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**Understanding Organisational Commitment:
Concepts and Antecedents**

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

This study aims to understand organisational commitment and its development, using the empirical case of RENOVA, a highly innovative firm based in Portugal, founded in 1939 and now present in over 70 countries with its paper and tissue products (is the leading brand in Portugal), and has a strongly committed and stable workforce. Using qualitative primary data, from the interviews with its employees, to which this research had access exclusively, organisational commitment is understood using a broad perspective, including all the elements possible. This study will contribute to the academic debate by suggesting new and original material about the antecedents of organisational commitment and lastly attempting a new multidimensional conceptualization of organisational commitment.

The antecedents of organisational commitment, which were observed by previous studies are extremely diversified, but most of those works arguably have a narrow focus, while there is a scarcity of holistic approaches. This research deviates from such narrow perspectives by observing organisational commitment through a broad perspective. The thesis suggests the most important factors that impact the development of organisational commitment in this company. The best examples are work experiences (such as the socialization of newcomers, perceived support, and autonomy), and organisational characteristics (such as the cultural and situational fit, meaningfulness, or value congruence). Secondly, previously identified antecedents were not found in the case study (such as corporate social responsibility or formal human resource management high-commitment strategy). Thirdly, some findings offer some contradiction with previous works, as is the case relating to specific interactions and relationships. During the research process, an additional opportunity for academic contribution emerged, and was achieved, for using the primary data to draw up a proposal for organisational commitment conceptualization.

In conclusion, this study is innovative both for the method employed, i.e., conducting open interviews to capture broad information, as opposed to a narrow focus, and for the theoretical proposals: discovery of antecedents (e.g., fluid job descriptions); absence of expected antecedents (e.g., human resource management strategy, expressive relationships); confirmation of known antecedents (e.g., socialization of newcomers, perceived organisational support, and leadership performance).



“Via, veritas, vita” Latin motto of the University of Glasgow

“Truth serves only its slaves.” Antonin Sertillanges

“It is not the thoughts, but the truths, that interest us. It is futile to linger endlessly over differences; the fruitful research is to look for points of contact. Let us build bridges, not dig ditches between their doctrines as you seek truth alone.” Antonin Sertillanges

“When they get together in a family, or a club, or a trade union, people talk about the “spirit” of that family, or club or trade union (...) because the individual members, when they get together, do really develop particular ways of talking and behaving which they would not have if they were apart.” Clive Staples Lewis

“A person committed to the company, has an incessant search for solutions. Commitment is demonstrated by the spirit and the perspective the person has about the work, and the time the person spends at the company.” Antonia (respondent, pseudonym)

“Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space lies our freedom to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our happiness.” Stephen R. Covey

“I understand organisational commitment as the ability of people to grasp their missions and carry them forward in a disinterested way. Getting involved as much as possible in the missions they are given and put in motion what is asked of you in a disinterested way.”,
Humberto (respondent, pseudonym)

“The reward of a work is to have produced it; the reward of effort is to have grown by it.”,
Antonin Sertillanges

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Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Printed name: Eduardo Pereira

Signature:

Chapter 1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the object, and the aims of the dissertation. It also attempts to delineate its contribution to academic debates and to management practice. This chapter finally reviews the literature identifying the research gaps, new research questions and the methodology chosen in this thesis. The chapter ends by describing the originality of this research and by showing the organisation of the dissertation.

This study focuses on organisational commitment, its conceptualization and the main elements that may have an impact on its development, in a specific organisation. Drawing on a case study analysis of a large consumer goods manufacturer, RENOVA (see Appendix 1 Information about RENOVA), it sets out to investigate how that organisation succeeds at maintain commitment at high levels, and also examines the employees' perception of organisational commitment.

The main purpose of this dissertation is to add new material to our understanding of how a degree of organisational commitment can be explained. The object of the research is a case study focusing on two elements: (1) the employees' perception of what organisational commitment is, and (2) the factors that, in this firm, affect the development of organisational commitment, also called antecedents.

This research aims to contribute to the debate on organisational commitment and to help managers who wish to develop organisational commitment among their employees. The contribution of this dissertation to academic debate is based on a case study that helps us to improve our understanding of organisational commitment from a holistic perspective (i.e., approaching the research in a way that allows to broaden the scope and to integrate all the possible elements that compose and/or impact organisational commitment).

As mentioned, the organisation under focus is RENOVA, which is a large paper tissue and pulp producer, with 600 employees and a turnover of nearly €150 million, and one important aspect of that company is that, although family owned, its governance and management are fully professionalized (see Appendix 1 Information about RENOVA). Regarding its human resources, RENOVA has some singular aspects. Its employees stay in this company for an average of 18 years and have an average age of 43 years (data from 2018). The company thrives on its innovation and bold marketing campaigns and focuses on a clear mission of

strengthening its brand, where “every employee must be the strongest brand ambassador”, in the words of the company’s CEO. More characteristics of the case firm are reported in more detail later in this dissertation.

1.1 Background theories

The first challenge for this research project was to review a vast literature, which spans several academic fields. This dissertation falls within the ambit of organisational psychology and human behaviour but not exclusively, as the results of this study may also contribute to the field of human resource management.

The organisational commitment literature has been the object of much scholarly attention. Despite the many attempts made to define it, there is little agreement on the notion of, and theory about, organisational commitment. Some works have been more influential than others. This is in particular the case with the three-component model of Meyer and Allen (1991) and the general model of Meyer and Herscovitch (2001). Others are just starting to be debated, such as the process-model of Klein et al. (2012). There are other more simplified definitions which will be described in detail in the chapters that follow, and this research will keep those models, as well as other definitions of organisational commitment, as a conceptual background. This dissertation considers organisational commitment in terms of both attitude and behaviour, using frequently the widely debated three-component model (Meyer and Allen., 1991), without however relying exclusively on it.

Even at first sight, there is a good number of important questions about organisational commitment that can be raised. Below are some examples:

(1) Can we better understand organisational commitment by choosing a particular perspective (more adequate than others) like the choice between behavioural or attitudinal perspectives? Or should we choose an alternative perspective like transactional, obligatory, or others? Or a more eclectic approach using a mixed perspective (both attitudinal and behavioural)?

(2) Is organisational commitment distinguishable from related concepts, such as employee engagement, identification, job embeddedness, personal motivation, or even a simple contract between parties?

(3) Does organisational commitment have an essence and thus is it possible to use a unidimensional definition for the concept, as some suggest? Is the affective component the essence of organisational commitment? Or is organisational commitment such a complex concept that it is only possible to be defined using a multi-dimensional conceptualization model?

These debates, among others, will be further detailed in the next sections and chapters.

Alongside the literature on conceptualization, other studies complemented the understanding of organisational commitment focusing on the antecedents of organisational commitment. To name just a few, factors such as organisational culture (Lok and Crawford, 2004a), person-organisation fit (O'Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell, 1991), organisational value system (Caldwell, Chatman and O'Reilly, 1990), leadership (Davenport, 2010; Behery, Paton and Hussain, 2012) were identified as having an impact on organisational commitment.

The quantity and the diversity of elements that seem to have an impact on organisational commitment are impressive. It would turn out to be a very difficult choice to focus our study on just some of them and a research methodology was chosen that would allow the analysis, and discovery, of all kinds of antecedents of organisational commitment. This meant that numerous other variables should also be taken into consideration in an attempt to be as comprehensive as possible, and to avoid both oversimplifications and to limit research to just a few of them with the aim of testing hypotheses. This is consistent with the research goal of comprehensively understanding the concept of organisational commitment and its antecedents.

Within the large number of antecedents, some deserving particular interest were identified, such as the relationships between employees. The decision was then taken to give special attention to those elements, such as the interactions between employees and the relations between leader and subordinate. As the data analysis developed even further, another topic emerged from the case study related to the role of human resource management. The findings were somewhat at odds with the literature and had the potential to bring some originality to the project. As such, a special attention was also given to the role of human resource management strategies and practices.

Another distinguishing element of this dissertation is the choice of research methods. Most contributions in the field chose quantitative methods to establish associations between variables and to propose theoretical models for organisational commitment. Other academic works are meta-analyses that combine a great amount of information from previous studies, uncovering patterns and proposing theoretical models.

From the body of works on organisational commitment, some assumptions regarding its conceptualization and development seem important. These can be summed up as follows:

(1) Organisational commitment is important for organisations, for its outcomes are related to innovation, performance, and cooperation.

(2) The development of organisational commitment is a complex phenomenon (individual's behaviours are unpredictable, and a great number of variables need to be managed).

(3) The development of organisational commitment may not be explained by one single variable or one single perspective.

(4) The development of organisational commitment seems to be influenced by numerous contextual characteristics and events, and there is need for a differentiated approach, which could integrate all the important elements.

(5) Social interactions seem to have attracted attention from scholars and are referred to as important antecedents of organisational commitment.

The literature on organisational commitment presents us three main questions that research has been investigating: (1) the conceptualization of organisational commitment (including its relation to other similar or adjacent concepts), (2) the drivers and factors that may impact organisational commitment (antecedents), and (3) the consequences of organisational commitment (outcomes).

This research project chose to focus on just two of these main issues (concept and antecedents) leaving out the consequences of organisational commitment. All the consequences of organisational commitment seem to be positive for organisations, and there is more consensus about this topic, while with antecedents there are less consensus and a number of contradictory perspectives. Although the topic of consequences of organisational

commitment was left out, from the data gathered it was decided that it was possible to add to the research results some ideas and propositions about its outcomes.

1.2 Research drivers

Based on the extant literature, which will be reviewed in detail in the next chapter, this research was driven by the considerations that follow.

Organisational commitment remains a top priority for organisations in general, and is found to be a precondition for several positive outcomes, including lower turnover and reduced absenteeism (Mowday, Steers and Porter, 1979; Angle and Perry, 1981; Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Randall, Fedor and Longenecker, 1990; Somers, 1995; Meyer *et al.*, 2002; Cooper-Hakim and Viswesvaran, 2005; Payne and Huffman, 2005), job performance (Becker *et al.*, 1996; Meyer *et al.*, 2002; Casimir *et al.*, 2014), discretionary behaviour and discretionary efforts (Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001), prosocial behaviours (O'Reilly III and Chatman, 1986) productivity and quality (Arthur, 1992), and key knowledge sharing (van den Hooff and de Ridder, 2004; Li *et al.*, 2015).

There is “considerable disagreement” about the conceptualization of organisational commitment (Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001, p. 299), a large number of studies on organisational commitment either do not provide a definition or the definition is “imprecise and inconsistent” (van Rossenberg, Cross and Swart, 2022, p. 3) and calls for an improved conceptualization are common (Cohen, 2007; Solinger, van Olffen and Roe, 2008; Klein, Molloy and Brinsfield, 2012). Moreover, a prominent stream of the literature puts emphasis on the complexity of the concept and its multi-dimensional perspective (Meyer and Allen, 1991; Klein, Molloy and Brinsfield, 2012). However, opposing contributions focus on simplicity and/or linearity and thus the body of knowledge could benefit from holistic perspectives on the elements that foster organisational commitment development.

Since organisational commitment is found to be important for all kinds of organisations, both research and practitioners have been eager to discover the conditions under which organisational commitment better develops. The debate is open regarding how organisational commitment develops and a profusion of variables are presented as causes, antecedents, and associations. As such, attention seems dispersed, and a usable, consensual set of antecedents is not available.

Recently, scholars have devoted greater attention to how human resource management practices play a role on the development of organisational commitment and have suggested that internal strategies contribute to build a high-commitment organisation. Examples embrace diverse aspects: flexible work design (Jørgensen and Becker, 2015), empowerment (Raub and Robert, 2013), career related elements such as career goal progress, promotion speed, and remuneration growth (Weng *et al.*, 2010), performance management practices (Farndale, Hope-Hailey and Kelliher, 2011), perceived organisational support (Whitener, 2001), and satisfaction with human resource management practices (Kinnie *et al.*, 2005a).

Another important strand of research is related to social relationships and interactions. In recent years there has been more investigation of the effects of variables such as social support (Duffy, Ganster and Pagon, 2002; Morgeson and Humphrey, 2006; Grant and Parker, 2009) and trust (Cohen and Prusak, 2001; Farndale, Hope-Hailey and Kelliher, 2011; Ellinger *et al.*, 2013). Previous works have found direct associations between social network configurations and organisational commitment (Lee and Kim, 2011), and specific social network variables (Moynihan and Pandey, 2008; Siciliano and Thompson, 2015), but have yielded mixed and limited results. The cited examples are not an exhaustive list and will be further developed in the next chapter, but in conjunction with the researcher's own reflections on these matters, led to the development of a set of research questions.

1.3 Research questions

Given the background theories and the state of the literature mentioned above which form the main drivers to engage in the debates, this dissertation attempts to answer the following questions.

Main research questions:

- How can organisational commitment be defined, from the perspective of the employees?
- How is the current development of organisational commitment explained, from the perspective of the employees?

Subsidiary research questions:

- Do internal human resource management strategies and policies contribute to develop commitment? And, if so, how?
- What other contextual circumstances or events play a role?
- What specific role do employees' interactions and relationships play?

1.4 Contributions

This thesis contributes to debate in the following ways.

Firstly, it focuses on organisational commitment's conceptualization, using an approach which tries to integrate the most important components of organisational commitment, and proposing a theoretical model that may define organisational commitment.

Secondly, by focusing on organisational commitment's antecedents, it tries to unveil important antecedents that contribute to the development of organisational commitment, in a particular firm, giving special attention to the specific role of employee's social interactions and relationships, and internal human resource strategies and policies, on the development of organisational commitment.

From a methodological point of view, this research also aims at contributing to the debate by: (1) complementing the above-mentioned quantitative approaches with holistic qualitative research, allowing a broader understanding of the phenomenon; (2) covering several academic fields, thus being influenced by their different disciplinary perspectives (namely, organisational psychology and human behaviour; human resource management; and organisational behaviour or sociology of organisations), while not adopting a single theoretical lens, allowing a broad perspective; (3) allowing the discovery of new knowledge, or alternatively the development of existing knowledge, regarding the whole process of the development of organisational commitment, and its conceptualization, through a deep and rich analysis.

1.4.1 Organisational commitment conceptualization

This research contributes to the debate with a contextualized and plausible proposal for a definition of organisational commitment.

Consensus has not been reached around a conceptualization of organisational commitment. This is evident by analysing the present debates on organisational commitment which, among other topics, focus on (a) attitudinal versus behavioural perspectives; (b) unidimensional versus multidimensional constructs; (c) the existence of related and overlapping constructs (e.g., employee engagement, organisational identification, psychological contracts). Common constructive criticisms of deductive approaches point to situations where the “outcome is not sufficiently connected to our current understanding of the topic”, offering an “insufficient explanation” to a theoretical question. (Shepherd and Sutcliffe, 2011, p. 363)

This research contributes to the debate by proposing a definition for organisational commitment (see Figure 13 Proposition for a model for the definition of organisational commitment), obtained through a holistic research process that allowed for all kinds of elements to emerge, relying on data analysis collected in the company case. The model proposed is based solely on the single case study, and therefore the results should be taken as a knowledge statement of plausibility and not of certainty. Most findings are consistent with the extant literature, indicating possible generalization, but the possibility that the proposed model may not be generalizable is also raised. This addresses the main objective of improving our understanding of organisational commitment, not necessarily to reach an explanation for the whole phenomenon.

Specifically, this proposal builds on prior theoretical models, especially the three-component model, adding new insights. The affective element of organisational commitment is expanded, including emotional attachment, and psychological bonds. The normative component is present but inclining less to a pre-disposition from the individual, and more to work experiences and to the duty to correspond with the organisation’s efforts. Continuance commitment was not found at all in the case study. The third element in our proposal integrates behaviours such as discretionary effort, overcoming frustration, sacrifice and engagement in the job, pointing to the strength of dedication from the employee on behalf of the organisation, i.e., the target of commitment.

1.4.2 Organisational commitment antecedents

This research contributes to the debate by using its empirical findings (employees’ perceptions) to support extant theories (or to find inconsistencies in them), and by

developing a rich case study, where data is gathered using open, less structured methods, allowing a more complete, integrated vision, to develop new propositions for future research.

The case study shows that there are many factors shaping organisational commitment. These are divided into the following three categories: work experiences (being the most relevant), organisational characteristics and personal characteristics.

Within the category of work experiences, the most relevant sub-categories were: (1) sub-category employee–organisation relations, with special emphasis to the antecedents: perceived fairness, perceived organisational support, support for personal goals, flexible work design and perception of autonomy and empowerment; (2) sub-category interpersonal relations with special emphasis on the antecedents: leader-member relationships, perceived supervisor support, instrumental social interactions between peer employees; (3) socialization practices; and (4) career related antecedents (expectations about the company and about the job; expectations about career growth).

Within the category of organisational characteristics, the most relevant sub-categories were: (1) person-organisation fit with special emphasis on the antecedents of value congruence between the individual and the organisation, situational fit and cultural fit between the individual and the organisation; (2) organisational purpose and meaningful work with special emphasis on the antecedent of perception of meaningfulness.

The case firm, RENOVA, revealed a strongly committed and stable workforce and very distinct characteristics (idiosyncrasies) that allow speculation on whether these case-specific conclusions apply to similar companies elsewhere. Additional to the identification of these antecedents of organisational commitment, some specific speculations about patterns can be made, namely (1) a wide dispersion of the antecedents, (2) a greater importance of small day-to-day elements, as compared to a smaller impact of larger elements, (3) the implicit value of freedom/autonomy embedded in numerous relevant antecedents, and (4) the importance of a strong organisational culture and leadership.

1.4.3 Internal interactions and relationships

From all the possible antecedents of organisational commitment, this dissertation focuses on social relationships and interactions between organisation’s employees. In doing so, it follows the indications given by Cohen (2007) that “the role of socialization tactics in

affecting commitment levels is an under-researched area” (Cohen, 2007, p. 349) and Nyhan who emphasises that “work relationships appear just as the background of organisational commitment theoretical models, and as such were rarely researched as fundamental elements” (Nyhan, 1999). The aim of this dissertation is to add new material to the understanding of the socially orientated antecedents of organisational commitment. This is achieved, in part, through less structured interviews, allowing for more open responses, yet also including open questions that address specifically the impact of social interactions and relationships on organisational commitment.

From the case study, a conclusion is that employees’ social relationships and interactions have a positive effect on organisational commitment, but with a smaller impact than anticipated in the literature. An additional claimed contribution is related to the content of the social interactions between employees, as more impact on organisational commitment seems to come from work-related interactions, rather than friendship, family ties or other nonwork-related interactions.

Consistent with the literature on the socialization of newcomers, results showed an influence exerted by older employees related to the development of organisational commitment. An original contribution from this research refers to a conclusion that not only institutionalized socialization had a positive impact on organisational commitment, but also non-institutionalized socialization.

Another claimed contribution from this research is confirmation of the importance of interactions between employee and supervisor because it is the leader that conveyed several important antecedents such as trust, respect, and perceived supervisor support. In sum, the case study was consistent with some extant works regarding the importance of social interactions and relationships between employees for organisational commitment, identifying the greater importance of instrumental relationships and interactions relative to expressive relationships, and revealing the importance of freedom and autonomy in the employees’ internal social networks.

1.4.4 Human resource management strategies

Scholars like Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) recommend that, when deciding on strategies aimed at improving organisational commitment, there should be special consideration of how these strategies will be perceived and whether it is likely that they will create the

conditions to the development of organisational commitment. The present research obtained some results related to the impact of human resource management strategies on organisational commitment. This was achieved, in part, through less structured interviews, allowing responses to be more open, and including open questions that address specifically the existence and impact of current human resource management strategies and practices, and their perception about their impact on organisational commitment.

However, no major contributions to the academic debate on the field of human resource management could be accomplished from this case study. The exception is the proposition that a formal human resource management strategy, aimed at increasing organisational commitment, may have minor effects (relative to other factors) on organisational commitment. In the case study company RENOVA, the absence of such deliberate strategy seems not to undermine organisational commitment.

On the other hand, some antecedents that could be included in the human resource management category are present in the findings. This happens with job descriptions and job design, organisational structure, appraisal and reward systems, and mentoring, which were relevant for organisational commitment in the case study. This may be an indication for future research for the need to identify which factors should be included in the category “human resource management”.

1.5 Originality

One element of originality of this dissertation comes is found in the research methodology. A mixed methods approach with an abductive logic, avoided simplistic views and oversimplifications. The choice of a more holistic perspective may have added some originality to this project, expanding on narrower works and allowing deeper understanding of how organisational commitment develops and is affected by contextual circumstances. Reliance on a more open, integrated approach, has allowed extended room and more possibilities for the emergence and discovery of original and novel antecedents of organisational commitment. These methodologic decisions enhanced the research opportunity which was having complete access to the employees and the sensible information, otherwise not available, that has been collected.

Specifically considering the research results, some originality was found regarding one particular antecedent from the subcategory employee-organisation relations. Although

formal job descriptions were present in the firm, there was a general perception of great employees' flexibility and autonomy and a strong degree of freedom to choose one's own goals, tasks, or activities. This degree of freedom extended to the opportunity to experiment and to participate in diverse and unanticipated projects. The employees use specific terms for their job designs, such as "fluid" and "organic". Although the concept may be consistent with conclusions that work design influences organisational commitment and especially in relation to flexible work and employees' autonomy, there seemed to be some specific elements different in the case study, that will be detailed later in this dissertation.

The same kind of consistency appears regarding the antecedent of socialization of newcomers. The influence which older employees exert on recent ones, specifically regarding organisational commitment is present in the literature as well as in the research results. However, an original contribution from this research may be claimed in relation to the specific conclusion that not only institutionalized socialization (i.e., regulated and formally promoted by the organisation) has a positive impact on organisational commitment, but also non-institutionalized socialization (spontaneous, non-formalized actions and behaviours that result in the socialization of newcomers in the organisation).

Another original result is that, although the case company did not pursue organisational commitment *per se*, and rather focused totally on innovation and marketing, it ended up enjoying a high level of organisational commitment. This unique case could be further researched in terms of dynamic capabilities, the agility of innovative firms, the flexibility of a non-unionised workforce, and without the presence of rigid job descriptions and their impact on the development of organisational commitment. The company case does not rely on a human resource management strategy to promote organisational commitment, which is a common and important antecedent in the academic debate. The case study findings seem to be inconclusive regarding conclusions about the impact of human resource management on the development of organisational commitment.

1.6 Organisation of the dissertation

The chapters of the thesis are organised as follows.

Chapter two examines extensively the relevant literature on organisational commitment, with a special focus on its conceptualization and antecedents. The chapter also identifies the academic debates, and some weaknesses that were identified in previous works. The chapter

concludes by identifying research gaps, defining research questions, and setting the stage for explanation of the methodology proposed.

Chapter three presents the research methodology. The chapter begins by setting out the philosophical assumptions and their implications for the research and follows by presenting the research design, including detailed explanations about how information was collected (interviews and secondary data) and analysed (coding method). Finally, the chapter presents arguments for the case study selection and describes the profile of the case firm.

Chapter four presents the findings of the case study. The chapter begins by explaining the process of data analysis, giving examples of the interview guidelines, transcripts, and coding structure. This chapter also presents a structure of themes that emerged from the data analysis, the respective justification for each theme and examples of primary data that support these findings. Finally, this chapter distinguishes between less important findings and major findings, the latter to be the subject of discussion in the next chapter.

Chapter five presents the discussion of the main findings from the case study, contrasting them with the extant literature. The chapter addresses the research questions specifically regarding whether the antecedents of organisational commitment are structured using a categorization to facilitate the understanding of the results. The comparison allows suggestions and discusses plausibility and generalization of the results. The last section in this chapter includes a proposition for organisational commitment conceptualization, as well as some assumptions, as contributions for future research.

Chapter six concludes the thesis by summarising the main contributions claimed for the academic debates on organisational commitment, and the implications for management practitioners. The chapter also includes speculations on whether these case-specific conclusions may apply to similar companies, and adds to the previous chapters the observation of some patterns and possible conclusions that emerge from this analysis. The chapter concludes by enumerating research limitations and discussing possible future research avenues.

Chapter 2 Key literature

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the relevant literature on organisational commitment, with a special focus on its conceptualization and antecedents.

Firstly, an initial approach to the extant academic works is presented. Through a comprehensive review of the literature, the starting point of the research rationale is explained, and the initial research questions are defined. Next, it is indicated a second set of literature that initially was not considered but was later found important, after being informed by the data collected and analysed. Finally, the research gaps are identified, and a choice is made on the academic debates this research will engage with, and a final version of the research questions is established which includes main and subsidiary research questions.

Although much has been said on this theme and some path-breaking works have been conducted, e.g., the model of Meyer and Allen (1991), there is still little consensus on the conceptualisation of organisational commitment. One argument of this dissertation is the existence of considerable opportunity for the improvement of current models, meaning there are clear opportunities to improve them and to clarify the concept of organisational commitment.

Secondly, regarding antecedents of organisational commitment it is possible to affirm that, by focusing on specific variables, and narrowing the scope especially for methodological reasons, part of the extant research could be characterized as having limited reach and/or relevance. This implies that holistic approaches (i.e., approaches that broaden the scope of analysis, and try to integrate all the elements found) are necessary, for example allowing for opportunities to extend the number of variables, thus leading to a deeper understanding of how organisational commitment develops. Existing models of organisational commitment present us with some level of simplicity and linearity but fail to capture the bonds between employee and organisation, which are quite complex and thus require more critical analysis.

This dissertation relies on the field of organisational psychology and human behaviour but not exclusively, as the results of this study may also contribute to the human resource management field. Therefore, this may be considered a multi-disciplinary study, where a

combination of organisational psychology and human resource management seems appropriate, but not to be used deductively. The research embraces several academic fields, namely: psychology (specifically organisational psychology and human behaviour); organisational studies (especially human resource management, sociology (organisational behaviour or sociology of organisations). This review of the literature covers these disciplinary perspectives but there is no single theoretical lens adopted here.

The research logic adopted is abductive, mainly exploratory, and adaptive, not developmental or explanatory in relation to prior theory, and tentative propositions represent the output of this study. However, the study does use concepts from prior theory and engages in the debates for example regarding associations between variables, but does not rely specifically on prior relationships, nor will it attempt to confirm or disconfirm prior conclusions.

A point of dispute is the very notion of organisational commitment, as there is no consensus in the prior literature on the concept itself. Some authors have looked at organisational commitment from a behavioural perspective (Becker, 1960; Salancik, 1977), while others focus on attitudes, with behaviours seen as the consequence of those attitudes (or psychologic states) and not as their origin (Buchanan, 1974; O'Reilly III and Chatman, 1986). This research regards organisational commitment in terms of both attitude and behaviour, with a multi-dimensional perspective, drawing on Mowday (1979) who suggest that attitudinal and behavioural commitments are actually two stages of the same process (Mowday, Steers and Porter, 1979) and using frequently the widely debated three-component model (Meyer and Allen, 1991). This emphasises the multi-disciplinarity of this research, in the sense that to comprehensively describe organisational commitment it seems necessary to cover several perspectives. The three-component model of Meyer and Allen (1991) (from organisational psychology) provides this research with one of the most validated conceptualizations of organisational commitment. Although this model has also been challenged (Solinger, van Olffen and Roe, 2008; Stazyk, Pandey and Wright, 2011; Mercurio, 2015), throughout this dissertation the model is used as a theoretical background, being a well debated, wider definition of organisational commitment, when comparing to alternative simplistic narrower conceptualizations.

In summary, based on the review of the literature, this research takes into consideration some previous conclusions and thus: (1) Considers both attitudinal and behavioural perspectives of organisational commitment, due to the importance and non-exclusive nature of each (see

Table 1 Definitions of organisational commitment and employee engagement, non-exhaustive list and Appendix 2 Selective overview of organisational commitment definitions) and is open to a mix of attitudinal organisational commitment perspectives, which refers more to a psychological state, a bond, or an attachment, and to a behavioural perspective of organisational commitment, which refers to manifestations of commitment, and related concepts such as employee engagement. (2) Presupposes that human resource management strategies and practices may positively affect the development of organisational commitment, following literature regarding flexible work design (Jørgensen and Becker, 2015), career related elements (Weng *et al.*, 2010), performance management practices (Farndale, Hope-Hailey and Kelliher, 2011), or satisfaction with human resource management practices (Kinnie *et al.*, 2005a). (3) Presupposes that interactions and relationships between employees may facilitate the development of organisational commitment, following some examples, from the literature, namely that social network characteristics may influence organisational commitment (Kim and Rhee, 2010; Yusoff *et al.*, 2012), intra-organisational social networks can facilitate retention (Moynihan and Pandey, 2008), affective commitment is influenced by social networks (Lee and Kim, 2011).

As mentioned, this research mode will not follow a pure inductive theorising logic, mainly exploratory in nature, and as such there is no strong legitimate reason for not having initial propositions (Yin, 2009, p. 43). These assumptions taken from prior works are not meant to bind the research into deductive reasoning but may serve as a help to move it in the right direction, especially at the time of initial data gathering, from which point the abductive approach will follow and inform the next direction to take.

The following assumptions derive from the extant literature and will serve as background for the research: (1) From the attitudinal perspective of organisational commitment, affective organisational commitment may be an essential core element of organisational commitment. (2) The process of organisational commitment development may be complex and potentially unknowable, in all its perspectives and elements. (3) The antecedents of organisational commitment are diverse and numerous variables are found to have impacts on organisational commitment. (4) Social interactions and relationships between employees may influence their attitudes and behaviours, in general, and specifically (a) Employees' social relationships are likely to have a positive effect on organisational commitment, however negative effects are also possible to be found, but less likely; (b) Strong attachments to other employees are likely to be a precursor to organisational commitment. (c) Different types of social networks (e.g., advice, friendship, work) may have different impacts on the

development of organisational commitment. (5) Human resource management strategies and policies, aimed at achieving high degrees of organisational commitment, are likely to have a positive effect on organisational commitment.

2.2 Organisational commitment: a review of the literature

This part of the literature review focuses on the origins of concepts, the evolution of the research and the most consensual definitions and components. The literature on organisational commitment is vast and what follows will seek to sketch an analysis of its evolution. The literature has looked at organisational commitment from different perspectives, yielding a wide range of hypotheses. It is unsurprising, then, that there is no agreement on the very notion of organisational commitment. Although used with “high frequency”, namely in human resource management literature, organisational commitment “has not always been defined, has been defined inconsistently, definitions vary and particularly the measurement of commitment does not fit very well with the conceptual meaning” (van Rossenberg, Cross and Swart, 2022, p. 15). As authoritative scholars in this field suggest, “decades of research” have been insufficient to reach consensus on “meaning, structure and measurement” of organisational commitment and “basic questions remain” (Klein, Molloy and Brinsfield, 2012, p. 130). What follows will describe some of the most common definitions of organisational commitment, found in the extant literature.

2.2.1 Conceptualizing organisational commitment

Distinct perspectives: behavioural, transactional, obligatory, and attitudinal

This review begins by looking at the behavioural commitment strand. This is primarily concerned with the observable behaviours of individuals, to define commitment to the organisation, as opposed to a focus on internal events, or on traits of the individual. In this strand, it is possible to find the prominent work of Mowday *et al.* (1979), which continues a well-used approach. Many definitions of organisational commitment focus on commitment-related behaviours, and on the manifestations of commitment. Salancik, for example, when stating that “what commitment does is sustain action in the face of difficulties (...) and behaviour is what is being committed, because behaviour is a visible indicator of what we are and what we intend doing” (Salancik, 1977, p. 63) is focusing on this point. In Salancik, the behavioural commitment perspective is strong, and he identifies three distinct characteristics of committed behaviour: visibility (how visible and observable is the

behaviour), irreversibility (behaviour must be relatively irrevocable) and volition (the will expressed freely to take the action, or personal responsibility) (Salancik, 1977, pp. 64–68). The latter, volition, being the most difficult to observe, is said to be a “most ambiguous aspect of commitment (...), cannot be documented (...) and is always [something] argued and attributed.” (Salancik, 1977, p. 69) At the same time, volition would be later deemed specifically important by the self-determination theory strand of organisational commitment (Gagné and Deci, 2005, p. 333). One could wonder whether a forced, obliged behaviour ought to be considered true commitment at all, and Salancik presents us with a lapidary response to this hypothetical question: “Volition is essential to all commitment. It is the cement that binds the action to the person and that motivates him to accept the implications of his acts.” (Salancik, 1977, p. 69)

The debate between the attitudinal and the behavioural perspectives of organisational commitment, was more abundant in early years of the research on this field. Attitudinal perspective reflects the psychological bond that an individual develops toward the organization, and the implications for behaviours regarding that organization. By contrast, the behavioural perspective reflects more the situation where the individual engages in a course of action which leads to a continuation of that course of action. In this sense, organisational commitment is seen a continuation of the behaviour which could exist beyond conscious awareness. The behavioural perspective has its importance in the overall debate on organisational commitment, however, more than the “simple” continuation of a course of action, it seems more relevant for the present research the consideration of the individual’s psychological state with regard with that course of action (Meyer and Anderson, 2016).

From the diverse behaviours related to organisational commitment, a most considered one is the employee’s likelihood of not leaving the organisation and an abundance of works is found that uses such variables as absenteeism, staff turnover and sickness absence (Porter, Steers and Boulian, 1973; Behery, Paton and Hussain, 2012). When employees have their commitment level reduced, their intention to leave the organisation tends to increase (McDonald and Makin, 2000; Chen and Chiu, 2009; Behery, Paton and Hussain, 2012), for example after a break of the psychological contract (psychological contracts are defined as sets of perceived reciprocal obligations between employee and employer) (Rousseau, 1989; Robinson, Kraatz and Rousseau, 1994, p. 138; McDonald and Makin, 2000; Herrera and De Las Heras-Rosas, 2021).

The approach of considering mainly behaviours of permanence (or loyalty) seems to oversimplify organisational commitment, as it leaves out other behaviours, which will naturally appear later in other models of organisational commitment. Behaviours such as employee's discretionary efforts, knowledge sharing behaviours, job performance, which will be referred in detail later in this chapter.

