

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

Current organisations are faced with challenges and opportunities due to the constant changing world of business. The changes in the business world include technological advances and economic trends in the global market. The implication of these constant changes is that organisational members are expected to compete and survive in the dynamic business world.

These changes affect other aspects of the organisation's functioning, such as organisational culture and organisational commitment. Meyer and Allen (1997, p 114) state that “ the biggest challenge for commitment researchers will be to determine how commitment is affected by the many changes such as increased global competition, reengineering and downsizing that occurring in the world of work”. The focus of this study is to investigate the relationship between organisational culture and organisational commitment in the dynamic business world organisations are facing today. These two phenomena are approached from an Industrial and Organisational Psychology perspective.

The focus areas of discussion in this chapter are as follows: background to and motivation for the research; the problem statement; aims of the study; paradigm perspective; research design; and research methodology.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO AND MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Research is an important aspect of acquiring new knowledge and validating existing knowledge (Mouton & Marais, 1994). The literature postulates a theoretical assumption that organisational culture in general can have an influence on the organisational commitment employees demonstrate (O'Reilly, 1989). According to Martins and Martins (2003, p 380) global research indicates that “organisational cultures create high levels of commitment and performance”.

What incited this research investigation is that there appears to be a substantial body of theory and research internationally that has emphasised the importance of organisational culture and organisational commitment in organisations without scientific evidence of the relationship between these concepts. This research study endeavours to determine the relationship between the two phenomena.

The role of organisational culture is crucial to understand organisational behaviour. Organisational culture has a strong influence on employees' behaviour and attitudes (Wagner, 1995). Organisational culture involves standards and norms that prescribe how employees should behave in any given organisation (Martins & Martins, 2003). Therefore managers and employees do not behave in a value-free vacuum; they are governed, directed and tempered by the organisation's culture (Brown, 1998). This behaviour includes employees' commitment to their respective organisations. Given the dynamics of culture and human behaviour it is inspiring to study how employees would commit themselves to their organisation.

According to Cohen (2003, p 3) organisational commitment "as a research topic, is important regardless of its setting because increasing our comprehension of the phenomenon may assist us in better understanding the nature of the psychological process through which people chose to identify with different objects in their environment and how they find purpose in life". Meyer and Allen (1991) identified organisational culture as an antecedent of organisational commitment. This suggests the need for a research study that will determine the impact of organisational culture on organisational commitment.

The main rationale for this research study is therefore to contribute to the broader research community by generating new knowledge and enhancing existing knowledge within the field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology. Furthermore, this study addresses this topic from a South African work context and viewpoint by focusing on employees in the motor manufacturing industry.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Based on organisational culture studies in South African organisations, such as the South African Post Offices, Martins and Martins (2003, p 380) highlight that organisational culture helps to “provide stability to an organisation, the community and South Africa as a nation”. This implies that organisational culture is a very useful tool for managers, in managing a diversified workforce within the South African business environment.

Moreover, South African organisations are experiencing changes in their organisational culture as a result of the new political dispensation. It is from this point of departure that it is important to conduct a research study in order to determine the impact of organisational culture on organisational commitment within the context of a South African organisation.

According to Miller (2003, p 72) “research evidence on organisational commitment gathered more than two decades ago, needs to be qualified to reflect the changing nature of employer-employee relationship”. This serves as the first rationale to conduct this study. Current changes in employment practices affect organisational commitment which is based on the unwritten loyalty contract between employees and employers. Employment practices such as layoffs, downsizing and mergers are stimulated by the need to be competitive, as a result employees may view their organisational commitment differently (Cohen, 2003).

A second rationale for a study of organisational commitment is that the success of any organisation depends on the organisational commitment of its employees (Cohen, 2003).

Therefore, the main research question for this study is whether organisational culture influences the employee's organisational commitment.

The following questions were formulated to direct the study:

- ❖ What is organisational culture and what are its dimensions?
- ❖ What is organisational commitment and what are its dimensions?
- ❖ What is the theoretical relationship between organisational culture and organisational commitment?
- ❖ What is the empirical relationship between organisational culture and organisational commitment?
- ❖ What recommendations can be formulated from the results?

1.3 AIMS OF THE STUDY

1.3.1 General Aim

The general aim of the study is to determine the impact of organisational culture on organisational commitment.

1.3.2 Specific Aims

Theoretical aims of the study are to:

- ❖ define organisational culture and its dimensions
- ❖ define organisational commitment and its dimensions
- ❖ discuss the theoretical relationship between organisational culture and organisational commitment

Empirical aims of the study are to:

- ❖ determine the existing organisational culture dimension/s within the organisation
- ❖ determine the existing organisational commitment dimension/s within the organisation
- ❖ determine the empirical relationship between organisational culture and organisational commitment

- ❖ formulate recommendations regarding organisational culture and organisational commitment

1.4 PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE

This study forms part of the Industrial and Organisational Psychology discipline and the sub-discipline of Organisational Psychology. Organisational psychology is defined by Odendaal and Roodt (2003, p 7) as “a field of study that investigates the impact that individuals, groups, and structures have on behaviour within organisations for the purpose of applying such knowledge towards improving an organisation’s effectiveness”. The common body of knowledge for this sub-field is organisational behaviour.

In order to examine the theoretical relationship between organisational culture and organisational commitment; the humanistic and open systems paradigms are adopted in the literature review chapters.

Meyer, Moore and Viljoen (1997, p 358) outline the assumptions of the humanistic approach as follows:

- ❖ The individual is an integrated whole.
- ❖ The individual is a dignified human being with unique qualities that distinguish him or her from life aspects.
- ❖ The positive nature of human beings, which is considered good or least neutral while evil and destructive behaviour is ascribed to external factors.
- ❖ The person has freedom of choice, which involves the right for self-determination.
- ❖ The person is self-reflective and transcending.
- ❖ The conscious process of an individual, which allows him or her to take part in conscious decision-making processes.
- ❖ The experiencing person is in a process of becoming.
- ❖ The person is an active being, who is not reactive only to the environmental demands but who is an active participant in

determining his or her behaviour towards actualising his or her potential and his or her innate or creative abilities.

