

# PSYCHOLOGICAL CAREER RESOURCES IN RELATION TO ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

**Orientation:** The impact of the current skills shortage and demands for retaining talented and skilled staff in a rapidly changing careers context and the consequences for employee loyalty, morale and commitment have led to a renewed interest in the motives, values and career meta-competencies that determine individuals' psychological attachment to their organisations and occupations.

**Research purpose:** The aim of the study was to determine the relationship between the psychological career resources (as measured by the Psychological Career Resources Inventory) and organisational commitment (as measured by the Organisational Commitment Scale).

**Motivation for study:** There appears to be a need for research on the psychological career resources that enhance individuals' career agency in proactively managing their career and the way in which these attributes influence their psychological attachment to the organisation in order to guide human resource and career-development support practices in retaining valuable staff.

**Research design, approach and method:** A quantitative survey was conducted on a convenience sample of 358 employed adults at managerial and staff levels in the field of economic and management services.

**Main findings/results:** Correlational and stepwise regression analyses revealed a number of significant relationships between the two variables.

**Practical implications:** Managers and human resource practitioners need to recognise how people's career preferences and career meta-competencies influence their sense of psychological attachment to the organisation.

**Contribution:** The findings add to existing career literature on the psychological factors that affect the retention of staff and provide valuable information that can be used to inform career-development support practices in the contemporary world of work.

## INTRODUCTION

### Key focus of the study

Managers and human resource practitioners have long been concerned with employees' psychological attachment to the organisation in the light of economic events such as mergers, acquisitions and layoffs, all of which change the nature of the relationship between employees and the organisation (Baruch, 2004; Bentein, Vandenberghe, Vandenberg & Stinglhamber, 2005). Coutinho, Dam and Blustein (2008) posit that given the demands of free-market capitalism, the infusion of technology and the global skills scarcity, which are on the one hand reducing the need for many types of workers and, on the other hand, increasing the concerns about retaining valuable skilled staff as a scarce resource, it is likely that there are not enough intrinsically motivating jobs and meaningful work options available to the majority of people. These changes are reflected in the changing definitions of work, careers and job structure, all of which mirror widespread downsizing, subsequent losses in job security, highly divergent and diverse career paths, shifts in organisational loyalties and an emphasis on career agency (Baruch, 2004; Marshall & Bonner, 2003; Sinclair, 2009; Suutari & Taka, 2004).

The present study focused on the psychological career resources that promote individuals' career agency in proactively managing their career and the way in which these attributes influence their psychological attachment or commitment to the organisation. By identifying the relationship between these variables, recommendations can be made to enhance human resource practices, such as organisational career-development support, as a critical element in the retention of key talent. Organisational career-development support is increasingly being recognised as a critical aspect of quality human resource management (Baruch & Quick, 2007). An investment in best human resource practices, such as career-development support, has been shown to solidify organisational commitment to employers (Spiegel & Schultz, 2003) and employees' overall job and career satisfaction (Barnett & Bradley, 2007; Kuijpers & Scheerens, 2006).

Organisations that offer employees personal growth and development opportunities by way of career-development support practices will possibly gain more benefits by ensuring that employees truly recognise how to proactively manage their own career (Coetzee, Bergh & Schreuder, 2010; Holbeche, 1997; Kidd, 2008). Ironically, the fear of losing valuable employees repeatedly comes to the fore as one of the key reasons why career-development support processes are not made accessible

to employees (Baruch, 2006). A lack of organisational support generally has long-term negative effects on an organisation's financial status, because a lack of organisational commitment is associated with lower job satisfaction (Blegen, 1993; McNeese-Smith & Van Servellen, 2000).

## Background to the study

Career changes nowadays cause people to have different goals and expectations with regard to job and career satisfaction and what they look for in their jobs. Faithfulness or commitment to organisations seems to be directly associated with how well people observe their psychological needs are being met, respected and recognised by organisations (Hughes & Half, 2009) and their career predictions at a specific time in the organisation (Baruch, 2006; Holbeche, 1997). Research has shown that from the individual's perspective, the turbulent careers context has led to a growing concern for developing a range of psychological career resources or career meta-competencies that enable people to take ownership of their career and be proactive agents in managing their career and enhancing their employability (Baruch, 2004; Coetzee, 2008;

Fugate, Kinicki & Ashforth, 2004; Sinclair, 2009).

McQuaid and Linsay (2005) believe that the responsibility for employability has now shifted from the organisation to the employee. This means that the main responsibility for growth and continued professional development lies with the individual. Fugate *et al.* (2004) contend that employees are responsible for career information, expertise and capabilities, as well as other abilities required by present and potential employers to sustain employability in both existing and future situations. Employability refers not only to people's ability to gain entrance to the place of work, adjust to the place of work and be dynamic in the place of work, but also to their constant ability to perform, obtain or create work through the best possible use of both occupation-related and career meta-competencies (Coetzee & Roythorne-Jacobs, 2007; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Herr, Cramer & Niles, 2004; Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006).

