

Is Commitment to Long Term Career Necessary for Company's Survival or it is a Waste of Time? A Case of Companies in Vanderbijlpark, South Africa

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ABSTRACT

Commitment to long term career is very crucial in any business organization and not a waste of time because it leads to good performance of the organizations, boosting production and ultimately low turnover intention. Provided the importance of long term commitment to career by employees, more information into factors affecting long term career and its consequences are needed to help organizations improve their level of retaining employees. Individuals who are rated low on career commitment are unproductive in the organization. Influence of workplace spirituality, expectations towards work and quality of work life on commitment to long term career of businesses in the South African context, Vanderbijlpark in particular is the main objective of this paper. Examining the influence of workplace spirituality, expectations towards work and quality of work life on the commitment to long term career will be useful to human resource practitioners in determining the success of their organizations. Amos 22.0 was used to do Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). Three hypotheses are empirically validated using a sample of 320 employees from different companies in Vanderbijlpark, South Africa. The findings revealed that the research constructs which are workplace spirituality (WS), expectations towards work (EW) and quality of work life (QW) affect workers commitment to long term career (CC) in a significant positive way. Implications and future research directions of the study are further provided.

Keywords: Workplace spirituality, Expectations towards work, Quality of work life, Commitment to long term career.

INTRODUCTION

This study was set out to research and explore the influence of quality of work life, expectations towards work and perception of work on commitment to long-term career. This study also sought to know whether there is a direct relationship between the variables and can the variables prove that there is an influence on the outcome of commitment to long-term career. The need for this study and outcome of this study can assist and guide organizations to determine and study their own organization's quality of work life, the expectations of their employees and their employee's perception of their work in order to attract and retain their human capital. Managers in organizations can use the outcome of this research to determine the cost and implications of replacing skills, knowledge, expertise and intellectual property due to employees leaving their current careers because of unfavourable quality of work life, unrealistic expectations and wrong perceptions of their work.

The study sought answers to the questions:

- **Research Question (1):** To what extent does quality of work life influence commitment to long-term career?
- **Research Question (2):** To what extent does expectations towards work influence commitment to long-term career?
- **Research Question (3):** To what extent does quality of work influence commitment to long-term career?

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Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is to achieve the following:

- To investigate the influence of workplace spirituality on commitment to long term career.
- To investigate the relationship between expectations towards work and commitment to long term career.
- To investigate the influence of quality of work life on commitment to long term career.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In Vanderbijlpark employees are leaving their jobs at an alarming rate and there is every reason to find out why it’s like that. Retaining talented employees and keeping them healthy and well are increasingly important challenges for organisations in the age of the knowledge worker. Organisations are interrogating aspects such as the reasons why some employees are more satisfied, committed and engaged to their organisations than others (Sehuno, Viviers & Mayer, 2015). Favourable employment conditions give rise to high internal work motivation and satisfaction, high quality and productivity in work performance, low staff absenteeism and low turnover (Bednarska, Olszewski & Szutowski, 2013). The basic purpose of quality of work life is to develop a work environment that are excellent for people as well as for production (Rathamani & Ramchandra, 2013). It is noted from this study that the quality of work life does indeed have an influence on an employee’s commitment to a long-term career.

The gap between initial expectation and current satisfaction might serve as an important factor in predicting future intent to stay (Wang, 2010). The study proved the influence of expectation towards work on commitment to long-term career. Strong evidence presented in the paper of Munasinghe (2006), noted the effects of worker expectations on turnover. Workers with less favourable expectations have a substantially higher turnover rate and a more steeply declining turnover rate with job tenure that their counterparts.

Scroggins (2008) provided a model for companies to examine the efficacy of fit perceptions and meaningful work in order to reduce employee’s intent to leave. Taking the latter into consideration, it has become important for companies to create meaningful work experiences, especially for the purpose of work retention, performance and motivation, thus supporting the rational that perception of an employees work does have an influence on a long-term career (Scroggins, 2008; Roman & Mason, 2015). In support of the research done by Scroggins (2008), perception of work does have an influence on commitment to long-term career.