Some authors consider employee engagement as a distinct construct from organisational commitment (Albrecht and Dineen, 2016). However, definitions of employee engagement such as the one presented by Wollard (Wollard and Shuck, 2011, p. 429), "an individual employee's cognitive, emotional, and behavioural state directed toward desired organisational outcomes", seems to converge to the behavioural perspectives of organisational commitment found in the literature, for example organisational commitment being "a perceived volitional bond with a target characterized by responsibility and dedication" (Klein, Molloy and Brinsfield, 2012, p. 137). To some authors like Saks (Saks, 2006, p. 602), organisational commitment may differ from engagement "in that organisational commitment refers to a person's attitude and attachment towards their organisation" while "engagement is not an attitude; it is the degree to which an individual is attentive and absorbed in the performance of their roles", and this definition, again, falls very close to a behavioural perspective on organisational commitment. On a recent analysis of the literature (Albrecht and Dineen, 2016), although distinguishing several differences between organisational commitment and employee engagement, the authors acknowledge numerous works reporting "the strength of the association between the two constructs" (Albrecht and Dineen, 2016, p. 75). Namely, both organisational commitment and employee engagement have been found to share common antecedents such as task autonomy, supervisor support, transformational leadership (Albrecht and Dineen, 2016, p. 81) as well as common consequences like job performance, productivity, innovation, organisational citizenship, turnover intention, absenteeism (Albrecht and Dineen, 2016, p. 83). From this, it seems safe to conclude that, in the literature reviewed, organisational commitment and employee engagement are very similar concepts, sharing many common traits and associations. Because these similarities and bounding elements seem stronger than the differences and the dividing elements, this research will use both concepts interchangeably making no distinction between them, except when it is needed.

Another approach is the so-called transactional commitment perspective which considers organisational commitment as a product of decisions and reasoning that aim to maximize some desired (or valued) outcomes. Commitment is then the result of the perceived losses

or gains from the specific investments that individuals make (or are going to make). When individuals make investments (also named side-bets), they are increasing commitment to a certain action (Becker, 1960). Becker recognized some empirical limitations to the behavioural approach, because seldom has “social life such a simplicity that permits clear and identifiable observations” as the ones needed to conclude on the consistency of behaviours and, therefore, on individual commitments. Rather, “interests, side bets and acts of commitment, and consequent behaviours will seem confounded and irremediably mixed” (Becker, 1960, p. 36). For example, an individual gets a job in another city, and because of this he will have to invest some money moving there which results, in this example, an increased commitment to not leaving that organisation. Deciding to acquire a home there, would increase even more those side-bets. In this case, commitment has grown but not related to any organisation’s characteristics, or policies, or decisions, rather just because of individual personal side-bets, and this seems reductive.

A similar approach to the transactional commitment perspective (Balfour and Wechsler, 1996) uses the term “exchange commitment” and theorizes that organisations may encourage organisational commitment by using extrinsic rewards. Besides money, time, or effort, social interactions may also become side-bets, in this transactional perspective. If individuals develop social bonds, the cost of breaking the commitment increases. As Becker puts it “side-bets are often a consequence of the person's participation in social organisations”, and “the existence of generalized cultural expectations provides penalties for those who violate them.” (Becker, 1960, p. 36) This perspective is based on the idea of an “economic rationale” and emphasises that individuals become committed to an organisation when threatened by a potential loss. This would later be termed the continuance commitment component in the three-component model of organisational commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Meyer and Allen, while testing the side-bet theory, find that side-bets effects on organisational commitment are very difficult to perceive and that affective commitment factors are stronger in influencing the degree of overall commitment. (Meyer and Allen, 1984)

When looking at the transactional commitment perspective, not only through the lens of the most obvious “investments” (money, time, effort), but rather amplifying the scope to include social investments, it is very important not to lose sight of this issue, as it leads to possible questions for research, namely the hypothesis that employees’ relationships and interactions increase the costs of leaving the organisation, thus developing organisational commitment.

Another strand of the literature which is reviewed here is the obligatory commitment perspective. Research notes that individuals have a degree of commitment that may be a consequence of some feeling that they have some obligation toward the organisation (Wiener, 1982; Meyer and Allen, 1991). This obligatory commitment perspective could be positioned as somehow contradicting continuance commitment because it happens, for example, when individuals make decisions on the organisation's behalf despite their estimated individual losses. That psychological state of obligation sometimes originates the internalization of specific norms of conduct. Meyer and Allen name this aspect the normative commitment component and argue that internalized norms of obligation (Meyer and Allen, 1991) can be developed by one's own needs or by perceived expectations from others. However, affective commitment has also been found a consequence of this, for example when, due to a perceived organisational support, employees feel obliged to become more committed to the organisation (Kim, Eisenberger and Baik, 2016). This obligation (or need to comply with some specific norms) may also be acquired prior to entry into the organisation (Cohen, 2007), as with the case of a general moral obligation towards the organisation influenced by family or cultural values and/or socialization. However, this obligation is most likely acquired following entry in the organisation, through the mediation of internal social relations, and other work experiences. Most importantly, as Cohen puts it "there are hardly any research findings to support the relationship between early socialization tactics and normative commitment. Therefore, it seems that normative commitment is affected very little by specific organisational experiences and does not depend on any exchange process with the organisation." (Cohen, 2007, p. 342) Because it relates to employees' feelings or mindsets, obligatory commitment could also fall within the notion of attitudinal commitment, which will be the focus of what follows.

The attitudinal commitment perspective is yet another important strand of the organisational commitment literature. The conflict between the attitudinal and behavioural perspectives is like the dilemma of "the chicken and the egg", is being hard to know which comes first. Behavioural theory is primarily concerned with actions, the conditions under these actions are repeated and, only in the end, the individual psychological state, which is to say the attitude. By contrast, attitudinal perspective, more than the origin, considers the consequence of one's psychological state, which is then influenced by certain conditions.

Attitudinal commitment and behavioural commitment are not mutually exclusive concepts. Meyer and Allen's (1991) model, although attitudinal also points to commitment being the result of specific behaviours that lead individuals to feel affectively committed to the

organisation. This suggests that attitudinal and behavioural commitments are two stages of the same process (Mowday, Steers and Porter, 1979). These authors refer to the usefulness of considering both attitudes and behaviours as reciprocally related over time, but also to the less important notion if commitment begins with attitudes or with behaviours.

Others follow the argument that commitment is best defined as the basis of an individual's psychological attachment to the organisation (Caldwell, Chatman, and O'Reilly, 1990), a sort of psychological bond linking individuals to their organisations (O'Reilly III and Chatman, 1986). Buchanan (1974), for example, defines commitment as a psychological bond to an organisation, and describes organisational commitment involving three attitudes (Buchanan, 1974, 1975): (a) identification with the organisation's mission, (b) involvement (or psychological immersion) in organisation's duties, (c) loyalty and affection for the organisation, apart from merits of its mission or its instrumental value to the individual.

Another conceptualization of organisational commitment using this attitudinal perspective defines it as the relative strength of an individual's identification and involvement with a particular organisation (Mowday, Steers and Porter, 1979), and is characterized by: (a) a strong belief in, and acceptance of, the organisation's goals and values; (b) a willingness to exert considerable, discretionary effort on behalf of the organisation; (c) a strong desire to maintain membership in the organisation.

Thus, organisational commitment involves an active relationship with the organisation, such that the individual is willing to give something of himself, to contribute to the organisation's objectives and results. This definition means that organisational commitment could be observed from two different viewpoints: by individuals' beliefs, opinions, and views, and by individuals' actions (Porter *et al.*, 1974; Mowday, Steers and Porter, 1979). Again, it is possible to find here both attitudinal and behavioural perspectives.

The following Table exhibits a schematic presentation of distinct definitions of organisational commitment and, for each one, a suggestion whether it relates to attitudinal or behavioural perspectives and a possible correspondence with the components of the three-component model (see Table 1 Definitions of organisational commitment and employee engagement, non-exhaustive list).

In the three-component model (Meyer and Allen, 1984; Meyer and Allen, 1991) the attitudinal part of commitment is named the affective commitment component. This model

is one of several proposals for a multidimensional conceptualization of organisational commitment. In the next section this distinction, between multidimensional and unidimensional approaches to define organisational commitment, will be further detailed.

Table 1 Definitions of organisational commitment and employee engagement, non-exhaustive list

References	Definitions	Key elements present in the definition	Attitudinal / Behavioural	Three-component model correspondence
(Becker, 1960, p. 32)	“Commitments come into being when a person, by making a side bet, links extraneous interests with a consistent line of activity.”	Side bet	Behavioural	Continuance
(Sheldon, 1971, p. 143)	“An attitude or an orientation toward the organisation which links or attaches the identity of the person to the organisation.”	Identity attachment	Attitudinal	Affective
(Mowday, Steers and Porter, 1979, p. 226)	“The relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organisation.”	(a) Identification (b) Involvement	(a) Attitudinal (b) Behavioural	(a) Affective (b) (not applicable)
(Wiener, 1982, p. 421)	“The totality of normative pressures to act in a way which meets organisational goals and interests”	Pressure to act	Behavioural	Normative
(O’Reilly III and Chatman, 1986, p. 493)	“The psychological attachment felt by the person for the organisation; it will reflect the degree to which the individual internalizes or adopts characteristics or perspectives of the organisation.”	(a) Psychological state/attachment (b) Internalization	(a) Attitudinal (b) Attitudinal	(a) Affective (b) Affective
(Meyer and Allen, 1991, p. 61)	“Commitment is a psychological state that (a) characterizes the employee’s relationship with the organisation and (b) has implications for the decision to continue or discontinue membership in the organisation.”	(b) Psychological state (b) Turnover intention and behaviours	(a) Attitudinal (b) Behavioural	(a) Affective (b) Continuance
(Klein, Molloy and Brinsfield, 2012, p. 137)	“a perceived volitional bond with a target characterized by responsibility and dedication.”	(a) Volitional bond/attachment (b) Behaviours of responsibility and dedication	(a) Attitudinal (b) Behavioural	(a) Affective (b) Affective
(Kahn, 1990, p. 694)	“(…) engagement is the harnessing of organisation members’ selves to their work roles; (...) people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances”	(a) Bond/ attachment to work role (b) Acting fully toward role performances	(a) Attitudinal (b) Behavioural	(a) Affective (b) (not applicable)
(Solinger, van Olffen and Roe, 2008, p. 80)	“An attitude of an employee vis-a-vis the organisation, reflected in a combination of affect (emotional attachment, identification), cognition (identification and internalization of its goals, norms, and values), and action readiness (a generalized behavioral pledge to serve and enhance the organisation’s interests)”	(a) Emotional attachment (b) Cognitive identification and internalization (c) Action readiness and behavioural pledge	(a) Attitudinal (b) Attitudinal (c) Attitudinal/ Behavioural	(a) Affective (b) Affective (c) Affective

Author’s own table.

Distinct approaches: Multidimensional versus unidimensional

In addition to the above-mentioned theoretical perspectives, some scholars have developed more eclectic approaches and models, describing organisational commitment as a multidimensional concept while others have chosen a unidimensional approach.

Perhaps the most distinct of the multidimensional approaches, having a lasting influence on later research works, is the mentioned three-component model proposed by Meyer and Allen (Meyer and Allen, 1991, p. 67). This model identifies three separate components or dimensions (not types) of organisational commitment, specifically: normative commitment which refers to a moral obligation to remain with the organisation, for example for ethical reasons; continuance commitment which refers to the perceived economic value of remaining with the organisation compared to leaving it; and affective commitment which is the emotional attachment to the organisation and a belief in its core values. This model describes organisational commitment as a combination of three distinct mindsets: desire (affective), need or perceived cost (continuance), and obligation (normative) (Allen and Meyer, 1990; Klein, Molloy and Brinsfield, 2012; Kam *et al.*, 2016). Although some limitations of this model are later pointed out, such as a possible conceptual ambiguity of continuance commitment and some redundancy between normative and affective commitment (Cohen, 2007), most of later research finds this approach useful. It is probably the most analysed and debated multidimensional conceptualization of organisational commitment.

Despite the relative validity of the three-component model as a general model of organisational commitment, it has also been refuted. Specifically, Solinger suggests that the three-component model should be used only to predict turnover (Solinger, van Olffen and Roe, 2008). This is based on the argument that normative and continuance commitment are “qualitatively different concepts” than affective commitment and that the three-component model does not provide a unitary concept of organisational commitment, because mixing “target attitudes” and “behaviour attitudes” may be logically incorrect (Solinger, van Olffen and Roe, 2008, p. 73). Although logical, this criticism does not eliminate the value of the three-component model, as it remains one of the most frequently used definitions in academic works, more than 50% according to a recent study (van Rossenberg, Cross and Swart, 2022, p. 10). Even if some works choose not to use all three of the components, the affective organisational commitment is used in the majority of the studies today. As such the present research is going to give special attention to this conceptualization.

One concept, included in the three-component model, which stands out and assumes a predominant position on later works, is that organisational commitment may be described as an “emotional attachment to the organisation by individuals” (Mowday, Steers and Porter, 1979). This definition follows the same line of reasoning as the affective component of organisational commitment, defined by Allen and Meyer (Allen and Meyer, 1990).

Another multidimensional model for organisational commitment is proposed by Cohen, after considerations on the advantages and limitations of the three-component approach. The limitations range from “predictive validity” to “conceptual ambiguity of continuance commitment”, and “concept redundancy between normative and affective commitment” (Cohen, 2007, p. 337). This model suggests that organisational commitment has a dimension which is instrumental in nature, i.e., “based on the actual exchange with the occupation, including the exchange of rewards, reputation, and status in return for commitment”, and another dimension which is affective in nature. This affective dimension is “a deeper commitment to the occupation that will be based on feelings of psychological attachment, pride in being a member of a given occupation, and a strong feeling of belonging.” (Cohen, 2007, p. 350).

Alternatively, another model suggests three distinct dimensions: compliance, identification, and internalization. (O'Reilly III and Chatman, 1986; Caldwell, Chatman and O'Reilly, 1990). The compliance dimension occurs when the behaviours observed are caused, not by any sharing of beliefs, but to obtain specific compensations or rewards (converging on the above-mentioned transactional perspective). Identification occurs when there is an acceptance of influence or the desire to maintain a satisfying relationship, for example when individuals respect the values and goals of a specific group, may want to be a part of the group, but do not necessarily adopt them as their own. Internalization occurs when the values of the group and the individual are the same, for example influence is accepted because the attitudes and behaviours one is being encouraged to adopt are congruent with existing values.

Balfour and Wechsler proposed another alternative multidimensional model (Balfour and Wechsler, 1996) suggesting three forms of commitment: identification, affiliation, and exchange. Identification commitment as the individuals' sense of pride in the organisation. Affiliation commitment as individuals' sense of belonging and attachment to co-workers and the organisation itself. Exchange commitment as individuals' belief that the organisation appreciates their work and efforts.

Table 2 Multidimensional models and correspondence with the three-component model

Three-component model	Distinct mindsets	Organisational commitment perspective	Dimensions of behaviour
normative commitment (moral/ethical obligation)	obligation	instrumental and affective in nature	compliance (behaviours observed caused to obtain compensation, not by share of beliefs)
continuance commitment (perceived economic value of remaining with the organisation)	need (or perceived cost)	instrumental in nature	identification (an acceptance of influence or the desire to maintain a satisfying relationship)
affective commitment (emotional attachment to the organisation and belief in its values)	desire	affective in nature	internalization (values of the group and the individual are the same, attitudes and behaviours encouraged are congruent with own values)

Author's own table

The argument that commitment is a multidimensional concept also finds confirmation in the work of many authors who conclude that organisational commitment can take diverse forms (Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001). However, contrary to the multidimensional approaches, some authors raise the possibility that organisational commitment may have a “core essence” and could be described using a single dimension (Klein et al., 2014; Meyer, 2016). One of the reasons raised is the methodological attractiveness of narrowing the focus and thus providing “clearer conceptual boundaries”, greater “coherence and convergence” across presently fragmented academic opinions, and a “wider applicability” across different types of workplaces (Klein and Park, 2016, p. 25).

Affective commitment has been suggested as a possible unidimensional definition for organisational commitment (Mercurio, 2015), taking out this affective component from the three-component model and proposing it as the essence of organisational commitment. Affective organisational commitment is attitudinal in nature and this notion of organisational commitment being “a more global, reflecting a general affective response to the organisation as a whole” appears in the seminal work of Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979, p. 226), as had a lasting influence in the literature that followed. Authors followed by defining organisational commitment as “an emotional attachment to the organisation” (Allen and Meyer, 1990, p. 2) which is the same concept incorporated later in the three-component model, as affective commitment.

Even earlier, commitment was described as “an attitude or orientation toward an organisation which links or attaches the identity of the person to the organisation” (Sheldon, 1971, p. 143). All these proposed definitions help to create a path for the separation of affective commitment as a distinctive concept. It is also possible to find affective commitment being associated with similar concepts, but using different terms in the literature (Meyer and

Herscovitch, 2001), e.g., “value commitment” (Angle and Perry, 1981), “value congruence” (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995), “moral commitment” (Jaros *et al.*, 1993), and “normative commitment (identification and internalization)” (Caldwell, Chatman and O’Reilly, 1990; O’Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell, 1991).

A peculiarity of affective commitment is the employee’s freedom of choice, expressed by an acceptance of the organisation’s goals and values and by a willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organisation. This freedom of choice, and thus freedom of will, implies the existence of a strong emotional attachment to that organisation (Mowday, Steers and Porter, 1979; Allen and Meyer, 1990), since “persons are emotionally attached to groups that strengthen their generalized sense of control” and to groups “perceived as most responsible for the choice opportunity” (Lawler, 1992, p. 327). According to the self-determination theory (mentioned in a previous section when talking about volition), affective commitment is most in line with autonomous motivation (Gagné and Deci, 2005), which these authors point as a crucial aspect. Specific self-determined motivations, which form the basis of affective commitment are identification and internalization as defined by Becker (Becker, 1992; Becker *et al.*, 1996) and exactly because of their self-determined nature, although being distinct constructs, identification and internalization are highly correlated (Johnson, Chang, and Yang, 2010). Affective commitment is thus mostly dependent on the will of the individual, it is the element that individuals can have strong decision and actions upon. Lawler and Yoon, on their relational cohesion theory, place emphasis on emotions (Lawler and Yoon, 2005, chap. 8). Commitment, in relational cohesion theory is the attachment individuals feel to a collective entity, such as a relationship, group, or organisation, which highlights the role of emotional commitment.

Another argument in favour of affective commitment as the core of organisational commitment comes from the conclusion that affective commitment can predict a wider range of behaviours, “compared to continuance and normative commitment, affective commitment correlates significantly with a wider range of outcome measures, and correlates more strongly with any given outcome measure” (Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001, p. 311). These authors state that the focal behaviour (the behaviour whereby the employee is bound by his commitment) is greater in the case of affective commitment than for continuance and normative commitment.

Also supporting this greater relevance of affective commitment is the argument that normative and affective commitment are similar concepts (Ko *et al.*, 1997; Meyer *et al.*,

2002), as normative commitment has consistently been found to correlate very strongly with affective commitment, and thus it may be hard to empirically distinguish one from the other. Ko *et al.* (1997) even go as far as to regard the normative dimension of commitment as redundant. Despite this empirically supported idea, these two dimensions of organisational commitment have been generally considered different. Compared to affective commitment, normative commitment is less organisation-specific and is more influenced by cultural socialization and general beliefs about employment than by actual experiences within a particular company (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Moreover, employees' normative commitment may exist before becoming a member of the organisation, whereas affective commitment emerges post-entry (Cohen, 2007). Affective commitment derives more from the support and fairness that individuals experience at work (Meyer *et al.*, 2002). Different motivations lead to affective commitment and to normative commitment (Johnson, Chang and Yang, 2010). Affective commitment is associated with identification and internalization, while normative commitment is associated with introjection, a process where individuals replicate behaviours, especially of other individuals, without necessarily accepting them (Gagné and Deci, 2005), for example whenever individuals fulfil obligations to reduce feelings of guilt or anxiety. "With this type of regulation, it is as if the regulation were controlling the person." (Gagné and Deci, 2005, p. 334)

The three-component model has also received critiques as "non-qualified" for a general model due to having a conceptual inconsistency (Solinger, van Olffen and Roe, 2008, p. 80). These authors propose a return to a straightforward definition of organisational commitment as simply "affective attachment to an organisation", in the same line of thought proposed by Ko *et al.* (Ko, Price and Mueller, 1997). It is stressed that "affective commitment is an attitude toward the organisation, whereas continuance and normative commitment are attitudes toward leaving the organisation" (Solinger, van Olffen and Roe, 2008, p. 74), implying continuance and normative commitments should not be considered. In a later work, these authors examined the impact of affect, cognition, and behaviour on the "within-person trajectories of organisational commitment" (Solinger, Hofmans and van Olffen, 2015). Testing a dynamic microstructure of commitment with organisational "entrants" and "exiters", they find that "within-person change of affective attitudinal information is indeed slower than the within-person change of cognitive and behavioural information" (Solinger, Hofmans and van Olffen, 2015, p. 15,18). They also found no support to the view that affect influences cognition and behaviour, thus concluding that committing and uncommitting are mainly cognition driven.

Although affective commitment appears as an attractive choice for the essence of organisational commitment, partly due to the abundance of literature, and also because following the path of a unidimensional approach allows a stronger focus, it would also pose a high risk of leaving out important components of organisational commitment. This narrower approach would contradict an apparent complexity of organisational commitment, namely “the inherent psychological complexity associated with the ties that bind people to their work” (Allen, 2016a, p. 38). The present research, aligned with the research objectives of 1) getting a holistic perspective of organisational commitment (as will be explained in the Methodology chapter), 2) explaining how commitment develops, and 3) to avoid a narrow-view perspective (a defect commonly found in this theme’s literature), a multidimension approach to organisational commitment seems most appropriate, rather than a unidimensional perspective.

2.2.2 Antecedents of organisational commitment

The second aspect of organisational commitment covered in this literature review pertains to the elements that may explain the development of organisational commitment. This section reviews the debate about the antecedents of organisational commitment.

Some recent approaches have focused on how commitment changes over time (Cohen, 2007; Gao-Urhahn, Biemann and Jaros, 2016; Kam *et al.*, 2016). Cohen proposes a model that incorporates time by adding two dimensions to commitment: pre-entry commitment propensity and post-entry commitment. The first regards a “general propensity to be committed to the organisation” (Cohen, 2007, p. 343), and the second relative to the present and actual commitment to the organisation. It has been proposed that “the microstructure of commitment is not fixed but can change over time and context” (Solinger, Hofmans and van Olffen, 2015, p. 20). Earlier seminal works have also studied the effect of time and specifically the change of attitudes, including commitment, over time. Buchanan (1975) studied large groups and found evidence of different levels of commitment between three groups: members of the organisation in their first year, members between two and four years, and members with five or more years at the firm and confirmed that personal priorities of these individuals (all managers) “change as their career unfolds” (Buchanan, 1975, p. 73) and found that each of these groups had certain experiences that had greater impact on their levels of commitment. These notions seem to deserve some attention from this research, as not only there seems to be no consensus regarding what organisational commitment is, but also how does organisational commitment develops over time. Moreover, as with the

conceptualization of organisational commitment, the theme of antecedents has received great attention but there still is no consensus and clear need for understanding what antecedents are associated with stronger organisational commitment. In relation to this question, Meyer and Herscovitch have concluded “the research has been largely unsystematic” (Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001, p. 315).

Broadly, the literature on the antecedents of organisational commitment is vast, and includes a wide spectrum of factors falling within the areas of organisational culture (Lok and Crawford, 2004a), person-organisation fit (O’Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell, 1991), organisational value system (Caldwell, Chatman and O’Reilly, 1990), leadership (Davenport, 2010; Behery, Paton and Hussain, 2012), among others later referred, and categorized, in this section. There is knowledge that points to human relations individuals experience within organisational boundaries having effects on organisational commitment (Buchanan, 1974; Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Kim and Rhee, 2010; Lee and Kim, 2011), whether be it relations with direct supervisor (Loi, Lai and Lam, 2012), relations with colleagues (Nyhan, 1999), relations with other distinct stakeholders (Grant *et al.*, 2007). In the end, very few research works considered process issues, as scholars “commonly examined correlations between organisational commitment and potential antecedent variables without much consideration of *why* these variables should influence commitment (i.e., without identifying underlying mechanisms)” (Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001).

It is possible to observe diversity of perspectives not only regarding antecedents of organisational commitment, but also in relation to a possible categorisation of such antecedents. Some examples are presented next and, based on these, an ordered list of categories has been defined to guide the present research and the subsequent discussion.

One categorisation, proposed by Meyer and Allen, divides antecedents of organisational commitment according three categories (Meyer and Allen, 1991, pp. 69–70):

- i) individual’s personal characteristics (demographic variables, e.g., age, sex, tenure, education, and personal dispositions, e.g., need for achievement, affiliation, autonomy)
- ii) organisational structure and
- iii) work experiences (also including attitudes or perceptions).

Another categorisation, included in a more recent meta-analysis, identifies some 42 different antecedents of employee engagement (Wollard and Shuck, 2011), and distinguishes between the categories of individual and organisational antecedents (see Table 3 Categorisation of antecedents of employee engagement).

Table 3 Categorisation of antecedents of employee engagement

Individual Antecedents to Employee Engagement	Organizational Antecedents to Employee Engagement
Absorption ^a	Authentic corporate culture ^a
Available to engage	Clear expectations ^a
Coping style	Corporate social responsibility ^a
Curiosity	Encouragement
Dedication ^a	Feedback
Emotional fit	Hygiene factors
Employee motivation	Job characteristics ^a
Employee/work/family status	Job control
Feelings of choice & control	Job fit ^a
Higher levels of corporate citizenship ^a	Leadership
Involvement in meaningful work ^a	Level of task challenge ^a
Link individual and organizational goals ^a	Manager expectations ^a
Optimism	Manager self-efficacy ^a
Perceived organizational support ^a	Mission and vision
Self-esteem, self efficacy	Opportunities for learning
Vigor ^a	Perception of workplace safety ^a
Willingness to direct personal energies	Positive workplace climate ^a
Work/life balance ^a	Rewards ^a
Core self evaluation ^a	Supportive organizational culture ^a
Value Congruence ^a	Talent management
Perceived Organizational Support ^a	Use of strengths ^a

Source: Wollard and Shuck, (2011, p. 433)

This two-level categorisation does not seem to fit our purpose of in-depth analysis, and in some ways, it seems rather ambiguous. For example, perceived organisational support appears in the individual-level category and perception of workplace safety in the organisational-level category, despite being partly derived from the organisation's initiatives.

The work of Morrow goes further and, based on a review of fifty-eight researches, proposes an expanded categorisation of antecedents: socialization practices, organisational changes, human resource practices, interpersonal relations, employee–organisational relations, and other antecedents (Morrow, 2011). This appears to be a more comprehensive and concrete categorisation, and it will be partly used in this research (see Table 4 Categorisation of antecedents of organisational commitment).

Table 4 Categorisation of antecedents of organisational commitment by Morrow (2011)

Table 1
Antecedent factors that change affective organizational commitment.

Socialization	Organizational changes	Human resource practices	Interpersonal relations	Employee/org. relations	Other antecedents
Pre-entry factors: •Propensity to AOC •Career exploration •Job knowledge •Proactive personality •Collectivism ^a Newcomer factors: •Favorable early work experiences (e.g., role clarity, job challenge, social integration) •Met expectations •Support from peers or mentors	Internal reorganization: •Automation to increase in operator process control •Quality circles with mentoring, training, and group based bonuses •Teams (+ and -) Downsizing and acquisitions: •Downsizing (-) •Being acquired by another organization (-) Unionization: •No effects Geographical relocation: •No effects	Performance appraisal and promotions: •Prior performance appraisal and promotions •No effects •Perceived appraisal system knowledge Training and compensation: •Training (no effects) •Collectivism •Quality circles with mentoring, training, and group based bonuses •Involvement in pay system change	Leadership: •Ideal business leader traits •Spiritual leadership Coworkers: •Coworkers' organizational citizenship behaviors Mentoring: •Various forms Org. climate: •Harassment (-)	Organizational support for personal goals Perceived organizational support: •General support •Emotional support of employees' families Psychological contract replicability (-) Fair social exchange and job embeddedness	Job satisfaction •No effects Intention to quit (-) Occupational commitment

Notes: Antecedents increase AOC unless otherwise specified.

^a Low collectivist values with high pay and job autonomy increase AOC; high collectivist values with low pay and job autonomy decrease AOC.

Source: Morrow (2011)

Based on the above-mentioned works (Meyer and Allen, 1991; Morrow, 2011; Wollard and Shuck, 2011), mixing and selecting categories, this research proposes a categorisation of antecedents of organisational commitment as follows:

Table 5 Proposal for a categorization of the antecedents of organisational commitment

- Personal characteristics
 - Demographic variables (e.g., age, sex, tenure, education)
 - Personal dispositions (e.g., need for achievement, affiliation, personality traits)
- Organisational characteristics
 - Person-organisation fit
 - Organisational culture
 - Organisational purpose (meaningful work)
 - Human resource management practices
- Work experiences
 - Socialization practices (pre-entry and newcomer socialization)
 - Interpersonal relations (leader-member exchange, perceived supervisor support, leadership performance and style, social interactions between peer employees, trust)
 - Employee–organisation relations (perceived organisational support, organisational support for personal goals, perceived organisational competence, perceived fairness, trust in the organisation)
 - Organisational changes and events

This list of categories will be used both guiding this literature review, in the next sections, and as well the discussion of findings.

Here is a brief explanation of how these categories were selected. First, as base the main categories of Meyer and Allen (1991) were chosen, because they appear more practical and logical than the other options. The main categories of Wollard and Schuck (2011), lacked a category that would include the connection between the individual and the organization, and the main categories of Morrow (2011) revealed some overlapping concepts. However, these two categorizations are detailed and more exhaustive listing a greater number of antecedents. All the antecedents of these lists were analysed and associated with the main categories and served as subcategories.

Antecedent category: Personal characteristics

Personal characteristics usually include demographic variables and personal dispositional variables. Several demographic variables are considered as antecedents of organisational commitment and receive attention from researchers, but the results do not seem to match other variables in terms of importance for the development of organisational commitment. For example, Chen and Francesco found no correlation of age, sex, education, or tenure with organisational commitment in Chinese employees (Chen and Francesco, 2000, p. 880), yet contrary to US results. Also, Morrow's review of longitudinal studies found only weak evidence that demographic characteristics like sex, minority status, age may have influence on organisational commitment, even after work experience variables were considered (Morrow, 2011, pp. 23–24). Another study found none of the demographic variables predicted organisational commitment, except for sex (and contradicting previous research) (Cheng and Stockdale, 2003, p. 482). The five-factor model of personality was also studied as an antecedent of organisational commitment, concluding it serves as information to examine dispositional sources of organisational commitment (Erdheim, Wang and Zickar, 2006, p. 966; Choi, Oh and Colbert, 2015) and Extraversion was found to be positively related with affective and normative organisational commitment, but negatively related to continuance commitment.

Antecedent category: Organisational characteristics

A second category of antecedents to be analysed is “organisational characteristics” and deals with variables related to the organisation itself, its culture, strategies, policies, and practices.

One of these variables, often mentioned in literature, is referred to as “person-organisation fit” and is defined as a “perceived fit between individual values and organisational values”

(Moynihan and Pandey, 2008), or a “compatibility between people and organisations that occurs when: (a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or (b) they share similar fundamental characteristics” (Kristof, 1996, pp. 4–5). This person-organisation fit is found to predict organisational commitment, especially normative commitment, independent of age, gender, and tenure (O’Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell, 1991). A subsequent replication of this study (Vandenberghe, 1999) reached the same conclusions. Person-organisation fit may shape turnover intention and may predict long-term commitment (Moynihan and Pandey, 2008). A recent study, examining interdependence between perceived person-supervisor fit and person-organisation fit finds a positive impact of person-organisation fit on affective organisational commitment (Astakhova, 2016). Many actions may influence person-organisation fit, but recruitment and selection are found to play a key-role. Rigorous recruitment and selection procedures are associated with higher levels of employee commitment based on internalization and identification (Caldwell, Chatman and O’Reilly, 1990).

The concept of person-organisation fit is also related to the wider theme of “organisational culture”, another variable traditionally considered as an organisational commitment’s antecedent. As personality is to an individual, organisational culture can be understood as the identity of an organisation (Naik, 2014). Organisational culture is unique to each organisation, and is seen as a complex integration of values, behaviours and norms that are developed by the managers and employees within an organisation (Naik, 2014), and Schein provides a widely accepted definition of organisational culture: “a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solves its problems (...) to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems” (Schein, 2010, p. 10).

For example, research agrees that organisational culture is a relevant factor in determining the degree of how an individual fits with organisational context (O’Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell, 1991). A normative view of commitment offered by Wiener (Wiener, 1982), emphasizes that individual’s predisposition will lead to commitment when includes values such as loyalty.

If culture is a distinctive element in organisations, then similar cultures should produce similar influences on organisational commitment. Innovative cultures and supportive cultures were found to have “positive effects on organisational commitment” (Lok and Crawford, 2004a, p. 334), and opposingly bureaucratic cultures have negative effects on

organisational commitment (significant although small). The empirical research of Manetje shows effects of organisation culture on organisational commitment (Manetje and Martins, 2009, p. 108). These authors conclude that specific organisational cultures, namely “achievement cultures” and “role cultures” have positive effects on affective commitment, and that “power cultures” have negative effects, meaning that affective commitment needs to be supported by the “preferred role cultures” rather than the “preferred power culture”. There is general consensus that “there is a match or compatibility between the type of organisational culture and type of organisational commitment required to motivate the employees in an organisation” (Rashid, Sambasivan and Johari, 2003, p. 724). This particular work finds empirical evidence that corporate culture does a good job at explaining the variation in the type of organisational commitment.

The following antecedent, meaningful work, although largely studied on its own, is less abundant in the literature of organisational commitment, and some authors point out there is an apparent scarcity (Ahmed, Majid and Zin, 2016). These authors find evidence of the importance of meaningful work for predicting work engagement and work wellbeing. (Grant, 2008) proposes that task significance increases job performance by strengthening employees’ commitment, due to the increased perception that their actions have an impact on beneficiaries and are appreciated by them.

