Sheffield Hallam University

Investigating strategic-implementation relative to Organisational- Commitment, within Sheffield City Region's SMEs. Re-connecting management research with the disciplines: Shaping the research agenda for the social sciences

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Investigating Strategic-Implementation relative to Organisational-Commitment in the Sheffield City Region.

Summary:

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the theoretical relationship between Strategic-Implementation and Organisational-Commitment on the basis that both constructs are interested in the 'goals' of the organisation (Mowday, Porter and Steers, 1982; Noble and Mokwa, 1999). Smith (2009) hypothesised that both constructs are connected and future researchers should conduct empirical work to test the relationship. This relationship was tested using the respected OC, TCM questionnaire and the researcher developed a scale to test strategic knowledge. The questionnaire was issued to three organisations and provided the foundation for a second phase of data collection where 38 employees were interviewed to understand the underlying employee relationship between OC and SI. The results demonstrate that a relationship exists between OC and SI and a number of influencers exist between both constructs, notably the **communication** between employee and employer, organisational **values**, and the employee awareness of the values. Finally, how employees are **'exited'** from the organisation where they are not perceived to be working in line with the organisations goals and values.

Keywords: Organisational Commitment   Strategic Management   Strategic-Implementation   Organisational Values.

Track: Strategy

Word Count: 5,602

(excluding references and tables)

Introduction

The topic of organisational commitment (OC) has been of academic interest for at least 50 years (Becker, 1960a; Cantril, 1963; Porter and Steers, 1974; Meyer and Allen, 1984; Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001). In this time, academics have argued that commitment should be viewed as a means to reduce turnover of employees (Mowday, Steers and Porter, 1979; Jaros, 1997), achieve improved alignment for organisations goals and values (Mowday, Steers and Porter, 1979), serve to trap employees (Becker, 1960a), or to increase employee organisation loyalty (Wiener, 1982). In this study, the focus moves past attempting to define commitment, and towards an investigation into the outcomes of commitment, particularly the outcome of increased employee strategic awareness and efforts towards strategic implementation. Ghosh and Swamy (2014) argue that outcomes and influencers of commitment are largely missing from OC research, and that researchers should dedicate more attention to the factors that lead to commitment and associated outcomes.

The concept of strategic implementation, where the planned strategy of an organisation is implemented within an organisation is of primary interest here. This argument is in line with Smith's (2009) hypothesis that OC and strategic implementation (SI) are related to each other as both theories share the same focus, an interest in the *'goals and values'* of an organisation (Mowday, Steers and Porter, 1979). The researcher agrees with Smith (2009 p. 473) that implementation should account for at *'least 90% of the effort required for strategic change'* and is often overlooked when compared to more well-known strategic planning and positioning activities (Campbell, 2002). Further, most research in SI and OC has been conducted in North America, and has traditionally been conducted using quantitative methods of data collection, meaning that there is a lack of research in other contexts and using alternative methods.

The Sheffield City Region (SCR) is a political partnership between nine local authorities in the South Yorkshire and North Derbyshire region in the United Kingdom. In the last decade, the SCR has experienced a significant change in its style of employment, emerging from a traditional steel and coal, heavy industry context, to employment primarily in the service sector (Skidelsky, 2017). Importantly, the landscape for employment in this sector, and the wider context for employment has changed. Employees can no longer expect lifelong employment, nor do workers from younger generations seek the same. In this environment, can organisational commitment still be expected? Are organisations willing to offer commitment to their employees? Are Smith's ideas correct that OC should be considered as a useful tool for employees wishing to implement strategy?

This paper will investigate the phenomena of SI relative to OC, beginning with a review of the literature in both fields, before moving onto the methodology and means to test the relationship and the results of the investigation. The paper will summarise with a review of the overall findings.

Literature Review

The literature surrounding organisational commitment and strategy has traditionally been housed in two separate areas of management research. OC can be found in the organisational behaviour or psychology literature as evidenced through its regular inclusion in popular journals such as the Journal of Organisational Psychology (1975-2018). The home for strategic implementation research is unsurprisingly located in the strategic management literature, though Noble (1999) highlights that strategic planning and positioning research

dominates the area when compared to implementation. In this review, both areas will be considered before the author connects the two, arguing common ground in line with the research aims and objectives.