Effectively attracting, developing, managing, motivating and retaining committed employees have become critical success factors for sustained organisational performance (Beechler & Woodward, 2009; Chang, 2010; Spagnoli & Caetano, 2012). Staff shortages and an insufficient labour pool are the most common labour-related barriers to company productivity and performance (Mulaudzi, 2015).The commitment an employee has to an organization has consistently been found to be related to critical workplace behaviours. Research has, however, been debating the number of components of organizational commitment (Abbott, White & Charles, 2005).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Quality of Work Life

Quality of work life refers to favorableness of a job environment for people (Rathamani & Ramchandra, 2013). On the other hand, quality of work life refers to the characteristics of the job itself and to the circumstances under which it is performed (Lupton, 1975). It is a concept that expresses a special way of thinking about people, their work and the organization in which their careers are fulfilled (Al-Qutop & Harrim, 2011). Therefore, quality of work life is the satisfactory conditions and environment under which an employee performs his or her job.

Since the publication of the Department of Employment report in 1973, increasing emphasis is being given to the importance of a quality of work life culture (Mullins, 1999). Mullins (1991) added by stating that for the concept to become a reality, it must be seen as a goal, as a process for achieving that goal and as a philosophy setting out the way people should be managed. There has been ample research studying the concept quality of work life, but little attempts to determine the influence on

long-term career. Al-Qutop and Harrim (2011) defines three benefits from quality of life programs which is a more positive attitude towards work and the organization, increased productivity and increased effectiveness. Improvement in quality of life leads to numerous gains. It also leads to improved job satisfaction and involvement of employees (Stephen & Dhanapal, 2011).

Subjective satisfaction with the work experience by individuals can cause a higher productivity of the whole economy through stimulating the creativity and innovativeness of workers (Bednarska, Olszewski & Szutowski, 2013). The basic purpose of quality of life is to develop work environment that are excellent for people as well as for production. It aims at healthier, more satisfied and more productive employees and more efficient, adaptive and profitable to the organizations (Rathamani & Ramchandra, 2013). Abualrub and Al-Zaru (2008) investigated the relationships between job stress, recognition of performance and intention to stay among hospital nurses. The results showed a positive relationship between job performance and intention to stay at work and between job performance and recognition for competent and outstanding performance (Abualrub & Al-Zaru, 2008). This ultimately result in high commitment to long term career.

Baba and Jamal (1991) listed what they described as typical indicators of quality working life as safe work environment, equitable wages, equal employment opportunities and opportunities for advancement (Baba & Jamal, 1991). Eight areas are identified as related to quality of work life. They are coworker and supervisor support; teamwork and communication; job demands and decision authority; patient/resident care; characteristics of the organization; staff training and development and overall impressions of the organization (Wang, 2010). Quality of work life involves job security; good working conditions; adequate and fair compensation and equal employment opportunity all together (Rathamani & Ramchandra, 2013). Rathamani and Ramchandra (2013) also states that a good quality of work life reduces absenteeism; accidents and attrition.

The basic purpose of quality of work life is to develop a work environment that are excellent for people as well as for production (Rathamani & Ramchandra, 2013). Favorable employment conditions give rise to high internal work motivation and satisfaction, high quality and productivity in work performance, low staff absenteeism and turnover (Bednarska, Olszewski & Szutowski 2013). Referring to all the previous literature available on quality of life, there seem to be a general consensus that factors of quality of life is related to the working environment, job security, opportunities for growth and pay and benefits.

Expectations towards Work

An individual will act in a certain way based on the expectation that the act will be followed by a given outcome (Herrera, 2003). Expectancy is the perceived probability of satisfying a particular need of an individual on the basis of experience (Hersey, Blachard & Johnson, 2013). An expectancy, according to Vroom’s terminology, represents an individual’s belief that a particular degree of effort will be followed by a particular level of performance (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001). Expectations towards work will lead to required outcomes which are job satisfaction and low job turnover.

In the current economic climate, it becomes even more important for both employees and employers to arrive at the most efficient and positive work environment assimilation process possible (Barnett, 2012). Workers today can expect more periods of intermittent work disruption and disengagement as part of their employment trajectory due to the unpredictability of the unstable global economies (Shaw, 2013). The gap between initial expectation and current satisfaction might serve as an important factor in predicting future intent to stay (Wang, 2010).

