Perceived career mobility and preference, job satisfaction and organisational commitment in the financial sector: an exploratory study

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Abstract
The objective of the study was to determine the relationship between perceived career mobility (measured by a perceived career mobility scale), career mobility preference (measured by a career mobility preference scale), job satisfaction (measured by the Minnesota Job Satisfaction Questionnaire), and organisational commitment (measured by the Organisational Commitment Scale). Research on the perceived career mobility, career mobility preference, job satisfaction and organisational commitment of financial professionals is considered important in the light of organisational concerns about retaining staff in the South African financial sector. A quantitative survey was conducted on a convenience sample (N = 82) of auditors, accountants and financial staff in the South African financial sector. Correlational and inferential statistical analyses revealed significant relationships between the variables of concern to this study. The results point to the importance of recognising how perceived mobility opportunities and preferences influence individuals' job satisfaction and commitment in the design of talent retention strategies for professional staff members. This study is the starting point for measuring perceived career mobility and career mobility preference in the South African context.

Key words: career mobility, career mobility preference, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, retention

1 Introduction
Globalisation and increased competition have brought with them the ability for professionally qualified knowledge workers to move between organisations more easily than before (João 2010; Lo Presti 2009). This increase in career mobility opportunities has brought with it several challenges to talent retention, especially in the financial sector where there are skills shortages (South African Institute of Chartered Accountants 2008). The 2008 financial management, accounting and auditing skills shortage research report (South African Institute of Chartered Accountants 2008) confirmed that organisations experience retention problems, and that accounting professionals are the group that organisations find it most difficult to retain (Pato & Spira 2008).

Research has shown that job satisfaction and organisational commitment are key variables that influence employees’ turnover intention, that is, an individual’s intent to leave an organisation (Martin 2007; Mokoka 2007; Price & Mueller 1981). Moreover, people’s need for career development opportunities is associated with their need for...
career mobility. Organisational career development opportunities have been identified as a retention factor, simply because employees want to experience career growth (Sutherland & Jordaan 2004).

However, it is not clear from the research how perceived career mobility and career mobility preference relate to the job satisfaction and organisational commitment of professional staff in the financial sector. In addition, there seems to be a paucity of research into career mobility in the South African organisational context. Furthermore, in South Africa’s multicultural work context, it would be beneficial for organisations and human resource managers and practitioners to gain insight into this relationship with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of talent retention practices.

In this study, the concept of perceived career mobility refers to an individual’s perception of the opportunity for intraorganisational and interorganisational career mobility. Intraorganisational career mobility refers to job changes that include substantial changes in work responsibilities, hierarchical level or titles within an organisation (Feldman & Ng 2007; João 2010). It also refers to occupational change, which includes transitions that require fundamentally new skills, routines and work environments, along with new training, education or vocational preparation within an organisation (Feldman & Ng 2007; João 2010). Interorganisational change, in contrast, refers to movement between organisations (João 2010).

The existence of intraorganisational career mobility opportunities in contemporary careers is evident in the new psychological contract between employers and employees which highlights the provision of lateral moves and developmental opportunities in exchange for longer working hours, added responsibility, broader skills and employee tolerance of change and ambiguity (Baruch 2002; Coetzee & Roythorne-Jacobs 2007). Aligned with the new psychological contract, the boundaryless and protean career attitudes focus on the need for individuals to adapt to their work environment and to manage their own careers (Briscoe & Hall 2006). In addition to opportunities for intraorganisational career mobility, modern-day careers are also characterised by an inclination toward physical movement between organisational boundaries. The increase in competition in response to globalisation has exacerbated interorganisational career mobility (João 2010).

Lesabe and Nkosi (2007) claim that employees experience the need to progress and grow, and that they become frustrated when they perceive their path to progress as being blocked. Kochanski and Ledford (2001) found that career opportunities are more significant predictors of retention than any other type of reward, followed by training opportunities and an employee’s relationship with his or her supervisor. Likewise, Mncwango and Winnaar (2009) reported that, after job security, South African employees value good advancement opportunities. These findings highlight the need for the provision of organisational career mobility opportunities, such as career advancement opportunities. The satisfaction of specific career mobility preferences through the provision of career mobility opportunities may help to embed employees (Ng, Sorensen, Eby & Feldman 2007) with a view to retaining talented staff. An organisation that provides its employees with career development opportunities will be regarded as an organisation that values its employees (Poong-ming 2008). Employees respond to caring and supportive work environments by reciprocating with feelings of attachment (João 2010).

Research has found turnover intention to be related to organisational commitment (Martin 2007; Mokoka 2007; Price & Mueller 1981), and organisational commitment to be related to career mobility (Murrel, Frieze & Olson 1996; Price & Mueller 1981), career mobility preference (Briscoe & Finkelstein 2009), and job satisfaction (Ng &
Along with a perceived lack of career mobility and preference opportunities, employees experiencing low levels of job satisfaction and organisational commitment are more likely to intend to leave organisations (Hellman 1997; João 2010; Lee & Mowday 1987; Price & Mueller 1981; Martin & Roodt 2007). The relationship between perceived career mobility, job satisfaction and organisational commitment should therefore be explored so that it can inform talent retention strategies (João 2010).

2 Aims of the study

The objective of this study was to explore the relationship between individuals’ perceived career mobility, career mobility preference, job satisfaction and organisational commitment. As pointed out in the background to this study, it is vital that organisations take into consideration the relationship between perceived career mobility, career mobility preference, job satisfaction and organisational commitment when designing their retention strategies. The problem is that, despite the need for a better understanding of the relationship between the constructs of relevance to this study, it is not clear from the literature how these variables empirically relate to one another, particularly in the South African organisational context ((João 2010; Martin 2007; Vallabh & Donald 2001). Furthermore, there seems to be a paucity of research addressing employees’ perceived career mobility, career mobility preference, job satisfaction and organisational commitment within the financial environment.

