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Finding Synergic Relationships in Teamwork, Organizational Commitment and Job Satisfaction: A Case Study of a Construction Organization in a Developing Country

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Abstract

The construction industry and its impact in strengthening the economic development of a country by providing work for an important constituent of the labour market is acknowledged. This is largely due to its contributing features to the growth of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of a country. Within this industry, teamwork is essential. If managed properly it may contribute to, among others, employees' commitment to an organization and their job satisfaction. Against this perspective, the study examines the relationship between teamwork, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction. The study is located within a quantitative research paradigm using a cross-sectional survey design through a structured questionnaire. Data from 178 employees were analyzed. The results show that team work, normative, and affective commitment contribute positively to job satisfaction, whereas continuance commitment reflects a negative association with job satisfaction. It seems that employers in this organization need to concentrate on employees' continuance commitment in shaping employees' propensity to their commitment in the organization. Since the construction industry depends heavily on the human resource, employers need to assess existing compensation and professional recognition, motivate employees through assignment of meaningful tasks, and create a working environment that inspires and enthuse workers so that their job satisfaction increases.

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1. Introduction

The popularity of teams in organizations has amplified over the past decade. Numerous organizations use teams to implement day-to-day activities to assist them in attaining strategies to cope with complexity and competition, especially in meeting customers' demands and expectations. Castka et al. (2001) argue that the experience of organizations using teamwork has shown that the effective use of teams can result in considerable improvement in productivity, efficiency, creativity and performance, as well as employee satisfaction. Similarly, Harvey et al. (2004) comment that an organization's survival in a competitive global environment depends on its ability to accommodate dynamic and adaptive teams. Alshawi and Faraj (2002) posit that a construction project involves a collaboration of individuals, who are assembled to allow synergy that ensures success to a project.

The construction industry is a project-based industry in which every project requires different people in accordance with their knowledge, expertise, competence and experience. The collaboration between individuals affects the relationships and eventually depicts an ability to work together. According to Azmy (2012), teamwork is prevalent in the cultural tradition of construction which ensures the successful completion of projects.

Over the years organizational commitment (OC) and job satisfaction (JS) have drawn attention from researchers in different disciplines and have been a focus for many organizations, primarily because of their effect on organizational outcomes such as employees' turnover intentions, absenteeism, organizational citizenship behaviour, performance, job involvement, and effectiveness. Organizations that have a committed workforce with values and respect, which are fair to their employees, may generate OC among employees' (McKinnon et al., 2003).

On the other hand, job satisfaction plays an important role in the overall productivity of any industry. Sempene et al. (2002) opine that job satisfaction is a result of an individual's perception and evaluation of the job. This perception is influenced by the individual's unique circumstances such as needs, values and expectations. Arising from this perception are a range of aspects that may influence one's level of job satisfaction. Some of these aspects comprise the level of pay and benefits, promotion, working conditions, supervision, leadership and interpersonal relationships, and the job itself. Saari and Judge (2004) posit that happy employees become productive employees.

In light of the fact that there exist few academic studies on the relationship between organizational commitment and job satisfaction within a construction context in South Africa, this paper sought to empirically determine the strength of the relationship between these variables in a construction setting.

2. Teamwork in organizations

Teams are viewed as an essential feature of modern management theory and practice (Tennant & Langford, 2006). Teamwork is defined as a collection of a small number of individuals with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable (Greenberg & Baron, 2003) which may engender social interactions between team members (Hoegel and Gemuende, 2001). Three aspects of this definition are important: interactions among individuals, group effort, and interdependence. Teamwork results in individuals working jointly in a supportive environment to achieve common team goals through the sharing of knowledge and skills. Building on this conceptualization, Luca and Tarricone (2002) opine that successful teamwork relies on the synergy between team members in creating an environment, where all members contribute and participate in order to promote and develop a positive effective team outcome. These authors emphasize that team members are required to be flexible enough to adjust in cooperative work settings where goals are achieved through collaboration and social interdependence.

In the context of the construction industry, teamwork may be viewed as a situation in which construction employees' work interdependently to reach an objective for which they share responsibilities. In the construction industry, organizations have a strong confidence in the power of teamwork. By embracing a cooperative setting with project teams, organizations are able to deliver complex projects on time and provide high levels of customer outcomes.

In the construction industry, organizations or project teams require the involvement of every member as it is a composition of human multitasking, including owners and construction professionals to facilitate and allow synergy that ensures more output and ultimately success. The importance of individual skills is certainly not suppressed, but in order to achieve maximum performance, an individual needs to be competent in the context of the team.

