

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This study dealt with the issues of personal meaning, sense of coherence, and organisational commitment within a South African corporate food services company. In chapter one the background of and motivation for the research is described. In this regard the problem statement, the aims of the research as well as the paradigm perspective are first presented. Thereafter the research design, research method and the chapter division are discussed.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF AND MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

The 21st century world of work has been portrayed as one involving increased stress, burnout, and a loss of meaning. The format of working arrangements is also increasingly characterised by contingent work, part-time work and multiple careers (Furnham, 2000). People are spending more of their time working and therefore number amongst their closest friends their co-workers (Mirvis, 1997). Research confirms that people are striving for congruence in their lives, meaning in their work and humanistic values in their workplace (Laabs, 1995; Richards & Bergin, 2005). Increasingly, such organisational issues as values, alienation, and the struggle to find deeper meaning at work are being raised and researched (Cavanagh, 1999; Gibbons, 2000; Snyder & Lopez, 2002). Workplace spirituality is increasingly being proposed as a means through which the individual can find meaning in paid employment, and the work organisation is portrayed as a source of spiritual growth that can enable the discovery of an interconnected purpose and one's innermost being (Baumeister & Vohs, 2002; Mirvis, 1997; Mitroff and Denton, 1999).

Victor Frankl remarked that human beings are naturally inclined to seek meaning, and that happiness, a much-desired state in modern society, is simply a by-product in the process of attaining meaning in life (Frankl, 1969). Increasingly, research has been conducted into existential meaning, or the meaning of one's life or existence (Debats, 1999, Wong, 1998) and empirical research strongly supports the association between meaning in life and positive health psychology (De Klerk,

Boshoff, & van Wyk, 2004; Giesbrecht, 1997; Moolman, 1999; O'Connor & Chamberlain, 1996; Reker & Wong, 1988).

Since Frankl's (1963) publication, the concept of meaning has been studied in great detail both as a single variable and as a composite variable. The most prominent of these composite variables is the sense of coherence (SOC). According to Antonovsky (1979, 1987), the SOC is a significant factor in determining an individual's position on the health ease-dis-ease continuum, or in deriving order and sense from chaos. The SOC was not developed as a meaning measure *per se*, but is intended to assess a more general personality structure. The SOC is a dispositional orientation that is embedded within the individual's personality structure, as well as in the ambience of a subculture, culture or historical period (Antonovsky, 1979). According to Coetzee and Cilliers (2001); Rothmann (2001); Strümpfer & Wissing (1998); Wissing and van Eeden (1997) the sense of coherence is one of the most prominent constructs which describes general psychological well-being. The SOC questionnaire includes a meaning subscale, which overlaps conceptually with other life meaning measures (Chamberlain & Zika, 1988; Korotkov, 1998).

While research focusing on meaning, both as single and composite constructs, is essential, it is also important to conduct research to assist in understanding the potential positive impact on employee attitudes that can occur when employees cope with and find meaning in their lives. Organisational commitment is a variable that indicates how individuals perceive their relationship to their current organisation, feel a bond with that organisation and want to maintain membership in it (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). According to Allen and Meyer (2001), employee commitment is a crucial factor in achieving organisational success. Organisational commitment has been found to be positively correlated with turnover in the organisation, attendance at work, job performance and employee well-being (Allen & Meyer, 2001; Suliman & Iles, 2000).

Few research studies have directly examined the relationship between personal meaning, sense of coherence, and organisational commitment. The present study is

therefore undertaken against this background and aims to investigate the relationships between personal meaning, sense of coherence and organisational commitment among employees.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The changing nature of work, characterised by employees becoming disheartened at the quality of their work life and searching for the meaning that underlies their efforts (Furnham, 2003), has resulted in various empirical studies being conducted specifically regarding various resilience factors and their relationships to and effects on outcome variables like job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Coetzee, 2004; Coetzee & Rothmann, 1999; Giesbrecht, 1997; Strümpfer & Mlonzi, 2001; Suliman & Iles, 2000; Viviers & Cilliers, 1999).

Considering the above, in this dissertation the researcher intends to identify the relationships that might exist between personal meaning, sense of coherence and organisational commitment in an attempt to improve the organisational behavioural processes within a certain food services company.

The following research questions arise on the basis of the description of the research problem:

- What is the nature of personal meaning, sense of coherence, and organisational commitment and how are the relationships between these constructs conceptualised in the literature?
- What are the levels of personal meaning, sense of coherence and organisational commitment in the sample group?
- What is the correlation between personal meaning, sense of coherence and organisational commitment?
- Can personal meaning and sense of coherence predict organisational commitment in the organisation researched?
- Are there significant differences in the manifestation of personal meaning, sense of coherence, and organisational commitment between management and non-management employees?

1.3 AIMS OF RESEARCH

The general aim of this research was to investigate the relationship between personal meaning, sense of coherence and organisational commitment.

1.3.1 The Specific Theoretical Aims

The specific theoretical aims of this research are now discussed.

- To conceptualise personal meaning, sense of coherence and organisational commitment and to integrate the three concepts theoretically.
- To investigate the possible theoretical relationships between personal meaning, sense of coherence and organisational commitment and selected biographical variables.

1.3.2 The Specific Empirical Aims

The specific empirical aims of this research are now discussed.

- To determine the levels of personal meaning, sense of coherence and organisational commitment in the sample group.
- To ascertain the psychometric relationship between personal meaning, sense of coherence and organisational commitment including the role of biographical variables i.e. age and tenure.
- To determine whether personal meaning and sense of coherence can act as a predictor of organisational commitment.
- To determine if there are any significant differences in the manifestation of personal meaning, sense of coherence, and organisational commitment between management and non-management employees.
- to formulate recommendations towards more effective organisational behaviour and future research.

1.4 PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE

A specific paradigm perspective guided this research. This perspective refers to the intellectual climate or variety of metatheoretical values or beliefs and assumptions underlying the theories and models that form the definitive context of the research (Mouton & Marais, 1994).

1.4.1 Relevant Psychological Paradigms

The Positive Psychology paradigm served as an overall perspective in terms of which this research was conducted. Specifically, the literature review was conducted within the parameters of the humanistic–existential paradigm and the empirical study within the guidelines provided by the positivistic paradigm and systems theory.

1.4.1.1 Humanistic Paradigm

Humanistic and existential psychologies may be seen as reactions to what was considered an overemphasis upon deficits and limitations and an underemphasis upon growth and greater human potentials. Puttick (2000) notes that humanistic–existential theories preceded the development of the Human Potential Movement. This movement represented an outgrowth of humanistic psychology and highlighted the importance of personal development, emotional literacy and the quality of relationships.

Humanism proposes that every individual is a free person, possessing a free will, being conscious and creative and being born with an inner motivation to fulfil his potential (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 1994). According to Meyer et al. (1994) the basic assumptions of the humanistic approach include that:

- Every individual functions as an integrated whole and should be studied in her “gestalt”.
- Recognition should be given to her spiritual processes, e.g. growth and actualisation.
- The nature of a person is basically good and positive.

- The conscious processes of individuals, specifically with regard to decision making, play an important role.
- Psychological wellness serves as a criterion against which functioning is measured.

One of the key humanistic psychologists was Abraham Maslow. Writing about the higher-order needs defined in his motivational hierarchy of needs, Maslow used words like vocation, calling, mission, duty, and beloved job, to describe the sense of dedication and devotion to their work experienced by self-actualising individuals (Maslow, 1971). According to Maslow's (1954, 1971) work on human motivation in work organisations, the individual exhibits the capacity for transcendence beyond experiences of the physical world. Maslow's concept of the self-actualising person involves individuals learning to resacralise their experiences, thus enabling them to reconnect with the sacred, the eternal and the symbolic. Maslow (1971) postulated that self-actualising people are involved in a cause outside their own skin, something that is outside themselves. Maslow (1971) also identified high levels of perceived meaningfulness in the lives of the self-actualising subjects whom he studied.

1.4.1.2 *Existential Paradigm*

According to existential psychology man is primarily a spiritual being – a being who has freedom and responsibility. The existential theories largely focus on the ultimate goal in life, which is to grow towards and find meaning in life, and to possessing an intrinsic will to meaning (Frankl, 1969; Meyer et al., 1994). Victor Frankl is credited with being a pioneer of the study of existential psychology. Frankl (1963) asserted that the “will to meaning” is a significant and universal human motive and that people are motivated by more than just basic drives and defense mechanisms. Individuals, who do not achieve the will to meaning, may experience, according to Frankl, an “existential vacuum.” Symptoms of such a vacuum include a sense of meaninglessness, feelings of boredom, apathy, or indifference (Frankl, 1969).

According to Meyer et al. (1994) the three fundamental premises of existentialism are:

- Freedom of the will: People are pre-eminently spiritual beings, free to take decisions about their own lives. They can choose who they want to be and such choices make them who they are.
- The will to meaning: A person is inherently inclined to search for values or life ideals outside of herself. She wants to make something special or unique out of her life.
- Meaning in life: The third premise is that there is without any doubt a meaning in all life's circumstances, even in suffering and death.

According to Frankl (1969), work is ideally an expression of a life task and as such represents the realisation of creative values. Frankl (1969) emphasised that work only becomes meaningful when it entails a contribution to a cause, or society, beyond selfish needs.

1.4.1.3 Positive Psychology Paradigm

The positive psychology paradigm also underpins the present research. This paradigm is defined as the scientific study of ordinary, positive, subjective human strengths, virtues, experience and functioning (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Sheldon & King, 2001).

The particular paradigm proposes an alternative orientation to a discipline that has focused mainly on the study, classification and treatment of pathology. Increasingly, the focus in the health professions is on developing interests in wellness as well as in illness, in psychosomatic health as well as disease, in prevention as well as treatment, in healing as well as curing.

Like Frankl (1963), positive psychologists reject the idea that people's goals and values arise from basic drives such as hunger and sex, or from defence mechanisms such as sublimation and reaction formation. Human beings can and do choose goals and values that promote higher purposes, such as those of creativity, morality,

and spirituality. Yet in contrast to Frankl, today's emerging positive psychology movement does not assume that survival through psychological adaptation needs to be the ultimate desired direction of human life.

The aim of positive psychology is to understand and then enhance those factors that allow individuals, communities, and societies to flourish. Positive psychology studies various individual constructs. Examples are: (1) individual strengths such as emotional intelligence, locus of control and self-efficacy (Lopez & Snyder, 2003), (2) emotional experiences in the present such as happiness (Seligman, 2002), creativity, courage and gratitude (Lopez & Snyder, 2003), (3) constructive cognitions about the future such as hope and optimism (Peterson, 2000; Schneider, 2001) and (4) specific coping approaches such as meaning (Baumeister, 1991, Wong, 1998), positive coping (Somerfield & McCrae, 2000) and spirituality (Richards & Bergin, 2005).

Positive psychology also encompasses the salutogenic paradigm (meaning the origin of health) that was developed by Antonovsky (1979) as well as the fortigenic paradigm. The fortigenic paradigm developed by Strümpfer (1990) extends health psychology to the origin of psychological strengths. The scientific study of psychological wellness has also been labelled by Wissing and Van Eeden (1997) as psychofortology (the science of psychological strengths). Psychofortology focuses not only on the source of psychological strengths, as implied by the names salutogenesis and fortigenesis, but also on the nature, and dynamics, of these strengths.

The emergence of the wellness and well-being paradigm focuses not only on the understanding and enhancement of psychological well-being and strengths, but also on holistic health and wellness (Wissing, 2000). The wellness construct is defined as a lifetime process with no definite end or beginning: the purpose of wellness is to increase the likelihood of healthier personal growth and to decrease the probability of mental illness, physical illness, or both (Palombi, 1992). According to Myers, Sweeney and Witmer (2000), wellness is defined as a way of life orientated toward optimal health and well-being and is manifested by the integration of body, mind and

spirit by the individual in order to live more fully within the human and natural community.

According to Wissing (2000), wellness is construed as the upper end of a continuum of holistic well-being in important life domains, including cognitive, emotional, spiritual, physical, social, occupational and ecological components. The tendency to focus on strengths, wellness and health rather than illness and pathology is not restricted to psychology and is becoming an interdisciplinary domain.

The definitions of psychological well-being/wellness include constructs such as Satisfaction with life (Diener, 2000), Peak Experiences/Optimal personality functioning (Maslow, 1965, 1971) and such dispositions like; Sense of coherence (Antonovsky, 1987), Locus of control (Scheepers, 1995), Self-Efficacy (Bandura, 1982) and Hardiness (Kobasa, 1982).

In South Africa extensive research has been done in Industrial and Organisational Psychology on positive psychology/psychofortology (Pretorious & Rothmann, 2001; Rothman & Malan, 2003; Strümpfer, 1990, 1995; Viviers & Cilliers, 1999; Wissing & Van Eeden, 2002).

1.4.1.4 Positivistic Paradigm

The present empirical study was conducted within the guidelines provided by the positivistic paradigm. Positivism involves the scientific exploration and objective collection and judgment of facts in order to arrive at a “positive” truth (Mouton & Marais, 1994). According to Mouton & Marais (1994) positivism includes the practice and culture of experiment, control, objective observation, meticulous recording, precise definitions of behaviour and statistical analysis of results. It is by means of logical positivism that psychology has adopted the assumption of realism which has characterised the discipline ever since.

1.4.1.5 *Systems Paradigm*

The literature review on organisational commitment in the next chapter is conducted from a systems perspective. The systems paradigm considers all the possible interactions between persons and groups, their relationships and their relatedness to other contexts within and outside the organisation (Cummings, 1980). The organisation is seen as one element of a number of elements that act interdependently. The main premise is that individuals as self-systems (biological, cognitive, social and psychological) can be best understood by first examining their functioning in the wider organisational systems that surround them.

The present study is undertaken against the background of a convergence of the above paradigms and theories and aims to investigate the effects of perceptions of personal meaning and sense of coherence on attitudes towards organisational commitment among employees.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

A quantitative survey design with a focus on correlational analysis was used to achieve the research objectives and to test the research hypotheses. In a survey research design the relationships that occur between two or more variables at one time are examined (Wellman & Kruger, 2001). The information obtained from the sample can then be generalised to an entire population. Survey research is usually a quantitative method that requires standardised information in order to define or describe variables or to study the relationship between variables (Wellman & Kruger, 2001). The survey design was also used to assess interrelationships among variables within the population. According to Wellman and Kruger (2001) this design is ideally suited to the descriptive and predictive functions associated with correlational research. There was no control group and all variables were measured at the same time.

To ensure the reliability of the measuring instruments Cronbach Alpha coefficients and inter-item correlation coefficients were used. The validity of the Personal Meaning Profile (PMP) instrument was assessed through exploratory factor analysis.

The unit of analysis comprise the individual employee working at a corporate food services company. According to Babbie (1979) when the individual is the unit of analysis, the focus is generally on the traits, characteristics, orientations and behaviour of the individual.