3 Perceived career mobility

Although career mobility has been studied for several decades, differences in the conceptualisation of this construct have resulted in the lack of a single, commonly used term in the literature (João 2010). Terms such as alternative job opportunities (March & Simon 1958), perceived employment alternatives (Baugh, Lankau & Scandura 1996), external mobility (DiPrete 1993), opportunities (Price & Mueller 1981), career opportunities (Döckel 2003, Kochanski & Ledford 2001), job hopping (Vallabh & Donald 2001) and mobility strategies (Murrell, Frieze & Olson 1996) have been used by various researchers when measuring actual and/or perceived career mobility. Studies of intraorganisational career mobility have included factors such as career expectations, which refer to a respondent’s expectations of future advancement in his or her employing organisation (Baugh et al 1996; Scandura & Schriesheim 1991), as well as opportunities for career development (Foong-ming 2008; Murrell et al 1996), internal promotion opportunities (Foong-ming 2008, Gaertner & Nollen 1989), developmental potential (Lin & Huang 2005) and lateral moves (Murrell et al 1996). Many studies (Coetzee 2010; João 2010) have included these factors in research into staff retention.

In this study, career mobility is used as an umbrella term that includes both interorganisational and intraorganisational career mobility. The former refers to an employee leaving the organisation to work for another organisation, whereas the latter refers to an employee changing jobs or occupations within an organisation (João 2010). “Job change” refers to changes in an individual’s work responsibilities, position in the hierarchy, or title within an organisation (Feldman & Ng 2007). “Occupational change” refers to changes in the specific line of work carried out by an individual in order to earn a living at a given point in time (Lee, Carswell & Allen 2000). Occupational change requires the possession of certain transferable skills, knowledge and duties that are differentiated from other occupational skills (Feldman & Ng 2007). More specifically, as opposed to the measurement of actual career mobility, this study focuses on voluntary
career mobility and the perception of such mobility. In other words, the focus of the study is on individuals’ current perceptions of whether or not they have the opportunity to move between jobs and organisations.

4 Career mobility preference
Voluntary turnover, with a focus on interorganisational career mobility, has been studied by analysing the phenomenon of job hopping (Fallic, Fleischman & Rebitzer 2006; Khatri, Fern & Budhwar 2001; Vallabh & Donald 2001). Intraorganisational career mobility has generally been studied by focusing on employees’ need for advancement opportunities in their understanding of career mobility (Brown 1998), and retention (Sutherland & Jordaan 2004). Recently, Briscoe, Hall and Frautschy De Muth (2006), and Ng et al (2007) have suggested that employees have specific job and career mobility preferences. Career mobility preference refers to an individual’s preference for interorganisational career mobility (movement between organisations) or intraorganisational career mobility (changing jobs and occupations within an organisation). Employee values are critical determinants of career mobility preference, specifically confidence in one’s ability to initiate such career changes (Ng et al 2007). Apart from the individual employee’s values, his or her personality traits, career interests and attachment styles also influence career mobility preferences (Ng et al 2007).

5 Job satisfaction
Job satisfaction has been studied from different perspectives, including dispositional, situational and person-environment fit perspectives (Van der Walt 2007). Proponents of the dispositional perspective view job satisfaction as a reflection of a biologically based trait predisposing individuals to focus on positive or negative aspects of their lives (Staw & Cohen-Charash 2005; Staw & Ross 1985). In contrast to the views of the proponents of the dispositional perspective, advocates for the situational perspective argue that job satisfaction is dependent on situational variables within the work environment. Factors such as challenging work, equitable rewards, working conditions and relationships with co-workers and bosses have been identified as some of the factors in the work environment that are conducive to job satisfaction (Theron 2009). The person-environment fit perspective can be understood in the light of Dawis and Lofquist’s (1993) perspective of job satisfaction as an attitude that is found when there is a correspondence between the individual’s abilities and the requirements of his or her job. Moreover, the extent to which an individual’s needs correspond to the reinforcers in the work environment is also important.

In addition to these perspectives, authors have focused on (a) the affective versus attitudinal perspectives of job satisfaction, and (b) job satisfaction as a global construct versus complex interrelated facets (Spector 1997). When defining job satisfaction, Locke (1979) focuses on the positive emotional state experienced by individuals when evaluating their job or job experiences. Brief (1998) regards job satisfaction as a favourable or unfavourable internal state experienced as a result of the affective and/or cognitive evaluation of one’s job.

In this study, job satisfaction is understood from the perspective of Dawis and Lofquist’s (1993) person-environment-correspondence theory (PEC). The work environment requires the completion of tasks by the individual (ability requirements), and individuals use their skills to complete tasks in exchange for compensation and favourable working conditions (reinforcer factors) (Dawis & Lofquist 1984). The degree
to which environmental and individual requirements are met determines the degree of correspondence. An increase in correspondence increases the probability of tenure, and vice versa. Substantial tenure suggests job satisfaction and satisfactoriness. Satisfaction is the result of the extent to which the environment meets the individual’s requirements, and satisfactoriness is the extent to which the individual meets the demands of the environment (Davis & Lofquist 1984). According to Dawis (2005), satisfaction and satisfactoriness are the result of correspondence, which in turn predicts tenure.

The distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction (Weiss, Dawis, England & Lofquist 1967) made by the theory of work adjustment (TWA) is relevant to this study:

- **Intrinsic satisfaction** refers to the nature of job tasks, that is, individuals’ feelings regarding the work they do which are the result of performing work and consequently experiencing feelings of satisfaction.
- **Extrinsic satisfaction** refers to satisfaction with aspects of the work situation that is derived from an individual’s satisfaction with the supervisor, the enforcement of company policies, working conditions, pay, co-workers, advancement opportunities and recognition.

According to Schultz and Schultz (2010), research has revealed that job satisfaction is positively related to the capacity to use one’s abilities in the work environment, and to employees’ perceptions of intra organisational career mobility opportunities. This is in agreement with the view that employees’ perceptions of growth and promotion opportunities are related to their job satisfaction (Levy 2010; Schultz & Schultz 2010).

Employee relationships with supervisors and co-workers seem to be important antecedents of job satisfaction (Levy 2010). The perception of organisational justice also tends to lead to increased job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Mayer, Nishii, Schneider & Godstein 2007; Wiesenfeld, Swann, Brockner & Bartel 2007). According to Spector (2000), the fairness of compensation is a greater determinant of satisfaction than compensation itself.