Career meta-competencies are regarded as a set of psychological career resources critical to the career-development process. These psychological career resources include attributes and

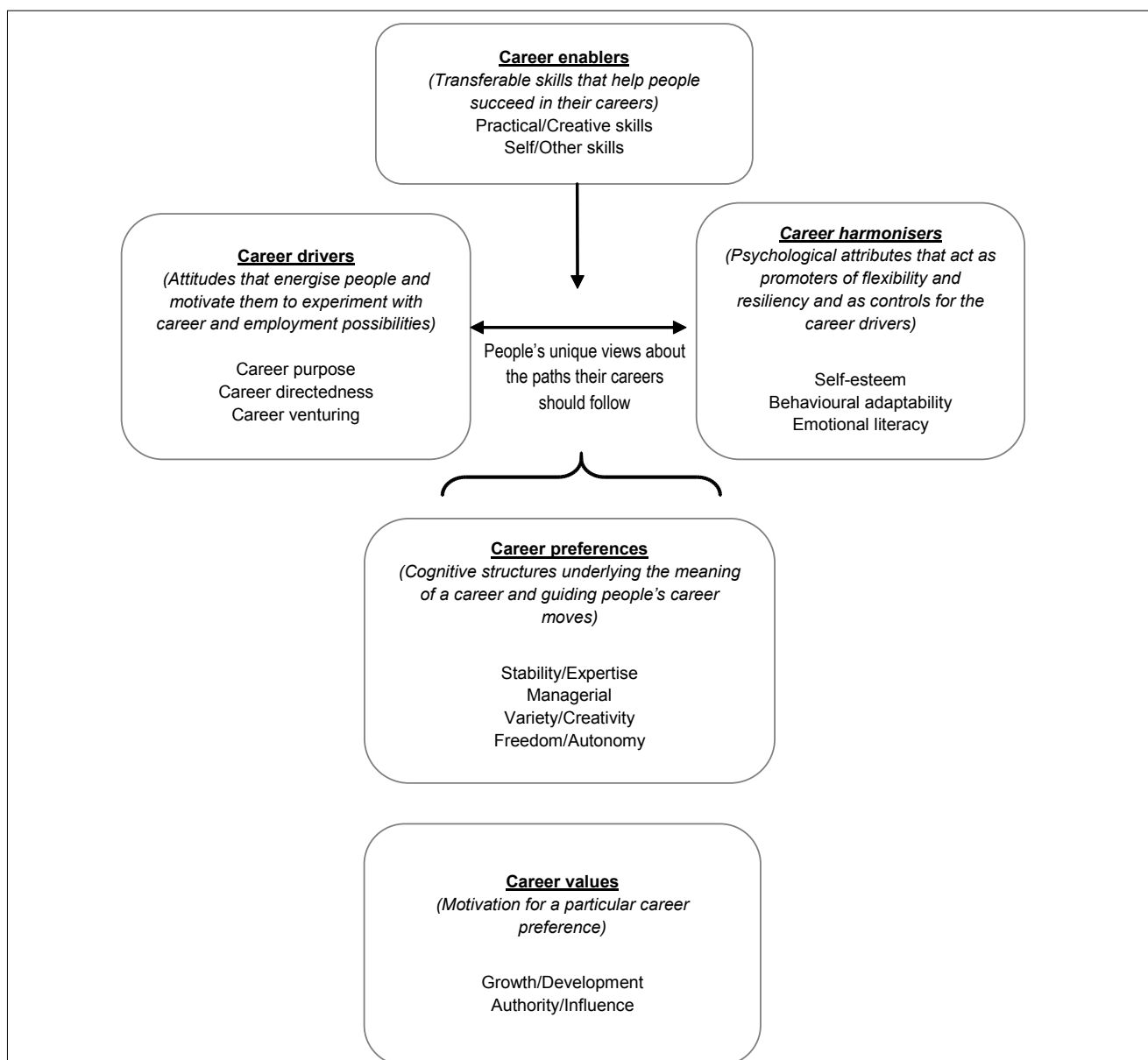


FIGURE 1

A theoretical framework of the construct psychological career resources

abilities such as behavioural adaptability, self-knowledge, career-orientation awareness, sense of purpose, self-esteem and emotional literacy, and allow individuals to be self-sufficient learners in the management of their own career (Briscoe & Hall, 1999; Coetzee, 2008; Coetzee & Roythorne-Jacobs, 2007; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Herr *et al.*, 2004). Living a proactive life and successfully managing one's career, for instance through a strong sense of purpose, commitment to individual goals and focused psychological resources and attempts, predict how psychologically balanced and fulfilled individuals would feel in three years' time (Gottfredson & Duffy, 2008).

Individuals' repertoire of psychological career resources has the function of organising their experiences, identifying their long-term contributions and establishing criteria for success by which they can measure themselves. In addition to helping them to understand the motives for choosing an occupation, the notion of career preferences, values and career-related skills and behavioural attributes (or career meta-competencies) provide a useful framework for examining how individuals' psychological career resources relate to their organisational commitment levels (Ferreira, 2009). Research indicates that individuals' career motives, values and psychological resources have an impact on their career decision making and their psychological attachment to an occupation (Feldman & Bolino, 2000; Kniveton, 2004; Schein, 1996). Career preferences and values are key determinants of an individual's career choice. Individuals often become aware of their career preferences and values when their self-image is boosted or damaged by compulsory career moves such as promotion or discharge (Schein, 1996).

