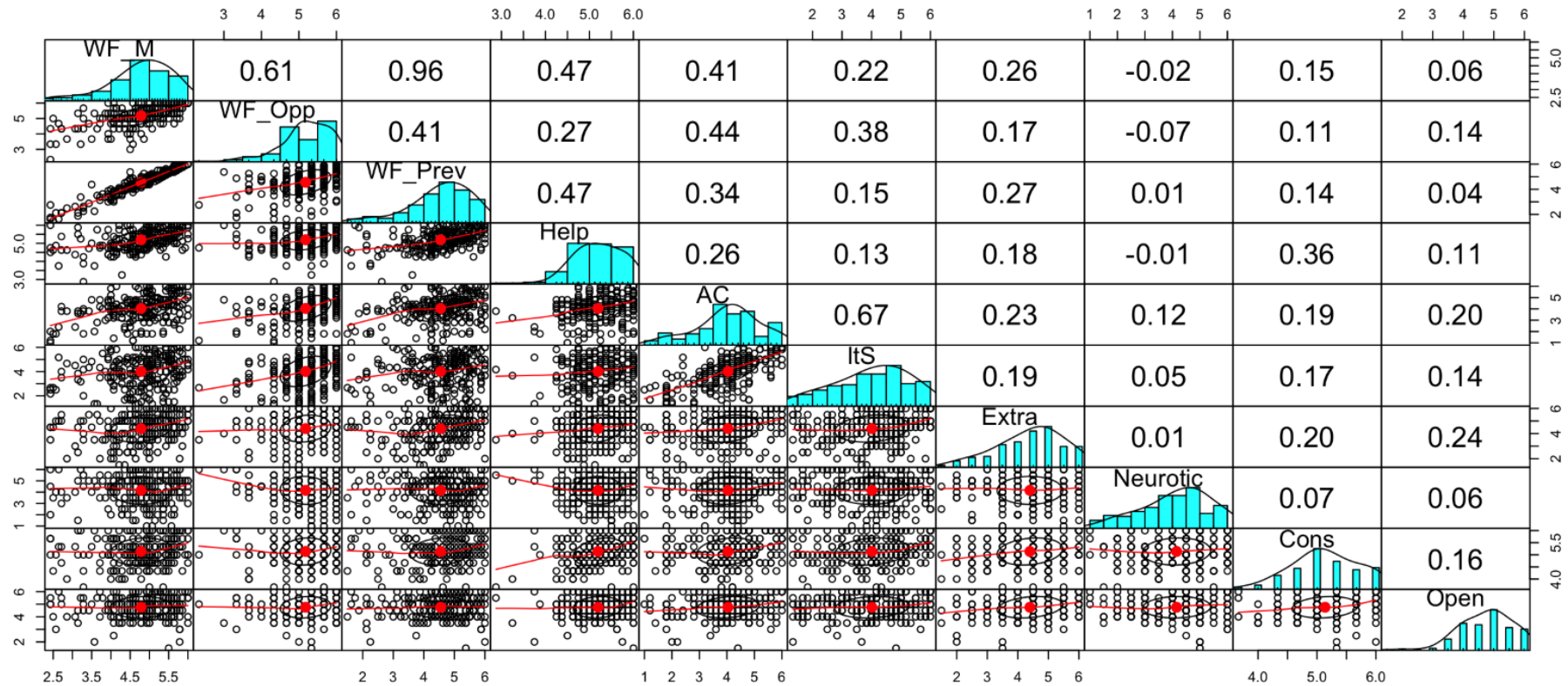
The Spearman rho correlation (ρ) coefficients are summarised in Table 7 and visually depicted in Figure 17 below, whereafter, the results outlined in the hypotheses are described.

Table 7
Summary of Spearman Correlation Coefficients

	n	WF	WF_Opp	WF_Prev	Help	AOC	ItS	Extra	Neurotic	Cons	Open
WF	216	1									
WF_Opp	216	.61**	1								
WF_Prev	216	.96**	.42**	1							
Help	215	.50**	.33**	.48**	1						
AOC	216	.39**	.47**	.31**	.28**	1					
ItS	216	.24**	.39**	.16*	.14*	.66**	1				
Extra	216	.29**	.17*	.31**	.17*	.25**	.22**	1			
Neurotic	216	-.01	.01	.01	.06	.13	.07	.00	1		
Cons	216	.17*	.14*	.16*	.34**	.23**	.19**	.18**	.08	1	
Open	216	.08	.18**	.03	.13	.18**	.12	.22**	.12	.20*	1

Note. WF = Workplace Friendship composite score; WF_Opp = Workplace Friendship Opportunity score; WF_Prev = Workplace Friendship Prevalence score; Help = Helping Behaviour score; AOC = Affective Organisational Commitment score; ItS = Intention to Stay score; Extra = Extraversion score; Neurotic = Neuroticism score; Cons = Conscientiousness score; Open = Openness score. Missing value handling: pairwise.
 ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Figure 17
Scatterplot Matrix

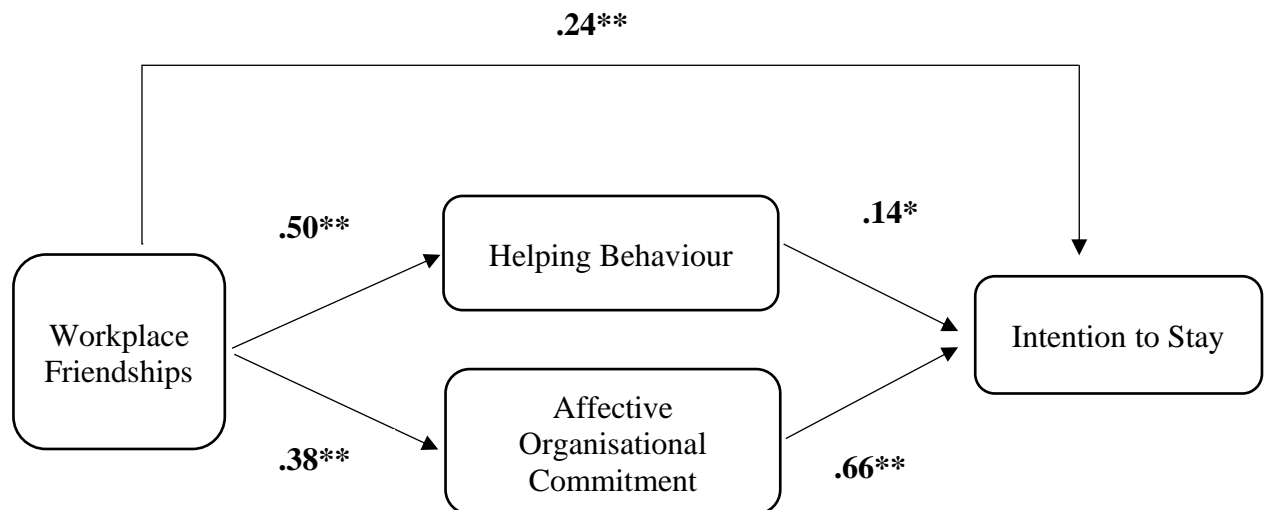


Note. WF_M = Workplace Friendship composite score; WF_Opp = Workplace Friendship Opportunity score; WF_Prev = Workplace Friendship Prevalence score; Help = Helping Behaviour score; AC = Affective Organisational Commitment score; ItS = Intention to Stay score; Extra = Extraversion score; Neurotic = Neuroticism score; Cons = Conscientiousness score; Open = Openness score.

The research model under investigation in the current study, which includes the Spearman's rho correlation (ρ) coefficients, is presented in Figure 18 (see below).

Figure 18

Spearman Correlation Coefficients for the Conceptual Model for Workplace Friendships, Intention to Stay, Helping Behaviour and Affective Organisational Commitment

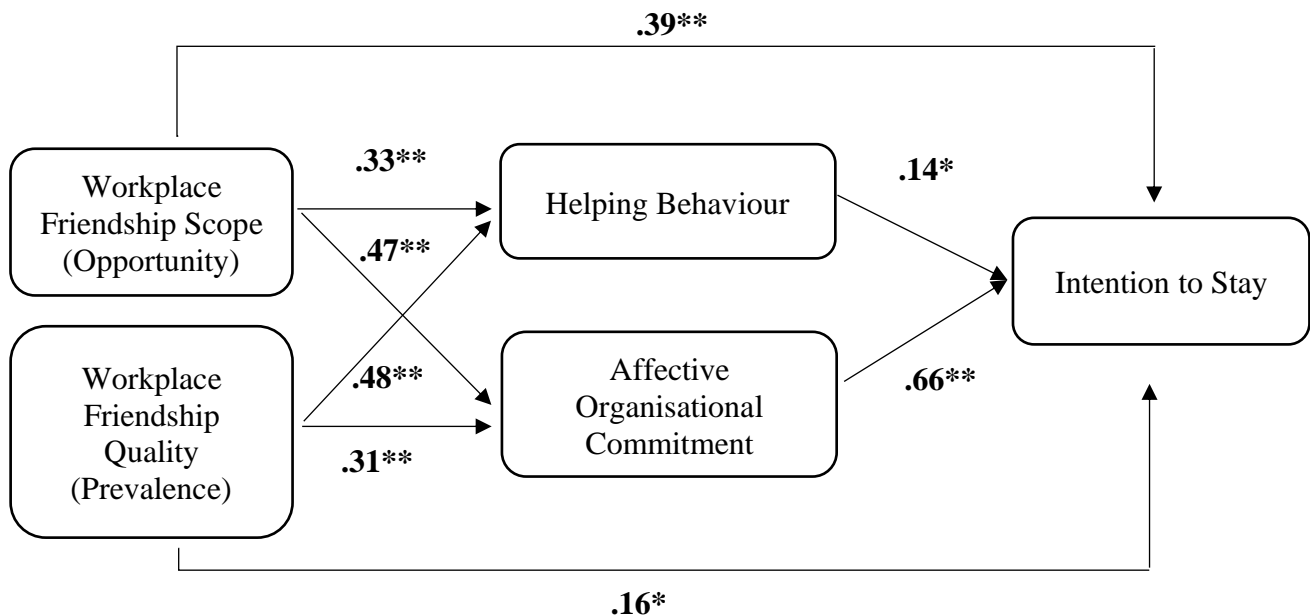


*Note. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

In Figure 19 (see below) the relationships between the sub-dimensions of workplace friendships, namely workplace friendship scope (opportunity) and workplace friendship quality (prevalence), and the other constructs of interest, are depicted.

Figure 19

Spearman Correlation Coefficients for the Conceptual Model for Workplace Friendship Scope (Opportunity), Workplace Friendship Quality (Prevalence), Intention to Stay, Helping Behaviour and Affective Organisational Commitment



Note. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The (Direct) Bivariate Relationship between Workplace Friendships and Intention to Stay

The results of the Spearman rho correlation (ρ) indicated that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay ($\rho(216) = .235, p < .01; 95\% \text{ CI } [.111, .350]$). The 95% confidence interval indicated the bootstrapping analysis, revealing that in 1,000 random samples drawn from the study's overall sample, the correlation coefficient ρ fell within the specified confidence interval 95% of the time. Based on Cohen's (2013) guidelines, the correlation's strength was considered low or weak. Therefore, the findings of a statistically significant ($p < .01$) positive (direct) relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay indicates support for Hypothesis 1.

The hypothesised positive relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay is further supported by respondents' comments in response to the open-ended questions at the end of the questionnaire. The following statements were made by participants in response to the following statement: "My workplace friendships are related to my intention to stay with my current organisation":

“My job is difficult and somewhat unfulfilling, and the sole reason I have stayed on for this long is because of the strong friendships I have formed” [P198]

“They are the reason I feel so comfortable, which in turn speaks to my willingness to stay at the organisation” [P197]

“It is all about the people you work with and the environment that is created at the workplace. If I get along with and can trust a colleague or colleagues, I believe I am more likely to stay at the workplace” [P158]

“I have formed strong friendships with my colleagues at work, and they are the only reason I stay working within my current organisation” [P19]

The results further indicated that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between workplace friendship scope (opportunity) and intention to stay ($\rho(216) = .387, p < .01; 95\% \text{ CI } [.256, .493]$). Using Cohen's (2013) guidelines, this indicates a medium correlation. The finding of a statistically significant ($p < .01$) positive (direct) relationship between workplace friendship scope (opportunity) and intention to stay supports Hypothesis 1.1.

Moreover, the results indicated that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between workplace friendship quality (prevalence) and intention to stay ($\rho(216) = .161, p = .018$ (i.e., $< .05$); $95\% \text{ CI } [.027, .292]$). Cohen's (2013) guidelines, used to interpret the strength of the correlation, suggest that it is a low to weak correlation. The finding of a statistically significant ($p < .05$) positive (direct) relationship between workplace friendship quality (prevalence) and intention to stay indicates support for Hypothesis 1.2.

Based on these results, support was, therefore, found for Hypotheses 1, as well as the respective sub-hypotheses.

The Mediated Relationships between the Constructs

Assessing the Assumptions underlying Inferential Statistics for the Indirect Relationships

To further investigate the indirect relationships between workplace friendships and intention to stay, as mediated by helping behaviour and affective organisation commitment, two mediation analyses were performed using Hayes's (2013) PROCESS Model 4. The outcome variable for both analyses was intention to stay, with the predictor variable of workplace friendship, and helping behaviour and affective organisational commitment as the respective mediator. Prior to performing mediation analysis, the following assumptions were considered.

Testing the Assumptions of Mediation Analysis and Multiple Regression

Prior to performing mediation analysis, it was assured that the assumptions for multiple regression were met. To ensure the assumptions of multiple regression were met, the following aspects were considered: sample size, linearity, collinearity, independence, homoscedasticity, and normality and are described further below:

- The sample size should be adequate for multiple regression and can be calculated based on Tabachnick and Fidell's (2014) formula of $N > 50 + 8m$ (where m = number of independent variables). The current study's sample size ($n = 216$) exceeds the calculated requirement of 90 (calculated as $50 + 8(5)$), considering workplace friendships, workplace friendship scope (opportunity), workplace friendship quality (prevalence), helping behaviour and affective organisational commitment as the five (5) independent variables).
- A scatterplot should be generated and considered to test the linearity assumption. The linearity assumption is considered met if the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable can be characterised by a straight line.
- There should also be no evidence of multicollinearity. Multicollinearity is found when independent variables are significantly highly correlated ($r > .90$; Field, 2018).
- Tolerance levels and Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) are also considered evidence of multicollinearity in regression models. The collinearity assumption can be considered met if VIF scores are below ten (10) and Tolerance values are greater than 0.2 (Kim, 2019).