Corporate social responsibility activities influence affective commitment, as research results indicate that corporate social responsibility perception is a significant predictor of affective commitment, although perceived organisational support has stronger explanatory power on affective commitment (Ditlev-Simonsen, 2015). Other authors (Bingham *et al.*, 2013) observe that corporate social responsibility activities can be viewed as both causes and targets of organisational commitment and points out that little is understood about the mechanisms for “employee involvement in organisation-sponsored causes”, and that motives and context for employee participation on those activities may differ significantly from participation in such causes outside of work. These authors propose that commitment to “organisation-sponsored causes” can be conceptualized in terms of affective and normative commitment. Purpose is associated with service to some stakeholders, or beneficiaries. The contact between employees and these beneficiaries of their work or service (Grant, 2007) are found a predictor of affective commitment.

Another empirical study shows that the perception of impact on others (prosocial) along with autonomy explained a significant variance in work engagement (Freeney and Fellenz, 2013,

p. 1437). This evidence highlighted the value of relational resources and suggested their explicit inclusion in current models of work engagement (Freeney and Fellenz, 2013). Also, a study already mentioned (Balfour and Wechsler, 1996) hypothesized that opportunities to provide direct service to the public could increase commitment and concluded that the willingness of individuals to make extra efforts on behalf of the organisation is more likely when there is a socially cohesive work group engaged in direct service to the public. These direct contacts and social interactions with the individuals that benefit from our services (beneficiaries is the term used by Grant) could fall in both antecedent category of social interactions and relationships as well as in a specific category of purpose-related antecedents.

Continuing with a focus on the category of organisation characteristics, human resource management practices have been found to influence organisational commitment. Suggestions point that, when aiming at increasing organisational commitment, organisations should use human resource management strategies and practices. One early example makes specific suggestions to managers who want to improve organisational commitment, which implicitly cover human resource management policies: 1) use relevant criteria when selecting managers; 2) design jobs linked to larger goals and to skills and aspirations of individuals; 3) build cohesive work groups, considering attitudes and values; 4) promote clear expectations for commitment; 5) design career development structures; 6) monitor individual's progress through a developmental program (Buchanan, 1975).

An important strand of the literature has empirically observed, and theoretically explained what the key practices are focused on a high-commitment internal strategy. Examples of those are: recruitment and selection policies (Caldwell, Chatman and O'Reilly, 1990), socialization practices (Allen and Meyer, 1990; Saks and Ashforth, 1997; Nyhan, 1999; Bauer *et al.*, 2007), mentoring and social networking (Payne and Huffman, 2005; Craig *et al.*, 2013), appraisal and reward systems (Whitener, 2001), or training and development (Whitener, 2001).

Antecedent category: Work experiences

The next category of antecedents refers to employees' experiences during their employment. These refer to a vast array of variables, and a focus is due, so this research will choose to pay special attention to those work experiences that require interpersonal relationships and/or interaction between members of the organisation. These include the following aspects: relations with leaders, relations with colleagues, social interactions not related

directly to work activities, and the effects and characterizations of these relationships/interactions, for example early socialization experiences, level of trust (on people and on the organisation), perceived support from the organisation and from its top decision makers, perceptions on career opportunities, among others.

A traditional approach to work experiences in the organisational commitment literature focuses on the socialization practices targeted at new employees (i.e., members at an early stage of employment in the company, sometimes also named entrants) and the effects of these social interactions on employee behaviour (Buchanan, 1974; Saks and Ashforth, 1997; Bauer *et al.*, 2007; Allen and Shanock, 2013). These early-stage experiences tend to have positive effects on organisational commitment. For example, Cohen observes that “normative commitment is affected in the main by socialization besides culture prior to entry into an organisation” (Cohen, 2007, p. 340). Other authors reaffirm this suggestion that relational mechanisms develop organisational commitment on new employees using socialization practices (Allen and Shanock, 2013, p. 350). Confirming an early position (Lawler and Yoon, 1998) Grant observes that “frequent contact is likely to increase affective commitment, based on findings that, increasing the frequency of exchange between people tends to increase identification and, therefore, cohesion” (Grant, 2007, p. 401). Socialization influences organisational commitment “by providing information about the goals and values of the organisation” and by increasing “the fit between the organisation goals and values and the individuals” goals and values (Cohen, 2007, p. 349).

Another type of relationship, which has attracted scholarly attention, is the one between employee and respective leaders, and the nexus between organisational commitment and leadership. Some works have focused on the notion that leadership styles have an impact on the level of organisational commitment of subordinates (Lok and Crawford, 2001, 2004a; Dale and Fox, 2008). As would be expected, since leadership has many types (or styles, as some literature alternatively terms it) and diverse observed behaviours, not all kinds of leaders should have the same effect on organisational commitment. Employees who are working under the supervision of leaders who adopt consultative or participative leadership behaviour show higher degrees of commitment to their organisations and produce higher job performance (Yousef, 2000). These leadership actions, although not specifically named in this Yousef’s work, are characteristic of a specific kind of leadership termed transformational leadership.

Transformational leadership is defined as a type of leadership where leaders empower followers and make them less dependent on the leader, delegate power to individuals, are concerned about the development of follower skills and self-confidence, and provide direct access to important information, building a strong culture of empowerment (Bass and M., 1990; Avolio, Bass and Jung, 1999; Raub and Robert, 2013). Transformational leadership seems to have a positive influence on organisational commitment (Park and Rainey, 2007), and also on employee engagement (Tims, Bakker and Xanthopoulou, 2011). When working under transformational leaders, individuals show a higher self-perception of their employability and increase their commitment which in terms proves to originate higher employee performance (Camps and Rodríguez, 2011). A study covering leadership and behaviours observes that transformational leadership is more likely to set autonomous goals, which led to both a positive direct effect on organisational commitment and indirect, through the mediation of self-concordance with the goals set. This indicates that transformational leaders who support their followers' autonomy, allow satisfaction of psychological needs and a committed attitude (Bono and Judge, 2003). Autonomy as result of delegation is a common feature of transformational leadership and is present in the literature focused on self-determination. It is suggested that when leadership promotes autonomous motivation, it will enable employees to experience meaningfulness, self-determination, and impact at work, which will contribute to employee's satisfaction of psychological needs and promotion of autonomous motivation and organisational commitment (Gagné and Deci, 2005).

Contradicting a previous study, Casimir et al. (2014) find that "leader-member relations" along with "perceived organisational support" have positive effects on organisational commitment. The previous study contradicted by Casimir et al. (2014), although finding a non-significant role of perceived organisational support as a mediator between leader-member exchange and organisational commitment, confirmed a strong positive impact between leader-member exchange and organisational commitment (Jing-zhou and Xiao-xue, 2010).

Organisational commitment also seems to be contagious, along vertical hierarchies, as leaders who themselves show high degrees of organisational commitment influence organisational commitment of their subordinates. This has been the subject of a study which found positive relationships between the leaders' own organisational commitment and its subordinate's organisational commitment (Loi, Lai and Lam, 2012).

Social interactions between peer employees are also a variable worth looking into because organisations have long been viewed as “social systems” and employees have needs of belonging, cooperate, and communicate with other employees (Mayo, 1945). This seminal view would lead to an important line of thought on the field of human resource management, with a focus on high commitment and targeting high performance (Mayo, 1945). In a so-called, “first era” of the organisational commitment literature (Behery, Paton and Hussain, 2012), the transactional perspective of organisational commitment was prevalent and the “side-bets theory” (Becker, 1960) were prominent. Sheldon was also hypothesizing that investments would “produce commitment to the organisation” (Sheldon, 1971, p. 144). However, Sheldon’s work included a second hypothesis that social involvements would “also produce commitment to the organisation”. This transactional view of organisational commitment is evident as social involvements are considered one type of investment, although observing that there ought to be “intrinsic differences” between the diverse types of “investments” (or side-bets). “Social involvements refer to interaction with (and identification with) other members of the organisation” and “this interaction is rewarding in itself, so that leaving the organisation would mean leaving these significant others” (Sheldon, 1971, p. 144). This does not lead us to affective commitment (in the form of some emotional attachment) of course, but rather to continuance commitment (in the form of a desire not to leave the organisation, to minimize one’s costs.) Sheldon concludes: “Social relationships are particularly important for producing commitment to the organisation for a group of men with an attribute very important to the organisation, professional competence. Viewed in perspective, both investments and social involvements are a part of the motivational pattern that produces identification of the professional with the organisation. (...) Social involvements are particularly important at a critical stage in a man's career, those years of medium length of service in the organisation. Without social involvements, a withdrawal from commitment to the organisation appears in spite of increased investments.” (Sheldon, 1971, p. 149)

Although Sheldon (1971) is close to the transactional perspective, her theorization goes a small, yet very important, step further by noting that investments did not explain fully the levels of organisational commitment found. In fact, when members of the organisation do not involve themselves through social relationships, despite investments (side-bets) already made, they tended to withdraw from the organisation. Sheldon was observing that, unlike religious or political organisations, professional organisations lacked a compelling ideology, and so would probably have more difficulties in developing commitment from its members.

The hypothesis was that organisational commitment would certainly be preceded by an extensive socialization period (Sheldon, 1971).

As mentioned previously, Buchanan (1974), concerned with the discovery of which work experiences would have more impact on organisational commitment, studied the effects of social interaction on organisational commitment. Professional managers were surveyed, and findings indicated activities that organisations can structure that lead to the development of commitment. It was found that peer group cohesion was very important to develop commitment, and that internal strategies focused on socialization had positive correlation with attitudes of commitment. Although not addressing specifically organisational commitment, the seminal work of Granovetter (1973) emphasises what previous works had already found, members of a social group tend to have similar characteristics in terms of norms, attitudes, behaviours, and/or knowledge. An extensive meta-analysis (Humphrey, Nahrgang and Morgeson, 2007) demonstrated significant associations between social characteristics and employees' attitudes. Social characteristics, especially "social support" and "interdependence" help explain organisational commitment, as well as turnover intentions.

Returning to the prominent three-component model of (Meyer and Allen, 1991, p. 68) theoretical ground is found to be related to the importance of social interactions, regarding the following possibilities: (1) that normative commitment may result from the internalization of normative pressures, and socialization may lead to the internalization of role models. This may begin on a micro level (employee's family) when parents emphasize the importance of loyalty, and may extend on a macro level (employee's cultural environment) when some cultures emphasize the importance of collective well-being over the individual, for instance; (2) normative commitment may come from the "reciprocity norm" (Eisenberger, Fasolo and Davis-LaMastro, 1990) in the sense that individuals may feel obliged to be committed because of advanced investments they perceive to be made by the organisation. Fellow workers may also exert social pressure on the individual; iii) Continuance: as people make social investments (or side-bets) related to their co-workers (time, affection, training, etc.) this may lead to increase continuance organisational commitment.

If social pressure has effects on organisational commitment, then it would be logical that social support would too. Social support is defined as a degree of assistance employees receive from supervisors and/or co-workers. Scholars agree that social support is strongly

associated with employees' experiences and abilities to fulfil their jobs (Morgeson and Humphrey, 2006; Grant, Dutton and Rosso, 2008; Grant and Parker, 2009). There is a suggestion, common to these perspectives, that social support is associated with diverse beneficial outcomes for employees who have access to it. However, a different perspective (Duffy, Ganster and Pagon, 2002) challenges this by finding a possibility of receiving support at the same time as being undermined. Social undermining is the set of experiences that provoke an employee having his or her work, relationships, or reputation hindered (Duffy, Ganster and Pagon, 2002). These authors show that, if employees are undermined by one source, support from a different source helps to buffer against negative outcomes. However, if the support is provided by the same source as the undermining, negative outcomes are exacerbated. These findings challenge work design researchers to recognize that social support can have negative, as well as positive, effects depending on the source, and point to the value of considering undermining as a social characteristic of work that is not merely the opposite of support.

Scholars find that employee support programs improve organisational commitment. Yet, on the other hand, there is also a notion that commitment is developed because the employee support programs enable employees to give support and emphasize that "giving strengthens affective organisational commitment through a prosocial sense making process in which employees interpret personal and company actions and identities as caring" (Grant, Dutton and Rosso, 2008, p. 898). This seems very interesting because it adds bi-directionality significance to the social interaction/organisational commitment relation.

A concept close to social support is that of trust. For the present research, trust in the context of organisations is interesting, but not from the perspective of a "dispositional" or a "trait-like" concept but rather as one aspect of relationships between actors (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995; Schoorman, Mayer and Davis, 2007). In an early work (Cook and Wall, 1980), a measurement scale is proposed for both trust and organisational commitment and results show an acceptable level of association, observing a significant correlation between the two constructs, except for the subscale "trust in peers" which has been found unrelated to "organisational loyalty".

The concept of trust differentiates between interpersonal trust, i.e., trust that happens between individuals, for example between an employee and its supervisor, or between two employees and systemic trust, i.e., trust between the individual and the organisation. This differentiation is important because it facilitates intervention strategies aimed at improving

commitment to the organisation. (Nyhan, 1999) observes that interventions focused on trust, are typically of the kind of strengthen systemic trust (top-down). However, Nyhan's study finds that interpersonal relationships trust was more correlative to levels of commitment than systemic trust, and so it is possible that a lot of organisations' related interventions are not achieving the desired results, and that intervention strategies that begin with trust building from the bottom-up are more likely to have higher increase of commitment than strategies reflecting systems trust building objective. (Nyhan, 1999)

Trust has also been found to moderate the extent to which performance management practices can lead to employees' perceptions of justice and organisational commitment. Trust positively correlates with organisational commitment as seen with Farndale at al. (Farndale, Hope-Hailey and Kelliher, 2011) showing that trust is a significant moderator between high commitment performance management practices experienced by employees and their level of commitment, which is also mediated by perceptions of organisational justice. This means that the level of trust an employee has in the organisation affects the extent to which high commitment performance management practices actually cause higher commitment. By investing in social capital, organisations may promote a climate of trust and mutual understanding, and this may allow organisational commitment to develop (Cohen and Prusak, 2001; Ellinger *et al.*, 2013).

Numerous works show that social interactions may impact organisational commitment. One could be inclined to consider only the effect on organisational commitment of direct relationships and interactions of each individual. However, "strong ties" are not the only ones exerting great effects (Granovetter, 1973), but rather there is a powerful role for weaker ties, for example linking fragmented social group (or cliques), that otherwise would be totally separated, but that have effects on organisational variables such as innovation, culture, or performance. One could speculate if evidence of similarity within groups are true for these variables, it is logical that it should be true for organisational commitment, as well.

Recent literature has drawn more attention to the role that social networks play in shaping work-related attitudes, including organisational commitment. Social networks on which employees are actors have influence in shaping individual attitudes and behaviours (Moynihan and Pandey, 2008). However, this work evaluates this influence on a single variable, turnover intention, which, although traditionally associated with organisational commitment, offers only a reductive perspective on the whole concept of organisational commitment. These authors hypothesize that intra-organisational social networks can

facilitate retention, and that, in the opposite direction, the strength of employee's external networks will lead to higher turnover. Their findings point to a stronger role of intra-organisational networks, but a relatively weak support for the effect of external networks and therefore provide support for a theory on the relational aspects of turnover. Amplifying their findings on turnover intention to wider organisational commitment, they mention that this "social network perspective suggests that employees are not just committed to organisations, but to people in organisations, to the social network of which they are a part" (Moynihan and Pandey, 2008, p. 219). These authors recommend policies that encourage social networks within organisations and that "foster social interaction opportunities among members and encourage shared responsibility and teamwork", thus generating "positive social capital" (Moynihan and Pandey, 2008, p. 221). The suggestion of practical examples include mentorship, events for newcomers, informal and formal events and designing of physical environments that may encourage employee interaction.

With a different research focus, another study (Lee and Kim, 2011) also argues that organisational commitment is influenced by social networks. These authors propose that social networks may shape commitment because they provide employees with opportunities to exchange social support and a sense of belonging and identity and observe a nonlinear relationship between social network configurations (i.e., network centrality, tie strength, and structural holes) and affective commitment. Results of this work show that employees' network centrality has an inverted U-shape association with affective commitment and structural holes have a U-shaped association. Although not explaining the U-shaped results, there is other findings of nonlinear relations between employees' interactions and organisational commitment. In a review of literature, the authors observe that task interdependence may have both positive and negative effects (Grant and Parker, 2009). At moderate levels, interdependence improves cohesion, trust, and commitment, but at very high levels, the costs of communication and coordination outweigh these benefits.

Siciliano and Thompson (2015) expanded on the work of Lee and Kim (2011) by distinguishing types of networks (advice vs. friendship networks) and by investigating social influence effects on organisational commitment separate from those of structural position (centrality). An element of directionality, regarding the network ties, is also included. Findings suggest that both structural position and social influence are associated with organisational commitment (Siciliano and Thompson, 2015). Their results lead to mixed conclusions, for example that "networks both constrain and enhance employee commitment to the organisation". On the other hand, this conclusion reinforces conclusions of nonlinear

relations (Lee and Kim, 2011). Findings suggests that organisational commitment is shaped by peer commitment (emphasizing co-worker relationship), but friendship and advice networks seem to operate in different directions (Siciliano and Thompson, 2015).

Beyond the employee's relations with co-workers, relations between employee and its organisation may also be considered a type of work experience and strongly related to organisational commitment (Meyer *et al.*, 2002; Mercurio, 2015). Work experiences such as socialization and interpersonal relationships have been found to have positive correlations with increases in organisational commitment (Morrow, 2011). The associations measured between work-experience variables and organisational commitment were generally much stronger than those involving personal characteristics. However, work experiences are not related in the same way to the different components of organisational commitment (Meyer *et al.*, 2002). Normative commitment "is affected in the main by socialization and/or culture prior to entry into an organisation" (Cohen, 2007, p. 342) and "...normative commitment is affected very little by specific organisational experiences and does not depend on any exchange process with the organisation". If this is so, then work experiences (such as socialization) after entry would not strongly affect normative commitment. Cohen proposes that affective commitment will be influenced by work experiences, such as "transformational leadership, perceptions of justice, and organisational support that represent higher order exchanges" (Cohen, 2007, p. 349) but also socialization. Cohen's extensive literature review, and proposed model, mentions exhaustively the importance of the relationship between the organisation and its members, for example regarding the psychological contract or employees' expectations. His works also emphasises the relative importance of early socialization of new members of the organisation, however not referring to the importance of continued social interactions as an antecedent of commitment.

Regarding compensation, a positive relationship between organisational commitment and income level is found. Despite the existence of reciprocity, there seems to be a stronger impact of income changes on commitment changes than *vice versa* (Gao-Urhahn, Biemann and Jaros, 2016). Pay satisfaction was found to be strongly and positively correlated with affective commitment, and with weaker effects on continuance and normative commitment. Weng and McElroy (2010) observe that remuneration growth, and the opportunity to have higher pay, is a strong positive predictor of organisational commitment. There is a suggestion that income level can symbolize the employee's relative position, status of achievement, level of autonomy within the organisation, and not just a mere tangible quantity, which could be linked to organisational support (Weng *et al.*, 2010).

Perceived organisational support is defined as the employee's perception that the organisation values their contributions, provides favourable treatment, and cares for their well-being. Some researchers observe that, when perceived organisational support is present, employees are motivated to strengthen their organisational commitment, as well as improve job performance, increase citizenship behaviours, and decrease turnover (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002; Grant and Parker, 2009). Perceived organisational support is associated with an increase of organisational commitment, as well as performance (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2001) and may also increase affective commitment by fulfilling socio-emotional needs such as affiliation and emotional support (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). At the same time, there is a distinction between this perceived organisational support effect on affective commitment (positive relation) and its effect on continuance commitment, which appears to be a negative correlation, explained by a feeling of "entrapment" in the organisation (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002, p. 701). Additionally, (Rhoades, Eisenberger and Armeli, 2001), along with findings that perceived organisational support is associated with increases in affective commitment, report that there is evidence that perceived organisational support mediated positive associations between organisational rewards, procedural justice, and supervisor support and affective commitment.

Another type of support-related antecedent is the concept of perceived supervisor support which has been found a relevant component of perceived organisational support (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2002). Perceived supervisor support strengthens employees' obligation to make efforts on behalf of the organisation's goals and increased affective commitment. Following organisational support theory, perceived supervisor support may lead to perceived organisational support, which in turn, may increase affective commitment and reduce turnover (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2001, 2002; Rhoades, Eisenberger and Armeli, 2001). Several training-related conditions, such as perceived access to training, perceived benefits of training, and also organisation social support for training, were positively related to organisational commitment, with the strongest association with affective commitment (Bartlett, 2001).

Socialization tactics influence perceived organisational support, which in turn is related to organisational commitment and voluntary turnover (Allen and Shanock, 2013). Perceived organisational support in the set of human resource management practices leads to higher organisational commitment (Kinnie *et al.*, 2005a). There is a relationship between perceived organisational support and organisational commitment, which is affected by human resource management practices (Whitener, 2001). A positive relation between perceived

organisational support and organisational commitment has been found (Ok and Vandenberghe, 2016) and the authors conclude that perceived organisational support is a valid antecedent, and that another form of work-related commitment, termed “career-oriented commitment” is rooted in different psychological foundations to organisational commitment. Another interesting approach to this addresses the question of whether the effect of perceived organisational support on affective commitment can be enhanced by the “organisation’s ability to achieve employee’s goals and objectives” which they name “perceived organisational competence” (Kim, Eisenberger and Baik, 2016). The findings suggest that perceived organisational competence strengthens the relationship between perceived organisational support and affective commitment.

This section has reviewed comprehensively the factors explaining the development of organisational commitment, including the debates and distinct approaches about the antecedents of organisational commitment. The following section will cover the consequences of organisational commitment.

2.2.3 Consequences of organisational commitment

A third aspect of organisational commitment is its consequences and observed outcomes. Since these consequences have been widely known empirically and researched, organisational commitment is found to be a clear antecedent for several positive outcomes and remains a top priority for organisations in general. Sound evidence abounds on the positive consequences of organisational commitment for both organisations and their employees. The consequences of organisational commitment are not the focus of this research, but this knowledge is also important to understand organisational commitment as a whole. In this section, some of the most significant consequences of organisational commitment are presented.

Particularly related to the attitudinal commitment perspective, organisational commitment consequences take the form of behaviours “that persist over a period of time, and that imply a rejection of other alternatives” (Sheldon, 1971, p. 143). Behaviours are usually quite specific, objective, and concrete but when the commitment target is an organisation, behaviours may tend to be more generic or abstract.

Consequences of organisational commitment include lower turnover, reduced absenteeism, improved performance, and increased organisational citizenship behaviour (Meyer and

Herscovitch, 2001), all of these or a mixture of some. Correlations between organisational commitment and turnover, turnover intention, absenteeism, job performance, and organisational citizenship behaviour, have been found (Meyer *et al.*, 2002) and that organisational commitment correlated negatively with turnover intention and actual turnover.

Specifically, using the different components of the three-component model, it has been found that affective commitment correlates more strongly with absenteeism and with job performance, than normative commitment and continuance commitment (Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001, p. 311).

Turnover and absenteeism are found to be consequences of a lack of affective organisational commitment (Mowday, Steers and Porter, 1979; Angle and Perry, 1981; Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Randall, Fedor and Longenecker, 1990; Somers, 1995; Meyer *et al.*, 2002; Cooper-Hakim and Viswesvaran, 2005; Payne and Huffman, 2005).

Organisational commitment, and affective commitment in particular, is identified as a strong indicator and predictor of job performance (Becker *et al.*, 1996; Meyer *et al.*, 2002; Casimir *et al.*, 2014) and innovative behaviours (Xerri and Brunetto, 2013).

Organisations with high commitment strategies have significantly higher levels of productivity and quality, compared to organisations with a control strategy (Arthur, 1992).

Higher levels of performance have also been attributed to affective commitment, based on the notion that actions based on “self-determined motivations”, result in greater efforts by employees by intrinsic motivation which leads to better performance (Johnson, Chang and Yang, 2010).

Higher levels of employee effort are associated with strong affective organisational commitment, as personal goals set by employees “overlap with company goals, which produces higher levels of performance” (Johnson, Chang and Yang, 2010, p. 227). Academics use the term discretionary behaviour (and particularly discretionary efforts) to refer to behaviours that may fall outside (usually beyond) the terms (agreed or not) of the commitment between the parties (Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001).

An integrative literature review reports that organisational commitment is positively correlated and predictive of organisational citizenship behaviours, which in itself “has been generally defined as discretionary behaviour of the individual to exhibit extra effort that is not recognized by a formal rewards or evaluative system” (Mercurio, 2015, p. 14).

Prosocial behaviours refer to a wide range of actions that have the intention of helping others, i.e., a concern for the rights and well-being of other people. Prosocial behaviours include empathy for others, organisational citizenship behaviours, teamwork, cooperation, sharing knowledge and tendencies toward ethical behaviours. Prosocial behaviours are considered to have important implications for organisations (Brief and Motowidlo, 1986). An association between organisational commitment and prosocial behaviours has been found (O’Reilly III and Chatman, 1986), with the emphasis on withdrawal behaviours such as absenteeism and tardiness (Meyer *et al.*, 2002).

Focused on employee well-being, the effects on stress in the workplace have been attracting increased attention and findings have supported that organisational commitment may mediate stress levels and diminish burn-out and emotional exhaustion (Schmidt, 2007).

This section mentioned just a few of the many examples of the positive outcomes of organisational commitment, which have been extensively investigated by scholars, in the last decades. As such, it is consensual that organisational commitment is regarded by practitioners and academics alike, as a priority for organisations in general.

2.3 Key debates and research gaps

This review shows some weaknesses in the literature of organisational commitment, which have been referred in previous sections of this chapter, the focus of the current research project is on the following aspects.

Firstly, on a broad perspective, it becomes clear that there is a lack of consensus regarding the simple conceptualization of organisational commitment - on what organisational commitment is.

Secondly, although there are known and well documented antecedents of organisational commitment, identified by scholars, since a great number of researchers used narrow approaches, opportunities exist for broader research that may qualitatively contribute

regarding the consistency of (or contradictions in) previously studied antecedents. At the same time, by using open approaches, there is more room and possibilities for the emergence and discovery of original and novel antecedents of organisational commitment.

Complexity, non-linearity and need for a “big picture”

Regarding the “how” organisational commitment comes to develop, there is clearly an open debate and a profusion of variables pointed as antecedents, causes, or mere associations. An apparent common ground is the notion that organisational commitment is complex, as it is possible to find abundantly, in the literature, models that conceptualize organisational commitment as multidimensional. The dominant perspective of organisational commitment has been multi-dimensional, with emphasis on the three-component model, consistent with such a complexity. However, despite this, many conceptual models of organisational commitment chose a path of evident simplicity and/or linearity for their frameworks. As such, I suggest the criticism that knowledge about organisational commitment would benefit from broader holistic perspectives to provide more complete, and thus realistic, models to explain how organisational commitment develops.

Also, in terms of methodological choices, to decrease the risks of misunderstandings between the researcher and the subject of the study (interviewees), some initial open questions are advisable in order to obtain clarity and more certainty that researcher and researched are talking about the same concepts (e.g., definition of organisational commitment and not some other concept) and making sure that researcher and researched are on the same level of understanding. This will offer more robustness for the research and lead to the opportunity of discovering new ways to define organisational commitment.

Since organisational commitment has mainly positive consequences for organisations and its objectives, thus being a mostly desired element for management, knowledge on what may be associated with stronger organisational commitment, and which strategies/initiatives should management consider when aiming at high-commitment levels, is of top priority. To reach the knowledge of how commitment develops, it is advisable to avoid narrow perspectives and to use a broader approach.

Regarding the knowledge on the antecedents of organisational commitment, it is possible to observe such a wide diversity of perspectives (even on the mere categorisation of antecedents), and such numerous variables as antecedents, that attention seems dispersed,

and a usable set of antecedents is not available. Some examples of antecedents researched seem more consensual, while other variables raise questions about accuracy and others are contradicted by opposing results, in the debate.

One such case of antecedent is “organisational culture” which is presented as a good factor to explain variations in organisational commitment. Organisational culture is also a complex reality itself and may change over time. As such, it presents as an important variable to control, for example finding an organisation where the culture has not changed much over time and so other elements could be put in evidence as good explanations of the development of organisational commitment.

Another current debate regards the impact of employees’ relationships and social interactions on organisational commitment levels. Several studies approached this association finding positive relations, and many show that social interactions may impact organisational commitment. One example is the notion that early socialization has a positive impact on organisational commitment. Another example is the effect of social pressure (both social support and social undermining) on organisational commitment. Other studies focus on a hypothesis associating internal social network characteristics with organisational commitment. This has resulted in mixed conclusions, but in general, researchers agree that organisational commitment is influenced by social interactions and shaped by peer (co-worker) commitment.

A research gap is found regarding the nature and the content of these relationships between employees, as this has seldom been studied. For example, the notion of how family or friendship impacts the development of organisational commitment, the difference between instrumental and expressive relationships, i.e., between work-related and non-work-related interactions. As such, there seems to be a need for better understanding how are relationships within the organisation associated with the development of organisational commitment.

2.4 Research questions (initial version)

Following the above identification of debates and research gaps in prior research, this project defined a set of research questions, as follows.

Main research question:

How is the current development of organisational commitment explained, from the perspective of the employees?

Subsidiary research questions:

What contextual circumstances or events play a role?

What role do employees' interactions and relationships play?

2.5 Additional literature reviewed

Following the methodological choice of abductive approach, after analysing the primary data collected (interviews), some themes emerged that had not been conveniently covered in the initial literature review. This section adds to the initial approach to the literature a list of references, regarding those themes that emerged following the data analysis. These emerging aspects, informed by data, include career related elements (such as career stages and career growth), flexible job design, flexible job descriptions and high levels of autonomy, perception of fairness and justice.

On the topic of human resource management, some antecedents have been looked upon in greater detail. As it happens on other topics, and has been identified and reported in previous sections, most works have chosen quantitative methods to find associations between variables, or meta-analysis to propose theoretical models. Apparently, some of these results may be better analysed with a qualitative approach, in order to leave some field open for new antecedents to emerge.

Associations between employees' satisfaction with human resource management practices and their commitment to the organisation has been studied (Kinnie *et al.*, 2005a), and there is a conclusion that satisfaction with human resource management practices is associated to the commitment of all groups of employees, while some practices seem to have stronger effects on specific groups.

More recent work (Farndale, Hope-Hailey and Kelliher, 2011) focuses on the relationship between individuals' perceptions of "performance management" (one human resource management practice) and organisational commitment. There is a significant association between performance management practices and organisational commitment but these

practices, when aiming high-commitment results, need to be perceived as fair. The author concludes that high levels of trust facilitate the process. For that it is suggested that these practices need to build on both processes and interactions considered fair by employees.

From all of these works, a tendency is found towards the notion that human resource management practices play important roles in the development of organisational commitment, whether having a direct impact on employee's commitment, or indirectly, through the impact on some other antecedent of organisational commitment. However, the diversity of practices is very wide and so a special attention should be deserved.

Still in the field of human resource management, another theme that emerged from the first cycle of analysis is related to how commitment may develop differently according to the career stage and according to career opportunities that the individual employee may have. In the literature there is some evidence that employees are more affectively responsive to work experiences early in their careers, but there is no sound evidence that tailoring experiences to employees' ages would result in improved organisational commitment. In early research, work experiences appear to have strong relation with affective organisational commitment (Allen and Meyer, 1993) but these relations are relatively independent of career stage.

On the other hand, career growth, and namely factors of "career goal progress", "professional ability development", "promotion speed" and "remuneration growth" are found to be positively related to organisational commitment (Weng *et al.*, 2010) and organisations should be able to strengthen organisational commitment "by providing opportunities for individuals to grow and by reinforcing such growth with appropriate rewards" (Weng *et al.*, 2010, p. 393).

Individuals experiencing career growth, working on tasks related to their career goals, and who perceive that the organisation is willing to reward them for their efforts, may have higher levels of affective organisational commitment. On the contrary, when employees perceive their "career goals are difficult to achieve, [or] are assigned tasks that do not allow for growth, and (...) perceive little connection between their efforts and organizational rewards will have lower affective commitment." (Weng *et al.*, 2010, p. 392)

Regarding the theme of job descriptions and work design, a recent qualitative study finds that human resource practices that leave room for flexible work design, may have effects on the development of organisational commitment (Jørgensen and Beckder, 2015). Associated

with work flexibility is the concept of empowerment, identified as a common characteristic in transformational leadership. Empowerment is found to be positive and strongly related to the development of organisational commitment (Raub and Robert, 2013).

Regarding antecedent category “employee–organisation relations”, it was already mentioned perceived organisational support. Perceived organisational support comprises several identified and described elements: supervisor support, organizational rewards, favourable job conditions and fairness (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). Studies have focused specifically on fairness and the employee’s perception of justice (Ohana, 2014) within the organisation and which confirm that they are positively related to all the three components of organisational commitment (as well as regarding job satisfaction) and that a “fair treatment is a way to enhance organisational commitment” (Marzucco *et al.*, 2014, p. 297). It is also related to behaviours typically linked with organisational commitment, such as discretionary behaviour, identification, and psychological engagement (Clayton and Opatow, 2003; Tyler and Blader, 2003). Some authors include perceived organisational support in the broader set of human resources practices (Kinnie *et al.*, 2005a). There are indications that human resource management practices, generally, affect the relationship between perceived organisational support and organisational commitment (Whitener, 2001).

2.6 Additional debates and research gaps

From this extended review of specific topics in the organisational commitment literature, additional themes have emerged that will be the matter for discussion later in the research.

Although initially the focus for data collection was mainly to find antecedents of organisational commitment, after performing the interviews and the initial analysis of the information, it became clear that this research project could also offer some answers regarding the conceptualization of organisational commitment.