In recent times, the literature surrounding organisational commitment has been greatly developed from commitment to a particular focus, such as family or religion (Ghosh and Swamy, 2014) to commitment to a particular organisation or employer. This focus lead to the development of organisational commitment (or OC), that focuses on an employee and their commitment to an organisation. Porter and Smith (1970 as cited in Mowday, Steers and Porter, 1979 p. 226) described commitment as *'the relative strength of an individual's identification with an involvement in a particular organisation.'* Mowday's (1979) popular organisational commitment questionnaire (OCQ) went on to describe commitment as a relationship with three primary qualities:

- a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values
- a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization
- a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization

Mowday (1979, p. 226) further described this style of commitment as more than mere passive loyalty, and argued that *'employees were willing to give something of themselves in order to contribute to the organisation.'* Others were more cynical of commitment including Becker (1956) who described commitment as an exchange relationship where employees were constantly scanning their side bets in an organisation to establish if continued participation was worthwhile for them. Becker (1956) provided an example of company sponsored healthcare as an organisational side bet that might not be equally as attractive from other employers. In the context of the UK, where universal healthcare is provided by the government (free of charge at the point of use), it is unclear how this side bet might impact British employees. However, Becker's remaining side bets might be relevant in this context, including pension contributions or pay (possibly in the public versus private sector for comparison). This serves as an example of the requirement to test popular commitment theory in more diverse geographical locations, including the UK and beyond.

In contrast to Mowday (1979) and Becker (1960b), Wiener (1982, p. 418) described commitment as the *'totality of internalized normative pressures to act in a way that meets organizational interests.'* Wiener is often credited for developing a dimension of OC that focuses on the *'loyalty'* of the employee and this could cause issue for those interested in the *'organisation.'* Cohen (1977a) points out that often normative commitment styles reflect the individual and their willingness to attach loyalty, as opposed to something an organisation may or may not be doing themselves.

The significant focus that organisational commitment research received early in the last century lead the concept to become wide, unclear and desperately seeking structure according to Morrow (1983, p. 486) who argued that the growth in OC related research has *'not been accompanied by a careful segmentation of commitments theoretical domain in terms of intended meaning of each concept or the concepts' relationship among each other.'* In order to provide this clarity and meaning to an emerging and complicated phenomena, several theorists have proposed alternative models with the intention of explaining OC. Thus far, OC has been treated as a one-dimensional construct that is either positive or negative from the perspective of the organisation. O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) argued that commitment was *'multi-dimensional'* arguing that an employee would move through three primary phases of commitment, from *'compliance, to identification and internalisation.'* This style of

commitment is different to those already seen, as it suggests that an employee's commitment will change over time (for example; as opposed to an employee always seeking side bets and exit from the organisation). From compliance with the goal of maintaining organisational membership, to identification, where the employee would begin to identify with the mission of the organisation, to internalisation where the employee would find their work *'intrinsically rewarding [...] because it is congruent with his value system'* (Kelman, 1958 p. 53).

However, it was the model provided by Meyer and Allen (1993) that became the most popular and well known approach to measuring OC. Meyer and Allen (1993) created a model that relied on preceding theory to support its arguments. The Three Component Model (TCM) that included components, Affective Commitment (AC) borrowed from Mowday's (1979) OCQ to test positive commitment. Continuance Commitment (CC) borrowed from Becker's (1956) trapped, side-bet based theory and Normative Commitment (NC) borrowed from Wiener's (1982) loyalty based approach. Perhaps part of the TCM's success can be attributed to Meyer and Allen's use of earlier theory to support their arguments in place of developing new theory as O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) attempted. However, the researcher notes various limitations of the TCM, despite its popularity. In the first part, academics have often found *'considerable conceptual overlap between AC and NC'* leading researchers to question the separation between the two scales, and whether it warrants continued inclusion in such theory (Cohen, 1977b). Further, as the TCM repeats earlier assumptions made by the literature such as the theoretical argument for 'side bet' style commitment that had not been tested empirically, newer theory is absorbing the limitations of old. Finally, the overall preceding literature bias for North American and statistically proven theory remains in the TCM, and the model has generally not been exposed to wider contexts.

