The relationship between organisational trust and quality of work life

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Orientation: Managers within organisations should be more attentive regarding their managerial practices, the quality of work life (QWL) and trust relationships, as experienced by employees.

Research purpose: The aim of the study was to determine the relationship between organisational trust and QWL.

Motivation for the study: Recent organisational changes have refocused attention on the productivity and performance of sales representatives. These changes have brought about a re-evaluation of their QWL and the organisational trust they experience.

Research design, approach and method: An Internet-based survey methodology was used to collect primary data from a probability sample of 282 sales representatives; a 72% response rate was obtained. Responses were analysed using quantitative techniques and structural equation modelling.

Main findings: Results confirmed a positive relationship between managerial practices with organisational trust and QWL and a lower relationship between the personality dimensions, organisational trust and the QWL.

Practical/managerial implications: The study accentuated how important it is for management to be constantly aware of employees' trust and their experience of a QWL, as these factors can lead to severe consequences if not properly managed.

Contribution/value add: The study focused attention on the importance of building good trust relationships within an organisation, as it seems as though the personality traits and managerial practices of managers influence not only the trust relationship experienced by employees, but also their experience of a QWL.

Introduction
Key focus of the study

The overall purpose of this research was to determine whether or not there is a significant relationship between organisational trust (comprising of the 'Big Five' personality dimensions [agreeableness, conscientiousness, resourcefulness, emotional stability and extraversion]) and managerial practices (information-sharing, work support, credibility and team management) and quality of work life (QWL), as well as between the 'Big Five' personality dimensions and trust for sales representatives within a South African beverage manufacturing, sales and distribution organisation. Furthermore, it was anticipated that data obtained from this study would enable management within an organisation to improve the QWL of the employees by focusing energy and resources on those aspects which could make a significant difference.

Background to the study

Employment relations within South Africa have changed significantly, altering the type of work employees do, when they work and how much they work (Rothmann, 2003). The extent and rate of change within organisations has created renewed interest in the quality of employees' work lives, particularly in South Africa where organisations have to deal with cultural diversity, the ethnic composition of the workforce and changes in value systems and beliefs (Kirby & Harter, 2001; Kotzé, 2005; Sekwena, 2007).

Dissatisfaction with working life is a problem affecting almost all employees during their working career, regardless of position or status. The boredom, frustration and anger experienced by employees disenchanted with their work life can be costly to both the individual and the organisation. Although many managers seek to reduce job dissatisfaction at all organisational levels, including their own, they sometimes find it difficult to isolate and identify all of the factors which affect and influence the QWL (Huang, Lawler & Lei, 2007; May, Lau & Johnson, 1999; Walton, 1973).

According to Kaushik and Tonk (2008) and Koonmee, Singhapakdi, Virakul and Lee (2010), an employee's QWL is determined by the interaction of personal and situational factors involving both personal (subjective) and external (objective) aspects of work-related rewards and experiences. From this, one can extrapolate that a person's awareness and evaluation of a situation can also have an influence on the perspective he or she has on that situation. According to Kotzé (2005), the changes in the ethnic composition of the South African workforce, specifically with regard to changes in beliefs and value systems, as well as the greater importance placed on knowledgeable workers, are factors which may influence QWL. Affirmed and emphasised by Martins (2000) and Schoorman, Mayer and Davis (2007), these changes in the workforce may also lead to an increase in the importance of trust in organisations. This is because perceptions of an individual's ability, benevolence and integrity will have an impact on how much trust the individual can acquire and will also affect to what extent an organisation will be trusted. Shaw (2005) also affirms that the success of QWL programmes will depend on the ability of an organisation to reinforce high levels of trust.

Quality of work life is assumed to affect various organisational factors (job effort and performance, organisational identification, job satisfaction and job involvement) (Ballou & Godwin, 2007), whilst organisational trust is the employee's expectation of the reliability of the organisation's promises and actions (Politis, 2003). Thus, the more the job and the organisation can gratify the needs of workers, the more effort workers may invest at work, with commensurate improvements in productivity (Huang *et al.*, 2007; Kerce & Booth-Kewley, 1993; May *et al.*, 1999).

Trends from the research literature

From the literature on organisational trust, it can be concluded that trust is an essential part of the effectiveness and performance of an organisation. Long, Sitkin and Cardinal (2003) urge managers to build trust between employees and the organisation in order to enhance organisational effectiveness. Martins and Von der Ohe (2002) also indicate that trust is created by leadership, which in turn influences relationships and job satisfaction.

From the literature review, it seems as though current organisations are trusted less than in the past: specifically within South Africa, Martins (2000) and Esterhuizen and Martins (2008) found a significant trust gap between employees and employers. This underlines how important it is for managers to understand trust, its influence within the organisation and how to build it. With regard to the QWL construct, there seems to be a lack of proper definition and many researchers have related it to various organisational dimensions, influencing the perception employees have regarding their experience of QWL.

Reviewing the literature on QWL, it appears there may be an ongoing debate on whether personal factors (dispositional tendencies) or organisational factors (job characteristics) are the main determinants of perceived QWL (Kerce & Booth-Kewley, 1993; Kotzé, 2005). Research has further shown that QWL is not only a significant determinant of various enviable organisational outcomes, but that it also significantly influences the non-working life of an individual and is an important predictor of the life satisfaction, health and psychological well-being of employees (Ballou & Godwin, 2007; Kaushik & Tonk, 2008; Koonmee *et al.*, 2010; Martel & Dupuis, 2006; Sirgy, Efraty, Siegel & Lee, 2001; Srivastava, 2008; Wilson, DeJoy, Vandenberg, Richardson & McGrath, 2004; Wright & Bonett, 2007).

However, based on the literature review, there is no denying the importance of QWL, as most employees' lives are tied to, and organised according to, the actions of their organisations. In addition, most individuals spend a great deal of their time participating in job or work-related activities and even plan their time, living standards and social interaction around the demands of their work.

Research objectives

The primary objective of this study was to determine whether or not there is a significant relationship between organisational trust ('Big Five' personality dimensions and managerial practices) and QWL, and between the 'Big Five' personality dimensions and trust for sales representatives within a South African beverage manufacturing, within four organisational regions spread over three South African provinces, utilising structural equation modelling.

Potential value-add of the study

Apart from the practical value of the study in confirming and motivating management of the organisation studied to foster a better trust relationship with its sales representatives and contribute to their overall QWL experience, the outcomes of this research also point to new findings within the work environment. This research study can be seen as an exploratory attempt to test an integrated model consisting of managerial practices, personality aspects and QWL. As far as could be established, such an integrated model has not been tested in this context before.

