

The Relationship between Organisational Trust, Job Satisfaction and Intention to Leave: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract

Authors have claimed that one of the key ingredients in ensuring that organisations remain effective and sustainable in the turbulent business environment characterising the 21st century, is through creating and maintaining organisational trust between an organisation's stakeholders. However, little published research within the South African context, is evident in support of this contention. This exploratory study set out to describe the levels of trust in an organisational context and then to determine the relationship between levels of trust, job satisfaction and employees' intention to leave the organisation. Three standardised instruments were used to measure the research variables and data were collected and analysed on the responses of 91 employees in a company producing bread in the Johannesburg area. The findings indicated that levels of organisational trust and job satisfaction were moderate to high while the intention leave the organisation was found to be low. Statistically significant, strong and positive relationships were found between organisational trust and job satisfaction. A relatively weak but statistically significant relationship was found between organisational trust and employees' intention to leave the organisation.

Keywords: organisational trust, job satisfaction, intention to leave the organisation

1. Introduction

Organisations today operate in a highly globalised business environment driven by increased competition, emerging technology and rapid innovation of products/services resulting in renewed emphasis on factors contributing to organisational effectiveness. One vital characteristic in achieving effectiveness is through creating and maintaining organisational trust (Schockley-Zalabak, Ellis & Winograd 2000:7). This includes trust among employees, supervisors, departments and the whole organisation. Schockley-Zalabak *et al.* (2000:9) go so far as to argue that for organisations to survive globally, the ability to create trusting relationships within the organisation is imperative (Schockley-Zalabak *et al.* 2000:9). Organisational trust has been viewed in the literature as a combination of trust toward the supervisor in the organisation and internal organisational trust. Trust in the supervisor entails a positive affect that occurs when an employee believes that he/she has a fair relationship with an honest and competent supervisor that he/she can rely and depend upon in the organisation (Gilbert & Tang 1998:324). On the other hand, internal organisational trust is the overall environment of trust within the organisation, which develops from relationships, structures and systems within the organisation (Bagraim & Hime 2007:44).

Levels of organisational trust have been shown to be linked to favourable organisational outcomes such as employee job satisfaction, and decreased employee turnover levels (Brashear, Boles, Bellenger & Brooks 2003:195; Gilbert & Tang 1998:323). Employee satisfaction is greatly influenced by employee's view of both the management and the organisation (Perry & Mankin 2007:169). Employee job satisfaction is the self-perceived state of gratification or positive emotional feeling that one has about his/her job (Lauren 2005: 205). Past studies have indicated that employees who trust their organisation are more likely to be satisfied in general than those who have low trust towards their organisation. The element of job satisfaction is imperative to both managers and employees. For managers, satisfied workers translates into higher morale thus more productivity since they will be less disruptions caused by absenteeism or turnover; whilst for employees, job satisfaction translates into a healthier and happier individual in and out of the workplace (Meyer & Allen 1997:18).

'Intention to leave' is an employees' voluntary intention to cease employment from the organisation, for reasons other than retirement or

dismissal (Tainio 1977:231). Intention to leave is the most immediate determinant of the actual turnover behaviour, which could have numerous negative implications for the organisation, such as decreased productivity and may erode the morale and stability of the remaining employees. Many studies have attempted to determine the reasons why employees intend to leave their organisations. The prevailing factors that have emerged from these studies have been lack of job satisfaction and lack of organisational trust (Brashear *et al.* 2003: 195).

Organisational trust is clearly a construct worth exploring in terms of identifying factors that may contribute to an organisation's long term effectiveness and sustainability in our current turbulent business environment. Indeed, Brownell (2002:10) goes so far as to claim that

Trust is the backbone of any credible organisation. In order to grow and survive in this fast paced world, organisations should strive to create trust with its employees

However, studies focussing on organisational trust are relatively rare and '... the consequences of organisational trust for organisational performances have so far not received a systematic study' (Hay 2002:40). From a review of published literature in this field, it would seem that this is especially the case when considering the South African context. In response to this need, the current study sets out to explore the relationship between the constructs of organisational trust, job satisfaction, and intention to leave in an organisation operating in the food sector in South Africa. In particular the study aimed to:

- examine the level of internal organisational trust as perceived by the employees.
- determine the employees' level of trust towards their supervisors in the organisation.
- determine the level of general job satisfaction as experienced by the employees.
- determine the level of employees' intention to leave the organisation.