As a result of generational differences in preferences and attitudes between generations, many management bodies now provide services on how best to manage generational differences at work (Cheng, 2013). The following factors were identified by Kreitner and Kinicki, (2001) as influential on an employee’s expectancy perception like self-esteem, self-efficacy, previous success at the task, help received from supervisor and subordinates, information necessary to complete the task and good materials and equipment to work with. Herrera (2003) suggested that expectations like rewards, fairness, punishment and discipline should be managed.

Employees need to know what is expected from them and they also need to know when they are doing a good job and when they are failing (Herrera, 2003). Research done by Bridges, Johnson and Sager (2007) suggests that personal characteristics can impact performance, expectations, satisfaction

and voluntary turnover. Moss (2014) demonstrates a technique by which performance expectations models may be optimized to fit the employee job criteria; therefore it might be possible to develop appropriate expectations models for other companies and position specifications.

The problem of retaining a stable and qualified workforce has become a major challenge to most human resource managers (Wang, 2010; Coetzee, Schreuder & Baker, 2015). The concept of congruence between personality and situational variables is not new to the fields of organizational psychology (Finegan, 2000). Most research has focused on how individuals, groups, organizations and cultures differ in the values they hold, and how these differences affect behavior (Abbott, White & Charles, 2005). If an employee has positive values, the influence on his or her expectations and perception cannot be underestimated. Perception towards work life deserves more intensive and in-depth research, especially examining quality of work life linkage with whole well-being (Al-Qutop & Harrim, 2011).

Commitment to Long-Term Career

Organisational commitment refers to attitudes implicit in a stable mind-set towards organisations (Chiu & Ng, 2013; Obi-Nwosu, Chiamaka & Tochukwu, 2013) and is viewed as the relative strength of an individual’s involvement in and commitment to a particular organisation (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Meyer and Allen’s (1991) multidimensional conceptualisation of organisational commitment integrates normative, continuous and affective commitment to form a three-component model of organisational commitment, comprising a cognitive, affective and conative component. A growing stream of research shows that fairness perceptions in organizations exert a strong influence on how employees react to a variety of aspects of organizational life leading to a commitment to long-term career (Kuvaas, 2008). The analysis done by Kuvaas (2008) indicated a strong, direct relationship between perceptions of developmental human resource practices and turnover intention. The recognition of different perspectives is an important and relevant concern for management. Different perceptions have been found to influence decisions, actions and behavioral outcomes (Sanchez-Vidal, Cegarra-Leiva, & Cegarra-Navarro, 2012). Perception of work-life support increases commitment and job satisfaction and reduces turnover intentions. Sanches-Vidal, *et al.*, (2012) continues by stating that getting people to see things from a common perspective and to move in a unified direction are critical challenges for managers.

In a study done by Abualrub and Al-Zaru (2008), the results indicated a negative relationship between job stress and intention to stay. The results also showed a positive relationship between job performance and intention to stay at work (Abualrub & Al-Zaru, 2008). Abualrub and Al-Zaru (2008) states that the direct buffering effects of recognition for performance and achievements on job stress and intention to stay at work could help in retaining staff. Until a unified approach has been achieved, the organization will be precluded from demonstrating optimal levels of performance (Zeytinoglu, Keser, Yilmaz, Inelmen, Ozsoy & Uygur, 2012). Eventually, the fulfillment of employees’ needs will trigger their satisfaction with the job, commitment to their job and hence leading to desire long tenure at their workplace (Chinomona & Dhurup, 2013). Moreover, there is reason to believe that commitment can be predicted either by the values of the person or the organization independently of the interaction between the values of the person and the organization (Finegan, 2000). Finegan (2000) states that an organization that values development, initiative, creativity and openness is likely to be perceived positively by many people and accordingly, respondents are also likely to be affectively committed.

The commitment an employee has to an organization has consistently been found to be related to critical workplace behaviors (Abbott, White & Charles, 2005). Literature and research has, however, been debating the number of components of organizational commitment. In the study done by Abbott *et al.*,(2005), the two studies confirm and clarify the link between work values and organizational commitment, finding that the values-organizational-commitment link appears robust across different types of organizational contexts.