What will follow?

The literature review has two specific aims: firstly, to conceptualise organisational trust constructs (organisational trust and QWL) and confirm their importance within the organisational context and, secondly, to focus on a theoretical analysis aimed at confirming a possible relationship between these constructs. The review is followed by a description of the research design, including the research approach, the nature of the respondents who participated in the study, the measuring instruments used and the manner in which data were collected and analysed. The findings of the study are then presented and discussed, and recommendations made to the management of the organisation studied. The paper concludes by mentioning the limitations within the theoretical and empirical research and giving recommendations for future research.

Literature review

Organisational trust

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) reviewed articles on trust which were written over four decades before the turn of the millennium. They concluded that trust was a difficult concept to define, as it was complex and multifaceted and had different bases and degrees, depending on the context of the trust relationship. Büssing (2002, p. 36) supports this view by stating that trust is 'not at all a straightforward and clearly defined concept'.

Trust can be regarded as a multidimensional construct, consisting of a cognitive (belief about another's trustworthiness), affective (role of emotions in the trust process) and behavioural (relying on another and disclosing sensitive information) base (Büssing, 2002; Gillespie & Mann, 2004; Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt & Camerer, 1998; Schoorman *et al.*, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) consequently proposed a multidimensional definition of trust, namely:

> Trust is one party's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is (a) benevolent, (b) reliable, (c) competent, (d) honest, and (e) open. (p. 556)

Despite the differences in conceptualisation, there are a number of common elements unifying the many different definitions of trust. In particular, there seems to be an agreement that trust is 'the willingness to be vulnerable based on the positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of others' (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995, p. 712). Secondly, it seems that interdependence and uncertainty are necessary conditions for trust to develop. McEvily, Weber, Bicchieri and Ho (2006, p. 54) conceptualise trust as a 'choice to make oneself vulnerable under the conditions of interdependence and uncertainty'.

In line with the above and taking into account that this research study is conducted within an organisational context, the authors use the definition provided by Von der Ohe, Martins and Roode (2004, p. 6) restricted specifically to the field of industrial psychology and the employer-employee relationship. For the purposes of this research study, organisational trust is therefore defined as 'the choice to make oneself vulnerable with the express belief in the positive intent and commitment to the mutual gain of all parties involved in the relationship'.

According to various authors (Bews & Martins, 2002; Hay, 2002; Lämsä & Pučėtaitė, 2006; Martins, 2000; Nooteboom, 2002; Rossouw & Van Vuuren, 2004; Schoorman *et al.*, 2007; Whitener, 1997), three common characteristics of trust can be distinguished:

- Trust in another party reflects a belief that the other party will act benevolently.
- Trust involves a willingness to be vulnerable and to risk the possibility that the other party may not fulfil the expectation of benevolent behaviour.
- Trust involves dependence between the parties, meaning their performance is influenced by one another.

Shaw (1997) postulates that trust influences performance within organisations on four levels:

- *Organisational success* – trust is required to empower employees and groups to act on various objectives.
- *Group effectiveness* – in order to realise a common goal, groups depend on the interdependency of people to work together. High levels of trust are needed for advanced performance.
- *One-on-one collaboration* – people who work together need to trust one another. This enables information-sharing, taking necessary risks and dealing effectively with adversity.
- *Individual credibility* – trust in employees is required for people to perform their jobs and will influence the degree to which people are given autonomy, resources and support. Support is usually given to people believed to be trustworthy.

According to Hay (2002) and Lämsä and Pučėtaitė (2006), the importance of trust in organisations is likely to increase over the next few years. This is reiterated by Bews and Rossouw (2002) and Martins (2000), specifically in relation to South Africa, as a result of the changing composition of the workforce and the focus on employment equity. A study conducted by Klein (2008) indicated trust in the South African government had dropped by 7.91% since April 2006 and approval of government issues, such as transparency and accountability, correct appointments, crime, inflation, narrowing the income gap and fighting corruption, had dropped by 20.00%. Often, organisations do not realise the consequences their actions have on the trust relationship between the employee and employer (Von der Ohe *et al.*, 2004).

Research by the Centre of Industrial and Organisational Psychology at the University of South Africa during 1995–1996 investigating the possible antecedents led to the assumption that trust within organisations is created by personality factors and managerial practices. These personality factors (the 'Big Five') are agreeableness, conscientiousness, resourcefulness, emotional stability and extraversion; the managerial practices are information-sharing, work support, credibility and team management (Martins, Watkins, Von der Ohe & De Beer, 1997). As indicated, personality refers to a set pattern of characteristics, thoughts, feelings and behaviours which differentiates one person from another and persists over time and situations (Phares, 1991). The five-factor model of personality (i.e. the 'Big Five') is a generic template which can be used to understand the structure of personality (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Kaushik & Tonk, 2008).

In a study investigating the relation of the 'Big Five' personality dimensions to job performance, Barrick and Mount (1991) and Barrick, Mount and Judge (2001, p. 11) confirmed that the dimensions' characteristics explain a significant proportion of work performance within a work environment and have 'provided a comprehensive yet parsimonious theoretical framework to systematically examine the relationship between specific personality traits and job performance'. Meta-analyses have found that conscientiousness and emotional stability are related to supervisory ratings of job performance and training success across occupational groups (Salgado, 2002).

In the development of a trust model, Martins (2000) and Martins and Von der Ohe (2002) also identified the 'Big Five' personality aspects (Robbins, 1996) as significant indicators of trust and their results provided support for the claim that personality characteristics, together with managerial practices – information-sharing, work support, credibility and team management – have an influence on the trust relationships between managers and employees.

This overview links to the notion that organisational trust is not necessarily an interpersonal form of trust, but rather a systems form of trust deriving from structures and processes within an organisation, such as fairness and perceived organisational support (Bagraim & Hime, 2007), which, in turn, relates to the QWL and employee experiences within the organisation.

Quality of work life

As mentioned above, there is no denying the importance of QWL – most individuals spend a great deal of their time participating in job or work-related activities and even plan their time, living standards and social interaction around the demands of their work. Indeed, to a large extent, people define themselves and others in terms of their work, making QWL in organisations a major component of quality of life in general (Kotzé, 2005; Rathi, 2010).

