FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Employee experiences of commitment and happiness in call centre employment: A qualitative study

By

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Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Masters of Social Science (Industrial Psychology) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College, Durban, South Africa.

This dissertation has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any university, nor has it been prepared under the aegis or with the assistance of any other body, or organization, or person outside the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

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CLARISSA TISSONG

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Abstract

The call centre industry has experienced a boom over the last decades. More organisations are making use of call centres as a means of speedy service deliveries to their customers. Call centres have therefore become an important method of communication between customers and clients, however the call centre environment has been characterised as being demanding and negatively impacting on employees. This study is therefore aimed at understanding employee experiences of commitment and happiness within the call centre environment. Specifically whether or not those employed within the call centre environment experience both commitment and happiness. Data in the study was collected with the use of a biographical questionnaire and semi- structured interviews. The results in the study suggest that commitment and happiness are experienced in the call centre environment when positive organisational factors such as feedback, recognition, goal accomplishment and growth opportunities are present.

Keywords: Commitment, happiness, call centres

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Chapter one

1.1 Introduction

Call centres around the world are growing at an exponential rate and South Africa is no different in this regards. Evidence shows that there are over 15000 call centres worldwide and that this number will increase by 17% per annum (Larner, 2001). Increasingly organisations are making use of call centres as a means of improved and speedy service delivery to customers. The explosion of call centres employing many hundreds of employees have brought with it an increased need to understand the manner in which call centre employees experience both happiness and commitment. The call centre environment has been characterised as one which is demanding, repetitive and monotonous thus negatively impacting on employee well-being and commitment (Holman, 2003). Some studies have suggested that there is a lack of commitment in the call centre environment (Malhotra & Mukherjee, 2004). Whilst, other studies have found that commitment in the call centre environment is linked to both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards (Bratton & Gold, 1994). Happiness within the call centre environment has been understood in relation to events such as supervisor support, goal achievement and recognition (Basch & Fisher, 1998).

1.2 Background and outline of research problem

Happiness has also been found to produce favourable outcomes in the organisation such as increased employee commitment and engagement (Field & Buitendach, 2011). Commitment is an important concept as it enables one to understand the reasons as to why individuals remain in various relationships, be it for reasons of affective, continuance or normative commitment. Both commitment and happiness are important within the organisation as they impact positively on employees and lead to organisational effectiveness. A large body of research exists on commitment and happiness within other organisational contexts. Studies on commitment within the context of the call centre environment have either been researched in isolation or in conjunction with other constructs such as job-satisfaction, engagement and motivation. Therefore the focus of this research is on both commitment and happiness within the call centre environment, also the experiences of employee happiness and commitment in call centres and importantly whether or not employees experience both commitment and happiness in the call centre environment.

1.3 Aims of study

Commitment and happiness have been extensively researched in other organisational settings however there is a lack of research of the constructs within the call centre environment. This research therefore aimed to build on the literature in this important area. The study also aimed to explore the experiences of commitment and happiness in call centre employment. Further aims of the study included an understanding of how

commitment is maintained in call centre employment and the factors that lead to happiness in call centre employees. The study was also interested in whether call centre employees are happy and committed.

1.4 Questions to be answered in research

1. How do employees engaged in call centre employment experience commitment?

2. How do employees engaged in call centre employment experience happiness?

3. How is commitment maintained in call centre employment?

4. What are the factors in call centre employment that lead to employee happiness?

5. Are employees in call centre employment committed?

6. Are employees in call centre employment happy?

7. Do call centre employees experience happiness in their jobs?

1.5 Structure of dissertation

Chapter one: Introduction

Chapter one of the study presents the outline and background of the study and the context in which it was situated. Included in the introduction is the rationale for conducting the

study, the aims of the study, questions to be answered in the study and importantly the significance of the study.

Chapter two: Review of literature and theoretical framework

A comprehensive literature review is provided in chapter two in which there is a focus on the nature of commitment and happiness in various organisational settings, employee's perceptions and also their experiences of commitment and happiness. The research draws on significant past studies on commitment and happiness either studied as a construct on their own, in conjunction with other constructs and also within different organisational settings. In addition to previous research conducted on the constructs, the literature review also focuses on the two theoretical frameworks upon which the study was based. These theories include the social exchange theory and the affective events theory, with the focus being on their applicability and appropriateness in answering the research questions.

Chapter three: Research methodology

Chapter three of the study highlights the design of the research, the type of sampling used in the research, the data collection methods that were used, the procedure that was followed in the research and also the method that was utilised for data analysis. The rationale, appropriateness and also the strengths and weaknesses of these techniques are also outlined in this chapter.

Chapter Four: Results and discussion

Chapter four of the study comprises of the presentation of results after analysis, as well as the discussion of the findings. The discussion includes a link between past findings and the findings in the study and also highlights any new and contradictory findings.

Chapter five: Summary, limitations, recommendations and conclusion

Chapter Five includes a summary of the results of the study it also includes the limitations and recommendations and suggestions for future research. The limitations of the study are also included in this chapter.

1.6 Conclusion

Commitment and happiness are important factors for individual and organisational effectiveness. It is therefore important to understand these two constructs within organisational settings as they not only affect an employee but the organisation as well in terms of productivity and turnover. This chapter has highlighted the principle aims rationale, objectives and the context of the research. The following chapter will present a review of literature which is related to the research questions and objectives that are outlined in chapter one.

Chapter two

Literature review and theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction

Globalisation and changes in information technology has created the need for organisations to adapt to these changes in order to maintain a competitive advantage. As a result of this in the 21st century more organisations are introducing the use of call centres as a means of improved service delivery. Call centres have therefore become an important method of communication between organisations and their clients (Gordi, 2006). In light of the introduction of call centres, many organisations have increasingly started employing people to work in such environments. A large body of research exists in literature in relation to call centre employment in respect to job-satisfaction, employee well-being, commitment and motivation. Call centres have been characterised as demanding environments, with studies suggesting that this may negatively impact on employees (Holman, 2003).

The purpose of this study is to investigate employee experiences of both commitment and happiness in the call centre environment. The research will be approached from a positive psychological framework, therefore an overview of positive psychology will be provided. A discussion of positive psychology on both the constructs, namely commitment and happiness will also be provided.

Commitment has been researched extensively over the years, as a construct on its own (Turner, 2001), its relationship with other constructs as well as how it derived, maintained and destroyed in different types of employment relationships (Torka, 2004). Happiness research has been mushrooming in psychology literature as interest has been given to the good life and the way it can be achieved (Guigon, 1999). The following literature review will examine both commitment and happiness in terms of their conceptualisations from the perspectives of researchers in both past and present respects. Studies in relation to the constructs will be the main focus of discussion. These studies will include research conducted on commitment and happiness in relation to other constructs in various organisational settings, commitment within the call centre environment and also happiness within the call centre environment. As a result of a lack of literature in relation to both constructs within the call centre environment; studies incorporating commitment and happiness will be reviewed in relation to other organisational settings.

Lastly commitment and happiness will be discussed in relation to theoretical frameworks. Commitment will be explained from the viewpoint of the social exchange theoretical framework and its link to individuals in call centre employment. Happiness will be explained from an affective events theoretical standpoint. As studies of both the constructs of commitment and happiness fall under the framework of positive psychology, a brief overview of positive psychology will be provided.

2.2 Positive Psychology

Studies on commitment and happiness fall under the umbrella of the positive psychological framework. Positive psychology focuses on factors such as hope, wisdom, creativity, future mindedness, courage, responsibility and perseverance, the factors that make life worth living (Cszikszentmihalyi & Seligman, 2000). The factors focused on by positive psychologists relates to the overall happiness of an individual which in turn leads to positive outcomes such as job satisfaction, general health and commitment of employees. Happy workers are generally more productive, work harder and are satisfied with their jobs (Cszikszentmihalyi & Seligman, 2000). Committed workers identify with their organisation, its goals and deliver services more effectively and efficiently (Cszikszentmihalyi & Seligman, 2000). The aim of positive psychology is to create a vision of a good life for individuals. Cszikszentmihalyi and Seligman (2000) state that actions that lead to well-being can be shown and positive psychology can also help document those aspects of the organisation that leads to increased engagement, commitment and overall happiness of the individual.

2.3 Positive Psychology and commitment

Positive psychology enables one to understand the influence that the above mentioned factors have on favourable job and individual outcomes in the various studies that have been conducted by researchers over the years. According to Turner, Barling and Zacharatos (2005), healthy work in organisations means the promotion of both psychological and physical well-being. Organisational commitment, job satisfaction and

job involvement are some of the measures of job well being. Positive psychology makes use of models and theories that explain how employment practices can make work processes more positive and enjoyable. Healthy work is promoted at various levels which lead to positive outcomes such as organisational commitment (Turner et al, 2005). Positive psychology has focused on the concept of role clarity and its relation to commitment in the workplace. Therefore jobs that are clearly defined are beneficial to the employee and aids in the employee feeling confident in their work. Role clarification also deepens the fit between the employee and their work; this fit is a critical factor for the employee to develop a sense of commitment to their organisation as well as the pursuit of organisational goals. Studies have shown that commitment is positively related to job clarity (Turner et al, 2005). Positive psychology has also focused on team and team work in relation to commitment, questioning the levels of commitment between the groups and the overall affective commitment of the group towards the larger organisation. Studies have shown that there is a positive link between positive affective organisational commitment and the overall well-being of the individual (Turner et al, 2005). The next paragraph will focus on happiness under the framework of positive psychology.

2.4 Positive Psychology and happiness

The aim of positive psychology is to help people embrace and enjoy their life as they live in it (Gavin & Mason, 2004). The aim of psychologists operating from this framework is to help individuals find genuine happiness in their everyday lives. Seligman (2002) stated that if an individual can discover a calling or something that will link them to a

greater good, they will tend to be happier. Therefore organisations that are able to create such work environments will create happier employees by providing them with the opportunity to not only spend their days earning a good living but also feeling as though they have contributed to the greater good. Positive psychology focuses on three levels; these include subjective experiences (feelings), individual traits and organisations (Gavin & Mason, 2004). At the subjective level more emphasis is placed on enriching human experiences such as well-being, contentment, satisfaction, hope, optimism, flow and happiness. A state of happiness is achieved when individuals fulfill their communal needs and desires which lead to a more successful life. At the individual level positive psychology seeks to develop positive traits within the individual such as the capacity to love, perseverance, forgiveness, wisdom and spirituality. At the organisational level, positive psychology focuses on organisations that move individuals towards better organisational citizenship which includes higher levels of responsibility, tolerance, altruism and work ethic (Gavin & Mason, 2004). To achieve the state of happiness, positive psychologists' state that individuals need to live and work in good environments, they must be able to recognise as well as cherish feelings of well-being, be content and satisfied with their pasts, feel happy in the present and optimistic about the future. For the creation and maintenance of happier and healthier workers, organisations need to place more emphasis on positive psychology (Gavin & Mason, 2004). It will serve as a method to help develop ways and means for individuals to experience worthy emotions such as feelings like personal happiness. Happiness is therefore experienced both within the individual and within the broader social context in which they work and

live (Gavin & Mason, 2004). The following paragraph will provide a discussion on the conceptualisations of commitment and studies that have been conducted on the construct.

2.5 Commitment

First conceptualisations of commitment originated in the period of 1960 by theorist H. S Becker, who defined the construct from the Side Bet Theoretical framework. Side bets are defined as the type of investments made by employees within the organisation; these investments include pension fund contributions and the time and effort expended by employees within the organisation. Becker (1960) believed that by making side bets, it would lead to employee commitment. Employees feel that side bets would be lost or devalued by leaving the organisation therefore side bets become a factor leading to employee commitment. Side bets are made unconsciously by employees in an organisation thus one is not always aware of the commitments they make.

Commitment has also been postulated by Emerson and Cook (1978) who believed that individuals make commitments in order to reduce feelings of uncertainty. Commitment therefore reduces the use of power thus allowing the exploration of alternatives which may benefit lower level parties.

A common conceptualisation of commitment is from the viewpoint of Meyer and Allen (1991) who defined the construct in respect of three components. These components are namely, affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment. Affective commitment is defined as the attachment, identification or the involvement that the individual has in the organisation. Employees who display high levels of affective commitment remain in the organisation because they want to. Continuance commitment is defined as the awareness that the individual has in terms of leaving the organisation and the costs associated with it therefore these individuals remain in the organisation not because they want to, but because they have to. The third conceptualisation of commitment was normative commitment whereby the employee feels obligated or ought to remain in the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991). A large body of knowledge exists in relation to Meyer and Allen's components of commitment in present day organisational studies. Affective, normative and continuance commitment are therefore believed by the researchers' as components and not types of commitments which vary among different individuals within the organisation.

The researcher understands the construct commitment as the factor which influences individuals to remain in different types of relationships, for some being either due to a need and for others due to a want. From a positive psychological frame of reference commitment is a factor that may be beneficial to the organisation for the reason that it may lead to employee identification with the organisation thus enabling mutual benefit from both parties in the relationship. One may also hold personal levels of commitment

whereby they are committed to a decision or an action in their lives to which they give their word to in order to be viewed as reliable and able to meet objectives. Commitment will also be that factor which motivates an individual to continue, strive and work harder in work or personal relationships.