## Trends from the literature

### Psychological career resources

Resources are defined as those entities that either are centrally appreciated in their own right (e.g. self-esteem, close attachments, wellbeing and internal tranquility) or operate as a means to gain centrally appreciated ends (Hobfoll, 2002). This broad definition forms part of a number of major theoretical perspectives that focus on psychological resources (Hobfoll, 1998). In the context of this study, the psychological career resources model developed by Coetzee (2008) is used as a theoretical framework.

Career meta-competencies consist of an assortment of psychological career resources, which include attributes and abilities such as behavioural flexibility, self-knowledge, career-orientation consciousness, sense of reason, self-esteem and affective literacy, which enable individuals to be independent learners and hands-on agents in the administration of their career (Coetzee, 2008; Hall & Chandler, 2005). 'A person's psychological career resources profile reflects the career awareness of an individual' (Coetzee, 2008, p. 10). This notion of individuals' career awareness is based on Adler's (1956) explanation of the idea of consciousness. Career consciousness is described by Coetzee (2008) as individuals' awareness; career-related cognitions, which include perceptions, attentiveness and self-evaluations of their calling preferences; attitudes; ideals; skills and behaviours that are understood and identified by individuals as a vital factor in actualising their objectives and experiencing career/job satisfaction.

Coetzee (2008) presents a valuable theoretical framework to help individuals recognise the significance of developing their inner career resources and drawing on these psychological resources to improve their universal employability characteristics and abilities. Figure 1 illustrates how the different psychological career resources connect with each other.

As indicated in Figure 1, people's *career preferences and career values* (individuals' personal view about their career) steer their career moves, values or ideals on the basis of their enthusiasm for a particular career preference (Brousseau, 1990). The

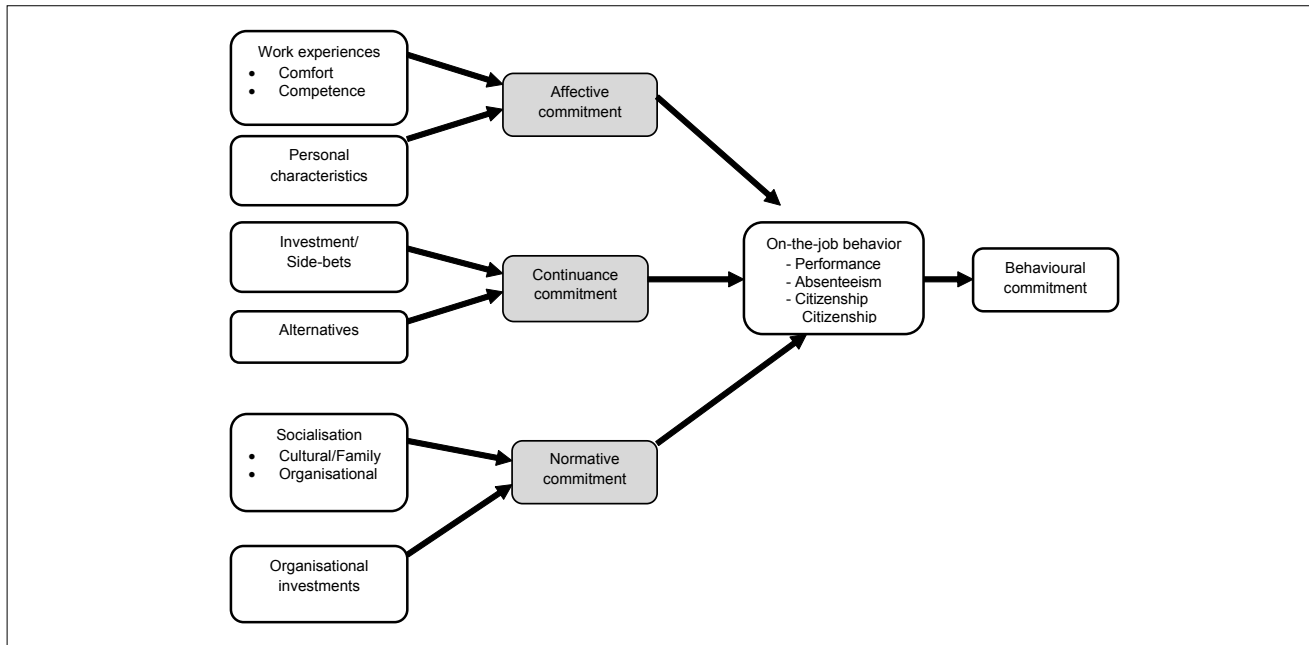
*career drivers* (career purpose, career directedness and career venturing) refer to a person's sense of clarity on future career guidelines and targets or finding fresh career opportunities (Coetzee, 2008). The *enablers* (practical or creative skills and self or other skills) refer to individuals' concious skills, such as their practical or artistic skills and self-management and association/relations skills, in other words those abilities that may help individuals to create successful careers (Coetzee, 2008). The *harmonisers* (self-esteem, behavioural adaptability, emotional literacy and social connectivity) encourage flexibility, and moreover act as a control measure to ensure that the career drivers are in balance so that individuals do not go overboard in the development or reinvention of their profession (Coetzee, 2008).

**Career preferences and career values:** People's career preferences and career values refer to their exceptional visions about the direction their career should take that steer their career choices. People's career preferences and career values are also considered as the continuing cognitive or theoretical structures forming the basis of their thoughts about their career that provide the significance of a career to them (Coetzee & Schreuder, 2009). Career preferences and career values therefore become the leading basis for individuals' long-term career choices. Whereas individuals' career preferences direct their career moves, career values indicate the inspiration for a specific career preference (Brousseau, 1990; Coetzee, 2008). This means that individuals' long-term career goals can be influenced by the way they value their career.