The researcher considers the statistical dependence for most OC models to be a significant limitation of research in this area. What is missing from OC research is actor led investigations into what commitment really means to them, and their perception of the places in which they work. O'Reilly and Chatman (1986, p. 497) made the same argument, claiming that OC theorists have thus far not managed to establish the *'process through which commitment is established'* and Ghosh and Swamy (2014) argued that there was a lack of research considering the influencers and outcomes of OC related research. Further, the researcher notes that most OC research has been conducted in the United States or Canada, and tested largely in the public sector (Kelman, 1958), with university employees and students (O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986), hospital and university employees (Meyer and Allen, 1991), or are entirely theoretical (Becker, 1956).

In line with the arguments made in the first part of this paper, the researcher is attempting to test the existing TCM developed in North America, using a mixed approach in a new context. This is not to make new generalisations to a population, rather to make generalisations to theory in line with Myers (2000) understanding of the benefits of small scale qualitative research projects. The second part of this literature review is concerned with the concept of strategic implementation, strategy research, and relationship to OC.

Johnson, Whittington, and Scholes (2008, p. 4) describe strategy as *'the long-term direction of an organisation'* arguing that this will include deliberate and emergent elements of strategic direction. Johnson, Whittington, and Scholes (2008) argue that successful strategy includes the process of the organisation defining their mission, vision, values and objectives (presumably to employees and general stakeholders in the business). Once the strategy is translated into values, vision and objectives, the relevance for OC begins to emerge. Smith (2009) argues that the benefits of implementing strategy should be largely self-evident and it

should be clear that the strategy of an organisation is assumed to be implemented by the employees of the business when conducting their day to day work. This means that the employee understanding and interpretation of strategy is of significant importance and relevance for successful implementation (Peel and Bridge, 1998).

The literature surrounding OC makes several claims that are of relevance to SI, including that commitment is *'a force that binds an individual to a course of action that is of relevance to a particular target'* (2002, p. 301) and that committed employees have *'a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values'* (Mowday, Steers and Porter, 1979). Smith (2009, 2010) argues that OC and SI should be considered together on the basis that both concepts have an interest in the organisations 'goals' - SI as the process of setting the goals, and OC as a means to align employees to said goals for successful implementation. For clarity, 'success' has been defined as the successful implementation of the stated goal, regardless of what the goal might be.

The researcher notes that there is a lack of research concerning SI, as evidenced through Noble's (1999, p. 86) *'eclectic roots of strategy implementation research'* paper that argues *'many models of strategic management tend to assume too simple a link between the development of strategic direction and its actual implementation via the allocation of resources.'* Smith (2009) has paved the way for research into SI relative to OC meaning that there might not be a need to develop new theory, and existing theory in separate domains might be able to help fill the theoretical gap between concepts. The methods section that follows outlines the researcher's attempts to bridge this gap and investigate both concepts relative to one another.

Methods

As part of a larger PhD study, an adapted version of the TCM was distributed to employees in three organisations in the Sheffield City Region (SCR). The three organisations were treated as case organisations in line with Yin's (2003) case study approach, all three cases were taken from a different economic sector in the SCR and the questionnaire was issued to all employees in all three organisations. Further, in order to investigate the employee interest and awareness in the organisations strategy, the researcher created a new scale to measure strategic interest. The scale was written in the same style as the TCM, and included the same number of questions, an example of a question on this scale was *'I understand my role in implementing [this organisations] strategy.'*

In order to further investigate the underlying issues associated with an employee's commitment and understanding of the organisations strategy, the researcher sought to conduct interviews with employees who completed the questionnaire. This was achieved through asking the employees during the questionnaire phase if they would be willing to attend a follow up interview. This style of qualitative research that allows for a quantitative element has often been described as qualitative positivism or neo-empiricism as has been adopted here (Johnson and Duberley, 2000).