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- establish the relationship between the three independent variables namely, organisational trust, job satisfaction and intention to leave.

The literature forming the context within which this study was undertaken is briefly outlined. This is followed by a description of the methodology adopted. The findings are then presented and discussed in relation to the literature reviewed.

2. Literature Review

Huff and Kelley (2003: 82) define trust as,

... the willingness of a party (the trustor) to be vulnerable to the actions of the other party (the trustee) based on the expectation that the trustee will perform a particular action important to the trustor irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party.

Within organisations, Houtari and Iivonen argued that trust is determined by the intensity, quality and durability of human interactions and is a function of the interactions between people in different organisational roles and positions and between employees and the organisation with its value system, structure and policies (Houtari & Iivonen 2003:60).

Trust in one's supervisor entails the positive affect that occurs when an employee believes that he or she has a fair exchange relationship with an honest supervisor (Mulki, Jaramillo & Locander 2006:563). A psychological contract is the unwritten contract that lays the foundation of a trust relationship between employees and supervisors. It entails beliefs about what employees think they are entitled to receive or should receive because they perceive that their employers conveyed promises either implicitly or explicitly to provide these things (Grobler, Warnich, Carrell, Elbert & Hatfield 2006:221). Research has shown that employers who understand and maintain this psychological contract with their employees, promote employees' trust in management and the organisation, and foster higher job satisfaction and the intention to remain with the employer (Grobler *et al.* 2006:222).

In line with this, Taylor-Dunlop and Lester argue that ‘Effective leadership begins and ends with trust’ (2000:3). To nurture organisational trust, supervisors must create an environment of trust which should be visible and experienced by every employee (Coetzee 2003:48). Bagraim (2007:43) suggested that, employees’ perceptions of their supervisors’ trust is based on the following characteristics: benevolence, integrity, ability, openness to share information and consistency of behaviour. Supervisors who display these characteristics will be ranked highly on trust by employees. Previous studies have found the importance of supervisors’ behaviours, attitudes and values as being a key determinant of employees’ perceptions of organisational trust. For instance, Perry and Mankin found that ‘when examining trust in the organisation, a critical part of it centers upon supervisors’ (2007:166). Similarly, Kouzes and Posner (2002) indicated that, leadership was identified as the most important characteristic in influencing organisational trust. In line with this, Taylor-Dunlop and Lester cited research showing that managers who establish a high trust relationship, showed more cooperation with one another and the employees, thus reducing tension (2000:4).

Another aspect that will be considered in the current study is the construct ‘internal organisational trust’. Huff defines internal organisational trust as ‘the climate of trust within an organisation, characterized by positive expectations that individuals have about the intent and behaviours of their colleagues in respect to organisational roles, relationships and systems’ (2003:82). Luhmann (1979:302) asserted that the attitude of trust within the organisation occurs in two dimensions, namely, faith in the management and faith in the intentions of peers. Therefore, internal organisational trust is determined by the structural relationships existing within the organisation. Faith in the management is based on the images that employees carry of the organisation regarding the decisions and actions of the executive group, especially as these decisions and actions impact them. Faith in the intentions of peers depends on social interaction between them (Nyhan & Marlowe 1997:618). Earlier studies have found that organisations with high levels of internal trust will be successful, adaptive, innovative and characterised by high employee job satisfaction (Mayer 1995:722). More recently, Lauren (2005:207) reported a strong positive correlation between organisational trust and job satisfaction. Gruneberg (1981:3) refers to job satisfaction as

‘pleasurable or positive emotional state, resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences’. These experiences include, mentally challenging work, equitable rewards and pay, supportive work environment, supportive co-workers, recognition, supervision, company and management (Robbins 1998:152). These in turn enhance employees’ morale and satisfaction. Furthermore, job satisfaction is an important determinant of an employee’s intention to leave.