**Career drivers:** In terms of career drivers, the concept of career purpose can be explained as people's sense of having a career passion (Coetzee, 2008). A sense of purpose is based on individuals' self-belief and personal convictions, which they are able to fulfil through their career goals. The concept of career directedness can be defined as a person's sense of clarity on future career guidance and targets, as well as the precision in terms of where and how support will be found for achieving his or her career targets or finding fresh career opportunities (Coetzee, 2008). In essence, this means that individuals show career directedness once clear goals or targets have been set, and then strive to achieve these goals or reach these targets by using their strengths and abilities. The concept of career venturing can be seen as an individual's willingness to take risks by exploring new and fresh career opportunities. When individuals seem to be satisfied with their career, they need to be helped to uphold their feeling of satisfaction. This can be done by developing new skills to help them do the job to the best of their ability.

**Career enablers:** Coetzee (2008) identifies two constructs associated with the idea of career enablers, namely practical/creative and self/other skills. This includes skills such as applying existing theoretical constructs in a practical and innovative manner in order to concentrate on new ways of doing things. Career enablers can be defined as individuals' convenience skills, such as their practical or artistic skills, and self-management and association/relationship skills, in other words those abilities that may help individuals create a successful career (Coetzee, 2008). Once individuals have developed the skills and knowledge to sustain the feeling of satisfaction, they need to develop emotional intelligence to harmonise their career.

**Career harmonisers:** Career harmonisers are embedded in individuals' emotional intelligence and social connectivity (Coetzee, 2008). According to Emmerling and Cherniss (2003), individuals who are emotionally intelligent are probably in a better situation to make use of the motivational characteristics of their emotions. They may be capable of focusing on exact emotions throughout the development of decisions about their career. This will have a motivational effect on adaptive behaviour by encouraging individuals to consider numerous affective components when making occupational choices.



Meyer, J.P., & Allen, N. (1991). A three component conceptualization of organisational commitment. *Human Resource Management Review*, 1, 61–89.

FIGURE 2  
A three-component model of organisational commitment

Social connectivity, on the other hand, can be explained as an individual's ability to interact with others and create and uphold fulfilling and sustaining relationships (Coetzee, 2008). The feelings experienced throughout the career decision-making process and with regard to social relationships in the job probably influence the awareness of the risks related to accurate career alternatives, the quantity and type of self-exploration individuals engage in and how they process information linked to career selection (Emmerling & Cherniss, 2003). Behavioural adaptability can be seen as individuals' ability to recognise those traits that are significant for potential performance and to be able to make the required personal changes to meet their career-related desires (Coetzee, 2008).

Coetzee (2008) suggests that the different characteristics of a person's psychological resources have to be in a state of equilibrium to allow development within the individual as a whole. If any one of the components are out of balance, none of the other components can be fully functional and thereby assist in self-empowering career behaviour. Reasonable, best possible functioning of the psychological resources is a sign of self-directed career behaviour that is guided within and determined by the person's career preferences, career values, sense of purpose, career directedness and self-awareness.

### Organisational commitment

The concept of organisational commitment has attracted considerable interest in an attempt to understand and clarify the intensity and stability of an employee's dedication to the organisation (Mester, Visser, Roodt & Kellerman, 2003). Researchers have distinguished between three approaches to study commitment, namely attitudinal, behavioural and motivational. There is a considerable body of literature relating to the concept of organisational commitment. Although a number of different definitions have been offered (Becker, 1960; Buchannan, 1974; Grusky, 1966; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Porter & Lawler, 1968; Pretorius & Roodt, 2004; Salancik, 1977; Sheldon, 1971), a common thread that can be found is the notion that commitment is the psychological bond of the employee to the organisation (Humphreys, Weyant & Sprague, 2003).

According to Gbadamosi (2003), the more favourable individuals' attitudes towards the organisation are, the greater

their acceptance of the goals of the organisation, as well as their willingness to exert more effort on behalf of the organisation. Mathieu and Zajac (1990, p. 171) believe that 'developing a better perception of the progression associated with organisational commitment has an effect on employees, organisations and the world in general'. The level of employees' organisational commitment will possibly ensure that they are better suited to receive both extrinsic (which include remuneration and benefits) and psychological (which include essentially job satisfaction and associations with fellow employees) rewards related to associations. Organisations appreciate commitment on the part of their staff. Organisational commitment is generally assumed to reduce abandonment behaviours, which include tardiness and turnover. In addition, employees who are committed to their organisation may possibly be more willing to participate in 'extra-role' activities, such as being creative or innovative, which frequently guarantee an organisation's competitiveness in the market (Katz & Kahn, 1978).