- To meet the independence assumption, the Durbin-Watson statistic was considered (Field, 2018). The independence assumption is considered to be met when the values of the residuals are independent, and the Durbin-Watson statistic value is close to two (2) (Field, 2018).
- To test the homoscedasticity assumption, the plot of standardised residuals vs standardised predicted values was considered to see if there were obvious signs of funnelling.
- The P-P plot for the model was considered to test the assumption of normality of the residuals. When the dots are seen to lie closely on the diagonal line, with few minor deviations, and no extreme noticeable deviations from normality, the results can be considered valid, and the assumption of normality can be considered to be met.
- Finally, Cook's Distance values was considered to evaluate the effect of outliers. If Cook's Distance values are found to be less than one (1), individual cases are not unduly influencing the model and therefore do not need to be removed from further analyses (Field, 2018).

Indirect Relationship between Workplace Friendships and Intention to Stay mediated by Helping Behaviour (H₂)

Before considering the mediated relationship, the three (3) bivariate relationships that it is made up of are discussed here. Firstly, a statistically significant positive relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay ($\rho(216) = .235, p < .01; 95\% \text{ CI } [.111, .350]$), as discussed above, was found.

Secondly, from Table 7 (see above), it is evident that a statistically significant positive relationship between workplace friendships and helping behaviour ($\rho(216) = .501, p < .01; 95\% \text{ CI } [.383, .599]$), interpreted as large or strong, according to Cohen's (2013) guidelines, was found. Additionally, to better understand the sub-dimensions of workplace friendships, namely, workplace friendship scope (opportunity) and workplace friendship quality (prevalence), the direct relationships between these sub-dimensions and helping behaviour were also considered. A statistically significant positive relationship was found between workplace friendship scope (opportunity) and helping behaviour ($\rho(216) = .328, p < .01; 95\% \text{ CI } [.196, .444]$), which, according to Cohen (2013), can be interpreted as a medium strength correlation. Additionally, a medium (Cohen, 2013) statistically significant positive relationship

was found between workplace friendship quality (prevalence) and helping behaviour ($\rho(216) = .481, p < .01; 95\% \text{ CI } [.355, .584]$).

In support of the quantitative findings reported above, the following qualitative statements were made in response to the statement, “*My workplace friendships are related to my level of helping behaviour at work*”:

“I see myself as a helpful person, but I know I am more likely to help my friends or people I have a positive connection with” [P211]

“Because I am fond of my colleagues and get along well with them, I am more willing to assist them” [P199]

“My work friends are incredibly understanding and helpful towards me, and so I want to help them wherever I can” [P163]

“I am always willing to help out friends with work and solving problems in a way that benefits them because of our close relationship and the reciprocal nature of our friendship” [P155]

“With positive working relationships, people are more willing to help one another” [P149]

“I care about my friends and want to help them succeed” [P137]

Thirdly, considering the relationship between helping behaviour and intention to stay, a statistically significant, albeit weak or low according to Cohen (2013), positive relationship ($\rho(216) = .137, p < .05; 95\% \text{ CI } [-.011, .259]$), was found.

In an attempt to assess the mediation hypotheses, Hayes’s (2013) PROCESS Model 4 was utilised. However, a significant indirect effect was not found when assessing the mediating role of helping behaviour on the relationship between workplace friendships (as a composite score) and intention to stay ($b = 0.021, t = 2.720$). Support was, therefore, not found for Hypothesis 2. A summary of the helping behaviour mediation analysis is presented in Table 8 below.

To address the two sub-hypotheses, namely Hypothesis 2.1 and 2.2, the mediation analyses were conducted considering the two sub-dimensions of workplace friendships, namely, workplace friendship scope (opportunity) and workplace friendship quality (prevalence), respectively, as the independent variables (see Table 8 below).

Firstly, when assessing the mediating role of helping behaviour on the relationship between workplace friendships scope (opportunity) and intention to stay, a significant indirect effect was not found ($b = 0.013$, $t = 5.671$). Support was, therefore, not found for Hypothesis 2.1. Secondly, considering the mediating role of helping behaviour on the relationship between workplace friendships quality (prevalence) and intention to stay, a significant indirect effect was not found ($b = 0.040$, $t = 1.594$). Support was, therefore, also not found for Hypothesis 2.2.

Table 8

Helping Behaviour Mediation Analysis summary

Relationship	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Confidence Interval		t-statistic
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
WF → HB → ItS	.345	.324	.021	-.081	.144	2.72
WF_Opp → HB → ItS	.707	.694	.013	-.055	.091	5.67
WF_Prev → HB → ItS	.194	.153	.040	-.046	.145	1.59

Note. WF = workplace friendship; Help = helping behaviour. ItS: intention to stay; WF_Opp = workplace friendships scope (opportunity); WF_Prev = workplace friendships quality (prevalence).

Indirect Relationship between Workplace Friendships and Intention to Stay mediated by Affective Organisation Commitment (H₃)

Before considering the mediated relationship, the three (3) bivariate relationships that it is made up of are discussed here.

Firstly, a statistically significant positive relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay ($\rho(216) = .235$, $p < .01$; 95% CI [.111, .350]), as discussed above, was found.

Secondly, as evident in Table 7 (see above), a statistically significant positive relationship was found between workplace friendships and affective organisational commitment ($\rho(216) = .384$, $p < .01$; 95% CI [.257, .500]), interpreted as medium or moderate, according to Cohen's (2013) guidelines. Considering the sub-dimensions of workplace friendships, namely, workplace friendship scope (opportunity) and workplace friendship quality (prevalence), a statistically significant positive relationship was found between workplace friendship scope (opportunity) and affective organisational commitment ($\rho(216) = .470$, $p < .01$; 95% CI [.458, .574]) which, according to Cohen (2013), can be interpreted as a

medium to strong correlation. Moreover, a medium strength (Cohen, 2013) statistically significant positive relationship was found between workplace friendship quality (prevalence) and affective organisational commitment ($\rho(216) = .312, p < .01; 95\% \text{ CI } [.175, .437]$).

Furthermore, a statistically significant positive relationship between affective organisational commitment and intention to stay ($\rho(216) = .657, p < .01; 95\% \text{ CI } [.556, .741]$), interpreted as large or strong, according to Cohen's (2013) guidelines, was also found.

In an attempt to assess the abovementioned mediation hypotheses, Hayes's (2013) PROCESS Model 4 was once again utilised. When assessing the mediating role of affective helping behaviour on the relationship between workplace friendships (as a composite score) and intention to stay, a significant indirect effect was found ($b = 0.445, t = -1.155$). Support was, therefore, found for Hypothesis 3. A summary of the affective organisational commitment mediation analysis is presented in Table 9 below.

To address the two sub-hypotheses, namely Hypothesis 3.1 and 3.2, the mediation analyses were conducted considering the two sub-dimensions of workplace friendships, namely, workplace friendship scope (opportunity) and workplace friendship quality (prevalence), respectively, as the independent variables (see Table 9 below).

Firstly, when assessing the mediating role of affective organisational commitment on the relationship between workplace friendships scope (opportunity) and intention to stay, a significant indirect effect was not found ($b = 0.509, t = 1.892$). Support was, therefore, found for Hypothesis 3.1. Secondly, considering the mediating role of affective organisational commitment on the relationship between workplace friendships quality (prevalence) and intention to stay, a significant indirect effect was found ($b = 0.298, t = -1.538$). Support was, therefore, also found for Hypothesis 3.2.

Table 9

Affective Organisational Commitment Mediation Analysis summary

Relationship	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Confidence Interval		t-statistic
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
WF → AOC → ItS	.345	-.101	.445	.296	.590	-1.16
WF_Opp → AOC → ItS	.707	.198	.509	.335	.721	1.89
WF_Prev → AOC → ItS	.194	-.104	.298	.178	.414	-1.54

Note. WF = workplace friendship; AOC = affective organisational commitment. ItS: intention to stay; WF_Opp = workplace friendships scope (opportunity); WF_Prev = workplace friendships quality (prevalence).

The hypothesised role of affective organisational commitment in relation to workplace friendships and intention to stay is further supported by respondents' comments in response to the open-ended questions at the end of the questionnaire. The following statements were made

in response to the statement, “*My workplace friendships are related to the feelings or beliefs I have about my organisation*”:

“I definitely think having at least one close friend at work will act as a support system for someone and affect the feelings and beliefs of those involved. If I have a friend at work, I think I would have more positive work-associated emotions”
[P211]

“The friendships have definitely improved my feelings about the company”
[P199]

“If there was no one whom I felt I could connect with at work, then I might have developed a negative association with the organisation because I could feel isolated or lonely, and that could have been generalised to the broader organisation (unconsciously)” [P112]

“My colleagues, especially those in management, ultimately represent the organisation. So, having positive experiences with them directly impacts the way I feel about the organisation” [P106]

“Positive collegial relationships improve the overall view of and feelings towards the organisation - and vice versa” [P94]

Estimating the Relationships while Controlling for Personality

The Role of Personality in the (Direct) Relationship between Workplace Friendships and Intention to Stay (H4)

Partial correlation is a statistical method used to estimate the correlation between two variables while the effects of a third variable are held constant (Brown & Hendrix, 2014). The primary reason for conducting the partial correlation would be to see how much unique variance the independent variable explains in relation to the total variance in the dependent variable rather than just the variance unaccounted for by the control variables. In other words, by statistically removing the influence of a third variable, a clearer or more accurate indication of the relationship between the two variables of interest can be obtained. As argued above, this

is an important consideration in the current study, as the previously investigated relationships between the constructs of interest (see Figures 18 and 19 above) may be overestimated due to the inclusion of personality variables.

We argue above that personality is related to all the constructs of interest, namely workplace friendships, helping behaviour, affective organisational commitment, and intention to stay, as well as, to some extent explaining the relationships between them. Therefore, by controlling for personality and its effects on the relationships under investigation in the current study, it was believed that these relationships could be better understood. Cohen's (2013) guidelines were once again used to assess the size of the correlation coefficients, which are presented in Table 10 below.

Table 10
Comparison of Correlation Coefficients of the Relationships of Interest

Relationship	Spearman's rho (ρ)	Not Controlling for 'Big Five'		Controlling for 'Big Five'		Difference in r-value
		Pearson Correlation (r)	% Unique Variance Explained	Pearson Correlation (r)	% Unique Variance Explained	
WF - ItS	.24**	.22**	4.9%	.17*	2.9%	-.05
WF_Opp - ItS	.39**	.38**	14.4%	.35**	12.3%	-.03
WF_Prev - ItS	.16*	.16*	2.6%	.10	1.0%	-.06
WF - HB	.50**	.47**	22.1%	.44**	19.4%	-.03
WF_Opp - HB	.33**	.27**	7.3%	.23**	5.3%	-.04
WF_Prev - HB	.48**	.48**	23.0%	.45**	20.3%	-.03
WF - AOC	.38**	.41**	16.8%	.37**	13.7%	-.04
WF_Opp - AOC	.47**	.44**	19.4%	.42**	17.6%	-.02
WF_Prev - AOC	.31**	.34**	11.6%	.30**	9.0%	-.04
HB - ItS	.14*	.13	3.9%	.05	0.3%	-.08
AOC - ItS	.66**	.67**	44.9%	.64**	41.0%	-.03

Note. WF = Workplace Friendship composite score; WF_Opp = Workplace Friendship Opportunity score; WF_Prev = Workplace Friendship Prevalence score; Help = Helping Behaviour score; AOC = Affective Organisational Commitment score; ItS = Intention to Stay score; Extra = Extraversion score; Neurotic = Neuroticism score; Cons = Conscientiousness score; Open = Openness score. Missing value handling: pairwise. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Based on the correlation coefficients summarised in Table 10 above, it can be seen that all but one of the relationships of interest that were found to be statistically significant remained statistically significant when controlling for personality. Although the strength of the relationships can be seen in Table 10 as becoming slightly numerically weaker, the numerically small margin of reduction in r-values and the fact that the relationships remained statistically significant ($r > 0$), suggest that controlling for personality had little effect on the strength of the relationship between the two variables under investigation. Therefore, when personality was

controlled for (i.e., the variance explained by personality was statistically removed from the relationships under investigation), statistically significant relationships between the constructs of interest were still found to exist, albeit slightly weaker, and support for most of the hypothesised relationships of interest remained empirically present even when controlling for personality.

However, when controlling for personality, the already weak relationship ($r < .1$, Cohen, 2013) between workplace friendship quality (prevalence) and intention to stay became non-significant, suggesting that this relationship may be spurious (i.e., occurring coincidentally). Based on these results, support was found for Hypothesis 4 and Hypothesis 4.1. However, given that the relationship between workplace friendship quality (prevalence) and intention to stay becomes non-significant when controlling for personality, support was not found for Hypothesis 4.2.

The Role of Personality in the Relationship between Workplace Friendships and Intention to Stay mediated by Helping Behaviour (H₅)

Hayes's (2013) PROCESS Model 4 was used to assess whether helping behaviour significantly mediates the relationship between workplace friendships (as a composite score) and intention to stay, while the four EFA-derived personality factors, namely extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience, were considered as covariates and therefore, held constant. Similarly to the previous mediation analysis involving helping behaviour as the mediator without controlling for the four personality factors, a significant indirect effect was not found ($b = -0.021$, $t = 2.43$) when controlling for the four personality factors. This is likely due to the weak relationship between helping behaviour and intention to stay, shown in Table 10, found in the current study, which may be spurious, as it became non-significant when controlling for personality. Support was, therefore, not found for Hypothesis 5. A summary of the helping behaviour mediation analysis while controlling for personality is presented in Table 11 below.

To address the two sub-hypotheses, namely Hypothesis 5.1 and 5.2, the mediation analyses were conducted considering the two sub-dimensions of workplace friendships, namely, workplace friendship scope (opportunity) and workplace friendship quality (prevalence), respectively, as the independent variables. Notably, the four EFA-derived personality factors, namely extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience, were considered as covariates and, subsequently, held constant (See Table 11 below).