Job satisfaction has been shown to be higher among higher-level incumbents, and this includes certain job categories such as entrepreneurs, technical staff, professionals and people in managerial jobs (Schultz & Schultz 2010). According to Levy (2010), job satisfaction is influenced by the structure of the job and what it provides. More specifically, the more jobs are able to provide autonomy, task identity, task variety, task significance and job feedback, the more satisfied employees are. Role ambiguity and role conflict have been shown to be negatively related to job satisfaction (Spector 2000).

Both extrinsic and intrinsic job dimensions influence job satisfaction. The former include promotion opportunities (Castro & Martins 2010), which form part of intraorganisational mobility. It may be deduced from this that if an individual’s need for promotion is not met, for instance, he or she is unlikely to experience extrinsic job satisfaction. A strong negative relationship has been found between job satisfaction and turnover or turnover intention (Martin 2007). In the light of the present study, there seems to be a paucity of research on job satisfaction in the financial sector.

### 6 Organisational commitment

A plethora of research exists on organisational commitment, yet there is little consensus on the conceptualisation of this construct. In this study, organisational commitment refers to an attitude characterised by a stable mindset towards the
organisation (Meyer & Allen 1997). The golden thread in the various conceptualisations and measurements is that organisational commitment is a bond or connection to the organisation (Roodt 2004), and that a particular focus has the potential to fulfil salient needs (Martin & Roodt 2007). Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) highlight the following commonalities in the definitions of commitment: (a) it is a stabilising and obliging force; and (b) it provides direction to behaviour (eg restricts freedom and binds a person to a course of action). The differences involve details concerning the nature or origin of the stabilising force that gives direction to behaviour (Meyer & Herscovitch 2001).

Meyer and Allen’s (1991) three-component model of organisational commitment, which they see as comprising affective, continuance and normative commitment, is relevant to the present study. Affective commitment arises from a sense of emotional attachment, continuance commitment is rooted in a sense of economic necessity, and normative commitment arises out of a sense of moral obligation to remain with the organisation (Coetzee & Roythorne-Jacobs 2007). Employees experiencing the different components remain with the organisation for different reasons. Those experiencing affective commitment remain because they want to, those experiencing continuance commitment remain because they need to, and those experiencing normative commitment remain owing to a sense of obligation (Meyer & Allen 1991).

Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) suggest that affective commitment is developed as a result of any factor, personal or situational, that contributes to the likelihood that an individual will become intrinsically motivated to a course of action, and recognise the value of and/or develop identity from association with an entity or the pursuit of an action. Factors here may include supervisor support and recognition (Meyer & Allen 1997; Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002; Wayne, Shore, Bommer & Tetrick 2002); the perception of being treated fairly, which enhances an employee’s sense of personal importance and competence (Meyer & Allen 1997); and age, in that older employees, or those with longer tenure, tend to be more committed (Levy 2010); and gender (Mguqulwa 2008).

According to Spector (2000), affective commitment occurs as a result of job conditions and the meeting of expectations, while continuance commitment occurs as a product of benefits accumulated from working for the organisation and by a lack of alternative jobs. The latter is of particular interest to this study. Meyer and Allen (1991) propose that continuance commitment may develop as a result of the perception of a lack of alternatives. Meyer and Allen (1997) posit that early socialisation processes may have an impact on employee normative commitment, because of indirect evidence which suggests that employees with a need to fulfill their obligations to others are more likely to be normatively committed to an organisation.

7 The relationship between perceived career mobility, career mobility preference, job satisfaction and organisational commitment

The link between high demand for scarce skills and retention challenges highlights the connection between interorganisational career mobility and retention (João 2010). The implication is that if employees are to be retained, intraorganisational career mobility must be considered. In addition to this, interorganisational career mobility must also be taken into account, as it may play an important role in satisfying and hence retaining employees. The retention of satisfied employees may be facilitated through activities aimed at the organisational fulfilment of employee internal career mobility preferences (João 2010).
A plethora of research exists on the role of job satisfaction and organisational commitment in influencing employee turnover (DeConinck & Stilwell 2004; Hellman 1997; Martin & Roodt 2007; Price & Mueller 1981; Scandura & Lankau 1997). A lack of organisational commitment has been shown to be an important contributor to turnover intention and turnover behaviour (Martin & Roodt 2007). In addition, a relationship has been found to exist between career mobility and job satisfaction, as well as between career mobility and organisational commitment (Kondratuk, Hausdorf, Korabik & Rosin 2004; Swaen, Kant, Van Amelsvoort & Beurskens 2002).

Akin to the view that organisational commitment is negatively related to turnover intention and career mobility, several researchers have found a relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention (Hellman 1997; Martin & Roodt 2007; Price & Mueller 1981), job satisfaction and mobility (Feldman & Ng 2007; Murrel et al 1996; Price & Mueller 1981), and job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Briscoe & Finkelstein 2009; Lumley 2009; Martin & Roodt 2007; Price & Mueller 1981). Job dissatisfaction has also been recognised as one of the most important factors in the intention to leave an organisation (Hellman 1997; Lee & Mowday 1987).

Briscoe and Finkelstein (2009) found a negative correlation between organisational mobility preference and organisational commitment. Kondratuk et al (2004) claim that the relationship between career mobility and organisational commitment depends on timing (before or after the move), and therefore tends to differ. Individuals may have a high mobility history, but may not perceive there to be current mobility opportunities because of situational factors; it is therefore important to assess an individual’s perception of his or her current career mobility opportunities and the relationship between this perception and organisational commitment. In the light of the findings referred to above, the measurement of preference for career mobility seems to be an important consideration in understanding the relationship between the constructs included in this study. An individual’s preference for career mobility may therefore be important in understanding whether he or she would be more or less committed or satisfied if that individual perceived that he or she had few or many career mobility opportunities within the organisation or the labour market (João 2010).

From the preceding discussion it is clear that greater insight into the relationship between perceived career mobility, career mobility preference, job satisfaction and organisational commitment is required. This is because an individual with a high intraorganisational career mobility preference may be more satisfied and committed within an organisation that is believed to offer opportunities for career development and hence intraorganisational mobility. Not only do career development and/or mobility opportunities help to create the impression that organisations value employees (Foongming 2008), but they also lead to increased self-fulfilment and thus to reduced turnover (Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002).

Individuals with a preference for intraorganisational career mobility are more likely to be satisfied if they perceive that their organisation provides career mobility opportunities. Job satisfaction and organisational commitment have been proven to correlate positively with each other; the greater the job satisfaction and organisational commitment, the lower the predictive turnover intention (Martin & Roodt 2007).