In the context of this study, organisational commitment is defined as a psychological connection individuals have with their organisation, characterised by strong recognition with the organisation and a yearning to contribute towards the accomplishment of organisational goals (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model of organisational commitment is therefore relevant to this study. Meyer and Allen (1991) define organisational commitment as reflecting three extensive aspects, namely affective, continuance and normative. Commitment can therefore be seen as reflecting an affective point of reference towards the organisation, acknowledgement of the consequences related to leaving the organisation, and an ethical responsibility to stay with the organisations (Meyer & Allen, 1991). The main distinction between the three components is in the state of mind. The three components differentiate between affective connection to the organisation (identified as affective commitment); supposed price of leaving (identified as continuance commitment); and the responsibility to stay with the organisation (identified as normative commitment) (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

**Affective commitment:** Affective commitment is the individual's affective connection to, recognition with and participation in the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1997).



Employees who are affectively committed to the organisation will probably carry on working for it because they want to (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Individuals who are dedicated at an emotional level usually remain with the organisation because they see their individual employment relationship as harmonious with the goals and values of the organisation for which they are currently working. Affective commitment development involves recognition of the organisation and internalisation of organisational principles and standards (Beck & Wilson, 2000).

**Continuance commitment:** The second component of Allen and Meyer's model of organisational commitment is continuance commitment, referring to 'awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organisation' (Meyer & Allen, 1997, p. 11). This definition is maintained by Kanter (1968, p. 504), who states that it is the 'profit associated with continued participation and a cost associated with leaving the organisation'. Because of the individual's awareness or consideration of expenses and threats linked to leaving the organisation, this state of mind is considered to be calculative (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Meyer and Allen (1991) also indicate that individuals whose most important connection to the organisation is based on continuance commitment stay because they need to.

Individuals remain with a specific organisation because of the money they add as a result of the time spent in the organisation, not because they want to. This differs from affective commitment, where individuals remain with an organisation because they want to and because they are familiar with it and its principles.

**Normative commitment:** Normative commitment can be explained as a sense of responsibility to continue employment with a specific organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1997). The internalised normative idea of responsibility and commitment allows employees' appreciated continued membership of a specific organisation (Allen & Meyer, 1990). The normative element is seen as the commitment individuals think about morally regarding their right to remain with a specific organisation, in spite of how much status improvement or fulfilment the organisation provides to the individual over the years (March & Mannari, 1977).

**Psychological career resources and organisational commitment:** Several studies suggest that job satisfaction encourages the highest level of organisational commitment (Lok & Crawford, 1999). Findings of a study conducted by Valentine, Godkin and Lucero (2002) show that organisational commitment is positively related to person-organisation fit. Research has also demonstrated that a conflict between the personal characteristics of employees and the attributes of their organisations is related to job dissatisfaction, low organisational commitment, substandard job performance, job stress and turnover (Judge & Ferris, 1992; Peterson, 2003; Schneider, Goldstein & Smith, 1995). Research conducted by Coetzee, Schreuder and Tladinyane (2007) revealed that people's career orientations and career motives are significantly related to their level of organisational commitment. Coetzee and Schreuder (2009) found people's psychological career resources to be significantly influenced by their career orientations and career motives, and Coetzee and Bergh (2009) showed psychological career resources to be a significant predictor of subjective work experiences such as perceived life and job/career satisfaction. Based on the above research findings, the following hypothesis was formulated:

*H1:* Psychological career resources are significantly related to people's level of organisational commitment.

## Research objectives

The present study aimed at empirically assessing whether psychological career resources positively relate to organisational

commitment. This article adds to research on the psychological attributes that influence people's psychological attachment to their organisations. The assessment of whether psychological career resources are related to organisational commitment may provide valuable information for human resource managers and practitioners concerned with career-development support practices for the retention of valuable staff.

The next section of the article elaborates on the research design, which covers the research approach and method, followed by the presentation of the results and a discussion of the findings. The article concludes with a brief synopsis of main conclusions, implications for practice and recommendations for potential future research.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

### Research approach

For this exploratory pilot study, a quantitative survey design was used to achieve the research objective (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 2003).

### Research method

#### Participants

The participants were a convenience sample of 358 employed adults at managerial and staff levels in the field of economic and management services who were enrolled for a human resource management programme at a higher distance education institution and who attended a one-week study school. The sample was predominantly represented by African people (84%). The rest of the sample consisted of White people (8%), Coloured people (6%) and Indian people (2%) in the early adulthood life/career stage (26–40 years). Overall, the Black (92%) and female (76%) participants dominated the sample. Participants were employed full-time and occupied relatively high-level positions at senior and middle management level (47%) and staff level (44%) in the economic and management services. The following economic sectors were represented: 40% human resource management, 7% education, 3% administration, 1% accounting and finance, and 0.6% nursing, public administration and social work.

#### Measuring instruments

The psychological career resources inventory (PCRI) (Coetzee, 2008) and the organisational commitment scale (OCS) (Meyer & Allen, 1997) was used to measure the variables of concern to this study.

**Psychological career resources inventory:** The PCRI (Coetzee, 2007) is a self-rated, multi-factorial measure that contains 64 items and five subscales (career preferences, career values, career enablers, career drivers, career harmonisers). The PCRI measures 15 constructs in total. A six-point Likert-type scale was used for subject responses to each of the 64 items. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each subscale range from 0.71 to 0.88. In terms of validity, interconstruct correlations range from 0.14 to 0.58, indicating small to large practical effect size. Studies conducted by Coetzee (2008) and Coetzee and Esterhuizen (2010) confirmed the reliability and validity of the PCRI in the South African context.