When assessing the mediating role of helping behaviour on the relationship between workplace friendships scope (opportunity) and intention to stay while controlling for the four EFA-derived personality factors (extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience), a significant indirect effect was not found ($b = -0.013$, $t = 5.41$). Similarly, to Hypothesis 2.1, support was, therefore, not found for Hypothesis 5.1.

Further, considering the mediating role of helping behaviour on the relationship between workplace friendships quality (prevalence) and intention to stay, controlling for the personality traits previously mentioned, a significant indirect effect was not found ($b = 0.004$, $t = 1.27$). Therefore, similarly to Hypothesis 2.2, support was also not found for Hypothesis 5.2.

Table 11

Helping Behaviour Mediation Analysis while Controlling for the Four EFA-derived Personality Factors summary

Relationship: Controlling for the four EFA- derived personality factors	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Confidence Interval		t- statistic
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
WF → HB → ItS	.270	.291	-.021	-.139	.096	2.43
WF_Opp → HB → ItS	.651	.665	-.013	-.088	.050	5.41
WF_Prev → HB → ItS	.128	.124	.004	-.081	.105	1.27

Note. WF = workplace friendship; Help = helping behaviour. ItS: intention to stay; WF_Opp = workplace friendships scope (opportunity); WF_Prev = workplace friendships quality (prevalence).

The Role of Personality in the Relationship between Workplace Friendships and Intention to Stay mediated by Affective Organisational Commitment (H₆)

Once again, Hayes's (2013) PROCESS Model 4 was used to assess whether affective organisational commitment significantly mediates the relationship between workplace friendships (as a composite score) and intention to stay, while the four EFA-derived personality factors, namely extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience, were considered as covariates and therefore, held constant. The indirect effect was found to be statistically significant [Indirect Effect = .3975, $SE = .0781$, 95% C.I. (.2432, .5503)]. Therefore, support was found for Hypothesis 6.

Once again, Hayes's (2013) PROCESS Model 4 was used to assess whether affective organisational commitment significantly mediates the relationship between workplace friendships (as a composite score) and intention to stay, while the four EFA-derived personality factors, namely extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience, were considered as covariates and therefore, held constant. Similarly to the previous mediation

analysis involving affective organisational commitment as the mediator without controlling for the four personality factors, a significant indirect effect was found ($b = 0.398$, $t = -1.42$) when controlling for the four personality factors. Therefore, significant mediation took place. Support was, therefore, found for Hypothesis 6. A summary of the affective organisational commitment mediation analysis while controlling for personality is presented in Table 12 below.

In an attempt to understand the two sub-hypotheses, namely Hypothesis 6.1 and 6.2, the mediation analyses were conducted considering the two sub-dimensions of workplace friendships, namely, workplace friendship scope (opportunity) and workplace friendship quality (prevalence), respectively, as the independent variables, affective organisational commitment as the mediator, and intention to stay as the dependent variable. Notable, the four EFA-derived personality factors, namely extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience, were considered as covariates and, subsequently, held constant (see Table 12 below).

When assessing the mediating role of affective organisational commitment on the relationship between workplace friendships scope (opportunity) and intention to stay while controlling for the four EFA-derived personality factors (extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience), a significant indirect effect was found ($b = 0.464$, $t = 1.76$). Similarly to Hypothesis 3.1, support was, therefore, found for Hypothesis 6.1.

Further, considering the mediating role of affective organisational commitment on the relationship between workplace friendships quality (prevalence) and intention to stay, controlling for the personality traits previously mentioned, a significant indirect effect was found ($b = 0.254$, $t = -1.81$). Similarly to Hypothesis 3.2, support was also found for Hypothesis 6.2.

Table 12

Affective Organisational Commitment Mediation Analysis while Controlling for the Four EFA-derived Personality Factors summary

Relationship: Controlling for the four EFA- derived personality factors	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Confidence Interval		t- statistic
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
WF → AOC → ItS	.270	-.127	.398	.243	.550	-1.42
WF_Opp → AOC → ItS	.651	.188	.464	.287	.679	1.76
WF_Prev → AOC → ItS	.128	-.126	.254	.0131	.374	-1.81

Note. WF = workplace friendship; AOC = affective organisational commitment. ItS: intention to stay; WF_Opp = workplace friendships scope (opportunity); WF_Prev = workplace friendships quality (prevalence).

Multivariate Analysis

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to assess the multivariate relationships in the theoretical model under investigation while controlling for selected demographic variables. Whereafter, a second set of hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted in which the personality variables were further controlled for.

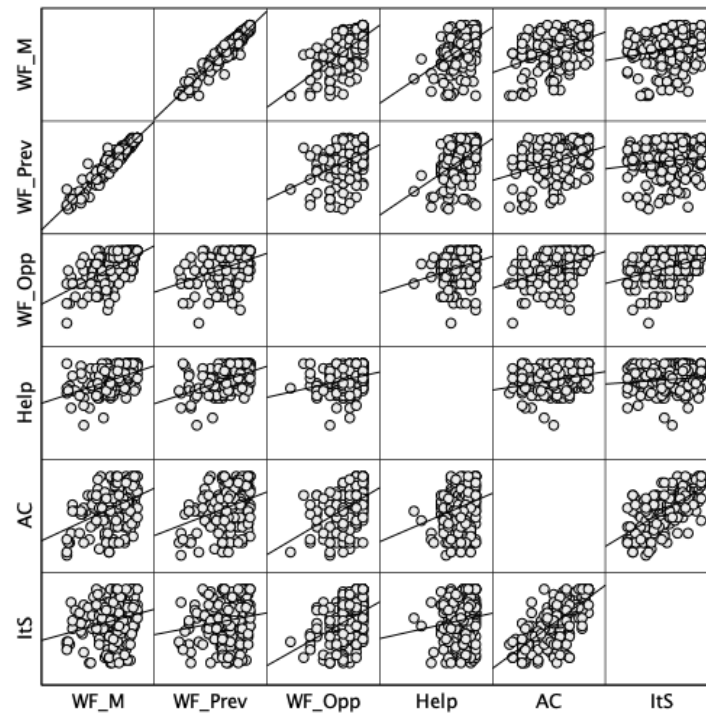
H7.1: *A regression model consisting of workplace friendships, helping behaviour, and affective organisational commitment significantly explains variance in the dependent variable intention to stay while controlling for selected demographic variables (age, tenure).*

A hierarchical linear regression analysis was utilised to address Hypothesis 7.1 (as stated above). Hierarchical regression was employed so that selected demographic variables (i.e., age and organisational tenure) could be controlled for to better understand the relationships under investigation. A two-step model was, therefore, used. The first regression model included the two demographic variables as control variables (age and organisational tenure). The second regression model comprised workplace friendships, helping behaviour and affective organisational commitment as the independent variables. Multiple regression analysis was conducted with intention to stay as the dependent variable (see Table 13.1).

Prior to performing hierarchical regression analysis, it was assured that the assumptions for multiple regression, previously presented, were met. Firstly, a scatterplot matrix was generated for the predictor variables and the outcome variable to test the linearity assumption. The scatterplot matrix (see Figure 20 below) indicates that the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable can be characterised by a straight line, suggesting that the linearity assumption had been met.

Figure 20

Scatterplot Matrix showing the Linear Relationships between the Constructs of Interest

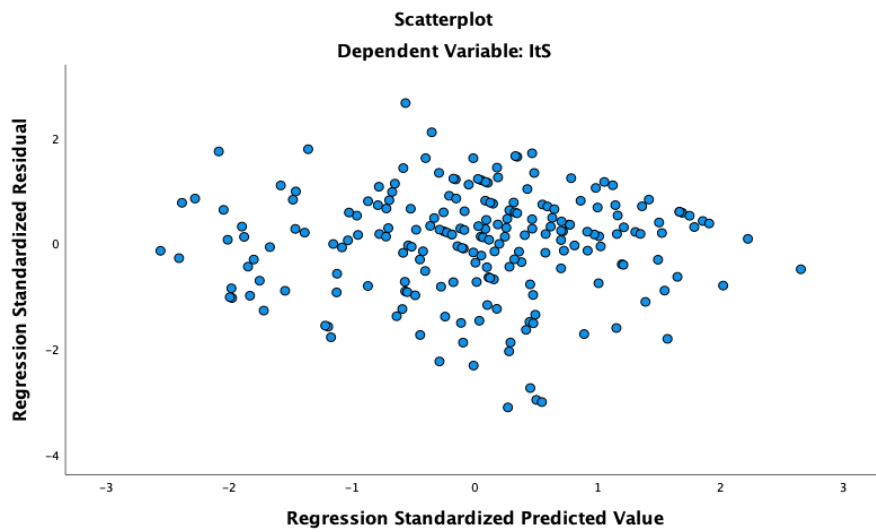


Note. WF_M = Workplace Friendship composite score; WF_Opp = Workplace Friendship Opportunity score; WF_Prev = Workplace Friendship Prevalence score; Help = Helping Behaviour score; AOC = Affective Organisational Commitment score; ItS = Intention to Stay score; Extra = Extraversion score; Neurotic = Neuroticism score; Cons = Conscientiousness score; Open = Openness score. Missing value handling: pairwise.

No evidence of multicollinearity was found (VIF scores = 1.01; 1.00 & 1.07, i.e., < 10; Tolerance = .99; .99 & .94; i.e., > 0.2; Kim, 2019). The Durbin-Watson statistic indicated that the values of the residuals are independent (Durbin-Watson = 1.95; i.e., is close to 2; Field, 2018). The plot of standardised residuals vs standardised predicted values, depicted in Figure 21 (see below), showed no obvious signs of funnelling, suggesting the assumption of homoscedasticity has been met.

Figure 21

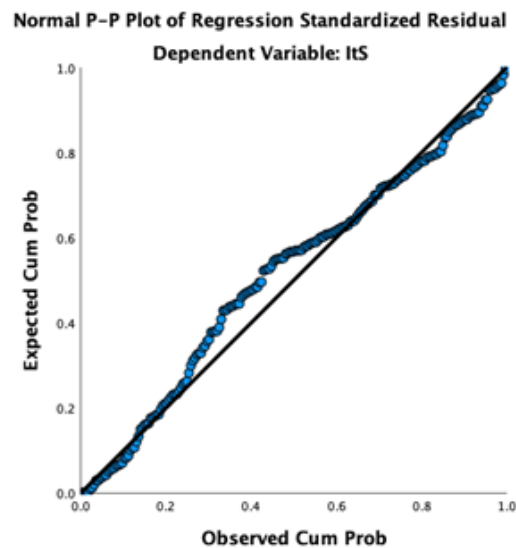
Plot of Standardised Residuals vs Standardised Predicted Values for Hypothesis 7



The P-P plot for the regression model suggested that the assumption of normality of the residuals have been met, as the dots lie very closely on the diagonal line with few minor deviations, and no extreme noticeable deviations from normality (see Figure 22 below).

Figure 22

P-P Plot for Hypothesis 7



Finally, Cook's Distance values were all found to be less than 1, suggesting individual cases were not unduly influencing the model. If Cook's distance is below one (< 1) and the outliers do not make a significant change in the regression, there is no need to remove the outliers (Field, 2018). The decision was, therefore, made to not exclude any cases from the multiple regression analyses.

Based on the information presented above, it was considered that no assumptions of multiple regression were violated and, therefore, that the data was considered appropriate for multiple regression analysis. Table 13.1 (see below) summarises the results of the Hierarchical Linear Regression Analysis.

Table 13.1

Hierarchical Linear Regression Analysis: Age, Organisational Tenure, Workplace Friendships, Helping Behaviour and Affective Organisational Commitment

Model	R ²	R ² Change	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig. (p)	Collinearity Statistics	
			B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	.090*		3.77	.103		36.59	<.01		
Age			.00	.001	-.027	-.40	.69	.983	1.018
Tenure			.07	.015	.303	4.54	<.01	.983	1.018
2 (Constant)	.467*	.377	1.38	.618		2.24	.03		
Age			.00	.001	0.41	.79	.43	.968	1.033
Tenure			.03	.012	.141	2.62	<.01	.901	1.110
WF			-.04	.097	-.023	-.37	.71	.697	1.424
HB			-.05	.130	-.024	-.41	.68	.773	1.294
AOC			.73	.065	.650	11.21	<.01	.774	1.292

Note. *Sig. F value ($p < .01$). Tenure = organisational tenure; WF = Workplace Friendship; HB = Helping Behaviour; AOC = Affective Organisational Commitment

Dependent variable: Intention to Stay.

Significant predictors of unique variance in Intention to Stay are highlighted

From Table 13.1, it can be seen that the overall regression model (i.e., a model consisting of all the independent variables and the control variables) significantly predicted 46.7% of the intention to stay ($R^2 = .467$; $F(5,205) = 35.905$; $p < .01$). Model 1 consisting of the control variables age and tenure significantly explained 9% ($p < .01$) of the variance in intention to stay ($R^2 = .09$; $F(2,208) = 10.310$; $p < .01$). Model 2 consisting of workplace friendships, affective organisational commitment and helping behaviour significantly

explained 46.7% ($p < .01$) of the variance in intention to stay ($R^2 = .467$; $F(5,205) = 35.905$; $p < .01$), indicating the importance of the selected variables in explaining variance in intention to stay over-and-above demographic variables. The independent variables of interest (i.e., workplace friendships, affective organisational commitment and helping behaviour), therefore, significantly explained an additional 38% of the variance in the dependent variable, intention to stay, i.e., over and above the 9% that could be explained by the selected demographic control variables.

In Model 1, organisational tenure was found to predict unique variance in the dependent variable intention to stay (Standardised Beta = .303, $t = 4.54$; $p < .01$). In Model 2, organisational tenure and affective organisational commitment were found to predict unique variance in the dependent variable intention to stay (see Table 13.1 above). The most important predictor of intention to stay was affective organisational commitment which uniquely explained 30.1% of the variation in intention to stay, while organisational tenure explained only 1.8% of the variation in intention to stay. Based on these results, support for Hypothesis 7.1 was obtained.

H7.2: *A regression model consisting of workplace friendships, helping behaviour, and affective organisational commitment significantly explains variance in the dependent variable, intention to stay, while controlling for selected demographic variables (age, tenure), as well as the 'Big Five' personality variables (extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness to experience).*

To address Hypothesis 7.2, a three-step hierarchical linear regression analysis was utilised. The first regression model included the two demographic variables as control variables (age and organisational tenure). The second regression model comprised the four EFA-derived 'Big Five' personality variables, extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience. Finally, the third regression model further included the independent variables of workplace friendships, helping behaviour and affective organisational commitment. Multiple regression analysis was conducted with intention to stay as the dependent variable, and the results are summarised in Table 13.2 (see below).