1.6 RESEARCH METHOD

The research method consisted of two phases, namely a literature review and an empirical study.

1.6.1 Phase One: Literature Review

The literature review was undertaken to conceptualise personal meaning, sense of coherence and organisational commitment as well as to examine the theoretical integration of the three concepts.

1.6.2 Phase Two: Empirical Study

Phase two consisted of the following steps one to six:

Step 1: The Selection of the Research Participants

All the employees of the given company formed the population group in this study. The sample therefore consisted of all employees (N=142) at a corporate South African food services company based in Johannesburg. For reasons of confidentiality, the name of the company will not be revealed, with complete anonymity of participants also being ensured throughout the study.

Step 2: The Selection of the Measuring Battery

Three measuring instruments were used in the empirical study, namely the Personal Meaning Profile (PMP) (Wong, 1998), the Orientation to Life Questionnaire (OLQ)

(Antonovsky, 1987) and the Organisational Commitment Scale (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993). A biographical questionnaire was also completed.

Step 3: Data Gathering

The questionnaires were provided to respondents in booklet form. A letter requesting voluntary participation and explaining the rationale for the research, as well as confidentiality undertakings, were included. The respondents were encouraged to participate in the research by being offered four gift vouchers on a lucky draw basis upon completion of the questionnaires. Ethical concerns were also taken into consideration, by adhering to the ethical code specified by the Psychological Society of South Africa (1998). This included ensuring that participation was voluntary, and that anonymity was retained. Feedback on an individual basis was available upon request as a means of empowerment.

Step 4: Data Analysis

The data was processed by means of two basic types of analysis: descriptive and inferential statistics. The SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, 2003) programme was used to analyse the data.

Descriptive statistics, i.e. means and standard deviations, were utilised to analyse the data. Cronbach Alpha coefficients and inter-item correlation coefficients were used to assess the reliability of the measuring instruments. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were calculated to indicate relationships between the constructs. A stepwise multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the percentage of variance in the dependent variable (organisational commitment) that was predicted by the independent variables (personal meaning and sense of coherence). T-tests for independent groups were used to compare two means obtained from different groups on selected biographical variables.

Step 5: Report and Discussion of the Results of the Empirical Study

After the research hypothesis was formulated the results were reported by means of figures and tables, and interpreted.

Step 6: Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations

The last step in the empirical study consisted of drawing conclusions based on the research questions that were presented. The limitations of the study were also highlighted. Recommendations for the implementation of results were formulated in terms of the promotion of knowledge within the field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology as well as of future research.

1.7 CHAPTER DIVISION

The chapter divisions of the research study are discussed next.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a theoretical overview of the three constructs, namely, personal meaning, sense of coherence, and organisational commitment. Specific attention was given to the history and background, definition, development, research on, and application of these constructs.

Chapter 3 Empirical Study

This chapter described the empirical procedure in terms of the sample, measuring instruments, data collection and processing as well as the statistical hypothesis.

Chapter 4 Results

This chapter encompassed the reporting and interpretation of the results.

Chapter 5 Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations

Conclusions were drawn regarding the specific aims of the research; the limitations were formulated in terms of the literature and the empirical study and recommendations were offered.

1.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the problem statement of and motivation for the research, research aims, paradigm perspectives, research design, research method and the division of chapters were discussed. Chapter Two will focus on a literature review and on conceptualising personal meaning, sense of coherence and organisational commitment, and their relationships.

CHAPTER 2

PERSONAL MEANING, SENSE OF COHERENCE AND ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

This chapter offers a literature review relating to the constructs of personal meaning, sense of coherence and organisational commitment. Specific attention is given to the history, definition, development, research on, and application of the constructs. The theoretical relationships between personal meaning, sense of coherence and organisational commitment are also investigated.

2.1 PERSONAL MEANING

The history, definition, development, research on, and application of personal meaning are now discussed.

2.1.1 History of Personal Meaning

As part of the existential-humanistic paradigm in psychology the concept of personal meaning is seen as integral to psychological functioning. Frankl is widely credited with being a pioneer in the study of personal meaning. Frankl (1963) asserted that the “will to meaning” is a significant and universal human motive. He claimed that humans are not merely biological and psychological beings, but also spiritual beings.

Meyer et al. (1994) pointed out that Frankl’s theory of logotherapy was concerned with the search for meaning in life and implied that the issue is not what happens to one in life but how one views what happens. Most of the empirical research into the construct of personal meaning has focused on the sources of such meaning. A different approach at this general level of personal meaning in life has been taken by Reker and Wong (1988), who proposed a theoretical outline for a multidimensional structure of personal meaning, which challenges a source-based approach.

Increasingly evident is a convergence of different authors with broad and multifaceted interests in the human quest for meaning, who are examining the complex processes of the search for meaning and its implications for psychological functioning (Wong & Fry, 1998). This includes creating meaning by making decisions (Maddi, 1998), construction of meaning from life events or personal narratives (Sommer & Baumeister, 1998), and implicit theories of a meaningful life (Wong, 1998). The current contribution of positive psychology is to emphasise that the desirability of a meaningful life goes beyond the fact that meaningfulness reduces suffering and that even in the absence of suffering, trauma or misfortune, human life will fall short of its potential if it lacks meaning (Snyder & Lopez, 2002).

2.1.2 Definition of Personal Meaning

The work of Frankl (1963) on personal meaning indicates that personal meaning is not a pleasure-seeking construct. Frankl (1963) sees pleasure-seeking and the search for self-actualization as futile if they become ends in themselves. Rather, happiness and self-fulfillment are by-products of finding personal meaning through choices involving basic life tasks by discovering the personal meaning of love, work, and suffering.

Crumbaugh and Maholich (1969) identified four factors in seeking life meaning: commitment and goal achievement, contentedness with life, being in control, and excitement and enthusiasm about life. Reker and Guppy (1988) established four categories of sources of meaning in the Sources of Meaning Profile (SOMP): self-transcendence, collectivism, individualism, and self-preoccupation. In the study conducted by O'Connor and Chamberlain (1996), the sources of meaning reported were: relationships, creativity, personal development, relationship with nature, religious and spiritual, and social/political.

Baumeister (1991) concluded that there are four *needs for meaning* that contribute to the drive for the search for a meaningful life. These needs are purpose, efficacy and control, value and justification, and self-worth. Purpose has to do with an individual's perception of current activities as related to future events, an example of which is

setting and meeting a goal. Efficacy and control have to do with the belief that individuals possess control over outcomes. Value and justification have to do with setting a criterion for what is right and wrong that can be used to make moral choices. Lastly, self-worth consists of having the means to regard oneself as a worthy individual, or as superior to others.

Schwarzer and Taubert (2002) suggest a two-dimensional construal of personal meaning as “sense-making” and personal meaning as “benefit-finding”. Sense-making relates to finding a reason for what happened, integrating it into existing schemata, such as religion, knowledge about health, or the consequences of life stress. Benefit-finding, on the other hand, pertains to perceiving the positive implications of a negative event or the pursuit of the silver lining of adversity.

Wong (1998) conceptualises personal meaning as an individually constructed cognitive system, which endows life with personal significance. He states that the meaning system consists of three components: cognitive, motivational, and affective. Wong (1998) found that the personal meaning system is most important in terms of overall functioning, because it is a dynamic, centralised structure with various sub-domains. Wong’s (1998) personal meaning definition recognises the two important aspects of personal meaning: (a) the cognitive dimension of making sense of and reappraising life events, and (b) the existential dimension of discovering meaning and purpose regarding one’s existence and future.

The definition of personal meaning used in the present research is that by Wong (1998): an internal cognitive structure with seven underlying factors, achievement, relationship, religion, self-transcendence, self-acceptance, intimacy, and fair treatment.

2.1.3 Development of Personal Meaning

Several studies in personal meaning demonstrate that individuals construct an internal structure of meaning (Baumeister, 1991; Crumbaugh & Maholich, 1969; Frankl, 1969; O’Connor & Chamberlain, 1996; Reker & Guppy, 1988; Wong, 1998).

According to Frankl (1969) the development of personal meaning is self-determined by individuals, and it is only in maturity that their uniquely human characteristics, like freedom of will, search for meaning and value realisation, emerge clearly. According to Frankl (1969) personal meaning allows individuals to live their life according to what they view as their goal in life, and identifying personal meaning accords personal significance both to small daily life activities and to the large abstract questions of human existence.

According to Frankl (1969) cognitive change is important, but it is also important that action is taken and behaviours are changed. He proposed three key values or life experiences that orientate individuals towards a meaningful life. Meyer et al. (1994) described these values as:

- *Creative values*, which constitute the values individuals experience through what they contribute in life. Any creative contribution individuals make allows them to feel that they are meaningfully part of life.
- *Experiential values*, which comprise values individuals receive from life, or the uplifting things they experience in life like love and empathy.
- *Attitudinal values*, which encompass values we experience through the attitudes we adopt towards life, especially towards situations of inescapable suffering.

According to Frankl (1969) the above represent the spiritual dynamics of being human and when these three values are actualised this leads to an authentic meaningful life.

In terms of the prototypical structure of meaning, Wong's study (1998) of implicit theories established seven factors as underlying this internal structure, such as achievement, relationship, religion, self-transcendence, self-acceptance, intimacy, and fair treatment. According to Wong (1998) meaning is developed by approximating value to the seven factors.

2.1.4 Research on Personal Meaning

For the last few decades, researchers have inquired into what makes life meaningful, employing both qualitative and quantitative methods (Battista & Almond, 1973; Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1969; Debats, 1999; Frankl, 1969; Moomal, 1999; O'Connor & Chamberlain, 1996; Reker, 2000; Wong, 1998). In the majority of the existing research personal meaning has been shown to offer ample positive benefits. Firstly, empirical research strongly supports the association between meaning in life and positive health psychology (Bezuidenhout, 2003; Moomal, 1999; O'Connor & Chamberlain, 1996; Reker, 2000; Reker & Wong, 1988).

In relation to physical health, higher levels of personal meaning were found to provide a buffering effect against stress regarding physical health outcomes (Flannery & Flannery, 1990; 1994; Mullen, Smith, & Hill, 1993). Wong (1998) has reported that personal meaning-seeking, as measured by the PMP (personal meaning profile questionnaire), is a more effective inner resource against depression than optimism and other cognitive moderators. Sargent (1973) found that individuals who perceive a clearer meaning and purpose in life exhibit more positive attitudes to work. South African research into personal meaning indicated statistically significant relationships between personal meaning and work commitment, specifically career commitment (De Klerk, Boshoff & van Wyk, 2003).

Empirical research results concerning the relationship of personal meaning with biographic variables are contradictory, with most studies failing to find such relationships (Debats, 1999). It can thus be concluded that personal meaning is a universal phenomenon and a human drive – it changes appearance throughout one's life cycle but never disappears.

2.1.5 Application of Personal Meaning

Existential psychology postulates that work can comprise both a source of meaning in life and a context which shapes personal meaning. This is evident in the increased focus in recent years by organisations on the creation of a meaningful

work-life balance for their employees (Furnham, 2003; Holloway, 2003); which is owing to employees wanting to find personal meaning and purpose in their everyday lives; which extends to their work lives (Baumeister & Vohs, 2002; Wong & Fry, 1998). Possessing a sense of personal meaning could maintain an individual's optimism and enable him to deal with the suffering he is going through (Frankl, 1969). Wong (1998) similarly stated that personal meaning is important not only for survival but also for health and well-being and that personal meaning plays a major role in maintaining positive mental health.

The search for personal meaning at work could be seen as a spiritual quest and the three categories of values proposed by Frankl (1969), when actualised, may provide sources of authentic meaning for individuals (Baumeister & Vohs, 2002). One of the areas where personal meaning is increasingly applied is the field of leadership development theory, especially in relation to servant leadership (Greenleaf & Spears, 2002; Page, 2000), the role of leaders in creating hope (Ackerman, 2002), and the high performance psychological states of leadership (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003). Levit (1992) proposed that any definition of leadership should include the clarification of purpose and meaning for others.

A further area of the application of personal meaning theory in an organisational behaviour context relates to what is known as employee wellness. According to Myers, Sweeney, and Witmer (2000) wellness is a way of life orientated toward optimal health and well-being in which body, mind and spirit are integrated by individuals in order for them to live more fully within the community. Because the workplace is a central part of the community in which individuals participate, organisations can enhance employee wellness and organisational performance by addressing the personal meaning profiles of their employees (De Klerk et al., 2004). Organisations can then focus on specific interventions so as to enhance personal meaning. This could take the form of investing in spiritual interventions at work, community and social responsibility interventions, and personal development (Baumeister & Vohs, 2002; Giesbrecht, 1997; Holloway, 2003; Laabs, 1995).

2.2 SENSE OF COHERENCE

The history, definition, development, research on, and the application of sense of coherence are discussed below.

2.2.1 History of Sense of Coherence

In 1979 Aaron Antonovsky established that despite being bombarded by multiple stressors in everyday living and undergoing severe traumatic experiences, there are individuals who are coping quite well and staying healthy. In trying to resolve the question of why people stay healthy (instead of why people become sick, as in the case of the dominant pathogenic orientation), he developed a theoretical model, which attempts to explain the origin of health or salutogenesis as opposed to the origins of disease, or pathogenesis. Antonovsky (1979, 1987) introduced the sense of coherence dispositional construct (SOC), as a composite variable comprising three variables: comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness.

The sense of coherence differs from other coping constructs by focusing on those factors which promote coping and well-being, rather than focusing on risk factors contributing to disease. The SOC focuses on the different factors which move individuals towards the healthy end of the sickness/health continuum. Thus the SOC takes a salutogenic approach to coping.

2.2.2 Definition of Sense of Coherence

The sense of coherence is a construct that is anchored in both the existential-humanistic paradigm as well as the salutogenic paradigm. In terms of the former paradigm it aims to address the ultimate existential quest, which is to grow towards and find meaning in life.

Antonovsky (1987, p.19) defined the concept of *sense of coherence* as:

“...a global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a pervasive, enduring though dynamic feeling of confidence that (1) the stimuli deriving from one’s internal and external environments in the course of living are structured, predictable and explicable [comprehensibility]; (2) the resources available to one meet the demands posed by these stimuli [manageability]; and (3) these demands are challenges, worthy of investment and engagement [meaningfulness]”.

SOC is a general way of appraising the world, both cognitively and emotionally, which is associated with effective coping, health-enhancing behaviours and better social adjustment. It is not a particular coping style but rather a disposition, which allows individuals to select appropriate strategies to deal with stressors confronting them (Strümpfer, 1990; 1995). Individuals with a strong SOC are more likely to show a readiness and willingness to exploit the resources that they have at their potential disposal (Antonovsky, 1987). The definition of sense of coherence includes three dimensions that constitute the concept, namely comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness (Antonovsky, 1987).

