

The Determination of the Level of Organisational Commitment among Police Officers in the Sebokeng Cluster

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Abstract

In general, organisational commitment is considered as the inclination of employees to identify with the goals of and retain membership of an organisation. The review of related literature on organisational commitment presupposes that organisational commitment constitutes of three dimensions, namely, affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. The purpose of this study was to determine the level of organisational commitment among police officers in the Sebokeng Cluster, in South Africa. The Sebokeng Cluster consists of eight police stations: Sebokeng, Vanderbijlpark, Evaton, Orange Farm, Ennderdale, Sharpeville, The Barrage and Boipatong. To achieve the research objective, the organisational commitment of police officers was assessed by means of a survey using a self-administered structured questionnaires distributed to 267 police officers in all the polices stations in the Sebokeng Cluster, with 199 police officers completing and returning the questionnaires. Frequency analysis and the computation of mean scores were performed to analyse data. The results from this study indicated that police officers identified with and were loyal to the safety and security cluster. The police officers felt that they were bound to remain with their safety and security cluster because the costs for leaving were great. Finally, police officers wished to maintain the membership of their safety and security cluster for moral or ethical reasons.

Keywords: organisational commitment, normative commitment, affective commitment, continuance commitment.

1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, the subject of organisational commitment among police officers has not received considerable attention (Jorgensen & Rothmann, 2008). Organisational commitment has become a topical issue as a result of the harsh environment under which police officers operate. Police officers usually work in unpredictable situations where they often experience stress or frustration. The critical issue worth of consideration is whether police managers do enough to deal with the frustrations of police officers (Gasic & Pagon, 2004). Research (Newstrom & Davis, 2002) confirms that organisationally committed employees have good attendance records, demonstrate the willingness to adhere to organisational policies, and have lower turnover rates. For this reason, managers should put into action those management practices geared towards enhancing organisational commitment (Hellriegel, Slocum & Woodman, 1998).

2. Literature review

Organisational commitment is defined as "the state in which employees identify with their organisation and its goals, and wish to maintain membership in an organisation" (Bergh & Theron, 2006:178). It is a measure of employees' willingness to remain with an organisation in the future (Newstrom & Davis, 2002). Organisational commitment constitutes of three dimensions, namely, affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment.

2.1 Affective commitment

Affective commitment is the emotional attachment employees have to or their involvement with an organisation (Döckel, 2003). In other words, an employee identifies with and enjoys membership in the employing organisation. An employee

who has affective commitment works for an organisation because he/she is loyal and the work is enjoyable. Affective commitment to the organisation is influenced by the extent to which employees' needs and expectations about the organisation are matched by their actual experiences (McDonald & Makin, 1999; Brown, 2003). According to Rhoades, Eisenberger and Armeli (2001), an employee who has affective commitment is seen as having a sense of belonging and identification that increases his/her involvement in an organisation's activities, the willingness to pursue the organisation's goal and the desire to remain with an organisation. Thus, employees with strong affective commitment remain with an organisation because they have a feeling of belonging (Allen & Meyer, 1996). Affective commitment can also refer to loyalty towards colleagues, customers or a profession (McShane & Travaglione, 2003). Affective commitment is improved by hiring people whose personal values are consistent with the organisation's values. A positive, satisfying work environment should also increase employees' desire to stay (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2008).

2.2 Continuanace commitment

Continuance commitment refers to the awareness of what it will cost the individual if he/she leaves the organisation (Döckel, 2003). An employee is willing to remain in an organisation because of an investment that an organisation has made in the employee which is non-transferable. Non-transferable investments include retirement, relationships with other employees, or materials that are special to the organisation. Continuance commitment also includes factors such as years of employment or benefits that the employee may receive that are unique to the organisation. An employee who has continuance commitment would leave an organisation if he/she knew that he/she could get more benefits from another next employing organisation (McShane & Travaglione, 2003). Continuance commitment is improved by offering employees a variety of progressive employment benefits such as medical aid and human resource programmes like training and development, and Employee Assistance Programme (McDonald & Makin, 1999). **2.3 Normative commitment** Normative commitment connotes a feeling of obligation employees have to continue with employment in the current organisation (Allen & Meyer, 1996). An employee who has normative commitment works for an organisation because he/she was hired when he/she needed a job, thus he/she owes it to an organisation. Employees with strong normative commitment remain with an organisation because they feel they ought to do so (Allen & Meyer, 1996).