Research debates about the conceptualization of organisational commitment has been decades in the making, yet consensus has not been reached, and the present millennium begins with JP Meyer, the same scholar who, two decades earlier, was presenting us with a multidimensional construct of organisational commitment, admitting that a “considerable disagreement” prevailed (Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001, p. 299) and that it would be useful to develop further research around a common framework that would allow future synthesis. This lack of consensus continues today, and there are frequent calls for better and

unambiguous conceptualization (Cohen, 2007; Solinger, van Olffen and Roe, 2008; Klein, Molloy and Brinsfield, 2012). The lack of consensus is observed not just around the subject of “what is” organisational commitment, but also regarding “which” dimensions of organisational commitment exist, and also regarding the measurement of quantity, “how much” degree of commitment is observed. As such, Meyer and Herscovitch, call for the definition of a general model that may be able to capture a “core essence” of organisational commitment. They propose a “general model” and although some parts are based on previous research, other parts remain debatable and even, in the words of the authors, “more speculative”. (Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001, p. 319)

This debate has been evidenced by recent research that invariably points to the lack of consensus when conceptualizing organisational commitment, partly due to the dispersed, or even conflicted, theorization of related constructs. Due to this lack of clarity and consensus around the concept, some patterns and relationships drawn from past research (for example conclusions that correlate organisational commitment with other variables) may not represent reality in a robust manner and may have been given more credit than they deserve. In the words of these prominent authors: “It is difficult to develop a valid measure of an ambiguous construct, resulting in contaminated and deficient measures.” (Klein, Molloy and Brinsfield, 2012, p. 131). As such, this lack of a consensual conceptual model describing organisational commitment is clearly a research gap. But, at the same time, should be considered a warning for researchers in this field, since no clear definition of organisational commitment is unambiguous, and cautious measures should be taken methodologically, to avoid misunderstandings, mismatches, and confusions. As such, to the research objective of understanding “how does organisational commitment develop”, it was added the need to better understand “what is” organisational commitment.

An antecedent, common in the academic debate, is the notion that human resource management plays an important role on the development of organisational commitment (Kinnie *et al.*, 2005a; Gellatly *et al.*, 2009; Jørgensen and Becker, 2015). The suggestion of internal strategies that contribute to build a high-commitment organisation have been studied (Whitener, 2001). Examples of these are: developing career ladders; increasing functional flexibility and the abandonment of potentially rigid job descriptions; the reduction of hierarchies, among others. A significant association between employee’s perception of “performance management practices” (one of the most common human resource management practices) and organisational commitment is found in the literature, but these practices need to be perceived as fair, and high levels of trust should facilitate the process,

as suggested and these practices need to build on both processes and interactions considered fair by employees. This is a typical “top-down” approach, meaning that policies and practices defined at the top (of the organisation’s hierarchy), would have effects on the organisational commitment that goes “down” (to employees). I choose to question this because, as mentioned in previous sections, the initial assumptions that organisational commitment is complex (Allen, 2016a, p. 38), goes through a process that seems to be slow but consistent over time (Mowday, Steers and Porter, 1979, p. 226), and is fuelled by individuals’ self-determination and volition (Salancik, 1977, p. 69; Gagné and Deci, 2005, p. 333; Klein, Molloy and Brinsfield, 2012, p. 137). Questions then remain about the real efficacy of such human resource management strategies and should be more researched. As such, this research adds a focus to two specific antecedents of organisational commitment: social interactions and relationships between employees, and human resource management strategies.

2.7 Research questions (revised final version)

Following the above identification of debates and gaps, in prior research, both before and after the first cycle of data analysis, a final set of research questions have been defined, as follows (highlighting the new research questions).

Main research questions:

How can organisational commitment be defined, from the perspective of the employees?

How is the current development of organisational commitment explained, from the perspective of the employees?

Subsidiary research questions:

Do internal human resource management strategies and policies contribute to develop commitment? And, if so, how?

What other contextual circumstances or events play a role?

What role do employees’ interactions and relationships play?

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology of the thesis, which aims at investigating how organisational commitment develops, and more specifically what are the effects on this development of the diverse antecedents. This chapter begins by discussing the research philosophy, which includes the epistemological and ontological dimensions. The following sections present the research design, including all the explanations about data collection and data analysis. Finally, this chapter presents the argument for the case study selection and a profile of the case company.

As mentioned, most previous research in this field, has adopted deductive approaches and many have failed to capture the holistic reality of organisational commitment and its development, especially because they have narrowed the focus to a great degree. It thus seems appropriate not to follow that same path, but rather to try new methods.

3.2 Research outline and philosophy

3.2.1 Epistemological and ontological dimensions

This section will explore the different research paradigms available and justify this research's selection of the post-positivist paradigm. A justification for selecting qualitative methodologies will also be provided, as well as the reasoning for the selected research mode.

A paradigm may be defined as a “a cluster of beliefs and dictates which, for scientists in a particular, discipline influence what should be studied, how research should be done, how results should be interpreted” (Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 66). In social sciences, including management, there is a wide variety of research paradigms. Unlike physical sciences where most researchers accept commonly held paradigms, in social sciences there is not a unified approach to ontology, epistemology and methodology.

A researcher's worldview is represented by a set of principles (Guba and Lincoln, 1994), which guides his actions during all the research process, and should provide a framework into which ideas, questions and facts will be organized and evaluated. The research paradigm will reveal the researcher's choices of method, ontology, and epistemology. Guba and

Lincoln (1994) argue that this worldview can be determined by asking three types of questions (Table 6 Research paradigm questions).

Table 6 Research paradigm questions

DIMENSION	QUESTION	DEFINITION
Ontology	What is the form and nature of reality (i.e., what is there that can be known?)	Refers to the nature of reality.
Epistemology	What is the relationship between the knower or would-be knower and what can be known? (i.e., what can a knower get to know about reality?)	Defines the nature (scope, limits, etc.) of the research.
Methodology	How can the inquirer (would-be knower) go about finding out what can be known?	The processes by which the knower searches for knowledge.

Source: Adapted from Guba and Lincoln (1994)

Following the answer of these three questions, Guba and Lincoln summarize the main paradigms present in research today (Table 7 Alternative inquiry paradigms). Although a full exploration of these concepts is beyond the scope of this research, they are helpful to understand which beliefs, core principles, and worldview are at the heart of the research.

Table 7 Alternative inquiry paradigms

ISSUE	POSITIVISM	POST-POSITIVISM	CRITICAL THEORY <i>et al.</i>	CONSTRUCTIVISM
Ontology	Naive realism – “real” reality but apprehensible	Critical realism – “real” reality but only imperfectly and probabilistically comprehensible	Historical realism – virtual reality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values crystallized over time	Relativism – local and specific constructed realities
Epistemology	Dualist/objectivist; findings true	Modified dualist/objectivist; critical tradition/community; findings probably true	Transactional/ subjectivist; value mediated findings	Transactional/ subjectivist; created findings
Methodology	Experimental/ manipulative; refutation of hypotheses; chiefly quantitative methods	Modified experimental/ manipulative; falsification of hypotheses; may include qualitative methods	Dialogic/dialectic	Hermeneutic/ dialectic
The Nature of Knowledge	Unrefuted hypotheses, established as facts or laws	Non-falsified hypotheses that are probable facts or laws	Structural/historical insights	Individual reconstructions coalescing around consensus
Inquiry aims	Explanation: prediction and control		Critique and transformation; restitution and emancipation	Understanding; reconstruction

Source: Adapted from Guba and Lincoln (1994).

Combining these three dimensions of discovery into a paradigm, and laying common methodologies upon it, generates what is called a research “onion” (Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thornhill, 2016). The following table (see Table 8 Synthesis of research features and methodological path adopted) summarizes the main methodological choices made in the present research, along with additional research traits. These choices will be further explained in the next sections.

Table 8 Synthesis of research features and methodological path adopted

DESIGN ISSUES AND DIMENSIONS	RESEARCH DECISIONS
Research title	Understanding Organisational Commitment: Concepts and Antecedents
Key words	organisational commitment; social interactions and relationships; human resource management; internal strategies; case study; critical realism
Research questions	<p>Main research questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can organisational commitment be defined, from the perspective of the employees? • How is the current development of organisational commitment explained, from the perspective of the employees? <p>Subsidiary research questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do internal human resource management strategies and policies contribute to develop commitment? And, if so, how? • What other contextual circumstances or events play a role? • What role do employees’ interactions and relationships play?
RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY AND APPROACH	
Ontology	Critical realism (“real” reality but only imperfectly and probabilistically comprehensible)
Epistemology	Post-positivism (findings probably true)
Research purpose	Subjective search for generalities
Research outcome	Contextual explanations and descriptions, some in the form of associations
Nature of research / Theorizing logic	Abductive
Research aim / function	Theory development
RESEARCH STRATEGY	
Research approach	Qualitative
Research method	Single case study – suggestion of contextual propositions for future research, not confirming or contradicting existing theories, nor pattern matching
Case selection	Theoretical sampling
DATA	
Data collection techniques	<p>Primary data: Interviews, observation</p> <p>Secondary data: Collection of documentation</p>
Data analysis techniques	Pattern recognition, logic models, explanation building (not pattern matching, nor time-series analysis, nor cross-case synthesis)

Author’s own table

This research began with a tendency towards a positivist stance. Studying seminal and prominent research works on organisational commitment, I found that most of them take such philosophical approaches and methodological choices tend for quantitative research methods. Thus, a natural tendency for a focus on causal explanations (e.g., “what are the causes of organisational commitment?”) emerged in the present research. This tendency for positivist causality has gone even to the point of imagining the possibility of discovering fundamental laws. With better understanding of the areas of study, through more extensive literature review and fair intellectual reasoning, this researcher started to identify less with pure positivism.

The initial steps in this research work would certainly position the researcher as a mere independent observer, formulating hypotheses first and then planning the research work aiming at reality measuring through objective, replicable methods. The focus, initially, was on quantitative methods, orientated towards predictions rather than understanding the social world. The initial goal set was to study and discover causal relationships between the selected objects of study, particularly employees’ organisational commitment and social relationships. This goal, if achieved, would allow knowledge to be refuted or unrefuted, laws or theoretical models to be apprehended. As mentioned above, this initial perspective was aligned with most of the extant literature, where researchers have committed to a positivist position and adopted highly structured methodologies for data collection and analysis, and then producing evidence that described social reality through theoretical models, and causal generalisations, like those that natural sciences usually present us. By following such a path, this research would probably replicate some experiments previous authors have applied, resulting in some contribution of value. Indeed, most of the literature treated these subjects in this manner: quantifying observations of behaviours and then subjecting the data to statistical analysis. This positivist paradigm was evident in our initial research proposal, and the choices of research questions are proof of this tendency (examples of our initial research questions: “Is organisational commitment largely dependent on leadership intervention or are intragroup interactions at lower levels of the structure more influential to achieve greater levels of commitment?”; “Can we predict organisational commitment based on social networks characteristics?”)

It is possible to find, in the organisational commitment literature, clear elements of research quality. Yet, reality appears to any observer far more complex and unreachable. Numerous research conclusions acknowledged missing independent variables not used and/or not observed. The practical application of some causal generalisations regularly falls to the

ground and/or is diminished by missing perspectives, and by *de facto* mixed or contradictory results.

Some research is able to find evidence of a very specific, extremely focused, causal association between variables, and yet failing to understand, in depth and holistically, the elements that impact a certain degrees of organisational commitment development. This fact is aligned with recent social science history and trends, common to most fields of study, as the new millennium begins with an assumed threat to the full reliability of quantitative research (Silverman, 2013). Critiques to positivism arose and included, for example, a perspective that social phenomena may occur in the minds of individuals and may not be investigated applying the approaches used in natural sciences. Thus, although clearly enlightened in respect of specific associations between specific variables, and robustly finding causal relationships, it seemed that the positivist perspective could fall short if the aim was to understand comprehensively a social reality rather than to simply measure it.

One could conclude that these researchers have ontologically applied a sort of “naïve realist” view (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) that the social world is external to individual cognition and consists of tangible and relatively immutable structures and relationships. At this point, a doubt easily arises as to if the social world is (really) supposed to be (merely) measured and counted, or should social reality (and its meanings) be understood? The present research is grounded on the belief that, if the possibility of comprehensively understanding reality exists, then it is much more appealing, advantageous and even conscientious to try to achieve the goal of understanding it, rather than opting to merely measure it.

When one believes that social reality can be understood, and that this is a desirable goal, one could be tempted to seize a most extreme epistemological paradigm opposing positivism, The interpretative paradigm (or interpretivism) views the world as the outcome of the interpretations of humans derived from their interactions (Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 62) and implies it is impossible to comprehend reality without a comprehension of the reality of the human beings in a given investigated context. This approach, with an ontological basis of relativism, may be associated with a constructivist dimension (Guba and Lincoln, 1994), underlining the social construction of the world, and assuming no construction can be absolutely right. Under the constructivist paradigm, since all truth is seen through a personal lens, then truth could not be objective, and perception alone is just subjective reality. Constructivists believe that reality is a mixture of external reality and subjective internal perceptions, implying that everything a human person states is a human construction and not

objective truth. Then, to support any particular construction, researchers have “to rely on persuasiveness and utility rather than proof” when defending their position (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). For research purposes, this means that everything the researcher presents is just a social version of reality and could not be regarded as definitive reality, or truth. While positivists use statistical calculus and probabilities to support evidence of truth, social constructionists base their conclusions on theoretical abstraction, often using inductive logic, to take into account not just the findings but also the values underneath such findings (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Since the present research must deal with complex social realities, the adoption of such interpretivist epistemology is appealing, as the subjective world would become more accessible and easier to describe. Looking at these definitions and based on self-awareness this researcher positions himself neither as a pure positivist, nor a pure interpretivist, because neither paradigm seems to fit the researcher’s view of the social world.

Additionally, as the project progressed, the research aims evolved to a more holistic understanding of “how organisational commitment develops”. As such, from working with a pure deductive approach, this research later developed into a mixed approach, arguably abductive (as explained later in this chapter). Indeed, recent research (Kim and Rhee, 2010; Lee and Kim, 2011; Yusoff *et al.*, 2012; Siciliano and Thompson, 2015) has provided evidence supporting theories (e.g., that social networks may be used to predict organisational commitment) but could be criticized for adopting a simplistic view of reality, where a single, or sometimes a few variables are used to explain something that is clearly complex. Thus, this research has no intentions of replicating previous experiments which would fall into the same “traps” (e.g., over-simplistic causal conclusions) but rather chooses to investigate through a more holistic (and somewhat original) perspective, expanding those works by conducting qualitative research that will allow deeper understanding of how organisational commitment develops, and more specifically how it is affected by contextual circumstances.

The present research is thus aligned with the view that the world cannot, fully and objectively, be observed and analysed, especially social realities like those at hand (organisational commitment, social interactions and relationships, managerial practices, etc.). On the other hand, this research cannot justify such a radical stance as to say that everything is a mere human construction. In fact, this research is based on the belief that some realities exist outside and beyond human constructions.

One additional epistemological paradigm may now be considered: critical realism, which may be defined as “a third way”. Critical realism shares an ontology of realism with positivism yet, at the same time, defends a non-positivist view that things may still be real even when those things cannot be measured or observed via our senses – it has a premise that objects and reality may exist independently of the human mind, and therefore what is shown by the senses may not be considered reality (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009, p. 115). Critical realism, as developed by Bhaskar, aims at resolving an old philosophical question: can society be studied in the same way as nature? (Bhaskar, 1979, p. 1) Critical realists accept that the “human sciences can be sciences in exactly the same sense, though not in exactly the same way, as the natural ones” (Bhaskar, 1979, p. 174) but claim that, to access the social world, the methods of the natural sciences should be adopted and take a scientific approach to the development of knowledge closer to positivism, for example by using rigor in method as far as data collection and analysis is concerned. By assuming that the social world is in constant change, the critical realist adopts a perspective that is aligned with the organisation and management realities under research and its view accepts and puts together two perspectives on which this research project is grounded on. First, maintaining that an objectively knowable, mind-independent reality exists, and second acknowledging, at the same time, the roles of perception and cognition.

An essential characteristic of critical realism is the belief that reality is what it is despite what we happen to know or think about it. At the same time, critical realism allows for the necessity of interpreting meaning, challenging the traditional understanding that to describe social reality one must make use of laws, like those of natural sciences (empirical causality). Since social systems are open, complex, evolve, and its social actors are capable of learning and changing their behaviours, then an empirical causality perspective would not be able to capture with accuracy the full reality, and would not fully understand this social world. In the social world, people’s roles and identities are often internally related, and so what a person is depends on her relation to others (Sayer, 2000, p. 13). Sayer states that “social phenomena rarely have the durability of many of the objects studied by natural science, such as minerals or species” (Sayer, 2000, p. 13). This implies that explanations of reality, in the social sciences, are bound not to be generalized throughout space and time.

A critical realist will assertively understand the necessity to find causal explanations in the social world but will reject the traditional natural science conception of causality, which implies obligatory consistency on sequences of events, regular successions of events, or “cause-effect” regularities. The present research relies on this different view of causation.

Also called post-positivism, this view takes the assumption that it is possible to know reality but the observer, through the process of knowing it, is bound to have an influence on the findings. This influence happens due to the observer's bias and so what research presents may not be objective truth but an interpretation of truth, which is an interpretation of reality. This position appears to join the best from both paradigms. While rejecting the absolute characteristic of positivist paradigm (that objective reality can be described by humans), post-positivism admits that reality truly exists, but the researcher should have in consideration a probable bias, influence and/or impact.

This epistemological perspective maintains as an end goal the determination of objective truth, although realizing that objectively this may become impossible. As paradoxical or utopian as it may seem, it is aligned with this researcher's principles of having an "ideal" research goal, while acknowledging, with humility, the natural limitations to capture real reality and to describe it. The present research will also identify with a post-positivist honesty that recognizes difficulties in assuring infallibility when using a single method, as it is aligned with the justification for pursuing the present line of research: the obvious fallibility in previous works by excessive narrowing the focus and scope of analysis (justifiable, of course, on the grounds of research feasibility), and so post-positivists defend the application of mixed methods, e.g. triangulation (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Bryman and Bell, 2015).

Contrary to positivist philosophy, critical realism tries to find meaning not separated from consciousness, but instead meaning is constructed through interactions with reality, thus both the research participants and the researcher (as observer) are considered.

If one believes that there is a reality which exists independent of its human perception, and there are unobservable events which cause the observable ones, then social reality would be understood only if understanding the structures that influence the unobservable events. This view seems both reasonable and useful to achieve the goals of this research. According to this view, there are unobservable events which cause the observable ones. Three domains are defined in critical realism:

1. the domain of "the empirical" which includes observations and experiences caused by actions in "the actual" domain
2. the domain of "the actual" which includes actual events that have been generated by mechanisms

3. the domain of “the real” which includes the mechanisms that have generated the actual events.

Critical realism is considered an adequate model to understand how organisations operate, due to its utility in identifying and conceptualizing the forces that govern organisations and their actions (Anderson, 2020).

The three domains, or layers, present in critical realism, are suitable for the present research and its aim of understanding organisational commitment antecedents, since: (1) the degree of organisational commitment development in a specific organisation can be empirically observed by its employees (“lay persons” (Fleetwood, 2005, p. 208)), as well as other experiences and/or observations that may have impact on the development of organisational commitment, and the present research collected this information, that is employees’ perceptions reporting on their empirical experiences – this relates to the domain of “the empirical”; (2) some of the actions (events or non-events), which occur and form the contextual circumstances under which organisational commitment develops, cannot be completely observed or experienced, such as employees’ interactions, leaders’ behaviours, organisation’s initiatives – this relates to the domain of “the actual”; and (3) mechanisms and structures that enable the actual events, and/or constrain them, although intangible are possible to be identified, such as the organisation’s culture, its policies and strategies, the principles and value system, individuals’ characteristics – this relates to the domain of “the real”. These three domains will be used in later sections to frame the results of the research about the antecedents of organisational commitment.

It is methodologically important to question also whether critical realism is a good choice for the conceptualization of organisational commitment, since this strand emerged during the process as a research opportunity (as explained in section 2.6). Fleetwood (2005) argues in favour of critical realism being used to study an entity, “An entity can exist independently of our knowledge (or identification) of it” (Fleetwood, 2005, p. 198). Employees have “tacit knowledge” about organisational commitment and its antecedents, despite not necessarily having an “articulated knowledge” of the entity.

From the “four different ways in which entities may be differentiated”: material, ideal, artefactual and social (Fleetwood, 2005, p. 199), organisational commitment could be defined as a “socially real” entity. The arguments in favour are the following: (1) organisational commitment is dependent of human activity for its existence; (2) organisational commitment is not material or physical, and we cannot touch it; (3) although

organisational commitment can be theorized about, explaining the concept does not transform it in discursive entities (i.e., “ideally real” entity). In summary, organisational commitment exists independently of our identification of it, but it is not independent from its actors. Additionally, it is possible to affirm that organisational commitment falls in the case of entities that “exist independently of its identification by all actors but not by social analysts whose research aims precisely to tease these things out” (Fleetwood, 2005, p. 203).

The term “conceptualization” is also aligned with critical realism, since this perspective accepts that socially real entities can be conceptualized or described (the concept of organisational commitment, in this case) and does not accept these can be “made” via our cognitive activities (Fleetwood, 2005, p. 207). As such, the conclusion is that the option for critical realism is acceptable regarding the aim to understand the antecedents of organisational commitment as well as for the research aim of conceptualization of organisational commitment.”

Additionally, this research is consistent with post-positivism, and less with alternative paradigms, due to the following factors:

(1) Although the research approach is not deductive, the researcher will not discard hypotheses derived from existing theory and associated literature and will make use of them. The present research does not aim to test hypotheses but will take them into consideration when trying to understand the elements that impact organisational commitment development.

(2) The present research recognizes that all research methods are fallible and hopes that the validity of findings is strengthened through processes such as triangulation and the disclosure of research limitations. This post-positivist/critical realist paradigm suits this research best, not only from an ontological and epistemological position, but also allowing practical application of the adequate methods chosen.

(3) In this research, the aim is to understand how organisational commitment develops using the perspective of the employees. Since causality has been established between a few variables and organisational commitment, the focus of this research is not to explore possible relationships quantitatively, but to empirically observe the influence of these factors on organisational commitment to propose new theoretical basis for future research.

3.2.2 Paradigm choice: practical consequences

Through the above exploration of ontological and epistemological issues, a conceptual foundation leads to a position where (1) it is possible to determine the nature of reality and, at the same time, (2) it is acknowledged the existence of limits on knowing. By determining that this research choices of ontology (critical realism) and epistemology (post-positivism), it is important to acknowledge that:

- When acquiring new knowledge, the best one can do is to explore the causal relationships through the researcher's own perspective.
- When acquiring new knowledge, one cannot accurately capture reality to the extent that social systems are open and evolve.
- Since social phenomena usually have a short durability (specially compared to that of the typical objects studied by natural sciences), one cannot expect to find an explanation of reality durable in time and valid throughout space.
- Whereas positivism and empiricism place causal relationships at an event level, critical realism positions causal relationships at the mechanism level.
- All collected data in this research may be biased by the researcher.
- All collected data in this research may be fallible, whether biased or not by the researcher.

This choice of paradigms will have implications also for the researcher's role. The study of complex organizational processes implies that the researcher should be as close as possible to the subjects studied. In order to get rich data about the process, interviews and personal interaction are usually used. Consequently, the judgement of the researcher will be important to better interpret the information as it is being collected, and/or to decide on the need to additionally search the observed organisation and processes. This leads the researcher to record his own thoughts throughout the data collection process.

Following Yin's suggestion for a researcher's performance when using the case study method (Yin, 2009, chap. 3), the researcher should focus on developing "good questions and to interpret the answers", "should be a good listener" and not force his own preconceptions on the researched, and "should be adaptive and flexible, so that newly encountered situations can be seen as opportunities, not threats". Additionally, the researcher should reduce the

information to manageable proportions and should be unbiased by preconceived notions, including those derived from theory, and be “sensitive and responsive to contradictory evidence”.

The researcher acknowledges all these implications and will use these techniques, reporting them throughout this dissertation, where found necessary.

3.3 Research design

Following the previous presentation of the main research philosophical issues, this section will explain in detail the research design decisions, including case study method, case selection and data collection and analysis, following the suggestions by the work of Yin (2009).

3.3.1 Research approach/mode

The main research modes are deductive and inductive. The deductive mode involves developing prior theory, while the inductive mode aims at generating theory based on fact-finding activities. The deductive approach applies when the researcher has some theory to base the analysis on, and eventually a theoretical model to understand and organise the data, and usually starts with some hypothesis from where the research then will support or refute such hypothesis (although this does not have to be the case). The researcher will then gather facts and conclude on generalisations of the specific phenomena. Typically, deductive researchers have tended towards a positivist paradigm.

In contrast, the goal of inductive research approach may be to produce new theory based on specific facts, and therefore, no hypotheses are needed *a priori*, before data gathering begins. An inductive approach could be said rarely to exist in a pure form, as it would mean the researcher would only make sense of the investigated phenomena from analysing the data collected. It is questionable whether it would be possible to process data without any *a priori* concepts or assumptions. For example, if the researcher had attended interviews and/or is familiar with concepts developed in prior literature, at previous stages of the research, then already at that point in time must have some understanding of the studied objects. The inductive approach may be also supported by previous theory. Inductive reasoning, in its extreme form, is related to grounded theory, while deductive reasoning relates more to a theory-based approach, but inductive and deductive approaches may not necessary be

mutually exclusive. There is the possibility of applying a third logic, besides deduction and induction, namely the abductive approach. Abduction moves from data to describing reality to the explanation that best explains or accounts for the data, and then back to the data again. Abduction represents a sort of theory-forming or interpretive inference.

In this research, an inductive approach would not be appropriate because some theory is already established, and the extant research works of other authors will form a basis for the research design. These theories have been used to define this research's objectives, to frame the scope of analysis, to define the research questions and, also for methodological purposes, to select concepts and the type of data to be gathered (for example, the interviews will consist of open questions, but will also have some relevant topics to address (e.g., the effects of leadership, some organisational events, employees' interactions, etc.)

At the same time, a purely deductive approach would not be the best choice. Although this research starts with theory, and from there gathers data in a semi-focused way, the main objective is not to prove or disprove some hypothesis, but rather to understand how the process works, and discover data that could produce new theory and propositions for future research.

Also, as acknowledged above, much previous research, mostly adopting a deductive approach, have failed to capture the holistic and complex reality of the development of organisational commitment, namely because of an extremely narrow focus. It would not be appropriate to follow the same path, rather to discover new ways and insights.

An abductive approach appears advisable (as well as feasible) because, on one hand, this research will start with an open-minded perspective to find the best explanation for the data collected, consistent with the aim of generating new ideas and propositions about how organisational commitment develops. This abductive mode allows for some space for new theory to emerge and, even though the bottom line of the research may be partly causal.

Since our present research is dealing with a complex process (the development of organisational commitment) the simplification of reality, as used in previous studies, would lead to a scientific trade-off, capturing some aspects of reality but leaving others in the background, or not considering them at all. Such a trade-off will be avoided by the methodological choices of this research. Since probably the research has limited data from which to formulate theory and make presumptions, and in fact it may even be that not enough

data will be found for a solid theory, then the abductive approach appears more convenient and advisable. The main concern of this research should be to allow room for collecting data that may lead to new theories to emerge, or for existing theories to be developed.

If a multiple case study research strategy was to be chosen, then a deductive research mode would seem to be more suited, as one could compare data to refute or confirm some previously defined theoretical model. However, this will not be the case if a single case strategy is chosen. As Yin (2009) points out, it is desirable to adopt some theory prior to the collection of any data when dealing with case studies. The theoretical base for this research will be a combination of empirical research and the researcher's own theoretical understanding of organisational commitment and the contextual circumstances antecedent to organisational commitment.

This framework evolved during the course of the project, founded both on a literature review and on insights from the case company data. Even if the data generation and analysis may be partly deductive, the research process will be abductive since abduction is essentially a process of reasoning from effect to cause, and abductive reasoning produces understanding. The abductive research mode, as suggested by Dubois and Gadde (2002), has its basis in systematically combining deduction and induction. The primary aim of systematic combining is theory development, rather than theory generation, as it serves better the refinement of existing theories rather than the creation of new ones. As such, it serves well this research, and its aims of better understanding the development of organisational commitment (Dubois and Gadde, 2002, p. 559), not abandoning or ignoring previous theories, but rather using them as comparison to discover consistencies or inconsistencies.

According to Dubois and Gadde (2002), systematic combining may be defined as the "nonlinear, path-dependent process of combining efforts with the ultimate objective of matching theory and reality" (Dubois and Gadde, 2002, p. 556). The essential trait of this approach is the "continuous movement" between the empirical world (reality) and a model world (theory). During this process, the research issues and the analytical framework are reviewed in confrontation with the empirical world.

This is a process where the conceptual framework, the empirical work, and the case analysis will progress almost simultaneously through a continuous interplay between the theory and the empirical observations (Dubois and Gadde, 2002, p. 559). Systematic combining rests on two essential processes: 1) matching theory and reality, and 2) research direction and

redirection. The process of matching theory and reality involves “going back and forth between framework, data sources, and analysis” (Dubois and Gadde, 2002, p. 556). These movements may affect and may be affected by some factors: the empirical reality; available theories; the case; and the analytical framework. The process of research direction and redirection results from the progress of empirical work, where the identification of unexpected, related issues may occur. These issues may be the subject of further work, possibly through other methods of data collection, which in turn may imply the necessity for redirecting the current theoretical framework, for example by expanding it, or by changing it. While researching, the analytic framework may change because empirical observations may motivate a change on the view of theory and *vice-versa*. The role of this framework is quite different from deductive and inductive studies. With the abductive approach, the initial framework may be successively modified, due to empirical findings (or theoretical insights) captured by the research process.

A fundamental aim of all research is to confront theory with reality. The systematic combining approach implies this confrontation is done in a continuous movement along the entire research process. The chosen method of case study is consistent with the abductive approach, and the reasoning for this decision and the case company choice will be explained in the following sections.

The principal concern of this research should be to allow room for collecting data that may lead to the emergence of new theories, or for the development of existing theoretical models. This research follows two different, yet very close and sometimes overlapped approaches: abductive approach and inductive top-down theorizing. Inductive top-down reasoning is “especially appropriate when a body of precious research is vast, dynamic, complex” (Shepherd and Sutcliffe, 2011, p. 374), as this is the case with the current research, where the vast literature on organisational commitment even comes from different disciplines and proposes distinct paradigms.

The abductive approach appears appropriate and consistent with the aim of generating new propositions (on the debate of how organisational commitment develops and more specifically which factors most impact this development). Thus, this research starts with broad and open perspectives, first seeking to gather the most unbiased perceptions from employees and only then referring to existing theories. Of course, some prior theoretical constructs and models will be used as background, yet not in the sense of restricting the research work, but rather to have some guides to use as support, as the data analysis starts to

clear a path. Researchers' attention is inherently limited, and so the sensory representation of the literature is always based on a subset of extant works (Shepherd and Sutcliffe, 2011, p. 367). This research will take some concepts from the literature and used them as initial assumptions (although not building a theoretical framework in the strict sense), in order to focus the research attention but not to restrict its potential scope.

In summary, this research will not produce a thesis based on deductive logic applied to established concepts, unanimously established in a prior literature from a single discipline. Instead, the thesis uses abductive logic applied to a new perspective on contested, multi-disciplinary terrain.

3.3.2 Research strategy: case study

Case studies are empirical descriptions of a particular reality and are formed by using a number of variety of data sources (Yin, 2009). Building a case study is a research strategy that uses empirical evidence from a case to create constructs or theoretical propositions (Eisenhardt, 1989). Therefore, when aiming at building new theory or developing existing theory this method is a common choice. Case studies are also able to deepen our understanding of complex social contexts and can be used to better understand a particular situation (or case) and to provide insights into an issue and also for theory refinement (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2009). Case studies are helpful for socio-scientific research in organizational sciences, both as a method of generating hypotheses for quantitative studies and as a way to generate theory (Patton and Appelbaum, 2003), and have increased their popularity and relevance in recent years namely due to an inherent ability to establish links between qualitative evidence and mainstream research (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007, pp. 25, 30).

Particularly for theory-building purposes, the case study method is useful due to its potential for a descriptive thickness and deepness. Following Yin's (2009) table of "Relevant Situations for Different Research Methods", both the case study and survey methods would be advisable options. This may be justified on the grounds that, in this research (1) the key research questions are "how" questions, and (2) control over behavioural events is not required, and (3) contemporary events will be the focus. As such, this research's first choice was the case study method, while leaving an open option of conducting surveys later, which did not occur in the end.

Yin also suggests that case studies “can offer important evidence to compliment experiments” (Yin, 2009, p. 29), and this is consistent with this research, since part of the literature gap lies within the research which used experiments, surveys, and quantitative methods. Additionally, it is considered that surveys have a limited ability to investigate context, struggling with typical limitation to the number of variables analysed. Case study inquiries allow for more variables to be considered in data collection and rely on multiple sources of evidence, resulting in a richer understanding of the whole context in which the focal phenomenon occurs. According to Yin (2009), single cases are an appropriate choice: when representing a critical case (allowing for testing of a well-formulated theory), when representing an extreme case or a unique case, when representing a typical case (the objective being to capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday situation), when it’s a revelatory case (if the researcher has an opportunity to analyse a phenomenon previously inaccessible), when it’s a longitudinal case (studying the same single case at two or more different points in time). This research features a typical case, with the possibility of capturing the circumstances and conditions of the development of organisational commitment, accessing information about one firm that has specific characteristics that may represent other similar organisations (see section 3.3.3 Case study selection for the company’s characteristics). To some degree the case study could also be labelled an extreme case, and this will be detailed in the following section, presenting the criteria for case study selection.

The purpose of a particular research study can be exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, evaluative, or a combination of these (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). Such categories are also used to refer types of case study strategies: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory (Yin, 2009). However, boundaries between types are not always precise. The nature of the research questions helps to define the appropriate strategy, by using the following criteria: “What” questions, and goals related to development of new hypotheses and propositions for further inquiry, usually lead to an exploratory strategy; “who” and “where” questions usually focus on a goal of describing the incidence or prevalence of a phenomenon and lead to a descriptive strategy; “how” and “why” questions are more explanatory and more likely to lead to the use of case studies.