In order to reduce the high costs incurred through employee turnover and to maintain a competitive advantage (Kaplan, Meyer & Brown 2000), an organisation needs informed talent retention practices. However, there seems to be a paucity of research in the financial sector on the variables relevant to the present study. Given the preceding overview of the research literature it follows that talent retention practices would benefit
from research into the relationship between perceived career mobility, career mobility preference, job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

In the light of the foregoing, the following hypothesis will be tested empirically:

H1: A statistically significant relationship exists between individuals’ perceived career mobility, career mobility preference, job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

8 Research design

8.1 Research participants

The sample consisted of financial management, accounting and auditing professionals. Out of a total population of 280 000 professionals in the financial management, accounting and auditing field in South Africa, a nonprobability convenience sample of 250 (N=250) participants were invited to participate in the research study. A final sample of 82 (n=82) completed questionnaires were useable, thus yielding a response rate of 33%.

The final sample (n=82) consisted of individuals aged mainly between 17 and 29 years (66%), individuals between 30 and 39 years (21%), and a very small number of individuals over the age of 40 (13%). Owing to the small number of participants over the age of 30 years, this group was clustered as one group during the analysis phase.

The sample was made up of 43% males and 57% females, indicating that the sample was fairly evenly split between gender groups. Seventy-nine percent of the sample had worked for their employing organisation for five years or less. An additional 17% had worked for six to ten years, and only 3% had worked for longer. The majority of the participants were single (57%), 34% were married and 9% were divorced. The majority of the sample was white (70%), with fewer black participants (30%): 18% African, 6% coloured and 6% Indian. The sample predominantly comprised 24% managers/directors, 29% qualified chartered accountants and auditors, 23% trainee accountants and internal auditor trainees, and 13% financial managers/bookkeepers.

8.2 Measuring instruments

Four questionnaires were used to measure the relationship between the variables used in this study. These included a perceived career mobility scale and a career mobility preference scale, both developed by João (2010). Job satisfaction was measured using the shortened version of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ20) (Weiss et al 1967). Organisational commitment was measured using the Organisational Commitment Scale (OCS) (Meyer & Allen 1997).

The perceived career mobility scale (João 2010) consists of 13 items divided into two scales: perceived interorganisational career mobility opportunities (four items) and perceived intraorganisational career mobility opportunities (nine items). Statements are responded to on a five-point rating scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). The higher the aggregate of responses, the greater the perceived career mobility. The following is an example of a statement from the perceived interorganisational career mobility opportunities scale: “There are many good jobs available for me in my organisation.” In terms of the present study, acceptable internal consistency reliabilities were obtained for the two subscales: perceived interorganisational career mobility (0.85) and perceived intraorganisational career mobility (0.64).

The career mobility preference scale (João 2010) is a 10-item scale that includes two subscales that measure intraorganisational career mobility preference (five items) and
interorganisational career mobility preference (five items). Items are reverse-scored on a five-point scale. Examples of items include: “In my ideal career, I would work for only one organisation,” and “If I could stay in my current job for the rest of my career, I would not desire to change jobs.” In the present study, the following internal consistency reliability coefficients were yielded: intraorganisational career mobility preference subscale (0.85) and interorganisational career mobility preference sub scale (0.82).

The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (short form) (MSQ20) (Weiss et al 1967) consists of three subscales: intrinsic satisfaction (twelve items), extrinsic satisfaction (six items), and general satisfaction (twenty items). An example of an intrinsic satisfaction item is: “On my present job, how do I feel about being able to keep busy all the time?” An example of an extrinsic item is: “On my present job, how do I feel about the way my boss handles his/her workers?” Satisfaction is measured on a five-point scale, ranging from very dissatisfied (1) to very satisfied (5). A higher score is indicative of higher levels of satisfaction experienced by the individual. Weiss et al (1967) report a median internal consistency coefficient of 0.90 for the MSQ20. Several South African studies have yielded acceptable levels of reliability (ie 0.88 and above) for the MSQ20 (Boshoff & Hoole 1998; Buitendach & Rothmann 2009; Martin & Roodt 2007; Sempane, Rieger & Roodt 2002). Internal consistency reliabilities of 0.90 (general job satisfaction), 0.84 (intrinsic job satisfaction) and 0.93 (extrinsic job satisfaction) were obtained in the present study. A South African study by Buitendach and Rothmann (2009) reported that exploratory factor analyses of the MSQ20 confirmed construct equivalence for the non-white black and white race groups.

The Organisational Commitment Scale (OCS) (Meyer & Allen 1997) measures total commitment and consists of three subscales: affective commitment (six items), continuance commitment (six items) and normative commitment (six items). Certain reverse-scoring items have been included. The scales are scored on a five-point Likert scale, with a higher score indicating greater commitment. Döckel (2003) reported acceptable internal consistency reliability estimates (Cronbach’s alphas) for affective commitment (0.82), continuance commitment (0.74) and normative commitment (0.83). A South African study by Lumley (2009) reported reliability estimates ranging between 0.82 and 0.68. Acceptable internal consistency reliabilities of 0.86 (total commitment), 0.74 (affective commitment), 0.86 (continuance commitment) and 0.89 (normative commitment) were obtained in the present study.

In line with directives provided by Nunnally (1978) for measuring broad-based trends for research purposes, the psychometric properties of the instruments were deemed acceptable.

8.3 Research procedure

Participants were approached directly and requested to participate. This was done with the aid of the South African Institute for Chartered Accountants’ (SAICA) list of contact information for all members, which is available for use by the public. Only SAICA members employed by an organisation were included. In addition, the management of five South African organisations were informed regarding this study, and they, in turn, informed relevant employees about the study. Participation was voluntary. This meant that the employees participated of their own free will. The procedure used also made it possible for participants to complete the electronic survey in their own time. However, this procedure yielded a low response rate (33%).