According to Ozag (2005), employees with normative commitment do not develop a strong sense of emotional attachment to an organisation, but they are obliged to stay with the organisation. In summary, Allen and Meyer's (1990) model of organisational commitment shows that those employees with a strong affective commitment will remain with an organisation because they want to; those with a strong continuance commitment remain because they have to; and those with a normative commitment remain because they feel that they have to. The present study seeks to determine the level of organisational commitment among police officers in the Sebokeng Cluster, South Africa.

3. The purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine the level of organisational commitment among police officers in Sebokeng Cluster.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Population and sample

In respect of this study the population was 1335 police officers of all ranks, race, gender and age in the Sebokeng Cluster. The Sebokeng Cluster consisted of eight police stations, namely, Sebokeng, Vanderbijlpark, Evaton, Orange Farm, the Barrage, Ennerdale, Sharpeville and Boipatong. Leedy and Ormrod (2010) suggest that if the population is around 1500, a sample size of 20% should be drawn. Based on the Leedy and Ormrod's suggestion, a sample size of 267 (20% of 1335) was drawn from the total population of 1335. The sample was extracted by means of the stratified sampling procedure, which is classified as probability sampling method. The numbers of sampled police officers per stratum are shown in table 1.

Table 1: Composition of sample size per police station

Police Station	Police officers per station	Sample size per station
Sebokeng	379	76
Vanderbijlpark	361	72
Evaton	204	41
Orange Farm	173	35
Ennerdale	64	13
Sharpeville	62	12
The Barrage	47	9
Boipatong	45	9
Total	1335	267

4.2 Instrumentation

Data was collected by means of a self-administered structured questionnaire. The questionnaire used in this study consisted of closed-ended statements. The questionnaire comprised of two sections, A and B. Section A aimed to glean biographical information from respondents whereas Section B elicited their responses in respect of organisational commitment. The questionnaire was a Five-point Likert scales questionnaire. In this questionnaire, respondents were expected to indicate whether they “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “neither disagree nor agree”, “agree”, or “strongly agree” with the questionnaire statements. The items in this section were adapted from two different sources, namely, Allen and Meyer (1990), and Jaros (2007) both of whom categorised questionnaire statements into three constructs: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment.

4.3 Reliability and validity

The reliability of the three constructs in the questionnaire (affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment) was tested using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The alpha values emanating from this process are shown in table 2.

Table 2: Cronbach's alpha values of organisational commitment dimensions

Organisational commitment dimensions	Cronbach's alpha values
Affective commitment	.920
Continuance commitment	.781
Normative commitment	.9171
Overall reliability	.882

The alpha values in this study exceeded the predetermined level of .70, thus indicating that the instrument utilized was reliable. Face validity was used in the study by issuing the questionnaire to six academics in the fields of industrial psychology and organizational behaviour who confirmed that the variables in the questionnaire accurately reflected the three dimensions in the study.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Demographics

Questionnaires (267) were distributed to all police stations in Sebokeng Cluster. Of the 267 questionnaires issued, only 199 were completed and returned resulting in a 75% response rate. Table 2 illustrates demographic data relating to respondents. It can be observed from table 2 that male police officers (n=128; 64.3%) made up the majority of respondents compared to their female counterpart (n=71; 35.7%).

Table 2: Summary of participants' demographics

Particulars	Variables	N	%
Gender	Females	71	35.7
	Males	128	64.3
Rank or position	Brigadier	1	.5
	Colonel	2	1.0
	Lieutenant Colonel	15	7.5
	Captain	29	14.6
	Warrant Officer	37	18.6
	Sergeant	22	11.1
	Constable	93	46.7
Police station	Sebokeng	32	16.1
	Vanderbijlpark	53	26.6
	Evaton	41	20.6
	Orange Farm	30	15.1
	The Barrage	13	6.5
	Ennerdale	12	6.0
	Sharpeville	9	4.5
	Boipatong	9	4.5
Age group	Under 25 years	5	2.5
	25-35 years	80	40.2
	36-45 years	53	26.6
	46-55 years	57	28.6
	56-65 years	4	2.0
Ethnicity	Black	178	89.4
	Coloured	4	2.0
	Indian	1	.5
	White	16	8.0
Years of service	Under 10 years	87	43.7
	10-15 years	26	13.1
	15-20 years	19	9.5
	Over 20 years	67	33.7