As mentioned, commitment has been researched extensively over the years, as a construct on its own and in relation to other constructs within the context of the organisation. In respect to research conducted on the components of commitment, Turner (2002) investigated normative, affective and continuance commitment among athletic coaches at a university. The study was conducted using a quantitative approach and the findings were as follows; many of the coaches were committed to the organisation and remained in it because they wanted to, and in doing so displayed high levels of affective commitment to the organisation. It was therefore evident that the coaches had an emotional attachment to the university. Scores on normative commitment showed that some of the coaches felt a sense of obligation towards the university and thus remained in it because they felt that they should. The results on continuance commitment showed that some of the coaches felt that should they leave the university, they would lose both benefits and the friendships built as many had a service of nine years to the university. Lastly affective commitment among the coaches showed the highest scores in comparison to the scores of the two other bases indicating that the coaches were in their respective profession out of enjoyment, passion for the sport and most importantly they remained in the university because they wanted to (Turner, 2002).

Commitment has been researched in relation to other constructs and with varying populations in the societal domain. Presently in the employment sector there is growing evidence of organisations making use of the services of an atypical workforce. Commitment has been researched in relation to atypical employees with various findings. However, some researchers' are unsure as to whether commitment and flexible employment can go together since it is believed that job security is a necessary condition for commitment. Establishing and maintaining the commitment of employees is something that is vital for the effectiveness of the organisation for the reason that it influences the employee's behaviours such as performance, absenteeism and creativity (Torka, 2004).

A study was conducted by Torka (2004) to explain how flexible workers can be committed in terms of the human resource policies in the organisation. A qualitative approach was adopted in order to establish the perceptions of workers with regards to the human resource policies and commitment. The results of the study were as follows; there were more congruencies than differences in the levels of commitment between atypical and typical workers. Commitment was therefore not only limited to the specific contracts of employees but also the human resource choices of policies such as the work systems, rewards and the human resource flow. In the study it was found that employers want their employees to focus on policies that affect them personally. Overall it was found that equal treatment policies aid in the creation of committed, long term relationships as HR meets the expectations of the employees (Torka, 2004).

Other related studies focusing on the relationship between commitment and work status have also been conducted more specifically focusing the link between work status, the psychological contract, attitudes and behaviours (Conway & Briner, 2002). The psychological contract as defined in the study is "the individual's beliefs shaped by the organisation, regarding the terms of exchange between the employee and the employer in the organisation. These exchanges are the effort, ability and loyalty of the employee in exchange for pay, promotion and security from the employer (Conway & Briner, 2002). In terms of affective and continuance commitment of the employee the psychological contract is used to understand these constructs across different work statuses. Conway and Briner (2002) proposed that psychological fulfilment associates positively with organisational commitment. The results of the study were as follows; the findings were not in line with the expectations of the researchers for the reason that there was no significant relationship between fulfilment of the psychological contract and affective commitment and there was a negative relationship between fulfilment of the psychological contract and continuance commitment. The study revealed that total psychological fulfilment will have an effect on affective commitment only if mediator variables such as well-being and job satisfaction exist in the relationship (Conway & Briner, 2002).

In a study conducted by Workman and Bommer (2004) on the conflicting expectations of the customer service and technical skills that are placed on call centre agents it was found

that work processes with high involvement produced the most positive effects of job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

A study by Huang and Hsiao (2007) was conducted to explore the reciprocal relationship between organisational commitment and job satisfaction with findings indicating that job characteristics are the most important determinants of commitment. Findings in the study therefore suggest that in order for management to increase employees' commitment to the organisation there must be a redesign in job content and management strategy. This would involve increasing the level of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback from the job.

In respect of the call centre environment commitment has also been researched in relation to other constructs as indicated by the following studies .One of the dimensions considered in relation to commitment in the call centre industry is support. Support can be understood as an individuals perceived manner of helpfulness from both management and co-workers thus placing an emphasis on the given support from above and below within the organisation (Litwin & Stringer, 1968). Within a call centre support from above and below therefore leads employees to believe that they can depend on the organisation in the instance of difficulties arising in their respective jobs (Slender, 1990). A supportive climate has therefore been deemed as a prerequisite for the establishment of a good organisational climate. A cross sectional study was conducted by Slender (1990)

and findings indicated that an organisations' structure together with strong support structures are the strongest predictors of organisational commitment.

A study was conducted on call centre personnel in Pakistan to investigate the impact of organisational commitment and citizenship behaviour on the turnover intentions. The results of the study indicated that turnover intentions of the call centre personnel depended on the commitment of the employees. The results in the study therefore provided solutions to the Human Resources department to reduce turnover by providing a feasible environment within the organisation which in turn impacts positively on employees in terms of high levels of commitment (Ahmad, Shahzad, Rehman, Khan & Shad, 2010). Some researchers' state that commitment seems to be one of the most important factors in reducing turnover intentions and therefore suggest that call centres should provide challenging work and constant opportunities for training and development (Wegge, van Dick, Fisher, Wecking & Moltzen, 2006a).

Commitment in call centres has also been researched using a systems thinking and organic structural approach. The systems thinking approach is one which is used in the design and management of work and is designed around customer demands and not functional hierarchies (Jaaron & Backhouse, 2011). An organic structure is characterised as an organisational structure whereby employees are empowered to perform a variety of tasks and jobs are wide in scope. Tasks are also not governed by rigid rule, therefore

allowing the team to share responsibility of duties. A hierarchy of control is also not present-critical literature in organisational science posits the team as a more effective method of employee control. (Jaaron & Backhouse, 2011). A qualitative study was conducted using the systems thinking and organic structural approach, findings indicated that employees working within the context of a call centre possess higher levels of affective commitment due to the rewarding job experience that they enjoy. It was found that employees who achieve personal aspirations in their working experiences are more likely to exert more efforts on behalf of their organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Findings also indicated that improving the call centre service operations design by adopting an organic structure is likely to increase affective commitment. Lastly still in respect of the organic structure the findings in the study indicated that due to employees having the ability to control their work and being able to decide on the way they receive and handle information, this becomes the key factor in building affective commitment (Jaaron & Backhouse, 2011.).

2.6 Happiness

Research on happiness is mushrooming in psychology literature as many psychologists are concerned with the good life and how it can be achieved (Guigon, 1999). Happiness may refer to either short term emotional states or long term cognitive evaluations (Ryff, 1989). However it also rests on the individuals' capacity to distinguish between the good and bad stimuli that exist in an environment and trigger behavioural responses. In the academic context, happiness has a long philosophical tradition, a biological core, a close

match with economics, a psychological standing and also sociological significance (Laynard, 2005). Researchers state that there are different ways to be happy (Guignon, 1999). One route to happiness is embodied in hedonism, which is the maximising of pleasure and minimizing pain. The doctrine of hedonism was articulated thousands of years ago by Aristuppus who believed that immediate sensory gratification is the route to a fulfilling life (Watson, 1895). This view was further elaborated on by Epicurus who stated that our fundamental moral obligation is to maximize our experience of pleasure. A second way one is believed to experience happiness is by being highly engaged in what one does and experiencing a state of flow. During the state of flow time passes quickly and the focus is on the activity itself. The individual's sense of self as a social actor is lost and the aftermath of the flow experience becomes one that is invigorating. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Another route to happiness identified can be traced back to Aristotle's (2000) notion of eudemonia, which refers to being true to one's inner self. According to the eudemonic view, true happiness entails an individual identifying their virtues and living in accordance with them (Peterson, Willibald, Beerman, Park & Seligman, 2007). The hedonic approach to happiness is exemplified by research on subjective well-being (a term often used interchangeably with happiness). Therefore the contributions made to the remainder of the review of literature on the construct will focus on the understanding of happiness as subjective well-being.

Subjective well-being (SWB) is a major area of psychology and is aimed at understanding how people evaluate their lives. According to Diener, Suh, Lucas and

Smith (1999), an individual's evaluation of their lives may be cognitive, such as life satisfaction or may consist of the experience of pleasant or unpleasant emotions. The three components of subjective well-being being life satisfaction, the presence of happy mood and the absence of negative mood, together are often summarized as *happiness*. A large body of research topics exists concerning well-being, with topics being quite diverse. Some topics grapple with the meaning of subjective well-being and how it differs among individuals, the role of emotions in subjective well-being and also the antecedents of subjective well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2001). Further discussions on these research topics will follow.

SWB has been researched in relation to individual differences and personality factors, with questions such as what type of people are likely to be happy and are there personality factors that consistently relate to well-being? In a meta-analysis conducted by DeNeve and Cooper (1998), many personality traits were significantly associated with SWB. The researchers reported that extraversion and agreeableness were positively associated with SWB, whereas neuroticism was negatively associated with it.

Considerable research has also been conducted on the antecedent conditions that are likely to facilitate well-being. These conditions include wealth, relationships and goal pursuits. Within the field of psychology there has been an increasing appreciation of the fundamental importance that warm, trusting and interpersonal relationships are for well-

being (Deci & Ryan, 2001). Some theorists have suggested that having stable and satisfying relationships is a general resilience factor across ones lifespan. However studies reviewed by Nezlek (2000), found that quantities of interactions does not predict well-being but the quality of relationships does. Therefore the work of quality relationships examining the relationships between people, it was found that individuals who have intimate or higher-quality relationships demonstrate greater levels of well-being (Nezlek, 2000).

Another active area of research related to well-being is in relation to goals and goal progress (Deci & Ryan, 2001). Research findings have pointed to the fact that individuals who feel competent and confident with respect to valued goals, this is associated with enhanced well-being. It is therefore clear that as individuals' progress towards their goals and these goals are rated as important, it serves as a predictor of enhanced well-being (Brunstein, 1993). However there have been concerns in relation to the issues that may be posed by one's goals. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) found that when life goals are either to easy or too challenging, positive affect in individuals is lower. Low expectations of success have also been associated with high negative affect.

It has been argued by some researchers that there are four theoretical approaches to understanding SWB in the work context. According to Gallie, White, Cheng and Tomlinson (1998), the first theoretical approach underlines the importance of work tasks

particularly how the avoidance of fragmented and repetitive work provides employees with the scope to use their initiative. The second approach locates employee well-being and satisfaction in the social support that exists in the work environment and the way employees embrace relations with colleagues and their superiors. The third theoretical approach in the understanding of well-being is concerned with the degree of participation employees have in their work and the extent to which they are involved in the decisions that affect their everyday lives. The fourth approach focuses on the implications of job insecurity (Gallie, White, Cheng & Tomlinson 1998).

Call centre environments are typically seen as stressful work environments which require highly repetitive work within the context of usually difficult working conditions. One of the defining characteristics of these environments is one in which every move made by the employee is monitored thus leading to negative outcomes. According to Pinheiro, Troccoli and Tamayo (2003), work overload or job pressures and feelings of a lack of job satisfaction may affect an individual's feeling of self-worth therefore resulting in negative emotional states. Some call centres have come under fire for the manner in which they are managed and the way agents are supervised. Pressure is placed on supervisors to increase performance who in turn increase pressure on agents. It was found that the cycle of pressure leads to unhappiness at all levels and thus becomes a major cause of the high turnover rate in call centres (Pinheiro et al, 2003).

Emotions within the context of the call centre environment have been researched and it has been found that call centre work is linked to various forms of emotion, both positive and negative. A study was conducted by Wegge, van Dick, Fisher and Dawson (2006), on the factors eliciting positive and negative emotions in the work of call centre representatives with a specific focus on the different consequences of emotions at work. Findings in the study revealed that positive emotions at work correlate with high job satisfaction. Another study was conducted on emotions in a South African outsourced call centre and aim of the research was to establish if work performance was influenced by the extent to which call centre agents experience positive or negative emotions at work. Findings in the study indicated only a slight correlation between emotions and performance of call centre employees, however it was not conclusive due to a small sample size and future research was suggested to establish the link more conclusively (Bettesworth, 2009).

2.7 Commitment and happiness

A fair body of knowledge exists in literature in respect to motivation, job satisfaction and hygiene factors within a call centre. However there is a lack of research that incorporates both the constructs of commitment and happiness in the context of the call centre environment. Therefore the literature in relation to these constructs will reviewed within other organisational settings.

It has been said that through the experience of positive emotions at work, individuals may form positive emotions about their work and their organisation. This may also include enhanced organisational commitment. (Fisher, 2002; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). This has been exemplified by Lilius, Worline, Maitlis, Kanov, Dutton and Frost (2008), who suggested that when employees experience compassion at work, this may lead to the experiencing of positive emotions which in turn may lead to pleasant emotional associations with the workplace and over time strengthened affective commitment to the organisation. The experience of positive emotions and happiness may also lead individuals to experience work in a meaningful way, therefore work is no longer considered as a job. Employees are therefore more affectively attached to their organisation and become committed to improving organisational performance (Gavin & Mason, 2004; Wright & Cropanzano, 2004).

Commitment in an organisation may be viewed as an exchange commodity in the sense that, employees are more likely to become committed to their organisation when they feel that their organisation is committed to them. Therefore reciprocity between employees and employers are mediated by feelings of happiness at work (Fuller, Barnett, Hester & Relyea, 2003). In a study by Rego, Riberio, Pina e Cunha and Jesuino (2011), it was found that perceptions of organisational virtuousness predict happiness and affective commitment. It was also found that happiness predicts affective commitment. More specifically, perceptions of organisational virtuousness predict affective commitment, either directly and/or through the mediating role of happiness. Past studies have suggested that an employee's affective commitment is crucial for the promotion of both

the individual and organisation (Allen & Meyer, 1996). Therefore findings in the study by Rego et al (2011) indicated that for such a bond to be created, managers and organisations must invest in employee happiness. It is therefore evident that positive emotions not only foster performance in the workplace but also a committed workforce (Fisher, 2002).