Clearly the use of work teams has become a popular strategy for increasing productivity and employees' flexibility in South Africa and the benefits are evident. A study conducted by the European Working Condition Observatory (EWCO, 2007) revealed that 80.6 percent of United Kingdom (UK) organizations report that at least some of their employees are organized into work teams, whereas in South Africa 60 percent of organizations have moved towards team-based structure. Craig (2008) posits that the importance of performing in the context of a team is a necessary recipe for long term success for employees and organizations.

In almost every organization, teamwork is vital in today's global business environment mostly for projects that are complex and require multiple skill sets (Samson and Daft, 2003). In this context, a construction based project far from being a single activity is an achievement of human multitasking. An effective team involves constant monitoring of team settings to ensure team members adjust their tasks with respect to one another in order to attain the project objectives (Azmy, 2012).

3. Organizational commitment

The focus of organizational commitment has been the subject of much theoretical and empirical endeavour in domain of organizational behaviour, human resource management and industrial/organizational psychology (Porter, Steers, Mowday and Boulian 1974; Stevens, Beyer and Trice, 1978; Allen and Meyer 1996; Mowday, Steers and Porter 1997) for many decades. The concept of organizational commitment relates to the intensity of an employee's dedication to an organization (Greenberg & Baron, 2003). It is a psychological situation attaching an employee to an organization (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Consistent with this view, Rashid et al. (2003) advocate that a committed employee is the one who bestows energy and display loyalty to the organization through any circumstances, attends work regularly, protects the organizations assets, and shares in the organizational goals. Organizational commitment is further envisioned as a psychological attachment that an employee has with an organization, classified by strong identification and desire to contribute to the achievement of organizational goals (Meyer and Allen, 1997). Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model of organizational commitment which is widely used in research was adapted for this study to explore the relationship with job satisfaction. The authors perceive organizational commitment as reflecting three essential themes, namely affective, continuance and normative commitment.

3.1 Affective commitment

Affective commitment is an employee's emotional attachment and involvement to an organization. It involves three aspects: the formation of an emotional attachment to an organization, identification with, and the desire to maintain organizational membership. An affective orientation towards an organization occurs when an employee's values match with those of the organizations, and therefore, the employee may be able to internalise the organizational values and goals.

3.2 Continuance commitment

Continuance commitment refers to the appreciation of the cost associated with leaving an organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991), which is based on Becker's Side-Bet Theory (1960) and described as the need component or the gains versus losses of working in an organization. The Side-Bet Theory stipulates that when individuals remain in the employment of an organization for a long period, they accumulate investments which become costly to lose when an individual leaves an organization.

3.3 Normative commitment

Normative commitment is described as a feeling of obligation to continue membership within an organization. Employees with a sense of normative commitment feel that they ought to remain with the organization. An employee who continues membership with an organization due to affective commitment show a propensity to stay in an organization.

4. Job satisfaction

The concept of job satisfaction is a complex phenomenon that has been studied in various contexts. The most used definition of job satisfaction in organizational research is that of Locke (1976) who describes job satisfaction as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the assessment of one's job or job experiences which represents the feeling and the rationale about an individual's job. Since job satisfaction involves one's emotional feelings, it has major consequences on one's life. It can be viewed as a reaction to a job, arising from what an individual pursues in a job in comparison with the actual outcomes that the job provides to the individual (Rothmann and Coetzer, 2002). From this standpoint, Sempane et al. (2002) consider job satisfaction as a result of an individual's perception and evaluation of a job, which is influenced by the individual's unique circumstances such as needs, values and expectations. Building on this conceptualization, Spector (2003) and Robbins et al. (2009) assert that an employee who possess positive attitudes or feelings towards a job may display higher levels of job satisfaction compared to an employee who holds negative attitudes or feelings towards a job. In the context of this study, job satisfaction is defined as the extent to which an employee is satisfied with the rewards received from a job (Statt, 2004). It is accepted as a complex concept that contains an employee's feelings about a variation of intrinsic and extrinsic job elements. Various elements come into play with regard to job satisfaction including inter-alia, the nature of the work, pay and promotion, supervision, co-workers relations.

5. Methodology

A quantitative research paradigm was used in the study as the research sought to find relationships between variables through statistical techniques, namely correlations and regression analysis. A cross sectional survey was conducted among construction employees using a structured questionnaire.

5.1 Sampling

Participants in the study were 178 sites managers, administrative and support workers, trained contractors, and construction professionals functioning in teams at different construction sites. A non-probability sampling technique, namely purposive sampling was used in this study.