Firstly, *Comprehensibility* refers to the degree to which individuals perceive the stimuli stemming from both the internal and the external environment as structured, predictable, and as making cognitive sense. The second related component, *Manageability*, refers to the extent to which individuals perceive that they possess the personal and social resources to meet and cope with the demands of their environment. The third and most significant component of the SOC is *Meaningfulness*, which is the emotional counterpart of comprehensibility and refers to the degree to which people’s lives make emotional sense and to which the demands confronted by them are seen as challenges worthy of energy, investment and commitment.

The definition of Sense of Coherence (SOC) used in this research study is derived from Antonovsky’s definition, a global composite construct that expresses the extent to which an individual exhibits a pervasive, enduring though dynamic feeling of confidence that his internal and external environments are predictable and that there is a high probability that things will work out as well as can reasonably be expected.

2.2.3 Development of Sense of Coherence

According to Antonovsky (1991) the sense of coherence is developed as a single dimension of the individual's personality, consisting of the abovementioned-interwoven components of comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness. It is developed through the process of coming to understand one's life experiences and is thus anchored in the particular historical and socio-cultural context of the individual's life-span. Whether a weak or strong sense of coherence develops depends on the existence of generalised resistance resources (GRRs) or coping mechanisms. Antonovsky (1979) defines these resistance resources as any characteristic of the person, group, sub-culture, or society that facilitates the management, avoiding, or combating of a wide variety of stressors. Antonovsky proposed that SOC develops at about 30 years of age and that this development occurs in proportion to the individual's experience of the world as predictable and consistent, as well as the ability to shape life outcomes.

Antonovsky (1987, 1993) pointed out that the meaningfulness component is the most important component of the three dimensions of sense of coherence and also proposed that a high level of meaningfulness enables individuals to transform their coping resources or Generalised Resistance Resources from potential to actual utilisation. This would result in a strong sense of coherence, and therefore generate good health, with health, in turn, having a positive effect on well-being (Strümpfer, 1995). A high level of meaningfulness motivates individuals to search for order and to make sense of their environment (Korotkov, 1998). In turn, experiences that are characterised by unpredictability, uncontrollability and uncertainty will lead to a weak sense of coherence (Ortlepp & Friedman, 2001).

2.2.4 Research on Sense of Coherence

Research studies are categorised according to negative relationships (a weak sense of coherence correlates with the variables) and positive relationships (a strong sense of coherence correlates with these variables).

Sense of coherence shows a negative relationship with measures of negative affectivity such as anxiety (Flannery & Flannery, 1990), job stress (Feldt, 1997), burnout (Jackson, Kruger & Rothmann, 2003), and work stress (Dhaniram & Cilliers, 2004).

Demonstrations of positive relationships between sense of coherence and respective variables include the following studies. Strümpfer and Wissing (1998) reported positive correlations between sense of coherence (SOC) and various measures of an individual's attitudes towards work, specifically affective organisational commitment, job satisfaction and job commitment. Research results also indicate high intercorrelations between sense of coherence, hardiness, and learned resourcefulness (Viviers & Cilliers, 1999). The latter also found that sense of coherence correlated positively with work orientation constructs like organisational commitment, job involvement, and job satisfaction. Rothmann (2001), and Strümpfer and Mlonzi, (2001) also reported a positive correlation between a strong sense of coherence and job satisfaction. Coetzee (2004) established a positive correlation between sense of coherence (SOC) and quality of work life. Redelinghuys and Rothmann (2004) recorded a positive relationship between sense of coherence and effective coping. A strong sense of coherence is also positively correlated with general well-being (Feldt, 1997), and emotional stability (Strümpfer & Mlonzi, 2001).

The present investigator found only limited research in the literature that investigated the relationship between sense of coherence and biographical information. Strümpfer and Mlonzi (2001) argued that no significant relationship exists between age, tenure and sense of coherence. However, Naidoo and Le Roux (2003) found a significant positive correlation between age and sense of coherence. Older respondents exhibited a higher sense of coherence score. Naidoo and Le Roux (2003) also found that individuals who have been employed for longer periods of time possess a greater sense of coherence than others.

In terms of prediction studies of the sense of coherence the meaningfulness component has been found to best predict life satisfaction and pain intensity (Margalit & Cassel-Seidenman, Petrie & Azariah, cited in Korotkov, 1998).

2.2.5 Application of Sense of Coherence

The sense of coherence is one of the key constructs that indicates individual salutogenic functioning in the work environment (Basson & Rothmann, 2002; Cilliers & Coetzee, 2003; Coetzee, 2004; Coetzee & Cilliers, 2001; Strümpfer, 1990, 1995). According to Strümpfer (1990) it seems evident that the sense of coherence not only refers to how people stay healthy, but that it must also impact on how work is approached and performed. Strümpfer (1990) and Coetzee and Rothmann (1999) postulated that a strong sense of coherence would thus result in the person:

- (a) Making cognitive sense of the workplace, perceiving its stimulation as clear, ordered, structured, consistent and predictable information;
- (b) Perceiving work as consisting of experiences that are bearable and manageable, with challenges that can be met by availing oneself of personal resources or resources under the legitimate control of others;
- (c) Making emotional and motivational sense of work demands, as welcome challenges, worthy of engaging in and investing energies in.

All the above results lead to organisational endpoints like higher levels of job satisfaction and positive work orientation (Coetzee & Rothmann, 1999; Strümpfer, 1995; Viviers & Cilliers, 1999). The sense of coherence indicates a positive dispositional orientation to the environment where individuals with a high sense of coherence experience lower levels of stress and burnout due to work demands and other organisational stressors like restructuring and retrenchments (Basson & Rothmann, 2002; Coetzee, 2004; Dhaniram & Cilliers, 2004; Naidoo & Le Roux, 2003). Thus by assessing individuals' sense of coherence organisations can ensure that they properly manage the organisational changes that face employees so that employees see these as meaningful and manageable on a personal level. If this is not done the stressful events often demotivate employees and their commitment to the organisation declines, resulting in them exiting from the organisation (Naidoo & Le Roux, 2003).

2.3 ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

The history, definition, development, research on and the application of organisational commitment are now discussed.

2.3.1 History of Organisational Commitment

Organisational commitment was being researched as early as the 1950s in terms of a single and a multidimensional perspective (Suliman & Iles, 2000). The most prominent single-dimensional approach to organisational commitment is the attitudinal approach of Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979), which views commitment largely as an employee attitude or a set of behavioural intentions.

According to Suliman and Iles (2000) the most popular multi-dimensional approach to organisational commitment is that of Meyer and Allen who in 1984, basing their argument on Becker's side-bet theory, introduced the dimension of continuance commitment to the already existing dimension of affective commitment. They later added a third component, normative commitment. Meyer and Allen (1984) proposed that organisational commitment is a psychological state linking employees to the organisation, which is multifaceted in both, form (affective, continuance, normative) and focus (organisational, work team, top management, team leader).

In research on attitudes towards work, organisational commitment has been shown in factor analytic studies to be distinguishable from job satisfaction, job involvement, career resilience, occupational commitment, turnover intention and the Protestant work ethic (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Mueller, Wallace, & Price; 1992). Thus an employee may not experience job satisfaction or high job involvement and yet be satisfied with the organisation and therefore continue working for it.

2.3.2 Definition of Organisational Commitment

Organisational Commitment has been defined in many ways. Mowday et al. (1982) defined organisational commitment as an individual's identification with and

involvement in a particular organisation, that can be characterised by a strong belief in and acceptance of the organisation's goals and values. Committed employees demonstrate a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organisation, and exhibit a strong desire to maintain membership in the company (Mowday, et al; 1982).

Meyer and Allen (1991) defined organisational commitment as reflecting three broad themes: Affective, Continuance, and Normative. Thus commitment is viewed as reflecting an affective orientation toward the organisation, recognition of the costs associated with leaving the organisation, and a moral obligation to remain with the organisation.

Subsequently, many definitions have been proposed for the *commitment* concept, but a recurring strand seems to be the idea of a psychological bond—an intrinsic attachment or identification of a person with something outside of oneself (Firestone & Pennell, 1993).

Chow (1994) defined organisational commitment as the degree to which employees identify with their organisation and the managerial goals, and show a willingness to invest effort, participate in decision-making and internalise organisational values. Organisational commitment is also defined as the extent to which an individual identifies with an organisation and is committed to its goals (Kreitner & Kinicki, 1995). According to Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) organisational commitment can be conceived as a binding force that is experienced as a mind-set or as a psychological state that leads an individual toward a particular course of action, while according to Zangaro (2001), employees are regarded as committed to an organisation if they willingly continue their association with the organisation and devote considerable effort to achieving organisational goals.

Meyer and Allen (1991) noted that common to the various definitions of organisational commitment is the view that commitment is a psychological state that (a) characterises the employee's relationship with the organisation, and (b) has implications for the decision to continue membership in the organisation. Thus,

regardless of the definition, “committed” employees are more likely to remain with the organisation than are uncommitted employees.

There are also various entities within the world of work to which employees might become committed, including the organisation, job, profession/occupation, manager/supervisor, team and union. According to Reichers (cited in Meyer & Allen, 1997) organisational commitment can best be understood as a collection of multiple commitments. The current research focuses on measuring organisational commitment as the entity of commitment.

Several authors have suggested that commitment is different from motivation or general attitudes (Brown, 1996; Scholl, 1981); they established that commitment influences behaviour independently of other motives and attitudes and, in fact, might lead to persistence in a course of action even in the face of conflicting motives or attitudes.

For the purposes of this research study, Meyer and Allen’s (1991, 1993, 1997) three-component commitment model is used, specifically the concepts of affective, continuance and normative commitment.

2.3.3 Development of Organisational Commitment

A search of the literature reveals several factors that are associated with the development of organisational commitment. Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979) have categorised these factors into four major categories of variables: personal characteristics, job characteristics, work experiences and structural characteristics.

The theoretical framework employed in this study was derived from the conceptual model proposed by Meyer and Allen (1997) who proposed a specific model for the antecedents and consequences of organisational commitment. The model establishes two main blocks of variables that can be considered to influence the development of organisational commitment in the individual, which are classified as proximal variables and distal variables. Distal variables are those associated with the characteristics of the organisation (e.g. size, structure), personal characteristics

(e.g. values), socialisation experiences (e.g. cultural, familial), management practices (e.g. recruiting, training), and environmental conditions. The main clusters of variables considered as proximal antecedents are: work experiences (e.g. support, justice), role states (e.g. conflict, overload) and psychological contracts. In spite of the fact that certain organisational characteristics such as policies and structure, or some personal characteristics such as values, tenure, and gender, have been studied as antecedents of affective commitment, no consistent results of causality have been found (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

According to Meyer and Allen (1997) affective commitment is developed through work experiences like job challenge, degree of autonomy, the variety of skills used by the employee, knowing the role that the employee plays in his or her company, and also the relationships between the employee and his or her co-workers and supervisor. Continuance commitment is developed by assessing the perceived transferability of the employee's skills and education to other organisations, and the individual's perception of her job opportunities outside the current organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1997). The research evidence for the antecedents of normative commitment was limited and vague, and certainly more theoretical than empirical. These were based mainly on the process of socialisation and acculturation of values, such as loyalty (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

2.3.4 Research on Organisational Commitment

Biographical variables play a role in organisational commitment. Age and length of service appear to demonstrate positive relationships with organisational commitment (Oberholster & Taylor, 1999; Rivera, 1994; Suliman & Iles, 2000). Gender shows a fairly consistent relationship to organisational commitment (Mowday et al., 1982), with women as a group being more committed than men.

Although findings in the literature are at times inconsistent, it appears that significant relationships exist between organisational commitment and the educational level achieved, as well as employment status (Armon, 1995; Oberholster & Taylor, 1999). Organisationally committed employees will usually have good attendance records,

demonstrate a willing adherence to company policies, and exhibit lower turnover rates (Newstrom & Davis, 2002).

Prior research also reveals that high levels of organisational commitment tend to be associated with positive personal attitudes, such as feelings of belonging, security, efficacy, purpose in life, and a positive self-image (Mowday et al., 1982). Similarly, Romzek (1989) examined the potential relationships between employees' commitment and their personal lives, concluding that people with the highest levels of organisational involvement also reported the most life satisfaction, as well as greater satisfaction in their careers. Such was also the case in a study of teachers (Tarr, Ciriello, & Convey, 1993).

Across various settings, there appears to be a direct relationship between the training received, professional growth opportunities and the commitment of a workforce (Sonnenberg, 1993). This would seem to imply that when an institution and its leaders take a personal interest in its members, particularly in areas of growth needs, caring relationships develop and employees are likely to reciprocate with a growing commitment to the institution.

Research into organisational commitment and employee well-being extends to literature on stress. Several studies highlight significant negative correlations between affective commitment and various self-reported indices of psychological, physical, and work-related stress (Begley & Cjaka, 1993, Reilly & Orsak, 1991). Viviers and Cilliers (1999) found a meaningful relationship between salutogenic constructs and work orientation, which included organisational commitment, amongst a cross-cultural South African sample of employees.

Normative and continuance commitment was examined by Reilly and Orsak (1991). Normative commitment was negatively correlated with several measures of stress-related variables (e.g. work stress, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalisation). There were no significant correlations in the latter's research between continuance commitment and work stress, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization.

Organisational commitment has also been shown to be positively correlated with certain outcome variables like organisation turnover, attendance at work, job performance and employee well-being (Allen & Meyer, 2001; Suliman & Iles, 2000; Wong & Wong, 2002)

2.3.5 Application of Organisational Commitment

The concept of organisational commitment has been studied extensively, and common to all conceptualisations of such commitment is the notion that commitment binds an individual to the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Mowday, et al., 1982; Suliman & Iles, 2000; Zangaro, 2001).

According to Allen and Meyer (2001) and Suliman and Iles (2000), the following are important aspects of organisational commitment: it improves employees' performance; committed employees are assumed to be motivated to work hard and put in more effort than less committed employees; it fosters better superior-subordinate relationships; it enhances organisational development, growth and survival; it improves the work environment; it negatively influences withdrawal. Thus employee commitment is a crucial factor in achieving organisational success.

According to Meyer and Allen (1997) organisational commitment as a multi-dimensional construct plays a key role in identifying and tweaking human resource management practices. For example if organisations fail to recognise that commitment takes many forms they could run the risk of assuming that if (affective) commitment leads to retention, an employee who remains with the organisation must be affectively committed. This assumption might not be true, since organisations that attempt to get employees committed by making the cost of leaving prohibitive run the risk of creating continuance commitment which does not have the same positive implications for on-the-job behaviour and performance that affective commitment does. Thus by ignoring the three broad themes of organisational commitment inaccurate conclusions about employees' attitudes towards the organisation might be reached (Meyer & Allen, 1997). It thus seems that practical organisational value can be ascribed to organisational commitment.

2.4 THEORETICAL INTEGRATION

The theoretical integration between the constructs is presented below.