A study by (Rolando, n.d.) was conducted to investigate the relationship between health, harmony, happiness and employee commitment aimed at answering the question, what is happiness? The study also attempted to show that happiness which is true and lasting could only be experienced at a level which encompasses meaning, that is harmony with oneself and engagement which is harmony with others. Rolando (n.d.) stated that, what makes an employee happy is not featured on the standard employee menu which includes money, training and positions. However what makes people truly happy is the contribution made to others, making a difference, forming relationships with others, the feeling of being valued and also having a sense of control over one's life.

In order to establish the relationship between happiness and commitment a range of datasets from employee commitment studies undertaken during the period of 2004 to 2007 were reviewed. The surveys were conducted amongst staff in the professional services environment. Responses by committed employees and a range of attributes were ranked according to importance. Attributes were grouped into themes which included happiness experienced as a sense of engagement (friends or family to turn to, company

sees people as vital, strong networks/relationships, involvement with work, feeling valued at work, fitting in with the company culture, alignment with company values, colleagues interested in well-being), happiness experienced as a sense of purpose or meaning (life has meaning and purpose, satisfied with achievements, strong beliefs), health and well-being as a driver of commitment (feeling alive and energetic, taking care of health, having a varied life, feeling well and in good health, having enough leisure time to be happy, feeling physically fit).

The findings of the study indicated that certain issues relating to happiness being experienced as either a sense of engagement or purpose have the potential of influencing commitment more powerfully as opposed to issues such as a salaries and the opportunity to advance. Experiencing happiness as a sense of engagement include, feeling valued, fitting in with the company culture, being seen as vital in the company's success, colleagues being interested in well-being and having a control over ones work. In terms of happiness experienced as a sense of purpose, the findings in the study indicated that committed people associate strongly with attributes such as life having meaning and purpose, being passionate about what one wants to do in their lives and being satisfied with ones achievements. Findings in the study relating to happiness as a factor for health and well-being found that, committed people associate positively with attributes such as taking care of one's health, feeling well and in good health, feeling alive and energetic, being physically fit and having enough leisure time to be happy. Findings in the study are intended to provide employers and organisations with new ideas to improve employee

commitment which in turn will lead to happier employees and more successful organisations.

In a study conducted on happiness, work engagement and organisational of support staff at a tertiary education institution in South Africa, significant positive relationships were found between organisational commitment and engagement as well as between affective organisational commitment and happiness (Field & Buitendach, 2011). Furthermore results indicated that happiness and work engagement have predictive value for affective organisational commitment. The findings in the study extends the body of knowledge that exists in the field of positive psychology for the reason that well-being plays a significant role in predicting a positive outcome such as affective organisational commitment (Field & Buitendach, 2011).

2.8 Call centres

The 21st century is characterised by rapid changes in technology, forcing organisations to keep abreast and adapt to these changes for gains and to maintain a competitive advantage (Altmann, 2000). In line with technological advancements the use of call centres has become essential for continued business. Holman (2003) describes a call centre as a work environment in which business activities are mediated by the use of computers and telephone-based technologies which enable the distribution of incoming and outgoing calls and thus permits customer-employee interaction to occur

simultaneously with the use of screen equipment. The use of call centres has become valuable in all sectors, both in developed and developing countries (Holman, 2003).

The use of call centres offers many advantages, thus making them desirable to organisations. These advantages include the curbing of expenditure and the improvement of efficiency and productivity thus leading to the greater achievement of profits for the organisation (Holman, 2005). Furthermore the call centre environment allows the organisation to practice greater control over the workplace and workforce through the electronic monitoring of workflow and employee performance (Miller, Fisher & Thatcher, 2007). For this reason it has become evident as to why many businesses are introducing call centres. As a result of the increasing popularity of call centres in organisations today, there has been an increased focus on the impact that call centre work has on those who work in these environments.

Whilst the use of call centres offers many advantages for organisations however the same cannot be always said for employees within the call centre environment. Studies conducted on call centres have argued that employees experience many negative consequences such as burnout, dehumanization and excessive control from management (Eason, 2000; Holman, 2005, Miller et al, 2005). The monitoring of employee performance and the surveillance that is present in call centres creates immense pressure on employees which in turn negatively effects employee well-being (Holman, 2000). Call

centres have gained the title of electronic sweatshops, characterised as a boring, demanding and stressful environment (Garson, 1998).

2.9 Theoretical frameworks: Commitment and the Social Exchange Theory

Research has shown that commitment can be described from the social exchange theoretical framework. According to the social exchange theory, when individuals decide on helping each other, they do a cost benefit analysis and in this analysis the benefits must outweigh the costs. The individual decides what is fair by comparing a give and take ratio. Benefits can be tangible or intangible, physical or psychological (Bentein & Guerrero, 2008). If one therefore perceives that the costs in the relationship outweigh the benefits, they may decide on leaving the relationship but before leaving the relationship a few considerations are taken into account. These considerations could be viewed as the barriers to leaving the relationship such as financial obligations as well as obligations to support the family (Bentein & Guerrero, 2008).

From a social exchange perspective, relationships established between parties are described from two points of view. In terms of an employee/employer relationship the relationship can firstly be described in terms of economic exchange, which may include respective and clear obligations. The other point of view is in terms of social exchanges, which are those obligations that are not specified and are left to the discretion of both parties (Bentein & Guerrero, 2008).

Rewards are an important component of the social exchange theory. Rewards in the employment relationship refer to the financial returns, tangible services and other benefits that are received by an employee as part of the relationship (Bratton & Gold, 1994). The theory therefore highlights the significance of both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards in the development of affective, normative and continuous commitment in the organisation. Extrinsic rewards are those rewards that result from extrinsic and non- job related factors; these include social rewards such as friendly, helpful and supportive co-workers and also considerate supervisors. Such rewards are derived from interaction with others in the organisation. Other extrinsic rewards include organisational rewards such as working conditions, pay satisfaction, benefits and promotion opportunities. Such rewards are provided by the organisation thus aiming to motivate employee performance and maintaining employee membership (Mottaz, 1988). Rewards therefore become important determinants of employee attitudes such as organisational commitment.

Intrinsic rewards on the other hand are those rewards that are inherent to the job itself and include motivational job characteristics such as skill variety, autonomy and feedback (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Other job characteristics that have been identified as intrinsic rewards include participation in decision making and role clarity. Within all levels of the organisation, employees recognize the importance of upgrading skills and therefore regard training as an important non- financial motivator, thus training being regarded as an intrinsic reward (Armstrong, 1993).

Previous research conducted to examine the relationships among employees' perceptions of rewards and the three components of organizational commitment in four major retail bank call centres (Malhotra, Budhwar & Prowse, 2007). The study adopted a quantitative approach and findings were as follows; as it was predicted extrinsic rewards in terms of promotional opportunities exerted a positive influence on affective commitment and were thus in line with findings of Meyer and Smith's (2000) study on career development practices being the best predictor of affective commitment. In respect of intrinsic rewards it was found that role clarity, autonomy and participation in decision making have a significant positive effect on affective commitment. The findings in relation to decision making confirm those of the previous findings of Meyer and Allen's (1991) study which suggested that encouraging employee participation in decision making, promotes affective commitment.

Within the body of knowledge, limited literature exists on the antecedents of normative commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1991). However findings in the study conducted by Malhotra, et al (2007) indicated that in terms of extrinsic rewards only satisfaction with benefits had a positive effect on normative commitment. In respect to intrinsic rewards, normative commitment like affective commitment was mostly influenced by autonomy, feedback and training (Malhotra, et al, 2007).

As hypothesized in the study with respects to continuance commitment, only extrinsic organizational rewards had a significant influence on this component of commitment and confirm findings of a meta- analytic study conducted by Mathieu and Zaiac (1990). Pay satisfaction was found to have a significant positive effect on continuance commitment thus indicating that satisfaction with pay is likely to increase employees' perceived costs of leaving the organisation thereby enhancing continuance commitment. Pay satisfaction therefore enhanced the need for call centre employees' to remain within the organisation thus influencing their continuance commitment (Malhotra, et al, 2007).

2.9.1 Happiness and the Affective Events Theory

Subjective well-being in the workplace can be understood from the affective events theoretical framework. The Affective Events Theory by Weiss and Cropanzano (1996), states that the environmental conditions in the workplace lead to hassles and uplifts in employees, therefore environmental conditions are regarded as affective events. Furthermore, according to the AET, it is the accumulation of positive and negative events that leads to positive or negative states in employees that in turn result in attitudinal states and behavioural responses. This may be further elaborated in the instance of an employee who is being hassled by a demanding employer (an effective event) and therefore becomes angry or disgruntled (an affective state) and suffers job dissatisfaction (an attitudinal state) and looks for employment elsewhere (a behavioural consequence). At the heart of AET lies the idea that the affective state mediates the affective event on the attitudes and behaviours of an individual. Therefore it can be understood that an

emotional build-up can profoundly affect our behaviours (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Many jobs or occupations, particularly the service industry are characterised by norms or expectations regarding the display of emotions. AET points out those emotional reactions experienced at a job affect important workplace dimensions such as commitment, job satisfaction and productivity. AET conveys the important message to management that emotions within the organisation and the events that cause them should not be ignored even if they are viewed as relatively minor. The Affective Events Theory also proposes that a work environment with stable features, such as job scope result in the occurrence of affect producing events. In the instance of an enriched job, the results may be discrete events such as feedback, task accomplishment and optimal challenges which in turn may lead to positive emotions such as pride, happiness and enthusiasm (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996).

In a study conducted by Basch and Fisher (1998), it was questioned as to what job events or situations caused employees to experience specific emotions while at work. The aim of the research was to show the relationship between the categories of job events and the corresponding emotions that were experienced by people. Twenty emotions were chosen (affection, pleasure, happiness, pride, optimism, enthusiasm, frustration, anger, disgust, unhappiness, disappointment, embarrassment and worry, relief, fear, hurt, bitterness, annoyance and sadness) were stimuli for the study together with fourteen categories of positive job events and thirteen categories of negative job events (Basch & Fisher, 1998).

Positive categories included acts of colleagues and management which are the appraisal of behaviours towards oneself or towards others by colleagues, managers and supervisors. Goal achievement related to situations where targets and goals are met. Recognition referred to the positive feedback one receives for the meeting of targets and the performance of jobs to a high standard. Acts of customers was the appraisal of behaviours of oneself or other employees from customers. Involvement referred to employee participation in job or organisational activities and was placed into categories which included, challenging tasks, problem solving, and decision making and planning. Influence or control was acts or attempts to influence or control work colleagues. Goal progress was the positive outcomes from events that were perceived to lead towards goal achievement (Basch & Fisher, 1998).

Negative categories included the appraisal of acts of colleagues, management and customers as negative towards oneself or others. Lack of goal achievement related to targets or goals not being met. Lack of recognition was described as being ignored by managers and supervisors despite the meeting of targets, performing of jobs to a high standard or engaging in helping behaviour. Task problems related to the experiencing of difficulty encountered by a person in performing his/her job. Making mistakes were the minor acts which resulted in unintended consequences. Lack of control related to situations whereby a person was unable to influence or control colleagues, supervisors and the work situation. Physical situations were the situations that were appraised as physical threats towards the individual while being at work. Workload was the personal

appraisal in relation to the amount of work one needed to carry out. Lastly personal problems were the individual's reflection about their personal problems at work (Basch & Fisher, 1998).

The results of the study were as follows; in incidents of goal achievement, feelings of happiness, enthusiasm and optimism were stimulated. Receiving recognition resulted in pride, enthusiasm, happiness and affection. The acts of colleagues stimulated feelings of pleasure, happiness and affection. Involvement in challenges generated feelings of enthusiasm. Goal progress generated feelings of happiness and pride. Being involved in decision making, problem solving and having influence or control over others and events was associated with the emotion of power while being involved in planning triggered feelings of enthusiasm (Basch & Fisher, 1998).

Acts of management accounted for 59% of events that cause negative emotions and resulted in feelings of frustration, disappointment, anger, unhappiness, sadness and hurt. Therefore the finding had clear implications of where the quality of emotional life at work could be improved. Mistakes in ones work was found to lead to embarrassment whereas a lack of goal accomplishment leads to disappointment, unhappiness and feelings of fear. Worry was a common response in the findings especially in relation to factors that were beyond the employees control such as a lack of control over others and the workload. Feelings of disappointment were the result of a lack of goal achievement

and not receiving recognition for accomplishments (Basch & Fisher, 1998). The results of the study could therefore be useful to management for the improvement of the emotional quality of life of their employees. In respect to recognition and involvement, these could be seen as areas in which changes could be made so as to increase the incidence of both positive events and emotions in the organisation. Acts of management and colleagues showed to be the most potent cause of negative emotions. Therefore a consideration can be taken into account in relation to the specific types of actions made by these parties that tend to upset employees in the organisation and can therefore be useful in planning interventions (Basch & Fisher, 1998).

2.10 Conclusion

In conclusion it can be deduced from the above discussion that commitment and happiness are important factors under the framework of positive psychology as it enables one to understand the various links between those factors that lead to positive outcomes in the organisation. Research on commitment shows how the single construct can be measured in terms of three different bases which provide one with an understanding and the rationale for individuals remaining in their respective relationships. Research on happiness has shown that happier employees are more productive, generate better goods and fulfil services to customers. Happiness together with health and productivity are three of the essential ingredients for a good society. For the creation and maintenance of committed and happier employees organisations are advised to place an emphasis on

positive psychology and also have leaders who are committed to create a committed and happy workforce.