As illustrated in table 2 most of the respondents were constables (n=93; 46.7%). Table 2 indicates that the greater percentage of respondents (n=53; 26.6%) was from the Vanderbijlpark station. Conversely, Sharpeville (n=9) and Boipatong (n=9) stations both had the lowest responses of 4.5% each. Reflected in table 2 was the majority of respondents (n=80; 40.2%) who were between the ages of 25 and 35. In contrast, the lowest percentage of respondents was between the ages of 56 and 65 (n=4; 2.0%), and under the age of 25 (n=5; 2.5%). Table 2 further shows that the highest percentage (n=178; 89.4%) of respondents were Black and the lowest percentage of responses were from the Indian population group (n=1; .5%). Finally, table 2 illustrates that the greater proportion (n=87; 43.7%) of police officers who responded had 10 or fewer years of service in the safety and security government department whereas respondents with years of service ranging from 15 to 20 were the lowest (n=19; 9.5%).

5.2 Frequency analysis

Frequency analysis was performed in respect of variables for normative commitment, affective commitment, and continuance commitment.

5.2.1 Normative commitment frequencies

Table 3 provides frequency analysis data for the variables pertinent to normative commitment.

Table 3: Frequency analysis on normative commitment variables

Description of Variable	Cumulative % on disagree	Cumulative % on agree
I am loyal to this organisation because I have invested a lot in it, emotionally, socially, and economically	14.6	72.4
I am dedicated to this organisation because I fear what I have to lose in it	19.1	63.3
I feel that I owe this organisation quite a bit because of what it has done for me	25.1	58.8
My organisation deserves my loyalty because of its treatment towards me	15.6	66.8
I feel I would be letting my co-workers down if I wasn't a member of this organisation	17.6	66.8
I am loyal to this organisation because my values are largely its values	10.5	79.4
This organisation has a mission that I believe in and am committed to	9.0	82.4
I feel it is 'morally correct' to dedicate myself to this organisation	8.0	84.4

Following from table 3 the majority of sampled police officers showed that they were loyal to the safety and security cluster. Many of the respondents displayed a willingness to remain with the cluster because they had invested in it emotionally, socially, and economically. The fear of losing out on the investment they made engendered more dedication to the Sebokeng Cluster. Other than the fear to lose out on the investment, sampled police officers intended to stay because the cluster had made a significant contribution to them. Additionally, respondents exhibited an inclination to stay with the safety and security cluster as the action to the contrary would let their remaining co-workers down. Respondents' willingness to stay with the cluster could be directly attributed to the common values they aspire to and share with the safety and security cluster. The contention among respondents was that it was morally good thing to do to dedicate themselves to the Sebokeng Cluster. Previous research affirms that an employee who feels a strong sense of obligation to remain with the organisation for moral or ethical reasons is considered to have normative commitment towards his or her organisation and as matter of fact will not leave that organization (Döckel, 2003).

5.2.2 Affective commitment frequencies

The data resulting from frequency analysis in relation to affective commitment are captured in table 4.

Table 4: Frequency analysis on affective commitment variables

Description of Variable	Cumulative % on disagree	Cumulative % on agree
I am very happy being a member of this organisation	26.7	66.4
I enjoy discussing about my organisation with people outside it	33.7	56.3
I really feel as if this organisation's problems are my own	35.2	45.8
I think that I could easily become as attached to another organisation as I am to this one	42.2	39.7
I feel like 'part of the family' at my organisation	30.2	56.8
I feel 'emotionally attached' to this organisation	30.2	50.3
This organisation has a great deal of personal meaning for me	28.7	58.3
I feel a 'strong' sense of belonging to my organisation	25.6	59.8

The results from table 4 indicate that sampled police officers were happy being members of a police force in the Sebokeng Cluster and had virtually developed a psychological attachment to the cluster. There was also a strong identification with and confidence in the cluster, extending to proclivity to engage with external people about the cluster. Feeling as part of the family elicited a sense of ownership of the Sebokeng Cluster from the sampled police officers. The Sebokeng Cluster became a family that had to be defended and protected at all costs. The emotional attachment ingrained in the sampled police officers towards the Sebokeng Cluster led to increased affective commitment to the cluster. The literature indicates that employees who have developed an emotional bond with an organisation are more likely to stay with the organisation than to look for job opportunities elsewhere (Werner, 2007).