- ❖ Emphasis is on psychic health, where the humanistic approach asserts that the psychologically healthy person should be the criterion used to examine human functioning.

The individual as an organism who interacts constantly with the dynamic changing world is studied as a total being with all his or her physical and psychological functioning. The individual's behaviour is determined by the subjective perception of the world and the meaning the person attaches to it. The phenomenal field studies the individual as represented by the totality of his or her perceptions and experiences (Möller, 1995). This includes perceptions of objects or events outside the person, as well as inner expectations and meanings that relate to the person self (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 1997).

The self-concept is also of central importance, according to this paradigm. It refers to the image people have of themselves and the value they attach to themselves (Möller, 1995). Although the self-concept consists of a relatively stable pattern of an integrated perception, it is nevertheless flexible and changeable. Since self-perceptions are organised into a whole, change in one part of the self-concept influences the whole self-image (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 1997).

On the other hand the open system paradigm studies an individual as part of an organisation who interacts with the external environment.

Hodge, Anthony and Gales (1996) present the following assumptions of the open system paradigm:

- ❖ The organisation, as an open system, interacts with the external environment.
- ❖ It is a set of interrelated and interdependent parts arranged in a manner that produce a unified whole.

- ❖ The open system model is characterised by inputs, throughputs or transformation processes and outputs.
- ❖ This open system moves towards growth and expansion.
- ❖ An open system engages in the processes of production, maintenance and adaptation of its functioning.
- ❖ There is a boundary between it and the external environment.

The literature review is followed by the empirical study which focuses on measuring the two variables, namely organisational culture and organisational commitment. This will be presented from the functionalistic paradigm, which tries to explain phenomena in terms of their function or purpose.

The following are the basic assumptions of the functionalistic paradigm, according to Morgan (1980):

- ❖ Human or social behaviour is always seen as contextually bound to a real world of concrete and tangible social relationships.
- ❖ Society has a concrete, real existence and a systematic character, which is oriented to producing an ordered and regulated state of affairs.
- ❖ Functionalistic paradigm focuses on understanding society in a way that generates useful, empirical knowledge.
- ❖ The basic orientation of the functionalistic paradigm is primarily regulative and pragmatic in nature.
- ❖ Social theory should focus on understanding the role of individuals in society.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

The aim of the research design is to plan and structure the research study in such a manner that the eventual validity of the research findings is maximised (Mouton & Marais, 1994). The research design of this study involves a quantitative design, which translates constructs and concepts into operational definitions and finally into numerical indices. According to Terre Blanche and

Durrheim (2002, p 42) “quantitative researchers collect data in the form of numbers and use statistical types of data analysis”.

A research design of an empirical study has variables that attempt to define the constructs. Christensen (2001, p 144) indicates that a variable is “any characteristic or phenomenon that can vary across organisms, situations or environments”. A variable is a factor, which varies and can assume many different values by being multi-dimensional or can have only one value by being one-dimensional (Huysamen, 1994).

There are two types of variables, namely independent and dependent variables. An independent variable is a variable which does not depend on anything else and it is one of the antecedent conditions manipulated by the researcher (Christensen, 2001). On the other hand, the dependent variable is a variable that is dependent on something else. The response of the organism measures the influence of the independent variable (Christensen, 2001). The research variables of this study are organisational culture as the independent variable and organisational commitment as the dependent variable.

The literature review is presented in a qualitative and descriptive manner while the empirical study is presented in an investigative manner using a quantitative research method. Structured questionnaires were used as data collection method. For the purpose of this study the unit of analysis is individuals (Mouton & Marais, 1994).

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research will be discussed in two phases:

Phase 1: Literature Review

Step 1 Organisational culture

In the literature review the theoretical background, definition and dimensions of organisational culture, are discussed.

- Step 2 Organisational commitment
A definition of organisational commitment and its dimensions is discussed as well as approaches and research of organisational commitment.
- Step 3 The impact of organisational culture on organisational commitment
A theoretical integration is discussed between organisational culture and organisational commitment.

Phase 2: Empirical Study

- Step 1 Population and sample
The total body of employees of a motor manufacturing company constitutes the population. The sample consists of employees who completed the questionnaire.
- Step 2 Data collection techniques
The appropriate measuring instruments were used to measure the two constructs of this study.
- Step 3 Data collection
The collection of data is discussed and the procedure thereof.
- Step 4 Data analysis
The statistical process of the data is discussed.
- Step 5 Interpretation of the empirical results
The results and interpretation of the research findings are discussed.
- Step 6 Integration of the literature review and the empirical study

The interpretation of the results regarding the literature review and the empirical research is discussed.

Step 7 Conclusion of the study

The aims of the research process are used to formulate the conclusion of this study based on the research findings.

Step 8 Limitations of this study

The literature review and the empirical study are used to discuss the limitations of this research study.

Step 9 Recommendations

Recommendations are formulated in terms of the literature and future research on organisational culture and organisational commitment.

1.7 CHAPTER DIVISION

To achieve the aims of the research study, the chapters are presented in the following manner:

Chapter 2 Organisational culture

Chapter 3 Organisational commitment

Chapter 4 Empirical study

Chapter 5 Empirical results

Chapter 6 Conclusions, limitations and recommendations

1.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the background to the research study which includes the problem statement, aims, paradigm perspectives, research design, research method and chapter division.

Chapter 2 will discuss organisational culture.