Chapter three

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The chapter will focus on the tools and techniques that have been utilised in the research process. The discussion will incorporate the type of research design used in the study, type of sampling, the procedure followed in the research and the data analysis technique. The rationale and appropriateness of these techniques as well as their strengths and limitations will also be discussed.

3.2 Research design

An understanding of employee experiences of commitment and happiness in call centre employment required the researcher to investigate employee feelings, perceptions and experiences within their working environment. The qualitative method was the most appropriate method to use as it allowed the researcher to obtain an in-depth description of the specific population. This is for the reason that qualitative research provides greater flexibility than quantitative research and therefore allows the researcher to probe further in order to attain a deeper understanding of participants' response. The qualitative method will be defined and further elaborated below.

The qualitative method according to Mertens (1998) is a "multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter" (p. 159) while Shank (2002) defines qualitative research as "a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning" (p. 5). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) claim that qualitative research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach: "This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 3).

Qualitative methods are assessed in terms of four criteria, these are namely; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Trochim, 2006). Credibility involves the establishment of results which are based on the perspectives of the participant, this is for the reason that qualitative studies focus on understanding various phenomena from the viewpoint of the participant (Trochim, 2006). Transferability refers to whether the results obtained in the study can be transferred to other contexts or settings. The idea of dependability refers to the emphasis that the researcher places on the context of where the research takes place and the fact that it is ever changing. It would therefore be the responsibility of the researcher to account for these changes as well as the effects that these changes have on the study (Trochim, 2006). Lastly confirmability refers to the degree of which the results of the study can be confirmed by others. Confirmability can be achieved if the researcher checks and rechecks the data throughout the study as well as describes the negative instances which have resulted in the contradiction of prior observations (Trochim, 2006).

The qualitative method is useful as the researcher gains an understanding of the participant's experiences and perceptions. Qualitative research also enables the researcher to reassure participants of confidentiality, rephrase questions in a different way and probe those participants who have initial short responses to expand on those responses thus allowing the attainment of rich, detailed information. Therefore, this proved a useful approach given the aims of the current study. The qualitative research method therefore, enabled the researcher to find meaning in and make sense of the participant's experiences and perceptions in their natural settings. Therefore, the application of the qualitative method of data collection is ideal. The selection of participants, settings and the process of data collection and analysis are discussed in the following sections.

3.3 Settings and participants

The sample in the study was attained from one organisation- Company X. Company X is a large South African port and pipeline company. Company X has branches throughout South Africa including call centres which manage customer care. For the purpose of the study the current research therefore targeted participants which are employed within the call centre environment. The researcher interviewed twelve participants, six of whom are permanent employees, four of whom are temporary and two of whom are part of the organisations learnership programme. Interviews were conducted at the company's call centre offices based in the Durban area of Kwazulu- Natal. The research participants that were interviewed were males and females aged between 21 and 40 years of age. All

twelve participants were English speaking and the majority had some form of post-matric

education, qualifications and courses.

Table 1: Participant biographical information

Participant	Gender	Age	Years In company	Employment Status	Highest level of education
One	Male	27	Four Years	Permanent	Matric + two years of university
Two	Male	26	One Month	Learner	Diploma in public relations
Three	Female	32	Five Months	Temporary	Diploma in secretarial business studies
Four	Female	22	Three Months	Temporary	Degree in economics
Five	Male	22	Three and a half years	Permanent	Matric
Six	Male	30	One and a half years	Permanent	Matric
Seven	Female	23	One Month	Learner	Marketing Diploma
Eight	Female	25	Five Months	Temporary	Bachelor's Degree
Nine	Female	30	Five Years	Permanent	B. Com Degree
Ten	Male	36	Two Years	Permanent	Matric

3.4 Sampling and sampling method

For the purpose of this study the sampling technique that was used was the non-probability technique and more specifically the purposive sampling technique. Non-probability sampling can be defined as "any kind of sampling where the selection of elements is not determined by the statistical principle of randomness" (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999). Purposive sampling, "depends not only on availability and willingness to participate, but that the cases that are typical of the population are selected" (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999).

The researcher used purposive sampling as the study targeted a specific population of participants. With respect to the study, the researcher was specifically interested in interviewing employees engaged in call centre employment. Therefore, the purposive sampling technique was the most appropriate method in order to supply the researcher with the necessary participants. The sample was selected from a call centre within the Durban area of Kwazulu-Natal.

3.5 Instruments

Data in the study was collected through the use of two instruments namely a biographical questionnaire and semi-structured interview questionnaire. The biographical questionnaire captured information relating to the participant's gender, age, employment

status, level of educational qualification and the period of time the participant worked in the organisation in their respective position. The biographical questionnaire was used to contextualise and interpret findings more meaningfully in terms of whether there was a correlation between the biographic variables on commitment and happiness as experienced by employees in the call centre.

The study also used the semi-structured interviewing technique. Semi-structured interviews are interviews in which there are a set questions however these questions are open ended and there is room for deviation from the actual questions (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006). This allows the researcher to get an understanding of the participant's perspective and feelings on the subject (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006). During the interview process the researcher prompted the participants to engage in a discussion on the questions that were asked relating to the participant's experiences of commitment and happiness in call centre employment. The interviews were recorded using a Dictaphone

The semi structured interview schedule that was used by the researcher was developed by the researcher in relation to the study's aims and objectives and consisted of questions that drew on employee experiences of commitment and happiness in call centre employment. The interview questions were guided broadly by the main research questions. Furthermore the interview questions were also developed through the consultation of literature available on commitment and happiness.

The researcher also made use of probing. Probing refers to asking follow-up questions when the researcher did not fully understand a response, when the answers were vague or ambiguous or when the researcher wanted to obtain more specific or in-depth information. During the interview the participants were encouraged to participate in a discussion from the questions that were asked relating to their experiences of commitment and happiness in call centre employment.

3.6 Data collection

The researcher made contact with the manager of the call centre and provided the manager with an overview of the study. Further, the researcher obtained the necessary permission to undertake the study at the call centre. Once the relevant permission was granted, the researcher requested, from the manager, an organogram of the department. The organogram provided the researcher with information pertaining to the number of employees in the call centre as well as job titles and gender. Upon receipt of the information, the purposive sampling technique was used by the researcher to identify the employees that participated in the study. The researcher provided a brief description to the identified participants regarding the purpose of the study, what the study will entail, their roles in terms of participation in the study and importantly the issues surrounding confidentiality as well as anonymity. After the briefing and participants that were keen to participate in the study were identified, arrangements were made between the manager and the researcher regarding time and date for the interviews. An informed consent letter was given to participants prior to the study. Data collection took place over a period of

approximately two weeks whereby the researcher was responsible for conducting the one on one interviews with the identified participants. The one on one interview was conducted at the place of work at a time that was appropriate to both the employee and employer. The interviews took place in a quiet room at the premises of the call centre to avoid distraction and external interference.

When the researcher met the participants, before proceeding with the interview questions, the researcher provided the participants with an informed consent form. The informed consent form that participants were provided with included a description of the study, the purpose of the study, what participation in the study entailed as well as issues of confidentiality and anonymity. The researcher read the informed consent form to the participants explaining what was required of the participants. The researcher then handed the form to the participants to read a second time. Once the participants had read and signed the informed consent form the researcher proceeded to first ask the biographical questions and thereafter the questions from the interview schedule.

The interviews lasted approximately half an hour to forty five minutes long and took place over a period of two weeks from the 14 July 2012 to the 28 July 2012. Once the researcher had completed the interviews the participants were thanked for their time and effort. All interviews that were conducted were tape recorded and the transcriptions were used at a later stage for analysis.

3.7 Data analysis

Interviews were recorded using a Dictaphone and each one on one interview was transcribed by the researcher and the data generated from the interview responses by participants were analysed using the thematic content analysis approach. Thematic content analysis is a "descriptive presentation of qualitative data" (Anderson, 2007). "The researcher groups and distils from the texts a list of common themes in order to give expression to the communality of voices across participants" (Anderson, 2007). Thematic content analysis is historically a conventional practice in the qualitative research method which entails the researcher searching through the data to identify any recurring themes or patterns (Anderson, 2007).

The researcher found common underlying themes from the participant's responses to the research questions by firstly transcribing the data that was obtained from the interviews. The researcher then proceeded to listen to the tape recordings and read over the transcriptions numerous times. Items of interest were noted. Emerging topics of interest were sorted into themes and sub-themes. The researcher then proceeded into refining and narrowing down the themes into the most critical and important themes.

The researcher then used the NVIVO software to create nodes and upload the interview transcriptions onto the NVIVO software. Quotes from the transcriptions that related to the relevant themes were coded under the appropriate nodes. However this was not the

main objective of research. The researcher also be tried to find how participants thought differently about the topic. Therefore the individuality and uniqueness of the participant's responses were also important. The researcher then proceeded to do a write up of the findings as interpretations were generated from the analysis.

3.8 Ethical considerations

All the participants in the study were briefed on the purpose of the study. An informed consent form was also provided to participants, whereby the participants were told that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any point. Confidentiality was also assured to participants in respect that neither their names nor the names of their organization would be revealed in the study. Respondents were also informed that participation is voluntary and that they would not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to participate or not participate in the study. Participants were also assured that the interview material used in the study (tapes and transcripts) would only be seen and heard by the researcher and the research supervisor.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the manner in which this research was conducted. Qualitative methodology was employed and semi-structured interviews were conducted. A non-probability sample, comprising of twelve participants was selected from a single

organisation. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The results and discussion

of the findings are presented in the next chapter.

Chapter four

Results and discussion

4.1 Introduction

The study highlighted and brought to the forefront the critical emergent themes that pertain to and are intertwined in call centre employees' experiences of commitment and happiness. Sixteen crucial and pertinent themes emerged from the data that was obtained in the study. These themes will further be discussed below. The emergent themes in the study are as follows:

- ➢ Understanding of commitment

- ➢ Rationale for commitment

- ➢ Subjective commitment

- ➢ Attachment to job responsibilities

- ➢ Employee retention and development

- ➢ The benefits of committed employees

- ➢ Organisational development of commitment

- ➢ Understanding of happiness

- ➢ Subjective happiness as an employee

- ➢ Conceptualising a happy employee

- ➢ Positive work factors

- ➢ Negative work factors'

- ➢ Subjective work experiences of happiness

- ➢ Subjective work experiences of unhappiness

- ➢ Organisational development of happiness

- ➢ The benefits of happy employees

4.2 Results

The emergent themes and sub-themes relating to employee experiences of commitment and happiness in call centre employment will further be presented.

4.3 Theme one: Understanding of commitment

Four of the participants understanding of commitment centered around the following; attachment, willing, ownership, loyalty, hardworking and dedication.

4.3.1 Attachment

Two of the twelve participants understood commitment as having an "attachment to something", as reflected by the following quotations:

"I think it means been attached to a certain something, a job or anything that you are

involved in" (Participant 1)

"My understanding of commitment is to love your job, love what you are doing and

love the company that you are working for" (Participant 10)

4.3.2 Willing

Some participants understood commitment as being a willing individual, as reflected by the following quotations:

"My understanding of commitment is basically, how much you are willing to do, how

are you willing to go, how far you willing to bend your back, how much you can take,

how much you can get pushed, that all boils down commitment" (Participant 2)

"When they call you over the weekend you are willing to come through and if the

ask you to do something you are willing to do it to the best of your ability"

(Participant 4)

4.3.3 Ownership

Two of the twelve participants interviewed understood commitment as treating the organization as it is your own, as reflected by the following quotations:

"Treating the business as if though it my own business even though I'm not the owner. I conduct myself as if though it's my own business" (Participant 7)

"I guess it is like treating it like it is your own business" (Participant 4)

4.3.4 Loyalty

Four of the twelve participants interviewed understood commitment as being loyal, as reflected by the following quotations:

"To me personally it means being loyal to the company, somebody that the company can rely on and knowing that I am not going to abscond, not going to stay away and be absent all the time and somebody that they can count on being here for as long as I am required" (Participant 3)

"I guess it is being loyal, with regards to commitment to the job it obviously involves being loyal to the job that you do and the company that you work for and I guess your managers and your clients" (Participant 4)

4.3.5 Hard working

Two of the twelve participants interviewed understood commitment as being hard working and doing something to the best of your ability, as reflected by following quotations:

"I think it is giving all of yourself to something, and doing it to the best that you can" (Participant 8)

"Commitment is whereby you do all your work with all your power and all your understanding. Make sure whatever you do is 100% correct" (Participant 11)

4.3.6 Dedication

Three of the twelve participants interviewed understood commitment as manifested through dedication to that which you are doing, as reflected by the following quotations:

"Dedicating yourself to the work you do, being committed to the work you do, not only to the clients but also to your colleagues and also to your superiors. And just being committed to playing the role that you supposed to play, depending on whatever you are doing like a call centre agent, being committed to your role as a call centre consultant" (Participant 9)

"To dedicate yourself to something that you are doing, have passion for it and do it

really well" (participant 12)

4.4 Theme two: Rationale for commitment

4.4.1 Financial

Four of the twelve participants interviewed mentioned that commitment for them was as a result of financial reasons, such as the need for an income and obligations to family, as reflected by the following quotations:

"My family, I have a 2 year old and I plan on getting married soon and in order for me

to make those dreams come true for myself and my family there is a certain level of

commitment that I have to show towards work" (Participant 2)

"Obviously due my financial issues like second semester I am going back to do my post

grad studies so I am just committed to get by financially for now to be quite honest"

(Participant 4)