The main research question in this research is a “how” question (“How does organisational commitment develop?”), and this led to a possibility of an explanatory strategy choice. At the same time, a subsidiary research question pointed to its explanatory nature (“What contextual circumstances play a role?”). Additionally, one research question has emerged

throughout the research process which also seems to ask for an explanatory strategy (“How can organisational commitment be defined, from the perspective of the employees?”)

In abductive research, case selection cannot be fixed, explained in advance, since findings inform theory and possibly further enquiry. Options, therefore, were left open. A single company was chosen initially, with potential for multiple cases (e.g., company’s departments as cases, such Marketing, Production and Logistics) but this changed as results emerged, and differences between departments were found to be scarce, thus not allowing for comparison between these units (departments).

The single case study approach was found the best choice for this research. This option is consistent with the research problem and questions, directed towards analysing a number of interdependent variables in complex structures, going deeper into a case study for a richness of description. On one hand, this contrasts with recent research, covering related research questions (Kim and Rhee, 2010; Lee and Kim, 2011; Yusoff *et al.*, 2012; Siciliano and Thompson, 2015) which revealed a simplistic view of reality, with few variables used to explain something that is clearly complex, suggesting qualitative enquiry would be appropriate. On the other hand, the use of single case design is found appropriate for several reasons, all of which are intrinsic to the present research, namely: the aim to get deeper insights, greater depth an emphasis on thicker descriptions; the focus on the uniqueness of the case and the contextualization (rather than the focus on comparison and generalization); the opportunity for greater flexibility; the lesser tendency for a positivist approach; and the theoretical function of theory development, concentrated of developing a deep understanding of an empirical setting (as opposed to a concern with developing testable and hypothesis) (Fletcher and Plakoyiannaki, 2011, p. 185). The present research is aligned with the purpose of generating “deep contextualized insights into the investigated phenomena” and as such single case study design may be considered a valid option.

The unit of analysis chosen was *the case company*, where the aim is to conclude on the employee’s organisational commitment and the antecedents of organisational commitment development. The focal social interactions and relationships will be those between actors who are members of the same organisation (not interactions with outside actors). So, for instance, interviewees may be questioned about their perspective about organisational commitment within the company, and how it developed. This permits conclusions, among other things, on the organisational commitment level of the company.

3.3.3 Case study selection

Since not all potential cases are accessible to the researcher, nor can the researcher have *a priori* knowledge of what cases will be more meaningful, selection of case studies becomes a challenging and risky task and of utmost importance. Choice of cases to study may be randomly made, yet random selection is not necessary, and in fact not even preferable (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 537; Patton and Appelbaum, 2003, p. 65).

The case selection strategy in this research was theory-driven, rather than phenomenon-driven (Fletcher *et al.*, 2018). The “theoretical sampling” case selection is a subcategory of “purposeful sampling” (Fletcher and Plakoyiannaki, 2011, p. 178) and is informed by theory. This option can be used to enhance credibility, but it may not be suitable for generalizations. It has also been associated with the investigation of emerging concepts, enhancing the quality of case study evidence and facilitating the applicability of findings in regard of context (Fletcher and Plakoyiannaki, 2011, p. 178).

Case selection on this research has followed a pathway that could be summarized in the next table (see Table 9 Case selection pathway).

Table 9 Case selection pathway

Philosophy	Logics/approach	Theoretical functions	Case selection strategy
Post-positivist/ Critical realist	Abductive	Theory development	Theory-driven case selection

Author's own table

For this research, random selection has not been an option, rather the case firm was chosen on theoretical grounds (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2009; Fletcher and Plakoyiannaki, 2011; Fletcher *et al.*, 2018). In addition to theoretical sampling strategy, using the categorisation found in Fletcher (2011), this research used also a selective or criterion sampling. Some criteria were identified, to amplify the possibility of finding associations and thus facilitating the analysis, namely: (1) Existence of low turnover and high stability in the workforce; (2) Existence of high levels of organisational commitment; (3) Organisational commitment is a critical element for overall organisational performance; (4) Social interactions and relationships between employees abound and are relatively

evident; (5) High prevalence of internal knowledge-sharing processes exists (typically motivated by consequences such as innovation, flexibility, creativity, performance); (6) The organisation has capacity to implement internal human resource management strategies and policies, to promote organisational commitment.

The case company entirely fulfilled these criteria and was revealed retrospectively to be a suitable choice. The organisation chosen for this case study was RENOVA. This company is a fairly large paper tissue and pulp producer, with around seven hundred employees and a turnover of nearly €150 million (in 2017), and although family owned, its governance and management are fully professionalized. Employees are with this company for an average of 18 years (data from 2018) and have an average age of 43 years old. RENOVA started its international expansion in 1986, and despite selling to over sixty countries, most of its sales still comes from Portuguese markets. The current CEO entered the company in 1984 and became CEO in 1995. The company thrives on its innovation and bold marketing campaigns, with a clear mission of strengthening its brand, with its levels of brand awareness (data from 2005) being extremely high, even when comparing with gigantic multinational corporations such as L’Oreal or Danone. Its human resource management is focused on issues like internal mobility and flexibility; a need for 24-hour shifts; low turnover and low absenteeism; strong specific technical training and strong internalization of the brand values (“every employee must be the strongest brand ambassador”, in the own words of the CEO). For these characteristics this research is based on the case study of RENOVA.

Finally, one last strategy of case selection could be associated with the current research, namely convenience sampling, which translates to a “selection of cases following those who are accessible” (Fletcher and Plakoyiannaki, 2011, p. 180).

3.3.4 Key components of research design

This section will identify some elements commonly influencing research design, according to Yin’s model (2009).

Research questions: Throughout this research, being informed both by extant theory and data collected, the researcher’s perspectives evolved and so the definition of research questions went through several versions, explained in the previous chapter.

Research questions (initial version)

Main research question: How does commitment develop in organisations?

Subsidiary research questions:

- What contextual circumstances or events play a role?
- What role do employees' interactions and relationships play?

Research questions (revised version)

Main research questions:

- How can organisational commitment be defined, from the perspective of the employees?
- How does commitment develop in organisations?

Subsidiary research questions:

- Do internal human resource management strategies and policies contribute to develop commitment? And, if so, how?
- What other contextual circumstances or events play a role?
- What role do employees' interactions and relationships play?

Propositions: Since the research will not follow a pure inductive theorising logic, neither will it be purely exploratory in nature, there is no strong reason for not having initial propositions (Yin, 2009, p. 43). Some concepts are used, but these are not meant to bind the research into pure deductive reasoning but may serve as a help to move in the right direction, especially at the time of initial data gathering, from which point the abductive approach will be followed, and will inform the direction to take.

Unit of analysis: Generally, the unit of analysis describes what the case is, and what its boundaries may be, and typically it is aligned with the research questions (Yin, 2009). A unit of analysis can be, for instance, an individual, an event, an entity, a decision, a project, an organizational change. In this research, the unit of analysis will be *the development of organisational commitment, in the case of an industrial consumer goods company*, where the aim is to observe, analyse and conclude about the case organisation employees' commitment, its development and its antecedents. This implies a "Type 1" case study design,

as defined by Yin (Yin, 2009) which means “single case with single unit of analysis”, suited for holistic research purposes.

Linking data to propositions: After data collection phase, as themes emerge, and data is analysed, patterns may become recognizable, and other techniques may be attempted. For this research, the data analysis techniques/logics that seem more appropriate are *logic models*, which is a form of pattern matching, consisting of matching empirically observed data to theoretically predicted events, based on the results of extant literature on the topic. The following logic seems appropriate for this research objectives:

1. Organisations choose and implement internal strategies and policies aimed at developing organisational commitment.
2. Employees make sense of these internal strategies and policies implemented, which may or may not have effects on the development of organisational commitment.
3. Employees have work experiences, including social interactions and relationships with other employees.
4. These social interactions and relationships between employees may or may not have an effect on the development of organisational commitment.
5. Organisational commitment develops in each employee, forming a degree of organisational commitment for the whole organisation.
6. Other factors may have contributed to the development of organisational commitment.
7. Some of these factors may have been observed and studied in previous research, and some not.

This analytical technique also seems coherent with the three domains of critical realism: “the empirical” which includes observable experiences; “the actual” which includes actual events that have been generated by mechanisms; and “the real” which includes the mechanisms that have generated the actual events.

The following data analysis techniques will not be used, as they seem less appropriate for this research objectives: *pattern matching* (compares an empirically based pattern with a predicted one), *time-series analysis*, *cross-case synthesis*.

Criteria for interpreting findings: The approach and methods chosen imply iteration between data collection and data analysis and the contrast of data with previous theory. In this abductive mode, open coding process seems appropriate (*i.e.*, working intensively with data identifying themes and categories that seem of interest), allowing codes to emerge during the data analysis, and finally reviewing these codes for emerging themes in the data. As such, the researcher should code the data before developing a theme structure. Only after a first cycle of coding should themes emerge. This allows the researcher to extract more meaning from the findings, leaving room for unexpected themes to emerge, and thus allowing for new theory to be developed. The next section describes how the process of data collection and analysis.

3.3.5 Ethics considerations and approval

Following university procedures, a first ethical approval form was submitted to the “Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Research Involving Human Subjects”. The proposal received feedback including “Minor recommendations” which were fully accommodated, and a final ethics form was resubmitted. Later the research ethics system approved the application. Following these ethical standards promotes the integrity and reliability of the data gathered and analysed.

The research design implicated that interviews were the main method but supplemented by secondary data. All contacts with interviewees and respondents were to be with consenting adults, employed in the organisations being analysed. The project adopted an ethical position which assumes that the researcher observes and protect the rights of would-be participants and systematically act to permit the participants to exercise those rights. To this end, all possible efforts were made to minimize participants inconvenience, by interviewing at places they consider convenient, by assuring that they are properly informed, free to volunteer without inappropriate inducement, free to opt out at any time without redress, remain anonymous, and be fully protected regarding safety to the limits of best practice. A second method of collecting data was anticipated, surveys, but carrying the research project it was decided not to include them in the data collection procedures, as it evolved in a different direction.

The interview method was used with employees of the company selected. As some of the specific concepts discussed in this research are relatively new, interviewing is an appropriate method, by permitting to gather empirical data with depth and open-mindedness.

Respondents were de-identified using pseudonyms, i.e., a reversible process whereby identifiers are replaced by a code, to which the researcher retains the key, in a secure location. This key is not to be applied without the respondent's permission. Participants were made aware that confidentiality may be impossible to guarantee; for example, in the event of disclosure of harm or danger to participants or others; or due to size of sample, particular locations etc. Participants were made aware that data may be shared/archived or re-used in accordance with Data Sharing Guidance provided on Participant Information Sheet. The template for the Participant Information Sheet can be found in the Appendices section, at the end of this dissertation.

Participants' anonymity was guaranteed by de-identifying their names and also by deleting all information about traits before the public release of any material. It was made clear to all participants that the research was for academic purposes only and that their participation was voluntary, and no incentives were being used by the researcher. Each participant signed a form agreeing that the interview could take place. Please see the "Consent Form" template used, in the Appendices section.

3.4 Data collection

Data for this research was gathered mainly by the interview method. As mentioned previously, it is important to acknowledge that the researcher will influence perspectives on reality, but also will be able to collect and interpret a richness of data, that otherwise (using other methods) would not occur. Generally, the interview method is not only considered a good source for qualitative research but also is considered an efficient way to gather rich, empirical data (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). As such, the in-depth interview method is applied as a primary data source. The purpose of the interviews is to find out the employees' perspectives on the issues of this research as well as other related contextual factors that may be relevant, and so this researcher considers it to be reasonable to directly ask for their opinions and views on reality.

In case studies, it is important to have diverse sources of data, as it allows the convergence of various sources (triangulation) ensuring a result that reflects the informants' understandings as accurately as possible. This is achieved by direct interviewing numerous employees, in open, semi-structured interviews to then compare their responses. This permits the creation of a coherent story with informants' meanings. Later, by adding additional secondary data and statistics the story is enriched.

Along with interviews with employees and managers, secondary data was collected from the firm's archives and reports and employee questionnaires were not applied in the end. The interviews were semi-structured, and fixed questions from a questionnaire were not used directly. The presence and level of organisational commitment was assessed, though not quantitatively.

Table 10 Primary and secondary data collected

Primary data collection		Secondary data collection	
Exploratory interviews with employees	Employees from Production, Logistics and Marketing departments	Company's internal documents	Company's reports on organizational climate, employee engagement (non-existent) Annual business stats People management challenges (see Appendix 1 Information about RENOVA)
Exploratory interviews with top management	CEO, Human Resource Manager, Logistics Manager and Marketing Manager	Company's non-official statistical data	Data on turnover and other characterization of the workforce (rendered by the human resource manager)
		Company's external documents	Information from company's public website. INSEAD Case study Company's commercial advertising and other published material

Author's own table

Interview characteristics: The criterion for interview sampling, in this case study, was breadth and not representativeness. The interviewees were selected according to specific criteria. 1) the selected interviewees were presumed to be knowledgeable of the topics of the research, namely: level of organisational commitment in the company, and the factors that impact its development; internal strategies and policies that the company case had implemented throughout recent years; social interactions and relationships in the company. 2) the selected interviewees had to be employees of the case company, for at least five years, to have a minimum knowledge of the evolutions in the company, and a high probability they have experienced themselves the phenomenon at study (the development of certain degree of organisational commitment). 3) the selected interviewees had to be willing to speak about the topics freely, 4) the selected interviewees should represent different functional departments and hierarchical levels, so they will have a view the topics from different

perspectives, which helps to overcome informant bias and hence generate divergent and rich data (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007), 5) the selected interviewees should have different functions and different fields of expertise.

Informant selection was made in cooperation with representatives of the case company, and an approximated number of interviewees was agreed with the top management, also responsible for supporting the research logistics. The interview sample size was not determined in advance, as it is advised to be determined by theoretical saturation (i.e., the point at which no new concepts emerge from the data). Interviews continued until saturation (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2014). Although these criteria above were defined for the choice of participants to respond to the interviews, since the selection was not made directly by the researcher, a risk of bias related to the type of participant that took part in the study should be considered. Retrospectively, the researcher concluded that there was no bias, since there was a possibility of excluding and/or requesting for other respondents; the questions posed in the interview did not address the respondent's level of organisational commitment and did not imply a qualitative judgemental evaluation of the company; and confidentiality was assured and explicitly explained to all the respondents. The following table presents the roles of the interview participants (manager or employee) and their department (Marketing, Logistics or Production), allowing to understand their background.

Table 11 List of participants in the interviews

Pseudonym	Department (Production / Logistics / Marketing)	Role (Manager / Employee)
ANTONIA	Marketing	Employee
BEATRIZ	Production	Manager
CARLOS	Marketing	Manager
DANIEL	Production	Employee
EDGAR	Production	Manager
FATIMA	Production	Employee
GABRIELA	Marketing	Employee
HUMBERTO	Marketing	Employee
INGRID	Logistics	Employee
JACK	Logistics	Manager
KATE	Logistics	Employee
LISA	Logistics	Employee
PAULO		Manager

Author's own table

The following questions (or probes) were used: “How would you define organisational commitment?”; “What would you say defines a person that is very committed, in this firm?”; “What attitudes would you say a committed person has in this company?”; “What behaviours does a committed person have in this company?” Then, the answers were contrasted with elements from earlier research in previously validated questionnaires and empirical works.

Data analysis consisted of qualitative data acquired through semi-structured interviews and employing mostly questions about “experiences/behaviours”, “opinions/beliefs”, “knowledge”, rather than “feelings/emotions”, “sensory”, “background/demographic” (Patton, 2003).

Each interview lasted about 90 minutes. To protect private information of interviewees, it was provided, to all of them, access to the University of Glasgow’s ethical guidelines (See Appendix 6 Participation Information Sheet for interviewees) and a letter of consent, which they signed (See Appendix 7 Consent Form signed by the interviewees).

Structure of the interviews: Since the nature of the research may oscillate between exploration and explanation, and an abductive approach is used, the type of interviews applied were open-ended and semi-structured, where the researcher introduces the topics of the research, and asks about opinions and perceptions about the topics, but leaves enough room for all kinds of data to emerge, and for insights to be easily generated (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). Fully structured interviews were not used.

Informant’s situation: The types of interviews used, according to the informant’s situation, were (1) *narrative*, where the researcher introduces the topics and themes and the interviewee narrates and delivers his perspectives and (2) *active*, where the researcher also participates in the interview, following the narrative of the interviewee, adding some elements, as in a conversation. The data gathering focused on a specific period of time, namely recent years, so that a type “*oral history*” was also present. Some interviews were *long and/or repeated interviews*, as the researcher interviewed the same informant more than once.

Preparing for the interviews, the researcher studied and compiled some knowledge on how to conduct interviews for research purposes and sketched a framework, to have in mind at the time of the interview. These served as guidelines helping to maintain the interviews with some degree of constancy and similarity between them. The researcher prepared for each

interview reviewing this compilation of knowledge and tools. These tools are shown here for exemplification of the way the interviews were performed. Figure 1 Interview tool “Sequence of events” shows the guidelines for the structure of each interview and served as reminder of the standard way for each interview to occur. Figure 2 Interview tool “List of recommendations for good interviews” shows a list of recommended practices in order to conduct quality interviews, namely several probes that could be helpful to assure fluidity in the interview. Figure 3 Interview tool “Interview guidelines” helped the researcher not to leave out any important matter.

Figure 1 Interview tool “Sequence of events”

Sequence of events	
1. Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Researcher personal presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Make clear that our role is researcher (and not consultant or manager or other) ii. Establish a relationship b. Overview of the study and its purposes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. PhD thesis to understand this company, to produce/develop theory applicable to other companies c. Deliver “Participant Information Sheet” and “Consent Form” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Brief explanation of rules, confidentiality issues and boundaries ii. Procedures of interview (audio recording), duration, follow-up iii. Comment on why the participant was chosen d. Offer to answer questions later, after the interview e. Focus on the topic at hand (sense of urgency and focus)
2. Warm-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Simple initial questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. What is your role/function? ii. How long have you been in this company? And in this function? iii. What was your path? iv. How is it to work here? v. What do you feel about this company?
3. Main body of the interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. (See interview guideline/topics checklist below)
4. Cool off questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Signal the nearing of the interview end b. Place easy questions (tension diffusion)
5. Closure (short, not to waste time)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Thanks b. Next steps: sign official Consent Form, ok if contacted again for another interview? c. Turn off audio recorder
6. “Off the record” time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Continue to talk to participant, and register mentally (and write after he leaves)

Adapted from (Yin, 2009)

Figure 2 Interview tool “List of recommendations for good interviews”

Recommendations for good interviews:	
•	List main questions and probes that help the interviewee understand the intent of the questions
•	Questions should be open and non-directive
•	Interviewer may diverge to follow a lead on an emergent idea or element in detail
•	Interviewer may change, add, drop questions
•	Types of probes:
○	Silence: nodding slowly, tilting head
○	Echo: repeat the last statement and ask person to continue
○	Neutral: Encouraging “I see...”
○	Direct: “Tell me more...”
○	Phased assertion: imply you already know something or encourage to speak up
○	Detail: Who, when, what, where, how
○	Clarifying: “You said X... please describe what you mean by that”

Adapted from diverse sources (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009; Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2014; Bryman and Bell, 2015)

Figure 3 Interview tool “Interview guidelines”

Draft interview questions	
Type of interview: Semi-structured	
The objective of the interview is to gather data as openly and wide as possible, and to have the least influence on the participant.	
Target: all hierarchical positions	
Topic	Questions, examples.
Organisational commitment definition	This research is about organisational commitment and engagement to understand how organisational commitment develops. How would you define organisational commitment? In this company: What would you say defines a person in this organisation that is very committed? What attitudes would you say a committed person has in this company? What behaviours would you say a committed person has in this company? What could you tell me about this topic, regarding your experience in this company?
Engagement definition	How would you define engagement? What could you tell me about this topic, regarding your experience in this company?
Organisational commitment and engagement: development / process	What happens to someone who joins this organisation? Can you give me a walk through that process? Any events occurred that have affected those attitudes and behaviours (we talked about before)? What's the present state of OC and engagement and how did it come to this state? What are the main reasons for this level of organisational commitment? Could you describe the evolution of commitment in this company through time (e.g., last 10-15 years)? Could you describe some process of development you have observed or experienced (in your co-workers or subordinates or other...)?
Organisational commitment individual commitment	How would you grade your own commitment towards this company? What are the main reasons for this current level? How did your own commitment develop over time? Can you describe some process of evolution it followed?
Your own process of commitment and engagement	Does the organisational commitment level vary between departments of the case company? What are the reasons for that?
[Other questions/interjections [that help the interviewee develop (freely) his answer (in addition to typical probing/prompting techniques such as “could you tell me more?”, “How come...?”, “What else...?”, etc)]:	
Social Interaction and Relations	How much of this commitment and engagement is caused by relationship with other in this company? Do people have social interactions within the company? Does this topic matter at all? Do relationships between employees account for any effect on the organisational commitment? Does inter-employee connectivity play a role in the development of organisational commitment?
Internal strategies of the case company	Did the company directly contribute to the current level of commitment and engagement? How did it happen? In what form did the company engage its employees? Did the company implemented specific internal strategies/policies/programs to have this level of organisational commitment? How did it happen? What were the results?

3.5 Data analysis

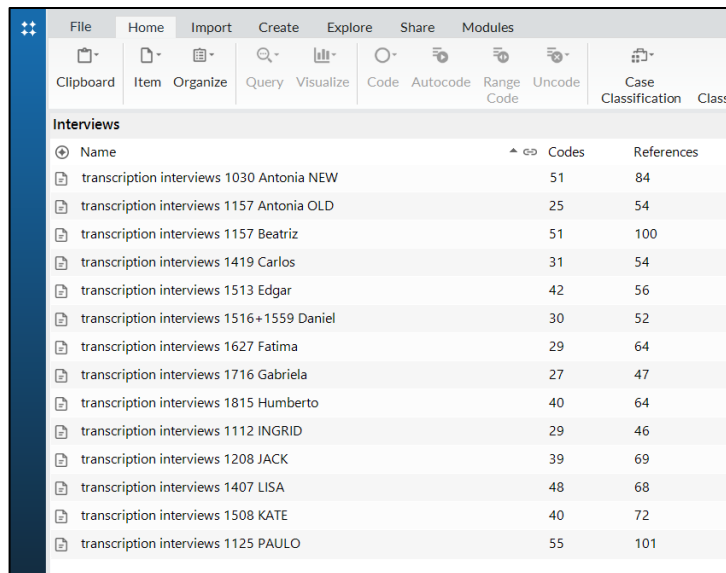
3.5.1 Data analysis: summary

This section explains how the data was analysed in this study. This research performed an interactive and cyclical process of data analysis, data display and conclusion drawing, inspired by the model described by Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014), although not following it rigidly. Data collection involved twelve interviews with employees, and an additional two interviews with the CEO and the HR Manager. Since all the interviews were performed in Portuguese, the full transcription and the first cycle of coding (data condensation) were performed in this language, and then the final version of the theme structure was translated to the English language, as well as selected citations from the interviews.

The interviews were performed in the native language of the respondents, Portuguese, and were fully transcribed by the researcher, maintaining the original language. This stage of the process resulted in a word processing document for each of the interviewees and named after a pseudonym, in alphabetical order Antonia, Beatriz, Carlos, etc. A description of each participant's role and functional department can be found in Table 11 List of participants in the interviews.

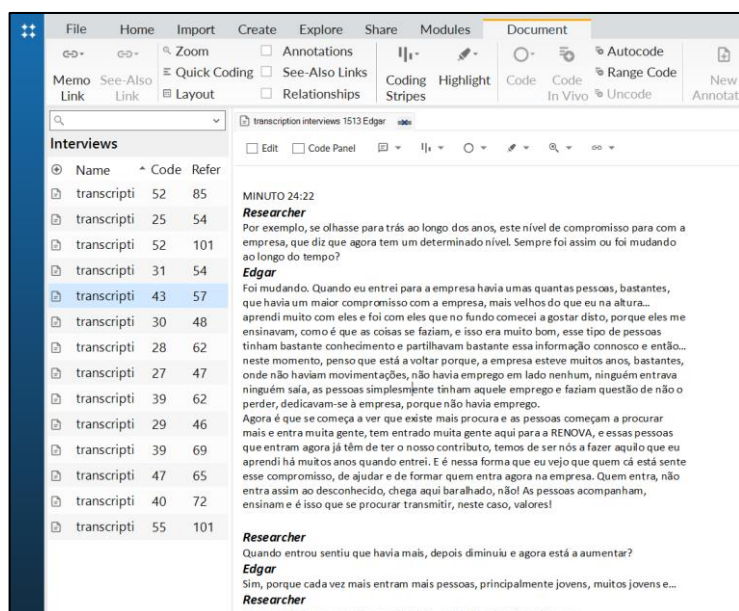
All transcriptions were then uploaded to NVivo software (see Figure 4 List of the interview transcription files (NVivo) and Figure 5 Example of an interview transcription file), and the coding process began. The first cycle of coding was performed without a previous structure of themes, which allowed the emergence of meaningful findings, unexpected themes, and the need to go back and forward reviewing the literature systematically. The researcher, listened, transcribed, and read the whole interviews, and started to define codes with some logical structure.

Figure 4 List of the interview transcription files (NVivo)



Name	Codes	References
transcription interviews 1030 Antonia NEW	51	84
transcription interviews 1157 Antonia OLD	25	54
transcription interviews 1157 Beatriz	51	100
transcription interviews 1419 Carlos	31	54
transcription interviews 1513 Edgar	42	56
transcription interviews 1516+1559 Daniel	30	52
transcription interviews 1627 Fatima	29	64
transcription interviews 1716 Gabriela	27	47
transcription interviews 1815 Humberto	40	64
transcription interviews 1112 INGRID	29	46
transcription interviews 1208 JACK	39	69
transcription interviews 1407 LISA	48	68
transcription interviews 1508 KATE	40	72
transcription interviews 1125 PAULO	55	101

Figure 5 Example of an interview transcription file



transcription interviews 1513 Edgar

MINUTO 24:22

Researcher
Por exemplo, se olhasse para trás ao longo dos anos, este nível de compromisso para com a empresa, que diz que agora tem um determinado nível. Sempre foi assim ou foi mudando ao longo do tempo?

Edgar
Foi mudando. Quando eu entrei para a empresa havia umas quantas pessoas, bastantes, que havia um maior compromisso com a empresa, mais velhos do que eu na altura... aprendi muito com eles e foi com eles que no fundo comecei a gostar disto, porque eles me ensinavam, como é que as coisas se faziam, e isso era muito bom, esse tipo de pessoas tinham bastante conhecimento e partilhavam bastante essa informação conosco e então... neste momento, penso que está a voltar porque, a empresa esteve muitos anos, bastantes, onde não haviam movimentações, não havia emprego em lado nenhum, ninguém entrava ninguém saía, as pessoas simplesmente tinham aquele emprego e faziam questão de não o perder, dedicavam-se à empresa, porque não havia emprego.

Agora é que se começa a ver que existe mais procura e as pessoas começam a procurar mais e entra muita gente, tem entrado muita gente aqui para a RENOVA, e essas pessoas que entram agora já têm de ter o nosso contributo, temos de ser nós a fazer aquilo que eu aprendi há muitos anos quando entrei. E é nessa forma que eu vejo que quem cá está sente esse compromisso, de ajudar e de formar quem entra agora na empresa. Quem entra, não entra assim ao desconhecido, chega aqui baralhado, não! As pessoas acompanham, ensinam e é isso que se procura transmitir, neste caso, valores!

Researcher
Quando entrou sentiu que havia mais, depois diminuiu e agora está a aumentar?

Edgar
Sim, porque cada vez mais entram mais pessoas, principalmente jovens, muitos jovens e...

Researcher
Muito obrigado. Muito obrigado. Muito obrigado. Muito obrigado. Muito obrigado.

Initial data condensation allowed the gathering and structuring of themes on data display, which then required additional data condensation, until conclusions were gradually drawn. Eventually, new data becomes necessary to allow other rounds of data condensation and display. A first cycle of coding involved a somewhat explorative analysis, and a ground-up coding, which allowed for unexpected themes to emerge, raised needs to review the literature again. Further cycles of coding (parallel) were categorised in accordance with some well-established theoretical models from the extant literature. Such theoretical knowledge from

previous research was the source of the second cycle of coding, where pattern matching and explanation started to be built, e.g., on the antecedents of organisational commitment.

All data was coded exhaustively, including themes with small probabilities of relevance, which made the code structure excessively large (See Appendix 3 Examples of coding structures). However, this was predictable as the goal, at this stage, was to ensure that none of the data would be left out.

A second cycle of coding resulted in categories and groups of codes. Coherence and patterns started to emerge, and the code structure was systematized. However, the code structure was still too long for a focus on the research questions.

After a third cycle of coding, the final structure took shape, as the analysis was now focused on the distinct research questions. From this last stage, the researcher then translated (from Portuguese to English) the most revealing quotations (not all of them) regarding each of the final themes/nodes.

Chapter “Findings” transcribes the themes/nodes and these quotations from the interviews, allowing a deep understanding of what is most relevant to the research.