Table 13.2

Hierarchical Linear Regression Analysis: Age, Organisational Tenure, 'Big Five' Personality variables, Workplace Friendships, Helping Behaviour and Affective Organisational Commitment

Model	R ²	R ² Change	Unstandardised		Standardised	t	Sig. (p)	Collinearity	
			Coefficients B	Std. Error	Coefficients Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	.090		3.77	.103		36.59	<.01		
Age			.00	.001	-.027	-.40	.69	.983	1.018
Tenure			.07	.015	.303	4.54	<.01	.983	1.018
2 (Constant)	.153	.063	1.30	.851		1.21	.23		
Age			.00	.001	-.027	-.41	.69	.967	1.034
Tenure			.07	.015	.300	4.54	<.01	.952	1.050
Extra			.20	.079	.174	2.58	.01	.905	1.105
Con			.29	.150	.129	1.93	.06	.936	1.069
Neuro			.03	.067	.029	.45	.65	.986	1.014
Open			.05	.100	.033	.48	.63	.884	1.131
3 (Constant)	.475	.322	1.09	.798		1.36	.18		
Age			.00	.001	.044	.83	.41	.949	1.054
Tenure			.03	.012	.146	2.68	<.01	.876	1.141
Extra			.08	.065	.066	1.19	.24	.847	1.181
Con			.14	.127	.062	1.10	.27	.823	1.215
Neuro			-.03	.054	-.025	-.47	.64	.966	1.035
Open			-.06	.080	-.040	-.73	.47	.868	1.152
WF			-.06	.099	-.034	-.55	.58	.673	1.486
HB			-.10	.137	-.045	-.74	.46	.693	1.444
AOC			.72	.067	.641	10.67	<.01	.723	1.383

Note. Tenure = organisational tenure; Extra = extraversion; Con = conscientiousness; Neuro = neuroticism; Open = openness to experience; WF = Workplace Friendship; HB = Helping Behaviour; AOC = Affective Organisational Commitment. Dependent variable: Intention to Stay. Significant predictors of unique variance in Intention to Stay are highlighted.

From Table 13.2 it is apparent that the independent variables of interest (i.e., workplace friendships, affective organisational commitment and helping behaviour) significantly explained an additional 32% of the variance in the dependent variable intention to stay, i.e., over and above the 15% that could be explained by the selected demographic control variables and individual's personalities (9% and 6.3%, respectively).

In Model 3, organisational tenure (Standardised Beta = .146, $t = 2.68$; $p < .01$) and affective organisational commitment (Standardised Beta = .641, $t = 10.67$, $p < .01$) were found

to significantly predict unique variance in the dependent variable, intention to stay (see Table 13.2 above). Affective organisational commitment was once again identified as the most important predictor of intention to stay, and uniquely explained 29.7% of the variation in intention to stay, while organisational tenure explained 1.9% of the variation in intention to stay. Based on these results, support for Hypothesis 7.2 was obtained.

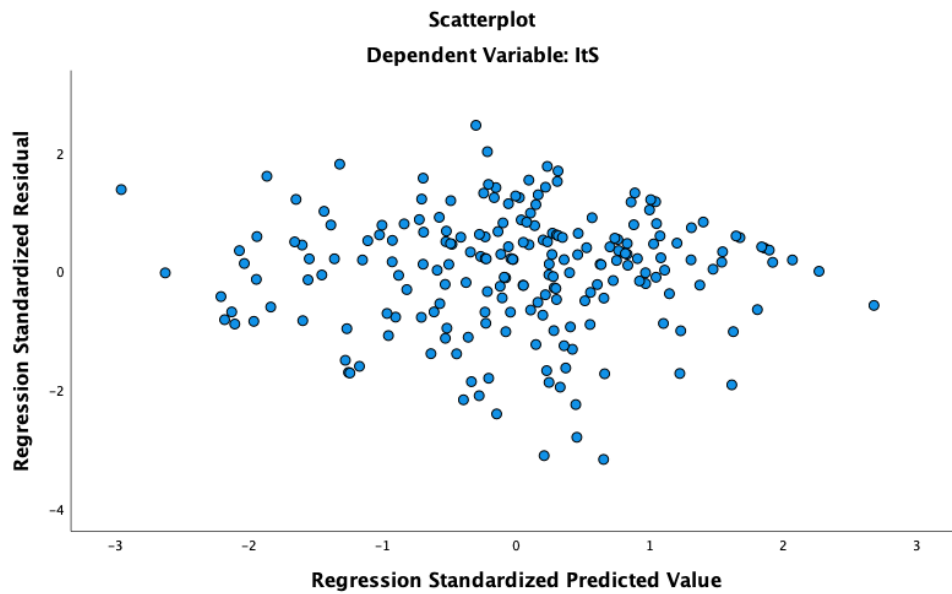
H_{8.1}: *A regression model consisting of workplace friendship scope, workplace friendship quality, helping behaviour, and affective commitment significantly explains variance in the dependent variable intention to stay, while controlling for selected demographic variables (age, tenure).*

Prior to utilising multiple regression to assess Hypothesis 8.1, the assumptions for multiple regression were considered. Firstly, the scatterplot matrix (see Figure 20 above) was considered and indicated that the linearity assumption had been met.

No evidence of multicollinearity was found (VIF scores ranging from 1 to 1.07, i.e., < 10; Tolerance ranging from .92. to .98; i.e., > 0.2; Kim, 2019). The Durbin-Watson statistic indicated that the values of the residuals are independent (Durbin-Watson = 1.97; i.e., is close to 2; Field, 2018). The plot of standardised residuals vs standardised predicted values, depicted in Figure 23 (see below), showed no obvious signs of funnelling, suggesting the assumption of homoscedasticity has been met.

Figure 23

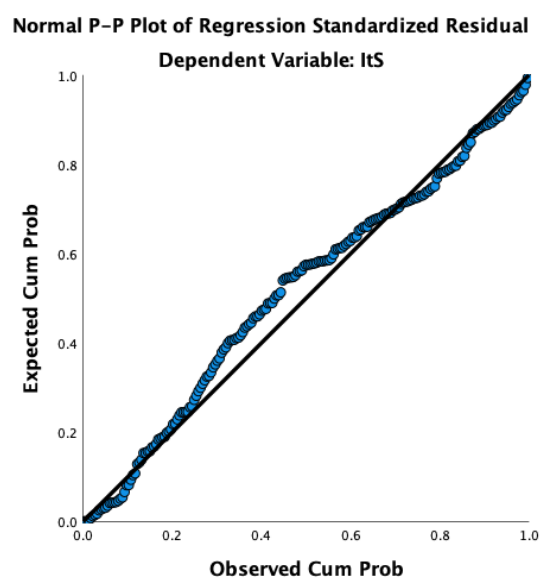
Plot of Standardised Residuals vs Standardised Predicted Values for Hypothesis 8



The P-P plot for the model suggested that the assumption of normality of the residuals have been met, as the dots lie very closely on the diagonal line (as seen in Figure 24). With few minor deviations, and no extreme noticeable deviations from normality, the results are, therefore, considered valid.

Figure 24

P-P Plot for Hypothesis 8



Finally, Cook's Distance values were all found to be less than 1, suggesting individual cases were not unduly influencing the model. If Cook's distance is below one (< 1) and the outliers do not make a significant change in the regression, there is no need to remove the outliers (Field, 2018). The decision was, therefore, made to not exclude any cases from the multiple regression analyses. Based on the information presented previously, it was considered that no assumptions of multiple regression were violated and, therefore, that the data was considered appropriate for multiple regression analysis.

To address Hypothesis 8.1, a hierarchical linear regression analysis was utilised. Hierarchical regression was employed so that selected demographic variables (i.e., age and organisational tenure) could be controlled for to better understand the relationships under investigation. A two-step model was, therefore, used. The first regression model included the two demographic variables as control variables (age and organisational tenure). The second regression model comprised workplace friendships scope, workplace friendships quality, helping behaviour and affective organisational commitment as the independent variables. Multiple regression analysis was conducted with intention to stay as the dependent variable (see Table 14.1 below).

Table 14.1

Hierarchical Linear Regression Analysis: Age, Organisational Tenure, Workplace Friendship Scope, Workplace Friendship Quality, Helping Behaviour and Affective Organisational Commitment

Model	R ²	R ² Change	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
			B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	.090		3.77	.103		36.59	<.01		
Age			.00	.001	-.027	-.40	.69	.983	1.018
Tenure			.07	.015	.303	4.54	<.01	.983	1.018
2 (Constant)	.487	.396	.41	.692		.59	.56		
Age			.00	.001	0.45	.89	.37	.967	1.034
Tenure			.03	.012	.142	2.69	<.01	.905	1.105
WF_Prev			-.12	.078	-.096	-1.59	.11	.683	1.465
WF_Opp			.29	.109	.157	2.68	<.01	.729	1.371
HB			-.04	.129	-.019	-.33	.74	.762	1.312
AOC			.67	.066	.602	10.23	<.01	.725	1.379

Note. Tenure = organisational tenure; WF = Workplace Friendship; HB = Helping Behaviour; AOC = Affective Organisational Commitment

Dependent variable: Intention to Stay

Significant predictors of unique variance in Intention to Stay are highlighted

The overall regression model (i.e., a model consisting of all the independent variables and the control variables) significantly predicted 48.7% of the intention to stay ($R^2 = .487$; $F(6,204) = 32.233$; $p < .01$). The independent variables of interest (i.e., workplace friendships scope, workplace friendship quality, affective organisational commitment and helping behaviour) statistically significantly explained an additional 40% of the variance in the dependent variable intention to stay, i.e., over and above the 9% that could be explained by the selected demographic control variables.

In the first regression model, i.e., Model 1 consisting of the demographic variables age and tenure, tenure was found to significantly predict unique variance in the dependent variable, intention to stay. In Model 2, organisational tenure, affective organisational commitment and workplace friendship opportunity (scope) were found to significantly predict unique variance ($p < .01$) in the dependent variable, intention to stay. Considering the Beta values, affective organisational commitment can be considered to explain the most unique variance in intention to stay (Standardised Beta = .602, $t = 10.23$, $p < .01$), followed by workplace friendship opportunity (scope) (Standardised Beta = .157, $t = 2.68$, $p < .01$), and tenure (Standardised Beta = .142, $t = 2.69$; $p < .01$). Based on these results, support for Hypothesis 8.1 was obtained.

H_{8.2}: *A regression model consisting of workplace friendship scope, workplace friendship quality, helping behaviour, and affective commitment significantly explains variance in the dependent variable intention to stay while controlling for selected demographic variables (age, tenure), as well as the 'Big Five' personality variables (extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness to experience).*

To address Hypothesis 8.2, a three-step hierarchical linear regression analysis was utilised. The first regression model included the two demographic variables as control variables (age and organisational tenure). The second regression model comprised the 'Big Five' personality variables, extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience. Finally, the third regression model further included the independent variables of workplace friendships scope, workplace friendship quality, helping behaviour and affective organisational commitment. Multiple regression analysis was conducted with intention to stay as the dependent variable (see Table 14.2 below).

Table 14.2

Hierarchical Linear Regression Analysis: Age, Organisational Tenure, 'Big Five' Personality variables, Workplace Friendship Scope, Workplace Friendship Quality, Helping Behaviour and Affective Organisational Commitment

Model	R ²	R ² Change	Unstandardised		Standardised		t	Sig.	Collinearity	
			Coefficients B	Std. Error	Coefficients Beta				Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	.090		3.77	.103			36.59	<.01		
Age			.00	.001	-.027		-.40	.69	.983	1.018
Tenure			.07	.015	.303		4.54	<.01	.983	1.018
2 (Constant)	.487	.396	.41	.692			.59	.56		
Age			.00	.001	0.45		.89	.37	.967	1.034
Tenure			.03	.012	.142		2.69	<.01	.905	1.105
WF_Prev			-.12	.078	-.096		-1.59	.11	.683	1.465
WF_Opp			.29	.109	.157		2.68	<.01	.729	1.371
HB			-.04	.129	-.019		-.33	.74	.762	1.312
AOC			.67	.066	.602		10.23	<.01	.725	1.379
3 (Constant)	.497	.344	.23	.798			.03	.98		
Age			.00	.001	.050		.97	.34	.948	1.055
Tenure			.03	.012	.151		2.83	<.01	.880	1.137
Extra			.09	.064	.076		1.38	.17	.834	1.199
Con			.14	.124	.062		1.13	.26	.822	1.217
Neuro			-.01	.053	-.006		-.11	.91	.956	1.046
Open			-.08	.079	-.055		-1.02	.31	.860	1.163
WF_Prev			-.14	.079	-.112		-1.81	.07	.654	1.529
WF_Opp			.30	.110	.163		2.74	<.01	.713	1.403
HB			-.09	.136	-.038		-.63	.53	.681	1.467
AOC			.66	.068	.590		9.68	<.01	.678	1.475

Note. Tenure = organisational tenure; Extra = extraversion; Con = conscientiousness; Neuro = neuroticism; Open = openness to experience; WF_Prev = Workplace Friendship Quality; WF_Opp = Workplace Friendship Scope; HB = Helping Behaviour; AOC = Affective Organisational Commitment, Dependent variable: Intention to Stay. Significant predictors of unique variance in Intention to Stay are highlighted

The overall regression model (i.e., a model consisting of all the independent variables and the control variables) significantly predicted 49.7% of the intention to stay ($R^2 = .497$; $F(10,200) = 16.614$; $p < .01$). The independent variables of interest (i.e., workplace friendships scope, workplace friendship quality, affective organisational commitment and helping behaviour) significantly predicted an additional 34% variance in the dependent variable intention to stay, i.e., over and above the 15% that could be explained by the selected demographic control variables and individual's personalities.