According to Seonghee, Misty and Priyanko (2008:1) ‘intention to leave’ is simply referred to as a worker’s intention to leave his or her present organisation. This concept is considered interchangeable with the term ‘turnover intention’. However, intention to leave is distinct from defining actual turnover. Seonghee *et al.* (2008:1) further state that intention to leave refers to the subjective estimation of an individual regarding the probability of leaving an organisation in the near future. Tainio argues that it is a problem in industries or sectors where experience is an essential prerequisite of the industry, due to high replacement costs and where turnover is disruptive and deflates the remaining employees (1977:231). Brashear *et al.* (2003:195) found that high levels of trustworthiness and trusting behaviours are positively related to the degree of mutual trust in the organisation, thus decreasing employees’ rate of turnover.

Departure of experienced employees in the organisation has great consequences to the organisation including potential productivity losses, impairment to the delivery of customer services, reduced client retention with the result that the organisation’s overall productivity is threatened (Hom & Griffeth 1995:13). Therefore, many companies tend to go the extra length to retain their skilled employees. High levels of trust towards the organisation and the supervisor has been shown to weaken the employees’ intention to leave the organisation (Naumann, Widmier & Jackson 2000:230).

This brief review of the literature shows that organisational trust is the backbone of any credible organisation and studies show that low levels of organisational trust experienced by employees does have numerous negative implications for organisations. Despite the importance of organisational trust to an organisation’s effective functioning, little published empirical studies seem to be available within the South African context. The current study aims to make a contribution towards addressing this need.

3. Research Methodology

This section provides a description of the methodology adopted in order to meet the previously mentioned objectives of the study.

3.1 Research Design

The current study was descriptive and quantitative in nature. Given the specific aims of the study, a cross-sectional correlational research design was adopted in order to explore the relationship between the research variables, namely, organisational trust, job satisfaction and intention to leave.

3.2 Sample

The organisation used for this research study operates in the food industry with its primary product being the production of bread. The company has branches throughout the country and for this study data were collected from the branches in the Johannesburg area. A total of 156 salaried permanent staff members are employed by the organisation in this area. A non-randomised convenience sampling technique was utilised as questionnaires were distributed to all available employees on one particular day. A total number of 93 employees completed the questionnaires, of which two were incomplete. As a result, a total number of 91 respondents (N=91) correctly completed the questionnaires (i.e. 58% of the total number of staff members employed in the Johannesburg area). Only 93 employees were available to participate at the time of data collection as some were off site, some were working the night shift and others were attending an all-day training course.

An analysis of the demographic data revealed that 57% (n=52) of the respondents were male. The age of the respondents ranged from 20 years to 69 years, with the average age being 38 years. The racial distribution (30% African, 15% Coloured, 6% Indian and 44% White) reflected considerable cultural diversity in the organisation. The majority of the respondents (53%; n = 48), had attained a Matric education level. The average tenure with the organisation was 7 years, with the minimum being less than a year and the maximum tenure in the organisation recorded at 48 years.

3.3 Measuring Instruments

A questionnaire was administered to the employees to complete on a vol-

untary basis. It consisted of a demographic section, and three standardised measuring instruments to measure organisational trust, job satisfaction and intentions to leave.

Organisational trust was measured using Nyhan and Marlowe's (1997) 12-item Organisational Trust Inventory (OTI). This scale consists of 8 items which measure employees' trust in the immediate supervisor and 4 items which focus on the measurement of the different attitudes of trust that employees feel towards their internal organisation (Nyhan & Marlowe 1997:618). Respondents are required to indicate their responses using a 7-Likert scale ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 7= strongly agree. Nyhan and Marlowe (1997:622) reported high levels of internal consistency in three different groups (i.e Cronbach alphas of 0.96, 0.95 and 0.95). The current study found a Cronbach alpha of 0.96 for the total score on the OTI, while 0.87 was found for the internal organisational trust sub-scale and 0.97 was found for supervisor trust sub-scale.

In order to measure job satisfaction, the Overall Job Satisfaction (OJS) scale developed by Warr, Cook and Wall (1979 cited in Cook, Hepworth, Wall & Warr 1981: 32) was adopted. This scale measures both intrinsic and extrinsic aspects contributing to satisfaction levels of employees towards their respective jobs. It consists of 15 items and respondents are required to indicate their responses using a 7-Likert scale, ranging from 1= extremely dissatisfied to 7= extremely satisfied. This scale has been used in numerous studies with satisfactory levels of internal reliability being reported. A Cronbach alpha of 0.95 was found in the current study.