5.2 Measures

Participants completed a demographic section of the questionnaire which included: gender, age, marital status, qualification levels and years of service and job titles. An existing teamwork instrument based on the study by Lurie, et al. (2011). A revised version of organizational commitment scale (OCS) based on Meyers and Allen's (1997) study, and a global measurement scale for job satisfaction based on the study by Brayfield and Rothe (1951) was used. Section A requested the demographic information of the respondents; Section B comprised questions on teamwork; Section C comprised questions on organizational commitment; Section D measured the job satisfaction of construction workers. The respondents were given statements and were asked to assess the importance of these constructs on a 5 points Likert scale coded as follows: strongly disagree=1, disagree=2, moderately agree=3, agree=4, strongly agree=5.

6. Reliability and validity

The Cronbach alpha coefficient was computed for each construct and the overall reliability of the scale that was used in this study. A reliability benchmark value of 0.70 and above was regarded as acceptable (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). The Cronbach alpha coefficients for the team work ($\alpha=0.701$), affective commitment ($\alpha=0.773$), continuance commitment ($\alpha=0.768$), normative commitment ($\alpha=0.737$), job satisfaction ($\alpha=0.709$) demonstrated satisfactory reliabilities. The reliabilities for all the constructs were satisfactory further affirming reliabilities of the scales (>0.70). Further the correlation analysis (Table 1) showed significant correlations among the variables (team work, affective commitment, normative commitment and job satisfaction) thus providing sufficient evidence of convergence of the

constructs. The regression analysis also showed significant predictive relationships with regard to teamwork and job satisfaction, affective commitment and job satisfaction and normative commitment with job satisfaction (See Table 2) further providing evidence of predictive validity.

7. Results and discussion

7.1 Demographic information

There were more males (n=138; 77.5%) compared to females (n=40; 22%) in the sample. In terms of the age categories, majority of the respondents were between 21 to 30 years of age (n=85; 48%). This was followed by the age group 41 to 50 years (n=67; 38%). Majority of the employees were married (103; 58%). The qualifications of employees were as follows: matriculation certificate (n=18; 10%); trade certificate (n=44; 28%); diploma (71; 40%); bachelor's degree (n=37; 21%) and the remainder of the sample was in possession of a post graduate degree (n=8; 5%). In terms of experience in the construction industry the distributions of employees were as follows: between 1 to 3 years (n=43; 42%); between 4 to 5 years (n=65; 37%) and over 6 years (n=70; 39%). Majority of the employees worked as trained contractors (n=73; 41%) followed by those who were construction professional (n=44; 28%), administrative staff (n=26; 17%), support staff (n=23; 13%) and the remainder of employees were in managerial positions (n=12; 7%).

7.2 Correlation analysis

In order to establish the strength of the relationship between teamwork, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction dimensions, Spearman's correlation coefficients (r) was used to measure the degree of linear association and establish the relationship amongst 5 dimensions; namely, teamwork, organizational commitment scale (affective, continuance, normative commitment, and job satisfaction. Table 1 illustrates the correlation analysis.

Teamwork showed moderate positive relationships with job satisfaction ($r=0.247$, $p<0.01$). Affective commitment showed moderate positive relationship with job satisfaction ($r=0.364$, $p<0.01$). Continuance commitment showed weak relationship with job satisfaction ($r=0.114$, $p>0.05$). Finally normative commitment showed moderate positive relationship with job satisfaction ($r=0.363$, $p<0.01$). Employees' continuance commitment does not seem to be associated job satisfaction. Affective commitment showed a strong relationship with normative commitment ($r=0.500$, $p<0.01$).

Table 1: Correlation analysis-teamwork, organisational commitment and job satisfaction

Dimensions		Teamwork	AC	CC	NC	JS
Teamwork	Pearson Correlation	1	.276**	.104	.176*	.247**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.165	.019	.001
Affective Commitment (AC)	Pearson Correlation	.276**	1	.230**	.500**	.364**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.002	.000	.000
Continuance Commitment (CC)	Pearson Correlation	.104	.230**	1	.303**	.114
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.165	.002		.000	.129
Normative Commitment (NC)	Pearson Correlation	.176*	.500**	.303**	1	.363**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.019	.000	.000		.000
Job Satisfaction (JS)	Pearson Correlation	.247**	.364**	.114	.363**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.129	.000	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). N=178

7.3 Regression analysis

The four variables namely teamwork, affective, continuance, and normative commitment were entered into a regression equation as independent variables and job satisfaction was entered as a dependent variable using the enter method. Gray (2009) stipulates that regression analysis is used to understand which amongst the independent variables are related to the dependent variable, and to explore the relationships. Table 2 presents the results of the multiple regression analysis of the four dimensions (teamwork, affective, continuance, and normative commitment) with job satisfaction.