Although QWL is a term used today in almost every area of organisational activity, definitions of QWL tend to change focus continually and it has been viewed in various ways: as a movement, a set of organisational interventions (approaches to management in organisations) and as a type of working life experienced by employees (reflecting the affective evaluation of individuals) (Kotzé, 2005; Wyatt & Wah, 2001). Whilst QWL as a construct was first introduced in the 1950s, its foundation as a concept and term was most probably laid at the first international conference on QWL at Arden House in 1972, where significant focus was placed on developing a credible and functional measure of QWL to make working environments more humane for workers (Hannif, Burgess & Connell, 2008; Koonmee & Virakul, 2007; Kotzé, 2005; Wyatt & Wah, 2001). Extensive research on the definition and measurement of QWL from a range of disciplines has since emerged and Hannif *et al.* (2008, p. 274) suggest that three categories of definition are found in the literature. These are, (1) a concept concerned with employees' job satisfaction, (2) a concept going beyond job satisfaction and encompassing subjective well-being and (3) a 'dynamic, multidimensional construct that incorporates any number of measures – objective and subjective – relating to employment quality'.

Although QWL is a concept which has been examined, discussed and researched, its definition and application remain rather vague and there seems to be a significant lack of clarity on the QWL construct, as there is no reliable instrument to promote consistency in its measurement (Chung, Killingworth & Nolan, 1997; Kandasamy & Sreekumar, 2009; Kotzé, 2005; Martel & Dupuis, 2006; Rathi, 2010). For the purpose of this research, the following definition of QWL will be used: the perception of the extent to which the work environment, work experiences and work rewards meets the full range of employees' needs, as determined by the interaction of personal and situational factors (Kaushik & Tonk, 2008; Koonmee *et al.*, 2010).

Quality of work life reflects the quality of relationships between employees and their total working environment. It can be seen as creating conditions within the work environment that promote individual learning and development, provide employees with influence and control over their work decisions and create meaningfulness for employees leading to greater personal satisfaction (Kaushik & Tonk, 2008). Schneider and Dachler (in Kaushik & Tonk, 2008, p. 36) found the feelings employees have about their job 'tend to be stable over time and might be a product of specific personality traits'.

As already mentioned, personality traits are psychological in nature, relatively stable over time and provide the reasons for behaviour (Church, 2000); they seem to be interrelated with trust and QWL by means of the 'Big Five' personality factors. Indeed, multiple research has found a link between the 'Big Five' personality factors (i.e. conscientiousness, agreeableness, emotional stability, resourcefulness and extraversion) and dimensions relating to QWL such as job performance (Barrick *et al.*, 2001; Bozionelos, 2004; Gellatly & Irving, 2001; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000; Rothmann & Coetzer, 2003), job satisfaction (Goodstein & Lanyon, 1999; Judge, Higgins & Cable, 2000; Thoresen, Kaplan, Barsky, Warren & De Chermont, 2003), emotional intelligence (Salgado, 2002), organisational engagement (Bozionelos, 2004), job proficiency (Salgado, 2002), organisational commitment (Thoresen *et al.*, 2003), work and time pressures (Dijkstra & Fred, 2005; Morgan & De Bruin, 2010; Pienaar, Rothmann & Van de Vijver, 2007) work–life balance (Thomson & De Bruin, 2007; Wayne, Musisca & Fleeson, 2004) and reaction to change (Vacola, Tsaousis & Nikolaou, 2004).

Research conducted by Kaushik and Tonk (2008) found a positive correlation between the construct QWL and three of the 'Big Five' dimensions of personality, namely extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness. In addition, research by Rothmann and Coetzer (2003) indicated that personality dimensions were related to management performance and identified emotional stability, resourcefulness and agreeableness as being significantly related to management performance. Shaw (2005, p. 249) proposes that the success of QWL programmes will depend on the ability of the organisation to 'reinforce high levels of trust', which, in turn, will improve organisational performance. Apart from their positive relationships with various dimensions of the QWL construct, as well as findings directly relating it to the construct (Kaushik & Tonk, 2008), the 'Big Five' personality aspects are also significant indicators of trust (Von der Ohe & Martins, 2010). However, it does seem as if there is a lack of research into the relationship between QWL and organisational trust.

Based on these theories and discussions, this study investigated whether there is a relationship between organisational trust – which includes the 'Big Five' personality aspects (agreeableness, conscientiousness, resourcefulness, emotional stability and extraversion), managerial practices (information-sharing, work support, credibility, team management, interpersonal trust and change that has occurred) (Martins & Martins, 2002; Von der Ohe & Martins, 2010) and QWL (consisting of the following dimensions: skill discretion, decision authority, task control, work and time pressure, role ambiguity, physical exertion, hazardous exposure, job insecurity, lack of meaningfulness, social support supervisor, social support co-workers and job satisfaction) (Van der Doef & Maes, 1999).

Research design

Research approach

The empirical research is quantitative in nature and a cross-sectional research design was used to answer the research objectives. This particular research design was thought to be most suited to this research study because the response rates of a cross-sectional design are generally high, it involves eliciting information on a single occasion from individuals in different conditions and conclusions can be drawn within a short period of time. Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to test the relationship between the various factors or dimensions of organisational trust and QWL.

Research method

Research participants

An Internet-based survey methodology was used to collect data from the target audience and the data were analysed using appropriate parametric methods. The unit of analysis used for this research was employees within the organisation; more specifically, the sales representatives within four organisational regions spread over three South African provinces (Gauteng, Free State and KwaZulu-Natal). Approval was obtained from the organisation to conduct the research. Probability sampling was used, following simple random sampling as all sales representatives across the organisation were invited to participate in the research. All respondents completed the Web-based survey voluntarily and no restrictions were placed on participation, including variables of gender, race, educational qualifications, tenure and levels of experience. All participants were ensured of the confidentiality of their responses.

The invitation to partake in the research study was sent out to 282 sales representatives across the business sector in the three provinces. In total, 203 participants completed the online questionnaire (72% response rate).

Of the 203 participants, 133 were male (65.5%) and 70 (34.5%) were female. The majority of respondents were African (124, 61.1%), below the age of 46 years (175, 86%) and had a tenure of 2–5 years (80, 39.4%).

Measuring instruments

A combined organisational trust and QWL questionnaire consisting of 6 biographical questions, 92 organisational trust questions and 59 QWL questions was posted on a survey company's website (http://www.orgdia.co.za/) with an open invitation for sales employees to participate.

To measure organisational trust, the trust audit survey was used (Martins, 2000) and comprised Sections 1–4 of the questionnaire. Section 5 encompassed the QWL construct and was measured by means of the Leiden quality of work questionnaire (Van der Doef & Maes, 1999).