Finally, to measure employees' intention to leave their current employer, a 3-item scale was used (Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins & Klesh 1979 cited in Cook, Hepworth, Wall & Warr 1981:95). The respondents are required to indicate their responses using a 7- point Likert scale, ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 7= strongly agree. A 0.83 coefficient alpha was reported by Cook *et al.* (1981:95). The current study indicated a Cronbach alpha of 0.67.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data were analysed using the computer software package SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Science) version 15, and included descriptive statistics and Pearson product-moment correlations.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Before proceeding with the data collection phase of this study, ethical clearance was obtained from the UKZN's ethical clearance committee. Participation was completely voluntary and the anonymity of the participants was protected in the gathering of the data and presentation of the findings.

4. Findings

The results of the data are presented according to the specific aims of the study.

The Level of Internal Organisational Trust as Perceived by the Employees

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Level of Internal Organisational Trust

Internal Organisational Trust	
N	91
Median	19
Mode	20
Standard Deviation	21
Minimum	5.70
Maximum	4
	28

Table 2: Average Responses of the Individual Items for Internal Organisational Trust

Internal organisational trust items	Mean Scores
The organisation will treat me fairly	5.05
High trust levels between supervisors and workers	4.82
High trust levels with co workers	4.70
Highly depend on each other	4.69

Table 3: Item Frequencies of the Internal Organisational Trust Sub-scale of the OTI

Internal organisational trust items.	Strongly Disagree (2)	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
The organisation will treat me fairly	3	5	7	13	20	16
High trust levels between supervisors and workers	5	7	6	15	21	15
High trust levels with co-workers	6	7	7	12	28	13
Highly depend on each other	6	6	9	15	22	14

The above tables reflect the level of internal organisational trust as perceived by the sample of employees from the organisation. From Table 1 it can be seen that the average response obtained was 19, this indicates that, their level of organisational trust is moderate to high considering the maximum and minimum scores of 28 and 4 respectively. The mode score of 21 indicates that most of the respondents are happy with the level of trust in the organisation. Table 2 represents the average results of the individual items of internal trust, according to the scale. Seven and 1 are the highest and the lowest scores respectively. The respondents ranked their organisation between 4.69 and 5.05 for all the internal trust items, indicating their moderate to high levels of internal trust they have in their organisation. These results are further elaborated on in table 3 by reporting the number of respondents per item of the scale. As a result of the above analysis it can be concluded that the level of internal trust is generally perceived to be positive amongst this sample of employees.

Employees’ Level of Trust towards their Supervisors in the Organisation

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Levels of Trust in Immediate Supervisors

Trust in Supervisors	
N	91
Mean	46
Median	48
Mode	56
Standard Deviation	10.34
Minimum	8
Maximum	56

Table 5: Mean Scores for the Items Related to the Trust in Supervisors Sub-component of the OTI

Items related to trust in immediate supervisors		Mean Scores
Ability	Technically competent	5.70
	Understanding of the job	6.82
	Do the job without causing any problems	6.67
	Ability to think through the job	5.68
Benevolence	Makes well thought out decisions	6.53
	Do the job in an acceptable manner	5.85
Integrity	I can rely on what my supervisors tells me	6.75
	Follow through on his/her assignments	5.63
Consistency		

Table 6: Item Frequencies of Responses Related to Trust in Immediate Supervisors

Supervisor’s Trust items.	Trust						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
Technically competent	3	1	5	7	11	32	32

Makes well thought out decisions	1	2	5	5	12	36	30
Follow through on his/her assignments	3	2	3	4	17	39	23
Understanding of his/her job	1	4	2	8	8	33	35
Do the job in an acceptable manner	1	1	5	4	13	36	31
I can rely on what my supervisors tells me	3	3	5	4	11	27	38
Do the job without causing any problems	4	2	2	6	13	35	29
Ability to think through the job	2	2	4	9	12	34	28

Tables 4, 5 and 6 above illustrate the respondents' levels of trust in their immediate supervisors. The mean score when considering all 8 items as a sub-scale was 46. This indicates a high level of trust towards the supervisors given that 8 and 56 are the minimum and maximum scores respectively. Similarly, as can be seen from Table 4, respondents ranked their supervisors highly on all the items. Specifically, the majority of respondents indicated that they are completely satisfied with the ability of their supervisors as well their consistency and benevolence. From the results in Table 6, it is evident that the majority of respondents rated items a 6 or 7 indicating a generally positive level of trust in their supervisors. Therefore it can be concluded that the level of trust towards the supervisors as perceived by this sample of employees in the organisation is generally high.