In Model 3 (see Table 14.2 above), organisational tenure (Standardised Beta = .151, $t = 2.83$; $p < .01$), affective organisational commitment (Standardised Beta = .590, $t = 9.68$, $p < .01$) and workplace friendship opportunity (scope) (Standardised Beta = .163, $t = 2.74$, $p < .01$)

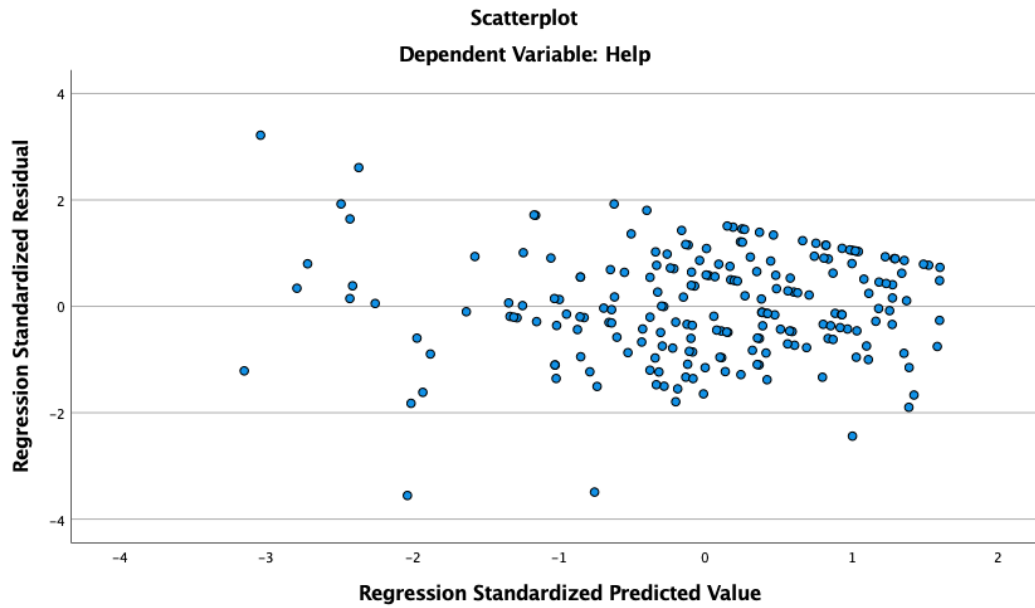
were found to significantly predict unique variance in the dependent variable, intention to stay. Considering the Beta values, affective organisational commitment can be considered to explain the most unique variance in intention to stay, followed by workplace friendship opportunity (scope), and tenure. Based on these results, support for Hypothesis 8.2 was obtained.

H_{9.1}: *A regression model consisting of workplace friendship scope and workplace friendship quality significantly explains variance in the dependent variable helping behaviour, while controlling for selected demographic variables (age, tenure).*

Prior to utilising multiple regression to assess Hypothesis 9, the assumptions for multiple regression were considered. Firstly, the scatterplot matrix (see Figure 20 above) was considered and seemed to indicate that the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable can be characterised by a straight line, suggesting that the linearity assumption had been met. No evidence of multicollinearity was found (VIF scores = 1.00 & 1.01, i.e., < 10; Tolerance = .78 & .78; i.e., > 0.2; Kim, 2019). The Durbin-Watson statistic indicated that the values of the residuals are independent (Durbin-Watson = 1.25; i.e., is close enough to 2; Field, 2018). The plot of standardised residuals vs standardised predicted values, depicted in Figure 25 (see below), showed no obvious signs of funnelling, suggesting the assumption of homoscedasticity has been met.

Figure 25

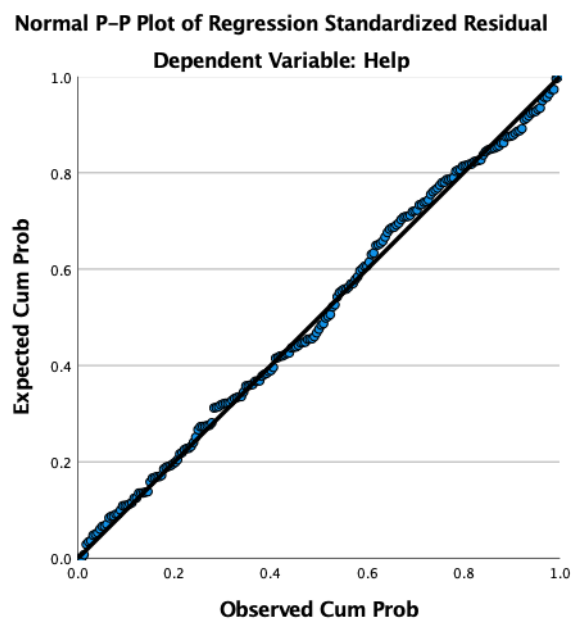
Plot of Standardised Residuals vs Standardised Predicted Values for Hypothesis 9



The P-P plot for the model suggested that the assumption of normality of the residuals has been met, as the dots lie very closely on the diagonal line (as seen in Figure 26). With few minor deviations and no extreme noticeable deviations from normality, the results are, therefore, considered valid.

Figure 26

P-P Plot for Hypothesis 9



Finally, Cook's Distance values were all found to be less than 1, suggesting individual cases were not unduly influencing the model. If Cook's distance is below one (< 1) and the outliers do not make a significant change in the regression, there is no need to remove the outliers (Field, 2018); the decision was, therefore, made to not exclude any cases from the multiple regression analyses. Based on the information presented previously, it was considered that no assumptions of multiple regression were violated and, therefore, that the data was considered appropriate for multiple regression analysis.

To address Hypothesis 9.1, a hierarchical linear regression analysis was utilised. Hierarchical regression was employed so that selected demographic variables (i.e., age and organisational tenure) could be controlled for to better understand the relationships under investigation. A two-step model was, therefore, used. The first regression model included the two demographic variables as control variables (age and organisational tenure). The second regression model comprised workplace friendships scope and workplace friendships quality as the independent variables. Multiple regression analysis was conducted with helping behaviour as the dependent variable (see Table 15.1 below).

Table 15.1

Hierarchical Linear Regression Analysis: Age, Organisational Tenure, Workplace Friendship Scope and Workplace Friendship Quality

Model	R ²	R ² Change	Unstandardised	Standardised	t	Sig. (p)	Collinearity		
			Coefficients B	Coefficients Std. Beta Error			Tolerance	VIF	
1 (Constant)	.004		5.23	.048	108.48	<.01			
Age			.00	.001	-.026	-.37	.71	.983	1.018
Tenure			-.01	.007	-.050	-.72	.47	.983	1.018
2 (Constant)	.226	.223	3.70	.275	13.45	<.01			
Age			.00	.001	0.14	.22	.83	.973	1.028
Tenure			-.01	.006	-.042	-.68	.50	.976	1.024
WF_Prev			.25	.038	.428	6.36	<.01	.830	1.205
WF_Opp			.08	.056	.093	1.38	.17	.827	1.209

Note. Tenure = organisational tenure; WF_Prev = Workplace Friendship Quality; WF_Opp = Workplace Friendship Scope.

Dependent variable: Helping Behaviour. Significant predictors of unique variance in Helping Behaviour are highlighted

The overall regression model (i.e., a model consisting of all the independent variables and the control variables) significantly predicted 22.6% of the intention to stay ($R^2 = .226$; $F(4,206) = 15.050$; $p < .01$). The independent variables of interest (i.e., workplace friendships scope and workplace friendship quality) significantly explained an additional 22% of the

variance in the dependent variable helping behaviour, i.e., over and above the 0.4% that could be explained by the selected demographic control variables.

Model 2, workplace friendship prevalence (quality) (Standardised Beta = .428, $t = 6.36$, $p < .01$) was found to significantly predict unique variance in the dependent variable, helping behaviour (see Table 15.1 above), and uniquely explained 15.2% of the variation in helping behaviour. Based on these results, support for Hypothesis 9.1 was obtained.

H_{9.2}: *A regression model consisting of Workplace Friendship Scope, Workplace Friendship Quality significantly explains variance in the dependent variable Helping Behaviour while controlling for selected demographic variables (age, tenure), as well as the 'Big Five' personality variables (Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, Openness to Experience).*

To address Hypothesis 9.2, a three-step hierarchical linear regression analysis was utilised. As done previously, the first regression model included the two demographic variables as control variables (age and organisational tenure). The second regression model comprised the four EFA-derived 'Big Five' personality variables, extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience. Finally, the third regression model further included the independent variables of workplace friendships scope and workplace friendship quality. Multiple regression analysis was conducted with Helping Behaviour as the dependent variable (see Table 15.2 below).

Table 15.2

Hierarchical Linear Regression Analysis: Age, Organisational Tenure, 'Big Five' Personality variables, Workplace Friendship Scope and Workplace Friendship Quality

Model		R ²	R ² Change		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients		t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
					B	Std. Error	Beta				Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.004			5.23	.048			108.48	<.01		
	Age				.00	.001	-.026		-.37	.71	.983	1.018
	Tenure				-.01	.007	-.059		-.72	.47	.983	1.018
2	(Constant)	.151	.147		3.20	.381			8.41	<.01		
	Age				.00	.001	-.017		-.41	.80	.967	1.034
	Tenure				-.01	.007	-.073		-1.10	.27	.952	1.050
	Extra				.05	.035	.090		1.33	.18	.905	1.105
	Con				.34	.067	.341		5.12	<.01	.936	1.069
	Neuro				-.03	.030	-.061		-.94	.35	.986	1.014
	Open				.04	.045	.057		.83	.41	.884	1.131
3	(Constant)	.314	.163		2.34	.403			5.80	<.01		
	Age				.00	.000	.019		.31	.76	.955	1.047
	Tenure				-.01	.006	-.066		-1.11	.27	.949	1.053
	Extra				-.01	.033	-.019		-.31	.76	.848	1.179
	Con				.30	.061	.294		4.84	<.01	.923	1.083
	Neuro				-.02	.027	-.041		-.70	.48	.977	1.024
	Open				.04	.041	.055		.89	.38	.870	1.149
	WF_Prev				.23	.038	.394		5.96	<.01	.778	1.286
	WF_Opp				.06	.054	.067		1.04	.30	.804	1.243

Note. Tenure = organisational tenure; Extra = extraversion; Con = conscientiousness; Neuro = neuroticism; Open = openness to experience; WF_Prev = Workplace Friendship Quality; WF_Opp = Workplace Friendship Scope. Dependent variable: Helping Behaviour. Significant predictors of unique variance in Helping Behaviour are highlighted

The overall regression model (i.e., a model consisting of all the independent variables and the control variables) significantly predicted 31.4% of the helping behaviour ($R^2 = .314$; $F(8,202) = 11.571$; $p < .01$). The independent variables of interest (i.e., workplace friendships scope and workplace friendship quality) significantly explained an additional 16% of the variance in the dependent variable helping behaviour, i.e., over and above the 15% that could be explained by the selected demographic control variables and individual's personalities.

In Model 3, conscientiousness (Standardised Beta = .294, $t = 4.84$; $p < .01$), and workplace friendship prevalence (quality) (Standardised Beta = .394, $t = 5.96$, $p < .01$) were

found to predict unique variance in the dependent variable, helping behaviour (see Table 15.2 above). Workplace friendship prevalence (quality) was identified as the most important predictor of helping behaviour, and uniquely explained 12% of the variation in helping behaviour, while conscientiousness explained 8% of the variation in helping behaviour. Based on these results, support for Hypothesis 9.2 was obtained.

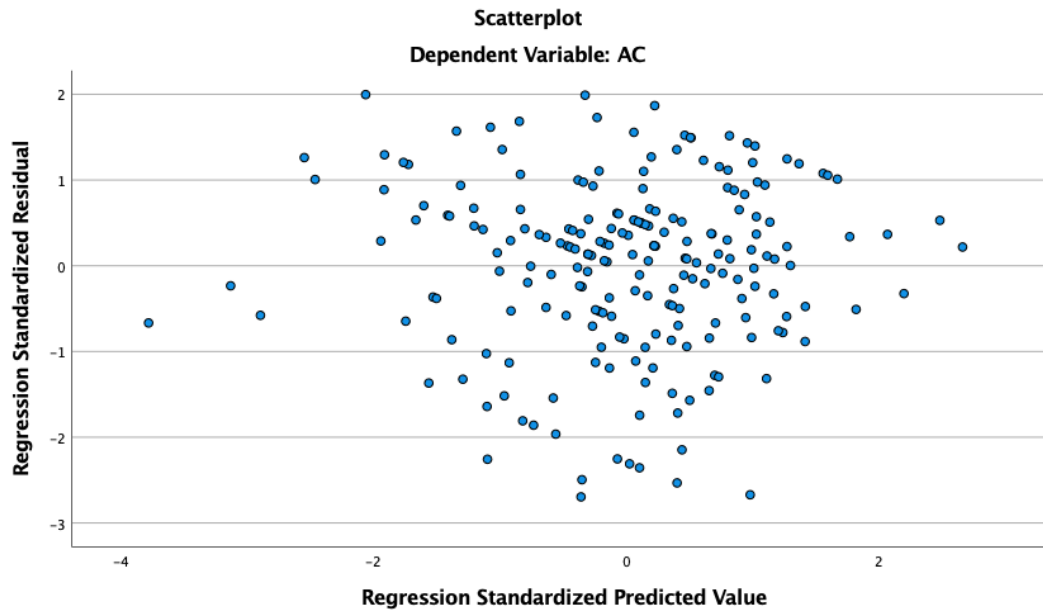
H_{10.1}: *A regression model consisting of workplace friendship scope and workplace friendship quality significantly explains variance in the dependent variable affective organisational commitment while controlling for selected demographic variables (age, tenure).*

Prior to utilising multiple regression to assess Hypothesis 10.1, the assumptions for multiple regression were considered. Firstly, the scatterplot matrix (see Figure 20 above) was considered and seemed to indicate that the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable can be characterised by a straight line, suggesting that the linearity assumption had been met.

No evidence of multicollinearity was found (VIF scores = 1.01 & 1.01, i.e., < 10; Tolerance = .98 & .98; i.e., > 0.2; Kim, 2019). The Durbin-Watson statistic indicated that the values of the residuals are independent (Durbin-Watson = 1.99; i.e., is close to 2; Field, 2018). The plot of standardised residuals vs standardised predicted values, depicted in Figure 27 (see below), showed no obvious signs of funnelling, suggesting the assumption of homoscedasticity has been met.