**Organisational commitment scale:** Organisational commitment was measured using the three-dimensional instrument of Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993), which was originally developed by Allen and Meyer (1990). The affective, continuance and normative organisational commitment scales each comprise six items, a modification of the original questionnaire. Meyer *et al.* (1993) reported internal consistency reliability estimates (Cronbach's alphas) for affective commitment (0.82), continuance commitment (0.74) and normative commitment (0.83).

TABLE 1  
Descriptive statistics: PCRI and OCS

Measuring instrument subscales (N = 358)	Means	Standard deviations	Cronbach's alpha coefficients
<b>PCRI</b>			
<b>Career preference</b>			
Stability/Expertise	5.29	0.58	0.69
Managerial	4.55	0.99	0.69
Variety/Creativity	4.92	0.84	0.76
Freedom/Autonomy	4.25	0.95	0.76
<b>Career values</b>			
Growth/Development	5.46	0.57	0.76
Authority/Influence	4.27	1.01	0.61
<b>Career enablers</b>			
Practical/Creative skills	4.48	0.92	0.82
Self/Other skills	5.04	0.78	0.7
<b>Career driver</b>			
Career purpose	5.45	0.56	0.8
Career directedness	4.4	1	0.74
Career venturing	4.38	1.22	0.87
<b>Career harmonisers</b>			
Self-esteem	5.32	0.7	0.84
Behavioural adaptability	4.67	0.81	0.77
Emotional literacy	4.46	0.96	0.79
Social connectivity	5.09	0.81	0.79
<b>OCS</b>			
Affective commitment	4	0.99	0.71
Continuance commitment	4.14	1.02	0.68
Normative commitment	3.77	1.35	0.7

Responses were made on a seven-point scale and were averaged to yield composite commitment scores for each respondent. The instrument was considered to be psychometrically acceptable. Studies by Coetzee *et al.* (2007), Ferreira (2009) and Lumley (2010) confirmed the reliability and validity of the OCS in the South African context.

As the purpose of this study was not to make individual predictions based on the PCRI and OCS, but rather to investigate broad trends and certain relationships between variables, the instruments were considered psychometrically acceptable.

### Research procedure

Information regarding the aim of the study, the confidentiality of the responses and instructions for completing the questionnaire was given to the respondents on the first day of the study school. The PCRI and OCS were distributed among all respondents who attended the study school. The questionnaires were administered in the group session and collected as soon as they were completed. Each questionnaire included a covering letter inviting subjects to voluntarily participate in the study, assuring them that their individual responses would remain confidential. In terms of ethics, permission from the institution's research ethics committee was obtained. A covering letter stated that by completing the questionnaires and returning them, agreement to use the results for research purposes only was assumed. A sample of 358 usable questionnaires was returned.

### Statistical analysis

The data-analysis procedures chosen for this research were based on their applicability to the exploratory nature of the research design. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data. Pearson's product-moment correlations and stepwise multiple regression analysis were performed to test the research hypothesis.

TABLE 2  
Pearson's product-moment correlations: PCRI and OCS

PCRI scale (N = 358)	Affective commitment	Continuance commitment	Normative commitment
<b>Career preference</b>			
Stability/Expertise	0	-0.01	-0.06
Managerial	0.10 <sup>††</sup>	0.03	0.09
Variety/Creativity	0.08	0.08	0.08
Freedom/Autonomy	0.17 <sup>†††</sup>	0.13 <sup>††</sup>	0.15 <sup>†††</sup>
<b>Career values</b>			
Growth/Development	0.03	0.02	0.03
Authority/Influence	0.07	0.1	0.15 <sup>†††</sup>
<b>Career enablers</b>			
Practical/Creative skills	0.12 <sup>††</sup>	0.06	0
Self/Other skills	0.09	-0.03	0.07
<b>Career drivers</b>			
Career purpose	0	-0.01	0.04
Career directedness	0.11 <sup>††</sup>	-0.02	0.17 <sup>†††</sup>
Career venturing	0.09	-0.06	-0.05
<b>Career harmonisers</b>			
Self-esteem	-0.02	-0.1	0
Behavioural adaptability	0.09	-0.03	-0.03
Emotional literacy	0.12 <sup>††</sup>	0.03	0.02
Social connectivity	0.04	0.01	0.07

\* $p \leq 0.05$  (two-tailed), \*\* $p \leq 0.01$ , †  $r \leq 0.30$  (small practical effect size)

Although a cut-off point of  $p < 0.05$  was set, a practical effect size of  $r > 0.30$  (medium effect, Cohen, 1992) was also considered for the correlational analyses to be able to interpret the practical significance of the findings. In terms of the multiple regression analyses, the value of adjusted  $R^2$  was used to determine the proportion of the total variance of the dependent variable (OCS) that is explained by the independent variable (PCRI). The F-test was used to test whether there was a significant regression ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) between the independent and dependent variables.

## RESULTS

Means, standard deviations and internal reliability for the variables of interest are shown in Table 1.

### Hypothesis testing

The primary aim of this study was to empirically assess whether psychological career resources relate to organisational commitment. *H1* was analysed by, firstly, performing Pearson's product-moment correlations and, secondly, by conducting standard stepwise multiple regression. *H1* proposed that psychological career resources (PCRI variables) would be significantly related to organisational commitment (OCS variables).