The TCM and SI scale measured the various styles of commitment and strategy on a seven-point scale ranging from *'strongly disagree'* to *'strongly agree,'* the researcher also collected demographic data from each questionnaire respondent including gender, age, tenure, and level in the organisation. In total 250 questionnaires were distributed across the three organisations, of which 160 were returned. Of these, 13 were discarded through incompletion, leaving a final response rate of 147 or 58%. 67% of the respondents were male, and 33% were female. 53% were at management level or other senior employees, and

47% were office based or had other junior roles. Participants ranged from 18 to 74 years old. The internal consistency of each scale (alpha coefficients) was found to be reliable (.85 AC, .73 CC, .85 NC and .91 SI) (Cronbach, 1951).

In the second phase of data collection, 38 employees were interviewed using a semi-structured approach to investigate the employee's subjective feelings around the topic of OC and SI.   The average length of the interviews was 1h: 3m, and the researcher transcribed each interview in line with Richie and Spencer's (1994) Framework Analysis (FA).   The transcripts amounted to over 228,000 words and the subsequent process of coding and thematic development was carried out in line with the same framework analysis. Figure 1 provides an overview of the entire FA process:
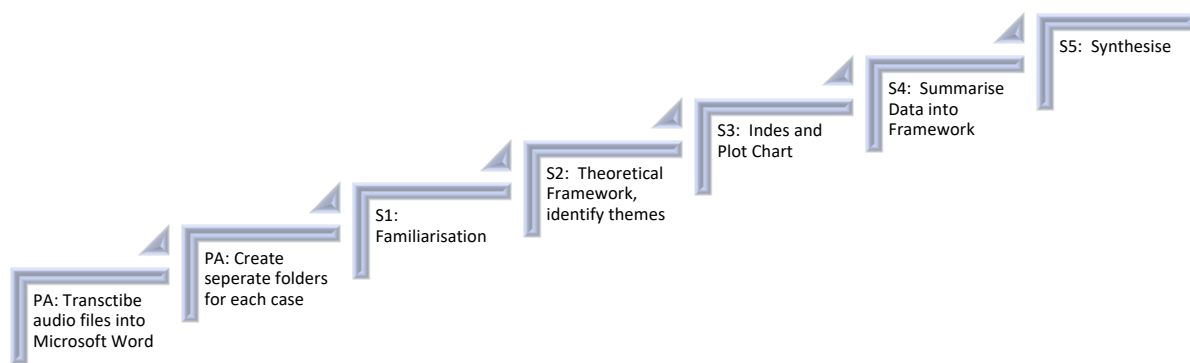

Figure 1 - Overview of Framework Analysis (FA), adapted from Ritchie and Spencer (1994)

The aim of this project is not to generalise to a population as earlier work in OC and strategy has attempted, rather the intention is to generalise to theory, and as Myers (2000, p. 1) points out, this style of research is *'not generalisable in the traditional sense, yet ha[s] redeeming qualities that set them above that requirement.'*

Results

The data from the TCM was analysed and compared to the data from the SI scale with the goal of understanding the relationship between both constructs (Figure 2). In all three case organisations, the employees were found to be committed with an overall mean score of 5.06 (AC), 3.60 (CC) and 4.88 (NC). In the case of SI, the overall mean score was 5.37 meaning that the average understanding of strategy was higher than all commitment scales.   The researcher has outlined the results from the seminal Meyer and Allen (1991) work for improved context, and to demonstrate the differences between commitment in the SCR compared to a North American context (notably a higher loyalty based NC, and lower trapped based commitment CC).

	Case MGY	Case PBS	Case ALB	Average Sample	Seminal Meyer, Allen
AC Scale	5.27	5.34	4.59	5.06	5.57
CC Scale	3.94	3.30	3.40	3.60	3.84
NC Scale	5.49	5.10	4.45	4.88	3.37

Figure 2 - TCM, SI Analysis

In much OC research (Herscovitch and Meyer, 2002), females have responded to the TCM questionnaire in greater number than males. This is likely due to the context in which OC research has traditionally been conducted; hospital nurses is provided as an example of seminal work (Somers, 2009). In contrast, and without intention, in this sample a greater number of males answered the questionnaire than females. The data demonstrated that females were more committed to their organisations (5.36, AC) than males (4.09 AC). Interestingly, females were found to be more continuously committed than males, meaning that they feel more trapped in their organisations, (F=3.65, M=3.56). Females also scored more highly for loyalty based commitment (NC) when compared to males (F=5.22, M=4.70).