All participants were provided with comprehensive instructions and details regarding confidentiality and the purpose of the questionnaires. As far as the ethics of the research were concerned, clearance to conduct the research was obtained from the
participating organisations, and SAICA was informed that a list of their members had been used for this study. Confidentiality and privacy were explained, as was the purpose of the study and the feedback that would be given. Written informed consent was obtained (the participants completed an informed consent form). The participants were informed that the completion and return of the questionnaire and consent form meant that they were granting permission for their questionnaire to be used for research purposes. The participants were also informed that they could voluntarily withdraw from the study at any stage, and that the researcher was available to deal with any questions and concerns. The confidentiality of the participants was scrupulously maintained and completed questionnaires were kept secure. Participants who wanted feedback provided their contact information and received feedback on the results of the study.

Given the sensitive nature of the study (participants reported on their attitudes and feelings towards their employer organisations), the data collection method used seemed appropriate, since the participants could complete the questionnaire anonymously. It was assumed that this would help to ensure that the answers obtained were honest, particularly since participants did not have to include their name and contact details.

8.4 Statistical analyses
SPSS (version 17) (2008) was utilised to analyse the quantitative data obtained from the empirical study. Assumptions for normality were analysed. Because the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests for normality for the distribution of each of the four variables across the sample groups indicated p-values greater than $p > 0.01$, it was decided to continue with parametric statistics (Field 2005).

Pearson product-moment correlations were determined to assess the direction and strength of the relationship between the variables. In order to counter the probability of a type I error, it was decided to set the significance value at a 95% confidence interval level ($p \leq 0.05$). For the purposes of this study, $r$ values greater than 0.30 (medium effect) (Cohen 1992) were regarded as practically significant.

The relationship between the four variables was further analysed by performing multiple regression analyses in order to investigate the proportion of variance in the dependent variable (organisational commitment) that is explained by the independent variables (perceived career mobility, career mobility preference and job satisfaction) (Lachenicht 2002). Since a number of independent variables had to be considered, the value of the adjusted $R^2$ was used to interpret the results. $R^2$ values greater than 0.13 (medium effect) (Cohen 1992) were regarded as practically significant.

9 Results
9.1 Descriptive statistics: perceived career mobility and career mobility preference
As summarised in Table 1, the mean scores for total perceived career mobility and total career mobility preference are just below the midway mark, at $M = 2.89$ and $M = 2.75$ respectively. The highest perceived career mobility dimension is perceived interorganisational career mobility, at $M=3.24$. Intra- and interorganisational mobility preferences are $M=2.86$ and $M=2.67$ respectively. The variability of the subscales ranges between $SD=0.89$ and $SD=0.80$, with interorganisational mobility preference yielding the highest variability ($SD=0.89$), and perceived intraorganisational mobility yielding the lowest variability ($SD = 0.80$).
Table 1

Descriptive statistics: means, standard deviations and Cronbach’s alpha coefficients (N = 82).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived career mobility</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std deviation</th>
<th>Cronbach’s alpha coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total perceived career mobility</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived interorganisational career mobility</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived intraorganisational career mobility</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career mobility preference</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total career mobility preference</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intraorganisational career mobility preference</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interorganisational career mobility preference</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| MSG20                                         |         |         |       |               |                               |
| General job satisfaction                      | 1.30    | 4.95    | 3.66  | 0.69          | 0.90                          |
| Intrinsic job satisfaction                    | 1.00    | 4.92    | 3.79  | 0.69          | 0.84                          |
| Extrinsic job satisfaction                    | 1.67    | 5.00    | 3.35  | 0.85          | 0.93                          |

| OCS                                           |         |         |       |               |                               |
| Total commitment                               | 1.28    | 4.78    | 3.06  | 0.71          | 0.86                          |
| Affective commitment                           | 1.00    | 5.00    | 3.18  | 0.94          | 0.74                          |
| Continuance commitment                         | 1.33    | 4.67    | 2.98  | 0.81          | 0.86                          |
| Normative commitment                           | 1.00    | 5.00    | 3.01  | 0.91          | 0.89                          |

9.2 Descriptive statistics: job satisfaction

Table 1 shows that the mean score obtained for general job satisfaction was $M = 3.66$. The range for intrinsic job satisfaction revealed a higher mean score than that for extrinsic satisfaction ($M = 3.79$ vs $M = 3.35$). The variance of the sample, as indicated by the standard deviation, ranges between $SD = 0.69$ and $SD = 0.85$, with higher variability on the extrinsic job satisfaction scale.

9.3 Descriptive statistics: organisational commitment

As summarised in table 1, the average score for organisational commitment was $M = 3.08$. The highest commitment dimension was affective commitment at $M = 3.18$. Both continuance and normative commitment were lower, at $M = 2.98$ and $M = 3.01$ respectively. The variability on the total scale was $SD = 0.71$ and the sub-scales ranged between $SD = 0.94$ and $SD = 0.81$. The standard deviations of the affective and normative commitment scales were slightly higher than that of the continuance commitment scale, at $SD = 0.94$ and $SD = 0.91$ compared to $SD = 0.81$.

9.4 Correlational statistics

No significant relationships were found between the perceived career mobility and career mobility preference subscales. Table 2 shows that, with the exception of perceived interorganisational career mobility and intrinsic job satisfaction, the job satisfaction variables correlated significantly and positively with the perceived career mobility and career mobility preference variables. The correlations vary from $r = 0.22$
(small practical effect size) to \( r = 0.57 \) (large practical effect size). The strongest significant correlations \( (r \geq 0.50, \text{large practical effect size}) \) were observed between total perceived career mobility and extrinsic job satisfaction \( (r = 0.57) \), and between perceived intra organisational career mobility and extrinsic job satisfaction \( (r = 0.57) \).

Table 2 shows that the organisational commitment variables correlated significantly with the perceived career mobility and career mobility preference variables, with the exception of total perceived career mobility and continuance commitment, perceived inter organisational career mobility and total, affective and normative commitment and perceived intra organisational career mobility and continuance commitment. Significant correlations between perceived career mobility and career mobility preference and organisational commitment variables were all positive, with the exception of the relationship between perceived inter organisational career mobility and continuance commitment. The correlations vary from \( r = -0.28 \) (small practical effect size) to \( r = 0.60 \) (large practical effect size).

Positive and significant relationships were observed between all the job satisfaction and organisational commitment variables (as shown in table 3). The correlations vary from \( r = 0.44 \) (medium practical effect size) to \( r = 0.62 \) (large practical effect size).