4.4.2 Growth and improvement

Four of the twelve participants interviewed linked commitment to the need for growth and improvement within the organisation, as reflected by the following quotations:

"There are times I don't want to wake up in the morning but I have to because I know at certain times I have to be at a certain place and accomplish a certain amount of goals and I have to progress this much so everything comes with time, you set yourself up for the future, you don't just wake up today saying you want to be a millionaire or whatever it is a process that teach us to become who we are so that is what drives me and keeps me committed" (Participant 2)

"Simply, because I want to move onto a better position. This was just like to grow up in the company, and to get some experience behind me, and now that I've got that, I'm just pushing towards working to another level" (Participant 5)

4.5 Theme three: Subjective commitment

4.5.1 Progress

Three of the twelve participants interviewed mentioned that they are committed to the organisation because of the progress they have/will make in the organisation, as reflected by the following quotations:

"I do feel I have been committed in these 4 weeks because we have been given a certain amount of work to complete for the learnership for the 3rd of July but I was finished by the 25th of June so I was ready to take calls. I am here every day, I haven't been absent once, I help out other agents on the learnership as well, and that is me showing my commitment. That is me trying to get somewhere with my life so, that is my commitment" (Participant 2)

I feel that I am very committed because I like the company. Honestly, I don't really like the position that I am in right now. It's more like a stepping stone to where I want to be. And that's why I am so committed, because I want to show people that I can do well in this small position, and get to where I need to be (Participant 5)

4.5.2 Hard work/effort

Four of the participants interviewed felt that commitment to the organisation is displayed through hard work and the effort invested in ones work, as reflected by the following quotations:

"Yes I feel that I am committed, because every time that I wake up I feel happy that I'm going to work. And whatever I do I make sure I do 100% correct also I'm getting paid well, so I have to do my best to make the customers happy" (Participant 11)

"I am still looking for better opportunities but I am committed because if they need me

for anything even if is outside of what I do, I am still willing to do it" (Participant 4)

4.5.3 Obligation

Two of the twelve participants felt that they were committed to the organisation as a

result of the sense of obligation they felt towards the organisation, as reflected by the

following quotations:

"I feel I am. The reason why I feel committed is not because of tangible reasons, it's

just that when I started here, I was in a difficult position so my commitment to the

company stems from the fact that I feel they saved me, do you understand what I am

saying, without been mellow dramatic? At the time I started working here it was a

positive place for me so I put my energy into my work and that is what leads to my

commitment. This commitment will not go away because basically I was out of work,

well not out of work. I was self-employed for a while and it was not working out and at

the tail end of it, I had the opportunity to come back to the position that I was in and I

took it so basically that is why I feel this way. Before I felt as if I was going nowhere

and now I feel that this is a proper outlet for me so my commitment will not change"

(Participant 6)

"Committed yes I am committed. Well because I don't think I have another job lined up, I am here, I've applied elsewhere and those job opportunities did not materialize, to be honest with you, I am stuck here"(Participant 1)

4.5.4 Tenure

Three of the twelve participants interviewed felt that they were committed to the organisation because of the length of time that they have remained in the organisation, as represented by the following quotations:

"I think I am, I mean the organisation I have been before this I was there for twelve years and I think to me commitment is a big deal. You see instability to me is the opposite of committed because it's like when you are unstable in a work environment, you going to be floating from one position to the next and it's not good for yourself as well because I mean if you are not committed to an organisation you going to be all over the place looking from one job to the next job and not satisfied with anything. No organisation is going to be everything you want it to be so it is no reason for you to be uncommitted to them by you just leaving and going to another organisation and if you have problems there then just go into another organisation. You have to commit yourself to one organisation because you are going to have problems everywhere in every organisation, so you have to, you have to get past whatever the problems are and just stay committed to the company because at the end of the day you are not going to be happy in every company that you go to, so people being unloyal, you need to think

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about the pros and cons of leaving as well, I mean you have to commit yourself to one organisation. I commit myself to an organisation because I don't like to feel unstable and go all over the place and stuff. I commit myself to an organisation that's why I have been in the last organisation for twelve years. That was because of commitment and being loyal" (Participant 3)

"Well I think I am committed because I have been here since 2005 and I am currently studying logistics to go to the terminals, port terminals to work maybe as a logistics officer so yes I am committed; I am willing to apply and get other positions"
(Participant 12)

4.6 Theme four: Attachment to job responsibilities

4.6.1 Competency

Six of the twelve participants interviewed described commitment to their job responsibilities as being competent in ones work and doing what is required of you, as reflected by the following quotations:

"According to my understanding, if you are a call centre agent, you need to have listening skills, know the company product, and always give an accurate answer and time frame because you can't stay more than three minutes on the phone with a client"
(Participant 10)

"Being able to achieve that task, basically that's what it means, within the required time" (Participant 7)

"We've got a certain amount of information that clients rely on us to give out correctly and it is not as if everything is put out there for you, you need to hourly update. You need to look for certain information; you need to collect certain stats. There is a certain range of information you need to have because you never know which client at a particular time can ask for what so you need to keep on the ball" (Participant 2)

4.6.2 Meeting/delivery of organisation objectives

Three of the twelve participants interviewed described commitment to their job responsibilities as the meeting of and delivery of the organisations objectives, as reflected by the following quotations:

"It means to deliver; I have to deliver according to the expectations of that task, that's all it means" (Participant 1)

"I think it means to deliver excellent customer services to our customers" (Participant 12)

4.6.3 Responsibility

Two of the twelve participants interviewed described commitment to their job responsibilities as having a high level of responsibility towards work tasks and duties, as reflected in the following quotations:

"It is responsibility, something that I owe the organisation for employing me, for giving me employment here I owe it to them to be responsible and to come to work every day and to be committed to them because in that I am committed to the organisation because they have given me employment and they have entrusted employment onto me knowing that I am going to be loyal to them and be committed and come to work punctually and staying with them until I am required"
(Participant 3)

"It is firstly someone who is punctual because you can't be committed to your work tasks if you can't start or get there on time, someone who is punctual, someone who is also able to help others as well, maybe your colleagues or guys who are training and also going the extra mile that I mentioned before that is also being committed to the task that you are been given and also sometimes learning more because you can work from a call centre doing something and while you are doing that specific task you can also learn something else which is not really part of that task you were hired for but just learning something else, so it's just like helping if lets say the person who does that is not in or they are off sick. Also, going the extra mile in helping with something as well" (Participant 9)

4.7 Theme five: Employee retention and development

4.7.1 Bursaries

Three of the twelve employees interviewed felt that the organisation displayed commitment towards them due to the funding provided by the organisation for the furthering of education, as reflected by the following quotations:

"I think they are for one particular reason that I'd like to single out, there may be some reasons. They know what to expect from me and one of the reasons is that they are paying for my school, they paying my school fees so I think that reason on its own does say something about them being committed to me. They might have long term goals for me, I am studying law I am sure that they are aware of it and they are paying for it so maybe they have a long time plan" (Participant 1)

"Yes they are committed because they care of their employees our bursaries, right. I got my B. Com degree in 2010 studying part time with a company bursary. So my company is taking care of their employees" (Participant 10)

4.7.2 Financial needs

Four of the twelve participants interviewed felt that the organisation is committed to them as their needs; more specifically their financial needs are met, as reflected by the following quotations:

"I haven't seen anything that would say that they aren't committed to me, I'd say that I think that they are because of the remuneration that we receive is more than what we would receive for the same task in another organisation, it is a bit simplistic for me to say that they pay you more than what they would pay you elsewhere for the same work. It might not show that the organization is committed but it does show that they value their people or it might just show that the organisation has a lot of money but from what I am saying from my side, I value that as a type of commitment if you are remunerated more than fairly for what you are doing" *(Participant 5)*

"Yes. Well for now my financial needs are met. As a temp I don't have many expectations from the organisation. I'm happy for now where I am positioned because I understand that the organisation can only do so much for me because I am not a permanent staff" *(Participant 7)*

4.7.3 Supervisor support

Three of the twelve participants interviewed had felt that the organisation is committed to them due to the support given by management and supervisors, as reflected by the following quotations:

"The supervisors have assisted me and the manager of the learnership company. There is someone helping at you all the time and seeing are you doing the right thing, how fast you are and what have you done, your accomplishments and they are rating you on that" (Participant 2)

"We have the K.P.S and so forth whereby they check your progress, and where you are, and where you want to be. So in that way, them showing you interest is also part of the commitment" (Participant 8)

4.7.4 Learnerships

Two of the twelve participants interviewed had felt that the organisation is committed to them due to development opportunities such as learnerships that are provided by the organisation, as reflected by the following quotations:

"Yes. I am going through the programme of the learnership as I said. It is 12 months but I've never worked so hard in such a short period of time. It is only the first 4 to 5 weeks, I've had to do 2 presentations, slide show presentations to an audience of about

10. I've had to complete certain tasks, I've had to research certain amount, and I've had to look on the internet. I've had to talk to people that I know that are working here. The supervisors have assisted me and the manager of the learnership company. There is a certain amount of information that you have to hand in and get assessed on so everything you do" (Participant 2)

"I would say yes, because I do get paid at the end of the month, as per the agreement, and there are opportunities like the learnership that we got onto, so they do have our interests at heart, they do want us to grow, so I would say yes, and we do have the K.P.S and so forth whereby they check your progress, and where you are, and where you want to be. So in that way, them showing you interest is also part of the commitment" (Participant 8)

4.8 Theme six: The benefits of committed employees

4.8.1 Incentives

Five of the twelve participants interviewed stated employee incentives such as bonuses as being the benefits of committed employees, as reflected by the following quotations:

"Management would recognize that person as one who is working well, If there is a chance of that person moving on, being promoted and stuff maybe they can go towards that and management can advise them on how best to do it and even with incentives

they get bonuses and management would want to use that person to like you know

better themselves as a person as well and become better in the organization"

(Participant 3)

"Bonuses, incentives and promotions for employees" (Participant 10)

"Well there are different rewards. If the company had certain targets and we meet

those targets we can get bonuses & incentives and recognition certificates" (Participant

6)

4.8.2 Promotions

Four of the twelve participants interviewed stated promotions as being the benefits of

committed employees, as reflected by the following quotations:

"They can get promoted, move to a different department, you can get promoted to

maybe a different position" (Participant 9)

"Promotions, they get promotions, acknowledgments and in fact growth as well"

(Participant 12)

4.8.3 Recognition

Four of the twelve participants interviewed sated recognition as being a benefit of committed employees, as reflected by the following quotations:

"You get recognized and maybe if there are visitors in the company they will call you to show the visitors around, maybe if there are new guys that are training you get to train the new guys and maybe they set an example, let's say punctuality they use you as well to set an example as being someone who is punctual" (Participant 9)

"Management would recognize that person as one who is working well" (Participant 3)

4.8.4 Progress

Two of the twelve participants interviewed stated progress within the organisation as being a benefit of committed employees, as reflected by the following quotations:

"Progress, the main thing that is boils down to is progress cause if you are in a certain position and you are showing that you complete and exceed expectations in that position you can honestly do whatever is on the other side so it now for your employees to trust you enough so that you can handle any task that is set up for you and we are all here for the same thing, progress. Progress comes with more money, better work environment, less tasks, more responsibilities so forth, so forth, so forth it is all about progress" (Participant 1)

"I think that one of them could be that if you know that you are committed to your

organization you can plan, it places you in a position where you can plan your long

term goals because you know what the future looks like. It depends on you on the

individual as well in terms of what you have in mind about your future. If I know that I

am going to be committed to my organisation my long term plan would be along those

ways" (Participant 1)

4.9 Theme seven: Organisational development of commitment

4.9.1 Growth opportunities

Four of twelve participants interviewed stated that if the organisation provided more
growth opportunities, their levels of commitment would improve, as reflected in the
following quotations:

"I think it's providing me with opportunities and one thing I don't like is been stuck, I

mean I've been stuck in the same position for a long time. I have been applying within

the organisation for years and I don't even get a letter of acknowledgement to say that

we are going to review your application, so if you don't get gestures like that, really

there is no encouragement. There need to be more growth opportunities, things like

that. They make you or they attract you, you know to the organisation that you work

for" (Participant 1)

"What I need is to move to another department, I have been here for five years now so

I need to move to another department" (Participant 10)

4.9.2 Recognition

Three of the twelve participants interviewed stated that if the organisation provided more recognition in relation to the effort put into work, their levels of commitment would improve, as reflected by the following quotations:

"I think if they can recognise good work more often, rather than just put you down

when you do something wrong. I mean, if you come to work two minutes late, it's an

issue. Whereas every day, you're here twenty minutes early. Its little things, it's like

people skills. So if you treat people nicely, they're going to work nicely for you. And if

the organisation can recognise good work for what it's worth, then people will be much

happier, and more committed" (Participant 5)

"Recognition, have an hour or two a month for recognition, which will be nice. It will

give you feedback about how you doing and this will give you some motivation"

(Participant 7)

4.10 Theme eight: Understanding of happiness

4.10.1 Good feeling

Five of the participants interviewed understood happiness as the experiencing of a good or positive feeling, as reflected by the following quotations:

"It is a good feeling, when you wake up in the morning, you feel like excited, it's a nice feeling" (Participant 12)

"Waking up and smiling, happiness is just a good feeling, a feeling of being happy" (Participant 11)

"I think it's when you don't get tired of something you know, when you do it with love. It's a good feeling that you get with something where you don't think of time, you don't get tired and you just happy" (Participant 4)