RESEARCH MODEL

The influence of workplace spirituality, expectation towards work and quality of life on commitment to long-term career have been put in a figure form to show the relationships between the variables.

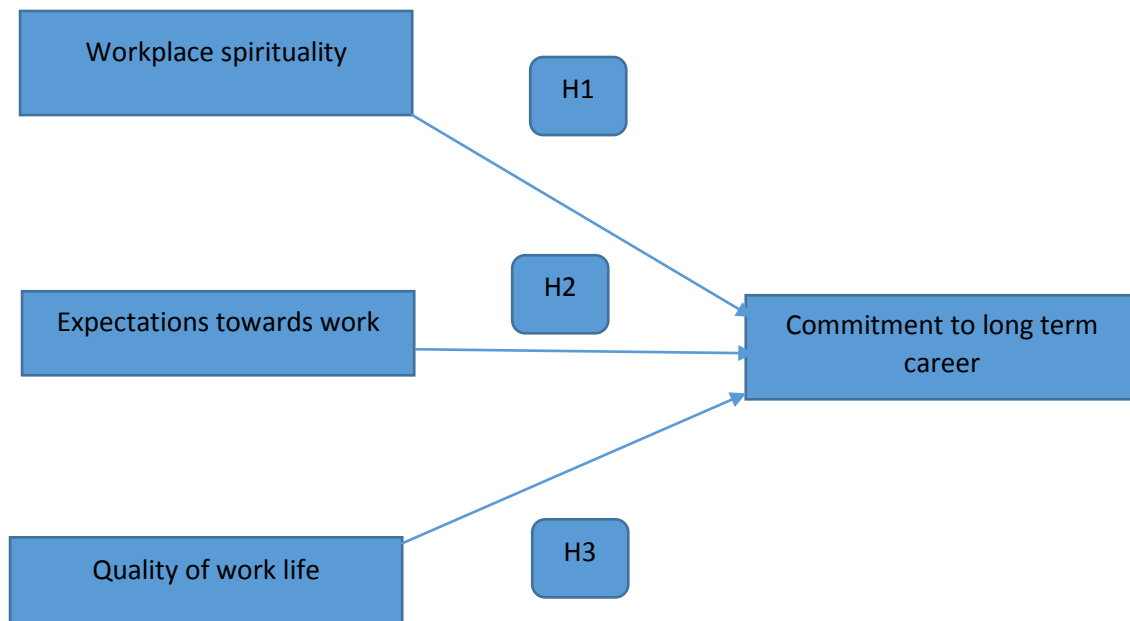


Figure1. Research Model

HYPOTHESIS STATEMENTS

H1: There is a positive influence between workplace spirituality and commitment to long-term career.

H2: There is a positive influence between expectation towards work and commitment to long-term career.

H3: There is a positive influence between quality work life and commitment to long-term career.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Sample and Data Collection

The target population for the study was South African companies in Vanderbijlpak which falls under the Gauteng province. The sampling unit was the individual workers who have company employee cards. The survey method has the advantage of speed, is less costly and the researcher has control over respondent type. Students from the Vaal University of Technology were recruited as research assistants to distribute and collect the questionnaires. Out of 350 questionnaires distributed, 320 usable questionnaires were retrieved for the final data analysis, representing a response rate of 91 per cent. To eliminate differences in response patterns due to different reference points, all respondents were prompted to answer the questionnaires with reference to companies they are working for.

Measurement Instrument

A questionnaire containing measurement items was designed based on previous work for the current study. Adjustments were made in order to fit the purpose of the current research context. All the measurement items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scales that was anchored by 1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree to express the degree of agreement.

Data Analyses and Results

The research sample is described below. Then, the two-step procedure suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) was applied to analyze the research data. That is, the accuracy of multi-item construct measures was assessed, followed by a test of the research model and hypotheses. In both data analysis stages, the current study mainly used Structural-Equation-Modeling (SEM) technique. The computation SEM software was AMOS 22.0

Sample Description

Descriptive statistics in Table 1 show the gender, age, nationality, home language and the academic qualifications of employees in the company. The profile indicates that more females are employed in the companies compared to males. 62% were females and 38% were males. The age which is the

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mode is 21-25 which constitutes 49% of the 5 different age groups. The study showed that there few employees who are 31-35 years (5%) and 36 and above (3%). South African employees constituted the majority since the study was done in South African context. South African constitute 70% and others constitute 30%. Highest qualification, most of the employees were matriculation holders (65%), followed by those with diplomas (12%), certificates holder (8%), degree (7%), postgraduate holders (7%) again and other qualifications holders (1%).