2.4.1 Personal Meaning and Sense of Coherence

Research indicates a strong relationship between personal meaning and coping/effective functioning (Allan, 1990; Koenig, 2001; Petrie & Azariah, 1992; Ryland & Greenfield, 1991; Sargeant, 1973). Personal meaning has been a consistent and strong predictor of psychological as well as physical health, even in times of stress and illness (Coward, 1994; Fife, 1994; Kendall, 1992; Zika & Chamberlain, 1992). Existential meaning in life has been found to be correlated with higher self-esteem (Reker, 2000), control (Reker, 2000; Yarnell, 1972), extraversion (Pearson & Sheffield, 1974), and life satisfaction (Shek, 1993). In terms of South African research into personal meaning, Bezuidenhout (2003), de Klerk, Boshoff and van Wyk (2004) established a positive relationship between personal meaning and positive psychological health.

In addition to the above-mentioned benefits of personal meaning, research has also shown that detrimental effects result from a lack of meaning in life. A lack of personal meaning has been found to be related to psychopathology (Yalom, 1980), substance abuse and suicide ideation (Harlow, Newcomb, & Bentler, 1986), neuroticism (Moomal, 1999), 1974), hopelessness (Shek, 1993), self-doubt (Hardcastle, 1985) and anxiety (Yarnell, 1972).

No research could be found by the present writer that related the prototypical meaning structure proposed by Wong (1998) to the sense of coherence. However, based on the research into salutogenic functioning (Antonovsky, 1979, 1987; Rothmann, 2001; Strümpfer, 1995 and Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, amongst others), it might be argued that an abundance of generalised resistance resources (GRRs) like personality hardiness, locus of control, and self-efficacy, to name a few, result in positive consequences – physical and psychological – for the individual. It is argued in this study that personal meaning too is a GRR, and that as such, both constructs – sense of coherence and personal meaning in life – fall within the ambit of

the positive psychology of Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000). It is thus expected that individuals with a strong sense of coherence will perceive high levels of personal meaning.

2.4.2 Personal Meaning and Organisational Commitment

Studies that investigated personal meaning in the workplace were also limited in number. Sargent (1973) was one of the very few researchers who examined the relationship between meaning and work motivation as well as work commitment. Sargent (1973) reported that individuals who see a clearer meaning and purpose in life exhibit more positive attitudes to work.

Research on the relationship between existential meaning and organisational commitment showed a positive association (Oberholster & Taylor, 1999). South African research into personal meaning indicated statistically significant relationships between personal meaning and career commitment amongst managers (De Klerk, Boshoff & van Wyk, 2003). Giesbrecht (1997) found that personal meaning as measured by the personal meaning profile (PMP) was positively related to several meaning of work measures, but negatively correlated with job stress measures.

Whereas most current theories on work commitment rely on sources based on physical or psychological dimensions (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Mowday, et al., (1982); Suliman & Iles, 2000; Zangaro, 2001) it is postulated in this study that a core antecedent of work commitment originates in the spiritual dimension and can be encapsulated in the “will to meaning”. According to Frankl (1969) work is one of the main tasks in life to which people can fully commit themselves, find meaning in the world and live a meaningful life. It is also through his work that the individual responds to the demands of responsibility. The relationship between personal meaning in life and organisational commitment is examined in this study to verify this proposed relationship.

2.4.3 Sense of Coherence and Organisational Commitment

It is important to point out that few studies could be found regarding how salutogenesis correlates with or influence the development of organisational commitment (Vivers & Cilliers, 1999). However, Strümpfer and Wissing (1998) reported positive correlations between sense of coherence (SOC) and various measures of an individual's attitudes towards work, specifically affective organisational commitment, job satisfaction and job commitment. Strümpfer and Mlonzi (2001) established a relationship between SOC and various measures of individuals' job satisfaction that could be bi-directional. They postulated that SOC, as a relatively stable and comprehensive disposition, is related to an individual's satisfaction with the job that plays a substantial part in her daily life. The opposite direction is, however, also plausible: Adults' work experiences and the attitudes developed in the process could contribute to the development of their sense of coherence. Strümpfer and Mlonzi (2001) acknowledged the possibility of a recursive effect from job satisfaction to SOC. Rothmann (2001) noted a positive relationship between sense of coherence and job satisfaction and Coetzee (2004) reported a positive correlation between sense of coherence (SOC) and quality of work life. According to Strang and Strang (2001) meaningfulness (a dimension of SOC) is created by work, faith and close relationships. They also found meaningfulness to be central to quality of life. No research could be discovered by the present writer in the literature that specifically compared sense of coherence and affective, normative, and continuance commitment.

2.4.4 Integrating all Three Constructs

The theoretical framework employed in this research was derived from the conceptual model proposed by Meyer and Allen (1997), which portrays antecedents, process variables and outcomes of organisational commitment. Antecedents are grouped into proximal and distal characteristics, which consist of both dispositional and situational factors. Outcomes of organisational commitment include the desire and intention to remain with the organisation, attendance and job effort.

Although it is generally accepted that dispositional and situational factors interact in the shaping of work and organisational attitudes, debate still exists about the relative weight attached to dispositional and situational aspects. Those leaning towards the dispositional side have contended that work attitudes are determined by, or are at least directly linked to, individual attributes (Coetzee & Rothmann, 1999; Strümpfer & Mlonzi, 2001; Suliman & Iles, 2000; Viviers & Cilliers, 1999) whereas those leaning to the situational side have argued that job characteristics, organisational situations and economic conditions affect attitudes much more strongly than do individual differences (Strümpfer, Danana, Gouws & Viviers, 1998).

Based on this model proposed by Allen & Meyers (1997), the present study focuses on personal attributes of employees as antecedents of the tri-component forms of organisational commitment, centring specifically on the perceived personal meaning of employees as well as their sense of coherence. The SOC questionnaire used in this research includes a meaning subscale, which overlaps conceptually with other life-meaning measures (Chamberlain & Zika, 1988; Korotkov, 1998; Wong, 1998). According to Coetzee and Cilliers (2001); Rothmann (2001); Strümpfer and Wissing (1998); Wissing and van Eeden (1997) the sense of coherence is one of the most prominent constructs which describes general psychological well-being, including a positive orientation to work (Coetzee, 2004; Rothmann, 2001; Viviers & Cilliers, 1999).

In terms of the above arguments it is expected that both personal meaning and sense of coherence will correlate positively with organisational commitment. It is also expected that personal meaning and sense of coherence as dispositional factors will predict the levels of affective, continuance and normative organisational commitment.

2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The constructs of personal meaning, sense of coherence and organisational commitment were conceptualised in this chapter. Possible relationships between the constructs were also investigated. In this chapter the first research question has

been answered and the first research aim has been achieved, namely to conceptualise the nature of personal meaning, sense of coherence and organisational commitment, as well as the relationships between the constructs, using the literature.

Chapter 3 focuses on the empirical study.

CHAPTER 3

EMPIRICAL STUDY

The second phase of the research entailed an empirical study. In this chapter the study sample, the measuring instruments, data collection, data analysis and the hypotheses are discussed.

3.1 THE POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The research was performed in a large South African food services group. The population of this study consisted of all the employees (N=142) as reflected on the personnel list obtained from the HR department of the organisation.

The sample consisted of ninety (90) people, which resulted in a response rate of 63%. This response rate can be seen as good when compared to the guidelines in the literature. Babbie (1998) suggests that a 50% response rate is adequate, a 60% response rate is considered good while a 70% response rate is considered very good. Participants are, on average, 37.8 years of age (SD 10.481), have worked in their current organisation for 5 years or less (SD 5.420). The sample is split almost equally between females (55%) and males (45%), and the participants tend to be well educated (60% possess a post-matric qualification).

3.2 THE MEASURING INSTRUMENTS

Four measuring instruments were used, namely the Personal Meaning Profile (PMP) (Wong, 1998), the Orientation to Life Questionnaire (OLQ) (Antonovsky, 1987), and the Organisation Commitment Scale (Meyer et al., 1993), and a biographical questionnaire.

3.2.1 The Personal Meaning Profile (PMP)

The development, rationale, aim, dimensions, administration, interpretation, reliability and validity of the PMP are now discussed.

3.2.1.1 Development

The Personal Meaning Profile (PMP) instrument was developed by Wong (1998), and assesses the current level of personal meaning in an individual's life, based on the implicit theories approach. This approach reveals laypeople's idealized prototypical structure of a meaningful life, which is relatively uncontaminated by their current life situations. Factor analysis of laypeople's descriptive statements has identified several sources of personal meaning, which include religion, relationship, achievement, self-transcendence, self-acceptance, intimacy and fair treatment/justice (Wong, 1998).

3.2.1.2 Rationale

The rationale of the PMP is to gauge how individuals measure up to the ideal prototype of a meaningful life.

3.2.1.3 Aim

The Personal Meaning Profile (PMP) assesses the current level of personal meaning in an individual's life, based on the implicit theories approach across different domains of life. As such the profile also provides an overall picture of the extent to which individuals find their lives meaningful and not just their work lives.

3.2.1.4 Dimensions

The PMP is a 57-item scale that loads on 7 factors. The seven factors comprise: achievement, relationships, religion, self-transcendence, self-acceptance, intimacy and fair treatment and are defined as follows (Wong, 1998):

- *Achievement* relates to what the individual has accomplished or strives to achieve. Regardless of how success is defined, it involves attainment of significant life goals and the fulfillment of aspirations.
- *Relationships* refer to the skills and attitudes necessary for working together and building community.
- *Religion* refers to the individual's beliefs in a higher power and a personal relationship with God. This factor indicates that the spiritual dimension is an integral part of laypeople's conception of a meaningful life.
- *Self-transcendence* focuses on the value of serving others.
- *Self-acceptance* relates to accepting personal limitations and the ability to integrate past mistakes and personal limitations with commitment to the present and confidence in the future.
- *Intimacy* focuses on having meaningful relationships with friends and family.
- *Fair treatment* indicates the need for individuals to receive fair treatment and respect from society,

3.2.1.5 Administration

The PMP is self-administering. All instructions are given on the front page of the questionnaire. No time limit is set. Individuals are asked to rate themselves on a number of statements that describe attitudes, beliefs, circumstances and activities. Response choices range from 1 (not at all) to 7 (a great deal). These responses are then categorised into the seven subscales. All the items are formulated to measure in the same direction and no reverse scoring is needed. The maximum score that can be obtained is 399 across all the subscales.

3.2.1.6 Interpretation

The PMP provides three different indices of personal meaning: magnitude, breadth and balance. The total PMP score is an index of magnitude – the greater the score, the more successful a person is in approximating the ideally meaningful life. The number of sources involved indicates the breadth of meaning-seeking, thus individuals who seek meaning from all the sources of the PMP have a broader basis

than individuals who derive meaning from only one or two sources. The relative difference in factor scores reflects balance. For example, if individuals score extremely high in Relationships, but very low in all other factors, they lack balance in meaning-seeking.

3.2.1.7 *Reliability*

The PMP has been used in a variety of studies (Giesbrecht, 1997; Reker & Wong, 1988; Wong, 1998) and both its validity and reliability have proven to be quite sound. Studies on the 57-item version of the PMP used in this research have demonstrated a 3-week test-retest reliability of 0.85 (Wong, 1998). According to Lang (cited in Wong, 1998) the total PMP scale reported an overall Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.93. The alpha values of subscales as reported by Lang (cited in Wong, 1998) were: self-acceptance (0.54), fair treatment (0.54), intimacy (0.78), relationship (0.81), self-transcendence (0.84), religion (0.89) and achievement (0.91). No South African research studies on the PMP could be found in the literature.

3.2.1.8 *Validity*

The PMP has shown significant correlations with a number of wellbeing measures: Wong, (1998) reported that the PMP was positively correlated with Ellison's (1981) Spiritual Wellbeing Scale ($r=0.64$) and Reker and Wong's (1984) Perceived Wellbeing Scale ($r = 0.29$ $p<0.05$). Giesbrecht (1997) established a significant relationship between personal meaning as measured by the PMP and job satisfaction.

3.2.1.9 *Justification for inclusion*

The PMP was selected as an instrument to measure personal meaning in this research owing to the fact that it operationalises the prototypical meaning structure as proposed by Wong (1998) to represent personal meaning-seeking, instead of an idiosyncratic approach as proposed by some researchers (Ebersole, 1998; Frankl, 1963; Little, 1998; Maddi, 1998). No South African research studies could be

discovered that incorporated the PMP. Therefore, this research could provide valuable information regarding the construct of personal meaning in a South African sample. The reliability and validity information that was reported in other research studies (Giesbrecht, 1997; Wong, 1998) also makes the PMP a sound instrument to use research into personal meaning.

3.2.2 The Orientation to Life Questionnaire (OLQ)

The development, rationale, aim, dimensions, administration, interpretation, reliability and validity as well as the reason for inclusion of the OLQ are now considered.

3.2.2.1 Development

The *Orientation to Life Questionnaire (OLQ)* was developed by Antonovsky (1987) on the basis of the sense of coherence construct. Antonovsky (1993) constructed the items using a facet analysis design, so as to vary the content systematically along a number of dimensions; secondly, from his review of other studies Antonovsky concluded that factor analysis of the scale is likely to produce a single factor solution which will not reflect the three components of comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness as separate.

3.2.2.2 Rationale

The aim of the sense of coherence instrument is to operationalise the sense of coherence construct as developed by Antonovsky (1987).

3.2.2.3 Aim

The aim of the OLQ is to test the core hypothesis that SOC is causally related to health status, and thus to report on the SOC as a global construct. The scale indicates the extent to which an individual experiences a pervasive and enduring feeling of confidence that:

- the stimuli in the environment are ordered, structured, predictable and comprehensible (Comprehensibility);
- the resources are available to cope with the stimuli (Manageability);
- the demands set by the stimuli are motivationally relevant and worth engaging with (Meaningfulness).

3.2.2.4 *Dimensions*

The Sense of Coherence Questionnaire consists of 29 items with a 7-point Likert scale response format. It measures an individual's feelings of comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness about life demands. It comprises eleven items measuring comprehensibility, ten for manageability, and eight for meaningfulness.

The scales are defined as follows:

- *Comprehensibility* refers to the degree to which individuals perceive the stimuli originating from both the internal and the external environment as structured, predictable, and as making cognitive sense.
- *Manageability* refers to the extent to which individuals perceive that they command the personal and social resources to meet and cope with the demands of their environment.
- *Meaningfulness*, which is the emotional counterpart of comprehensibility, refers to the degree to which people's lives make emotional sense and to which the demands confronted by them are seen as challenges worthy of energy, investment and commitment.

3.2.2.5 *Administration*

The OLQ is a self-completion questionnaire and takes 15-20 minutes to complete. No time limit is set. It is administered individually or in groups. Thirteen of the items are negatively worded to counteract response styles. The items 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 13,

14, 16, 20, 23, 25, 27 are reversely scored. Adding up the item values on the seven-point scale gives a total score on SOC, the SOC: T score. Thus the total score is the sum of the three subscales and the SOC is reported as a single score. The maximum score that can be obtained is 203 across all the subscales.