Figure 27

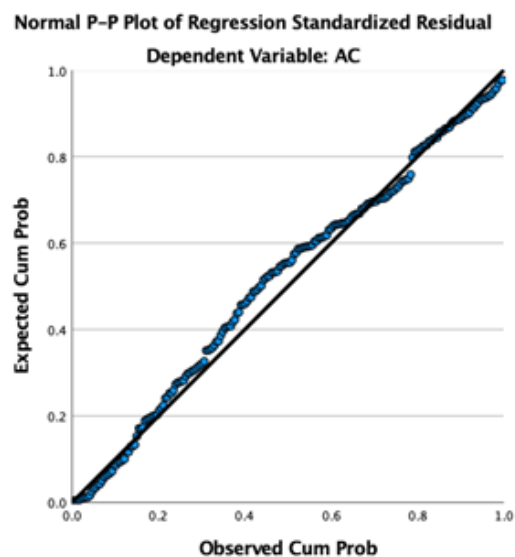
Plot of Standardised Residuals vs Standardised Predicted Values for Hypothesis 10



The P-P plot for the model suggested that the assumption of normality of the residuals have been met, as the dots lie very closely on the diagonal line (as seen in Figure 28). With few minor deviations, and no extreme noticeable deviations from normality, the results are, therefore, considered valid.

Figure 28

P-P Plot for Hypothesis 10



Finally, Cook's Distance values were all found to be less than 1, suggesting individual cases were not unduly influencing the model. If Cook's distance is below one (< 1) and the outliers do not make a significant change in the regression, there is no need to remove the outliers (Field, 2018). The decision was, therefore, made to not exclude any cases from the multiple regression analyses.

Based on the information presented previously, it was considered that no assumptions of multiple regression were violated and, therefore, that the data was considered appropriate for multiple regression analysis.

To address Hypothesis 10.1, a hierarchical linear regression analysis was utilised. Hierarchical regression was employed so that selected demographic variables (i.e., age and organisational tenure) could be controlled for to better understand the relationships under investigation. A two-step model was, therefore, used. The first regression model included the two demographic variables as control variables (age and organisational tenure). The second regression model comprised workplace friendships scope and workplace friendships quality as the independent variables. Multiple regression analysis was conducted with affective organisational commitment as the dependent variable (see Table 16.1 below).

Table 16.1

Hierarchical Linear Regression Analysis: Age, Organisational Tenure, Workplace Friendship Scope and Workplace Friendship Quality

Model	R ²	R ² Change	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
			B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	.065		3.91	.093		41.88	<.01		
Age			-.00	.001	-.108	-1.60	.11	.983	1.018
Tenure			.05	.014	.246	3.64	<.01	.983	1.018
2 (Constant)	.264	.199	.01	.536		.01	.99		
Age			-.00	.001	-.064	-1.06	.29	.973	1.028
Tenure			.05	.012	.233	3.85	<.01	.976	1.024
WF_Prev			.21	.075	.181	2.76	.01	.830	1.205
WF_Opp			.57	.109	.343	5.21	<.01	.827	1.209

Note. Tenure = organisational tenure; WF_Prev = Workplace Friendship Quality; WF_Opp = Workplace Friendship Scope.

Dependent variable: Affective Organisational Commitment. Significant predictors of unique variance in Affective Organisational Commitment are highlighted

The overall regression model (i.e., a model consisting of all the independent variables and the control variables) significantly predicted 26.4% of the affective organisational commitment ($R^2 = .264$; $F(4,206) = 18.473$; $p < .01$). The independent variables of interest (i.e., workplace friendship scope and workplace friendship quality) significantly explained an additional 20% of the variance in the dependent variable affective organisational commitment, i.e., over and above the 6.5% that could be explained by the selected demographic control variables.

In Model 2, organisational tenure (Standardised Beta = .233, $t = 3.85$; $p < .01$) and workplace friendship opportunity (scope) (Standardised Beta = .343, $t = 5.21$, $p < .01$) were found to significantly predict unique variance in the dependent variable, affective organisational commitment (see Table 16.1 above).

Workplace friendship opportunity (scope) was identified as the most important predictor of affective organisational commitment, and uniquely explained 9.7% of the variation in affective organisational commitment, while organisational tenure explained 5.3% of the variation in affective organisational commitment. Based on these results, support for Hypothesis 10.1 was obtained.

Therefore, an important finding in this study was that employees who experienced workplace friendships, specifically in terms of more friendship building opportunities and higher friendship prevalence, were employees who reported higher levels of affective organisational commitment, regardless of their age and organisational tenure.

H_{10.2}: *A regression model consisting of Workplace Friendship Scope, Workplace Friendship Quality significantly explains variance in the dependent variable, Affective Organisational Commitment, while controlling for selected demographic variables (age, tenure), as well as the 'Big Five' personality variables (Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, Openness to Experience).*

To address Hypothesis 10.2 (as stated above), a three-step hierarchical linear regression analysis was utilised. As done previously, the first regression model included the two demographic variables as control variables (age and organisational tenure). The second regression model comprised the four EFA-derived 'Big Five' personality variables, extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience. Finally, the third regression model further included the independent variables of workplace friendships scope

and workplace friendship quality. Multiple regression analysis was conducted with affective organisational commitment as the dependent variable (see Table 16.2).

Table 16.2

Hierarchical Linear Regression Analysis: Age, Organisational Tenure, 'Big Five' Personality variables, Workplace Friendship Scope and Workplace Friendship Quality

Model		R ²		Unstandardised		Standardised		Collinearity	
		R ²	Change	Coefficients	Coefficients	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
				B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	.065		3.91	.093		41.88	<.01	
	Age			-.00	.001	-.108	-1.60	.11	.983
	Tenure			.05	.014	.246	3.64	<.01	.983
2	(Constant)	.144	.103	.63	.754		.83	.41	
	Age			-.00	.001	-.116	-1.78	.08	.967
	Tenure			.05	.013	.233	3.55	<.01	.952
	Extra			.20	.070	.188	2.80	<.01	.905
	Con			.27	.133	.135	2.05	.04	.936
	Neuro			.07	.059	.076	1.19	.24	.986
	Open			.16	.089	.118	1.75	.08	.884
3	(Constant)	.318	.149	-2.09	.805		-2.60	.01	
	Age			-.00	.001	-.072	-1.21	.23	.955
	Tenure			.05	.012	.223	3.74	<.01	.949
	Extra			.12	.066	.111	1.77	.08	.848
	Con			.19	.122	.096	1.60	.11	.923
	Neuro			.10	.054	.112	1.91	.06	.977
	Open			.11	.082	.084	1.34	.18	.870
	WF_Prev			.16	.075	.139	2.10	.04	.778
	WF_Opp			.54	.108	.328	5.06	<.01	.804

Note. Tenure = organisational tenure; Extra = extraversion; Con = conscientiousness; Neuro = neuroticism; Open = openness to experience; WF_Prev = Workplace Friendship Quality; WF_Opp = Workplace Friendship Scope. Dependent variable: Affective Organisational Commitment. Significant predictors of unique variance in Affective Organisational Commitment are highlighted

The overall regression model (i.e., a model consisting of all the independent variables and the control variables) significantly predicted 31.8% of the affective organisational commitment ($R^2 = .318$; $F(8,202) = 11.759$; $p < .01$). The independent variables of interest (i.e., workplace friendship scope and workplace friendship quality) significantly explained an additional 15% of the variance in the dependent variable affective organisational commitment,

i.e., over and above the 17% that could be significantly explained by the selected demographic control variables and individual's personalities.

In Model 3, organisational tenure (Standardised Beta = .223, $t = 3.74$; $p < .01$) and workplace friendship opportunity (scope) (Standardised Beta = .328, $t = 5.06$, $p < .01$) were found to predict unique variance in the dependent variable, affective organisational commitment. Therefore, organisational tenure and workplace friendship opportunity (scope) made significant unique and similar in strength contributions to the variance explained in affective organisational commitment (see Table 16.2 above). Moreover, workplace friendship opportunity (scope) was identified as the most important predictor of affective organisational commitment, and uniquely explained 8.6% of the variation in affective organisational commitment, while organisational tenure explained 4.7% of the variation in affective organisational commitment. Based on these results, support for Hypothesis 10.2 was obtained.

Table 17
Summary of Estimated Relationships of Interest

Relationship	Bivariate				Multivariate		
	Spearman's rho (ρ)	COD ($r^2 \times 100$)	Controlling for 'Big Five'	COD ($r^2 \times 100$)	% Variance explained ($R^2 \times 100$)	% Variance explained Controlling for 'Big Five' ($R^2 \times 100$)	Model
WF → ItS	.24**	5.8%	.17*	2.9%	46.7%	47.5%	(AOC , WF, HB) → ItS
WF_Opp → ItS	.39**	15.2%	.35**	12.3%	48.7%	49.7%	(AOC , WF_Opp , HB, WF_Prev) → ItS
WF_Prev → ItS	.16*	2.6%	.10	1.0%			
WF → HB	.50**	25%	.44**	19.4%	22.6%	31.4%	(WF_Prev , WF_Opp) → HB
WF_Opp → HB	.33**	10.9%	.23**	5.3%			
WF_Prev → HB	.48**	23.0%	.45**	10.3%			
HB → ItS	.14*	2.0%	.05	0.3%			
WF → AOC	.38**	14.4%	.37**	13.7%	26.4%	31.8%	(WF_Opp , WF_Prev) → AOC
WF_Opp → AOC	.47**	22.1%	.42**	17.6%			
WF_Prev → AOC	.31**	9.6%	.30**	9.0%			
AOC → ItS	.66**	43.6%	.64**	41.0%			

Note. COD = Coefficient of Determination; WF = Workplace Friendship composite score; WF_Opp = Workplace Friendship Opportunity score; WF_Prev = Workplace Friendship Prevalence score; Help = Helping Behaviour score; AOC = Affective Organisational Commitment score; ItS = Intention to Stay score; Extra = Extraversion score; Neurotic = Neuroticism score; Cons = Conscientiousness score; Open = Openness score. Missing value handling: pairwise.

Bivariate: ** *Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)* * *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)*

Multivariate: Independent variables explaining unique variance in the dependent variable are written in **bold**. The independent variables are presented in order of their Standardised Beta values, with the highest furthest to the left and lowest furthest to the right within the brackets.

Conclusion

Once the reliability and validity of the scales used in the current study were established and reported, descriptive statistics were calculated to summarise the data. Finally, the results obtained from the inferential statistics utilised to assess the hypotheses were reported here.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The insights gained into the direct relationships between workplace friendships and intention to stay, as well as the indirect relationship mediating by helping behaviour and affective organisational commitment, are discussed here. Moreover, the role that personality factors play in these relationships was investigated, and the implications on these relationships are further discussed. The limitations of the current research and recommendations for future studies are further provided. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the theoretical and practical contributions of the current study, culminating in several practice-focused recommendations for managers/leaders of organisations to consider.

Background to the Current Study

As described above, the substantive aim of the current research study was to investigate the relationship between workplace friendships and employees' intention to stay and the extent to which this relationship is mediated by affective organisational commitment and helping behaviour. These relationships were investigated with and without accounting for personality as a possible confounding or extraneous variable.

A substantial body of literature can be found which has focused on the selected constructs under investigation, in other words, affective organisational commitment (a dimension of organisational commitment), helping behaviours (a dimension of organisational citizenship behaviour), and intention to quit/stay. Nevertheless, limited evidence-based literature could be found that has investigated the role of workplace friendships in the abovementioned variables. Furthermore, personality was considered a possible covariate due to previous studies depicting personality demonstrating partial prediction of the current study's variables of interest (Erdheim et al., 2006; Harris & Vazire, 2016; Kumar & Bakhshi, 2010; Udin & Yuniawan, 2020).

There is a growing body of literature that recognises the key role and value of forming and maintaining friendships within workplace settings, and this is considered to be an under-researched aspect of employee well-being, organisational effectiveness, and employee retention, among other desirable organisational behaviours and outcomes, such as competitively engaging in the 'war for talent'. As a result, several authors have called for such

research to be conducted. This research project has responded to this call, and it will hopefully stimulate further empirical studies in the near future.

The Direct Relationship between Workplace Friendships and Intention to Stay

In the present study, empirical support was found for the hypothesised positive relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay ($r = .24, p < .01$). This finding corroborates several research studies that have been conducted in the past (for example, Alam & Asim, 2019; Morrison, 2004). As previously discussed, workplace friendships have been found to offer various desirable outcomes to both individuals and organisations, such as lower stress levels and improved job performance, the realisation of which can arguably be conducive to talent retention and organisational effectiveness (e.g., Anderson & Fowers, 2020). As an organisation's talent is considered a key component of its competitive advantage (Delery & Roumpi, 2017), talent management strategies, policies and practices generally focus their efforts on the attraction and retention of talent and attempt to avoid voluntary turnover.

As Shahid (2018) expressed, an employee's intention to behave in a specific manner, such as their intention to stay, is a strong predictor of the actual behaviour, such as actually staying with the organisation instead of quitting. Therefore, it is argued that talent retention or reduced turnover may be achieved through engaging and increasing employees' intention to stay. Furthermore, one would assume that people want to remain in environments where they feel comfortable, supported and have a sense of belonging; friendships can arguably facilitate workplaces in becoming such an environment. It can, therefore, be argued that the direct positive relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay was to be expected, as the individual benefits associated with workplace friendships, such as being a source of social support, may create an environment in which employees feel comfortable, supported and a sense of belonging, ultimately encouraging them to stay.

To further investigate the direct relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay, Zarankin and Kunkel's (2019) distinction between workplace friendship scope (i.e., the frequency and the diversity of interactions) and workplace friendship quality (i.e., the value of friendship to those involved) was considered. Empirical support was found for the hypothesised relationships between workplace friendship scope, workplace friendship quality and intention to stay ($r = .39, p < .01$, explained variance = 15.2% & $r = .16, p < .05$, explained variance = 2.6%, respectively) in the current study. Therefore, in corroboration with Zarankin and Kunkel's (2019) proposal, individuals were found to be likely to gain more

benefits, such as a happy work life (Charaba, 2022) and positive emotional bonds (Ingram & Zou, 2008), from workplace friendships with both broader scope (i.e., more frequent and diverse interactions) and greater quality (i.e., high levels of reciprocity, commitment, trust and positive affect), than those experiencing narrowed scope and lower quality friendships. More specifically, considering the abovementioned relationships in relation to Cohen's (2013) guidelines, the relationship between workplace friendship scope and intention to stay can be categorised as medium. This is to say that, as the medium relationship between workplace friendship scope and intention to stay is somewhat stronger than the weak relationship between workplace friendship quality and intention to stay (Cohen, 2013), organisations may benefit more from focusing on broadening the scope of friendships among employees.