The Level of Overall Job Satisfaction as Experienced by the Employees

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics for Overall Job Satisfaction

Overall Job Satisfaction	
N	91
Mean	71
Median	74
Mode	66

Standard Deviation	17.9
Minimum	7
Maximum	29
	105

Table 8: Means for the Individual Items of the Overall Job Satisfaction Scale

Overall Job Satisfaction Items	Mean
Physical work condition	4.85
Freedom to choose method of work	5.31
Co-workers	5.15
Recognition for good work	4.47
Supervisor	5.18
Amount of responsibility given	5.29
Rate of pay	3.68
Opportunity to use your ability	4.87
Relations between management and workers	4.74
Chances of promotion	3.81
Management of firm	4.78
Attention paid to suggestions you make	4.63
Job variety	4.84
Job security	5.09
Hours of work	4.91

Table 9: Item Frequencies of Items in the Overall Job Satisfaction Scale

Job satisfaction items	Extremely dissatisfied (1)	Very dissatisfied (2)	Moderately dissatisfied (3)	Not sure (4)	Moderately satisfied (5)	Very satisfied (6)	Extremely satisfied (7)
Physical work condition	2	6	15	6	24	28	10
Freedom to choose method of work	3	2	6	11	19	31	19

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Co-workers	3	1	8	7	33	26	13
Recognition for good work	9	8	10	9	25	19	11
Immediate supervisor	5	1	4	17	20	24	20
Amount of responsibility given	3	2	8	5	23	35	15
Rate of pay	19	8	20	8	21	11	4
Opportunity to use your ability	5	3	7	14	25	29	8
Relations between management and workers	4	6	6	17	29	19	10
Chances of promotion	19	5	7	26	14	17	3
Management of firm	4	9	1	17	24	30	6
Attention paid to suggestions you make	6	8	13	16	11	27	10
Job variety	6	6	6	10	23	31	9
Job security	4	3	4	13	24	32	11
Hours of work	8	2	11	7	17	33	13

According to Table 7 above, the average score recorded for job satisfaction was 71, which means that the respondents' level of job satisfaction is satisfactory given the maximum and minimum scores of 29 and 105 respectively. Similarly, the median score 74 indicate that half of the respondents are highly satisfied compared to the remaining half who are not as satisfied with their jobs. These moderate to high scores are evident more clearly in Table 8, which indicates the average responses levels for each item of the job satisfaction scale. For most items, respondents have rated them, on average, with 4's and 5's, indicating a moderately high satisfaction level. However, for items to do with rate of pay, recognition for good work and chances of promotion, respondents indicated that, they are not satisfied with them at all, they were rated 4. Table 9 above indicates the number of

responses for each item of the scale and shows that the level of job satisfaction in the organisation, as perceived by this sample of employees, is moderate to high.

The Level of Employees’ Intention to Leave the Organisation

Table 10: Descriptive Statistics for Intention to Leave

Overall intention to leave	
N	91
Mean	10
Standard Deviation	4.23
Median	10
Mode	9
Minimum	3
Maximum	21

Table 11: Means for the Individual Items of the Intention to Leave Scale

Intention to leave actual items	Mean score
I often think of quitting	3
I will definitely return if I have to quit	5
I will search for a job the next year	3

Table 12: Response Frequencies per Item of the Intention to Leave Scale

Intention to leave items	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Slightly agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
Will definitely return, if I quit	18	29	12	14	8	4	6

Often think of quitting	16	16	8	14	18	10	9
Search for a new job next year	18	16	11	14	15	6	11

Table 10 above represents summary of the responses to the study variable ‘intention to leave’. The mean score of 10, given the maximum and minimum scores of 21 and 3 respectively, indicates that employees overall have a low intention to leave the organisation. These results are elaborated on in Table 11 which indicates the average response levels of intention to leave as reported by this sample of employees. From the table, the items ‘often think of quitting’ and ‘search for a new job’ were both rated 3 out of 7 by the respondents, indicating their low intention to leave the organisation. Additionally, respondents indicated their moderate to high intention to return to the organisation should they leave. For the purpose of this research, the item ‘Will definitely return, if I have to quit’ was reverse scored in order to be similar to the other remaining two items. In order to provide a more detailed description of these findings, Table 12 represents the number of responses per rating scale of each item. From these findings, it can be concluded that respondents have low intention to leave the organisation.