Further, the researcher tested for a relationship between education, commitment and SI, on the basis that employees with different levels of education might perceive their employment possibilities in different ways. Figure 3 demonstrates the relationship between education, OC and SI. CC (representing the feeling of being trapped in an organisation) is highest when employees had no formal education (5.00), compared to an employees who was qualified at post graduate level or above (3.08). The employee interest and awareness for strategy was found to increase with education, while CC was found to decrease with education. This finding is in line with Becker's (1960b) theory that employees would become trapped in employment through (perceived) lack of alternatives, in this case education. Interestingly, loyalty based commitment (NC) is at its highest with no formal education, and lowest with 'post graduate' education and above.
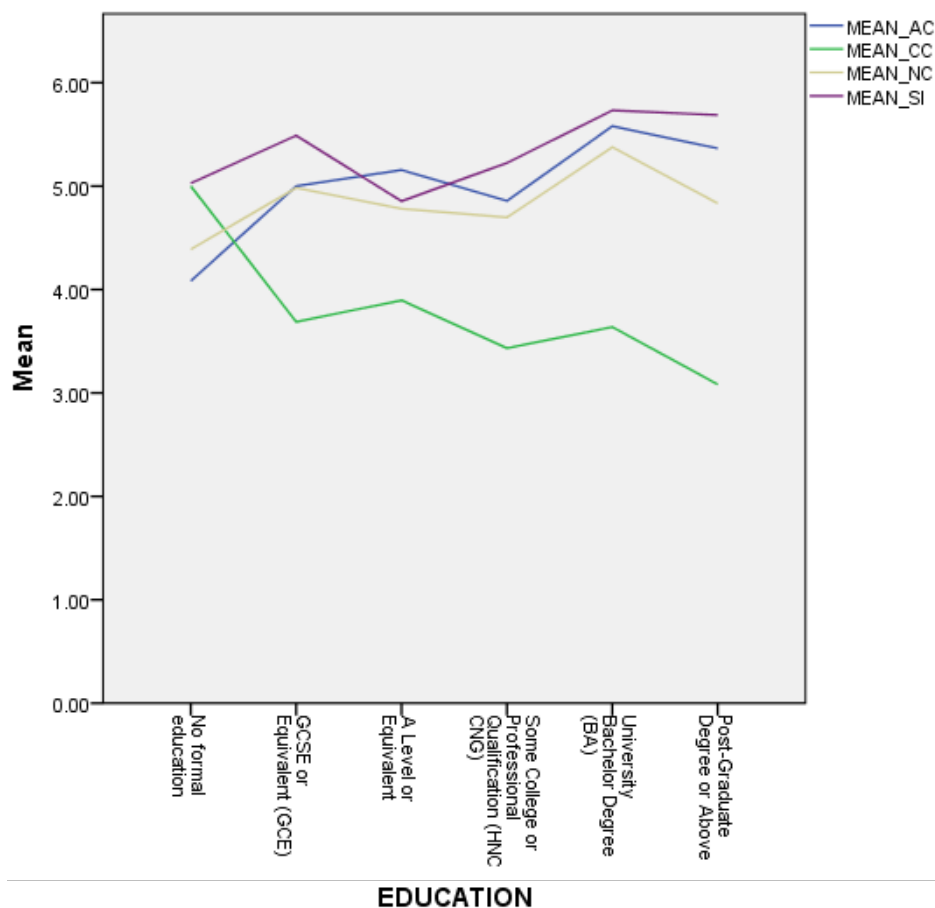

Figure 3 - Comparison between TCM and SI scales relative to education

In line with the overall research question, the researcher sought to test if a relationship existed between commitment and strategy. This was achieved through correlation testing between TCM and SI scales. The table in Figure 4 demonstrates this association between variables, highlighting a strong relationship between OC styles AC, NC and SI.