Organisational trust survey: The primary focus of the organisational trust survey was to explore the role of trust in the workplace and to gather views on the existence of a trust relationship, correlated with personality and managerial practices and behaviour as a whole (Martins & Martins, 2002). The questionnaire consists of 12 dimensions, comprising the 5 personality aspects and 6 managerial practices and the trust relationship (Martins, 2000; Martins & Von der Ohe, 2002; Von der Ohe & Martins, 2010, Von der Ohe *et al.*, 2004). The trust questionnaire required the respondents to evaluate statements using a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (*strongly disagreed*) to 5 (*strongly agreed*). The questionnaire was then scored for each of the various dimensions. All the dimensions were scored in such a way that a low score indicated non-acceptance or distrust of the dimension, whilst a high score indicated acceptance of the trust dimension or high levels of trust. In addition to the above dimensions, an additional section was added to the questionnaire to measure participants' satisfaction with changes that had occurred in their organisations. Reliability in measuring these constructs was established in a previous study (Martins, 2000; Von der Ohe & Martins, 2010).

The 'Big Five' personality aspects are:

- *Conscientiousness* – this includes traits such as being persistent, determined, hardworking, dependable, thorough and responsible.
- *Agreeableness* – this reflects being liked, courteous, good natured, cooperative, forgiving and soft-hearted.
- *Emotional stability* – this reflects an absence of anxiety, depression, anger, worry and insecurity.
- *Resourcefulness* – this includes imaginativeness, creativity, broad-mindedness and intelligence.
- *Extraversion* – this comprises sociability, friendliness, talkativeness and activity.

Managerial practices include:

- *Information-sharing* – willingness to give individual feedback on performance and to reveal company-related information in an honest manner.
- *Work support* – willingness to support employees when needed and to provide job-related information for the accomplishment of objectives.
- *Credibility* – willingness to listen, consider proposals, allow others the freedom to express feelings, being tolerant of mistakes and ensuring that employees enjoy prestige and credibility in the organisation.

- *Team management* – the effective management of team and individual goal accomplishments and the handling of conflict within groups.
- *Interpersonal trust* – the trust relationship between top management, the immediate manager and colleagues.
- *Changes that have occurred* – participants' satisfaction with changes that had occurred within their organisations.

The trust relationship dimension in the questionnaire was directly related to the trust dimension and measured by five questions dealing with various aspects of trust between employees and their immediate supervisors in terms of openness, honesty, fairness and intention to motivate employees.

The reliability of the questionnaire was shown to be highly satisfactory, with alpha coefficients ranging between 0.82 and 0.95 for the five-factor model of personality characteristics and managerial practices (Martins, 2000). The reliability was based on a total sample of 6528 employees from 22 South African companies (Martins, 2000) which are similar to the organisation in which this research study was conducted.

The trust audit compiled by Martins (2000) has been used to construct a conceptual model for the manifestation of trust and as a valid and reliable measurement of organisational trust in research studies over the past few years (Cyster, 2005; Von der Ohe & Martins, 2010; Von der Ohe *et al.*, 2004). Although there are other trust measurements, most of them are grounded solely in personality theory and only a few focus on aspects relating to organisations (Büssing, 2002). The trust questionnaire focuses on six dimensions which have been found to have a high correlation with management practices. These management practices also correlate significantly with trust (factor intercorrelation – 0.58) (Martins, 2000).

Leiden quality of work questionnaire: The Leiden quality of work questionnaire was used as a measure for QWL. The questionnaire was constructed by Van der Doef and Maes (1999). According to these authors, the questionnaire aims to develop a reliable measure of work characteristics that would be considered relevant from a theoretical perspective. The questionnaire was constructed to assess work characteristics from two occupational stress models, namely the job demand-control-support model (i.e. psychological demands, skill discretion, decision authority, and social support from supervisor and employee) and the Michigan model (job stressors such as overload, role ambiguity, responsibility, role conflict etc.).

The model includes 59 items, measuring 11 work characteristics and 1 outcome variable, namely job satisfaction. The 11 work characteristics are (Van der Doef & Maes, 1999):

- *skill discretion* (task variety and the extent to which the job challenges an employee's skills)
- *decision authority* (freedom of decision-making regarding work related activities)
- *task control* (control over time management and work execution)

- *work and time pressure* (workload and time constraints experienced by employees)
- *role ambiguity* (clear understanding of role and responsibility within an organisation)
- *physical exertion* (physical burden of work)
- *hazardous exposure* (physical exposure to dangerous objects or situations)
- *job insecurity*
- *lack of meaningfulness* (perception that an employee's work is important and valued)
- *social support supervisor* (support provided by line manager)
- *social support co-workers* (instrumental and emotional support provided by colleagues).

All items were phrased as statements (i.e. 'My job is worthwhile') with four answer categories (*disagree completely*, *disagree*, *agree* and *agree completely*), which resulted in a 59-item pool with a standard format. As a general quality of work measure, the Leiden quality of work questionnaire is suitable for all occupational groups.

Confirmatory analysis by means of linear SEM was used to examine the factor structure of the questionnaire (Van der Doef & Maes, 1999). The factor correlations were 0.87 to 0.88. The reliability was based on the total sample of 10 112 respondents (Van der Doef & Maes, 1999).

Although the goodness-of-fit index (GFI) and the non-normed fit index (NNFI) were still somewhat below the recommended criterion (0.90), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) indicated a good fit of the model. The Cronbach's alpha for these scales ranged from 0.73 to 0.93 (Van der Doef & Maes, 2002).

According to Kotzé (2005), the point of view from which QWL is defined will determine the criteria relevant in its evaluation. Some QWL measurements only evaluate employees' experiences of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, or look at job-related perceptions and attitudes of individuals, whilst some measure only job characteristics (Kerce & Booth-Kewley, 1993; Wilcock & Wright, 1991). A more integrated approach to the measurement of QWL is therefore important. The Leiden quality of work questionnaire includes 12 dimensions consisting of both personal and structural factors, which gives a more comprehensive view of the work situation.

Research procedure
After permission to conduct the research was obtained from the organisation, the questionnaire was posted on an external survey company's website. Participants were informed of the research via an internal email that explained the objectives and importance of the study, what was being measured and what would happen to the results. Instructions on how to complete and submit the questionnaire were given on the opening page of the website. Questions participants might have had were also included pre-emptively in the electronic communication, as was an invitation to send any enquiries or questions to the author. Participants were also assured of the confidentiality of their responses. The participants were

able to complete the questionnaire in their own time and submit their answers when done. Data was then collected from respondents following the hyperlink to the measuring instrument. As this was a Web-based application, the data were anonymously stored on the survey company's server as soon as the respondents completed the questionnaire. The data were then verified as far as possible by checking for contradictions and obvious misinformation.