Table1. Sample demographic characteristics

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	120	38%
Female	200	62%
Total	320	100%
Age	Frequency	Percentage
17-20	118	37%
21-25	156	49%
26-30	19	6%
31-35	17	5%
36 & older	10	3
Total	320	100%
Nationality	Frequency	Percentage
South African	224	70%
Others	96	30%
Total	320	100%
Academic Qualifications	Frequency	Percentage
Matriculation	208	65%
Certificate	27	8%
Diploma	38	12%
Degree	22	7%
Post Graduate Degree	22	7%
Others	3	1%
Total	320	100%

Measurement Accuracy Assessment

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to examine the reliability, convergent and discriminant validity of the multi-item construct measures. Overall acceptable CFA model fit indices used in this study included: the $\chi^2/(df)$ (Chi-Square/Degree of Freedom) value equal to or less than 3.00, the CFI (Comparative Fit Index) value equal to or higher than 0,90, Tucker and Lewis Index (TLI) value equal to or higher than 0,90, the Incremental Index of Fit (IFI) value equal to or higher than 0.90, and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) value equal to or less than 0.08. Recommended statistics for the final overall model assessment showed an acceptable fit of the measurement model to the data, that is: $\chi^2/(df) = 1,200$, GFI = 0.904, CFI = 0,907, TLI = 0,919, IFI = 0,928 and RMSEA = 0,049.

Table2. Accuracy Analysis Statistics

Research Construct	Cronbach’s Test		C.R Value	AVE Value	Highest variance shared	Factor loading
	Item-total	α value				
WS 1	0.741					0.750
WS 2	0.690					0.698
WS 3	0.888	0.901	0.900	0.895	0.422	0.898
WS 4	0.900					0.905
EW 1	0.866					0.875
EW 2	0.808					0.855
EW 3	0.908	0.951	0.951	0.933	0.455	0.910
EW 4	0.845					0.862
QW 1	0.622					0.632
QW 2	0.743	0.889	0.888	0.822	0.438	0.749
QW 3	0.823					0.834
QW 4	0.857					0.852

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CC 1	0.912					0.916
CC 2	0.933	0.908	0.908	901		0.945
CC 3	0.957					0.969

Note: WS: Workplace Spirituality; EW: Expectations towards work; QW: Quality of work life; CC: Commitment to long-term career; C.R.: Composite Reliability; AVE: Average Variance Extracted; S.V.: Shared Variance; * Scores: 1 – Strongly Disagree; 3 – Neutral; 5 – Strongly Agree Measurement CFA model fits: $\chi^2/(df) = 1,200$, CFI = 0,907, TLI = 0,919, IFI = 0,928 and RMSEA = 0,049.

Loadings of individual items on their respective constructs are shown in Table 2. The lowest value for individual item loadings for the research constructs is 0,698. Therefore, all the individual item loadings exceeded the recommended value of 0, 5 (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). This indicates that all the measurement instruments are acceptable and reliable since all the individual items converged well and with more than 60% of each item’s variance shared with its respective construct.

As indicated from the results shown in Table 2, the lowest obtained composite reliability (CR) value of 0,888 is well above the recommended 0.6 (Hulland, 1999), while the lowest obtained average variance (AVE) value is also above the recommended 0.5 (Fraering & Minor, 2006). This indicates that convergent validity was achieved and also this further confirms and excellent internal consistency and reliability of the measurement instruments used. Table 3 shows the discriminant validity was established by ensuring that average variance extracted (AVE) for each multi-item construct was greater than the shared variance between constructs (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Table3. Correlations between Constructs

Research Construct	Construct Correlation			
	QW	EW	PW	CC
Workplace Spirituality (WS)	1.000			
Expectations towards work (EW)	0.523	1.000		
Quality of work life (QW)	0.450	0.505	1.000	
Commitment to long-term career(CC)	0.422	0.431	0.558	1.000

Note: WS: Workplace Spirituality; EW: Expectations towards work; QW: Quality of work life; CC: Commitment to long-term career

As such all pairs of constructs revealed an adequate level of discriminant validity (see Table 3) because of the correlations are less than 1. By and large these results provided evidence for acceptable levels of research scale reliability.