**Table 2**

**Correlation analysis between perceived career mobility, career mobility preference, job satisfaction and organisational commitment \((N = 82)\)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Total perceived career mobility</th>
<th>Perceived intraorganisational career mobility</th>
<th>Perceived interorganisational career mobility</th>
<th>Total career mobility preference</th>
<th>Interorganisational mobility preference</th>
<th>Intraorganisational mobility preference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>( r ) ( 0.49^{++} )</td>
<td>( 0.24^{+} )</td>
<td>( 0.44^{++} )</td>
<td>( 0.32^{++} )</td>
<td>( 0.31^{++} )</td>
<td>( 0.26^{+} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( p ) ( 0.000^{**} )</td>
<td>( 0.03^{*} )</td>
<td>( 0.000^{**} )</td>
<td>( 0.004^{**} )</td>
<td>( 0.004^{**} )</td>
<td>( 0.03^{*} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td>( r ) ( 0.32^{+} )</td>
<td>( 0.20 )</td>
<td>( 0.30^{+} )</td>
<td>( 0.33^{+} )</td>
<td>( 0.33^{+} )</td>
<td>( 0.27^{+} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( p ) ( 0.003^{**} )</td>
<td>( 0.07 )</td>
<td>( 0.01^{**} )</td>
<td>( 0.002^{**} )</td>
<td>( 0.002^{**} )</td>
<td>( 0.01^{**} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extrinsic</td>
<td>( r ) ( 0.57^{++} )</td>
<td>( 0.26^{+} )</td>
<td>( 0.57^{++} )</td>
<td>( 0.28^{+} )</td>
<td>( 0.29^{+} )</td>
<td>( 0.22^{+} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( p ) ( 0.000^{**} )</td>
<td>( 0.02^{*} )</td>
<td>( 0.01^{**} )</td>
<td>( 0.01^{**} )</td>
<td>( 0.000^{**} )</td>
<td>( 0.05^{*} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>( r ) ( 0.36^{+} )</td>
<td>( -0.02 )</td>
<td>( 0.43^{+} )</td>
<td>( 0.59^{++} )</td>
<td>( 0.50^{++} )</td>
<td>( 0.46^{+} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( p ) ( 0.000^{**} )</td>
<td>( 0.83 )</td>
<td>( 0.000^{**} )</td>
<td>( 0.000^{**} )</td>
<td>( 0.000^{**} )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective</td>
<td>( r ) ( 0.48^{++} )</td>
<td>( 0.21 )</td>
<td>( 0.48^{++} )</td>
<td>( 0.45^{++} )</td>
<td>( 0.42^{++} )</td>
<td>( 0.41^{++} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( p ) ( 0.000^{**} )</td>
<td>( 0.06 )</td>
<td>( 0.000^{**} )</td>
<td>( 0.000^{**} )</td>
<td>( 0.000^{**} )</td>
<td>( 0.000^{**} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Con invariance</td>
<td>( r ) ( 0.03 )</td>
<td>( -0.28^{+} )</td>
<td>( 0.11 )</td>
<td>( 0.47^{++} )</td>
<td>( 0.51^{++} )</td>
<td>( 0.32^{+} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( p ) ( 0.77 )</td>
<td>( 0.01^{**} )</td>
<td>( 0.31 )</td>
<td>( 0.000^{**} )</td>
<td>( 0.000^{**} )</td>
<td>( 0.000^{**} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative</td>
<td>( r ) ( 0.36^{+} )</td>
<td>( -0.03 )</td>
<td>( 0.41^{+} )</td>
<td>( 0.50^{++} )</td>
<td>( 0.52^{++} )</td>
<td>( 0.39^{+} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( p ) ( 0.001^{**} )</td>
<td>( 0.81 )</td>
<td>( 0.000^{**} )</td>
<td>( 0.000^{**} )</td>
<td>( 0.000^{**} )</td>
<td>( 0.000^{**} )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** \( p \leq 0.001 \); ** \( p \leq 0.01 \); * \( p \leq 0.05 \) (two-tailed)

+++ \( r \geq 0.50 \) (large practical effect size) ++ \( r \geq 0.30 \leq 0.49 \) (medium practical effect size)

+ \( r \leq 0.29 \) (small practical effect size).
Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total commitment</th>
<th>Affective</th>
<th>Continuance</th>
<th>Normative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General job satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( r )</td>
<td>0.51+++</td>
<td>0.62+++</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.50+++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( p )</td>
<td>0.000***</td>
<td>0.000***</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic job satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( r )</td>
<td>0.48++</td>
<td>0.58+++</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.44+++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( p )</td>
<td>0.000***</td>
<td>0.000***</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extrinsic job satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( r )</td>
<td>0.53+++</td>
<td>0.58+++</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.53+++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( p )</td>
<td>0.000***</td>
<td>0.000***</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.000***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** \( p \leq 0.001; ** \( p \leq 0.01; * \( p \leq 0.05 \) (two-tailed)
++ \( r \geq 0.50 \) (large practical effect size) ++ \( r \geq 0.30 \leq 0.49 \) (medium practical effect size)
+ \( r \leq 0.29 \) (small practical effect size).

9.5 Inferential statistics: multiple regression

Table 4 indicates that the regression models explained large \((R^2 \geq 0.28)\) practical effect percentages of variance in the dependent variables (Cohen 1992).

The following variables contributed significantly to explaining the percentage of variation in total organisational commitment \((R^2 = 50\%\); interorganisational career mobility preference \((\beta = 0.48; p \leq 0.001)\), extrinsic job satisfaction \((\beta = 0.27; p \leq 0.001)\) and perceived intraorganisational mobility \((\beta = 0.20; p \leq 0.001)\). The beta-weights indicate that interorganisational career mobility preference makes the biggest contribution to explaining the total commitment variable.

Intrinsic job satisfaction \((\beta = 0.42; p \leq 0.001)\), perceived intraorganisational career mobility \((\beta = 0.31; p \leq 0.001)\) and intraorganisational mobility preference \((\beta = 0.25; p \leq 0.001)\) contributed significantly to explaining the variance in affective organisational commitment \((R^2 = 47\%\). The beta-weights indicate that intrinsic job satisfaction makes the biggest contribution to explaining the affective commitment variable.