Statistical analysis

The statistical processing of data is presented in terms of quantitative procedures and statistical techniques. The SPSS statistical programme Amos 18 (2009) was used for this purpose. The quantitative procedures included the use of descriptive statistics to describe the basic features of the data. Inferential statistics included the Cronbach's alpha and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to determine the reliability of the instruments. Structural equation modelling multivariate analysis technique was used to determine the relationship between the constructs (organisational trust and QWL) and the independent dimension of trust to test the theoretical model. Confirmatory factor analysis, path analysis and regression analysis within SEM were used to test the three hypotheses. Two SEM approaches were subsequently followed, namely the strictly confirmatory approach (to confirm a structural model specified by another researcher) and the model development approach (to find models into which the data fitted well statistically) (Garson, 2009; Schumacker & Lomax, 2004).

Results

Reliability analysis

The Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the internal reliability of items within each factor (results are presented in Table 1). Although the reliability of both questionnaires had already been reported on, it was still important to verify reliability, especially as the Leiden quality of work questionnaire reliability scores are not based on the South African population. An acceptable value for Cronbach's alpha is between 0.70 and 0.80 and values substantially lower indicate an unreliable scale (Field, 2005). However, Kline (1999) notes that although the generally accepted value for reliability is 0.80, when dealing with psychological constructs, values below 0.70 can be expected because of the diversity of the constructs being measured. According to Nichols (1999), a Cronbach's alpha will be negative whenever the average covariance amongst the items is negative. These items should be recoded. According to Nunnally (1967), a suitable criterion for instruments in the early stages of development is regarded as between 0.05 and 0.60. For the purpose of this research study, a reliability coefficient of 0.50 or higher was considered an acceptable score of internal consistency.

Based on each factor's Cronbach's alpha, it was determined that all factors included within the organisational trust dimension had a strong internal reliability, with the lowest score being 0.602 obtained for information-sharing. Agreeableness presented with the highest score of 0.980. These

findings are consistent with research conducted by Von der Ohe *et al.* (2004), in which the internal consistency reliability of all constructs was high. Table 2 shows a comparison of the Cronbach alphas of the current research study and the research conducted by Von der Ohe *et al.* (2004).

The reliability coefficient of the factors, which forms part of the QWL dimension, appeared to vary between -0.179 and 0.908, with five of these reliability coefficients being above 0.900 – which could be regarded as acceptable internal consistency (Kline, 1999). The item analysis based on Cronbach's alpha suggested there was a negative relationship between some items, that is, decision authority and job insecurity, after recoding took place. Based on these reliability results, information-sharing (0.602) was excluded

TABLE 1: Results of reliability analysis.

Questionnaires	Main categories measured	Dimension	Cronbach alpha	N of items
Organisational trust	Personality	Conscientiousness	0.954	8
		Extraversion	0.940	7
		Agreeableness	0.980	8
		Emotional stability	0.952	5
		Resourcefulness	0.852	7
	Managerial practices	Trust relationship	0.941	5
		Credibility	0.944	15
		Work support	0.945	4
		Information-sharing	0.602	4
		Team management	0.947	8
		Change which has occurred	0.940	11
		Interpersonal trust	0.874	9
Quality of work life		Skill discretion	0.598	8
		Decision authority†	-0.179	4
		Task control	0.536	4
		Work and time pressure	0.354	3
		Role ambiguity	0.811	6
		Physical exertion	0.596	3
		Hazardous exposure	0.852	8
		Job insecurity	-0.125	3
		Lack of meaningfulness	0.613	3
		Social support supervisor	0.888	6
		Social support colleagues	0.908	11
		Job satisfaction‡	0.843	5

N, number.
†, Negative questions were recorded but did not improve reliability.
‡, One negative question was recorded.

TABLE 2: Comparison of Cronbach alphas between past findings and the present research study.

Dimension	Von der Ohe *et al.* (2004)†	Present research findings
Trust relationship	0.93	0.94
Credibility	0.95	0.94
Agreeableness	0.95	0.98
Conscientiousness	0.93	0.95
Extraversion	0.89	0.94
Resourcefulness	0.87	0.85
Emotional stability	0.91	0.95

Source: Von der Ohe, H., Martins, N., & Roode, M. (2004). The influence of credibility on employer–employee trust relations. *South African Journal of Labour Relations*, *28*(2), 4–32
†, Von der Ohe *et al.* (2004) only included trust relationship and credibility as part of the managerial practices.

from SEM Model 1 (organisational trust model) because of its weak Cronbach's alpha. Overall, it could be concluded that the internal consistency (reliability) of the overall organisational trust questionnaire and the factors were consistent in what it was intended to measure, and were thus acceptable. Consequently, decision authority was excluded from SEM Model 2 (relationship between organisational trust and QWL) because of its weak Cronbach's alpha. There was, however, no obvious reason for the negative Cronbach's alpha obtained for job insecurity and the low score for work and time pressure, as there did not appear to be any coding error. It was therefore decided to include both as part of the model. With regard to the Leiden quality of work questionnaire and its factors, internal reliability seemed to vary between the various factors and could definitely be improved. Most of the dimensions of the Leiden quality of work questionnaire portrayed acceptable coefficients. The exceptions were job insecurity and work and time pressure.

Structural equation modelling results

Two models were originally tested using the covariance matrix based on SEM procedures. Alternative models were tested on the basis of the theory and changes to the structural and/or measurement models were made as suggested by the SEM modification indices. As previously mentioned, this research study included two approaches with regard to SEM models. Firstly, Model 1 (organisational trust relationship model) could be regarded as a strictly confirmatory approach to corroborate the already established model of organisational trust, as proposed by Martins (2000). The second approach (Model 2: the relationship between organisational trust and QWL) could be seen as a model development approach in which the goal is to find a model into which the data fits well statistically, but which also has practical and substantive theoretical meaning, as it entails specifying a model in which the initial data do not fit at an acceptable model fit criterion level (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004).

