THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONAL MEANING, SENSE OF COHERENCE AND ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

by

INGRA DU BUISSON-NARSAI

submitted in part fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF COMMERCE

in the subject of

INDUSTRIAL AND ORGANISATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: PROF F VAN N CILLIERS

NOVEMBER 2005

DECLARATION

Student Number: 706-936-7

I declare that "THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONAL MEANING, SENSE OF COHERENCE AND ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT" is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

SIGNATURE (Mrs. I. du Buisson-Narsai) DATE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor Professor Frans Cilliers for his enthusiasm, expertise and assistance with finishing this dissertation.

I would also like to thank all participants, my work colleagues, who volunteered their time and effort in completing the questionnaires. Without their help and willingness to support me this study would not have been possible at all.

Thank you also to David Levey for the professional editing of the dissertation.

On a personal level I am extremely grateful for the unwavering support I have received from my beloved husband Yatin, who always encouraged me to pursue the topic that I was passionate about, and to my miracle daughter Mira Regini, who has profoundly changed my life.

Next, I would like to thank my parents, Chris and Betsie, for their unconditional love and encouragement throughout my life. I know that I would not have accomplished so much and travelled this far without you. A special word of thanks to my father Chris, who proofread the manuscript many times over and to my mother Betsie for encouraging me through difficuilt times.

Most of all I would like to thank my higher power, for spiritual guidance and blessings. It has been a challenging and humbling journey.

I dedicate this thesis to Prof. Frans Cilliers, my husband Yatin, my beloved daughter Mira Regini, my father and mother, Dr Helena Strating, and all my friends and family who supported and encouraged me to keep going. Without any one of them, this dissertation would not have come into existence.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

| 1.1 | BACKGROUND OF AND MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH | 1 |
|---------|---|----|
| 1.2 | PROBLEM STATEMENT | 3 |
| 1.3 | AIMS OF RESEARCH | 4 |
| 1.3.1 | The Specific Theoretical Aims | 4 |
| 1.3.2 | The Specific Empirical Aims | 4 |
| 1.4 | PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE | 5 |
| 1.4.1 | Relevant Psychological Paradigms | 5 |
| 1.4.1.1 | Humanistic Paradigm | 5 |
| 1.4.1.2 | Existential Paradigm | 6 |
| 1.4.1.3 | Positive Psychology Paradigm | 7 |
| 1.4.1.4 | Positivistic Paradigm | 9 |
| 1.4.1.5 | Systems Paradigm | 10 |
| 1.5 | RESEARCH DESIGN | 10 |
| 1.6 | RESEARCH METHOD | 11 |
| 1.6.1 | Phase1: Literature Review | 11 |
| 1.6.2 | Phase 2: Empirical Study | 11 |
| 1.7 | CHAPTER DIVISION | 13 |
| 1.8 | CHAPTER SUMMARY | 14 |

CHAPTER 2 PERSONAL MEANING, SENSE OF COHERENCE AND ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

| 2.1 | PERSONAL MEANING | 15 |
|-------|---------------------------------|----|
| 2.1.1 | History of Personal Meaning | 15 |
| 2.1.2 | Definition of Personal Meaning | 16 |
| 2.1.3 | Development of Personal Meaning | 17 |
| 2.1.4 | Research on Personal Meaning | 19 |
| 2.1.5 | Application of Personal Meaning | 19 |
| 2.2 | SENSE OF COHERENCE | 21 |

| 2.2.1 | History of Sense of Coherence | 21 |
|-------|--|----|
| 2.2.2 | Definition of Sense of Coherence | 21 |
| 2.2.3 | Development of Sense of Coherence | 23 |
| 2.2.4 | Research on Sense of Coherence | 23 |
| 2.2.5 | Application of Sense of Coherence | 25 |
| 2.3 | ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT | 26 |
| 2.3.1 | History of Organisational Commitment | 26 |
| 2.3.2 | Definition of Organisational Commitment | 26 |
| 2.3.3 | Development of Organisational Commitment | 28 |
| 2.3.4 | Research on Organisational Commitment | 29 |
| 2.3.5 | Application of Organisational Commitment | 31 |
| 2.4 | THEORETICICAL INTEGRATION | 32 |
| 2.4.1 | Personal Meaning and Sense Of Coherence | 32 |
| 2.4.2 | Personal Meaning and Organisational Commitment | 33 |
| 2.4.3 | Sense of coherence and Organisational Commitment | 34 |
| 2.4.4 | Integrating all three constructs | 34 |
| 2.5 | CHAPTER SUMMARY | 35 |

CHAPTER 3 EMPIRICAL STUDY

| 3.1 | THE POPULATION AND SAMPLE | 37 |
|---------|---|----|
| 3.2 | THE MEASURING INSTRUMENTS | 37 |
| 3.2.1 | The Personal Meaning Profile (PMP) | 38 |
| 3.2.1.1 | Development | 38 |
| 3.2.1.2 | Rationale | 38 |
| 3.2.1.3 | Aim | 38 |
| 3.2.1.4 | Dimensions | 38 |
| 3.2.1.5 | Administration | 39 |
| 3.2.1.6 | Interpretation | 39 |
| 3.2.1.7 | Reliability | 40 |
| 3.2.1.8 | Validity | 40 |
| 3.2.1.9 | Justification for inclusion | 40 |
| 3.2.2 | The Orientation to Life Questionnaire (OLQ) | 41 |