Interorganisational mobility preference \((\beta = 0.50; p \leq 0.001)\) and perceived interorganisational mobility preference \((\beta = 0.26; p \leq 0.001)\) contribute significantly to explaining the variance in continuance organisational commitment \((R^2 = 31\%\). The beta-weights indicate that interorganisational career mobility preference makes the biggest contribution to explaining the continuance commitment variable. The results also show that high scores on the perceived interorganisational career mobility variable were significantly related to the lower scores on the continuance commitment variable.

Extrinsic job satisfaction \((\beta = 0.42; p \leq 0.001)\) and interorganisational mobility preference \((\beta = 0.39; p \leq 0.001)\) contribute significantly to explaining the variance in normative organisational commitment \((R^2 = 41\%\). The beta-weights indicate that extrinsic job satisfaction makes the biggest contribution to explaining the normative commitment variable.

In the light of the results showing that the measured relationships are statistically significant in the majority of the relationships tested, the null hypothesis H0 (a statistically significant relationship does not exist between individuals' perceived career mobility, career mobility preference, job satisfaction and organisational commitment) is herewith rejected.
Table 4
Regression model summary with organisational commitment as dependent variable and perceived career mobility, career mobility preference and job satisfaction dimensions as independent variables (N = 82)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Unstandardised coefficient</th>
<th>Standardised coefficient</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Adjusted $R^2$</th>
<th>R</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td>27.72</td>
<td>0.50++***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interorganisational career mobility preference</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>5.91</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extrinsic job satisfaction</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perceived interorganisational career mobility</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>-0.94</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>-1.96</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>0.67+++***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intrinsic job satisfaction</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perceived interorganisational career mobility</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intraorganisational mobility preference</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>7.02</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td>19.51</td>
<td>0.31+++***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interorganisational mobility preference</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perceived interorganisational career mobility</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>-0.26</td>
<td>-2.86</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td>29.26</td>
<td>0.41+++***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extrinsic job satisfaction</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interorganisational mobility preference</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** p ≤ 0.001; ** p ≤ 0.01; * p ≤ 0.05
+$R^2 ≤ 0.12$ (small practical effect size); ++ $R^2 ≥ 0.13 ≤ 0.25$ (medium practical effect size); +++ $R^2 ≥ 0.26$ (large practical effect size)

10 Discussion
The primary aim of this study was to empirically explore the relationship between individuals' perceived career mobility, career mobility preference, job satisfaction and organisational commitment. In interpreting the results, the biographical profile of the sample was taken into consideration: The sample consisted of mainly white participants 30 years of age and younger, in full-time employment. Slightly more single participants (compared with married and divorced participants) were included in the sample. Gender was distributed fairly evenly. The majority of participants were professionally qualified chartered accountants and auditors, and accounting and auditing clerks studying towards a chartered accountancy qualification. The majority of the sample indicated a tenure of five years or less, a statistic that should, perhaps, be interpreted in the light of the younger age and higher qualification levels of the participants in the sample. Individuals completing a degree after their secondary education may possibly enter the workforce only upon completion of their degree, or change jobs after completing their degree.

The participants reported relatively high job satisfaction and affective commitment levels. Although their preferences for organisational career mobility appeared to be relatively low, the results suggested that they felt positive about the availability of inter- and intraorganisational career mobility opportunities. In the light of the reported shortage of financial staff, accountants and auditors in the South African work context (South African Institute of Chartered Accountants 2008), these results are not surprising. Skills shortages, and hence a high demand for employees, result in greater career opportunities (Kochanski & Ledford 2001). The higher scores on perceived interorganisational career mobility opportunities are interesting in the light of the lower mean scores obtained for normative and continuance commitment. It appeared from the findings that the participants who perceived several job opportunities in the job market seemed unlikely to feel they had to be committed to an organisation because of the high cost of leaving the organisation.

10.1 The relationship between perceived career mobility, career mobility preference, job satisfaction and organisational commitment

Overall, the results suggest that the participants’ perceptions of interorganisational and intraorganisational career mobility opportunities are significantly related to their levels of job satisfaction and organisational commitment. The results further suggest that the participants who preferred to move between organisations, and who seemed satisfied with their current work environment, were also more likely to perceive opportunities for advancement within their organisation. These participants also seemed to feel significantly more committed towards their employing organisation. These findings could be attributed to the relatively young age of the participants. Coetzee and Schreuder (2008) found in this regard that the early adulthood age group (individuals in the entry-level phase of their careers) appears to feel most satisfied in work situations in which, as far as possible, they will be free of organisational constraints and restrictions and free to develop their professional competence. Individuals with a boundaryless mindset experiencing promising development opportunities were found to experience greater levels of organisational commitment (Briscoe & Finkelstein 2009).

The significantly strong positive relationship observed between perceived intraorganisational career mobility, extrinsic job satisfaction and organisational commitment highlights the importance of factors in the work situation (such as satisfaction with the supervisor, company policies, working conditions, pay, co-workers, advancement opportunities and recognition) in influencing participants’ overall commitment. Findings reported by Foong-ming (2008) highlight the importance of organisational support as a mediating factor between extrinsic job satisfaction and perceived intraorganisational career mobility. In the present study, both intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction were found to be related to affective organisational commitment and perceived intraorganisational career mobility. Intraorganisational career mobility preference was found to relate significantly to affective and normative commitment. These findings are in agreement with those of Allen, Shore and Griffeth (2003), who reported that perceived organisational support, including growth opportunities, results in a perception on the part of employees that the organisation cares about them, leading to increased emotional attachment to the organisation. The findings of the present study are in contrast with those of Döckel (2003), who found no significant relationship between training, development and career opportunities, and organisational commitment. However, there is much support for view that a relationship
exists between career opportunities and employee commitment (Kochanski & Ledford 2001; Meyer & Allen 1997). Allen et al (2003) suggest that growth opportunities, among other factors, mediate the relationship between job satisfaction and organisational commitment. A lack of growth opportunities has been found to have a negative influence on an individual’s attitude towards the organisation, which in turn influences his or her intention to leave, leading to turnover behaviour (Allen et al 2003). Personal and organisational growth may be ensured through the availability and accessibility of training and career pathing by organisations (Lesabe & Nkosi 2007).