		MEAN_AC	MEAN_CC	MEAN_NC	MEAN_SI
MEAN_AC	Pearson Correlation	1	-.078	.770**	.571**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.348	.000	.000
	N	147	147	147	147
MEAN_CC	Pearson Correlation	-.078	1	.187*	.073
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.348		.023	.377
	N	147	147	147	147
MEAN_NC	Pearson Correlation	.770**	.187*	1	.588**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.023		.000
	N	147	147	147	147
MEAN_SI	Pearson Correlation	.571**	.073	.588**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.377	.000	
	N	147	147	147	147

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

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Figure 4 - Correlation Analysis, TCM and SI Scales

The analysis demonstrated a strong relationship between education, strategic awareness and commitment. Further, the results also revealed that variables AC and NC correlated positively in line with the critique of the TCM as offered in the literature review (Herscovitch and Meyer, 2002), once again raising the question of how empirically separable the two scales are. Ghosh and Swamy (2014) argue that having a high AC and NC is good for the employer because it will reduce any negative effects that are associated with CC. The researcher also notes that while this correlation between NC and AC has been observed in earlier literature, the correlation is yet to be observed in the context of the SCR.

The correlation between SI, NC and AC as hypothesised by Smith (2009) is of significant interest here and serves to help answer the theoretical question of the relationship between SI and OC. The researcher notes that no correlation exists between trapped based commitment (CC) and strategic awareness, as might be expected for an employee who identifies themselves as trapped in an organisation (Becker and Carper, 1956).

This data from the questionnaire in the first phase allowed the researcher to enter the second phase of data collection in the knowledge of each case organisations commitment profile and overall awareness of the strategy. The researcher was also aware that a correlation existed between SI and OC at this stage. The results from the quantitative data revealed that employees had a strong interest and awareness in the organisations overall strategy; however the qualitative data revealed that the overall employee interest was influenced by a number of factors that were external to the employee. In line with the larger PhD project, three factors were found to be influential to an employee's interest and awareness in the organisations strategic mission; **communication, values and exit-strategy.** The discussion that follows explains each theme individually, followed by a short discussion to link the three themes

together with the end goal of answering the research question, **what influences an employee's interest and awareness in an organisations strategy?**

In the case of the first influencer, the **'communication'** between managers and employees played a significant role in an employee's overall understanding of the organisations strategic direction. In case one (coded as ALB); employees were not permitted to communicate informally during work hours, meaning that employees often sat in silence:

> *It's deadly silent for hours and hours. We look up every now and again, I am one of those who break it up, say it's like a morgue in here, let's break it up, get a bit of banter going. But it's only for five minutes then we are back to silence. [ALB-Participant, 1]*

The repercussion of this culture was that the organisation did not benefit from communication between employees. In the remaining case organisations (coded as MGY and PBS), communication was encouraged between all members of staff, at all levels, and on all topics:

> *Well (the strategy has) been sent out to me via email, (I have been) out with my line manager, he's took me, if there's plans outside, new buildings or anything, he's gone and took me outside and said this is looking like happening [...] With me I think, communication verbally through a meeting, face to face, and kind of informal, it kinda gives you a better understanding than say an email trail something like that. So, any questions you might want to ask there and then, they can answer then, or you may not understand the wording of it, so things like that [MGY-Participant, 1]*

The outcome of this approach was that information was shared more freely in MGY and PBS. Schultz and Breiger (2010) highlighted the importance of *'weak'* culture in organisations, describing it as systems of *'small talk'* on *'levelling'* topics such as sport and music to achieve workplace community. White and Davey (2003 p. 231) described communication as *'basic building blocks to inclusion.'* In case ALB, this style of communication was unable to grow in the same way as PBS and MGY, meaning that the strategy of the organisation was not being communicated from management to employees using established communication channels.

The second influencer of an employee's strategic interest is **'values'** and when it is considered that OC theory speaks of commitment as an *'alignment to the goals and values of the organisation'* (Mowday, Steers and Porter, 1979 p. 226), the theme might not be surprising to a reader. The values of an organisation are often linked to the overall mission statement of and wider strategic vision of an organisations overall strategy (Noble and Mokwa, 1999; Johnson, Scholes and Whittington, 2008). The values of an organisation have an important role to play in the overall employee commitment process, as according to Mowday (1982) and Meyer and Allen (1991), employees cannot commit fully to an organisation unless the employee and employer share common values. Further, in line with the theme communication; logically, employees cannot align to the values of their employer unless the values are fully known and understood by them.