Figure 6 Example of part of the code structure, presenting an early version and final version

30	Conceptualisation of OC
31	Affective Commitment
32	Behavioural perspective of commitment
33	Accepting some level of frustration (and injustice, etc)
34	Alignment (...) agreement with company mission and purpose
35	Behaviours associated with low commitment
36	Committed employees give ideas and suggestions
37	Constantly linked and thinking about the job
38	Cooperation as manifestation of commitment
39	Discretionary Effort
41	Low commitment behaviours
42	Employee low committed not showing distinct behaviours
44	Low commitment evidences bad behaviours
45	Turnover may not be a sign of low commitment
46	Loyalty
47	Talking good things about the company
48	Continuance Commitment
49	Side-bets
50	Motivation (related construct or confusion)
51	Normative OC
52	Notion of belonging to a group (team, company...)
53	Satisfaction (I like my job)
54	Consequences of OC

File	Home	Import	Create	Explore	Share	Modules
Clipboard	Item	Organize	Query	Visualize	Code	Autocode
					Range	Unicode
					Code	Classif
Codes						
⊕	Name	Files	Refs			
⊖	Organisational Commitment	0	0			
⊖	Conceptualisation of OC	0	0			
⊖	1. Affective Org. Commitment - emotional attachment	6	10			
⊖	Notion of belonging to a group (team, company...)	2	4			
⊖	2. Behaviours from org. commitment	0	0			
⊖	1. To speak well about the company	3	3			
⊖	2. Cooperation (team work, company's goal oriente	5	7			
⊖	3. Discretionary effort and accepting frustration	4	4			
⊖	Discretionary effort (extra job description, extra r	11	20			
⊖	4. Concern and care for the company	1	1			
⊖	5. Sense of urgency (timing)	1	1			
⊖	3. Normative Org. Commitment - moral obligation to re	4	14			
⊖	Loyalty	2	2			
⊖	4. Related concepts	0	0			
⊖	1. Employee engagement	7	9			
⊖	2. Motivation	3	8			
⊖	5. Confusion between OC and its consequences	0	0			

Figure 7 Example of part of the code structure

Codes			
Name	Files	Re	
Organisational Commitment	0	0	
Conceptualisation of OC	0	0	
OC Antecedents	0	0	
1. HRM impact on organisational commitment	2	2	
1. Inexistence of deliberate HRM strategy targeting O	8	12	
2. Inexistence of deliberate strategy or initiatives, regarding OC	7	7	
3. Low investments in HRM initiatives (No formal even	9	14	
2. Other antecedents or contextual circumstances	0	0	
01. Career growth and development opportunities	9	16	
02. Sense of "career peak" and having fewer opportun	4	5	
03. Challenges proposed to employee	7	15	
04. Company is stable, reputable, trustworthy	7	12	
05. Concern for employees' well-being and conditions	7	14	
06. Fluid job descriptions, dynamic organic structures,	7	24	
07. Participation. Employee's opinion is considered.	7	17	
08. Financial stability, and salaries always paid on time	10	20	
09. Monetary compensation (e.g., salary increases, bo	4	6	
11. Leadership - Top management cares for employee	5	8	

Figure 8 Example of part of the code structure, presenting an early and a final version

OC Antecedents		Codes	
		Name	Files
Access and good communication between Departments		OC Antecedents	0 0
Career growth and development opportunities		1. HRM impact on organisational commitment	2 2
Causes of lower commitment		1. Inexistence of deliberate HRM strategy targeting OC	8 12
Challenges proposed to employee, reveal trust in the employee		2. Inexistence of deliberate strategy or initiatives, regarding OC	5 7
Rotation between production lines improves knowledge sharing and professional develop		3. Low investments in HRM initiatives (No formal events to improve OC)	9 14
Communication, knowledge sharing by company		2. Other antecedents or contextual circumstances	0 0
Company is stable, trustworthy, notorious		01. Career growth and development opportunities	9 16
Brand, Notoriety, (also) Pride in the company (SEPARATE THIS)		02. Sense of "career peak" and having fewer opportunities	4 5
Company is local as opposed to other multinational firms (and family owned)		03. Challenges proposed to employee	7 15
Company's mission		04. Company is stable, reputable, trustworthy	7 12
Conditions, Tools, Training, Resources, etc are good		05. Concern for employees' well-being and conditions	7 14
internationalization, new plant in France		06. Fluid job descriptions, dynamic organic structures, and a perception of autonomy	7 24
Conditions and concern for employees' general well-being		07. Participation. Employee's opinion is considered	7 17
Flexible job description, organic dynamic structures, freedom, autonomy		08. Financial stability, and salaries always paid on time	10 20
Flexibility of schedule in some areas, and homeworking		09. Monetary compensation (e.g., salary increases, bonuses)	4 6
Job descriptions (formal) and targets are yet needed		11. Leadership - Top management cares for employees and their problems	5 8
People like to learn new things and have diverse tasks		12. Leadership - Access to top management	8 21
Freedom (in general), tolerance (explicitly mentioned), Openness (in general)		13. Leadership - Direct supervision	9 24
Identification, culture, person-organization fit		14. Direct supervision - trust	4 12
Knowledge about other departments in the company		15. Direct supervision - feedback and recognition	4 6
Landmarks events that impacted OC		16. Direct supervision - communication	6 7
No impact		17. Additional antecedents to OC mentioned with less	0 0
Leadership effects on OC		3. Employees interactions and relationships	0 0
Access to top level hierarchy		1. Good relationships between employees	7 12
Careful not to surpass of direct supervisor		2. Access to other departments, and good communication	4 5
Closeness to higher levels of hierarchy		3. Open spaces and a culture of openness fosters good	4 4
Geographic proximity to top level is relevant		5. Older employees influence the more recently hired	5 13
As company grows people may feel more distant		6. Informal interactions have less impact than work at	2 2
Identification with Top Management		7. Additional antecedents to OC mentioned with less	0 0
Information and knowledge sharing		OC Consequences	2 2
Allows broader perspective			
Leads to feelings of trust			
Makes easier to understand the company (direction, decisions, strategy, etc)			
Communication top-down or effect supervisor-employee relationship			
Feedback about performance (individual, evaluation)			
Improve alignment (=OC) is leaders' responsibility			
Supervisor support, trust, respect, politeness			
Location Employee is far from management decision centres			
Monetary compensations (salary etc)			
Company does not use bonus to motivate			
Compensation schemes negative impacts			
Monetary Compensation in relation to conjuncture (crisis)			
Participation, employee's opinion is asked and heard			
Participation is asked more in Marketing than Production			
Purpose, goal achievement, productivity impacts			
Recognition (informal), employees are recognised (not just by direct supervisors)			
Relationships and interactions between employees			
Family ties account for some but small effect on commitment			
Friendship relationships account for low impact on OC etc			
Inter-generation relationships			
Knowledge sharing, elders with youngsters			
Recent hires are more susceptible to influence regarding commitment			
Socialization, newcomers are influenced by older employees			
Key people, a group			
Low commitment negative cycles			
Low commitment is difficult to recover			
People low committed may influence others			
Low impact on OC from relationships			
Mid-level commitment is more influenced			
Strong positive impacts on OC from relationships			
Informal Expressive ties account for cohesion			
Relationships and interactions helps to improve sense making			
Satisfaction, employee likes the job, Person-Job Fit			

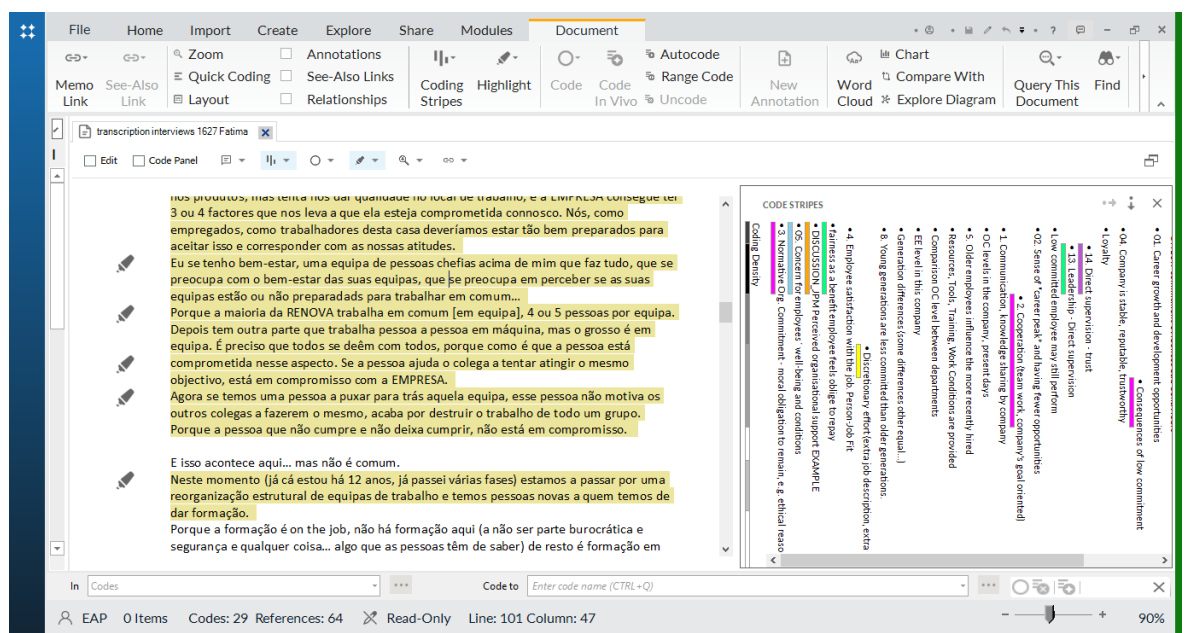
3.5.2 Coding cycles

Data analysis memos were used throughout the coding process (see Appendix 4 Examples of Data Analysis Memos). These memos are documented to facilitate the tracking of the researcher's thoughts over time and to go back in the process, review some previous assumptions or conclusions and modify them, if necessary. Memos were dated and have included some meta-data such as the “Brief explanation of events: what happened and how was the process”, the “Summary of accomplishments: what outcomes and its relevance.”, the “Further action needed: e.g., improvements to coding, extension of literature review, links to theory, etc.”.

First cycle coding: transcribed interviews and coding

In this first cycle, the full transcription of all interviews and the first coding of interviews was completed. The researcher, at this stage, listened, transcribed, and read whole interviews, and started to define codes with some logical structure. All data was coded, even unusual issues or events that showed little possibilities of being found relevant or useful. The focus on this stage was to be exhaustive, leaving nothing behind, making sure that all the data was condensed.

Figure 9 Example of interview coding (using NVivo)



Second cycle coding: collapsing codes into categories and discovering patterns

In a second cycle of coding, categories started to emerge, and codes were grouped, using pattern recognition of frequency, sequence, similarity, and difference. The researcher's handwritten notes, taken as the interviews were occurring, helped to better understand these patterns and to avoid misunderstandings from the records and transcriptions. Some labels and descriptions were added to themes, in the coding structure, to assure strong coherence of the coding, namely increasing the possibility that similar data was coded equally, and/or that different ideas were not coded in the same code.

The code structure was increasingly systematized, and the elimination of similar codes occurred, combining and merging codes. Despite this work of collapsing codes into categories and discovering patterns, the length of the code structure was still too large and an effort to reduce it was a part of the following cycle. At this stage, some analytical ideas started to appear as well as ideas for secondary data to be gathered. This was also noted down using the NVivo software (see Appendix 5 Examples of researcher notes).

Third cycle coding: from categories obtaining themes/concepts and relate these to theory

In the third cycle of coding, relations with the literature started to be identified, and the structure began to take shape, getting ever closer to a final format. At the same time, the analysis was more focused on the research questions. At this stage, the researcher's own interpretation became stronger and more decisive for the interpretation of the data, but the significance of the responses also increased. There was some identification of interconnections between codes/themes, and references (data) coded in several themes was found.

3.6 Conclusion of the chapter

Critical realism is considered an adequate perspective for this research, both regarding the research questions related to the antecedents of organisational commitment, and the research questions related to the conceptualization of organisational commitment (Anderson, 2020).

Following a critical realism perspective implies this research takes special consideration to the three domains of reality: (1) the domain of "the empirical", which for this research could

translate as both the degree of organisational commitment development in the company case, and the reported employees' perceptions of their experiences and/or observations related to organisational commitment; (2) the domain of "the actual" which includes the actions (events or non-events) that form the contextual circumstances that impact organisational commitment development, some of which cannot be completely observed or experienced; and (3) the domain of "the real" which includes the mechanisms and the structures that enable and/or constrain the events, such as the organisation's culture, its policies and strategies, principles and value system, individuals' characteristics.

Regarding the conceptualization of organisational commitment, critical realism may be considered a valid methodologically perspective as organisational commitment is an entity that exists independently of actors, but where employees have tacit knowledge about it and its antecedents.

Although the research approach is not deductive, the researcher will make use of concepts and assumptions derived from existing theory and associated literature. The present research does not aim to test hypotheses but will take them into consideration when trying to understand the current organisational commitment development. This research's aim is to understand how organisational commitment comes to develop, not to explore possible relationships quantitatively, but to empirically observe the influence of these factors on organisational commitment to establish a new theoretical basis for future research. In conclusion, the path for this research could be schematically summarized as follows: (1) Read all the literature and extract ideas, concepts, and meanings (e.g., organisational commitment and employee engagement are very close concepts; affective organisational commitment may be the core essence of organisational commitment, but this research will not follow this line of thought; the three-component model seems mostly agreeable and should be held in the background as framework.); (2) Start with questions, rather than hypotheses. (3) Collect data with open ended methods (e.g., what does organisational commitment mean for these employees? how did the current state of organisational commitment came to develop in this organisation?) (4) Analyse data through cycles of sense-making, resorting to literature to contrast with existing theories, and going back to data again, in a systematic way. (5) Report on the discussions and final conclusions from this systematic process, trying to answer the research questions.

Chapter 4 Findings

4.1 Introduction

Data has been collected from interviews, conducted by the researcher, face-to-face with employees, from several departments of the case company (namely the departments of Marketing, Production and Logistics). This chapter presents the structure of themes that emerged from the data analysis, and its respective justification and data support. Then, the following chapters will take these findings as inputs, and translate them into discussions, tentative conclusions, propositions, and original contributions.

In accordance with this research's methodological choices, these emerging themes are both broad and deep, providing a holistic perspective of the development of organisational commitment in the case company.

Each of the themes, correspond to specific nodes, a result of the coding process which had several iterations until reaching a final version. Related to each single "Theme/Node" (on bold formatting) there is a brief explanation and examples of raw data from the interviews (quotations which were translated from Portuguese to English).

4.2 Summary of the findings

What is most evidenced from an initial reading of the findings is that:

- (1) A multitude of antecedents of organisational commitment was observed, and there was no single factor, or even a combination of few factors, to which the current high level of organisational commitment could be attributed.
- (2) Several empirical antecedents of organisational commitment were quite consistent (mentioned by several interviewees). Other antecedents were less frequently reported, however, but could still be relevant as they were consistent with the whole of the data analysed.
- (3) The case company does not use typical/traditional human resources strategies or initiatives, specifically targeted at improving organisational commitment, and yet the overall organisational commitment level remains high.

(4) Regarding the impact of employees' relationships and interactions on organisational commitment, the finding allowed very specific conclusions (to be developed later in this chapter).

(5) The research data permitted the formulation of a proposed model of conceptualisation of organisational commitment, using the descriptive perspectives of the employees.

4.3 Findings related to mRQ1 “How can organisational commitment be defined, from the perspective of the employees?”

At the beginning of the interviews, after an initial “warm-up”, the brief introduction and consent form signature, and always before asking about antecedents of organisational commitment, the researcher asked the interviewees to define and describe their own view of what organisational commitment is. The objectives were firstly to identify, distinguish and exclude antecedents that were present in the case company but not related to organisational commitment but rather to other concepts; and secondly to use this data for a conceptualisation of organisational commitment, empirically grounded. This section presents the explanation of how the emergent themes relate to the raw data, including the quotes from the interviews. This forms the basis for the following discussion and contrast with the extant literature and ultimately will allow for a proposal of a conceptualisation of organisational commitment.

Emotional attachment to the organisation

Elements such as emotional attachment, feeling proud, etc., which are the basis of affective organisational commitment were found to be foremost in the minds of most people, according to the interviews.

BEATRIZ: (...) people saying, "I really like working here" (...) [having] pride of working at RENOVA.

JACK: (...) people with very affectionate connection to RENOVA and to the CEO.

PAULO: When I see them sharing RENOVA stuff (a new product or a picture of a truck with our brand) on their Instagram (...) [Even after they leave the company and go work somewhere else] but when seeing something from RENOVA they tag it on Instagram (...) [means] something good remains.

LISA: I think that first of all, [organisational commitment] is to have the notion of being part of a team. To have a notion that we belong to a group.

A particular finding in the company is the emotional affection not only for the organisation, but also for its brand, and they really feel proud about the company's achievements regarding its marketing and branding strategy.

To speak well about the company

This means to have a positive, and favourable discourse whenever the opportunity or the necessity comes of talking about the company and/or its events, situations, characteristics.

ANTONIA: We [may] have a vision [not aligned with the company's, but we must have] a discourse for the inside of the company and a discourse for outside. It is like in our families. [There's] What we know and talk about inside and what we try to convey outside.

CARLOS: Commitment can also be to be in front of a client and defend the company passionately. We could say they are "in love" and so being "deceived" and "deceiving" others, but it's not that! Commitment is also this of sticking to the "cause" [defending it].

PAULO: (...) sharing RENOVA stuff on their Instagram.

This behaviour may happen in day-to-day physical conversations or virtual conversation, for example when sharing positive things about the company on social networks. This behaviour does not imply to always agree with everything about the company.

Cooperation toward company's goals

This behaviour refers to a behaviour of doing everything with an attitude of cooperation and team spirit, having more interest in the goals of the group (or company) than a focus on the self-interests.

BEATRIZ: We use the expression "to wear the sweater" [same as "fly the flag" or "wear the colours"] When one has commitment, one collaborates, aligns with the defined strategies, contributes with constructive criticism for these strategies.

HUMBERTO: I understand organisational commitment as the ability of people to grasp their missions and carry them forward in a disinterested way. To do things in the best way possible so that the organisation can better fulfil its main objectives. Getting involved as much as possible in the missions they are given and put in motion what is asked of you in a disinterested way.

Discretionary effort and accepting some level of frustration

This theme relates to when individuals put the company ahead of their private life and sometimes sacrifice one's own self-interest on behalf of the company's needs, and also going beyond what is expected or agreed. It was also mentioned in the sense of dedicating much of one's time to the company, and being resilient when facing adversities, sometimes making efforts relentlessly and for years.

CARLOS: Commitment is to sometimes put the company ahead of your private life, with even family sacrifices... is to not keep their schedule from 9 to 6 and go beyond that sometimes.

ANTONIA: A person committed to the company, in the face of difficulties, or when there is lack of understanding from direct supervisors, [still] has an incessant search for solutions, wants to be part of the solution and not of the problem. Commitment is demonstrated by the "spirit" and the perspective the person has about the work, and the time the person spends at the company. the number of hours they work.

EDGAR: A person very committed is constantly connected to work. Not only the time they spend here, but even when they leave. And it exists here. People who are dedicated, dedicate much of their time to the company.

INGRID: People who are proud to work here and stay here for years and years and years, (...) and continue to be active and to make effort.

Concern and care for the company

This theme refers to the attitude of being constantly concerned about the organisation's wellbeing and success, and that whenever something not as good as expected was observed, the person immediately feels preoccupation and wants to improve or suggest improvements.

CARLOS: A way of seeing commitment is, if going to a supermarket, I can't stand to see [something wrong about our presence [company's products] in the supermarket.

ANTONIA: the understanding of the "giving and receiving" (not having just an attitude of "you owe me this, I have a right to this"; when, despite the setbacks, above all they like to work.

EDGAR: Speaking for myself, I am often at home, and I am thinking about what I can do the next day to improve, anything to improve the work system.

Sense of urgency (timing) and sense of duty

To implement solutions with a sense of urgency, to have a clear notion of good timing, i.e., to criticize at the adequate moment but still implement what is needed even if not in full agreement with the solution/decision.

JACK: The timing people implement the decisions made above them, is also crucial to assess [organisational commitment]. [People] may opine and criticize something, but then there's the implementation. There are some people who are against the decisions, [but still they know they must implement].

Also, a good number of the responses pointed to organisational commitment as a sort of obligation, a duty to honour an agreement with the company.

BEATRIZ: It means you have a relationship with the company that is beneficial to both parties. The worker has a contract with the company, and both must honour that contract.

DANIEL: the sense of duty towards the company is a point that I would associate with [organisational commitment]. Because every day when I go to work, I feel that I have a duty and even an obligation to give everything to the company in my workplace. of work, that must be our thinking, we have a duty to do our best and give everything... in our day-to-day activities. Maybe it's a little difficult to explain this point.

FATIMA: I understand commitment to the company as loyalty, respect, the place where I am and all the responsibilities that come from the loyalty we may or may not have in the place where we are. If I fully comply with what they ask me to do, I am being loyal, committed to the company, I feel that I am committed to the company in that respect, (...) if I fully comply with what the company asks me to as I have an agreement.

It was found perceptions that a moral duty to correspond, and to match, the same commitment the company has with its employees. Since the company was perceived to making efforts to give its employees good conditions, then being committed to the company is to correspond to this commitment from the company.

FATIMA: RENOVA provides us with well-being and that if people complied [meaning to retribute in the same manner] with the well-being that RENOVA offers them, this would be marvellous. The company brings us well-being (a safe environment, there is quality in the workplace), We, as employees, should respond with our attitudes. The stability that the COMPANY provides us, economic, job security, to know that we can work here for the next 50 years here if we want to. A good, faithful company providing good working conditions, and where we can progress in our career. The COMPANY invests in training, invests in quality of work.

KATE: Commitment to a company, the first thing is to work. We sign a contract, and that is the commitment in the beginning. Afterwards, other commitments change throughout our stay at the organisation. The commitment it assumes to us employees, and they keep it, (...) [in terms] of motivation, salaries, of course, It is still a contract, a job in exchange for remuneration. This part is very important, and the company strictly complies [always].

4.3.1 Related concepts

Some respondents mentioned two aspects which, although distinct from organisational commitment, are sometimes related or even considered similar (as previously mentioned in the literature review). These dispersions from the main topic of organisational commitment were taken into account and considered in the analysis of the information, so it would not influence the results. Here are some examples.

Employee engagement

It was not possible to find a clear definition of employee engagement distinct from organisational commitment. This may be partly attributed to the fact that this research was designed to use both concepts interchangeably (as explained in previous sections) and there was no clear aim of concluding on the difference between the concepts. However, in spite some probes were made in the interviews, asking for the definition of both concepts, the respondents did not provide with a clear and distinct conceptualisation, and struggled to separate one concept from the other, as the following quotes illustrate.

BEATRIZ: I would say that engagement... deep down... It is commitment. It is a strong bond (hesitation), more or less strong. A strong connection would be the "translation".

CARLOS: I was talking about both things. Maybe even more about engagement than commitment. Sometimes it also helps to understand the words in English.

DANIEL: Dedication is, in the day-to-day work, being aware that we are giving everything we can to do our best, in the best way possible, without jeopardizing values, safety. Yes, dedication I consider that to be it. We have a clear conscience that we do our best to make sure everything runs smoothly and for the best to achieve our goals.

GABRIELA: It is the level of "delivery" that people have relative to the place they are in, and the people they're with. The dedication and engagement...

Motivation

When mentioning motivation, the respondents were talking about two perspectives. On one hand, they are referring to the incentives (or motives) that an individual may experience and that push in the direction of a certain course of action. On the other hand, it is also mentioned in the sense of feeling satisfaction for their job, or their work experiences. The findings point to a relation between “being motivated” and “being committed”, but also that someone unmotivated (unsatisfied) could still behave in the direction that the company needs. These responses also point to an obvious fact which is that the respondents are laymen (not experts) on the concepts at hand.

RESEARCHER: What do you think could make people lessen their commitment to this organisation? HUMBERTO: Good question. [Do you mean] what could make people demotivate? RESEARCHER: No, I mean to uncommit [to decrease their commitment]!

INGRID: I think... [hesitation] we now think a lot about the monetary part... so maybe if the company did not pay on time, in any company [that would happen], it would make people less motivated and so less committed.

INGRID: Sometimes I am less motivated, but I always end up doing everything the same... We take [with us] a little bit from here [the company]. That is, here we do things as always, even if we are sad and unmotivated, we end up not showing it, at least here [at work] though we show it to our husband and children. As I told you there are times when I feel sadder, unmotivated. But then there are certain people here who tell us something and it takes us back to that higher level of motivation.

KATE: Here we are talking about the commitment and motivation of the employee for the organisation. And the goal is to reach the end of the year and see that it grew with the lowest possible costs... that is the motivation. And it is really a factor that motivates me a lot, it's me for the year to know that I want to do even better than this year and that we have 12 more months to do it.

4.3.2 Confusion between organisational commitment and its consequences

Some responses could be classified as consequences of organisational commitment rather than attempts to define the concept itself, which is natural. Interviewees when struggling to add more elements to their response to “how would you define organisational commitment in this company?”, would sometimes disperse and give concepts related or adjacent. Here are some examples:

Cooperation

BEATRIZ: For example, there is “war” (...) I see that they are having conflicts and a little more aggressive exchange of words. But if there is a deadline to meet and one of them is in trouble, I know they get together and agree [to cooperate] and say, "let's divide this work among everyone and do it." For example, if there are difficulties on a production line (...) I can call someone from another line and ask them to help their colleagues. [Someone not committed] does not collaborate as they should, will "undermine" the team and eventually even "undermine" adjacent teams.

ANTONIA: When people find reasons to be “discharged” from work, or get a [unlawful] sick leave, or leave early not giving their reasons. These are all signs of a lack of commitment.

Alignment with decisions

JACK: Sometimes is, although saying freely what one thinks, then when it is time to stand [meaning defend] a decision that was made [by the company], and even a decision that we may not be 100% aligned with [agreeing on], this is important. [So, being committed] is implementing decisions coming from “above” is very important. The way we implement them is also relevant to assess the employee commitment.

These confusions between definition and consequences were very uncommon in the responses and could not be used to reach any strong conclusions.

4.3.3 Identification of measurement items in the literature

The following table identifies detailed definitions of the constructs found in the literature, namely scale items from the questionnaires used to measure the constructs and relates them to each theme of the findings, obtained through qualitative methods. In the next chapter (Discussion) the findings are put in dialogue with the literature and, as result, a proposed model is presented.

Table 12 Identification of measurement items and relation with findings

Quotes from the interviews	Themes/ Concepts/ Constructs	Specific elements from the literature (namely metrics)
<p><i>BEATRIZ: (...) people saying, "I really like working here" (...) [having] pride of working at RENOVA.</i></p> <p><i>JACK: (...) people with very affectionate connection to RENOVA and to the CEO.</i></p> <p><i>LISA: I think that first of all, [organisational commitment] is to have the notion of being part of a team. To have a notion that we belong to a group.</i></p>	Emotional attachment to the organisation	<p>"I do not feel 'emotionally attached' to this organization (R)", "I do not feel like 'part of the family' at my organization (R)" and "I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization (R)" (Allen and Meyer, 1990)</p> <p>"5. I find that my values and the organization's values are very similar." (Mowday, Steers and Porter, 1979)</p>
<p><i>ANTONIA: We [may] have a vision [not aligned with the company's, but we must have] a discourse for the inside of the company and a discourse for outside. It is like in our families. [There's] What we know and talk about inside and what we try to convey outside.</i></p> <p><i>CARLOS: Commitment can also be to be in front of a client and defend the company passionately. We could say they are "in love" and so being "deceived" and "deceiving" others, but it's not that! Commitment is also this of sticking to the "cause" [defending it].</i></p>	To speak well about the company	<p>"I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it" (Allen and Meyer, 1990)</p> <p>"2. I talk up this organization to my friends as a great organization to work for."</p> <p>"6. I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization." (Mowday, Steers and Porter, 1979)</p> <p>"6. I am proud to tell others that I am a part of this organization." (O'Reilly III and Chatman, 1986)</p>
<p><i>BEATRIZ: When one has commitment, one collaborates, aligns with the defined strategies, contributes with constructive criticism for these strategies.</i></p> <p><i>HUMBERTO: I understand organisational commitment as the ability of people to grasp their missions and carry them forward in a disinterested way. To do things in the best way possible so that the organisation can better fulfil its main objectives. Getting involved as much as possible in the missions they are given and put in motion what is asked of you in a disinterested way.</i></p> <p><i>EDGAR: 'Speaking for myself, I am often at home, and I am thinking about what I can do the next day to improve, anything to improve the work system.'</i></p>	Cooperation toward company's goals	<p>"Working toward this organization's success is important to me." (Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001)</p>
<p><i>CARLOS: Commitment is to sometimes put the company ahead of your private life, with even family sacrifices... is to not keep their schedule from 9 to 6 and go beyond that sometimes.</i></p> <p><i>ANTONIA: A person committed to the company, in the face of difficulties, or when there is lack of understanding from direct supervisors, [still] has an incessant search for solutions, wants to be part of the solution and not of the problem. Commitment is demonstrated by the "spirit" and the perspective the person has about the work, and the time the person spends at the company. the number of hours they work.</i></p> <p><i>EDGAR: A person very committed is constantly connected to work. Not only the time they spend here, but even when they leave. And it exists here. People who are dedicated, dedicate much of their time to the company.</i></p> <p><i>INGRID: People who are proud to work here and stay here for years and years and years, (...) and continue to be active and to make effort.</i></p>	Discretionary effort and accepting some level of frustration	<p>"1. I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help this organization be successful." (Mowday, Steers and Porter, 1979)</p> <p>"9. Unless I'm rewarded for it in some way, I see no reason to expend extra effort on behalf of this organization." (O'Reilly III and Chatman, 1986)</p> <p>"Working toward this organization's success is important to me.", "I am willing to do whatever is asked of me by this organization" (Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001)</p> <p>"9. I feel happy when I am working intensely."</p> <p>"17. At my work, I always persevere, even when things do not go well." (Schaufeli, Bakker and Salanova, 2006)</p>
<p><i>CARLOS: A way of seeing commitment is, if going to a supermarket, I can't stand to see [something wrong about our presence [company's products] in the supermarket.</i></p> <p><i>ANTONIA: the understanding of the "giving and receiving" (not having just an attitude of "you owe me this, I have a right to this"; when, despite the setbacks, above all they like to work.</i></p> <p><i>EDGAR: Speaking for myself, I am often at home, and I am thinking about what I can do the next day to improve, anything to improve the work system.</i></p>	Concern and care for the company	<p>"I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own" (Allen and Meyer, 1990)</p> <p>"13. I really care about the fate of this organization." (Mowday, Steers and Porter, 1979)</p>

<p><i>JACK: The timing people implement the decisions made above them, is also crucial to assess [organisational commitment]. [People] may opine and criticize something, but then there's the implementation. There are some people who are against the decisions, [but still they know they must implement].</i></p> <p><i>BEATRIZ: It means you have a relationship with the company that is beneficial to both parties. The worker has a contract with the company, and both must honour that contract.</i></p> <p><i>DANIEL: the sense of duty towards the company is a point that I would associate with [organisational commitment]. Because every day when I go to work, I feel that I have a duty and even an obligation to give everything to the company in my workplace. of work, that must be our thinking, we have a duty to do our best and give everything... in our day-to-day activities. Maybe it's a little difficult to explain this point.</i></p> <p><i>FATIMA: I understand commitment to the company as loyalty, respect, the place where I am and all the responsibilities that come from the loyalty we may or may not have in the place where we are. If I fully comply with what they ask me to do, I am being loyal, committed to the company. I feel that I am committed to the company in that respect, (...) if I fully comply with what the company asks me to as I have an agreement.</i></p>	<p>Sense of urgency (timing) and sense of duty</p>	<p>“If I got another offer for a better job elsewhere, I would not feel it was right to leave my organization”</p> <p>“One of the major reasons I continue to work for this organization is that I believe that loyalty is important and therefore feel a sense of moral obligation to remain”</p> <p>(Allen and Meyer, 1990)</p> <p>“I owe it to this organization to do what is needed to achieve its objectives.”</p> <p>“I would feel guilty if I left this organization now.”</p> <p>(Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001)</p>
<p><i>DANIEL: Dedication is, in the day-to-day work, being aware that we are giving everything we can to do our best, in the best way possible, without jeopardizing values, safety. Yes, dedication I consider that to be it. We have a clear conscience that we do our best to make sure everything runs smoothly and for the best to achieve our goals.</i></p> <p><i>GABRIELA: It is the level of “delivery” that people have relative to the place they are in, and the people they're with. The dedication and engagement...</i></p>	<p>Job engagement</p>	<p>“5. I am enthusiastic about my job.”,</p> <p>“17. At my work, I always persevere, even when things do not go well.”,</p> <p>“11. I am immersed in my work.”</p> <p>“16. It is difficult to detach myself from my job.”</p> <p>(Schaufeli, Bakker and Salanova, 2006)</p>
<p><i>INGRID: Sometimes I am less motivated, but I always end up doing everything the same... We take [with us] a little bit from here [the company]. That is, here we do things as always, even if we are sad and unmotivated, we end up not showing it, at least here [at work] though we show it to our husband and children. As I told you there are times when I feel sadder, unmotivated. But then there are certain people here who tell us something and it takes us back to that higher level of motivation.</i></p> <p><i>KATE: Here we are talking about the commitment and motivation of the employee for the organisation. And the goal is to reach the end of the year and see that it grew with the lowest possible costs... that is the motivation. And it is really a factor that motivates me a lot, it's me for the year to know that I want to do even better than this year and that we have 12 more months to do it.</i></p>	<p>Motivation</p>	<p>“8. When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.”</p> <p>“17. At my work, I always persevere, even when things do not go well.”</p> <p>(Schaufeli, Bakker and Salanova, 2006)</p>

4.4 Findings related to mRQ2 “How is the current development of organisational commitment explained, from the perspective of the employees?”

This section presents the antecedents found to have a stronger impact on the development of organisational commitment in the case company. To be able to grasp and use most of the amount of data collected and analysed, and to better understand the main theme of organisational commitment development, this research question was divided in three specific questions: (1) the impact of internal resource management strategies and policies, (2) the impact of interactions and relationships and (3) other contextual circumstances that have an impact on the development of organisational commitment.

Note1: Direct quotations from the interviews appear formatted in italic.

Note2: Where the symbol (*) appears, other similar interview quotations are available.

4.4.1 Findings related to sRQ1 “Do internal human resource management strategies and policies contributed to develop commitment? And, if so, how?”

Inexistence of a formal strategy/vision regarding organisational commitment

The company showed no internal strategy for improving organisational commitment, as the CEO’s response evidences. The company’s strategy was a total focus on developing a strong consumer brand, focused on innovation, and they saw organisational commitment aligned with this strategy, meaning that their vision includes employees as the strongest brand fans.

PAULO: “The brand is the main target (related to commitment). Employees should be the biggest fans of the RENOVA brand. Work has been done so that employees become fans of the brand.”

INGRID: [RENOVA] innovated in several areas, for example the new machine [a major investment], it built a new warehouse. [events] Directly to employees, [yes] the company could do more.

BEATRIZ: RENOVA started to appear in all media and to be a “case study”, and people [employees] realized this. There is RENOVA brand all over the world (...). From the [launch] of the black toilet paper [2005], when appeared in the news, in the United States, etc. and people on their travelling would take photos [of RENOVA’s products] on the shelf”

This company seemed not to target the development of organisational commitment *per se* but rather considered organisational commitment as included in their strategic aim to strengthen the RENOVA commercial brand with employees. The secondary data also confirmed a high focus and efforts on innovation, as reported by the INSEAD case study (de Sousa, 2012).

Inexistence of deliberate strategy or initiatives, regarding organisational commitment

This was also confirmed by the numerous interviewees who did not recognize any deliberate strategy aiming at the development of organisational commitment, nor did they recall more than a few initiatives toward this goal. All agreed that there are few, if any, of these policies and initiatives put in place.

CARLOS: [examples] team building actions, or a party to bring where everyone gets together (...) to distribute a kit with a t-shirt... there “could be” those kinds of strategies, so that people would say “RENOVA, in addition to its commercial activity, has other causes!”. I am not saying they don’t exist, but this is not the culture [of this company].

EDGAR: There was only one event like that recently: the “family day”, or “Father’s Day”, where the company received employees’ family members, and showed the [new] machine. There was this “open day”, for people to show the family, the company, where they work... this year [it happened] on Father’s Day. (...) In my view it was positive, it revealed that the company not only thinks about us, but also knows that we have a family and that this family must have the pleasure of getting to know the company, the place where we go every day. (...) Yes, it was an isolated case.

INGRID: [something the company did deliberately to improve the commitment of people] Directly to employees, I do not think so. But it innovated in several areas, for example the new machine [a major investment], it built a new warehouse. [events] Directly to employees, [yes] the company could do more...

Low investment in human resource management initiatives

The case company did not invest on traditional, typical, human resources initiatives such as teambuilding activities, “get togethers”, thematic workshops, or other policies specifically aimed at increasing organisational commitment.

BEATRIZ: [These events like “open day” or “Father’s Day” have a big influence on the development of organisational commitment?] No, because they are sporadic.

KATE: I think it is important but right now in RENOVA I don’t see activities, like a dinner, we are too many [employees and] would be difficult to gather... now it’s Christmas time, it’s customary for some departments to organize their own [Christmas

dinners]. But there it is. [it is not the company organizing], it's the people and it's the Department (Logistics, or Marketing), we are the ones who organize it.

JACK: RENOVA is a company that does not organize many corporate events. It does not exist, very few... (...) not a corporate event company, to align, it never was like that. Nowadays there are companies that make corporate events, for example, Christmas parties. RENOVA does not have that, it once did, but in my 20 years here it never did. I do not think that's the most important thing. There are companies that get together with employees, with staff to discuss the results, not much happened here. It is not a company of these events... this alignment is done in a connected way, the word of mouth.

KATE: [activities or events, things that bring people together?] No, as far as I can see, it does not exist. It could. It might not matter in the same way for [all] people, which is my case: I do not feel the need for that. But for others may be important.

Although this company clearly did not invest in corporate events, or concrete initiatives to promote organisational commitment, which was unexpected for this type of large organisation, and human resource management did not focus on policies aiming at developing organisational commitment, this did not seem to harm organisational commitment level, as people interviewed generally were not concerned with this “absence” of deliberate strategies or initiatives.

LISA: [Whether the company promotes those initiatives, or if] nothing is done, there will always be those who do not care, and those who speak negatively about it and those who speak good things. (...) So, I think it is important [those events] but right now RENOVA in that part, I don't see... activities... a dinner, we are too many would be difficult to gather.

Even the few existing activities related to the promotion of organisational commitment, did not seem to be lead or coordinated by the human resource department, and there was a perception that they have a low, if any, impact on organisational commitment.