### Correlational statistics

The relationship between the variables was calculated by means of Pearson's product-moment correlations. Pearson's product-moment correlations allowed the researcher to identify the direction and strength of the relationship between each of the variables. As shown in Table 2, only a few significantly positive relationships were observed between the PCRI and OCS variables. The significant correlations range from  $r = 0.10$  to  $0.17$  ( $p \leq 0.05$ ;  $r \leq 0.30$ , small practical effect size).

Table 2 shows a significant positive relationship between only the two career preference variables *managerial* ( $r = 0.10$ ; small effect;  $p \leq 0.05$ ) and *freedom/autonomy* ( $r = 0.17$ ; small effect;  $p \leq 0.05$ ) and affective commitment. In terms of the career enablers, only *practical/creative skills* ( $r = 0.12$ ; small effect;

TABLE 3  
Multiple regression analyses: PCRI and OCS

Variable (N = 358)	Unstandardised coefficient		Standardised coefficient	t	p	F	Adjusted	R
	b	SE b	$\beta$					
Affective commitment (Constant)	25.04	4.96		5.05	0.00***	2.56***	0.06 <sup>†</sup>	0.32
Career driver: Directedness	0.33	0.17	0.12	1.93	0.05*			
Career driver: Venturing	-0.38	0.19	-0.12	-2.03	0.04*			
Career harmoniser: Emotional literacy	0.21	0.11	0.13	1.97	0.05*			
Career harmoniser: Social connectivity	0.62	0.22	0.19	2.87	0.00***			

\* $p \leq 0.05$ , \*\* $p \leq 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq 0.001$ , <sup>†</sup>  $R^2 \leq 0.12$  (small practical effect size)

$p \leq 0.05$ ) relates significantly and positively with affective commitment. The career driver *career directedness* ( $r = 0.11$ ; small effect;  $p \leq 0.05$ ) and the career harmoniser *emotional literacy* ( $r = 0.12$ ; small effect;  $p \leq 0.05$ ) show a significant positive relationship with affective commitment. As shown in Table 2, except for the *freedom/autonomy* career preference variable ( $r = 0.13$ ; small effect;  $p \leq 0.05$ ), which shows a significant positive relationship with continuance commitment, no other significant associations between the PCRI and the OCS variables can be observed. Table 2 shows that significant positive associations exist between only the career preference *freedom/autonomy* ( $r = 0.15$ ; small effect;  $p \leq 0.05$ ), the career value *authority/influence* ( $r = 0.15$ ; small effect;  $p \leq 0.05$ ), and the career driver *career directedness* ( $r = 0.17$ ; small effect;  $p \leq 0.05$ ) and the normative commitment variable.

#### Stepwise multiple regression analysis: PCRI and OCS

Table 3 shows that the regression of the PCRI variables on the OCS affective commitment variable produced a highly statistically significant model ( $F(p) \leq 0.000$ ). Although only a small percentage of variance ( $R^2 = 6\%$ ; small practical effect size) (Cohen, 1992) is explained by the models, useful pointers are provided regarding the influence of the participants' psychological career resources on their affective commitment.

Table 3 shows that the regression of the PCRI variables (career directedness, career venturing, emotional literacy and social connectivity) on the affective commitment variable produced a statistically significant model ( $F(15, 342) = 2.56$ ;  $p \leq 0.001$ ), accounting for 6% of the variance. The career harmoniser variable *social connectivity* obtained the largest beta weight ( $\beta = 0.19$ ;  $p \leq 0.00$ ), followed by the career harmoniser *emotional literacy* ( $\beta = 0.13$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ ), indicating a significantly larger, potentially positive, influence on the affective commitment variable. The career driver variable *career venturing* ( $\beta = -0.12$ ;  $p \leq 0.04$ ) negatively influenced the variance in the affective commitment variable. The negative regression coefficient observed for *career venturing* could be attributed to a probable net suppression effect, in which case the variable *career venturing* may be seen to suppress the unwanted variance in the variable *emotional literacy*. As such, the variable *career venturing* appears to contribute to the magnitude of the relationship between the *emotional literacy* and the affective commitment variable.

Based on the statistical results, *H1* (psychological career resources are significantly related to people's level of organisational commitment) is only partially accepted.

## DISCUSSION

The study explored the relationship between psychological career resources and their organisational commitment. There seems to be a need for research on the psychological career resources that enhance individuals' career agency in proactively managing their career and the way in which these attributes influence their psychological attachment to the organisation in order to guide human resource and career-development support practices in retaining valuable staff. Although the research hypothesis was only partially accepted, the correlational and stepwise multiple regression analyses indicated a number of significant relationships between the variables that provide

valuable pointers about the relationship between the variables of concern to the present study. In interpreting the results, the following socio-demographic characteristics of the sample were kept in mind: The participants were predominantly full-time employed black people and women in their early adulthood (entry and establishment) life/career stages, and they occupied mostly managerial and staff level positions in the economic and management services field.