In the case of ALB, the values of the organisation were written on the walls of the office, but had not been explained, or communicated to the employees. This meant that the employees had an awareness of the values, but limited overall understanding:

> *I have read them [values], couldn't tell you what they were*
> *[ALB-Participant, 11]*

In the case of MGY, the values had also been written on the walls of the stadium, and had been issued electronically over email to employees who were generally more receptive to the idea that their employer would have a set of values. However, the organisation had taken few other steps to communicate the values to employees:

> *If the staff take on these values and operate in this manner then*
> *hopefully It won't need to be printed everywhere, you'll see that*
> *they're passionate, open honest, constant innovation, but I*
> *suppose it's like a bit of er, difficult one how you would actually*
> *communicate to actually get people to buy into the vision*
> *[MGY-Participant, 3]*

In PBS, the organisation had decided against creating the values in management teams and board meetings. The Directors of PBS decided to build the values using a bottom up, emergent approach where the employees were placed together in 'focus group' style meetings to establish the core values of their organisation. This strategy was successful, as evidenced through PBS having the highest SI score in the sample 5.59 (5.49 MGY, 5.03 ALB). The employees also spoke about their organisations values more passionately in a manner as though they were connected to them:

> *In terms of the values, they are relatively new, […], it's all*
> *about integrity, honesty, passionate and enthusiastic. And I like*
> *to think that I'm that kind of person, do things right, be honest*
> *about things, definitely. But they company got us involved in*
> *that, it wasn't the company setting the values, they got every*
> *person in the company involved in the values [PBS-Participant,*
> *3]*

> *The values, I was heavily involved, well a lot of us were. My big*
> *one was integrity, it is a feeling I have a lot and put a lot of trust*
> *and meaning into it [PBS-Participant, 7]*

This serves in contrast to employees in ALB (particularly, ALB-Participant, 11) who could not tell the researcher what the values were. This second theme is linked to the first theme of communication, as without suitable communications channels, the employees could not commit to the values of the organisation (or in case ALB, understand what they were). In case MGY, the values were better known, but only PBS had worked with their employees to achieve employee buy-in for the values of the organisation. The final theme, **'exit-strategy'** is concerned with leaders and the action taken by management when an employee is deemed to be unsuitable and not working towards the organisations values.

The researcher did not envisage an emerging theme that spoke of 'exiting' employees from an organisation in a study that investigated commitment. However, the employees in all three

case organisations were clear that management action when employees were not working towards the goals and values of the organisation was important. In case ALB, there was a perception that management were 'weak' and did not manage effectively:

> *They don't manage, simple as that [ALB-Participant, 4]*

The Chief Executive Officer of PBS argued the importance of dealing with employees who were not working in line with shared goals:

> *If there are weak links they need to be dealt with, because other members of staff will see weak links not being dealt with, you know, it doesn't mean that [my managers] walk around with his head in pink fluffy clouds, you know, [managers] will deal with problem, but they are in absolute isolation, you know, there is a problem with that person, not the position and therefore, but that will be 3 out of a workforce of 350 for example, and that gives other people the motivation and the confidence [MGY, Participant 16]*

The approach to 'moving on' the wrong employees was of significant concern to managers, who worried about the consequences of exiting too many employees and the repercussions to the wider culture of the business:

> *It's a fine line you tread here, because if you hire and fire, perceived to be willy-nilly, then people think you're in a chopping culture, so it has to be a situation where everyone can see this individual is wrong, we don't just sit down and say, you're wrong, you're out - we say these are our values, this is what we expect in this job, bla bla bla, it's usually not, it's behaviours you're getting rid of, not performance generally, it's behaviours [PBS-Participant,8]*

However, the importance of dealing with employees who were not working in line with the goals and values of the organisation was clear from the Directors:

> *I've worked in places before where people will not be dealt with if they cannot be bothered, and the atmosphere goes flat, people start leaving because he doesn't bother working, comes in at 10:00 every morning, then why should I? [MGY, Participant 16]*

> *So, they were people who we bought in and there were those blockers and, erm what do I call them, I call them, […] toxic employees. They have all gone [PBS-Participant, 9]*

The action taken by managers to exit 'toxic' employees did have consequences to the wider culture of the organisation, and often caused concern to individual employees who expressed concern that they might suffer the same treatment:

> *I just found out by chance that another member of our staff has left and none of us knew about it […] You know, you could come here to interview one of my colleagues in a fortnight and learn that I'm not here [MGY-Participant, 6]*

I came back to a department where the person who had worked here longest had worked here 8 months when I joined, and hang on there's 5 in this department and no one has been here more than 8 months, what the hell went on, and now I know what went on [...] yeah it was a good excuse to cut some dead wood [MGY-Participant, 4]

If you think about it, people go to work, and you're beating against a drum that is not singing the same tune as you, you're eventually going to go, frustrated. I'm not, best I move on, or best I change, personal change, personality. [...] Well they would probably stick out like a sore thumb, in that you've got a team, and there is just constantly dysfunctional, for whatever reason, I suppose that would be clear enough to see that that's not working well [PBS-Participant, 5]

The theme of 'exit-strategy' was found to be important to both managers and employees. From the perspective of the employee, the knowledge that their leaders were proactively managing teams in line with the goals and values was important. From the perspective of the leaders, the exit-strategy allowed managers to demonstrate to employees that they valued hard working employee's efforts and were willing to take action where an individual employee was not performing to the same standard as the team.

The strategic awareness and understanding model (SAUM) as seen in Figure 5 serves to visually demonstrate the relationship between themes and overall relationship between themes and SI:
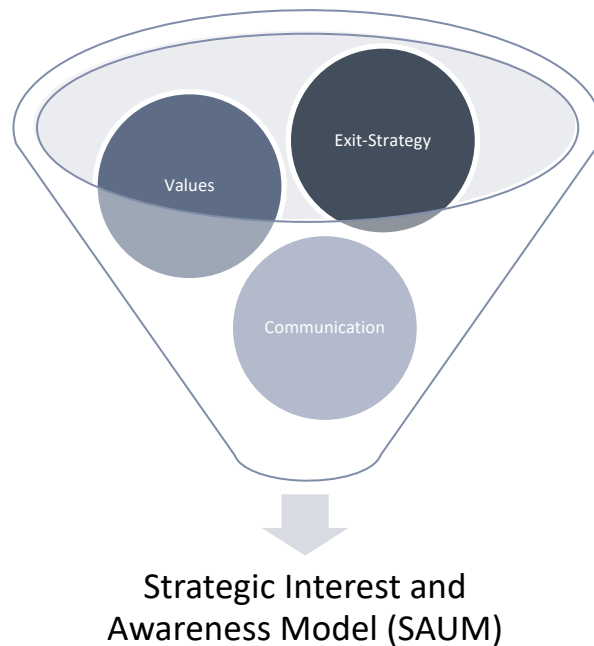

Figure 5 - Strategic Interest and Awareness Model (SAUM)

The three themes of strategic awareness (communication, values and exit-strategy) have been demonstrated relative to the overall research question of strategic implementation and wider

topic of organisational commitment. The data from phase one demonstrated the connection between OC and SI using statistical methods similar to those already seen in OC research. The second phase of data collection demonstrated the underlying experiences and themes associated with this connection, whilst not attempting to generalise to a population (Myers, 2000). The second phase demonstrated that commitment to strategy was influenced by communication, culture and exit-strategy.

Conclusion

The paper has introduced the topics of OC and SI to investigate the theoretical relationship between the two concepts. The researcher built upon Smith's (2009) argument that there might exist a relationship between both constructs on the basis that both shared a similar focus 'the goals of the organisation.'

The data collected from the SCR served to test the TCM model that had been developed and tested in the context of the United States and Canada whilst testing for a relationship between OC and SI at the same time. The results demonstrated that employees in all three case organisations were committed to their organisations and had an understanding of the overall strategy. This SI and OC were found to correlate positively and the qualitative data collected during interviews found a number of influencers to employee interest in SI. These included communication, values and exit strategy and were conceptualised in the SAUM model as seen in Figure 5.

The researcher concludes that a relationship does exist between SI and OC in the SCR, as is evidenced through the strong correlation between OC and SI scales and qualitative data that investigated the phenomena more deeply. The researchers own PhD aims to investigate the concept much more deeply, providing a comprehensive overview of the influencers to OC and SI and associated outcomes of both.

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