The Relationship between Organisational Trust, Job Satisfaction and Intention to Leave

In order to explore the relationship between the three research variables, Pearson product moment correlations were computed. These were computed for the total organisational trust score as well as separately for the sub scales, internal organisational trust, and trust in supervisors. The results are presented in table 13.

Table 13: Correlation Coefficients for Organisational Trust, Job Satisfaction and Intention to Leave

	Job satisfaction	Intention to leave
Organisational Trust.	.716(**)	-.196(*)
	.000	.031
Supervisor’s trust	.648(**)	-.205(*)
	.000	.026

Internal organisational trust	.731(**) .000	-.150 .155
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* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the results reported in table 13, the correlation coefficient of 0.72 indicates a strong and positive relationship between organisational trust and job satisfaction. The Pearson correlation value of -0.20 found between organisational trust and intention to leave indicates that a statistically significant but relatively weak and negative relationship exists between organisational trust and intention to leave.

Focussing specifically on the relationship between levels of trust in immediate supervisors, it can be seen from table 13 that a strong and positive relationship between trust toward the supervisor and job satisfaction is evident. The correlation coefficient of -0.21 indicates a relatively weak yet statistically significant inverse relationship between trust toward the supervisor and intention to leave.

The Pearson correlation value of 0.73 indicates a very strong and positive relationship between internal organisational trust and job satisfaction. However, the Pearson correlation value of -0.15 suggests a statistically non-significant weak and inverse relationship between internal organisational trust and intention to leave.

While not a specific aim of this current study, in order to further explore the data, correlations were computed between the variables intention to leave and job satisfaction. The results are presented in table 14.

Table 14: Pearson Correlation Coefficients for Job Satisfaction and Intention to Leave

	Intention to leave
Job satisfaction	-.313(**) .003

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 14 indicates that a statistically significant moderate inverse relationship is evident between job satisfaction and intention to leave.

The findings and implications of this study are now discussed drawing on relevant literature.

5. Discussion of the Findings

The findings indicate the existence of moderate to high levels of organisational trust in this organisation. As stated earlier, authors in this field assert that organisational trust can be viewed as comprising of two related but separate components, namely, internal organisational trust and trust in immediate supervisors (Nyhan & Marlowe 1997:618). The objective of this current study was not to investigate this contention but the differing trends in the findings related to these components of the OTI seem to provide some support for this approach to viewing organisational trust from this perspective. Focussing specifically on the findings related to trust in the immediate supervisor a number of observations in support of related literature can be made.

According to Taylor-Dunlop and Lester (2000:3) supervisors who strive to align their words and actions in order to maintain the unwritten psychological contract - which is created by the perceived obligations that they have to fulfill toward each other - create a strong trust relationship with their subordinates. Results reported in Table 5 indicate that, on average, the respondents rated their supervisors 6.75 under the item 'I can rely on what my supervisor tells me'. Coetzee (2006:48) further asserts that supervisors who allow their subordinates to make decisions, or who fairly consider them in making decisions about things that impact them, build a trusting relationship with their subordinates. Literature by Bagraim and Hime (2007:43) asserted that to create strong trust with their subordinates, supervisors need to show that they are capable of doing their jobs and that they understand and do their jobs properly. This is the ability characteristic of the supervisor. Therefore, supervisors who display benevolence, integrity, ability, openness and consistency will create high levels of trust with their subordinates (Bagraim & Hime 2007: 43). From the results displayed in Table 5, it can be seen that the respondents have on average ranked their supervisors 6 and 7 on these characteristics. This indicates that supervisors in the organisation have managed to display those characteristics successfully, thus building strong trusting relationships with their subordinates.

As suggested by previous authors, organisational trust can be expected to relate to other factors essential for the effective functioning of organisations in today's competitive business environment (Brashier & Boles 2003:195; Parnell & Crandall 2003:54). The findings in this study confirm this contention although it is acknowledged that causality cannot be implied in the findings of significant correlations between variables.