GABRIELA: [human resources is not responsible for these types of events], No. Because in this company these things (...) are assigned to each of the departments [meaning that] it's not just human resources department who does this, there's the involvement of other people, marketing department, the CEO, and things end up involving several people from various areas, which then also contributes to more engagement from the people.

4.4.2 Findings related to sRQ2 “What other contextual circumstances or events play a role?”

Opportunities for career and professional growth and development

Career opportunities and the will to grow, to learn and to develop competences were found to be strong influences on organisational commitment, in this company. There was a sense that the more time people remain with the company, the more committed they become, and attribute this, partly, to their sense of personal and career development. This was confirmed by the observation of the opposite, that a potential perceived risk of diminishing commitment exists, when people have fewer career opportunities, and/or less competences development potential.

EDGAR: (...) RENOVA ended up asking me if I was willing to lead a team. (...) And I was given that opportunity, (...) In other words, to always get a little more... this is how I see it and when I leave home it is with this idea, that I come here to contribute, to be able to develop a little bit more. And my commitment to the company is much related to this.

ANTONIA: I think a person can build her commitment, that is, to the extent that the person feels that there are things to do and can do and is appreciated for that and builds his career, I think this commitment will be reinforced.

(*)

Sense of “career peak” and having fewer opportunities

A potential downside for organisational commitment existed when people felt they had fewer career development opportunities, thus becoming less committed. However, this effect did not seem to have such strong impact. Some people even perceived no risks for commitment reduction from this antecedent.

ANTONIA: (...) [there may be a situation in which] a person says "I reached the top of my career", and doing too much or too little is indifferent, no one will give me the conditions anymore [such as a salary increase or a better job position], and (...) the person may even have a high position [job], and may be here for many years with the company but yet his level of commitment is zero.

(*)

This confirmed the importance of this antecedent: when career opportunities were perceived, commitment could increase (and consequent behaviours are manifested), and when these

opportunities became fewer and/or the expectations of progress were frustrated, then a negative effect on organisational commitment could occur.

Challenges proposed to employees

Challenges, such as new goals, new projects, higher goals, led to a sense of “being trusted” (by the organisation) and/or “being recognized”, and this led to greater commitment. The company frequently asked people to augment their contributions and challenged them to achieve new goals.

GABRIELA: [What contributed to this state of people's commitment?] (...) Work is always challenging (...) [in this company] And the challenges are constant, having to solve problems quickly and effectively, to appear something out of the blue, that we didn't even dream about and suddenly we have to think about it and solve that problem that was raised, and this has to do with the challenges. (...) Having a more monotonous and less autonomous job, I think it would also reduce my degree of commitment to the company.

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Despite this, these challenges posed to employees were not “artificially” fabricated by the company, there was a sense that this company’s operations were inherently challenging, constantly demanding effort and creativity from its employees.

BEATRIZ: (...) in a factory [working] twenty-four over 24, every day of the year, in which all our plans go upside down, in which we are constantly evaluating situations and reacting quickly, (...) because all the time we lose, is money [lost].

GABRIELA: ours is a very small company (if we compare with multinationals [in the same industry]) and it's a company that needs to be very agile. We all must be very agile to solve problems, and to get things done. And the challenges are constant, having to quickly and effectively solve problems that appear “out of the blue”, that we didn't even dream about, and suddenly we have to think about it and solve that problem and that has to do with the challenges.

Company is stable, reputable, trustworthy

The company’s core strategy included being a strong, high-profile consumer brand, investing in advertising and growing in reputation. This strategy had impact on employee commitment in diverse ways.

Firstly, people felt pride in working in a well-known, high-profile company.

CARLOS: If we were a company making private label products, for third parties, if we were a component company, or something like that, I do not know if the commitment would be the same, I doubt it would be. (...) I am saying this because I am in Marketing. (...) But I am convinced that even on the shop floor of the factory, people feel that there is an "elan", a [special] commitment to the RENOVA brand. (...) They are proud to travel to Japan and find a product of ours in a shop window. Or go to Mexico or the United States and know that our products are there for sale, even if they do not sell much (...) if we were only making products for other brands [and even if we had this new factory] and new machines (...) I don't think they would have so much commitment... I would be enjoying making toilet paper, doing all these things, getting paid better, having a better salary, but I do not know if I would have the same pride.

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Secondly, people felt that the company's good reputation had been conquered with great efforts, and that the brand must be sustained. They felt some obligation to contribute to this.

LISA: We must not forget this, when we contact a customer, or when we contact a carrier [supplier], in our case [Logistics Department], in general, I make contacts on my own behalf but the image behind me is the RENOVA brand, "period". There it is. We must not lose sight of this: we are serving a company and at that specific moment I am the face of RENOVA, both with the customer and the carrier, we need everyone.

DANIEL: Because the older colleagues say "A few years ago working at RENOVA was almost like emigrating to a country like France...for the people here in the area..." [Why?] Because of the economic standard of living and the provided security [from RENOVA] (...) but the eldest [employees] use this expression a lot: "coming to RENOVA was like emigrating to France, economically".

Thirdly, employees identify themselves with the company's struggle, competing with much larger multinational corporations, while being a family-owned, medium-size firm.

KATE: And people are very committed to the name RENOVA, which has already created a certain respect for us. We do not want RENOVA to look bad out there. We like the name RENOVA, and I notice that with a lot in my colleagues. For example, they may be loading a car [truck] that they know must be loaded urgently to reach the customer on time. But I think that the respect for the RENOVA's brand and the desire for it to be well regarded, impels us to execute the functions and to have such a commitment.

Finally, employees recognized that the company could be trusted to provide the needed conditions for developing high quality products and excellent work.

EDGAR: (...) the quality that is provided to us. This is a company that insists on having what is needed, what we feel is lacking, they provide. (...) People are given tools to be able to do that, to have the necessary tools to be able to contribute our best. They can absorb more of this training given to us.

FATIMA: They give us all the tools! RENOVA invests in training, invests in quality of work ... (...) we have a clean, organized workplace, good atmospheric conditions(...)

good lighting, an organized place without garbage around us... we have limitations, and we know the risks and dangers that we are running there, but everything is contained, analysed, predicted(...)

Concern for employees' well-being and conditions provided

The company was very concerned about employees, in all their human aspects. Employees recognized not only the company's efforts to provide the best work conditions, but also that the company was concerned with its employees' personal life and well-being. This concern was observed in the mind of the top management, going as far as the CEO having some doubts on how paternalistic the company may be presently, or may become in the future. The CEO was aware that the company could do more for its employees if had more resources.

PAULO: we care a lot (!) about the well-being of people, even in areas very different from those [typically] imagined (having a good canteen, having things...) we tried to do the best we can within our financial stability. (...) If the resources were much more, we could do much more. In that sense I am glad that people recognize it. This affective "commitment" [management has for employees] also often makes us treat people with some (how shall I say) with affection, paternalism... if people have been here for many years, they are not "thrown on the street" [fired] when younger people could do better job than them, so we try to adapt them and no one ever got fired, although there is a group of people who are unsuitable in relation to their work,... often people worked with machines, at some age, and who do not have ability to work with computers, it is not their fault, but they have been working a whole life here, we try to create a new life for people in logistics, or create a place where they can be useful, but not fire them.

PAULO: [In other companies, this happens] A person who has "put on our shirt" [meaning someone that has committed strongly to the company] his whole life, at a certain point is "kicked out" [fired]. But this does not happen here [in RENOVA]. We try to "recycle" people too, also have this emotional side... people have worked a lot their lives (...) [dedicated themselves to the company] and then because the world has changed, because their skills are no longer up to the task, and they have no needed abilities... to abandon them coldly ... So, there is this commitment on the other side [on the company side].

Employees recognized this concern from top management, and company's initiatives to promote general employee well-being. This was mentioned abundantly and with vigour, throughout the interviews.

FATIMA: RENOVA itself, provides us workers with some well-being and if people realized the well-being that RENOVA provides them, it would be wonderful (!) and there were not so many concerns [employee's worries and dissatisfactions]. Because RENOVA brings us well-being! It has a safe environment, it has quality, not only in the products, but it tries to give us quality in the workplace, and RENOVA manages to have three or four factors that lead us to be committed. (...) most of the people who entered [the company] with me, what they see in RENOVA is this: a good, faithful

home, which provides good working conditions, and where we can progress in our professional career.

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Fluid job descriptions, dynamic organic structures, and a perception of autonomy

Formal job descriptions, hierarchies, goals, and tasks exist in the company. However, there was a perception that the company promoted employees' autonomy and allowed a fair degree of liberty to choose goals, tasks, and activities. Examples of this were the freedom to experiment, to make decisions, to participate in diverse and unpredicted projects.

This appears to be intended, not "random", as they coined terms for it, calling it "fluid" and "organic" (rather than just flexible). If some new unprogrammed task emerged and made sense, people were not restricted to their formal job responsibilities and could improvise and go beyond their job description and responsibilities.

ANTONIA: if one wants to present a new proposal or signals being good at doing other jobs, in parallel, the person has the opportunity to demonstrate these skills to people who can evaluate indirectly. Even though it is not in its reporting structure, and, in this sense, I think that the person can build this commitment, that is to the extent that the person feels that there are things to do [id est, that need to be done], and one is appreciated for that, and builds a career, I think that the possibility of this commitment will be strengthened.

KATE: I always like to work with a goal to improve something. We always have a goal of improving, I create my own goals, I like to define my own goals.

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This "organic" or "fluid" approach to job definition was deliberate, as the CEO said he believes to be very beneficial for the company's performance.

PAULO: There is probably some [formal job descriptions], but very few, and they are less and less important. Sometimes I say "the time we are going to waste describing everything [in job descriptions], and then a new technology appears, and it will no longer be that [job description], and it will have to be a different one..."

I think that more and more people must do different things, and throughout their lives... in the past, people took a course, or learned, to be electricians or accountants all their lives, which would serve them for life. Nowadays, it is not like this: what they are doing now [will not be the same] in 3 years' time... they have to continue training for something else. Throughout life people will have to reinvent themselves, and do a lot of training, everything changes, it is a very big change, which implies enormous fluidity. I like to call it a "fluid" and a "quantum" organisation. If you ask me how I would like to see our organisation, I would like to see it fluid. Not like a crystal! Nature is not a crystal; it is much more complex. When we try to describe an organisation, in

two dimensions [draws an organizational chart outline], it is false, like trying to describe reality, or Nature, in two dimensions. And then Man is the most complex and most spectacular thing. Because this also often allows people to be able to change, to do different things, without being tagged to something as they were in the past. And to create this natural way for people to do different things throughout their lives ... workers are on a [production] line, and tomorrow they are on another.

Because from my point of view, the problematic areas in organizations (and this is the physicist [in me] talking and looking at Nature), are the ones in which there is a lot of “interference”, in which there are several that intersect, these are “shock zones”. And sometimes it is more important to create a person responsible for the interference, than the person responsible for each one of the things (example: because the person responsible for Logistics is more or less defined, he knows what he has to do ...) but suddenly if we have a new technology, a new client, and suddenly there will be a zone of “interferences”, it is better to have a mission in someone who resolves these “interferences” so that they do not fall apart, or to be a bit of an “evangelist” about the change you want, or the new thing you want to do.

This circumstance appeared frequently as a strong antecedent of employees' commitment, linked to an increase in intrinsic motivation, even after so many years working for the same company, sometimes on the same job post. With this element, they felt they were growing and developing, although they may have been in the same job position for many years.

Participation, employee's opinion considered

Several people mentioned that it is common that someone, namely from top management, asks their opinion in matters (e.g., marketing campaigns, ideas for solving some actual problem) that are not a part of their daily jobs and responsibilities. This was perceived as something motivating that also increases their overall commitment (and not just when their opinions and contributions were accepted, and/or incorporated into the final solution, but also when this was not the case).

FATIMA: Because the company does not oblige us to do anything, [meaning there is not a style of imposing or coercing employees], instead the company asks our participation and we may be willing, or we may not. [This happens for all kinds of activities] For everything, be it for “fires” [very critical events, or not so critical, less important matters].

CARLOS: For example, I imagine there is no other company where the President [CEO] sits in front of us on a swing [there is a playground swing installed in the open space] as it happens here. We have swings and that he [the CEO] swings while we are talking about important matters, sometimes strategic, that will shape the company's destiny. And he does it with me, and with anyone else.

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The environment and atmosphere lived in the company was one of openness to new ideas, to free discussions and to sharing own opinions. The playground swing in the open space office was just one example of how the company tried to promote a “debate culture”. Top management tried to look relaxed, “chilled” and open, even when discussing critical and strategic issues with employees. This made employees feel that their voice mattered and that they were requested to help solving the company’s problems.

Financial stability, and salaries always paid on time.

There was a perception that, in the present days, financial conditions were not the strongest motivator for younger generations, who may value other drivers. However, there was frequent mention to the fact that the company always honoured its part of the “deal” (in terms of salary and other conditions) and never failed, and also a perception that this was crucial to the commitment developed.

HUMBERTO: [Anything else that contributes to commitment?] People also feel that the remuneration and recognition of their work [is delivered by the company]. I mean, [generally] people always wish for more, but there is employee recognition [by the company]. (...) Compensation and recognition are also important factors for the person to feel committed here... The salary is important. If you would ask me "Are you pleased with your salary? Are you pleased with your salary progression over the years?" That could be an interesting question [from the researcher, regarding commitment].

(*)

Employees did not refer to the company as paying above the market, but they recognized and valued that the company could always be trusted regarding compensation and retribution, and strongly felt that this factor was associated with the current organisational commitment.

Leadership - Top management cares for employees and their problems

Top management, especially the CEO, was very well regarded, highly respected and people appreciated his openness, close presence, and care for everyone, for their problems, and even regarding personal issues.

CARLOS: I think that Management has a peculiar way of running the company. It does not follow the “canons” of a [typical] consumer products industry, a paper company (...) I think so [employee commitment in this organisation is closely related to the CEO] (...) because he has been in the company for a long time. For example, myself have never had another president, so it is only natural that I feel involved with him.

HUMBERTO: Well, obviously, top management has influence on this [organisational commitment], and it certainly does here [on this company]. It is said that the “example comes from above”. If at the top of the organisation this is what we are trying to promote, people become identified with those in front of them, the direct boss but also the boss of the boss.

KATE: [What could decrease people's commitment if it would happen?] For example, the Administration itself is important to be involved with all people, including the lowest hierarchical part of the pyramid. This part is important. If there was a “cold” relationship [from the part of top management] I think it would be a great reason for people [to be less committed].

Leadership: Access to top management

Top management was found to be deliberately very accessible to all employees, from all levels of the structure, and this was widely mentioned as something that helped organisational commitment to develop, in this company.

ANTONIA: I think that the level of commitment is highly related to the mission that each one performs here, but within each department I think the closer to the top (to a higher hierarchical position) the greater the commitment. Here it is very [frequent] for a person to go to the plant and seeing anything wrong and go to top management and say: "I saw this and in my perspective is that this is bad". It is clear that the care [attention] with which is heard, is always the same, that is, [any employee, even] an operator, if wants to speak to top management, just has to set an appointment [and can have access to top management and say what he wants].

JACK: [this company] is a family business, the Administrators [Board] are here, and this is very important, the fact that they are not managing from Lisbon, is in itself a very peculiar form, they are very present. But above all, the fact that it is a family business has a big impact, [people] do not see them as bosses but as leaders. If this bond ceases to exist, there will be misalignment with the company. (...) when [the CEO] assumed the presidency, he gathered people with a very strong commitment, and that changed [the company] a lot. People still talk about it today.

BEATRIZ: Anyone can come to [top management] and make comments about what they think. There are people who do it more at ease because they have been here for more years and know this... but an operator's access to a director or Board Member is at any time of the day or night.

Leadership: Direct supervision

The performance of direct supervision was considered very important and related to the so called “unpredictable nature” of some job functions (for example, the “fluid job descriptions” mentioned above).

ANTONIA: In my perspective it [the role of leadership for employee's commitment] counts a lot. (...) because often things are not clear, and my mission is "we don't have a map, let's get it, let's see where I can find a map to make this route easier".

EDGAR: You know that a machine we turn on, and we turn off, and then it stops. The human person is not like that, we need to captivate people, because as a line leader, I am responsible for the people (...) to produce more, to make them feel motivated (...) [the role of supervisors] always has an impact on commitment.

(*)

Direct supervision: trust

Direct supervision was seen as one that promotes autonomy, delegates, and shows trust in their employees. Trust was a relevant issue in the company culture and had strong consistency from top to bottom, i.e., the example of trust came from the top level (CEO and Board) and down to lower levels of the hierarchy.

DANIEL: One factor that I consider important [to employee commitment] is the relationship between managers and employees. It is a positive point in this house. There is no communication barrier between managers and employees. The trust they place in us. (...) they have confidence in us [trust] and we take this the best way possible [try to perform better]. This is important for me to have this commitment to the company that trusted my work. [Another factor is] the person with whom we were learning [supervisor].

HUMBERTO: Often it is not necessary to wait for validations (...) the culture of the company is like "if this has to be done, I will do it now". Because that [trust culture] comes from above, one hears "do it with no fear" and this is heard on many levels. It is a phrase that is not difficult to hear at RENOVA. At the top and at intermediate levels.

LISA: The leadership! [is a factor that contributes to commitment to the organisation] The relationship with the boss. It is essential. I think leadership produces commitment. Management shows us the example (...) Also, it is a support. I think they are very different [leadership at RENOVA have specific characteristics].

Direct supervision: feedback and recognition

Feedback and recognition, both formal and informal could be improved, as these elements did not seem to occur as frequently as some people would expect and desire. This was mentioned in the sense that if these elements, if improved, would develop organisational commitment even more than the current state.

INGRID: [what would you make people be more committed is] some kind of assessment, a conversation, assessing the strengths and weaknesses, [telling us] how to improve. Not only the monetary part [bonus], which is also very important

nowadays, because we have children, houses to pay, cars, etc... But sometimes, an appraisal, to sit down for a while and talk about the strengths and weaknesses. Our boss [should talk to the people] and say whether we are doing a good job or not.

KATE: As I said earlier, the company does not impose objectives on us, nor does it make assessments. We do not have evaluations that will tell us what the person has done, where has to improve...

This last point was related to a previous antecedent of organisational commitment identified: the flexible (fluid, non-formal) job descriptions, and a level of freedom and autonomy to set one's own goals. As a backlash of this, some people said they could use for more feedback and formal performance evaluations.

Direct supervision: communication

Generally, vertical communication was seen as a strength in this company, both top-down and bottom-up. It was mentioned that it impacted positively organisational commitment.

ANTONIA: [what most impacts people's commitment] we must not forget the top-down feedback, bi-directional communication. As the head of 5 people, I have to be committed to the work they have. I cannot give up on a person because they bypass me. My obligation is to try to reinforce the commitment. I cannot deny people access to participate if the person has an idea, he can share it to those who have the power to decide on that idea.

DANIEL: [the relationship with direct management] is very positive. My colleagues, our direct manager, is a relationship that you can easily talk to the person, talk about everything you need. There are no difficulties imposed on certain things that we may need.

JACK: If there would be hesitations in the purpose, if there would be poorly explained decisions, less understood decisions, if there would be lack of information, [then the level of commitment would decrease] I think that would certainly cause people to misalign, demotivation. If people would not understand [company] decisions if they were not explained.

The following table presents additional quotes to the themes above.

Table 13 Additional quotes regarding the themes with stronger impact

Theme	Quote
Emotional attachment to the organisation	<p><i>INGRID: People who are proud to work here and stay here for years and years and years, (...) and continue to be active and to make effort.</i></p> <p><i>CARLOS: It is a person who gets up in the morning thinking [they are] doing important work and goes home thinking about the problems [of the company].</i></p> <p><i>PAULO: [something has] to do with narratives... [many years ago] people working here, when talking to shareholders used to say, "your company...". The company was not theirs [the employees]. [But nowadays] people feel [differently], they internalized, they say "we...", now it's common a person speaking in public [about the company] saying "we".</i></p>
Inexistence of deliberate strategy or initiatives, regarding organisational commitment	<p><i>CARLOS: As far as I know, we don't have any plan, no strategy put in place to reinforce it [organisational commitment]. We do not have any objective to reinforce the commitment... we could have... Even at the level of our Innovation Management System we could have such a project for example, or a metric to increase people's commitment. [In the 20 years I have been here] This is more embedded in the day-to-day, and in the way of being of management.</i></p> <p><i>JACK: [the example interviewee gave was a training program on environmental awareness] the effort to train all that people. RENOVA is not the kind of company that organizes corporate events. It does not exist, very few of them... the "transmission of information" that I told you about before is done a lot between the leaders, and between [leaders and the] people, in a hierarchical way. It is not a "corporate event" company, it never was. Nowadays there are a lot of people to do... There are companies that make corporate events, for example, Christmas parties. But RENOVA does not have that, in my 20 years here it never saw it. I do not think that's the most important thing. There are companies that get together with employees, with staff to discuss the results, not much happened here. It is not a company of these events... The alignment is achieved in a more "connected" way, word of mouth.</i></p>
Low investment in human resource management initiatives	<p><i>INGRID: [events organized by the company and targeting] Directly employees, no, I do not think so. But it innovated in several areas... for example, the new machine, it built a new warehouse, in the production part, I think so... But directly with employees, I think we could do more.</i></p> <p><i>LISA: There was one [an event to bring people together] a few years ago. They wanted to show the new cafeteria and held an event on a Saturday and invited employees and their families to come if they wanted. This was a fun and effective event! Because the people who came were very happy and even the family members... that was 10 years ago. I had my oldest daughter [a baby] and I could not come (because my husband was working that day) and I was very sorry.</i></p>
Leadership - Top management cares for employees and their problems	<p><i>PAULO: I think that, in general, we care [for all employees] and I notice that in many managers, [the care] for people's well-being in things that I do not know if people notice it or not. Sometimes, in personal matters, because that person has vented and so we know who is going through a problem [rough time] and so the supervisor has a conversation with the person. For example, the person is not well because is getting divorced (...). [bosses here are very demanding] and require a lot from people but if the person is going through a bad time, has a sick child, or something else... we also [must show] support [and say to them] "we know that you are not here</i></p>

Theme	Quote
	<i>100%". In other words, we demand a lot, but also (...) we must be careful, if the person has any problem try to help them.</i>
Leadership: Access to top management	<p><i>JACK: It is a company with its own identity: The brand is very important, then the [Administration and Owners] being very present is very important, then developing things in a direct way is very important. And this is it.</i></p> <p><i>DANIEL: [this present level of commitment is due to] the trust employees have in the company, and the trust that the company has in employees. The absence of barriers between the various levels of the organisation, especially with the levels directly linked to ours, but also other levels above, to get to speak with [top management] it is something that is very easy.</i></p>

The following findings are presented in a different table to distinguish themes that were mentioned either less frequently throughout the interviews, or as information that did not come at first in the interview, meaning it may be less relevant (“top of mind”), when compared to other pieces of information.

Table 14 Additional antecedents, mentioned with less emphasis (related to sRQ2)

Findings / Quotations	Theme / Node
<p>Adequate communication, and knowledge sharing, was mentioned as a possible factor for the development of organisational commitment.</p> <p><i>FATIMA: I think certain things used to be communicated [and today are not and this information would] reach Production Department, and it would push people to be more committed. I only got to know [this company] very well after I became internal auditor. Until then, I only knew my function [job], and I did not really know the company. (...) Lack of communication is a big “mistake” [that causes] people not being “attentive”, or willing and strongly committed to RENOVA.</i></p> <p><i>JACK: People, occasionally, are heard [in this company]. It is sought [by the managers] to motivate through explaining and trying to involve them and aligning them in a direct and persuasive way with direct conversations, explaining things... that now happens less because they [managers] have less time than they had. I feel there is an effort by them [managers].</i></p> <p>Some managerial effort was recognized, using direct communication to motivate and increase employee commitment, yet no strong effect was evidenced (nor frequently mentioned throughout the interviews).</p>	<p>Communication, knowledge sharing by company</p>
<p>People working from home (and having flexible work hours) was mentioned only once. This view was ambivalent because the factor may have a positive impact on employee commitment, but at the same time may also refer to a consequence of commitment.</p> <p><i>HUMBERTO: (...) flexibility in most of the areas [sectors of the company]. Obviously not for people [on production lines]. But if they have a desk job, it is okay for people to arrive a little later. (...) a good number of people have computer equipment allowing them to work remotely. And if you need to, you can do things at home or other locations... in fact, it happens a lot and it is also a sign that people are committed... sometimes there are people working at home, on the weekends, and they are not obliged to do it, but they feel they should do it and they want to do it, and so they do it.</i></p>	<p>Work hours flexibility (in some functions) and possibility to work from home</p>
<p>Employees feel more committed when they realize the company is meeting its goals, and fulfilling its purpose, and at the same time they are also contributing to that with their own individual performance.</p>	<p>Sense of goal achievement and purpose. Own</p>

Findings / Quotations	Theme / Node
<p><i>HUMBERTO: at the factory we have billboards with production "daily", "weekly", "monthly" records, so people realize that their work is being evaluated in a funny way, sort of a "gamification", people realize there is "something else" that makes their work more valuable. (...) they know that if they give a little more [of themselves] they will break production records. And when it happens, it is publicized (...) This happens across all areas [not just a part of the people]. In each of the plants we have these "billboards", these productivity ranking tables and people are committed to breaking the records. There are no special prizes for beating the records. It is a cultural thing, about "wanting to do more" because they know "if it's good for the whole organisation, it's good for me".</i></p> <p><i>INGRID: When work does not go so well when I make mistakes for example... I get "disappointed" because it did not go well, it didn't go as I wanted, it wasn't done well [enough]. I like things to be done well.</i></p> <p><i>JACK: (...) believing in the RENOVA project is very important. Believing that, although we may not agree with everything, but realizing what the "path" is, having a very strong predefined path is very important, it is essential for people to believe. (...) It is very important [for people's commitment] to be able to understand what the course [direction] is and that there is no hesitation. Hesitation leads to mistrust, and mistrust leads to less commitment (...) If people perceived any hesitation about the purpose, about the goals, the "path", people would become insecure, and no one would be more committed.</i></p> <p><i>KATE: Because from the moment we are here, we want more and more the company develops, increase, that the brand be further strengthened, worldwide (...) This has been the growth of RENOVA, within society, and in the world. And my commitment comes from knowing execution, however small it may be (even the person may think their role is not essential for the company, but it is!), Any role is necessary within the organisation, and it is important.</i></p>	<p>impact on company's goals.</p>
<p>After giving stronger causes for commitment, later in the interviews some people also mentioned their satisfaction with the job as something that could affect their commitment.</p> <p><i>BEATRIZ: [Causes of commitment?] Because they like to do it. Here at the level of operators [production floor employees] people work with machines. (...) if they do not not like working with machines, they will feel extremely unhappy (...) they don't have affinity, don't feel comfortable (...).</i></p> <p><i>FATIMA: (...) what I do, I do it with pleasure. I am committed, as well as contractually, to the "taste" I have acquired for the work I do. (...) the person is committed to a contract ("ok, you have to do it") and has accepted the terms of the contract but does not like what is doing. Not me! I like what I do. I am committed in two dimensions: for what I like and for the contract the company has "imposed" on me.</i></p> <p><i>Anyone who joins a company thinks that they will reach the top level and when it does not happen creates frustration. Either one learns to like what one does and embraces the "cause", or he is "bad" for the rest of his life, because afterwards he does not achieve what he wants, does not look for anything else, settles down. And that is what I see a little in the organisation, in some people who have been there for a few years... some are leaving.</i></p>	<p>Employee satisfaction with the job. Job satisfaction.</p>

Findings / Quotations	Theme / Node
<p><i>GABRIELA: [elements would make people no longer committed? Or decrease the degree of commitment.] Having a monotonous and less autonomous job, I think it would also reduce my degree of commitment to the company.</i></p> <p>This evidence could also be more leaning toward “motivation” and “job satisfaction” than to commitment.</p>	
<p>This element was mentioned only once, and in the end of the interview, after the interviewee had already mentioned other more important antecedents for commitment in the company.</p> <p><i>HUMBERTO: [thinks for a long time] If you started to increase intolerance to certain types of issues. Or some conditions that exist today [would be gone, for example] we have a pleasant canteen... If they said “who does not go to the canteen is not entitled to the lunch subsidy” this would severely damage the commitment, people would feel more injured and less cherished...</i></p>	<p>Tolerance.</p> <p>Present conditions to employees.</p>
<p>It was specifically asked if they could recall, in the company’s history, some event that had an impact on organisational commitment, positive or negative. The results were not strong, as we did not find many elements mentioned across interviews (triangulation).</p> <p>There was a mention of: some strikes in the distant past, but not too relevant, and the launch of innovative products (e.g., black toilet paper) and how it changed the brand awareness worldwide.</p> <p>Example 1: Implementation of 24h shifts.</p> <p><i>BEATRIZ: I cannot identify [such an event]. It may have happened before I arrived but, in the 26 years I am here, I have not identified such a situation. But [before I was here] there were some strikes, and [division between] “who was on the side of the company” [and who was not]. At that time, some people were [very committed] (...) There were historical issues, which may have had impact on that commitment, but things “way back” [distant past]. I know there were situations... I remember some issues with strikes, after they implemented 24hr [shifts] and that had a big impact.</i></p> <p>Example 2: Launching black toilet paper.</p> <p><i>BEATRIZ: RENOVA started to appear in all media and to be a “case study”, and people [employees] realized this. There is RENOVA brand all over the world and this has increased the pride of working here. From the [launch] of the black toilet paper [2005], when appeared in the news, in the United States, etc. and people on their travelling would take photos posting “I saw something from RENOVA, on the shelf...” There was pride.</i></p>	<p>“Landmark” events have little or no impact on organisational commitment.</p>

Findings / Quotations	Theme / Node
<p>Since the CEO and the main Board Members have a low rotation in the last decades, it was mentioned that it would not be surprising that no events had strong impact.</p> <p><i>CARLOS: [considers his answer for a long time...] No. I cannot identify a moment, an event, a “before and after”. But it must be borne in mind that I have been here for 20 years, and the Board has always been the same. The CEO has always been the same, the Directors have always been the same, and therefore, I think that this type of events implies a change at “the top”. I believe that in a company that changes its CEO every 3 years, maybe it completely changes the relationship and commitment that people have.</i></p>	
<p>A strong bonus scheme (monetary incentives) does not exist in the company, and some people interviewed revealed they have no bonuses or financial rewards at all. The salaries were not considered high, nor higher than the general job market. Although people mentioned this as a possible (theoretical/abstract) cause for lower commitment, it seems not to have negatively affected organisational commitment, in general.</p> <p><i>INGRID: For example, prizes [bonuses], I think that from time-to-time people should be valued with prizes. I think people like to have bonuses too. And many times, in our day-to-day life, as an employee, sometimes it is just a salary increase, or [an increase] indexed to inflation, and there have been some years that, because of the economic crisis, this may have reduced the feeling of commitment. We are doing our best, and in contrast to the company [perspective] because of external reasons, economic circumstances, is unable to attribute a bonus to the level of remuneration at that time.</i></p> <p><i>DANIEL: [And is that factor here pulling commitment down?] Yes, that is what I am saying ... In some employees I think so. But it is not that big a proportion... [meaning it has a low impact]</i></p> <p>(*)</p> <p>A frustration of expectations in terms of financial compensation may lead to a decrease in commitment, as did happen during the period of the financial world crisis (in the years following 2008). However, this was mentioned more in terms of what “could happen”, theoretically, and not so much what actually is the real situation in the company.</p>	<p>Monetary compensation (e.g., salary increases, bonuses)</p>
<p>Because the incentive scheme (bonus) is not strong (mentioned above), some people showed frustration and consequently regarded as a risk to the development of organisational commitment.</p> <p><i>DANIEL: (...) people who think they should be [compensated/recognized] monetarily ... I think it influences, there are certain employees in which this discontent is visible, because they think they should be better paid (...) but I think this is by comparison with other companies. some met with colleagues</i></p>	<p>Compensation incentive scheme</p>

Findings / Quotations	Theme / Node
<p><i>[school friends], who have gone to other workplaces in the same industry, and there is this comparison factor. In some people, but not a big fraction [of employees].</i></p> <p><i>LISA: Reduction of commitment... I don't know if it goes in the direction of what you are asking me for, but I think there was a phase [when] this was an important factor: I think people like to have bonuses. And many times, in our day-to-day life, as an employee, it is sometimes a salary increase, or indexed to inflation, and there have been some years when, because of the crisis, this may reduce the feeling of commitment. Why is it, when we are doing our best, the company in contrast, because of "external reasons", "economic circumstances" is unable to award a bonus?</i></p> <p><i>HUMBERTO: (...) in the years of the crisis, during a period when wages were frozen... there were times when the buying power at throughout the country and tax surcharges (...) wages were frozen, there was some "buzz", displeasure, but people still committed themselves to what they were doing and what they felt they had to do.</i></p>	
<p>Several individual characteristics or traits were mentioned as potentially having impact on the level of employee's commitment. Here are the most important examples from the interviews:</p> <p>Personal characteristic #1: Resilience (and Patience)</p> <p><i>ANTONIA: [People] need some time [to develop commitment] (...) and those who have less patience, are more restless, [for example] when one sends a message expects [from companies in general] to have some immediate response, therefore when they join an organisation like RENOVA, they expect the company meets their expectations immediately or almost immediately. And it is the resilience of each person who enters here that will define their commitment [to the company]. (...) If the person does not have persistence, to "chase" it is easy for them to give up and then that commitment disappears.</i></p> <p>Personal characteristic #2: Character and Temperament</p> <p><i>BEATRIZ: You know what they say, "good people are genuinely good". [People] who have no bad character and have good character. We all have our "character", some are more introverted others are more extroverted but there are people who care more about others, who teach others, who are willing to help.</i></p> <p><i>Human resources when selecting people already have this care, in addition to technical competence, to also evaluate the way people are, the way they collaborate with colleagues and the way they collaborate with the boss.</i></p> <p><i>[If we] have someone in a team who does not work properly, who "hangs" on to colleagues, (...) I mean a "bad character", you say to them "You have to do this." and they reply, "I don't do it, do it yourself". (...) the way they relate to others, the way the person sees the situations, I think this attitude (...) [hurts commitment].</i></p> <p>Personal characteristic #3: Knowledge sharing behaviour</p>	<p>Individual's traits and individual's previous experiences.</p>