Model 1: Organisational trust relationship model

The trust relationship model proposed by Martins (2000) was again confirmed. Within the original model, Martins (2000) found a low relationship between trust and the personality aspects (0.240) and a positive relationship between trust and managerial practices (0.580). The results also indicated that credibility, group management and work support are directly associated with managerial practices. Information-sharing did not appear to be directly associated with managerial practices. Results further revealed a non-significant chi-square of 4404.511, based on 33 degrees of freedom with a probability value of less than 0.001. However, Model 1 included two factors additional to Martins's (2000) model, namely change which has occurred, and interpersonal trust, but excluded the dimension of information-sharing (weak Cronbach alpha). Table 3 shows a comparison of the findings from Martins (2000) with the findings within this research, indicating the chi-square, degrees of freedom, probability level and comparative fit indexes (CFI).

The significant minimum fit chi-square statistic obtained (90.874; df = 40, p = 0.000) demonstrated imperfect model fit and implied the model might not be adequate and might therefore have to be rejected. However, the chi-square statistic is sensitive to multivariate normality and sample size (Fan, Thompson & Wang, 1999). To overcome this problem, Bollen and Long (1993) and Kelloway (1995) recommend the ratio of chi-square and degrees of freedom (χ^2/df) be used instead. A value of between 2 and 5 is believed to indicate good fit. Using this ratio, a value of 2.272 was obtained for the structural model. When evaluated against this standard, it seemed that the model fitted the data adequately. Root mean square error of approximation is based on the analysis of residuals, with smaller values indicating a better fit with data (Ryu & West, 2009). Garson (2009) contends that a value lower than 0.080 indicates acceptable fit. Model 1 achieved an RMSEA value of 0.079, which falls within what is regarded as acceptable fit.

The GFI for Model 1 was 0.922, which indicates an adequate fit. In addition, the CFI equalled 0.980, the normed fit index (NFI) equalled 0.965 and the NNFI equalled 0.973, which indicate a good fit as all of the values are very close to the recommended perfect fit, from 0 (*no fit*) to 1 (*perfect fit*). Based on these indices, Model 1 achieved adequate fit.

The results also indicated that personality and managerial practice have a causal relationship with the trust relationship dimension. Results depicted in Table 4 further indicated a positive relationship between the managerial practices and personality aspects (0.79). This is consistent with the research findings by Von der Ohe *et al*. (2004), in which they found a positive relationship between the 'Big Five' personality aspects and both the trust relationship and credibility dimensions.

In order to improve model fit, changes suggested by the SEM modification indexes were taken into consideration. These changes related to moderate correlations found between the unknown variables (error variances).

TABLE 3: Comparison of trust results.

Comparison of fit criteria	Martins (2000)	Model 1: Findings†
Chi-square	4404.511	90.874
df	33.000	40.000
p	0.001	0.000
CFI	0.890	0.980
NFI or BDNFI	0.889	0.965
NNFI or BBNNFI	0.850	0.973

Source: Martins, N. (2000). Developing a trust model for assisting management during change. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology/SA Tydskrif vir Bedryfsielkunde*, *26*(3), 27–31
df, degrees of freedom; *p*, probability level; CFI, comparative fit indexes; NFI, normed fit index; BDNFI, Bentler and Bonett normed fit index; NNFI, non-normed fit index; BBNNFI, Bentler and Bonett non-normed fit index.
†, Model 1 includes interpersonal trust and Changes which have occurred as additional factors and excludes information sharing.

TABLE 4: Structural equation modelling correlations coefficients within organisational trust.

Correlation	SE	CR	Correlation between dimensions		
0.480	0.055	8.794*	Change which has occurred	↔	Interpersonal trust
0.336	0.069	4.890*	e 9	↔	e 10
0.789	0.029	27.261*	e 1	↔	e 2

SE, standard error; CR, criterion ration; e, error terms.
*, < 0.05 = significant on the 0.001 level.
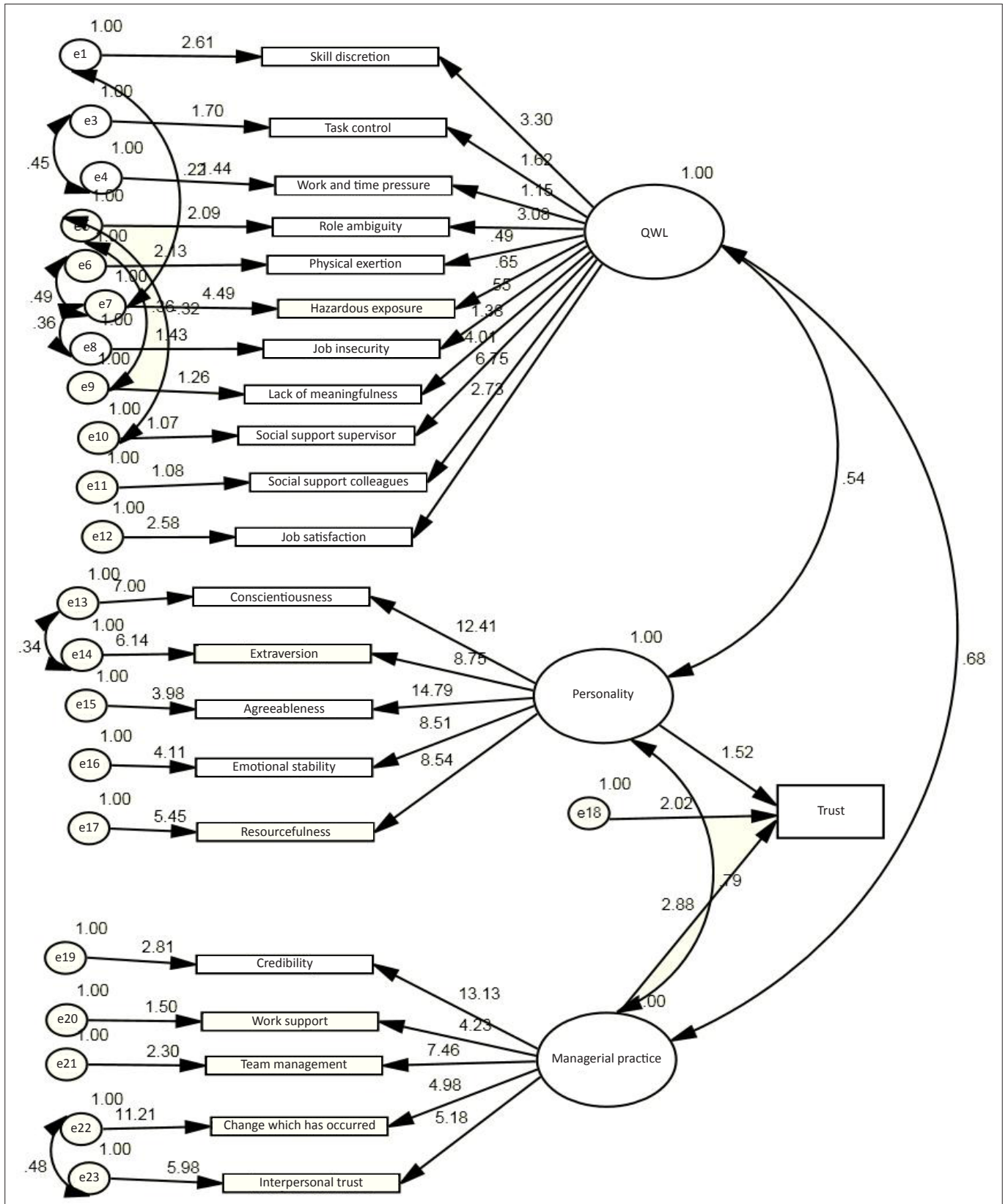
e, error terms; QWL, quality of work life.