| 3.2.2.1 | Development | 41 |
|---------|---|----|
| 3.2.2.2 | Rationale | 41 |
| 3.2.2.3 | Aim | 41 |
| 3.2.2.4 | Dimensions | 42 |
| 3.2.2.5 | Administration | 42 |
| 3.2.2.6 | Interpretation | 43 |
| 3.2.2.7 | Reliability | 43 |
| 3.2.2.8 | Validity | 43 |
| 3.2.2.9 | Justification for inclusion | 44 |
| 3.2.3 | The Organisational Commitment Scale (OCS) | 44 |
| 3.2.3.1 | Development | 44 |
| 3.2.3.2 | Rationale | 44 |
| 3.2.3.3 | Aim | 45 |
| 3.2.3.4 | Dimensions | 45 |
| 3.2.3.5 | Administration | 45 |
| 3.2.3.6 | Interpretation | 46 |
| 3.2.3.7 | Reliability | 46 |
| 3.2.3.8 | Validity | 46 |
| 3.2.3.9 | Justification for inclusion | 46 |
| 3.2.4 | Biographical questionnaire | 47 |
| 3.3 | DATA COLLECTION | 47 |
| 3.4 | DATA PROCESSING | 47 |
| 3.4.1 | Descriptive statistics | 48 |
| 3.4.2 | Reliability of Instruments | 48 |
| 3.4.3 | Correlations | 49 |
| 3.4.4 | Regression Analysis | 50 |
| 3.4.5 | T-Tests | 51 |
| 3.5 | FORMULATION OF STATISTICAL HYPOTHESIS | 51 |
| 3.6 | CHAPTER SUMMARY | 53 |

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

| 4.1 | DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS | 54 |
|-------|--|----|
| 4.1.1 | The Three Instruments | 54 |
| 4.1.2 | Biographical Variables | 57 |
| 4.2 | RELIABILITY OF INSTRUMENTS | 57 |
| 4.2.1 | Reliability and Item Analysis of the Personal Meaning Profile | 57 |
| | (PMP) Questionnaire | |
| 4.2.2 | Reliability and Item Analysis of Orientation to Life Questionnaire | 59 |
| | (OLQ) | |
| 4.2.3 | Reliability and item analysis of the Organisational Commitment | 60 |
| | Scale (OCS) | |
| 4.3 | CORRELATIONS | 61 |
| 4.3.1 | PMP and OLQ | 61 |
| 4.3.2 | OLQ and OCS | 63 |
| 4.3.3 | OCS and PMP | 64 |
| 4.3.4 | Biographical variables | 65 |
| 4.3.5 | Discussion | 67 |
| 4.4 | REGRESSION | 70 |
| 4.5 | T-TESTS | 74 |
| 4.6 | CHAPTER SUMMARY | 76 |

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

| 5.1 | CONCLUSIONS | 77 |
|-------|-----------------------------|----|
| 5.1.1 | Literature Review | 77 |
| 5.1.2 | Empirical Study | 79 |
| 5.2 | LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH | 81 |
| 5.3 | RECOMMENDATIONS | 82 |
| 5.4 | CHAPTER SUMMARY | 84 |
| | | |
| | REFERENCES | 85 |

LIST OF TABLES

| Table | 4.1 | Descriptive Statistics for the Personal Meaning Profile, Orientation to Life Questionnaire (OLQ), and the Organisational Commitment Scale (OCS) for (n=90) | 55 |
|-------|------|--|----|
| Table | 4.2 | Biographical Characteristics (n = 90) | 57 |
| Table | 4.3 | Single factor loadings and Cronbach Alphas of the dimensions of the PMP (n= 90) | 58 |
| Table | 4.4 | Single factor loadings and Cronbach Alphas of the $OLQ (n = 90)$ | 59 |
| Table | 4.5 | Single factor loadings and Cronbach Alphas of the dimensions of the OCS (n= 90) | 60 |
| Table | 4.6 | Correlation between PMP and OLQ | 61 |
| Table | 4.7 | Correlation between OLQ and OCS (n = 89) | 63 |
| Table | 4.8 | Correlation between OCS and PMP ($n = 89$) | 64 |
| Table | 4.9 | Correlation between Age, Tenure and the PMP, OLQ, OCS | 66 |
| Table | 4.10 | Stepwise Regression Results for Affective Commitment, Continuance Commitment and Normative Commitment | 71 |
| Table | 4.11 | Model summary | 71 |
| Table | 4.12 | Differences between the scores of management and non-management on PMP, SOC and OCS | 75 |

viii

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 4.1 The most significant correlations (medium and large 68 effect) between personal meaning, sense of coherence, and organisational commitment
- Figure 4.2 An illustration of the variables that predict 73 organisational commitment

SUMMARY

The present study aimed to investigate the relationships between, personal meaning, sense of coherence, organisational commitment and selected biographical variables, specifically age, tenure and occupational level.

It was found that mostly significant positive relationships exist between personal meaning and sense of coherence. Personal meaning and sense of coherence exhibit predictive value for organisational commitment. It was established that self-transcendence plays a significant role in the development of affective and normative organisational commitment.

Some significant differences were found between management and nonmanagement employees in the manifestation of personal meaning. Management approximate more personal meaning to achievement, self-acceptance, and fair treatment. On sense of coherence and organisational commitment there were no significant differences between management and non-management employees.

It was recommended that the relationship between personal meaning and other positive psychology variables be researched in order to determine the significance of such relationships so as to add to this relatively new body of research.

Key words:

Positive Psychology, Personal Meaning, Sense of Coherence, Organisational Commitment, Existential Psychology, Salutogenesis.