3.2.2.6 *Interpretation*

A high score indicates a strong sense of coherence, whereas a low score represents a low degree of sense of coherence. The three components, comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness, provide a profile of the respondent's sense of coherence.

3.2.2.7 *Reliability*

Antonovsky (1993) reported alpha coefficients of the 29-item Orientation to Life Questionnaire varying between 0,85 and 0,9. This consistently high internal consistency has been found in a variety of Western populations. In their overview of South African studies, Strümpfer and Wissing (1998) reported Cronbach alphas ranging from 0,74 to 0,94 with the exception of two studies. The OLQ also shows high test-retest reliability (Basson & Rothmann, 2002; Cilliers & Kossuth, 2004).

3.2.2.8 *Validity*

The scale is representative of the theoretical construct. Antonovsky (1993) reported good construct, content, face and predictive validity. Wissing (2000) attests to the applicability of this scale in a South African context. In terms of convergent validity, the OLQ has been found to be moderately related to a number of other salutogenic-like constructs, including perceived self-efficacy, locus of control (Rothmann & Malan, 2003) and learned resourcefulness (Cilliers & Coetzee, 2003).

3.2.2.9 *Justification for inclusion*

The sense of coherence has been established to be one of the best indicators of psychological well-being and provides reliable results across the multicultural South African context (Cilliers & Coetzee, 2003; Cilliers & Kossuth, 2002; Redelinguys & Rothmann, 2004; Jackson & Kruger, 2003; Rothmann & Malan, 2003; Van Eeden 1996). The reliability and validity information reported above also make the OLQ a sound research instrument.

3.2.3 **The Organisational Commitment Scale (OCS).**

A discussion of the development, rationale, aim, dimensions, administration, interpretation, reliability and validity of the Organisational Commitment Scale follows.

3.2.3.1 *Development*

Meyer and Allen (1991) developed a three-component model of organisational commitment, namely, affective, continuance, and normative. Definitions of the three constructs were used to develop the initial pool of items that was then administered to a sample of men and women working in various occupations and organisations. Items were selected for inclusion in the scales on the basis of a series of decision rules that took into account the distribution of responses on the 7-point agree-disagree scale for each item, item scale correlations, content redundancy, and the desire to include both positively and negatively keyed items (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Each of the three scales resulting from this process comprised eight items (Allen & Meyer, 1990). A revision of the scales was undertaken which resulted in an 18 item series (Meyer, Allen & Smith, 1993).

3.2.3.2 *Rationale*

The rationale of the instrument is that it elicits the respondent's commitment to the organisation through scientifically formulated questions so as to gauge the specific nature of organisational commitment, i.e. affective commitment (emotional

attachment to, and involvement in the organisation), continuance commitment (an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organisation) and normative commitment (a feeling of obligation to continue employment).

3.2.3.3 *Aim*

The aim of the organisational commitment questionnaire (Meyer et al., 1993) is to measure the three distinct forms of organisational commitment.

3.2.3.4 *Dimensions*

The 18 item *Organisational Commitment Scale* was used in the present research. This scale (Meyer et al., 1993) comprises six items per scale. Responses to each item are made on a 7-point scale with anchors labelled (1) strongly disagree and (7) strongly agree. The three scales of Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model of organisational commitment are defined as follows:

- *Affective Commitment* - employees with a strong affective commitment continue employment with the organisation because they want to do so.
- *Continuance commitment* - employees whose primary link to the organisation is based on continuance commitment remain because they need to do so.
- *Normative commitment* - employees with a high level of normative commitment feel that they ought to remain with the organisation.

3.2.3.5 *Administration*

The instrument is a self-completion questionnaire and takes 10-15 minutes to answer, though there is no time limit. It is administered individually or in groups. For administration, items from the three scales are mixed to form an 18-item series. Some items are reversely scored to counteract response styles. The maximum score that can be obtained is 42 for each scale.

3.2.3.6 *Interpretation*

The scores for the six items in each scale provide a total and a mean score for each one of the scales to indicate the level of affective, continuance and normative organisational commitment. There is no single indicator of overall organisational commitment as this would contradict the three-component structure of organisational commitment proposed by Meyer et al. (1993). The higher the scores on each subscale, the more committed the individual is to the organisation regarding that dimension.

3.2.3.7 *Reliability*

Research findings report considerable support for the reliability and validity of the affective, continuance, and normative organisational commitment scales. Median reliabilities for the Affective, Continuance, and Normative Commitment Scales, respectively, are 0.85, 0.79, and 0.73 (Meyer and Allen, 1997). Some results from South African studies support the reliability and validity of the questionnaire (Bagram & Hayes, 1999) However, in a local study of organisational commitment amongst 113 senior level educators, Van Zyl and Buitendach (2004) found the internal consistency of the normative scale to be below the guideline of 0,70 proposed by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994).

3.2.3.8 *Validity*

Factor analytical studies provide evidence to suggest that affective, continuance, and normative commitment are indeed distinguishable constructs (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Reilly & Orsak, 1991). Research into the construct validity of the measures yields positive results (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Suliman & Iles, 2000).

3.2.3.9 *Justification for inclusion*

The Organisational Commitment Scale (Meyer et al., 1993) was utilised in this study as it permits the specific nature of organisational commitment to be measured empirically rather than just the affective scale, which is often used. The

psychometric properties of the instrument also make it a valid and reliable measure of the three-component structure of organisational commitment. Only a few South African research studies could be found that use the three-component structure for measuring organisational commitment (Bagraim & Hayes, 1999; Van Zyl & Buitendach, 2004). Incorporating the organisational commitment questionnaire into this research study will consequently contribute to the understanding of the organisational commitment process.

3.2.4 Biographical Questionnaire

A biographical questionnaire was constructed to gather information on the biographical variables of gender, age, occupational level, and tenure.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

The following procedure was used in gathering the data.

- A letter requesting voluntary participation and containing the rationale for the research, as well as confidentiality undertakings, was sent to all employees (N=141). As an incentive to participate, the respondents' names were entered into a random draw, for winning one of four gift vouchers on a lucky draw basis, upon completion of the questionnaires.
- The instruments were provided to respondents in booklet form.
- Respondents were requested to complete the questionnaire within a 3-week time frame.
- An electronic reminder to return the questionnaires to the Human Resources department was sent out to employees via the internal electronic mail system

3.4 DATA PROCESSING

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 11.0.1 (SPSS Inc., 2003) programme was used for the statistical analysis. The specific techniques used in this research are discussed below.

3.4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics portray the characteristics of the sample in terms of the three chosen constructs as well as the biographical characteristics. The descriptive statistics used were frequencies, means and standard deviations (Salkind, 2001).

3.4.2 Reliability of Instruments

The reliability of an instrument can be defined in terms of when a test measures the same thing more than once and results in the same outcome (Salkind, 2001). The present study calculated the Cronbach Alpha coefficient (Lemke & Wiersma, 1976) as a measure of the internal consistency of each of these scales. Cronbach's alpha calculates how well a set of items (or variables) measures a single unidimensional latent construct. When data exhibit a multidimensional structure, Cronbach's alpha will usually be low.

The alpha coefficient ranges in value from 0 to 1 and may be used to describe the reliability of factors extracted from dichotomous and/or multi-point formatted questionnaires or scales (Lemke & Wiersma, 1976). The higher the alpha, the more reliable the test. There is no generally agreed cut-off figure. Usually 0.7 and above is acceptable (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). It is a common misconception that if the alpha is low, the test concerned must be bad. Actually the test may measure several attributes/dimensions rather than one and thus the Cronbach Alpha is deflated.

The means of the inter-item correlation coefficients are also reported and are symbolised by r .

The *procedure of Item analyses* involves the following:

- Extracting a *single factor* on the items of a particular sub-scale, as suggested by the theory. The factor loading is then inspected to ascertain whether the items should be reverse scored, as indicated by the theory, and to identify items with a very low factor loading (less than 0.1) which should be omitted from the final sub-

scale. Factor analysis is only used to aid item analysis and not to indicate factorial validity.

- Computing the Cronbach Alpha (Lemke & Wiersma, 1976) for the sub-scale as well as the alpha, should each item be excluded from the scale. If it is found that the exclusion of any particular item in the sub-scale were to improve the alpha significantly, it is decided to omit this item from the calculation of the final sub-scale scores.
- Once all the items in a sub-scale have been examined, those that are considered adequately reliable are used to calculate the final sub-scale score. The sub-scale scores are calculated by obtaining the mean over these items.

3.4.3 Correlations

Pearson Product-moment Correlation Coefficients (ρ) (Lemke & Wiersma, 1976) were used to indicate relationships between the constructs:

- A negative value reflects an inverse relationship;
- The strength of the linear relationship is determined by the absolute value of ρ ;
and
- A strong correlation does not imply a cause-effect relationship (Steyn, 2002).

Effect sizes can be used to establish whether relationships between two variables are practically significant or important (Steyn, 2002). Because a non-probability sample was used in the present study, effect sizes (rather than inferential statistics) were used to decide on the significance of the findings.

The absolute values of the Pearson Product-moment Correlation Coefficient (ρ) give an indication of the effect size (Cohen, 1988).

Small effect: $|\rho| = 0,10$

Medium effect: $|\rho| = 0,30$

Large effect: $|\rho| = 0,50$

In this study, a cut-off point of 0,30 (medium effect) was used to determine the practical significance of correlation coefficients (Cohen, 1988).

3.4.4 Regression Analysis

A stepwise multiple regression analysis (Lemke & Wiersma, 1976) was conducted to determine the percentage of variance in the dependant variable (organisational commitment) that was predicted by the independent variables (personal meaning and sense of coherence).

It was decided to conduct a separate regression analysis for each of the three organisational commitment sub-scales owing to the diverse nature of these sub-scales. A stepwise regression procedure was used on all the data, with the sub-scales of the PMP and SOC as independent variables and the three scales of OCS as dependent variables.

The effect size (which indicates practical significance) in the case of multiple regressions is given by the following formula (Steyn, 1999):

$$f^2 = (R^2 - R1^2) / (1 - R^2)$$

f^2 = effect size

R^2 = variance explained

Steyn (1999) offered some guidelines to interpret the extent of the practical significance:

- Small effect smaller than 0,15
- Medium effect 0,15 – 0,35
- Large effect larger than 0,35

A cut off point of 0,35 (Steyn, 1999) was set for the practical significance of the explained variance.

3.4.5 T-Tests

The appropriate inferential test when comparing two means obtained from different groups of subjects is a t-test for independent groups. The t for independent groups is defined as the difference between the sample means divided by the standard error of the mean difference. According to Shaughnessy, Zechmeister and Zechmeister (2003) the p-level reported with a t-test represents the probability of error involved in accepting our research hypothesis concerning the existence of a difference. The null hypothesis is that of no difference between the two categories of observations (corresponding to the groups).

Some researchers (Shaughnessy et al., 2003) suggest that if the difference is in the predicted direction, one can consider only one half (one "tail") of the probability distribution and thus divide the standard p-level reported with a t-test (a "two-tailed" probability) by two. Others, however, suggest that one should always report the standard, two-tailed t-test probability.

As the two-tailed p-values in the current study are all highly significant (below 0,001), it was not considered necessary to divide them even though the differences are in the expected direction.

3.5 FORMULATION OF STATISTICAL HYPOTHESIS

In chapter two the research hypothesis was formulated regarding the potential interrelationship between personal meaning, sense of coherence and organisational commitment on the one hand, and between these constructs and certain biographical variables (age, tenure and occupational level) on the other hand. It was also argued that personal meaning and sense of coherence should predict organisational commitment in the researched organisation.

Next, the statistical hypotheses will allow for the empirical testing of the relationship between these variables. The following such hypotheses were formulated in line with the objectives of the study:

Null Hypothesis:

(H01): There is no relationship between personal meaning, sense of coherence, organisational commitment and certain biographical variables amongst employees in this food services company. This is the null hypothesis.

Alternative Hypothesis 1:

(H1): There is a significant relationship between personal meaning, sense of coherence and organisational commitment amongst employees in this food services company. This is the alternative hypothesis. A correlation test will be performed to test this hypothesis.

Alternative Hypothesis 2:

(H2): There is a significant relationship between personal meaning, sense of coherence, organisational commitment and the biographical variables of age and tenure amongst employees in this food services company. A correlation test will be carried out to test this hypothesis.

Alternative Hypothesis 3:

(H3): Personal meaning and sense of coherence predict the levels of affective, continuance and normative organisational commitment in the sample. A stepwise multiple regression will be done to test this hypothesis.

Alternative Hypothesis 4:

(H4): There are significant differences between the scores of members of management and non-management members on the constructs, of personal meaning, sense of coherence and organisational commitment. A t-test will be performed to test this hypothesis.

3.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In Chapter 3 the second phase of this research was addressed. The objectives of the research were stated, the measuring battery was discussed, the selection and compilation of the sample was described, the empirical methodology was considered and the hypothesis was stated in terms of the present study.

In Chapter 4 the results of the empirical study are reported and discussed.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

In this chapter the results of the empirical study are reported and discussed. The first section records the descriptive statistics of the sample. The next section examines the reliability and item analysis of the instruments, followed by the correlations, regression analysis, and t-tests. The results are interpreted in the last section.

4.1. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

The descriptive statistics for each of the instruments in the measuring battery and the biographic variables of the sample are now discussed.

4.1.1 The Three Instruments

The descriptive statistics for each of the items and sub-scales of the measuring battery consisting of the Personal Meaning Profile (PMP), the Orientation to Life Questionnaire (OLQ) and the Organisational Commitment questionnaire (OCS) are provided in table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Descriptive Statistics for the Personal Meaning Profile, Orientation to Life Questionnaire (OLQ), and the Organisational Commitment Scale (OCS) for (n = 90)

Item	Mean	SD
PMP		
PMP (Total)	311,55	9,38
Achievement	5,80	0,698
Relationship	5,73	0,720
Religion	5,51	0,885
Self-Acceptance	5,37	0,822
Intimacy	5,64	1,307
Fair Treatment	5,10	1,213
Self-Transcendence	5,54	0,754
OLQ		
OLQ (Total)	141,23	8,35
Comprehensibility	4,34	0,832
Manageability	5,02	0,796
Meaningfulness	5,41	0,949
OCS		
Affective Commitment	5,38	0,98
Continuance Commitment	4,12	1,30
Normative Commitment	4,48	1,29

The total PMP score, which is an index of magnitude, compared well to that reported in other research ([mean=289, 09] in Giesbrecht,1997). The present sample also involved all the sources of meaning and thus it can be concluded that its members exhibit a broader basis of meaning than individuals who derive meaning from only one or two sources. Respondents scored the highest on the sub-scale Achievement (5,80) and the lowest on Fair treatment/justice (5,10). The relative difference in factor scores was also very small and reflects balance in the search for personal meaning. It would thus appear to indicate that the present sample seems to score higher than the research sample of Giesbrecht (1997) in approximating the ideally meaningful life. Hence in general the individuals in the sample study display a high magnitude and breadth of personal meaning-seeking.