FIGURE 1: Model 2 – Relationship between organisational trust and quality of work life.

Model 2: Relationship between organisational trust and quality of work life

In Model 2, the relationship between the constructs of organisational trust and QWL is depicted. The path diagram and parameter estimates are illustrated in Figure 1. Results

revealed a non-significant chi-square (622.252), based on 0.196 *df* with a probability of 0.000. The ratio of chi-square and degrees of freedom (χ^2/df) was equal to 3.175, indicating an adequate fit (a value of between 2 and 5 is believed to be a good fit) (Bollen & Long, 1993). Contradictory to this, Model 2

achieved an RMSEA value of 0.104. According to Garson (2009), an RMSEA value of 0.050 or less indicates a close approximation and values of up to 0.080 suggest a reasonable fit of the model in the population. A value of 0.104 therefore suggested a moderate fit within the population.

The GFI for Model 2 was 0.754, which also indicated a moderate fit. In addition, the CFI equalled 0.910, the NFI equalled 0.875 and the NNFI equalled 0.894, which confirmed these findings. Based on the above indices, it is therefore believed the structural model achieved a moderate fit.

Analysing the SEM correlation coefficients between the various variables (see Table 5), the model indicated moderate correlations between QWL and managerial practices (0.68), as well as between QWL and personality aspects (0.54).

Furthermore, the Pearson product-moment correlation co-efficient was used to calculate the correlations between organisational trust, QWL, personality and managerial practices (see Table 6). All correlation coefficients were significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Highly significant positive relationships (at a 0.01 level of significance) were evident between the trust relationship and personality dimensions (0.793), managerial practices and the trust relationship (0.760), and managerial practices and personality (0.702), suggesting that if managerial practices are regarded as positive, the trust employees experience will increase accordingly. Moderate linear relationships were evident between managerial practices and QWL (0.613), trust relationship and QWL (0.545), and QWL and personality (0.502).

Summarised results of Model 1 and Model 2

Based on the above discussion of the overall GFI indices, both Model 1 and Model 2 produced acceptable GFIs by means of the non-significant chi-square obtained, as well as values attained for the relative chi-square (χ^2/df). Model 1 attained an acceptable absolute GFI of 0.922, which was above the 0.900 cut-off and so reflected a good model fit. Model 2 produced a GFI of 0.754, which fell below the 0.900 cut-off and could therefore be interpreted as a moderate fit. Both Model 1 and Model 2 achieved acceptable incremental fit measures for the following:

- *CFI*: Model 1 = 0.980 and Model 2 = 0.910, both of which were above the cut-off, reflecting good model fit.
- *NFI*: Model 1 = 0.965, which was above the cut-off point (0.90), reflecting good model fit and Model 2 = 0.875, which was close to the cut-off point and could therefore be interpreted as reflecting adequate fit.
- *NNFI*: Model 1 = 0.973, which was above the cut-off point (0.90), reflecting good model fit and Model 2 = 0.894, which was close to the cut-off point and could therefore be interpreted as reflecting adequate fit.

Based on these results, Model 1 (organisational trust relationship) could therefore be accepted as a model with a good fit and Model 2 (relationship between organisational trust and QWL) could be accepted as a model with a moderate fit.

Further analysis seemed to indicate that personality aspects had less impact on trust (estimate of 1.51) than managerial practices (estimate of 2.89). Within the personality dimension, agreeableness had the highest impact (estimate of 14.79), explaining 93.2% of the variance, followed by conscientiousness (estimate of 12.41), explaining 75.9% of the variance. Focusing on the managerial practices, it seemed as though credibility had the highest impact (estimate of 13.11), explaining 95.3% of the variance, whilst team management explained 91.5% of the variance (estimate of 7.47). Change which has occurred (estimate of 4.98) and interpersonal trust (estimate of 5.18) seemed to have the lowest impact

TABLE 5: Structural equation modelling correlations coefficients between organisational trust and quality of work life.

Correlation	SE	Correlations between dimensions		
0.541	0.052*	QWL	↔	Personality
0.679	0.039*	QWL	↔	Managerial practices
0.790	0.029*	Personality	↔	Managerial practices
0.475	0.055*	e 22	↔	e 23
0.488	0.049*	e 6	↔	e 7
0.453	0.056*	e 4	↔	e 3
0.363	0.063*	e 5	↔	e 9
0.358	0.052*	e 7	↔	e 8
0.337	0.069*	e 13	↔	e 14
-0.316	0.085*	e 5	↔	e10

SE, standard error; QWL, quality of work life; e, error terms.
*, < 0.05 = significant on the 0.001 level.

TABLE 6: Pearson product-moment correlations coefficients.

Dimension	Correlation	Trust relationship	QWL	Personality	Managerial practices
Trust relationship	Pearson correlation	1.000	0.545**	0.793**	0.760**
	Significance (2-tailed)	–	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	203.000	200.000	203.000	203.000
QWL	Pearson correlation	0.545**	1.000	0.502**	0.613**
	Significance (2-tailed)	0.000	–	0.000	0.000
	N	200.000	200.000	200.000	200.000
Personality	Pearson correlation	0.793**	0.502**	1.000	0.702**
	Significance (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	–	0.000
	N	203.000	200.000	203.000	203.000
Managerial practices	Pearson correlation	0.760**	0.613**	0.702**	1.000
	Significance (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	–
	N	203.000	200.000	203.000	203.000

QWL, quality of work life; *N*, number of respondents.
**, correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

on trust, explaining 16.0% and 41.7% or the variance, respectively. Within the QWL dimension, social support from colleagues had the highest impact (estimate of 6.75), explaining 97.5% of the variance, followed by social support from the supervisor (estimate of 4.01), explaining 93.4% of the variance (see Table 5). Hazardous exposure (estimate of 0.65) and physical exertion (estimate of 0.49) seemed to have the lowest impact and only explained 2.0% and 5.0% of the variance, respectively. This might be the result of the specific work environment of a sales representative, as it seems they are not necessarily exposed to hazardous circumstances and physical exertion.