4.10.2 Content

Two of the twelve participants interviewed understood happiness as being content with life and work, as reflected by the following quotations:

"Just to be content with the work environment, and being okay to come to work, and not being such a grouch to wake up in the morning, and say "Oh shucks, I'm here at

this job again". It's just being content, and being okay with where you're working, and

being okay with the hours you're doing, and I'm satisfied with everything. So that's

how I understand happiness in the workplace" (Participant 5)

"I think it means, I don't know if being content is the right word. I'm normally happy

when things are right in my personal life, and I'm okay at work. There's no stress. If

I'm okay work-wise, because I spend like a third of each day at work, so that has to be

fine, and if my personal life is also fine, because that can affect my work, then if that's

fine also, and also if there's no stress, I'm happy" (Participant 8)

4.11 Theme nine: Subjective happiness as an employee

4.11.1 Happy

Eight of the twelve participants interviewed stated feeling happy as an employee, as

reflected by the following quotations:

"I am happy because firstly job security as I said before and payment, we are paid very

well. And management they have got that transparency that's why I'm happy"

(Participant 3)

"So far I haven't experienced any difficulties so I will say so far I'm happy"

(Participant 7)

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"I do, but it is also that I am temping so it is also a little bit of a downer u know but I am happy" (Participant 6)

4.11.2 Unhappy

Two of the twelve participants interviewed stated feeling unhappy as an employee, as reflected by the following quotations:

"No, honestly I am not! I am sure you can pick up from what I said earlier. I am not happy been here, not that I am not happy been within the organisation but I am unhappy about been stuck in the same position for so long and seen that the organisation is not coming through for you, meeting you halfway in terms of you attempts of making yourself visible" (Participant 1)

"No, because I've worked in other organisations before, and here is different from where I've been, there were more employee-centric, more focused on us. So here it's not like that. Our interests are like, not what we can do to improve this, and improve that, that kind of thing" (Participant 8)

4.11.3 Content

Two of the participants interviewed stated just feeling content as an employee, as reflected by the following quotation:

"I'm content. I'm not 100% happy because I'm not where I want to be. I feel that I've got so much potential, and I've got so much more knowledge, rather than to just sit here, and do the same thing over and over again. There isn't much challenge to your brain, you just like robot and do the same thing over and over again. So I'm not exactly happy where I am, I'm just okay with it because I know it's where I need to be to get to the next level"(Participant 5)

4.12 Theme ten: Conceptualising a happy employee

4.12.1 Dedication

Six of the twelve participants interviewed defined a happy employee as one who is dedicated and willing to go the extra mile, as reflected by the following quotations:

"Some who wants to work, someone who is comfortable working. Someone who is an environment where they know how far to push and when to stop and where the cut off line is and is just happy. You complete your job timeously, you are at work on time, you leave work on time, you do whatever needs to be done, and that is an employee who is happy. Someone who doesn't come in and complain every five minutes doesn't have issues at home and doesn't want to this and that. There is always something coming up so that they can stay away from work" (Participant 2)

"Somebody who is always willing to help, somebody who will go the extra mile, somebody that is always cheerful u know, not down and just putting on this facade"

(Participant 3)

"An employee that is willing to take the business as their own, to have ownership because that comes with certain reasons so I think that if someone is happy they are always willing to give back. If an employee is happy they can work an extra hour if need be and be happy about it" (Participant 7)

4.12.2 Goal Driven

Two of twelve participants interviewed defined a happy employee as one who is goal orientated, as reflected by the following quotations;

"Happy employee…..the one who's making progress. The one who shares goals with the organisation is part of the organisation" (Participant 1)

"I can define a happy employee by targets set down by management and see this is a happy employee. If I'm reaching these targets I'm committed and motivated. A happy employee if he has a problem will go to management and speak to them" (Participant 11)

4.13 Theme eleven: Positive work factors

4.13.1 Communicating/helping clients

Seven of the twelve participants interviewed stated that helping and communicating with clients' every day is the factor that brings happiness into their work situation, as reflected by the following quotations:

"I like talking to people or always have every job that I have ever done, on some level so actually that is why I like working here. So that is all I have to do the whole day so I am thrilled about that" (Participant 6)

"The daily chatting with different types of people daily, I mean you chat with people our age, we chat with people our mums age, sometimes while you are on the phone helping them with stuff" (Participant 9)

"I guess I enjoy talking to people, and communicating with different people. I guess you come across very friendly people and you may find that you come in feeling down and you may talk to a very friendly client and they ask about you and they care and they tell you to have a blessed day, so yeah that's what's nice" (Participant 4)

4.13.2 Colleagues

Three of the twelve participants interviewed stated that the interaction with colleagues is the factor that brings happiness into their work situation, as reflected by the following quotations:

"My colleagues make me happy, because you can go anywhere, and the people there are not, you know. You go to work, and if the people there are not, you know. You go to work, you do your job, but if the people don't add that extra zing, or flavour, or whatever, the different characteristics of people, just make your day sometimes"
(Participant 8)

"Chatting with people, just interacting with them and also being at work and spending the day with colleagues" (Participant 9)

4.14 Theme twelve: Negative work factors

4.14.1 Unfair treatment

Four of the twelve participants interviewed stated that unfair treatment from management/supervisors is a factor that leads to their unhappiness in the workplace, as reflected by the following quotations:

"You know every job has its ups and downs, it's the way management does things sometimes and how can I put it, it's the way the employees are getting treated, like you know I not happy with that" (Participant 12)

"What I mentioned earlier, when I said sometimes not everyone is being treated fairly" (Participant 9)

4.14.2 Work pressure

Three of the twelve participants interviewed stated that work pressure is a factor that leads to unhappiness in the workplace, as reflected by the following quotations:

"It's the pressure you know. I think any job has pressure and I am getting used to that. I think it's the pressure that you get because of time, a call centre is very dependent on time you know and every time you are busy it's another call and another call waiting and someone hanging up, those things. It's the pressure that really gets to me at times" (Participant 5)

"At times it is a lot more pressurised than other times so I feel a little bit stressed but not necessarily unhappy. Let's just say there are times that I am not comfortable with the volume of work that we do sometimes. Never the type of work just the amount at times" (Participant 6)

4.14.3 Lack of recognition/feedback

Two of the twelve participants interviewed stated that a lack of recognition and feedback is a factor that leads to unhappiness in the workplace, as reflected by the following quotations:

"The fact that I'm here for so long, and even though I've done so much, and it's like in that month, even though I've passed out five ideas, everybody is your friend, and they're all happy with you. The five ideas should be enough because not everybody is contributing the same amount as I am, and the next month they'll be pushing and saying "Come on guys, you've got to give more". I feel I've done so much, but no one has recognised that I've done so much, and that's what makes me unhappy"

(Participant 5)

"I have never received any feedback since I started, like coaching where I sit down with someone and they tell you where you are going wrong and this is where you are doing good, keep up the good work. I never had that. I have never had that, so you are always hoping that you are doing the right thing and I think that will be nice to have, not only when you are doing something wrong you must be approached" (Participant

7)

4.14.4 Monotony

Two of the twelve participants interviewed stated that the monotony and boredom of their jobs is a factor that leads to unhappiness in the workplace, as reflected by the following quotations:

"Being in a call centre is stressful as it is, and it's monotonous, and so sometimes you do feel that you actually not growing, you just saying the same thing over and over again. Better still, there's no growth, and it's just monotonous in the long hours"

(Participant 8)

"Doing one and the same thing every day, it's boring" (Participant 10)

4.15 Theme thirteen: Subjective work experiences of happiness

4.15.1 Feedback/recognition

Three of the twelve participants interviewed stated that they experienced happiness in their work when they received feedback and were recognized for good efforts, as reflected by the following quotations

"My boss made me happy yesterday because she came up to me and thanked me for doing my job properly and yes, that recognition" (Participant 10)

"I have been nominated as one of the employees who excel production wise and they made me choose which terminal I want to be in, so I told them I want to go to DUT and study operations management for whole year July to next year July I will go and study that course. That makes me very happy and at the moment I'm excelling just because of that" (Participant 11)

4.15.2 Growth opportunities

Three of the twelve participants interviewed stated that they experienced happiness in their work when they received growth opportunities, as reflected by the following quotations:

"When the decision was made or decided to pay my school fees, mmm ya, I was very happy about that" (Participant 1)

"Well, when we got on the learnership, I guess. I'd say that because when I first got into the organisation, I wasn't exposed to other aspects of the business, but when we got onto the learnership then we were introduced to the terminals and we got more insight into the business and as a result we saw that this is not where we're going to end up, we want to explore, you know, because this is actually a good company to work for. And to realize that I actually have my foot in, makes me happy because I know going forward obviously is going to make me work harder to get into another

department in this company, but this is the company that I want to be in" (Participant

8)

4.15.3 Clients

Four of the twelve participants interviewed stated that they experienced happiness when communicating with certain clients and also by satisfying and helping clients, as reflected by the following quotations:

"There is a client who usually calls that I get along with very well so I think that whenever I speak to them I feel all good even if I am having a bad day they go out of their way to really make me happy, that really keeps my job exciting. I look forward to that and even when I have a really bad day I know that if I get a call from that person I will feel better" (Participant 4)

"Satisfying clients' and helping them solve their problems, that's what makes me happy" (Participant 3)

4.16 Theme fourteen: Subjective work experiences of unhappiness

4.16.1 Conflict with management

Three of the twelve participants interviewed stated that they experienced unhappiness in their work when they experience conflict with management, as reflected by the following quotations:

"When I had a misunderstanding with management, I remember we had a meeting, it was called a counselling meeting because management believed that I did not or behaved in a certain manner and there was a certain bias, I had my own point of view and at the same time I felt that they were harsh in thinking that way" (Participant 1)

"I think there was an error that happened here at work where I was accused of something when actually my manager made the error and then I realized that it was not my fault. At first I took responsibility, they had said I made a mistake and I said I am sorry and didn't mean to do that and I corrected it and that's when I realized that I wasn't my mistake my mistake, it was theirs and I went back to them and told them you guys made a mistake here and they were like "ok" and I thought you come to my cubicle and you scream and you shout and I say I'm sorry and show you I did not make the mistake and it was you who did, you say "ok" and brush it off like it is nothing. That's disrespectful, I didn't like that" (Participant 4)

4.16.2 Conflict with clients

Two of the twelve participants interviewed stated that they experienced unhappiness at work when there was conflict or a misunderstanding with clients, as reflected in the following quotations:

"Yes, you know in call centre we are dealing with incoming calls. 80%. So everything is recorded. Only to find out ok, that you only spoke to one guy about completion date of the vessel and he tells another guy and that guy calls call centre and mentions your name because his/her colleague told him that you said this but you honestly don't know the second guy who called in" (Participant 10)

"Rude clients, I can't handle them but unfortunately we have to stomach them and just talk to them and are friendly and stuff but some of them are very rude people hey"
(Participant 3)

4.17 Theme fifteen: Organisational development of employee happiness

4.17.1 Progress/opportunities

Three of the twelve participants interviewed stated that they would be happier as employees if they were giving opportunities and the chance to progress within the organisation, as reflected by the following quotations:

"What would make me happy is seen progress, I think it's in us, all of us want to see ourselves getting somewhere within the organisation, so I'd like to see opportunities becoming available. I would like to see something that would give me hope for a better future in the organisation" (Participant 1)

"Really I need to explore. If maybe my managers can give me a chance to do terminals to see what's going on there to understand operation side, land and water side then that can motivate me and make me happy" (Participant 10)

4.17.2 Higher remuneration

Three of the twelve participants interviewed stated that they would be happier as employees if there were to be paid a higher remuneration from the organisation, as reflected by the following quotations:

"More working hours for me because that would obviously mean more money. I am coming from a background which I worked at the airport. What I am getting paid now to what I used to get paid is kind of a drop. Last year I resigned and I travelled around South Africa and I am back now and starting all over again but if get more hours that would make me happier" (Participant 2)

"If I earn more money" (Participant 10)

4.17.3 Improved relationship between management and employees

Three of the twelve participants interviewed stated they would be happier as employees if there was an improvement in the relationship between management and supervisors, as reflected in the following quotations:

"I guess it's just the whole respect thing that I find as a temp and even the permanent staff complains about it but they obviously don't say anything about it. I can be vocal about it to you because I am a temp and won't be here forever but I think that it is the relationship between supervisors and staff needs to improve. What I heard once is that managers need to be more leaders than bosses you know what I mean. Instead of ordering people around they should start treating them in a better way" (Participant 3)

"If management and employees could understand each other, just come to an understanding of their needs then I will be happy" (Participant 12)

4.18 Theme sixteen: Benefits of happy employees

4.18.1 Productivity/meeting of targets

Five of the twelve participants interviewed stated increased productivity and the meeting of targets within the organisation as one of the benefits of happy employees, as reflected by the following quotations:

"Obviously a happy employee becomes more productive; I think that is the bottom line. The whole reason why we are here is to deliver and to make the organisation large and go places and that can only be achieved once the employees are happy" (Participant 1)

"A happy employee is a productive employee; u can't be productive if you are unhappy. You can't be productive if you are demotivated." (Participant 10)

4.18.2 Hard work

Four of the twelve participants interviewed stated that hard work is one of the benefits of a happy employee, as reflected by the following quotations:

"I think the benefits for the organisation with a happy employee, would be that if the employees are happy, they'd be putting more time in at work, they'd enjoy what they do, they'd do it properly. The organisation then gains by knowing that they can trust its employees. I think some organisations suffer due to unhappy employees, either they don't come to work; some of them don't do their jobs properly. There's a lot of negative that comes from someone being unhappy. But also the positives because you've got this person who gives their all and works hard enough, and who loves what they do. They could go elsewhere, they could be an asset elsewhere, but they decided to be an asset in this organization" (Participant 8)

"I think it is being committed to the company and really just staying loyal to them and even when you go out you tell people about the company you work for. People would work harder, definitely work harder and come up with new ideas and things and there are challenges to be faced one would not be bothered you know, they would just deal with it" (Participant 4)

4.19 Discussion

The sample of participants in the study consisted of a combination of permanent, temporary and learnership employees within a call centre environment. Findings in the study indicated that despite the differences in employment status all employees felt committed to the organisation. The study is therefore consistent to a study conducted by Torka (1994), to establish worker perceptions of commitment with the results of the study indicating more congruencies than differences between employees in the organisation despite having different work statuses. Commitment can therefore be understood as not only being limited to specific work contracts.