With regard to the Orientation to Life Scale (OLQ) respondents scored the highest on the sub-scale Meaningfulness with an average of 5,41 out of 7 and the lowest on the sub-scale Comprehension with an average score of 4,34. This means that the sample group is inclined to interpret stimuli from the environment as meaningful and worth engaging with. The total mean scores for sense of coherence seem to be similar to those found in other groups ([mean=135,92] in Rothmann et al., 2003; [mean=156,74] in Cilliers & Coetzee, 2003; [mean = 154,06] in Strümpfer & Mlonzi, 2001; [mean = 151,52] in Ortlepp & Friedman, 2001). Strümpfer and Wissing (1998) established 137 as the South African estimate of the mean for the SOC scale. The participants in the present sample seem similar to most other groups in their ability to make sense of stimuli from the environment, to find meaning and interpret stimuli as worth engaging in and to view stressors from the environment as manageable. The sample thus exhibits the dispositional factor, in terms of sense of coherence, that is expressed as an enduring feeling of confidence in the internal and external environment being predictable, manageable and meaningful.

With regard to the organisational commitment questionnaire/scale (OCS) respondents scored the most on Affective commitment (5,36). The present sample's scores for the organisational commitment questionnaire compared well to that reported in other research ([affective mean=3,6; Continuance mean=3,8; Normative mean=3,1] in Suliman and Iles, 2000) and ([affective mean=3,36; Continuance mean=3,28; Normative mean=3,40] in van Zyl and Buitdendach, 2004).

The sample thus indicates a relatively strong commitment to the organisation across the three scales of affective, continuance and normative commitment. The relatively high score on continuance commitment compared to other studies (Suliman & Iles, 2000; van Zyl & Buitdendach, 2004) suggests that employees would not be likely to leave, as they perceive the exchange-reward relationship not to have reached an equilibrium point. According to Suliman and Iles (2000) continuance commitment should be seen as a positive organisational phenomenon: by giving more attention and recognition to the employee committed to continuance the organisation can improve his /her morale and dedication to that level that binds him/her emotionally to the organisation.

4.1.2 Biographical Variables

The biographic variables obtained for each respondent included: gender, age, occupational level, and tenure. The biographical characteristics of the participants are listed in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2
Biographical Characteristics (n = 90)

Item	Category	Percentage
Gender	Female	55%
	Male	45%
Occupational Category	Management	58%
	Non Management	38%
	Student	4%
Item	Category	Value
Age	Minimum	19 years
	Maximum	70 years
	Mean	37,81 years (SD=10,481)
Service/Tenure	Minimum	0 years
	Maximum	25 years
	Mean	6,57 years (SD=5,420)

The sample is split almost equally between females (55%) and males (45%). The youngest respondent is 19 years of age and the eldest is 70. On average respondents are in their late thirties (37,8) and 66,6% fall between 1 standard deviation from this mean, either 10,48 years younger or 10,48 years older. Also, 58% of respondents indicated that they are in management while 38% are non-management staff. Only 4% are students.

4.2 RELIABILITY OF INSTRUMENTS

All three instruments were found to be reliable for purposes of this research. The statistical evidence for this follows.

4.2.1 Reliability and Item Analysis of the Personal Meaning Profile (PMP) Questionnaire

The factor loadings and the Cronbach Alpha of each of the seven sub-scales are given in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3

Single factor loadings and Cronbach Alphas of the dimensions of the PMP (n = 90)

Self Acceptance		Intimacy		Fair treatment/justice			
Item	Factor loading	Item	Factor loading	Item	Factor loading		
4	0,628	1	0,690	14	0,129		
16	0,700	11	0,813	35	0,862		
36	0,596	17	0,535	55	0,860		
37	0,663	38	0,929	56	0,870		
47	0,528	43	0,858				
57	0,658						
Cronbach Alpha = 0,692		Cronbach Alpha = 0,833		Cronbach Alpha = 0,824			
Achievement		Relationship		Religion		Self-Transcendence	
Item	Factor loading						
6	0,373	10	0,685	3	0,544	2	0,544
7	0,722	18	0,656	5	0,507	15	0,681
8	0,796	27	0,588	19	0,589	23	0,743
9	0,779	28	0,620	20	0,832	30	0,698
12	0,662	32	0,748	22	0,407	31	0,600
13	0,850	41	0,815	33	0,781	39	0,643
21	0,776	42	0,823	51	0,350	49	0,688
24	0,688	45	0,760	52	0,758	53	0,680
25	0,702	50	0,612	54	0,424		
26	0,677						
29	0,570						
40	0,416						
44	0,620						
47	0,782						
48	0,629						
Cronbach Alpha = 0,905		Cronbach Alpha = 0,866		Cronbach Alpha = 0,749		Cronbach Alpha = 0,812	

All items displayed a positive factor loading in their respective sub-scales, with all factor-loading values ranging from 0,37 upwards. The only item that showed a very low factor loading is item 14, in the sub-scale Fair Treatment/Justice. It was decided to omit this item from the sub-scale and the Cronbach Alpha improved from 0,67 to 0,824. All the other sub-scales showed acceptable to high internal reliability and were above the guideline of 0,7 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

4.2.2 Reliability and Item Analysis of the Orientation to Life Questionnaire (OLQ)

The factor loadings and the Cronbach Alpha of each of the three sub-scales are given in Table 4.4 below

Table 4.4
Single factor loadings and Cronbach Alphas of the OLQ (n = 90)

Comprehension		Manageability		Meaningfulness	
Item	Factor loading	Item	Factor loading	Item	Factor loading
1	0,446	2	0,450	4	0,394
3	0,279	6	0,406	7	0,616
5	0,479	9	0,577	8	0,580
10	0,331	13	0,348	11	0,683
12	0,574	18	0,463	14	0,796
15	0,608	20	0,607	16	0,403
17	0,453	23	0,384	22	0,771
19	0,758	25	0,608	28	0,697
21	0,712	27	0,688		
24	0,545	29	0,670		
26	0,655				
Cronbach Alpha = 0,747		Cronbach Alpha = 0,700		Cronbach Alpha = 0,756	

Each sub-scale's factor loading is positive, indicating that the reverse scoring of the questions was successful. None of the factor loadings are below the cut-off point of 0,10 (Lemke & Wiersma, 1976) and all are therefore included in the determination of the Cronbach Alpha and in the formulation of the final sub-scale scores. Each of the sub-scales achieved an adequately high internal consistency/reliability, with

Cronbach Alpha values of above 0,70. This is in line with the guideline of 0,70 recommended by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994).

4.2.3 Reliability and Item Analysis of the Organisational Commitment Scale (OCS)

The internal consistency reliability of the OCS is listed in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5
Single factor loadings and Cronbach Alphas of the dimensions of the OCS
(n = 90)

Affective		Continuance		Normative	
Item	Factor loading	Item	Factor loading	Item	Factor loading
1	0,437	7	0,540	13	0,199
2	0,433	8	0,723	14	0,817
3	0,738	9	0,683	15	0,630
4	0,761	10	0,691	16	0,648
5	0,597	11	0,674	17	0,816
6	0,798	12	0,491	18	0,771
Cronbach Alpha = 0,691		Cronbach Alpha = 0,704		Cronbach Alpha = 0,735	

All the sub-scales of the Organisational Commitment Scale show acceptable internal consistency reliability. With the exception of item 13, that displayed a factor loading of 0,199 all the items show factor loadings of above 0,4. On closer examination it appeared that while item 13 has a relatively lower factor loading, the reliability if it were omitted would improve from 0,735 to 0,768. This increase is not considered sufficiently large to exclude the item, as comparisons will be made with other research. The Cronbach Alpha scores for the three scales of organisational commitment indicate that this 18 item scale is reliable.

4.3 CORRELATIONS

The Pearson Product-moment Correlations between the scores of respondents on all the sub-scales of the different measurement instruments are reported in this section.

4.3.1 PMP and OLQ

The Pearson Moment Correlation between the sub-scales of the Personal Meaning Profile (PMP) and those of the Orientation to Life Questionnaire (OLQ) are given in Table 4.6 below.

Table 4.6
Correlation between PMP and OLQ

Personal Meaning Sub-scales		Orientation to Life Questionnaire sub-scales		
		Comprehension	Manageability	Meaningfulness
Achievement	Pearson Correlation	0,26	0,43*	0,50**
	p-value	0,012	0,000	0,000
Relationship	Pearson Correlation	0,18	0,39*	0,33*
	p-value	0,097	0,000	0,001
Religion	Pearson Correlation	0,07	0,21	0,29
	p-value	0,505	0,042	0,005
Self-transcendence	Pearson Correlation	0,27	0,45*	0,51**
	p-value	0,011	0,000	0,000
Self-acceptance	Pearson Correlation	0,39*	0,54**	0,41*
	p-value	0,000	0,000	0,000
Intimacy	Pearson Correlation	0,17	0,26	0,24
	p-value	0,113	0,015	0,022
Fair treatment/justice	Pearson Correlation	0,29	0,39*	0,38*
	p-value	0,005	0,000	0,000

Statistically significant: p-value below 0, 05

r = 0,10 – small effect

* r = 0,30 – medium effect

**r = 0,50 – large effect

All the sub-scales of the Personal Meaning Profile and the Orientation to Life Questionnaire correlate positively with one another. The significant positive correlations (shaded in grey) indicate that the higher a person's scores are on one of

the Personal Meaning Profile sub-scales, the higher they are on the Orientation to Life Questionnaire's sub-scales. The correlations that were found not to be significant (of a small effect size) are those between the Relationship, Religion and Intimacy sub-scales of the Personal Meaning Profile and the Comprehension sub-scale of the Orientation to Life Scale.

Most of the personal meaning subscales correlated positively with the Meaningfulness scale except for religion and intimacy, which display a positive correlation, but of small effect. Antonovsky (1987) contended that meaningfulness is the most important component of the SOC and that without meaningfulness, the manifestations of the comprehensibility and manageability components are likely to be temporary. A high level of meaningfulness motivates individuals to search for order and to make sense of their environment (Korotkov, 1998). This extends to their personal meaning-seeking, as can be perceived in the practically significant positive correlations between meaningfulness and the personal meaning subscales.

Most of the personal meaning subscales correlated positively with the Manageability scale except for religion and intimacy, which show a positive correlation, but of small effect. Self-acceptance correlates significantly (large effect) with Manageability. Thus those who accept personal limitations and integrate past mistakes, and personal limitations with commitment to the present and confidence in the future also perceive that the resources are available for them to cope with environmental stimuli.

The correlations between personal meaning subscales and the comprehensibility subscales of the OLQ are mostly positive but of small effect. Self-acceptance correlates significantly (medium effect) with Comprehensibility. Hence those who accept personal limitations and integrate past mistakes and personal limitations with commitment to the present and confidence in the future also perceive environmental stimuli as making cognitive sense. Schwab (1980) noted that the construct validity of a measure can be assessed by examining its correlations with other constructs and comparing these correlations with what is expected theoretically. The correlations between the PMP and OLQ prove this notion and it can be concluded

that both personal meaning and sense of coherence are constructs that measure psychological well-being and thus form part of the salutogenic paradigm.

4.3.2 OLQ and OCS

The Pearson Moment Correlations between the sub-scales of the Orientation to Life Questionnaire (OLQ) and the Organisational Commitment Scales (OCS) are given in Table 4.7 below.

Table 4.7
Correlation between OLQ and OCS (n = 89)

Sense of Coherence		Organisational Commitment Scale		
		Affective	Continuance	Normative
Comprehension	Pearson Correlation	0,190	-0,400*	-0,240
	p-value (1-tailed)	0,081	0,000	0,021
	p-value (2-tailed)	0,041	0,000	0,011
Manageability	Pearson Correlation	0,190	-0,390 *	0,030
	p-value (1-tailed)	0,075	0,000	0,746
	p-value (2-tailed)	0,038	0,000	0,373
Meaningfulness	Pearson Correlation	0,190	-0,270	0,050
	p-value (1-tailed)	0,080	0,010	0,664
	p-value (2-tailed)	0,040	0,005	0,332

Statistically significant: p-value below 0,05

r = 0,10 – small effect

* r = 0,30 – medium effect

**r = 0,50 – large effect

The continuance component of the organisational commitment scale shows the strongest significant correlation with the Orientation to Life Scale. The negative correlations indicate that the higher a respondent scores on the Orientation to Life sub scales, the lower they will score on this commitment scale. The normative organisational component correlates significantly with one segment of the Orientation to Life scale: Comprehension. This correlation is negative, which indicates that the lower a person scores on Normative Commitment the higher they score on Comprehension.

There is not a practically significant relationship between SOC and affective or normative commitment, which was hypothesised. The negative correlation between the Continuance Commitment and Sense of Coherence constructs indicates that individuals who exhibit an enduring feeling of confidence in the internal and external environment being predictable, manageable and meaningful will not stay with the organisation merely because of cost reasons. This supports the theory (Antonovsky, 1979) with regards to the sense of coherence in that the SOC will enable individuals to perceive the environment as manageable and thus they will not stay with the organisation for cost reasons alone, as they will possess the resources to seek other solutions. No research could be found in the literature that investigated the relationship between SOC and affective, continuance and normative commitment. However, the above research findings contradict research studies that found a positive relationship between SOC and work orientation including organisational commitment (Viviers & Cilliers, 1999), and SOC and affective organisational commitment (Strümpfer & Wissing 1998).

4.3.3 OCS and PMP

The Pearson Moment Correlations between the sub-scales of the Organisational Commitment Scales (OCS) and the Personal Meaning Profile (PMP) are given in Table 4.8 below.

Table 4.8
Correlation between OCS and PMP (n = 89)

Personal Meaning Sub-scales		Organisational Commitment Scale		
		Affective	Continuance	Normative
Achievement	Pearson Correlation	0,380*	-0,050	0,190
	p-value	0,000	0,622	0,077
Relationship	Pearson Correlation	0,170	-0,060	0,100
	p-value	0,110	0,564	0,354
Religion	Pearson Correlation	0,120	0,070	0,050
	p-value	0,272	0,500	0,637
Self-transcendence	Pearson Correlation	0,390*	-0,070	0,260
	p-value	0,000	0,496	0,016
Self-acceptance	Pearson Correlation	0,140	-0,140	0,000
	p-value	0,183	0,176	0,990
Intimacy	Pearson Correlation	0,070	-0,040	-0,090
	p-value	0,504	0,709	0,399
Fair treatment/justice	Pearson Correlation	-0,030	-0,210	-0,200
	p-value	0,788	0,053	0,058

Statistically significant: p-value below 0, 05

r = 0,10 – small effect

* r = 0,30 – medium effect

**r = 0,50 – large effect

The positive correlations (medium effect) between the Achievement and Self-transcendence sub-scales and the Affective Commitment sub-scale indicate that the higher individuals score on their Achievement or Self-transcendence scales, the higher they will also score on Affective Commitment; thus the higher their sense of achievement, the more affectively they are committed to the organisation. The normative commitment scale is the other organisational sub-scale that positively correlates with any of the personal meaning scales. A positive correlation (small effect) with self-transcendence was found ($p = 0,016$). This is rather inconclusive regarding the relationships between personal meaning and organisational commitment.