Moreover, as presented previously, according to Nielsen et al.'s (2000) WFS, workplace friendships can also be divided into workplace friendship opportunity and workplace friendship prevalence. Through EFA conducted in Chapter 4, we found workplace friendship opportunity to be generally composed of the same items as workplace friendship scope in the current study, while the items used to measure workplace friendship prevalence predominately aligned with those measuring workplace friendship quality. Therefore, it can be argued that in order to reap the possible benefits associated with workplace friendship, such as increased intention to stay and talent retention, organisations should focus on creating opportunities for friendships to form and flourish amongst colleagues.

Understanding the differences between workplace friendship scope and workplace friendship quality and intention to stay will hopefully assist organisations in developing targeted strategies aimed at increasing the employee's ties to the organisation, thereby increasing their intentions to stay. Due to workplace friendship scope/opportunity explaining more variance than workplace friendship quality/prevalence in intention to stay, encouraging more frequent and diverse interactions among employees, and creating opportunities for friendships to form, should be the primary focus for managers and organisations in pursuit of talent retention through increased intention to stay related to workplace friendships.

The Indirect Relationship between Workplace Friendships and Intention to Stay mediated by Helping Behaviour

Support for the three relationships which make up the mediated relationship of interest, in other words, the relationships between workplace friendships and intention to stay ($r = .24$, $p < .01$, explained variance = 5.8%), workplace friendships and helping behaviour ($r = .50$, p

< .01, explained variance = 25%), and helping behaviour and intention to stay ($r = .14$, $p < .05$, explained variance = 2.0%) was found. The results obtained here support the notion that workplace friendships are strongly positively related to increased engagement in helping behaviours (Cohen, 2013), as well as providing for the establishment and maintenance of social support among co-workers (Hamilton, 2007; Paul et al., 2016). The presence of social support, in turn, creates a positive work environment and promotes positive workplace experiences, which play an important role in employee's desire to remain with their current organisation, in other words, their intention to stay (Berman et al., 2002; Ferhat, 2018).

However, the simple mediation analyses conducted using Hayes's (2013) PROCESS revealed that helping behaviour did not significantly mediate the relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay. Therefore, although workplace friendships and helping behaviour, as well as helping behaviour and intention to stay, are found to share positive relationships, as discussed previously, we cannot conclude that helping behaviour mediates the direct relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay. Such findings corroborate those of Hamilton (2007) and Ferris et al. (2009) in that the presence of positive social relationships, such as workplace friendships, are related to the performance and reciprocation of helping behaviours among employees.

With a dearth of studies considering the role helping behaviours play in an individual's intention to stay, it is difficult to argue whether the weak relationship between helping behaviour and intention to stay (Cohen, 2013), as well as the lack of empirical support for the role of helping behaviour as a mediator in the relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay, may be due to the current study's sampling methods or any other influence.

Further mediation analyses were conducted, which revealed that similarly to workplace friendships, helping behaviour did not mediate the relationship between workplace friendship scope and intention to stay, nor the relationship between workplace friendship quality and intention to stay. Such findings may lead to future research endeavours to investigate the antecedents and outcomes of helping behaviour within an organisational context.

Notably, no support found for the role of helping behaviour between workplace friendships (as a composite score or considered as the two components of workplace friendships scope and workplace friendship quality) and intention to stay, was arguably to be expected after finding a weak, perhaps spurious relationship between workplace friendship quality and intention to stay, as previously discussed. Therefore, although two of the three direct relationships which make up mediation were medium to strong in strength, according to Cohen (2013), the third, weak direct relationship restricted the possibility of significant

mediation. Despite little support for the relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay, organisational leaders may gain access to the benefits associated with helping behaviours, such as higher levels of motivation, commitment and employee engagement (Bell & Sheridan, 2020; Rousseau & Aubé, 2010), through the encouragement of workplace friendships.

The Indirect Relationship between Workplace Friendships and Intention to Stay mediated by Affective Organisational Commitment

Support was found for the three relationships which make up the mediated relationships of interest, in other words, between workplace friendships and intention to stay ($r = .24$, $p < .01$, variance explained = 5.8%), workplace friendship and affective organisational commitment ($r = .39$, $p < .01$, variance explained = 15.2%), and affective organisational commitment and intention to stay ($r = .66$, $p < .01$, variance explained = 43.6%). Empirical support found in the current study for a medium significant positive relationship between workplace friendships and affective organisational commitment (Cohen, 2013) corroborates previous findings that position workplace friendships as a source of social support (Zarankin & Kunkel, 2019). Such findings arguably make sense in alignment with the JD-R model, as social support is considered a job resource, assisting employees in the successful completion of job-related tasks, as well as influencing various positive organisational outcomes, such as increased organisational commitment (Bakker et al., 2007). Furthermore, finding empirical support for a strong significant positive relationship between affective organisational commitment and intention to stay (Cohen, 2013) corroborates Bell and Sheridan's (2020) findings that higher levels of affective organisational commitment play a significant role in predicting an employee's intention to stay. Such findings were expected as higher affective organisational commitment, as a component of organisational commitment, encapsulates an employee's obligation or devotion to the organisation (Vandenbos, 2015), arguably the inverse of a willingness to leave or quit.

Additionally, based on simple mediation analyses conducted using Hayes's (2013) PROCESS, support was found for the hypothesised indirect relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay, as mediated by affective organisational commitment. Further mediation analyses were conducted, which revealed that affective organisational commitment also significantly mediates the relationships between workplace friendship scope and intention to stay and between workplace friendship quality and intention to stay. In alignment with

Morrison's (2004) findings, empirical support found in the current study for a significant positive indirect relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay, as mediated by affective organisational commitment, suggests that the presence of and engagement in workplace friendships increased an employee's positive feelings towards, and emotional attachment to, their organisation (affective organisational commitment) which in turn positively influenced their intention to stay.

The Role of Personality

While there is support for the notion that personality traits play a role in the constructs under investigation and the relationships between them, for example, in friendships (Harris & Vazire, 2016), helping behaviour (Habashi et al., 2016; Hashim et al., 2017; Udin & Yuniawan, 2020), affective organisational commitment (Chandel et al., 2011; Erdheim et al., 2006), as well as intention to stay (Alam & Asim, 2019; Ganu & Kogutu, 2014; Kumar & Bakhshi, 2010), this has not received attention in relation to workplace friendships and the relationships of interest in the current study. To establish a better understanding of the relationships of interest and the role of an individual's personality, various effects of the 'Big Five' dimensions of personality were statistically removed from the abovementioned relationships by using partial correlation analyses.

Evidence was found for the effect of personality traits on the relationships of interest, as when controlling for the four EFA-derived personality traits, the strength of the correlations of interest consistently numerically decreased. An inspection of the zero-order correlations, in other words, the correlation between two variables without controlling for a third, suggested that controlling for personality had little effect on the strength of the relationship between the two variables (Brown & Hendrix, 2014). This is, however, not the case for the relationship between workplace friendship prevalence (quality) and intention to stay, as although the zero-order correlation ($r = .16, p < .05$) displayed a significant relationship, the partial correlation (i.e., the correlation when controlling for personality) statistic ($r = .10, p > .05$) depicted a non-significant relationship (see Table 10), further indicating that the personality traits under consideration had an effect on the relationships of interest.

Therefore, employees' personalities were found to have an effect on the relationships under investigation in the current study, albeit marginally so in most of the relationships. Such findings can be considered an argument against spurious relationships (i.e., when the presence of a third variable, or coincidence, results in the conclusion of a relationship between two

variables, when this is, in fact, not the case (Anderson, 2022)). Therefore, although we expected personality to largely influence the relationships under investigation, the differences in the zero-order and partial correlations are numerically small and may be sample dependent. No empirical evidence was therefore found in the current study to indicate that the relationships under investigation are due to individual personalities rather than workplace friendships.

Therefore, with the current study's findings suggesting that employee's personality traits do have a role to play in the relationships of interest, future research endeavours should aim to more thoroughly measure personality and investigate the extent to which personality traits affect these and other relationships, and what this means for employee's and organisations.

Based on the findings presented and discussed in the current study, workplace friendships can be considered to add value to organisations regardless of employees' personality traits.

The Theoretical Model

Combining or integrating the direct and two mediated relationships creates a helpful theoretical model (see Figures 2 and 3). To supplement the estimation of the bivariate relationships, as discussed above, multiple regression was used to estimate the multivariate relationships represented in the model. Moreover, hierarchical regression was specifically utilised so that the multivariate relationships could be estimated after the variance that can be explained by selected demographic variables that were considered to play a role in the hypothesised relationships and for which data was collected (i.e., age and organisational tenure), could be removed.

Predicting Intention to Stay

A regression model consisting of workplace friendships, helping behaviours and affective organisational commitment was found to significantly predict variance in the dependent variable, intention to stay ($R^2 = .467$; $F(5,205) = 35.905$, $p < .01$). Affective organisational commitment was further found to significantly predict unique variance in the dependent variable (Standardised Beta = .650, $t = 11.21$, $p < .01$), indicating the importance of the influence of employee's affective organisational commitment on their intention to stay. Such findings, which indicate an employee's levels of affective organisational commitment are important in determining their intention to stay, were expected and are aligned with various

previous studies (for example, Morrison, 2004; Sias & Cahill, 1998). Therefore, to encourage retention, organisations should focus their efforts on creating positive workplace experiences for their employees and increasing their emotional attachment to the organisation, which in turn is likely to reduce their turnover intention, invertedly increasing their intention to stay. Furthermore, organisational tenure, which may be considered an aspect of organisational commitment, specifically continuance commitment, was also found to significantly predict unique variance in respondent's intention to stay (Standardised Beta = .141, $t = 4.54$, $p < .01$). *Continuance commitment* has been defined as an employee's purposeful intention to continue their membership with the organisation after an analysis cost of leaving (Hayat Bhatti et al., 2019). Such findings, therefore, arguably make logical sense and have been supported by Hu et al. (2019), who suggest that the longer an employee works within an organisation, the more embedded and committed they are likely to be. Furthermore, it can be argued in relation to Zarankin and Kunkel's (2019) proposal and Nielsen et al.'s (2000) WFS that the longer an employee works within an environment, and the more time they spend with certain colleagues, the more opportunity they have to make friends and broaden the scope of such friendships through multiple interactions.

A further regression model consisting of workplace friendship scope, friendship quality, helping behaviours and affective organisational commitment was found to significantly predict variance in intention to stay ($R^2 = .487$; $F(6,204) = 32.233$; $p < .01$). Both affective organisational commitment (Standardised Beta = .602, $t = 10.23$, $p < .01$) and workplace friendship opportunity (scope) (Standardised Beta = .157, $t = 2.68$, $p < .01$) were found to significantly predict unique variance in the dependent variable. As previously discussed, affective organisational commitment was expected to predict unique variance in intention to stay. Moreover, such findings further support Zarankin and Kunkel's (2019) proposal and indicate the importance of the opportunity for colleagues to interact and establish friendships at work, suggesting that organisations should create the opportunity for friendships to form among employees and diversify and broaden employees' scope of interaction, in order to better realise the organisational benefits associated with intention to stay, such as commitment and talent retention.

Predicting Helping Behaviour

A regression model consisting of workplace friendship scope and workplace friendship quality was found to significantly predict variance in helping behaviour as the dependent variable ($R^2 = .226$; $F(4,206) = 15.050$; $p < .01$). Furthermore, workplace friendship prevalence

(quality) was found to significantly predict unique variance in helping behaviour (Standardised Beta = .428, $t = 6.36$, $p < .01$), indicating the importance of the existence of workplace friendships among colleagues, as well as the quality of such workplace friendships, in the promotion of helping behaviours. Such findings, which indicate workplace friendship prevalence (quality) is essential in determining their level of helping behaviour, were expected and are in alignment with various previous studies (for example, Falk & Fischbacher, 2006; Zarankin & Kunkel, 2019). Therefore, the existence of positive relationships, such as friendships, among colleagues, especially those friendships with high levels of reciprocity, commitment, trust and positive affect, can be expected to positively relate to more helping behaviours.

Conscientiousness was also found to significantly predict unique variance in respondent's helping behaviour (Standardised Beta = .294, $t = 4.84$, $p < .01$). Typically associated with following through on commitments (Harris & Vazire, 2016) and doing the right thing (Cherry, 2022), such findings arguably make sense and corroborate those made by Udin and Yuniawan (2020), which claim that higher levels of conscientiousness positively relate to organisational citizenship behaviours, such as helping. Organisational leaders can therefore consider more conscientious individuals to be more likely to engage in helping behaviours than those low on conscientiousness.

Organisations should therefore create opportunities for high-quality friendships to develop among employees, as well as promoting the maintenance of such friendships in order to indirectly create a helpful organisational culture. Moreover, such findings further support Zarankin and Kunkel's (2019) proposal and indicate the importance of the high quality of friendships among colleagues, suggesting that workplace friendships are of value to organisations.

Predicting Affective Organisational Commitment

A regression model consisting of workplace friendship scope and workplace friendship was found to significantly predict variance in affective organisational commitment as the dependent variable ($R^2 = .264$; $F(4,206) = 18.473$; $p < .01$).

Organisational tenure, which may be considered an aspect of organisational commitment, specifically continuance commitment, was found to significantly predict unique variance in respondent's affective organisational commitment (Standardised Beta = .233, $t = 3.74$, $p < .01$). As previously discussed, when predicting intention to stay, such findings

arguably make logical sense as the longer an employee works within an organisation, the more embedded and committed they are likely to be (Hu et al., 2019).

As workplace friendship opportunity (scope) was found to significantly predict unique variance in affective organisational commitment (Standardised Beta = .343, $t = 5.21$, $p < .01$), organisations need to create opportunities for employees to engage with their colleagues and establish friendships within the workplace. Furthermore, the frequency and diversity of such opportunities are also important in promoting employees' affective organisational commitment levels. Such findings were expected, as previous research studies found a positive relationship between social support, often derived from positive social interactions and relationships such as those gained from friendships, and employees' emotional connection to their organisation (Rousseau & Aubé, 2010). Organisations should therefore create opportunities for friendships to develop among employees, as well as promote frequent and diverse social engagement opportunities, in order to indirectly increase employees' affective organisational commitment levels. Moreover, such findings further support Zarankin and Kunkel's (2019) proposal and indicate the importance of broad-scope friendships among colleagues, once again suggesting that workplace friendships are of value to organisations.