According to the findings in the study participants understood commitment as being attached, dedicated, loyal, willing, and hardworking and taking ownership of one's organisation. Conceptualising commitment as attachment is consistent with the conceptualisation of affective commitment made by Allen and Meyer (1991), in which individuals are attached, identify and are also involved in their organisations. Willingness, hard work and dedication bear similarity to the early conceptualisation made by Becker (1960) in terms of the side bet theory whereby side bets are the investments made by employees within the organisation therefore becoming a factor leading to employee commitment. Willingness, hard work and dedication are therefore investments in terms of time and effort understood by respondents in the study as being commitment.

Further findings in the study also bear relation to the two other components of commitment defined by Allen and Meyer (1991) in terms of continuance and normative commitment. Findings in the study indicated that within the organisation different types of commitment existed amongst employees. Continuance commitment displayed the highest level within the organisation as findings indicated that the rationale for commitment was largely due to financial reasons, the need to survive and also the need to support families. Normative commitment was also displayed by employees within the organisation as the findings indicate that employees continue to remain in the organisation due to of a level of obligation to the organisation and also as a result of no choice but to remain within the organisation. Despite respondents in the study understanding commitment as having an attachment to the organisation, there were no findings in the study that indicated any of the respondents bearing commitment to the organisation in relation to Meyer and Allen's (1991), affective commitment. Commitment within the call centre was therefore due to the need to remain within the organisation as individuals become aware of the costs associated with leaving the organisation. Obligation was also a reason for employees remaining within the organisation therefore commitment to the organisation was due to a need and not a want.

Data in the study is also consistent with Huang and Hsiao's (2007) study in which it was found that in order for management to increase employees' commitment to the organisation there must be a redesign in job content and management strategy. This redesign centered on increasing the level of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback

from the job. Likewise findings revealed that there would be an increase in the levels of commitment if more growth opportunities are given in the organisation. This would be relative to skill variety as findings indicated respondents need to progress and move to different departments within the organisation as many have been in the call centre department for a long period of time. Further findings in the study that are consistent with the work of Huang and Hsiao (2007), relate to feedback. Data in the study indicated that the levels of employee commitment would increase in the organisation if the good efforts employees put into their work are recognised and feedback is given with regards to the progress of work.

One of the dimensions considered in relation to commitment in the call centre industry is support. Support can be understood as an individuals perceived manner of helpfulness from both management and co-workers thus placing an emphasis on the given support from above and below within the organisation (Litwin & Stringer, 1968). Within a call centre support from both above and below leads employees to believe that they can depend on the organisation in the instance of difficulties arising in their respective jobs (Slender, 1990). Findings in the study are consistent with the support dimension as respondents' revealed commitment on behalf of the organisation through support structures from management and the assistance in the company's learnership programme.

As previously mentioned all employees within the organisation have confirmed commitment to the organisation despite employment status. From a sample of twelve call

centre employees, six of the employees were permanent employees of the organisation, with tenure of between 3-5 years in the organisation. Data in the study revealed commitment from all permanent respondents in the study therefore findings are consistent with the study conducted by Ahmad, Shahzad, Rehman, Khan and Shad (2010), on the impact of organisational commitment and citizenship behaviour on the turnover intentions. The results of the study indicated that turnover intentions of the call centre personnel depended on the commitment of the employees as data shows that permanent employees remained within the organisation for a period of time. Therefore for individuals remaining in the organisation this could be majorly attributed to commitment. Findings in the study are also consistent with the work of (Wegge, van Dick, Fisher, Wecking and Moltzen (2006), who state that commitment seems to be one of the most important factors in reducing turnover intentions and therefore suggest that call centres should provide challenging work and constant opportunities for training and development

The data in the study is also consistent with previous research conducted from a social exchange theoretical perspective which found that individuals may remain committed to the organisation in the hope that their involvement and hard work in the organisation will enable them to be viewed as assets and also grow within the organisation. (Bentein & Guerrero, 2008). Findings in the study indicated that respondents were goal driven in terms of wanting to improve and work themselves up within the organisation. Rationale

for commitment was therefore used as a tool to aid in a better future within the organisation.

From a social exchange theoretical perspective, relationships established between parties are described from two points of view. In terms of an employee/employer relationship, the relationship can firstly be described in terms of an economic exchange, which may include respective and clear obligations. The other point of view is in terms of social exchanges, which are those obligations that are not specified and are left to the discretion of both parties (Bentein & Guerrero, 2008). Data in the study is consistent with the economic and social exchanges within the organisation as described from a social exchange theoretical viewpoint. In terms of respective and clear obligations, the data in the study indicated that more than fifty percent of the participants were aware of their various duties in the organisation. Commitment to tasks was understood in respect of being competent to complete tasks to the best of one's ability therefore enabling the meeting of the organisational objectives. Furthermore in terms of social exchanges data revealed that participants were aware of those obligations that were not specified such as maturity levels and conduct and also having a high level of responsibility towards ones work (Bentein & Guerrero, 2008).

According to the social exchange theory, when individuals decide on helping each other, they do a cost benefit analysis and in this analysis the benefits must outweigh the costs.

The individual decides what is fair by comparing a give and take ratio. Benefits can be tangible or intangible, physical or psychological (Bentein & Guerrero, 2008). Findings in the study revealed the benefits indicated by respondents in relation to the rationale of their commitment within the organisation. Bentein and Guerrero (2008) found that in terms of continuance commitment, you may find individuals remaining committed not out of want but out of need. Data in the study shows similar results as some of the participants interviewed stated that financial reasons was primarily one of the main reasons for commitment. Responses were grounded on a need to obtain an income from the organisation and the awareness of survival needs for oneself and one's family.

Rewards are an important component of the social exchange theory. Rewards in the employment relationship refer to the financial returns, tangible services and other benefits that are received by an employee as part of the relationship (Bratton & Gold, 1994). Findings in the study are consistent to previous research conducted by Malhotra, Budhwar and Prowse (2007), to examine the relationships among employees' perceptions of rewards and the three components of organisational commitment in four major retail bank call centres. Findings were as follows; as it was predicted extrinsic rewards in terms of promotional opportunities exerted a positive influence on affective commitment. Data in the study were consistent with those of Malhortra, Budhwar and Prowse (2007), as some of the respondents interviewed stated that their levels of commitment in the organisation will increase if they are given growth opportunities in terms of promotions and being able to progress into the various different sectors of the organisation.

Data in the study is also consistent with the study conducted by Mathieu and Zaiac (1990), on extrinsic rewards such as pay satisfaction which had a positive effect on the continuance commitment of employee's. Data in the study revealed that employees remained within the organisation due to pay satisfaction and the need for financial gain. Satisfaction with pay is likely to increase employees' perceived costs of leaving the organisation thereby enhancing continuance commitment. Pay satisfaction therefore enhanced the need for employees' to remain within the organisation thus influencing their continuance commitment.

The three components of happiness according to Diener, Suh & Lucas and Smith (1999), are life satisfaction, the presence of happy mood and the absence of negative mood. Findings in the study is consistent with one of the components of happiness as almost fifty percent of respondents understood happiness as being a good feeling/emotion thus being relative to the presence of a happy mood. Further findings revealed happiness as being understood by respondents as a feeling of being content. No findings in the study indicated happiness as being understood by respondents in terms of the two other dimensions of happiness, namely life satisfaction and the absence of negative mood.

In relation to the antecedents of happiness within the organisation that are likely to facilitate well-being in the organisation, findings in the study are consistent with the study conducted by Deci & Ryan (2001), on the fundamental importance of warm

relationships for well-being. According to the data collected in the study there is evidence that colleagues in the work place are one of the factors for employee happiness in the organisation as the positive relationships between employees and interaction improve the overall mood of an individual. Findings in the study further revealed that positive relationships with clients also improved employee well-being in the organisation as some clients make the extra effort to enquire more about employees thereby contributing to the building a good relationship between the parties.

Another active area of research related to well-being is in relation to goals and goal progress (Deci & Ryan, 2001). Research findings have pointed to the fact that individuals who feel competent and confident with respect to valued goals, this is associated with enhanced well-being. Findings in the study are consistent with the study by Deci and Ryan (2010) whereby happy employees were understood by respondents as being individuals who are goal driven and making progress in the organisation. Progress towards goals is rated as important by individuals which therefore serves as a predictor of well-being.

There are four theoretical approaches to understanding SWB in the work context. According to Gallie, White, Cheng and Tomlinson (1998), the first theoretical approach underlines the importance of work tasks particularly how the avoidance of fragmented and repetitive work provides employees with the scope to use their initiative. Findings in

the study however indicated that due to the monotonous nature of call centre work, this has become one of the factors leading to employee unhappiness. The second approach locates employee well-being and satisfaction in the social support that exists in the work environment and the way employees embrace relations with colleagues and their superiors. Findings in the study are consistent with the second approach to work happiness as respondents revealed the interaction with colleagues on a day to day basis was a factor that created happiness for them in the workplace Findings in the study further indicated that the communication and the relationships that are built with certain clients is also a factor that creates happiness for call centre employees. Further findings in the study indicated the importance of relationships between employees and management as respondents stated that should the relationships between management and employees improve, so will their levels of happiness. There were no findings in the study which were relative to Gallie, White, Cheng and Tomlinson's (1998) third and fourth theoretical approach to happiness in the workplace which focuses on the degree of participation in one's work and the implications of job insecurity.

Call centre environments are typically seen as stressful work environments which require highly repetitive work within the context of usually difficult working conditions. According to Pinheiro, Troccoli and Tamayo (2003), work overload or job pressures and feelings of a lack of job satisfaction may affect an individual's feeling of self-worth therefore resulting in negative emotional states. Findings in the study are consistent with the work of Pinheiro, Troccoli and Tamayo (2003) as respondents in the study revealed

that the work pressure within the call centre environment is one of the factors that lead to their unhappiness in the organisation.

The Affective Events Theory by Weiss and Cropanzano (1996), states that the environmental conditions in the workplace lead to hassles and uplifts in employees, therefore environmental conditions are regarded as affective events. According to the AET, it is the accumulation of positive and negative events that leads to positive or negative states in employees. This may be further elaborated in the instance of an employee who is being hassled or unfairly treated by an employer (an effective event) and therefore becomes angry or disgruntled (an affective state). Data in the study justifies this point made by the AET as findings revealed by respondents that the unfair treatment from managers is one of the factors that creates unhappiness in the workplace.

The Affective Events Theory also proposes that a work environment with stable features, such as job scope result in the occurrence of affect producing events. In the instance of an enriched job, the results may be discrete events such as feedback, task accomplishment and optimal challenges which in turn may lead to positive emotions such as pride, happiness and enthusiasm (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Findings in the study are consistent with the work of Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) as it was revealed by respondents that recognition given from management for the efforts put into work was a factor that created happiness for employees.

Findings in the study are also consistent with the study conducted by Basch and Fisher (1998), whereby positive work categories such as the appraisal of behaviours, goal achievement, recognition, involvement and goal progress were investigated as the factors that lead to positive emotions in the workplace. Negative work categories such as the negative appraisals, lack of recognition, lack of goal achievement, lack of control and workload were also investigated as the factors that lead to negative emotions in the workplace.

Findings in the study are consistent with Basch and Fisher's (1998) study on various positive categories. The first being recognition, data revealed that respondents stated that they experienced feelings of happiness when they were recognised for the good efforts that they put into their work. In terms of goal progress findings in the study revealed that feelings of happiness were experienced by employees when the organisation invested in employees through the paying of school fees and the development of learnership programmes, as these investments where viewed as the factors aiding in the goal progress of employees. Colleagues were also found to have a positive impact on employees and the creation of happiness and respondents revealed that the interaction with colleagues and the relationships developed with colleagues is one of the factors that create happiness in the workplace.

In relation to the negative categories, findings in the study also bear similarities to Basch and Fisher's (1998) study. Conflict and misunderstandings with management was found in the study as being one of the factors causing unhappiness amongst employees in the workplace. This finding can be further justified by the employees stating the improvement of the relationship between management and employees as being a factor that would improve employee happiness in the workplace. Findings further revealed that the work pressure experienced by employees in the call centre environment also leads to employee unhappiness. Feelings of unhappiness were also experienced by employees when their hard work and efforts that they put into their work were not recognised. Employees felt unhappy when their mistakes were highlighted upon by management and no notice is taken of the progress one has made in one's work.