The above research results confirm the findings of Oberholster and Taylor (1999) who established a positive relationship between meaning in life and organisational commitment. No research could be found in the literature that related personal meaning as measured by the PMP to organisational commitment as measured by the OCS. However, Giesbrecht (1997) discovered that personal meaning as measured by the personal meaning profile (PMP) was positively related to several Meaning of Work measures, including job satisfaction.

4.3.4 Biographical Variables

The current section investigates the correlation between each of the measurement instruments and certain biographic variables and is purely exploratory. Age and length of employment (tenure) are both continuous variables and are correlated with the sub-scale scores to establish if any linear relationships exist. Table 4.9 lists these correlations.

Table 4.9**Correlation between Age, Tenure and the PMP, OLQ, and OCS**

Personal Meaning Profile (PMP) Sub-scales		Age (n = 90)	Tenure (n = 86)
Achievement	Pearson Correlation	-0,07	-0,12
	p-value	0,49	0,27
Relationship	Pearson Correlation	0,22	0,12
	p-value	0,04	0,28
Religion	Pearson Correlation	0,26	0,18
	p-value	0,01	0,09
Self-transcendence	Pearson Correlation	0,09	-0,02
	p-value	0,42	0,88
Self-acceptance	Pearson Correlation	0,19	0,03
	p-value	0,08	0,78
Intimacy	Pearson Correlation	0,03	0,06
	p-value	0,74	0,61
Fair treatment/justice	Pearson Correlation	0,08	-0,08
	p-value	0,45	0,46
Sense of Coherence (OLQ)		Age (n = 90)	Tenure (n = 86)
Comprehension	Pearson Correlation	0,12	0,01
	p-value	0,26	0,89
Manageability	Pearson Correlation	-0,08	-0,18
	p-value	0,44	0,10
Meaningfulness	Pearson Correlation	-0,04	-0,13
	p-value	0,68	0,24
Organisational Commitment Scales (OCS)		Age (n = 90)	Tenure (n = 86)
Affective	Pearson Correlation	0,15	0,20
	p-value	0,15	0,06
Continuance	Pearson Correlation	0,23	0,04
	p-value	0,03	0,75
Normative	Pearson Correlation	-0,00	-0,01
	p-value	1,00	0,90

Statistically significant: p-value below 0,05

r = 0,10 – small effect

* r = 0,30 – medium effect

**r = 0,50 – large effect

The PMP sub-scales, Religion and Relationships correlate significantly (small effect) with age. The correlation is positive, indicating that the older a person is, the higher they scored on the religion and relationships sub-scales. This differs slightly from the finding by Debats (1999) who discovered no relationships between meaning and age. None of the PMP sub-scales correlated with Tenure. With regard to the OLQ Table 4.9 illustrates that the p-values are not below the 0,05 “cut-off” point selected and the correlations are therefore not significant.

There is a positive correlation (small effect) between the continuance sub-scale of the OCS and age. The older respondents are, the higher they score on this aspect of continuance commitment ($p = 0,03$). This result differs from those of other research, which indicated significant relationships between age and all three organisational commitment scales (Sulliman & Iles, 2000) as well as between age and affective commitment (Oberholster & Taylor, 1999). Thus it can be concluded that in the present sample, older individuals are committed to the organisation owing to the cost of terminating their membership of the organisation being higher than the benefits of leaving the organisation. There is no significant relationship between tenure and any of the organisational commitment scales.

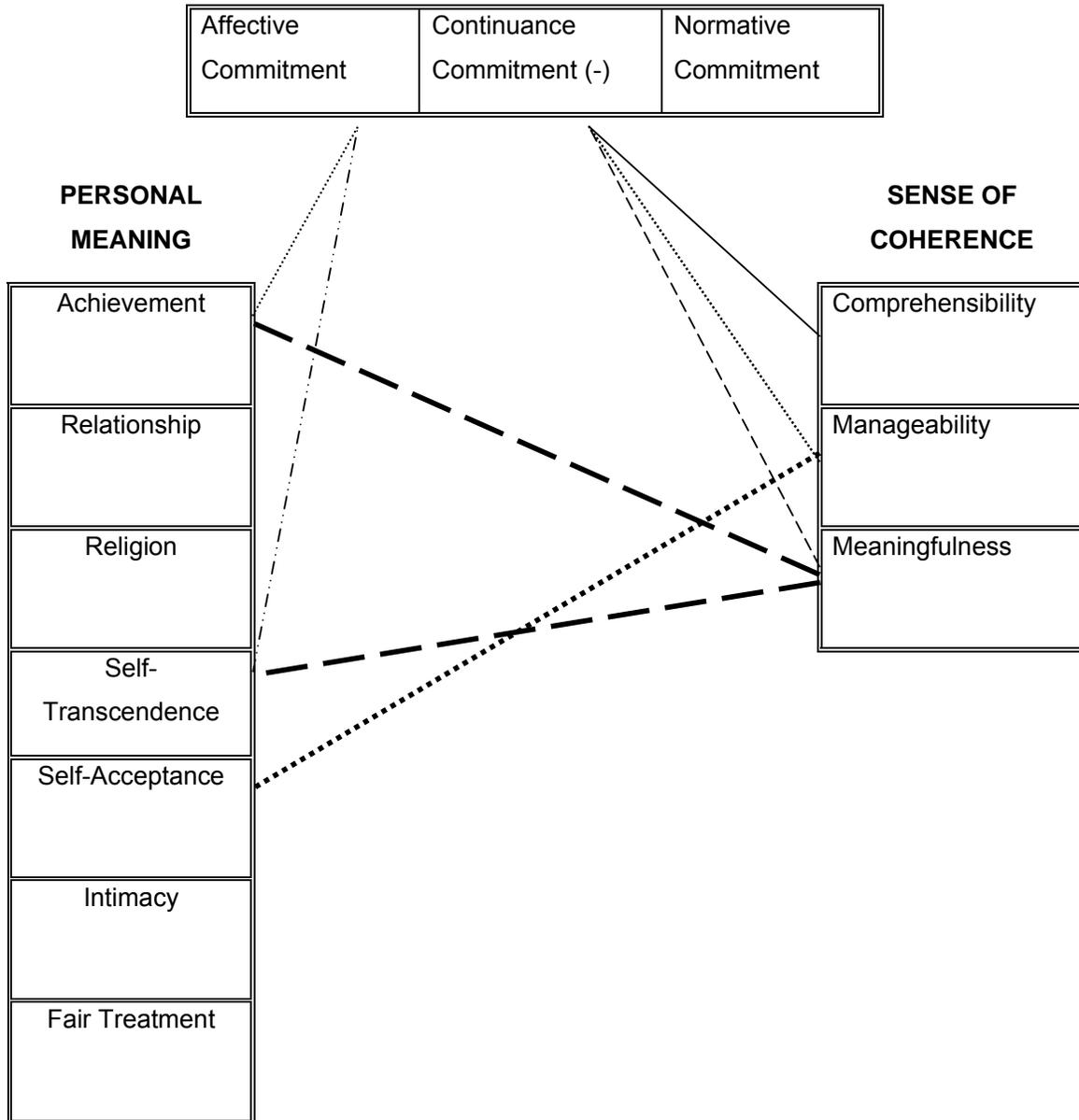
4.3.5 Discussion

The interpretations on the four sets of correlations are discussed below.

Figure 4.1 illustrates the empirically most significant relationships between personal meaning, sense of coherence and organisational commitment.

Figure 4.1

The most significant correlations (medium and large effect) between personal meaning, sense of coherence, and organisational commitment



Large effect correlations are indicated in bold.

— — — = Positive Correlation (large effect) between self-transcendence, achievement and meaningfulness.

..... = Positive Correlation (large effect) between self-acceptance and manageability.

- = Positive Correlation (medium effect) between self-transcendence and affective organisational commitment.
- = Positive Correlation (medium effect) between achievement and affective organisational commitment.
- = Negative Correlation (medium effect) between comprehensibility and continuance organisational commitment.
- = Negative Correlation (medium effect) between manageability and continuance organisational commitment.
- = Negative Correlation (medium effect) between meaningfulness and continuance organisational commitment.

It seems that respondents who seek personal meaning in self-transcendence and achievement perceive the environment as worthy of engaging in (Meaningfulness component of SOC). Respondents who seek personal meaning in self-acceptance perceive that the resources are available to cope with environmental stimuli (Manageability component of SOC). As can be observed in figure 4.1 there is a practically significant (medium effect) correlation between personal meaning and organisational commitment specifically, which shows that individuals who find personal meaning in achievement and self-transcendence are more affectively committed to the organisation. This has implications for organisational development, in that organisations could implement practices that enhance the achievement of individuals' goals and life aspirations and could also implement community or social responsibility projects: these will enhance the self-transcendence construct which focuses on the value of serving others. The negative correlation between the Continuance Commitment and Sense of Coherence constructs indicates that individuals who display an enduring feeling of confidence in the internal and external environment being predictable, manageable and meaningful will not stay with the organisation merely because of cost reasons.

The statistical hypothesis (H01) was stated in Chapter 3 and is now tested, based on the outcomes of the empirical study.

Hypothesis One (H1) stated that perceptions of high levels of personal meaning (high scores on PMP) will correlate with high levels of sense of coherence (high OLQ scores) and high levels of organisational commitment (high scores on the OCS).

- Based on the research results hypothesis one (H1) is thus partially accepted. Employees who demonstrate a high sense of personal meaning demonstrate a high sense of coherence.
- Employees who possess a high level of affective commitment have a high level of personal meaning (achievement and self-acceptance only).

Hypothesis Two (H2) stated that perceptions of high levels of personal meaning, high levels of sense of coherence and high levels of organisational commitment will correlate with the biographical variables of age and tenure.

Hypothesis two (H2) is also partially accepted.

- Based on the research results, hypothesis two (H2) is partially accepted. Employees' age is significantly related to their levels of personal meaning (relationship and religion subscales only).
- Employees' age is significantly related to their levels of continuance commitment.
- Employees' tenure is not related to any of the constructs.

4.4 REGRESSION

The results of the stepwise multiple regression analysis are now reported. The independent variables were personal meaning and sense of coherence while the dependent variables comprised affective, continuance and normative organisational commitment.

Table 4.10 below indicates the variables included in each of the models and Table 4.11 indicates the variance explained by each model.

Table 4.10
Stepwise Regression Results for Affective Commitment, Continuance Commitment and Normative Commitment

Model	Independent Variable	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2,486	0,724		3,432	0,001
	Self-transcendence	0,519	0,130	0,395	4,007	0,000
1	(Constant)	6,832	0,678		10,079	0,000
	Comprehension	-0,624	0,153	-0,400	-4,068	0,000
1	(Constant)	2,060	0,988		2,084	0,040
	Self-transcendence	0,436	0,177	0,256	2,467	0,016
2	(Constant)	3,472	1,030		3,371	0,001
	Self-transcendence	0,589	0,174	0,346	3,391	0,001
	Comprehension	-0,522	0,158	-0,336	-3,296	0,001
3	(Constant)	3,879	1,023		3,792	0,000
	Self-transcendence	0,676	0,174	0,396	3,878	0,000
	Comprehension	-0,438	0,159	-0,282	-2,752	0,007
	Treatment/justice	-0,244	0,109	-0,231	-2,240	0,028

Table 4.11
Model summary

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Model F	P-Value
1	0,395(a)	0,156	0,146	16,059	0,000

a Predictors: (Constant), Self-transcendence

1	0,400(a)	0,160	0,150	16,550	0,000
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a Predictors: (Constant), Comprehension

1	0,256(a)	0,065	0,055	6,086	0,016
2	0,413(b)	0,170	0,151	8,820	0,000
3	0,465(c)	0,216	0,189	7,827	0,000

The regression formulas for the independent variable may be written as follows:

The regression formula to predict Affective Commitment (AComm) could be written as: $AComm = 2,486 + 0,519 (\text{Self-transcendence})$.

The regression formula to predict Continuance Commitment (CComm) could be written as: $CComm = 6,832 - 0,624 (\text{Comprehension})$

The regression formula to predict/explain Normative Commitment (NComm) is:
 $NComm = 3,879 + 0,676 (\text{self-transcendence}) - 0,438 (\text{Comprehension}) - 0,244 (\text{fair treatment})$.

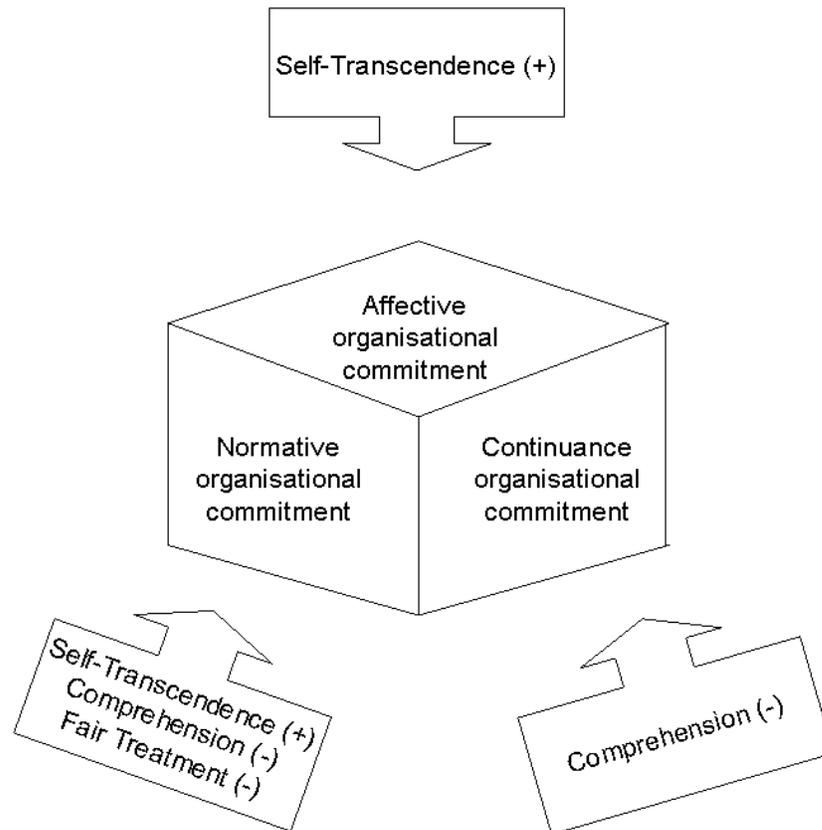
The stepwise multiple regression with affective commitment as the dependent variable indicates that only one independent variable, self-transcendence, contributed significantly towards affective commitment. While statistically significant, this variable explains only 15,6% of the variance (R-squared 0,156). For theoretical purposes it could be considered that there is a relationship between the two variables ($p = 0,000$). Looking at the R-value of 0,395, which acts as an effect size to judge practical significance, it is large (above 0,35 is considered large) and thus practically significant.