Overall, the results suggest that participants who value the managerial and freedom/autonomy career preferences feel emotionally attached to the organisation. In addition, the significant relationship observed between the authority/influence career values and normative commitment suggests that participants who value being in charge of an entire organisation or group, rising to a high managerial position and who have the freedom and autonomy to supervise, influence, lead and control people feel affectively committed to the organisation. These findings are in agreement with those of Beck and Wilson (2000), who posit that individuals who are dedicated at an emotional level usually remain with the organisation because they see their individual employment relationship as harmonious with the goals and values of the organisation for which they are currently working. Moreover, as observed by Meyer and Allen (1997), having the authority to influence the goals of the organisation seems to increase participants' sense of responsibility to continue their employment with the organisation. It appears that the feelings of responsibility engendered by having authority and influence over others tend to increase a sense of accountability to stay in the occupation and organisation, and include an enhanced awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organisation.

Similarly, the significant relationship observed between the career enabler practical/creative skills and affective commitment suggests that participants, who perceive themselves as having the skills to plan, implement and manage their career goals in innovative ways tend to feel emotionally attached to the organisation. Moreover, the findings also suggest that having career-directedness (having clarity regarding future career options and goals) and a low need for venturing out into new career and organisational contexts (and by implication, preferring steady, stable employment) may lead to high levels of affective and normative commitment. These findings are in agreement with those of Meyer *et al.* (1993), who suggest that affective commitment develops when involvement in the occupation proved to be a satisfying experience (for example being given the opportunity to do satisfying work or to develop valued skills).

The significant relationship between emotional literacy and social connectivity and affective commitment further suggests that participants who have the skill to interact at an emotional and social level feel psychologically more connected to the organisation. Meyer and Allen (1997) further state that affective commitment is also influenced by factors such as work challenge, role clearness, clarity about objectives and the difficulty of the objectives, openness on the part of management, peer unity, equity, individual significance, feedback, contributions and steadiness. Kidd (2008) found that having positive thoughts and clarity about the future relates to positive career experiences or feelings. Coetzee and

Esterhuizen (2010) found that having clarity about one's career goals stimulates health-promoting behaviours that lead to an increase in one's physical and emotional wellbeing as well as an optimistic attitude towards oneself and one's life in general. Moreover, people who are emotionally literate are able to form supportive social networks, which increase their sense of belonging to the organisation (Sinclair, 2009).

Considering that the participants were predominantly in the entry and establishment phases of their career, the findings seem to be in agreement with Super's (1990) view that these stages represent the time period during which the life structure of young adults heralds a more stable period as they begin to settle down, become committed to contributing towards an occupation, a company or a person, and start to establish socially supportive networks. The contention that the young adult's need for developing expertise by means of further growth and learning opportunities rather than through venturing out towards new and different organisational contexts seems to be higher during these particular life stages may offer an explanation for the participants' strong sense of affective commitment. As individuals in the early adulthood phase (entry and establishment life/career stages) become more oriented to the importance of work in their lives and learn how to balance job demands with their own needs, they generally find the work role becoming increasingly important (Savickas, 2007). In addition, as shown by the results of the present study, their emotional attachment to the organisation also seems to be stronger.

## CONCLUSION

### Implications for practice

The findings of this study have implications for managers and human resource practitioners who are responsible for providing career-development support, especially within a context of talent retention. The findings confirm the need to assess the psychological career resources of employees, as these provide valuable information regarding the motives and values and psychological attributes that drive individuals' career decisions and that significantly influence their job and career satisfaction. Coetzee and Bergh (2009) note that the education, guidance and coaching for self-empowering career behaviours and career meta-skills that clearly underpin individuals' inner career orientations and psychological career resources may lead to higher levels of life and job/career satisfaction and, as indicated by the results of the present study, people's emotional attachment to the organisation.

Considering the importance of the apparent influence of individuals' psychological career resources on their organisational commitment, it is suggested that organisations and managers consider the importance and need for more effective career matching, which can be accomplished by offering multiple rewards and career paths that address the diverse needs of a multi-cultural workforce. According to Coetzee *et al.* (2010), favourable organisational conditions and career-development support practices that foster an expression of self-concordant goals that relate to employees' core self-evaluations and inner career needs, values and interests (as reflected in their repertoire of career orientations and psychological career resources) may invoke higher levels of job/career satisfaction and commitment. While Kuijpers and Scheerens (2006) indicate that career-support practices affect career-development ability, behaviour and motivation of employees, Bhatnagar (2007) suggests that career-development support in the form of nurturing relationships and processes that ensure that job roles are closely aligned with career aspirations generally enhance employee engagement, organisational citizenship behaviour and commitment. Barnett and Bradley (2007) found that individual career behaviours are significantly related to career satisfaction. They further suggest that organisations that implement initiatives that promote the individual benefits associated with individual career-

management behaviours and encourage employees to engage in these behaviours may experience most success in facilitating employee career satisfaction and commitment.

The findings also highlight the need for further research to explore the relationship between working adults' psychological career resources and their organisational commitment, as the percentage variance explained by the prediction model is relatively small in terms of practical effect. However, the practical value of the findings lies in the new knowledge gained regarding the relationship between these variables and the factors highlighted as contributing to employees' psychological attachment to the organisation.

### Methodological limitations and future directions in research

As the present study was limited to participants predominantly employed in the economic and management service industry in the South African organisational context, the findings cannot be generalised to other occupational contexts. Furthermore, given the exploratory nature of the research design, this study cannot yield any statements about causation. Associations between the variables have therefore been interpreted rather than established. These findings therefore need to be replicated with broader samples across different occupational groups and economic sectors before more comprehensive conclusions can be drawn about the relationship between employees' psychological career resources and their organisational commitment.

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