Focussing firstly on job satisfaction, the Pearson-product moment correlation value reported in Table 13 ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.01$) indicates a very strong and positive relationship between organisational trust and job satisfaction. This means that according to the respondents, employees who experience higher levels of organisational trust will also experience higher job satisfaction levels and vice versa. Previous studies have indicated that organisational trust is a significant predictor of job satisfaction (Gilbert & Tang 1998:323). Focussing on the two components of organisational trust separately, significant, albeit of slightly different strength, positive correlations were found between supervisor's trust and job satisfaction ($r = 0.65$, $p < 0.01$) and between internal organisational trust and job satisfaction ($r = 0.73$, $p < 0.01$). While causality can not be implied in these relationships, these research findings are in line with other studies showing that employees who trust their organisation will also experience higher job satisfaction at the workplace (Grobler *et al.* 2006:222). Therefore, from the strong correlations found between organisational trust and job satisfaction and support from the literature, one may argue that the existence of strong trusting relationships between management and employees as well between co-workers is positively related to employees overall job satisfaction. Job satisfaction, in turn, is related to productivity levels and therefore has significant implications for an organisation's effective functioning.

The potential implications of these positive findings are highlighted further when considering the relationship between organisational trust and employees' intentions to leave their organisation. A correlation value of $r = -0.20$ ($p < 0.05$) was observed between organisational trust and intention to leave. This indicates a weak but statistically significant inverse relationship between organisational trust and intention to leave. Even though this was not a particularly strong correlation coefficient, this finding is still in line with the observations made by other authors in this field such as Naumann *et al.* (2000:230) who concluded that organisational trust has a negative effect on

intention to leave. Similarly, Brashear *et al.* (2003:195) asserted that high levels of trustworthiness and trusting behaviours displayed by both supervisors and subordinates towards each other create a degree of positive mutual trust in the organisation, thus reducing employees' rate of turnover.

While a weak but statistically significant inverse relationship was observed between supervisor's trust and intention to leave ($r = -0.21$; $p < 0.05$) the relationship between internal organisational trust and intention to leave was not found to be statistically significant. This finding is in line with a study reported by Pienaar, Sieberhagen, Mostert (2007:63) where it was argued that, compared with internal organisational trust, trust towards the supervisor is the higher predictor of employees' intention to stay in the organisation. The findings of the current study once again give some support to viewing the two components of organisational trust together as well as separately.

Gruneberg (1976: 229) argued that employees who enjoy their work and are satisfied with their jobs are least likely to leave the organisation. This contention is supported in the findings that there was a statistically significant inverse relationship between these two variables in the current study ($r = -.31$, $p < 0.01$). On the other hand, Martin (1979: 314) has argued that factors that contribute to job satisfaction - such as low pay, few close friends, lack of autonomy in the workplace etc - do have a strong impact on employees wanting to leave the organisation. However, this was not observed in the present study, even though according to the results reported in Tables 8 and 9, respondents indicated that they were not very happy with the rate of pay, recognition they get for good work etc, on average they still did not have high level of intention to leave the organisation. This may be an indication of the current economic climate and may well be an indication of the importance of seeing the results of studies such as this, within the broader macro-environmental context.

While the findings of this study are clearly limited in their generalisability due to small sample size, they do nevertheless make an initial contribution to the understanding of the nature of the relationships between the three study variables. No published research was evident in South Africa at the time of conducting the empirical research. As such, this research makes a useful exploratory contribution to a key area in the field of people management.

6. Conclusion

This study has highlighted the importance of creating and maintaining organisational trust as one of the competitive advantages that will enable the organisation to compete successfully and survive in its environment. The findings of the relationships between the three study variables reported in the current research are strongly supported by the findings of other researchers who asserted that high levels of trust and trusting behaviours in the organisation positively influence employees' satisfaction level resulting in employees wanting to remain in the organisation. For managers, these findings indicate that it is imperative for them to invest in creating a culture that enhances trusting relationships inside the organisation. This will induce employees to stay in the organisation, and reduce turnover of the employees. Globalisation, workplace diversity, downsizing, internal networks, external alliances and other complex decisions are some of the events affecting the organisations in the 21st (Ridderstrale & Nordstrom 2000: 25). Organisational trust occupies a central role. 'It is trust conceived within and across the organisation that determines the organisation's ability to remain viable in its environment' (Schockley-Zalabak *et al.* 2000:35).

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