The stepwise multiple regression with continuance commitment as the dependent variable indicates that only one independent variable, comprehension, contributed significantly towards continuance commitment. Table 4.10 and Table 4.11 illustrate that only 16% of the variance is explained (comprehension predicts continuance commitment), and this is significant with a p-value of 0,000. The R-value is 0,4 and is considered to be of a practical significance.

For Normative Commitment, three models were proposed, each including further variables to explain more of the variance. The third model explains 21,6% of the variance, somewhat more than the 17% of the second model, and therefore the third model is chosen. The R-value (46,5%) is somewhat larger than found for the other types of commitment. This formula is therefore of more practical significance. The independent variables involved are self-transcendence, comprehension and fair treatment.

Figure 4.2 illustrates the predictive value as regards personal meaning and sense of coherence for the different organisational commitment variables.

Figure 4.2 An illustration of the variables that predict organisational commitment



The regression formula for predicting the three components of the organisational commitment construct showed that the extent to which a respondent experiences affective organisational commitment is determined by her level of seeking meaning through self-transcendence (thus focusing on the value of serving others). However this only explains 15,6% of the variance in the dependent variable.

From the regression formula regarding Continuance Commitment a respondent's continuance commitment can be predicted by his disposition to experience the world as comprehensible. Thus respondents who perceive the stimuli stemming from both the internal and the external environment as structured, predictable, and as making

cognitive sense (Antonovsky, 1987) will possess an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organisation and they will understand the efforts-reward relationship between the organisation and the individual. However, owing to Comprehension showing a negative beta coefficient this result can be interpreted as demonstrating that in the present sample the respondents with a high SOC (comprehension) will not perceive their primary link to the organisation as cost-dependent (they will have a low score on continuance commitment). An employee's level of normative commitment can be predicted by his positive level of self-transcendence as measured by the PMP, fair treatment (negative beta coefficient) and comprehension (negative beta coefficient). However this only explains 21,6% of the variance in the dependent variable.

Hypothesis three (H3) stated that personal meaning and sense of coherence will predict the levels of affective, continuance and normative organisational commitment in the sample. Hypothesis Statement (H3) is thus partially accepted.

- Affective organisational commitment is determined by the level of seeking meaning through self-transcendence.
- Continuance organisational commitment is predicted by a negative level of experiencing the world as comprehensible.
- Normative commitment is predicted by a positive level of self-transcendence, a negative level of fair treatment, and a negative level of comprehension.

4.5 T-TESTS

The current section investigates the differences between each of the measurement instruments and occupational level (management and non-management) on PMP, SOC, and OCS and is purely exploratory. In the research sample occupational category referred mostly to management and non-management staff, since only 4% were students. Only the two larger categories are therefore compared with one another by means of a t-test for differences in independent means.

Table 4.12**Differences between the scores of management and non-management on PMP, SOC and OCS**

Personal Meaning Sub-scales	Management (n = 52)		Non-management (n = 34)		t-value	p-value
	Mean	Std	Mean	Std		
Achievement	5,96	0,577	5,61	0,766	2,36	0,021
Relationship	5,69	0,763	5,78	0,645	-0,56	0,574
Religion	5,39	0,995	5,64	0,699	-1,23	0,224
Self-transcendence	5,59	0,719	5,44	0,822	0,86	0,394
Self-acceptance	5,56	0,715	5,16	0,909	2,20	0,031
Intimacy	5,79	1,396	5,39	1,221	1,32	0,192
Fair treatment/justice	5,48	1,142	4,54	1,203	3,52	0,001
Sense of Coherence	Management (n = 52)		Non-management (n = 34)		t-value	p-value
	Mean	Std	Mean	Std		
Comprehension	4,43	0,804	4,26	0,828	0,94	0,352
Manageability	5,12	0,774	4,90	0,826	1,25	0,217
Meaningfulness	5,48	0,934	5,31	0,965	0,79	0,435
Organisational Commitment Scale	Management (n = 52)		Non-management (n = 34)		t-value	p-value
	Mean	Std	Mean	Std		
Affective	5,50	0,981	5,22	0,968	1,23	0,222
Continuance	4,05	1,250	4,31	1,450	-0,88	0,382
Normative	4,51	1,247	4,56	1,334	-0,16	0,869

On the PMP, management and non-management differed significantly with regard to Achievement ($p = 0,021$), Self-acceptance ($p = 0,031$) and Fair Treatment ($p = 0,001$). On all three counts, management scored higher than non-management, especially on Fair Treatment (5,48 for management and 4,54 for non-management). On all three sub-scales of the OLQ, management and non-management exhibited similar Sense of Coherence scores. On the OCS, management and non-management displayed similar levels of organisational commitment, with no significant differences being found.

The research hypothesis (H4) stated that there are significant differences between the scores of management and non-management regarding the constructs of personal meaning, sense of coherence and organisational commitment. Based on

the research results, hypothesis four (H4) is partially accepted. Management and non-management differed significantly with regard to Achievement, Self-acceptance and Fair Treatment on the personal meaning profile.

4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter the results of the empirical study were reported. The hypotheses as formulated in Chapter 3 were accepted or rejected according to the results of the empirical study. The results of and considerations regarding the empirical study were also considered. In Chapter 5 the conclusions of the research will be discussed, after which recommendations will be made.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this chapter is to present conclusions regarding the specific objectives as stated in Chapter 1, to discuss the limitations of the research, and to offer recommendations.

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation focused on the relationship between personal meaning, sense of coherence and organisational commitment. Conclusions are now formulated regarding the theoretical and the empirical objectives.

5.1.1 Literature Review

The conclusions below can be stated regarding the theoretical aims of the research.

The *first aim*, namely to conceptualise personal meaning, sense of coherence and organisational commitment, was achieved in Chapter Two. In terms of this conceptualisation it was identified that one's personal meaning in life is important in preventing illness, increasing wellness and adapting successfully to varying circumstances of life. Personal meaning helps to provide an individual with a balanced relationship to the world, and finding personal meaning in provides individuals with alternatives to develop organisational commitment. Wong (1998) has identified that the personal meaning of individuals can be ascertained by assessing their current level of life-meaning, based on implicit theories of what makes their life meaningful. There are 7 dimensions to an ideally meaningful life, namely achievement, relationships, religion, self-transcendence, self-acceptance, intimacy, and fair treatment.

From the literature it was demonstrated that the Sense of Coherence construct is a way of conceptualising the personal qualities of individuals who seem particularly

effective at responding to the demands of life. It displays an essentially cognitive character and consists of three components: comprehensibility indicates whether a person perceives stimuli originating in the internal and external world as information that is ordered, consistent, structured and clear. Manageability refers to the extent of one's perception that adequate resources are available to meet the demands posed by these stimuli. Meaningfulness stresses the importance of being a participant in shaping one's own destiny and one's daily experience. It represents a motivational element regarding the areas of life that make cognitive and emotional sense. SOC develops by the age of 30 years in proportion to a person's experience of the world as predictable and consistent, as well as in relation to one's ability to influence life outcomes. As a dispositional orientation, SOC can prevent breakdown in stressful situations through the employment of appropriate coping responses.

The three-component model of organisational commitment: affective, continuance, and normative was used in this study. Affective commitment refers to the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organisation. Employees with a strong affective commitment continue employment with the organisation because they want to do so. Continuance commitment refers to an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organisation. Employees whose primary link to the organisation is based on continuance commitment remain with it because they need to do so. Normative commitment reflects a feeling of obligation to continue employment. Employees with a high level of normative commitment feel that they ought to remain with the organisation.

The literature study found that a theoretical relationship exists between personal meaning, sense of coherence and organisational commitment. Personal meaning and sense of coherence are both constructs that exhibit positive organisational endpoints like orientation to work, job satisfaction and organisational commitment. One of the more general aims of this study was to broaden the knowledge base regarding variables of positive psychology. It is thought that this aim has indeed been accomplished.

The *second theoretical aim*, namely to investigate the possible relationship between personal meaning, sense of coherence, organisational commitment and selected biographical variables, i.e. age and tenure, was achieved in Chapter Two. Most empirical research studies failed to find a significant relationship between personal meaning and age or tenure. It can therefore be concluded that personal meaning is a universal phenomenon. Some research studies established a significant positive relationship between sense of coherence, age and tenure. Biographical variables do play a role in organisational commitment because age and length of service appear to exhibit positive relationships with organisational commitment.

5.1.2 Empirical Study

The *first empirical aim* was to determine the levels of personal meaning, sense of coherence and organisational commitment. This aim was achieved. Measured against the results published in other research studies, the employees in this study reflect a high level of personal meaning, a high level of sense of coherence and high levels of organisational commitment.

The *second empirical aim* regarding the possible relationships between personal meaning, sense of coherence and organisational commitment of employees in a food services company has been achieved.

The correlations carried out showed that employees with high levels of personal meaning (achievement, relationships, religion, self-transcendence, self-acceptance, intimacy, and fair treatment) possess high levels of sense of coherence (meaningfulness, manageability, comprehensibility). However a significant correlation could not be established between the three subscales of the personal meaning profile: relationships, religion, and intimacy, and the comprehension subscale of the sense of coherence.

The results of the study confirmed that organisational commitment is a multifaceted concept, and that its components display some significant relationships with the

personal meaning and sense of coherence constructs. The practically significant relationships are those between affective organisational commitment and the self-transcendence and achievement subscales of the personal meaning profile. There is a negative relationship between continuance organisational commitment and sense of coherence. There likewise is a negative relationship between normative commitment and sense of coherence.

The personal meaning subscales religion and relationships showed a positive relationship to age. On sense of coherence there were no significant relationships between the employees' SOC and the selected biographical variables; i.e. age and tenure. Antonovsky (1987) found that SOC is developed at about 30 years of age, and given that the average age of the present sample is 37, 5 years one may note that the sense of coherence is of a similar level in this age category, confirming Antonovsky's finding. There were almost no significant relationships between the employees' organisational commitment and the selected biographic variables of age and tenure. However, continuance organisational commitment showed a positive relationship with age. Thus the older employees will be more committed to the organisation owing to the high cost of leaving.

With regard to the *third empirical aim* the results of this study partly support the stated predictions that personal meaning and sense of coherence display predictive value concerning organisational commitment.

The multiple regression analysis indicated that in terms of the personal meaning scales self-transcendence plays a significant role in the development of affective and normative organisational commitment. Thus people who focus on the values of serving others demonstrate a higher affective and normative commitment to an organisation.

Concerning the *fourth empirical aim*, relating to determining any significant differences in the manifestation of personal meaning, sense of coherence and organisational commitment between management and non-management employees, the following research findings were reported via the t-tests results:

The personal meaning levels of management and non-management differed significantly with regard to achievement, self-acceptance, and fair treatment. Management scored higher and thus accorded more personal meaning to these dimensions than non-management. On sense of coherence there was no significant difference between the SOC of management and non-management employees. Management and non-management employees displayed similar levels of organisational commitment, with no significant differences being found.

5.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The limitations of the research are discussed with regard to the literature review and the empirical study.

With regard to the literature review, the following limitation was encountered:

- Limited literature seems to exist on the relationship between personal meaning, sense of coherence and organisational commitment. This lack of information limited the determination of a theoretical relationship.

The following limitations of the empirical research should be taken into account:

- The research design does not allow one to determine the direction of the relationship between the variables;
- A non-probability sample has been used, which implies that the findings cannot be generalised to other settings;
- The sample size was also relatively small; and appears to be rather homogenous. Thus in terms of the South African context the sample group was not very diverse. Insofar as biographical type variables influence people's commitment to the organisation, their sense of coherence and their personal meaning in life, the present study's results were inadequate; and
- Only self-report measures were used, which may affect the validity of the results. Including behavioral outcome data, for example absenteeism and turnover would increase the validity of the findings.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

This study generated several application-oriented suggestions as well as suggestions for further research. The following recommendations based on the results of this study can be formulated for the food services company:

- It could recruit and select individuals who display a high level of personal meaning and strong sense of coherence as potential employees. However, before the Company begins selecting potential employees on the basis of these characteristics, more research is required, especially because these characteristics were not studied in an employment context.
- It can use employees' profiles on the PMP to discuss the breadth and levels of personal meaning so as to gain a broader perspective of available options for meaning-seeking.
- It can contribute to the development of its employees' sense of coherence by conveying information in a consistent, structured, ordered and understandable manner and by specifically providing training on the prototypical meaning dimensions that exhibit a significant correlation with sense of coherence, i.e. achievement, relationships, self-transcendence, self-acceptance, and fair treatment.
- By developing the self-transcendence dimension in employees through involvement in, for example, social responsibility projects employees' affective and normative organisational commitment can be enhanced owing to the predictive values found in the research. This is also relevant to the application of leadership development, with its current focus on servant leadership.

The following recommendations for further research can be made, based on the empirical results of this study:

- Personal meaning and sense of coherence may be regarded as health-related variables falling within the view of positive psychology, and as such deserve to be explored further in future research so as to add to this relatively new body of research.
- Personal meaning is the key to achieving the fortuitous ends envisioned by the positive psychology movement, such as authentic happiness, commitment, flow, and creativity. The relationship between personal meaning and other positive psychology variables should be researched in order to determine such relationships.
- Additional research is required to examine the relationships between personal meaning, sense of coherence and organisational commitment. By enhancing the size of the sample group, more convincing results may be obtained.
- Future research should focus on qualitative research so as to provide more information on the nature of personal meaning. Thus richer and more diverse material for analysis will be obtained. This can be done by administering an open-ended questionnaire to subjects in order to gather statements on the possible sources of meaning in life. These statements can then be analysed according to their content to arrive at additional sources of meaning.
- The prototypical structures of meaning used in this study were identified within a Western cultural context. It is important to consider cultural factors in this prototypical structure. Questions arise as to whether people with different cultural backgrounds would have different sources of personal meaning. The literature indicated a lack of research concerning culture-universal and culture-specific sources of personal meaning. Further research into the prototypical meaning structure in the South African context would thus be beneficial.

- The multi-faceted organisational commitment construct should be further analysed and studied so as to put an end to the domination of the attitudinal approach to studying organisational commitment.
- To enhance external validity, future research efforts should focus on obtaining a larger and representative sample.

5.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Within this final chapter, conclusions were reached in terms of both the literature review and the empirical study, followed by a consideration of the limitations to the research. This chapter ended with a few recommendations, derived from this investigation, into a potential relationship between personal meaning, sense of coherence and organisational commitment.

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