Limitations and Recommendations

As is often the case with research studies of this nature, several limitations were encountered in conducting the present research. These limitations, as well as recommendations for ways in which they could be addressed in the future, are provided here.

Firstly, for the purposes of the present study, judgement sampling was utilised, which resulted in a non-probable sample being collected. A non-random sample does not allow for generalisation to the population. Inferential statistics based on probability theory were employed in attempt to mitigate this limitation and to allow for careful inferences to be made about what is likely to be the case in the 'real world' regarding the phenomena under investigation. However, the present study's findings can only really be considered relevant to the group of individuals who participated. Future studies should endeavour to collect data from random samples and larger samples that are obtained from a broader base of organisations and industries. Alternatively, future research should investigate these relationships in a more focused industry or business area, as the results may differ vastly between industries and groups.

Secondly, data were collected using self-report measures, therefore, introducing a risk for social desirability bias, in other words, where respondents attempt to present themselves in

a manner that they perceive to be more socially desirable rather than providing an accurate reflection of their thoughts, feelings and opinions (Donaldson & Grant-Vallone, 1999). In an attempt to mitigate possible falsified or positively/negatively biased responses, respondents were not required to provide their names or any identifying information (as all of the demographical questions were optional). Further, we included a confidentiality clause and encouraged honesty in the instructions and throughout the questionnaire. To prevent the impact of social desirability bias in the future, studies should consider a variety of data collection points, for example, helping behaviour surveys completed by a respondent's colleagues, a psychometrically sound personality questionnaire and data collected at multiple points in time.

Thirdly, given time and cost constraints, the use of a single method to collect data from the same group of respondents at a single point in time may have led to mono-method bias (Donaldson & Grant-Vallone, 1999). In future, researchers should attempt to use multiple data collection methods in addition to the questionnaire, such as a follow-up interview, as well as diversify and increase the sample. Further, it is suggested that data be collected longitudinally.

Fourthly, restrictions on social engagement and free movement, which resulted from the implementation of strategies to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus, necessitated data being collected utilising an online survey. However, the use of online/electronic questionnaires are deemed to be a suitable and convenient method to reach a large number of people in a short space of time (Minnaar & Heystek, 2016). A well-known disadvantage of online/electronic questionnaires is the low response rate often found, along with concerns regarding computer literacy and security or confidentiality Minnaar and Heystek (2016). Therefore, future studies should attempt to diversify the data collection methods in order to make the questionnaire more accessible to the South African population. In addition to online methods, future studies could perhaps consider adding alternative methods, such as paper and pencil surveys, as this may increase the response rate and reduce other online survey-related concerns for potential participants, such as computer literacy.

Fifthly, in the current study's sample, white respondents were found to be over-represented. This is likely due to the selection bias generally introduced due to the use of a non-probability sampling technique. The use of an online survey to collect data, along with the platforms on which the survey was shared, for example, LinkedIn, led to the over-sampling of respondents similar to the researcher, as the majority of the participants identified as white and female. Although the sample obtained was demographically skewed and deemed unrepresentative of the population of interest, the results and findings are still valuable as they

provide insight into the relationships of interest. Future studies should attempt to diversify the sampling technique to be more representative of the South African population.

Sixthly, given that a descriptive research design was employed for the purposes of the present study, causal inferences cannot be made about the relationships under investigation. The target variables in the current study follow a logical chronological temporal order, such as the opportunity for friendship formation among colleagues in the workplace is followed by workplace friendship establishment, which logically leads to reciprocity, helping, and the development of a positive emotional connection, ultimately enticing increased commitment and intention to stay. It is recommended that field experiments (e.g., full-factorial or fractional experiments) or quasi-experimental research designs be utilised to study the proposed relationships so that causal inferences can be made.

Finally, with only 10 of the 44 items used in the current study from John et al.'s (2012) 'Big Five' Inventory (BFI) questionnaire, we were only able to capture a brief insight into the respondents' personality traits. While this reduced set of personality items reduced the survey completion time, condensing the threat of response fatigue and discontinuance (Couper, 2000), it is recommended that future research studies measure personality more thoroughly, possibly using all 44 items, in order to establish more concrete conclusions regarding the role personality traits play in the relationships under investigation in the current study.

Furthermore, it was beyond the scope of the current study to take control variables, such as the organisation's company culture, respondents' work arrangements, such as hybrid working, working from home or office layout, and occupational field, among others, into account. However, such contextual factors, and potentially many more, may play a significant role in the opportunities for and the existence of workplace friendships and should therefore be considered in future research studies.

Contribution

The present study makes several important theoretical and practical contributions to the field of study, which are discussed in further detail below.

Theoretical Contribution

The current study can be considered to have contributed to social sciences and organisational psychology literature on the role of, and associated benefits of, workplace friendships (for the individual employee as well as for the organisation), as well as the

antecedents of intention to stay, namely, workplace friendships, affective organisational commitment and helping behaviour. Importantly, by considering the confounding role of personality on the relationships of interest and viewing personality as a covariant, the current study further contributes to literature by considering the abovementioned relationships while controlling for the effect of personality.

The study has given pertinent and current information indicating that the opportunity for the development of, and the presence of, workplace friendships presents positive benefits for individuals, such as social support, increased overall well-being, and reduced stress (Anderson & Fowers, 2020; Morrison, 2004; Sias & Bartoo, 2007), as well as for organisations through the positive relationship workplace friendships have with affective organisational commitment, helping behaviours, found to be an important portion of organisational citizenship behaviours and employee retention through intention to stay (Williams & Anderson, 1991; Zarankin & Kunkel, 2019). However, whilst this information is somewhat logical, limited studies on workplace friendships have been conducted, specifically within South Africa's diverse population or during the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, the study has shown that affective organisational commitment is important in the relationship between workplace friendship and intention to stay, as it significantly mediates the relationship. Although not a significant mediator in the relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay, helping behaviour was found to positively correlate with workplace friendships, presenting as a possible outcome of such positive interpersonal workplace relationships, and with intention to stay, suggesting a possible antecedent thereof.

Practical Contribution

The findings of this study may be pertinent to human resource management practitioners, general managers, and industrial/organisational psychologists in pursuit of the various previously discussed benefits associated with workplace friendships. The current study suggests that the opportunity for, and the presence of workplace friendships, is related to increased helping behaviours, greater affective organisational commitment, and higher intention to stay, even while controlling for the effects of individual personality traits on such relationships. This hypothesised relationship suggests that by including the opportunity for and promotion of workplace friendships as part of the practices and strategies aimed at enhancing employee retention, organisations may gain access to various benefits, regardless of individuals' personality traits. The findings further suggest that employees reporting

engagement with workplace friendships also report higher levels of helping behaviour, affective organisational commitment, and ultimately greater intention to stay with their current employer. Of course, there are many other potentially influential factors, such as workplace design, work arrangements, type of work, and occupational field (Ingusci et al., 2021), among others which were not controlled for, and thus we cannot conclude for certain that workplace friendship is the deciding factor. Therefore, future research should consider such factors in an attempt to better understand the role of workplace friendships.

Further research should be conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying reasons for workplace friendships pertaining to various individual/employee and organisational benefits. The current study also found a positive relationship between workplace friendships and helping behaviour, in the sense that an increase in workplace friendships relates to an increase in helping behaviour or *vice versa*. Furthermore, this study found a positive relationship between workplace friendships and affective organisational commitment, suggesting that an increase in workplace friendships directly relates to an increase in affective organisational commitment or *vice versa*. Previous studies have found helping behaviour, as an important component of organisational citizenship behaviour, to be pertinent in promoting employee well-being and emotional connections in the workplace (Ferhat, 2018). Additionally, research continues to illustrate that increasing affective organisational commitment in the workplace can strengthen employees' sense of belonging and job performance (Sias & Cahill, 1998), ultimately contributing to the organisation's competitive advantage in the market (Delery & Roumpi, 2017). Therefore, it can be acknowledged that it is in the organisation's interest to value and promote workplace friendships, as workplace friendships hold direct benefits for organisations. Additionally, as intentions to stay are usually predicted by positive employment experiences (Bell & Sheridan, 2020), organisations in which employees display strong or high intentions to stay can be considered to house happy, healthy, and more productive workforces, benefiting individual employees as well as society.

Recommendations for Future Studies

The current study illuminates several additional questions which could be addressed in future studies.

Despite compelling evidence that having a friend at work could potentially hold several benefits for both individuals and organisations, it is not entirely clear why having a close friend in one's personal life is so common, while close to half of all employees report that they do not

have a friend at work (Stevens, 2022). A question that can be asked then is, “if forming connections and friendships are such naturally occurring human conditions within one’s personal life, with a recent study finding that 88% of individuals reported having at least one close friend (Pearson, 2022), why is this not found to be at least to the same extent in a workplace context where people spend considerable time with colleagues in a shared space?” Future studies should therefore investigate why employees do not make friends at work to the same extent that they do in their personal lives.

Another question provoked by the current study is the impact of Covid-19-related changes on how employees work and interact. As evident in the current study, the opportunity for friendship formation and diverse interaction opportunities are important components in the establishment and maintenance of workplace friendships. An important question emerging from this finding is, “Are employees willing to, and organisations able to, create and encourage sufficient opportunities and scope for friendships to form and flourish during the ‘new world of work’ where face-to-face interactions are limited and hybrid, and remote working arrangements are becoming increasingly popular?” Therefore, future studies should investigate workplace friendships in alignment with employees working in a hybrid or fully remote arrangement.

A more in-depth focus on Zarankin and Kunkel’s (2019) workplace friendship typology may also be an important consideration for future researchers. In order to better manage workplace friendships and effectively promote the associated individual and organisational benefits, practitioners may benefit from a better understanding of the workplace friendship type, in accordance with Zarankin and Kunkel’s (2019) workplace friendship typology. An important question in this regard is, “Do the four types of workplace friendships, introduced through Zarankin and Kunkel’s (2019) workplace friendship typology, statistically significantly different in terms of their associated costs and benefits?” In other words, future researchers can consider whether the associated benefits deem the associated efforts of each friendship type worthwhile.

As the current study focused on the positive psychology approach to workplace friendships and intention to stay, it was not within the scope to consider the possible ‘dark side’ or negative individual and organisational outcomes of friendships within the workplace. However, such consequences could be considered in future research to gain a more holistic understanding of the role workplace friendships play and potentially compare the costs and benefits thereof.

Furthermore, by adding a qualitative component to the research, future researchers may gain a deeper understanding of the factors that relate to the constructs of interest. Through a qualitative approach, the researcher might be able to identify possible moderating variables and how they influence the relationship between the main variables, which could subsequently be tested in quantitative studies.

Although beyond the scope of the current study, future research should investigate the relationship between workplace friendship, affective organisational commitment, helping behaviour, and intention to stay across different countries, cultures and contexts to contribute to literature and expand the understanding of these relationships in the workplace.

Managerial Implications

Talent retention is an important component of organisational effectiveness which largely affects an organisation's competitive advantage (Delery & Roumpi, 2017). Moreover, high turnover carries various direct and indirect costs, which expend organisational resources (Chiat & Panatik, 2019).

The results of the current study indicate that in order to promote employees' intention to stay, which ultimately reduces actual turnover behaviours and the associated costs, managers should encourage the establishment and maintenance of workplace friendships. Furthermore, not only have we found empirical support for a significant positive relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay, but we also found empirical evidence supporting increased helping behaviours and affective organisational commitment related to workplace friendships. Therefore, we can conclude that workplace friendships have the potential to bring value to employees and organisations.

Following such findings, managers may benefit from developing retention strategies that enhance social engagement among co-workers, creating opportunities for friendships to be established and maintained. Such actions could range from formally structured socialisation activities to informal social engagements, which create opportunities for colleagues to meet and interact and for friendships to form and be nurtured. Examples of such actions include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Implement open physical office layouts and facilitates, such as staff canteens, which allow colleagues to meet and interact informally;

- Encourage group projects to allow colleagues to work together, support one another and learn from each other, promoting the formation and fostering of friendships in the workplace;
- Encourage team socialisation events and the celebration of personal events, such as birthdays, to diversify the interactions among colleagues;
- Create opportunities for colleagues to have fun together, whether by engaging in a work-related task they are passionate about or participating in a teambuilding activity to create friendship formation opportunities;
- Encourage the establishment of workplace support groups for employees to connect with other employees with similar interests. Such groups could be formal, such as groups for pregnant women, young managers, and working students, or informal, such as a social tennis group or a group for working parents with children of similar ages;
- Plan, budget for, and execute social events such as prize-giving evenings to allow employees to connect outside of working hours;
- Implement ‘buddy’ programmes where new recruits are partnered with an employee who can act as a mentor and friend; and
- Utilise technology in such a way that employees feel connected with their co-workers; this may include a weekly lunch hour virtual meeting where colleagues are encouraged to connect and engage virtually over lunch.

Through the creation of opportunities for engagement, and the encouragement of friendship formation and maintenance, managers may facilitate a cultural shift within the organisation and assist in the realisation of many previously discussed benefits for both the individual employees as well as the organisation at large.

Conclusion

In gaining a better understanding of the relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay, as well as the mediating role of both helping behaviour and affective organisational commitment, on the abovementioned relationship, the current study proposed, theoretically investigated, empirically assessed, and found positive relationships, supporting the hypotheses. Individual personalities were considered and treated as confounding variables worthy of consideration. Therefore, the relationships of interest were investigated and assessed

both by statistically controlling for personality as well as not doing so to ascertain whether this was, in fact, the case.

Significant findings from the current study indicate that workplace friendships may be an important variable in the promotion of desirable organisational behaviours, such as helping behaviours, affective organisational commitment, and overall talent retention through increased intention to stay. Additionally, contributing to literature following the discovery of a dearth of research conducted on the relationships workplace friendships share with various organisational outcomes, particularly intention to stay, as well as on the mediating effects of helping behaviour and affective organisational commitment on the relationship between workplace friendships and intention to stay, the current study has made several important contributions to the literature on the constructs of the current study, specifically within the South African context and in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, and provided organisations with potential implications of such findings. By providing various recommendations for future research, it is hoped that the workplace friendships phenomenon will receive more attention within the research domain and in policy and practice. Organisations may find benefits in focusing on workplace friendships to promote talent retention strategies, among other organisational effectiveness domains.

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