The results further revealed that the participants who preferred intraorganisational career mobility opportunities, that is, opportunities to advance or develop within the organisation, appeared to feel emotionally more attached to the organisation. Similarly, those participants who felt positive about the possibility of such advancement opportunities within the organisation, and who felt intrinsically motivated by their job tasks, their achievements and opportunities to use their abilities (i.e., those who experienced intrinsic job satisfaction) seemed more likely to feel emotionally attached to the organisation. Kondratuk et al (2004) suggest in this regard that affective commitment increases after a move within or between organisations. The results of the present study are also in agreement with findings reported by Spector (2008), which indicate job satisfaction to be most strongly related to affective commitment.

All career mobility preference dimensions were found to be positively related to job satisfaction and organisational commitment. These findings are in agreement with research conducted by Lumley, Coetzee, Tladinyane and Ferreira (2010), who reported that individuals who are satisfied with pay, promotion (advancement), supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards (recognition and achievement), relationship with co-workers, nature of work and communication (organisational and job specific) are more likely to feel emotionally attached to, and involved with their employing organisation. They are also more likely to feel obliged to remain with the organisation because of social norms (i.e., normatively committed).

The significant positive relationship observed between job satisfaction and organisational commitment suggests that the participants who felt highly satisfied with aspects of their job also felt highly committed to their employing organisation. Several studies have found a relationship to exist between job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Carmeli & Freund 2004; Lumley 2009; Martin & Roodt 2007). In the present study, all job satisfaction dimensions were found to be related to total, affective and normative commitment. The relationship between extrinsic job satisfaction and affective organisational commitment is confirmed by previous research. Knowledge employees have been shown to appreciate supervisor support and recognition (Döckel 2003) which, in turn, suggests a link between affective commitment and extrinsic job satisfaction. Normative commitment may develop when an employee receives benefits and experiences the need to reciprocate (Meyer & Allen 1991; Meyer & Herscovitch 2001). Martin (2007) explains that intrinsic satisfaction occurs as a result of self-actualisation experienced from doing one’s job. On the basis of these findings, it is therefore suggested that satisfaction with the benefits obtained from working within the organisation will result in employees feeling more attached to the organisation.

Contrary to the observed positive relationship between career mobility preference and organisational commitment found in the present study, Briscoe and Finkelstein (2009) reported an inverse relationship between organisational mobility preference and organisational commitment. The findings of the present study seem to corroborate those of previous retention studies (Coetzee 2010), which suggest that participants who
prefer career mobility opportunities are more likely to feel satisfied and committed when these are provided by the organisation.

The results of the present study further indicated that a preference for interorganisational career mobility, but a perceived lack thereof, significantly increased continuance commitment. In other words, it appears that those participants who would like to change jobs to work for another organisation, but who do not perceive appropriate alternative jobs within the work environment, seemed more likely to remain with their current organisation, owing to the costs involved in leaving (and for instance being unemployed).

11 Conclusions, implications and recommendations

11.1 Conclusions and implications

Overall, the results of the present study provide preliminary evidence that individuals’ perceptions of the availability of career mobility opportunities, their preferences for career mobility, and job satisfaction significantly influence their level of commitment to the organisation.

More specifically, managers should recognise that extrinsic job satisfaction factors (pay, benefits, policies, working conditions, co-worker relations, advancement opportunities and recognition), employees’ perceptions of intraorganisational mobility opportunities and preferences for interorganisational career mobility contribute significantly to employees’ organisational commitment. Interorganisational career mobility opportunities seem to become more important when the costs associated with leaving the organisation are low. However, a preference for interorganisational commitment seems to be high for young professionals even if the costs associated with leaving the organisation are high. This implies that managers should consider competitive pay and benefit structures for their talented staff and recognise the desire of young professionals for career advancement opportunities. These findings suggest that employees who have a need for career mobility, and who feel positive about their opportunities for career mobility opportunities, may present unique retention challenges since they may be more difficult to retain. Managers could strengthen their young professional talent’s affective commitment by paying attention to intrinsic job satisfaction factors (for example providing challenging tasks that allow their staff to apply and develop their knowledge and skills) and intraorganisational career mobility opportunities. Research has indicated that the more an organisation’s policies and practices reflect concern for employee morale and development and encourage innovation and growth, the more employees want and intend to stay (Meyer, Hecht, Gill & Toplonytsky 2010).

Considering that job attitudes (eg job satisfaction and organisational commitment) and ease of movement (eg career mobility opportunities and preferences) are regarded as some of the major predictors of voluntary turnover (João 2010), the results of the present study highlight the importance of considering individuals’ career development needs along with the behaviours and attitudes that drive their career decisions in the design of talent retention strategies for professional staff members. Organisations can be proactive about retaining scarce and critical staff by matching employees’ knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, career needs and values with the requirements of a job, providing the required emotional care and support, along with opportunities for further growth and development. Intrinsic job motivators (stimulating job tasks, variety,
opportunities to utilise one’s abilities and talents) and extrinsic job motivators such as pay, nature of work, supervisor support and co-worker relationships, need to be congruent with employees’ own needs, making them feel affectively and normatively committed to their employer to reduce turnover intentions.

11.2 Limitations and recommendations
Since the present study was limited to a relatively small sample of predominantly white participants in the South African financial environment and in the early stage of their career development, the findings cannot be generalised to other occupational, age and race contexts. In addition, considering that five different organisations in the financial sector participated in the study, variables such as the type of organisation and its unique culture could have influenced the results. Given the exploratory nature of the research design, this study cannot provide any statements about causation. Associations between the variables have therefore been interpreted rather than established. These findings thus need to be replicated with broader samples across various occupational, age and race groups and economic sectors before more extensive conclusions can be drawn about the relationship between the constructs of concern to this study. In terms of the reliability of the measures used in this study, the relatively small sample size may also have inflated the Cronbach alpha estimates. Future studies should consider using larger sample sizes (≥200) to obtain an unbiased Cronbach alpha estimate. Studies with larger sample sizes could also perform confirmatory factor analysis to confirm the construct validity and reliability of the subscales of the measures utilised in the present study.

Notwithstanding its limitations, this study is regarded as the starting point for measuring perceived career mobility and career mobility preference in the South African context. In this regard, the findings contribute original and valuable new knowledge to human resource practices concerned with the retention of staff in the financial sector.

List of references