Table4. Analysis results of the research structural model and related hypotheses

Path Coefficients	Hypothesis	Factor Loading
Workplace Spirituality (WS) → Commitment to long-term career(CC)	H1	0,789***
Expectations towards work (EW) → Commitment to long-term career(CC)	H2	0,905***
Quality of work life (QW) → Commitment to long-term career(CC)	H3	0,933***

Note: ^a significance level <0,05 **; ^b significance level <0,1*; significance level <0,001*** ,Research structural model fits: $\chi^2/(df) = 2.037$, GFI = 0.900, CFI= 0,902, TLI = 0,905, IFI = 0,916, and RMSEA = 0,070.

The research model was estimated and the hypotheses testing done. All the research model fit statistics were within the acceptable ranges, i.e., $\chi^2/(df) = 2.037$, GFI = 0.900, CFI= 0,902, TLI = 0,905, IFI = 0,916, and RMSEA = 0,070. The individual hypothesis testing results are shown in Table 4. The path co-efficients for H1, H2, H3 are 0.789, 0.905 and 0.933 respectively. H1, H2 and H3 are all significant at a confidence level (p-value) of 0.001. Therefore the results support for all the proposed three hypotheses. This shows that the data fits well to the hypothesized model.

IMPLICATIONS

This study has both academic and practical implications. On the academic front, it provides added literature to the context of companies in South African which seem to have been neglected by researchers in terms of how they can increase employees’ commitment to long-term career. Most of the researches have been done in developed countries and research on companies in Africa is still scant so this research aim to fill the void by expanding the already existing literature.

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As a practical contribution the study has implications to the top management employees in South African companies around Vanderbijlpark. They should aim to provide good quality of work life, high and positive expectations towards work, high and positive perception of work and high commitment to long-term career. Measures might include employees support services like instituting a strict code of conduct and ensure that the code is understood, observed and enforced for effective results. Managers are required to work hand in hand with employees to promote cooperation and encourage team spirit at work places. Cooperation and teamwork tend to increase worker satisfaction at workplaces if done in the right way. Organizations should not only match the job requirements with the person’s knowledge, skills and abilities, but also carefully match the person’s personality and values with the organization’s values and culture. This will result in commitment to long term career (Chew & Chan 2008).

Previous research by Chinomona and Dhurup (2013) indicated that if an employee’s needs are met, it does have an influence and impact on their commitment to their long-term career decisions. Eventually, the fulfilment of employees’ needs will trigger their satisfaction with the job, commitment to their job and hence leading to desire long tenure at their workplace (Chinomona & Dhurup 2013).

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study encountered a number of limitations, which need to be considered. The size of the sample in this research was too small. The required relationships from the data and the statistical tests using SEM requires a bigger size sample to ensure a representative outcome. The questionnaire used for this study, was not subjected to a pilot study prior to the distribution. The researcher could have addressed the questions in such a way that a better results would have been gathered and represented. The researcher also realizes that meaningful results could have been obtained if qualitative research and quantitative were used together. The researcher acknowledge the limitations to this research, but also pose it to be opportunities for future research. The researcher suggests this research to be done in other South African provinces like Limpopo province, Mpumalanga and other provinces for comparison reasons and also could get different results.

The researcher also suggest that for future research, the sample size should be considered and increased to gain the required statistical results. More time and effort should be spend on the distribution and proper collection of the questionnaires. To be able to reach measurable and conclusive conclusions, the researcher suggest to distribute the questionnaires by recognisable organisations in South Africa and avoid using students.

CONCLUSION

This study makes a great contribution to the South African companies, those in Vanderbijlpark in particular in that managers are being asked to treat employees well such that they stay long. It is very expensive to lose employees that you have in terms of monetary value and performance of the company. In this study all the three hypotheses postulated were supported by the data. It means the data fits well with the model. So commitment to long term career its very crucial and not a waste of time in any organisation as it contributes to the survival of the organisation.

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