Table 2: Regression analysis-Teamwork, organizational commitment and job satisfaction
Job Satisfaction: Dependent variable

Independent variables	Beta	t	Sig.
Teamwork	.149	2.101	.037
Affective Commitment	.208	2.574	.011
Continuance Commitment	-.022	-.304	.762
Normative Commitment	.239	2.960	.004
R= 0.444 R ² = 0.197 Adjusted R ² =0.178 F=10.610			

The results show that an estimated 18% of the variance in overall job satisfaction that can be accounted for by the three dimensions. *Normative commitment* makes the highest contribution to *job satisfaction* ($\beta=0.239$). According to Giritli *et al.* (2013) normative commitment is related to an employee's feelings of responsibility to stay with the organizations due to the fact that the organizations has invested much in him/her. The positive relationship observed between normative commitment and job satisfaction suggests that an employee who is satisfied with pay and promotion, supervision, benefits, rewards, co-workers, nature of the work and communication seems to feel more indebted to remain with the organization. *Affective commitment* made the second highest contribution to *job satisfaction* ($\beta=0.208$). According to Spector (2003) job satisfaction relates to affective commitment, and this may be attributed to the notion that both job satisfaction and affective commitment relate to an employee's attachment and involvement with his/her respective organizations. *Teamwork* also contributes positively towards the prediction of *job satisfaction* ($\beta=0.149$). Van Dick *et al.* (2004) affirm that individuals who identify with their work group will observe their working conditions and situation positively, which may lead to job satisfaction. In the construction industry, joint effort is a common practice amongst work group members, which results in a positive feeling among construction employees.

Of concern was the negative Beta coefficient of ($\beta=-0.022$) associated with *continuance commitment* and *job satisfaction*. Meyer and Allen (1991) found that job satisfaction relates positively to affective and normative commitment, and negatively associated with continuance commitment. The negative relationship between *continuance commitment* and *job satisfaction* suggests that employees' decision to continue membership within the organizations due to their emotional attachment (affective commitment) and obligation (normative commitment) may possibly be a result of their satisfaction with compensation and promotion, supervision, benefits, rewards, working conditions, co-workers, nature of work and communication, rather than the costs associated with leaving the organizations (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Moreover, in the South African context, the construction industry has experienced a financial decline since the boom brought on by the 2010 FIFA World Cup. According to SAPA (2013), this drop is related to the diminution in margins achieved as cost pressures could not be attributed to clients due to depressed public and private work projects expenditure. For example, in preparation for the 2010 FIFA World Cup stadiums, the construction industry had been under-performing. According to Building and Wood Workers International (BWI, 2011), almost 36% of workers were employed under informal work contracts, with no possibility of obtaining permanent employment, incentives bonus, and social security. Maylor (1996) points out that the disadvantage of such actions is that the project team is provisional and workers may have no commitment to its success. Besides, this industry is still facing a downward spiral in terms of retaining employees. Further employees are not secured of permanency in terms of their positions within the construct industry because of the lack of construction projects and there is a tendency for on/off employment situation, which means jobs are uncertain and workers are likely to continue membership within their respective organizations as they cannot find another job. Although they may have a tendency of discontinuing their employment with their existing employers, they are left with very little job opportunities in the market.

Congruent with Meyer and Allen's (1991) assertions of continuance commitment which pertains to one's awareness of the costs associated with leaving the present organization, employees whose commitment is in this disposition of continuance will remain in the organization because they have to. As a result, continuance commitment becomes an integral part of an employee's decision-making process because any action or events that increase costs of leaving the organization may weigh against discontinuing membership with the current organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

8. Limitations and implications for further research

Although this study may have expanded the knowledge about teamwork, organizational commitment and job satisfaction within a construction sector, a few limitations are crucial to mention. The data was collected from a construction company through self-reported measures from the perspective of employees. Future research could be extended to other construction companies in South Africa in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between teamwork and the identified constructs. Consequently the results of the study should be viewed with prudence which limits generalization until replicated in the future, taking into account other research constructs. In this way a comparison could be made to further explore similarities and dissimilarities between employees' perceptions of these constructs. A combination of qualitative and quantitative research design is an avenue to further explore these constructs within the construction sector. This study was an attempt to contribute to the knowledge base of existing literature on teamwork in the construction context. It provides a perception on teamwork, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction in the construction industry, an area which is under-researched. For more practical purposes, future research may consider a more comprehensive teamwork scale to improve reliability and capture in greater detail the concept of teamwork, and furthermore, consider a larger sample size.

9. Conclusion

In this study, the relationship between teamwork, organizational commitment and job satisfaction was been examined among employees in the South African construction industry. Though, this industry requires numerous individuals working in synergy to produce quality performance, and depends heavily on human labour, it is necessary for employers to consider organizational commitment and job satisfaction concerns such as working conditions, fair remuneration plan, recognition for achievement, job enrichment, and employees' feelings of security and loyalty. High organizational commitment and job satisfaction level of employees empowers them to be motivated.

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