The experience of positive emotions and happiness may also lead individuals to experience work in a meaningful way, therefore work is no longer considered as a job. Employees are therefore more affectively attached to their organisation and become committed to improving organisational performance (Gavin & Mason, 2004; Wright & Cropanzano, 2004). Findings in the study are consistent with the work of Gavin & Mason (2004) & Wright and Cropanzano (2004). Respondents in the study were asked the benefits of happy employees and findings revealed hard work and commitment as being one of the benefits of happy employees in the organisation. Importantly the findings also revealed that happy employees are driven to meet targets and organisational objectives.

Happier employees therefore become more committed to improving organisational performance.

Commitment in an organisation may be viewed as an exchange commodity in the sense that, employees are more likely to become committed to their organisation when they feel that their organisation is committed to them. Findings in the study indicated that respondents all viewed the organisation as being committed to them for various different reasons These reasons include the organisation funding further education, learnership programmes, supervisor support and also by through the meeting of employee financial needs. All employees in the study that indicated commitment on behalf of the organisation also indicated commitment to the organisation thus indicating a reciprocal committed relationship between the two parties. Past studies have suggested that an employee's affective commitment is crucial for the promotion of both the individual and organisation (Allen & Meyer, 1996). Findings in the study are consistent with the past study by Allen and Meyer (1990) as findings indicated committed workers as those individuals who progress within the organisation. Further findings elaborate on this point as respondents in the study stated that one of the benefits of a happier worker is the alignment of individual and organisational goals therefore employees are also driven to meet targets and organisational objectives. It is therefore evident that positive emotions and commitment foster performance in the workplace.

Rolando (n.d.) stated that, what makes an employee happy is not featured on the standard employee menu which includes money, training and positions. However what makes people truly happy is the contribution made to others, making a difference, forming relationships with others, the feeling of being valued and also having a sense of control over one's life. Findings in the study were consistent with the findings of Rolando (n.d.) as respondents in the study indicated experiencing feelings of happiness by communicating with different clients on a daily basis. However the helping and satisfying of clients' needs was the factor that created true happiness for employees, thus the overall contribution to others. Further findings in the study revealed that receiving recognition and feedback for good work and efforts put into work was also a factor that makes employees truly happy in their work environment. Recognition and feedback therefore indicated to an employee that the work and the efforts invested in the organisation are valued. The forming of relationships was also found to create feelings of happiness in employees; specifically the relationships with colleagues and also the relationships developed with clients as certain clients break down the formal barriers and go the extra mile in showing concern about the employee.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter the critical emergent themes from the study were discussed in relation to previous research conducted on the study, the discussion also included new findings as well as contradictory findings to what has already been researched. Findings in the study were also discussed in relation to the two theoretical frameworks in which the study is

grounded. The following chapter will provide a summary of the findings, limitations of the study and also recommendations that can be made for future research.

Chapter five

Summary, limitations, recommendations and conclusion

5.1 Summary

Overall the findings in the study indicated that commitment is not limited to a specific employment status and there are more congruencies than differences in the different employment statuses. This may be justified by the fact that all participants (permanent, temporary and learnership employees) in the study indicated being committed to their organisation. However findings in the study further reveal that continuance commitment is the most common type of commitment within the call centre environment. This type of commitment indicates commitment out of a need and not a want which is relative to affective commitment. The findings therefore indicate that commitment to the organisation is channelled towards respective obligations and the need to sustain ones living through remuneration. Further employees are aware of the costs associated with leaving the organisation. Displays of affective commitment are only evident towards the larger organisation as a whole and not the call centre department per se. This could be understood through the employees' awareness that call centre employment could be viewed as the stepping stone for growth within the larger organisation.

Findings in the study also revealed the need for job redesign. Job redesign is centered on increasing the level of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and

feedback from the job. The call centre environment is characterised by monotonous and demanding work and findings may indicate unhappiness for the reason that individuals feel stuck and also have to do repetitive work on a day to day basis. Many call centre agents seek the need to grow and be recognised in the organisation. This is also evident in the employees who are continuing with post matric and further education, thus the need to move to various other divisions of the organisation. The findings of the study also indicated the importance of recognition. Employees want feedback in terms of how they are progressing in their respective positions and happiness is centred on being recognised for hard work and good efforts put into ones work. Employees want to feel that they are valued within their organisation.

Commitment in the study is also shown to exist from both employees and the organisation. On behalf of the organisation, findings in the study show that support is an important factor within the call centre environment. Employees want to believe that they can depend on their managers should any difficulty arise in their respective jobs. Findings also indicated that the organisation can increase the happiness of their employees through improving the relationships between managers and employees. Still in line with commitment on behalf of the organisation the findings revealed commitment in this respect through the funding of employee education, bursaries and learnership programmes. This finding therefore indicates organisational commitment through employee development and retention schemes.

The study was grounded on two theoretical frameworks, the social exchange theory as one framework that incorporates the importance of rewards and commitment and the affective events theory which focuses on the factors that create happiness in the workplace. Findings in the study revealed that promotion and growth opportunities in the organisation are likely to lead to an increase in employee commitment, more specifically affective commitment. Employees therefore have a stronger want than need to stay in the organisation. This also in turn positively influences the staff turnover rate in the organisation as employees would not need to seek employment elsewhere as opportunities are provided in their respective organisation.

Findings in the study also revealed the importance of warm relations within the organisation. Colleagues become one of the factors leading to employee happiness as the positive relationships between employees and interaction improve the overall mood of the individual. Happier workers create an overall happier environment therefore this finding may aid the organisation in the development of happier workers which may not be only beneficial to the individual but also to the organisation at large. This may be justified by the findings which revealed happier workers as being more productive.

Lastly findings in the study revealed the importance of environmental conditions in the work place which are also referred to as affective events. The accumulation of positive events in the workplace leads to positive states in employees. Findings in the study revealed positive events such as feedback, optimal challenges, task accomplishment,

appraisal, and recognition and goal achievement as the positive affective events that lead to positive emotions such as pride, enthusiasm and importantly the overall happiness of the employee. These factors may therefore serve as a guide for management to improve on the affective events in the workplace as a means of improving the overall happiness of the workforce.

5.2 Limitations

The study is not without its limitations. The use of a small sample size decreases the transferability of the findings to other contexts and settings but nevertheless the study has assisted in the understanding of how individuals employed within the context of a call centre environment experience both happiness and commitment. Another limitation recognised in the study is the fact that the constructs happiness and commitment have been studied in isolation within the call centre environment as opposed to jointly therefore making it difficult to guide the research in terms of previous, reliable findings. The present study also made use of biographical information such as age, tenure in the organisation and employee status. These factors did not have any considerable effects on results therefore future research should investigate whether this is also applicable in other call centres.

5.3 Recommendations

Future research conducted within a call centre environment could expand the research and focus on both inbound and outbound call centres. This will enable a broader understanding of the different organisational climates and employees experiences. Further a comparison could be made between the two respective call centre structures. A longitudinal study may also prove to be of value for future research as it will enable one to investigate whether the findings of the current research has remained the same over time. Findings in the study may also indicate future recommendations that can be made in organisations in order to increase employee commitment and happiness. To reduce the negativity that exists between employees and management in organisations, there should be the implementation of training programmes which focus on teambuilding in order to evoke trust and co-operation between employees and management thus promoting an organisational culture. The results indicated that participants displayed the highest levels of continuance commitment meaning employees analysed the costs of leaving the organisation. On the basis of this cost analysis employees chose to remain in the organisation not because they wanted to but because they had to. A future recommendation would be for the organisation to modify the work environment so as to create a working environment that has a positive influence on employees' thereby increasing affective commitment within the individual. In so doing employees will increasingly choose to remain in the organisation. Lastly, managers should focus on the factors that create happiness in the workplace, for example recognising the good efforts employees put into their work. Call centres are characterised as being highly pressurised environment therefore recognition of employees hard work will allow the employee to

feel valued in the organisation thus leading to both individual and organisational effectives

5.4 Conclusion

The call centre industry has undoubtedly experienced a boom over the last four decades. This is for the reason that companies continue see the value of the technology that are offered by call centres. Call centres may benefit businesses through the cutting of costs and the increase in profits however the benefits that call centres have on employees may not be very obvious. Call centres have been characterised as electronic sweatshops with poor working conditions whereby individuals have to perform routine and monotonous tasks under extreme surveillance and also very strict performance management systems.

The call centre environment has implications for both the well-being and the commitment of employees. Despite the negative frame of reference given to the call centre industry, individuals still continue to enter it and for some prosper in it. The main aim of the study was to understand how happiness and commitment are experienced within the call centre environment. Therefore this study explored employee experiences of commitment and happiness within a South African based call centre. In doing so, the researcher identified important factors that could impact positively on employee happiness and commitment in the context of call centre employment. These factors were relative to the actual experiences of call centre employees. The researcher made use of a qualitative approach in the design of the study but more specifically data was collected through the use of a

biographical questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The sample in the study consisted of twelve call centre agents of different age, sex, tenure in the organisation and employment status.

In conclusion the results of the study are valuable as they enable a deeper understanding of the conditions that foster positive states and increased levels of commitment in the call centre environment. Organisations and leaders can promote a workforce that is psychologically healthy and can also stimulate a committed workforce. It would therefore be both reasonable and highly practical for organisations and management to understand that happiness and commitment are valuable tools in maximizing personal betterment and the job performance of an employee. An important implication of this study is to increase management's awareness of the possible factors and routes to act in favour of a more committed, happier and productive workforce.

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Appendix A: Interview Schedule

Section A
Biographical questions

1. What is your age?

2. What is your highest level of educational qualification?

3. How long have you worked in this organisation?

4. How long have you worked in this organisation in this position?

5. What is your job title?

6. Are you a permanent or temporary employee?

Section B
Interview questions

1) What is your understanding of commitment?

2) What does being committed towards an organisation mean to you?

3) Do you feel that you are committed to your organisation? Why do you feel this way?

4) What does being committed to your specific work related tasks mean to you?

5) What are the reasons that you remain committed to your organisation?

6) Do you feel that your organisation is committed to you?

7) What do you think are the factors that lead to organisational commitment

8) What do you think are the benefits of a committed employee?

9) What can the organisation do to make you more committed as an employee?

10) What is your understanding of happiness?

11) Do you feel happy as an employee?

12) How would you define a happy employee?

13) What aspects of your job make you happy?

14) What are the aspects of your job that make you unhappy?

15) Can you describe a specific event in your work that made you feel happy?

16) Can you describe a specific event in your job that made you feel unhappy?

17) What would make you happier as an employee?

18) How do your daily activities at work make you feel?

19) What do you think are the benefits of a happier employee?

20) Would you regard yourself as both happy and committed? Why do you feel this way?

21) Has there ever been a point where you wanted to leave your job and why?

22) Overall would you regard yourself as happy in your present position?

Appendix B: Letter to the organisation requesting permission to conduct the study

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-----Original Message-----
From: Neeran Ramjuthan [mailto:ramjuthan@ilo.org]
Sent: 13 June 2012 06:56 PM
To: Sharon Sagadevan Transnet Port Terminals DBN
Subject: Re: Research
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Dear Sharon,

As you might recall some time back when we spoke I mentioned that I have a master's student Clarissa Tissong who is writing a dissertation focussing on call centre employees.

Her topic is Employee experiences of commitment and happiness in call centre employment" and written from a positive psychology framework. As part of her research Clarissa would like to interview about ten (10) employees on the subject. All interviews will be treated with the strictest of confidentiality and any information obtained would be used only for research purposes with no names attached at all to any report or paper written.

Note that she has clearance from the University of Kwa Zulu Natal for her studies and can make her research available to your organisation.

Sharon please advice if this would be possible, as her Supervisor I also don't mind setting up an initial meeting with the two of you to introduce her and the research.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards

Neeran Ramjuthan

Chief Technical Advisor: Promotion of Decent Work (South

African

Transport Sector)

Mobile: +27 78 019 1969

Fax: +27 12 8188087

Email: ramjuthan@ilo.org

Appendix C: Letter from the organisation granting permission to conduct the study

Hi Neeran,

Thank you for your email, my team and I would be delighted
in participating in the Clarissa Tissong research.

Let me know of your availability I am based at 202 Smith
Street.

Kind regards,

Sharon Sagadevan

Call Centre Manager

█████████ Port Terminals Call Centre

█████████ Port Terminals

031 3611630

0861204485

031 3611715

sharon.sagadevan@████████.net

Appendix D: Letter of informed consent

To whom it may concern

My name is Clarissa Tissong. I am a Psychology Masters student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Part of my Masters degree requires me to conduct a research project. My research project will be focusing on employee experiences of commitment and happiness in call centre employment. I would very much appreciate it if you participated in my study as it would help me a great deal with my research.

Your participation in this study will consist of:

- Being interviewed by myself, the interview will be audio taped to help me accurately capture your insights in your own words.

- The interview will be approximately thirty minutes long.

Should you consent to participate in my study the following will be assured:

- Confidentiality: the information and answers we obtain from you will only be seen by me and my research supervisor.

- Anonymity: no identifying information will be used therefore we will not use your name or company's name.

- If at any time during the interview you feel uneasy you are more than welcome to leave.

- Your participation is completely voluntary.

If you have any questions, concerns or queries feel free to contact me on 0763227006 or email clarissatissong@yahoo.com. You may also contact my research supervisor Neeran Ramjuthan on 0781743602 or email ramjutn@telkomsa.net

If you have any queries about the rights of research respondents, please contact Ms. Phumelele Ximba in the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics office on 031 360 3587

I …………………………………..consent to being interviewed and audio recorded by Clarissa Tissong for the research project: Employee experiences of commitment and happiness in call centre employment.

Sign: …………………………….. 		Date: ……………………………