This research study therefore indicated that, for sales representatives, there is a stronger relationship between QWL and managerial practices than between QWL and their personality constructs.

Ethical considerations

As mentioned above, participation in the survey was voluntary after permission was obtained from the organisation to conduct the survey. Participants were also informed and assured of the confidentiality of their responses. Data were collected via the Web and anonymously stored on the survey company's server.

Trustworthiness

The reliability and validity of both questionnaires were determined accordingly, as discussed in the 'Results' section above.

Discussion

This research study can be seen as an exploratory attempt to test an integrated model consisting of managerial practices, personality aspects and QWL. In particular, the aim of this study was to investigate the implied theoretical relationship between the dimensions making up the organisational trust construct and those which form the QWL construct. The results of the analysis of Model 1 (organisational trust relationship) confirm a positive relationship between the managerial practices and personality dimensions (0.790). Similar results were found within the Pearson product-moment correlations. Highly significant positive relationships (at a 0.010 level of significance) were found between the trust relationship and personality dimensions (0.793), managerial practices and the trust relationship (0.760), and managerial practices and personality (0.702), suggesting that if managerial practices are regarded as positive, the trust employees experience will increase accordingly. This also confirms the research conducted by Martins (2000). Moderate linear relationships were evident between managerial practices and QWL (0.613), trust relationship and QWL (0.545), and QWL and personality (0.502).

The relationship between organisational trust and QWL (Model 2) also indicated a positive relationship between QWL and managerial practices (0.68) but a lower relationship with the personality constructs (0.54).

Martins (2000) and Von der Ohe *et al*. (2004) found agreeableness to be a significant manifestation of the 'Big Five' personality aspects. This is confirmed by the results of this research. Also, in accordance with Martins's (2000) research, it seems that the personality aspects have a lower impact on organisational trust than managerial practices.

Summary

From the empirical results, the assumption can be made that if an organisation intends to improve the satisfaction levels of sales representatives, the focus should be on improving the managerial practices and QWL dimensions. In this environment, a focus on the 'correct' personality types will not have a great influence on organisational trust or positively influence QWL. Research results regarding the organisational trust construct have been supported by research carried out by Cyster (2005), Martins (2000), Martins and Martins (2002), Martins and Von der Ohe (2002), Von der Ohe *et al*. (2004) and Von der Ohe and Martins (2010).

The findings of this research study are useful because they not only provide valuable information about an understanding of the relationship between organisational trust and QWL, but also have some practical implications which may be useful for organisations. Firstly, this study shows that managers within organisations should be more attentive to their managerial practices than to their personality traits, as this might influence the building of trust relationships within the organisation. Managers should therefore pay attention to the job-related needs of employees, as well as the influence managerial practices may have on the QWL experienced by employees.

It is also important to note the potentially valuable contribution of this research to a better understanding of the organisational trust and QWL constructs within the organisational context. As far as could be established, such an integrated model has not been tested in this context before. This study therefore makes a valuable contribution to theory-building and practice in the field of organisational psychology, especially within the South African context.

Limitations of the study

As with all research, this study is subject to a number of limitations. The first obvious limitation is the use of the Leiden quality of work questionnaire, as it was designed for use in a completely different context to the one in which it was used in this study. Whilst it seemed to demonstrate good psychometric properties and had obtained satisfactory reliability and validity scores, the instrument may require further revision and refinement, specifically for use within the South African context.

The focus on a specific functional area (sales) within one organisation restricted the study to a relative small sample (*N* = 203). Although it is desirable to have a large sample, the researcher was limited to the number of sales representatives within the soft-drink division of the organisation. Although sufficient to conduct SEM, the convenience sample means a

conservative test of the hypotheses without much statistical power to reveal potentially significant relationships. However, the benefit of conducting the research within one functional area in one organisation was that any alternative explanations for any observed variance could be ruled out, as the circumstances of all the sales representatives are mostly the same.

Recommendations for future research

From the results, the following recommendations might assist the organisation to foster a better trust relationship and contribute to the overall QWL experience of its sales representatives:

- Social support, specifically from the line manager and colleagues, seems to play an important role within the QWL experienced by these employees and it is therefore recommended that the company be aware of and focus on positive interaction with its employees.
- Possible coaching and mentoring techniques might be considered, not only to aid in positive interaction with the employees, but also to provide the sales representatives with the necessary work support from their managers.
- Listening to and considering the employees' proposals and suggestions and providing them with recognition will enhance these employees' experience of their managers' credibility. A proper reward and recognition scheme might assist in addressing this.
- Fair and unbiased team management practices will also foster a better trust relationship and increase the job satisfaction employees experience within their roles.

The results also suggest several other interesting future studies on QWL and organisational trust. Research on the violation of trust by line managers and its consequences has not received much attention and a possible future research venture could be to look into the possible consequences of a broken trust relationship on the QWL experienced by employees.

A further possibility is to use a longitudinal research design to determine the temporal relationship between these variables across levels as different organisational factors such as communication, effectiveness, change and demographic variables can affect the trust relationship.

Conclusion

In this article, the purpose, literature overview, research design, results, several conclusions, recommendations and limitations of the study were discussed and explained. Conclusions were made about the theoretical as well as the empirical sections of this research. The outcomes of this research also point to new findings within the work environment and recommendations were made to enhance research specifically within this domain.

This research emphasises how important it is for the management of an organisation to be constantly aware of the trust employees have in the organisation, as this can lead to severe consequences if not properly managed. Furthermore, it is essential for an organisation to create an environment in which employees experience QWL, as research has indicated this influences not only performance, commitment, profitability, job involvement, absenteeism and turnover rate, but also the overall trust relations experienced by employees.

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Authors' contributions

N.M. (University of South Africa) was the project leader and was responsible for the experimental and project design, managing the online survey and the conceptual contributions on organisational trust. Y.v.d.B (University of South Africa) was responsible for marketing and coordinating the survey, as well as the conceptual contributions on quality of work life.

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