5.2.3 Continuance commitment frequencies

In table 5 the frequency analysis data in respect of continuance commitment is shown.

Table 5: Frequency analysis on continuance commitment items

Description of Variable	Cumulative % on disagree	Cumulative % on agree
I worry about the loss of investments I have made in this organisation	31.1	52.3
If I wasn't a member of this organisation, I would be sad because my life would be disrupted	33.1	50.7
I often feel anxious about what I have to lose with this organisation	14.6	63.3
Sometimes I worry about what might happen if something was to happen to this organisation and I was no longer a member	14.6	66.8

As illustrated in table 5 respondents agreed with all questionnaire statements. There was high level of continuance commitment among sampled police officers because of the fear of losing investments they made in the Sebokeng Cluster. They were holding to membership in the safety and security cluster because they desired to safeguard its interests. Emerging from the data was that the sampled police officers' retention of membership of the safety and security cluster was prompted by the the fear of disruption to their lives in case they left. In line with these research findings, Allen and Meyer (1996) found that employees were willing to remain in an organisation because of the non-transferable investments that the organisation had made. These non-transferable investments include retirement, relationships with other employees, or materials that are special to the organisation. **5.3 Mean scores** The results of organisational commitment questionnaire feedback indicated that the sampled police officers in the Sebokeng Cluster had a strong organisational commitment on all the three subscales, namely, normative commitment (M=3.8593), affective commitment (M= 3.2626), and continuance commitment, (M= 3.5846). This data can be viewed in figure 1. The results show that the normative commitment among sampled police officers was stronger than affective commitment and continuance commitment.

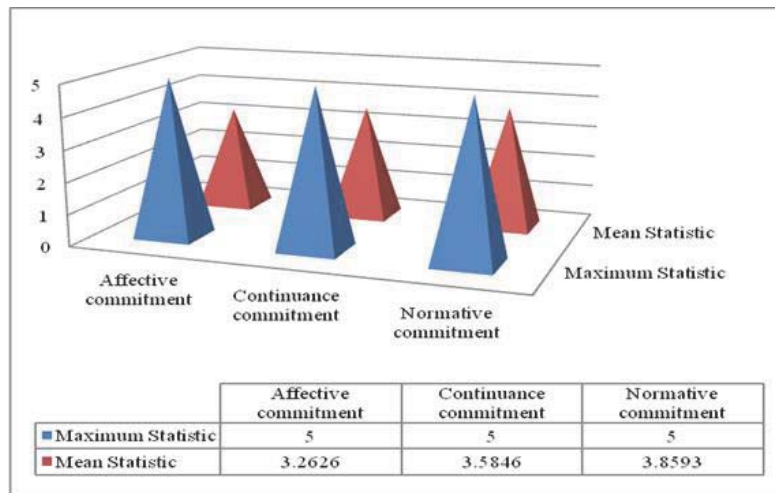


Figure 1: Mean scores of the three OC factors

6. Future research

The current research aimed at determining the level of occupation organisational commitment among police officers in the Sebokeng Cluster. Future research could assess the level of organisational commitment among police officers on a broader scale, either at provincial or national level. Similar research could be extended to other government departments on a municipal, provincial or national level.

7. Conclusion

The results emanating from the study are positive. In light of these research findings it is recommended that management at Sebokeng Cluster should continue the good management practices to sustain and enhance the prevalent organisationsl commitment among police officers. Prolonged stay by police officers with the Sebokeng Cluster could obviate costs of recruiting and training new police workforce. Strong organisational commitment ensures higher commitment of police officers to safety and security duties.

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