Findings / Quotations	Theme / Node
<p><i>EDGAR: [Researcher: do you think] people share their knowledge because they are committed or rather is this knowledge sharing that generates more commitment.] [Reply] This sharing (...) is really something within the person, they were already here at the start-up and the knowledge they had, they made a point on sharing it with anyone who entered the company.</i></p> <p>Personal characteristic #4: Past experiences that shaped personality</p> <p><i>LISA: Second: I think it also depends on the “character”, the individual traits, probably. (...) there are people with more group spirit, others less, it depends on the experience they had, their past. This is within the character of the person; people have a character in a way that facilitates commitment and others that make it difficult ...</i></p> <p><i>It depends on the spirit they had before [??] for example a person who worked alone, when he joins a team, even working in groups is difficult in the beginning, he needs to adapt. Then there are people who naturally have some “group gift” [meaning team spirit]. (...) they have this “gift” naturally.</i></p> <p><i>[for developing commitment] Group sense is essential. Each person's experience. The character of the person. And in the end, there it is... origins so different but we managed to work in groups.</i></p>	
<p>Typically, entry-level younger employees start with very low commitment, mainly due to their initial work and life expectations, influenced by society around them.</p> <p><i>ANTONIA: [Nowadays, people from this new generation] have less patience, are more restless, (...) expect [from companies in general] to have an immediate response ...</i></p> <p><i>BEATRIZ: Sometimes, when we admit operators, young people aged 18, 19, 20, young people who would like to be something else in their life: they would like to be soccer players, pop stars, and therefore [coming to] work in a factory in shifts, maybe it wasn't (for sure it wasn't!) what they would imagine, so their commitment [is bound to be low] ... They even probably are thinking “something fantastic is going to happen in my life and I'll have a lot of money, a car, a house...” So, when they join [the company], their commitment is very weak, especially young people. Because a few years ago, it [the economic environment] was different, as [most] people didn't study, they had to go to work [early and most likely], they wanted to build the house, they wanted to have a piece of land, get married, have children, now it's not like this... Young people marry later, stabilize their relationships later, if at all, live in their parents' homes and have an ideal that they would prefer something else for their lives.</i></p> <p>It seems to be a common opinion that, on average, more committed employees are older, and have more years with the company.</p> <p><i>FATIMA: [Nowadays] people (...) say “I am here today, in this company that provides me with some well-being, but to work on Saturdays, and Sundays and holidays, that I do not want!” People are not willing to have rotation (we have a schedule here, which changes every two days. It is understandable that these boys who leave high school or university, come to work there, and they really don't want to come here!</i></p>	<p>Young generations are less committed than older generations.</p>

Findings / Quotations	Theme / Node
<p><i>INGRID: Most people like to learn [in the context that this shows higher commitment]. There are people who have been here for many years, and they like to learn new things and are not afraid to work.</i></p> <p>Younger employees, although apparently less committed to the company, and probably because of that offer feedback less filtered, and that is valued.</p> <p><i>INGRID: Yes, I notice that some young people also “put on the shirt” [meaning they are highly committed], so to speak, but they also have a good thing: when they think something is wrong, they say it right away and we, older people, keep a little quieter [to ourselves]. They bring another energy, at least in our section, they came and deliver [their opinions]. The older ones also give me feedback, but the younger ones are more “down-to-earth”.</i></p> <p><i>JACK: Nowadays, the new generations, people are much less connected to companies (...) What has happened is that people have gone out [retirement] and new people who replace them (...) have a degree of involvement (...) increasingly difficult to have, and it is not anything in particular, but nowadays generations are different, kids today are much less connected and people change jobs much more easily than they did 20 years ago. And therefore, if at my level [meaning his older generation] it still exists a strong commitment, [hierarchically] downwards, on operators [level] there is a much lesser commitment and it is not only at RENOVA, but I think this is everywhere [in every company]. (...) nowadays it is very difficult the kids want more job rotation, to earn 100- or 150 more-euros people leave the company.</i></p>	
<p>Not mentioned often, nor with a high degree of relevance, is the fact that some people, being more ambitious than others, may stand out in terms of their more visible behaviours and that this may lead to a misleading perception of higher level of commitment.</p> <p><i>DANIEL: (...) we all had the same opportunities. And it is up to each person wanting or not to grab the opportunity, because not everyone has the same will of wanting to get the opportunity ([for example] wanting to be responsible for the machine during other’s vacations.) Not everyone has that ambition, that goal. And those who had [that ambition] had their chance.</i></p> <p><i>EDGAR: Not all of us are similar, not everyone has the same desire, and you know that Man is complicated (laughs) and is unsatisfied, and that is something that affects one’s commitment to the company.</i></p> <p><i>ANTONIA: (...) from the moment one decides “this is my place, I still have things here to do, I want to continue!”, (...) If one feels that I still can give more, [has not] reached the limit, [then one’s] commitment is reinforced.</i></p>	<p>Individual’s ambition and will to power</p>
<p>This type of employee recognition was not happening in all departments the same way, as one of the interviewees mentioned that she would appreciate more frequent appraisals and specific recognition, especially from her direct supervisor. However, others do have appraisals and recognition, and valued this fact related to their organisational commitment.</p> <p><i>DANIEL: Knowing that I am going to a workplace where they value my work is very important, knowing that we are valued for our work. (...) Because we</i></p>	<p>Informal recognition</p>

Findings / Quotations	Theme / Node
<p><i>observe the situations and I think, I consider, I have this idea that the organisation gives value to our work, because what is the organisation without its employees? I think there is this thinking [mentality] on the part of RENOVA, valuing their employees and knowing that they have people they can count on to continue with the challenges ahead.</i></p> <p>(*)</p>	

4.4.3 Findings related to sRQ3 “What role do employees’ interactions and relationships play?”

This section presents specific antecedents found to have impact on organisational commitment, in the case company.

Note1: Direct quotations from the interviews appear formatted in italic.

Note2: Where the symbol (*) appears, other similar interview quotations are available.

Good relationships between employees

Data revealed that generally, relationships between employees are positive and healthy, and that this was considered a factor with positive impacts on the development of organisational commitment. Here are presented the most relevant examples.

Example #1: Existence of groups on a social network mobile application and that serves both to solve work issues and problems (e.g., plant production problems) as well as to share personal information (e.g., family events, births, anniversaries, etc.)

BEATRIZ: They named it “RENOVA Teamwork” and the other day I changed its name to “RENOVA Dream Team” (laughs), (...) [we share on this app] good things that happen in the factory. [but also] (...) a daughter’s photograph. [this social network group] is a good thing and it ends up having to do with that [organisational commitment], because a colleague of ours is happy and shares his new baby [and we relate more to him].

Example #2: A young employee who happened to be introvert and the direct supervisor incentivised social interaction with co-workers to raise the level of commitment.

BEATRIZ: (...) an operator with relationship problems came in, a guy who seemed to be intelligent, capable, but with immense social difficulty. We decided to hire him, give him a chance, and we were careful to put him in a team with a line leader who is a person with a great training capacity. (...) [his direct supervisor said] "I had a conversation with him as if he were my son, who had to know how to be different, talk to people, what was his problem, etc.". This then helps the commitment. Either the boy will not integrate, will not establish himself and will leave; or, if we do it [properly, considering the importance of relationships] and choose the person who is going to be with him and his colleagues... [and he will do fine].

Because if I'd put him with someone who [does not care about relationships] I'd "killed" him, it's over, he's dead, it's over. And he is not going to have any commitment to the company, he will drag himself, because [this boy] seems to be a person with great capacity, but he has a social side with great difficulties, I don't know if they are family issues, or his character...

Example #3: Direct perceptions and references about how good relationships between employees impacts positively organisational commitment, on this company.

DANIEL: [relationship between employees, how does it affect commitment to this company?] This is how: the relationship between colleagues is essential for the proper functioning of the company. Because if several employees have a good relationship with each other, if we are all going to think "we are here for this purpose, we all contribute to the work of others", it only helps that the company is favoured.

GABRIELA: [The level of relationship between people here, how would you rate it?] Good! Honestly, it is good. And I hear terrible things from other companies. I would say it is "humane". It is what I told you at the beginning: to value the individual person. These relationships are at the work level. [but there are also friendships, like, we all dine together sometimes without having anything to do with work. [Is it frequent and common here? And does it contribute to such a commitment or is it neutral?]] Yes, it does contribute. The fact that I know the family of my friends... my colleagues... [She corrects and laughs] You see, I confuse myself... yes, it contributes to more cohesion.

LISA: [this expression "notion of group" means] I think we have to have a sense of group, [for example] if there is someone who is "low" [depressed] or has difficulties, we should support him. [we should] be together on the moments of success but also if there is a more difficult moment, we also cannot leave a person on their own, because it is not good for the team in general. If we are a team of five and one person is in a weaker physical condition, tired or having a personal problem, then that person may become more fragile, and we must give them support.

Example #4: The company has a good, healthy, cooperative environment, where in general the relationships are positive.

DANIEL: There is comradeship between the employees. In general, there is a good relationship between colleagues [in this company].

GABRIELA: I see a good connection between Production and Transformation [two divisions of the company]. They are very connected because it is a process ... and it is all very connected.

INGRID: Sometimes I feel sadder, less motivated. But then there are certain people here who say "this" or "that" and it takes us back to that higher level of motivation, which is important to me here ...

Access to other areas/departments, and good communication

In this company it is very easy to have access to the CEO, and other board members, and top managers. People viewed this as a positive thing, allowing to know better the vision and direction of the company, its culture, strategy, etc. It was frequently mentioned as a factor contributing to the development of organisational commitment.

ANTONIA (...) people are not interdicted to access the President [CEO](...) the marketing director, (...) they [employees] have the opportunity to demonstrate their skills to people who can evaluate them, indirectly. Even though he may not be in his reporting structure, and, in this sense, I think that the person can build his / her commitment, (...) I think that the possibility of this commitment will be strengthened.

BEATRIZ (...) yes, here [the atmosphere] is very "open" and we all talk [with each other], electricians, mechanicals, [employees from] quality, safety, and we are all close, face-to-face, or "next door neighbour".

EDGAR: No. [the company] doesn't promote, but it doesn't prohibit it either... that is, I'm from a department and if I want to go and see another department there's nothing that says, "you can't enter here, it's forbidden". There is the freedom within the company to move, to go talk to any colleague, there is no reprisal or anything.

Open spaces and a culture of openness fosters good cooperation between employees

There are several physical open spaces, both in the head office, where the Board and Marketing department are located, and in the plant, near manufacture/production lines. These were created, on purpose, to promote frequent employees' interactions.

CARLOS: What we don't have here is that rigid thing, a room for each manager, (etc) There are some people with their own offices, but very few of them. There are two or three, for the Board members and for some Directors.

This type of office layout was mentioned as a condition allowing for more interactions between employees (when compared with closed rooms). These interactions are frequently debates about the job or projects, and people mentioned it as a factor contributing to the development of organisational commitment.

Young employees starting with lower commitment and developing it through interactions

Some younger employees entered the company with low expectations, sometimes having a sense that they are on a less attractive career than their expectations and through relationships with other employees they developed organisational commitment, becoming attached to the organisation, and improving their overall motivation.

BEATRIZ: if they have been in the company for less time their commitment is not great, the person has just joined and is getting to know the “house”, training, the commitment is [bound to be] weak. (...) young people [probably] would like to be something else in their lives (like soccer players, or pop stars, ...) and therefore to work in a plant, doing shifts, maybe it wasn't (for sure!) what they expected, so their commitment [is low] and they could even think “maybe something fantastic is going to happen in my life and I'll have a lot of money, a car, a house, and travels...” So, when the person enters [the company], the commitment is very weak, especially in young people. Because a few years ago, it was different, people were not going to study [university], and they had to go to work, they wanted to build a house, to have land, to get married, have children, now it's not like this... Young people marry later, stabilize their relationships later, if at all, live in their parents' homes ... and have the idea that they'd like something else, for their lives.

Now, these young people depend sometimes on which teams they are assigned to, with whom they form a work group, and if they have examples of someone who has a good commitment to the company, I think they end up following that example; if they stay with someone who doesn't have such a strong commitment, they can also join this path(...) So we are careful to put them with someone who can influence them.

Not all young employees got to develop organisational commitment, in this company. Rather, it was found that this depends a lot on the influence of team members, and their own level of organisational commitment.

Older employees influence the more recently hired (newcomers' socialization)

BEATRIZ: We always try to make a “mix”, in which we bring together people who have been here longer with more recent employees. For example, a new operator enters that I may think may depend on who to stay with ... can go to one side or give to the other ... [if the recent employee is on] that group that [his behaviour] "will depend a lot on the relationships", then we are careful to put him with someone with another view, who can try to influence them.

EDGAR: When I joined the company, there were quite a few people, that had great commitment to the company, people older than me. I learned a lot from them, and it was with them that I started to really enjoy this, because they taught me how things were done, and that was very good, that people had a lot of knowledge and shared that information with us then. (...) Currently, I think this is happening again because the company has been for many years without [employee rotation], people simply had that

job and made sure not to lose it, they dedicated themselves to the company, because there were no jobs [on the outside market].

FATIMA: everything is learned from experience but now after 6 months they are gone... because they do not want to be “stuck” at weekends, working shifts, working nights... they will not want to be in this company if there is no camaraderie, and this commitment [level]... We are training people so that in two years RENOVA will have active people with that same disposition.

JACK: Now it is difficult, it is difficult. This issue of the [older] “generation” that was [recruited and] closely related to what [our CEO] implemented at RENOVA [and this older generation, is about to] retire.

I think this is a very important moment, where it is important not to lose your footing because this is not only important because people are retiring and may “take” this commitment with them, but on the other hand it is very important that the people who are here understand this and make [younger people] understand it because if it doesn't happen, a lot of that commitment will be lost [when this older generation retiring].

People who have some responsibility, like me, it is important that they understand this and can pass it down, because if not... [presently] it is very difficult with the “kids” [and what they] want. [They have] more rotation, they will leave the company to earn 100 euros more, and I think it is an important phase that we are in.

Informal interactions have less impact than work activities

Work-related interactions between employees were perceived to have greater positive impact, than informal interactions, on the development of organisational commitment.

LISA: I think [interactions and relationships where content is not work-related] counts less than day-to-day [work-related interactions]. (...) [in our workplace] we can have a good time, a moment of sharing, but I think the “starting point” [where good relationships really count to improve commitment] is really the “day-to-day”, because every day we are here, 40 hours a week, sometimes even more... and it is important not to lose sight of day-to-day work and it is part of our daily lives. I think the starting point [the most important] is, first of all, the work.

PAULO: And for the company it is also very important that the person has balance (with friends, with family, with things “out there”). And even for us it is very important to use the network of all these people! When I select someone, I am recruiting them for the work, as well for their knowledge, but also for the network the person has. [it is important that the person] is not “closed” [short-minded] within the company. I really like that people play tennis, football, do things with family, with children, go outside. If they do these activities among them [employees], that's great, but then that they do it spontaneously, informally, and not within the organisation [meaning, requiring organisation's involvement].

This topic was mentioned throughout most of the interviews, even when the subject was not directly talked about. The findings from the interviews pointed to that their focus and concern was mainly for the completion of their work and for the company's goals. As such,

informal relationships and interactions seemed to appear as “nice to have”, rather than a “must”, in terms of impact on the development of organisational commitment.

The following findings are separated on a different table to indicate themes that were mentioned either less frequently throughout the interviews, or as information that did not come at first in the interview, meaning it was less relevant (“top of mind”), when compared to other pieces of information.

Table 15 Additional antecedents, mentioned with less emphasis (related to sRQ3)

Findings / Quotations	Theme / Node
<p>The company views informal external social networks as something valuable and that management should take advantage of, and regard as relevant for the employee’s well-being (work-life balance). However, the company does not promote these informal social networks inside the company, it is expected these interactions and relationships occur outside the company, and spontaneously.</p> <p><i>PAULO: And for the company it is also very important that the person is balanced with his friends, with his family, with things out there. (...) it is very important to use the network of all these people! When I admit a worker, I am recruiting him for the work he does here, for the knowledge he has, but also for the network he has in the world and that is able to work things out. And I should [it’s my job and the company’s interest] potentiate these networks, as never before! Do not close within the company. I really like that people play tennis, football, do things with family, with children, who go outside ... and if it is in here, among them, great! ... but that they do it spontaneously, informally, and that don't do it within the organisation, which suddenly has something ...</i></p> <p>This reinforces the idea that this company does not invest on increasing relationships and interactions, although they regard them as valuable. The company does not deliberately promote employee expressive interactions.</p> <p><i>PAULO: I used to do things like that at the beginning of my life: weekends had company activities and if I was exhausted, it was a huge bore. And you had to involve the family! I really like that people show RENOVA to their family, ant to let them explain the company to them. The employee is RENOVA’s face before his family, so he must be incarnate and he feels that he is also the owner of this brand, in part, of course. For example, there are those companies that try to provide and create all these spaces inside: the gym, etc. It’s one thing to have a company football team, it’s another thing to have a gym here and people go when they want. I prefer that they do it outside. Diversity is a very important thing for me, and I prefer that people would talk to other people [outside the company]. [So, that kind of program “we are all going to plant a tree next Saturday...”] You won't see us ever doing that here! You may see us letting an NGO clean up our intranet and propose it to people, and the person with their own freedom... I don't like these liturgies [these prescribed rites or body of actions, because they] are false, artificial things, and that would be treat employees like children, [that would be like to] buy a good conscience by treating people as if they were</i></p>	<p>Informal relationships and interactions (expressive ties) were valued but not seen as something important for commitment</p>

Findings / Quotations	Theme / Node
<p><i>children. And nowadays one cannot treat people like children ... you do that in high school, you do not do it [here].</i></p>	
<p>Friendship relationships abound (expressive ties) but compared to work-related interactions, those are not seen as having a strong impact.</p> <p><i>BEATRIZ: It may have an impact on some people because there are people who establish friendly relationships here, but I don't think it's the main factor. My opinion is that it does not have a significant impact [on organisational commitment]. We talk even with the area managers and the operators, we talk about what they think about life, their mother, etc... but I don't have to have a friendship relation with them (...)</i></p> <p><i>DANIEL: [examples] football games, paintball [but not all sections of the company] at least in my section these are not organized. [relationships between colleagues were mentioned as being very important but not this type of relationship] Yes, in professional terms. The rest [of interactions] outside the company, sometimes they meet (...) but the professional "terms" [interactions related to work] are what is most important.</i></p> <p>The company does not promote such friendship and informal interactions, directly.</p> <p><i>GABRIELA: [after direct question] Yes. The fact that I know the family of my friends... my colleagues! [Laughs because confused the terms] See! I even confuse myself [between friends and colleagues] This contributes to more cohesion between people. But the organisation is "discreet" [in the sense of not promoting these interactions, yet it just happens]. [The company] is not intrusive into people's lives. We get together because we want to be. It is not the company that says that on a certain day we are all going to have a picnic somewhere. I know that there are companies that promote saying, for example "we are all going there to do things at the weekend" ... Not here...</i></p> <p><i>HUMBERTO: [Does the company encourages these activities?] Not at all, team building activities we have very few... Now and again, they exist spontaneously but are not promoted by the company. [when asked directly for impact on organisational commitment] It has some impact. If this were enhanced, it could have good results.</i></p> <p><i>JACK: There are relationships in which the content is not work, but I don't think it is very relevant [has no impact]. Everything revolves around work; everything revolves around work matters. Sometimes there is [the other type of interaction] but essentially it is a lot about work.</i></p> <p><i>LISA: (...) people working in shifts [arrange activities outside the company on their off hours] Then at the departmental level, in Logistics we have a Christmas dinner, organized among ourselves, choose the place between us, and go. (...) No, not the company, we organize it. On our own initiative (...) I think. [it has some impact on commitment, although it was not mentioned spontaneously] Then there is also the notion of being part of the "RENOVA family". Although it is not RENOVA that organized it, but we have this notion.</i></p>	<p>Friendship relationships abound (expressive ties) but were not seen as having a great impact</p>

Findings / Quotations	Theme / Node
<p>Located in a countryside region, somewhat distant from big cities, and thus being a major employer in the region, i.e., having several members of the same family working there, there is no evidence that these family ties have a strong impact on the development of organisational commitment.</p> <p><i>BEATRIZ: [family relations between employees have a minor impact on commitment with the company] It ends up having... There was an engineer who recently had a baby. And we saw the photographs of the second daughter, and he even joked saying they could reserve him an employee number at RENOVA because it would be the 4th generation [of this family] working in the company. The grandfather had already worked here, his parents worked both here and he works here and as a joke he said to get a number at RENOVA for his daughter. The parents lived in one of the little houses outside the factory. There are really a lot of family relationships here. (...) [But] I do not believe [this is part of the main factors for high commitment]</i></p> <p>Interviewees mentioned this theme (family ties) as a secondary issue and never as a strong antecedent of organisational commitment.</p>	<p>Employee's family ties</p>
<p>Interactions and stronger relationships make people have a better sense of the company and its situation, and thus help to understand what is happening (sense-making). This was seen as having an indirect impact on organisational commitment but not a direct or strong effect.</p> <p><i>ANTONIA: In my view, this [interaction between people from different departments] reinforces commitment because there is a greater sharing of [information]. People are not short-sighted, limited to the reality they have. They have different perspectives. This interaction between people not only leads to a much broad vision of the company, but also makes us share our views of things and [this way makes us] transfer knowledge.</i></p> <p><i>The fact that there is this interaction between people, we not only have a much more transversal understanding of the company, but we also managed to share our view of things and we managed to transfer the knowledge... [having] access to a certain type of information (...) helps people make a better reading of a particular setting.</i></p>	<p>Relationships and interactions improve sense-making</p>
<p>The importance of organisational commitment appeared here in a negative perspective, as those with lesser commitment may influence other employees. This topic could be linked to the fact that people often work in teams (both in Production and Logistic departments) and so their influence is obviously present.</p> <p><i>ANTONIA: I think I understand the signs of when that bond is completely broken and, in that case, it is very difficult to bring people "back" [to strong organisational commitment]. If RENOVA insists on that person staying, whether we give him a different project, or else that person may be a "bad element". That person can contaminate the rest of the team. I would not say ... I think that if a person is not committed and stays, for me, has a negative effect, because I think that from the moment that this bond is broken, it is</i></p>	<p>The influence on others from someone not committed</p>

Findings / Quotations	Theme / Node
<p><i>difficult for the rest of the “family” to convince that person that got “astray”.</i></p> <p><i>BEATRIZ: One [person] can influence a [whole] team, because then that team ends up not working well, and it can influence another team with are the other persons of other teams. Now, based on my experience, I see that there are people who are committed regardless of what is around. They have their commitment and their attitude. [on the other side] There are people who don't have that commitment. And other people who are in the middle, depending on who they are and how they are. They may “fall” to either side.</i></p>	

4.5 Conclusion of the chapter

In the previous sections the comprehensive record of all the findings was presented in detail and in an articulated way. This section presents a summary of these findings, shown in the next table allowing for a rapid review (see Table 16 Summary of the findings and association with antecedent categorization).

When presenting the findings, a distinction was made between the “stronger” and the “weaker” themes. Based on this analysis, the following table summarizes whether a specific finding is considered a “Major” or a “Minor” theme, according to the quantity of mentions received in the interviews (frequency) and/or to how these findings were mentioned, i.e. whether the information came less spontaneously (possibly following the conversation with the researcher), implying a piece of information less relevant (“top of mind”) when compared to other pieces of primary information that were responded immediately, i.e., more spontaneously.

As referred to, a categorisation of the antecedents helped to guide the analysis and the discussion and to facilitate the reader’s understanding of the data analysis rationale (see Table 4 Categorisation of antecedents of organisational commitment. The researcher, using his own judgement and reasoning, and based on his knowledge of the literature, associated each of the most important findings (“major themes”) with one or more categories of antecedents, following the above proposed categorization. This link between themes coded from the primary data and known categories of antecedents was not done immediately and in a single step. Rather it was the result of a continuous systematic process of going back and forward between the extant literature and the empirical data (as already mentioned in the chapter about Methodology, regarding the process of coding, which has included several cycles).

Table 16 Summary of the findings and association with antecedent categorization

Category: Personal characteristics

Findings (Themes)	Emphasis/ Relevance (major or minor)		Category and subcategory of organisational commitment antecedent
	Major	Minor	
			Category: Personal characteristics
Personal characteristic #4: Past experiences that shaped personality		✓	Demographic variables (e.g., age, sex, tenure, education)
Young generations are less committed than older generations.		✓	
Individual's ambition and will to power		✓	
Personal characteristic #1: Resilience (and Patience)		✓	Personal dispositions (e.g., need for achievement, affiliation, personality traits)
Personal characteristic #2: Character and Temperament		✓	

Author's own table

Table 16 Summary of the findings and association with antecedent categorization (cont.)

Category: Organisational characteristics

Findings (Themes)	Emphasis/ Relevance (major or minor)		Category and subcategory of organisational commitment antecedent
	Major	Minor	
			Category: Organisational characteristics
Company is stable, reputable, trustworthy	✓		Person-organisation fit
Feeling pride in a well-known, high-profile company	✓		
Company's good reputation has been conquered with great efforts, and the brand must be sustained	✓		
Identification with company's struggle, competing with multinational corporations, as a family-owned, medium-size firm	✓		
Recognition that the company can be trusted to provide the needed conditions, for developing high quality products and excellent work	✓		
Participation, employee's opinion considered	✓		Organisational culture
Communication, knowledge sharing by company		✓	
Good relationships between employees	✓		
Company's good reputation has been conquered with great efforts, and the brand must be sustained	✓		Organisational purpose (meaningful work)
Identification with company's struggle, competing with multinational corporations, as a family-owned, medium-size firm	✓		
Sense of goal achievement and purpose. Own impact on company's goals.		✓	
Non-existence of a formal strategy/vision regarding organisational commitment	✓		Human resource management strategies, policies, and practices
Non-existence of deliberate strategy or initiatives, regarding organisational commitment	✓		
Low investment in human resource management initiatives	✓		
Work hours flexibility (in some functions), possibility to work from home		✓	
Job satisfaction.		✓	
Fluid job descriptions, dynamic organic structures, and a perception of autonomy	✓		

Author's own table

Table 16 Summary of the findings and association with antecedent categorization (cont.)

Category: Work experiences

Findings (Themes)	Emphasis/ Relevance (major or minor)		Category and subcategory of organisational commitment antecedent
	Major	Minor	
			Category: Work experiences
Older employees influence the more recently hired (newcomers' socialization)	✓		Socialization practices (pre-entry and newcomer socialization)
Top management cares for employees and their problems	✓		Interpersonal relations (leader-member exchange, perceived supervisor support, leadership performance and style, social interactions between peer employees, trust)
Access to top management	✓		
Direct supervision – trust	✓		
Direct supervision - feedback and recognition	✓		
Direct supervision – communication	✓		
Good relationships between employees	✓		
Access to other areas/departments, and good communication	✓		
Informal interactions have less impact than work activities	✓		
Informal relationships and interactions (expressive ties) are valued but not seen as something important for commitment		✓	
Friendship relationships abound (expressive ties) but are not seen as having a great impact		✓	
Relationships and interactions help improve sense making		✓	
Employee's family ties		✓	
The influence on others from someone not committed		✓	
Concern for employees' well-being and conditions provided	✓		Employee–organisation relations (perceived organisational support, organisational support for personal goals, perceived organisational competence, perceived fairness, trust in the organisation)
Fluid job descriptions, dynamic organic structures, and a perception of autonomy	✓		
Financial stability, and salaries always paid on time.	✓		
Informal recognition		✓	
Monetary compensation (e.g., salary increases, bonuses)		✓	
Compensation incentive scheme		✓	
“Landmark” events have little or no impact on organisational commitment		✓	Organisational changes and events
Opportunities for career and professional growth and development	✓		Career related antecedents (career growth meeting career goals, developing professional abilities, career promotions, compensation commensurate with abilities)
Sense of “career peak” and having fewer opportunities	✓		
Challenges proposed to employees	✓		

Author's own table

Chapter 5 Discussion

This chapter will discuss the main findings of the dissertation which is an important step in case study methodology (Eisenhardt, 1989), strengthening the answers to the research questions.

5.1 Antecedents of organisational commitment

This section presents the discussion from the RENOVA case related to the antecedents of organisational commitment. Previously, a categorisation of the antecedents of organisational commitment was proposed, and this table is reproduced here (Table 5 Proposal for a categorization of the antecedents of organisational commitment). The discussion will be guided by this categorisation.

Table 5 Proposal for a categorization of the antecedents of organisational commitment

- Personal characteristics
 - Demographic variables (e.g., age, sex, tenure, education)
 - Personal dispositions (e.g., need for achievement, affiliation, personality traits)
- Organisational characteristics
 - Person-organisation fit
 - Organisational culture
 - Organisational purpose (meaningful work)
 - Human resource management practices
- Work experiences
 - Socialization practices (pre-entry and newcomer socialization)
 - Interpersonal relations (leader-member exchange, perceived supervisor support, leadership performance and style, social interactions between peer employees, trust)
 - Employee-organisation relations (perceived organisational support, organisational support for personal goals, perceived organisational competence, perceived fairness, trust in the organisation)
 - Organisational changes and events

The following table summarizes the discussion regarding antecedents of organisational commitment (Table 17 Summary of the discussion on antecedents of organisational commitment), pointing out which categories, subcategories and antecedents are found to be consistent or inconsistent with previous works, or if the results are inconclusive. To facilitate the connection with the text that follows, an additional column was added with a numeric code to each category (CA#) and subcategory (S#) of antecedents.

Table 17 Summary of the discussion on antecedents of organisational commitment

Antecedents	Cod.	Category/Subcategory	Comparison with literature
	CA1	Personal characteristics	
Demographic variables (e.g., age, sex, tenure, education)	S1	Demographic variables	Partly consistent
Personal dispositions (e.g., need for achievement, affiliation, personality traits)	S2	Personal dispositions	Partly consistent
	CA2	Organisational characteristics	
Value congruence	S3	Person-organisation fit	Consistent
Organisational characteristics and situation fit	S3	Person-organisation fit	Consistent
Culture fit	S3	Person-organisation fit	Consistent
Culture's mediation role with leader's behaviour	S4	Organisational culture	Consistent
Culture fit	S4	Organisational culture	Consistent
Meaningfulness	S5	Organisational purpose and meaningful work	Consistent
Corporate social responsibility (general perception)	S5	Organisational purpose and meaningful work	Inconsistent
Corporate social responsibility (organisation-sponsored causes)	S5	Organisational purpose and meaningful work	Inconsistent
Human resource management high commitment strategies	S6	Human resource management strategies, policies, and practices	Inconsistent
Investment on human resource management initiatives	S6	Human resource management strategies, policies, and practices	Inconsistent
Recruitment and selection policies	S6	Human resource management strategies, policies, and practices	Partly inconsistent or Inconclusive (no evidence)
Training and development policies	S6	Human resource management strategies, policies, and practices	Partly inconsistent or Inconclusive (no evidence)
	CA3	Work experiences	
Newcomer socialization tactics	S7	Socialization practices	Consistent
Leader-member exchange	S8	Interpersonal relations	Consistent
Leadership performance and style	S8	Interpersonal relations	Consistent
Perceived supervisor support (trust, feedback and recognition, vertical communication)	S8	Interpersonal relations	Consistent
Social interactions between employees (peers)	S8	Interpersonal relations	Consistent
Instrumental relations stronger impact (than expressive relations)	S8	Interpersonal relations	Partly Consistent
Compensation and perceived fairness	S9	Employee-organisation relations	Consistent
Perceived organisational support	S9	Employee-organisation relations	Consistent
Perceived organisational competence	S9	Employee-organisation relations	Consistent
Organisational support for personal goals	S9	Employee-organisation relations	Consistent
Informal recognition	S9	Employee-organisation relations	Inconclusive
Flexible work design, and perception of autonomy and empowerment	S9	Employee-organisation relations	Consistent
Career stage (opportunities, career growth)	S10	Career related antecedents	Consistent
Job challenges	S10	Career related antecedents	Consistent

Author's own table

5.1.1 Antecedents of organisational commitment: Main discussion

Research Questions: How is the current development of organisational commitment explained, from the perspective of the employees? What contextual circumstances or events play a role?

This section confronts the findings with the extant literature. The main objective was not to confirm or disconfirm previous research conclusions, but rather to engage in the academic debates, to suggest plausible conclusions, to point out limitations to the extant theories, and to propose criteria to be met in future theory development. When identifying consistencies between the research findings and previous research, it was based on subjective hunches, rather than positivistic hypothesis testing. When presenting conclusions or models, the aim was to gain an understanding, and to solve some of the phenomenon's mysteries, rather than experimentalizing and/or demonstrating.

From all the categories of antecedents, it became evident that, in the case company RENOVA, the least relevant was the "Personal characteristics" category (see code CA1, in the summary table at the end of this section, Table 17 Summary of the discussion on antecedents of organisational commitment). Little or no evidence emerged from the interviewees' responses linking these factors to the development of organisational commitment. This is reasonably consistent with the contradictory results between China and the US samples (Chen and Francesco, 2000), and also with findings of demographic variables having just weak influences on organisational commitment (Morrow, 2011). It also seems to be consistent with results that most demographic variables do not predict organisational commitment, in any of its components (Cheng and Stockdale, 2003). This non-existence of information regarding this entire category of antecedents does not imply that these antecedents are unimportant; however, it is significant that none of the respondents have mentioned them, and so one could argue that antecedents related to personal characteristics, if existing, will probably have a very low relevance when compared to other antecedents.

Regarding the category "Organisational characteristics" (see CA2 on the **Erro! A origem da referência não foi encontrada.**), there are several major findings that could be debated and put in comparison with previous works. Some findings are consistent with previous research, while others are not, for example when there are no mentions at all in the data of topics that would be expected, considering the conclusions from some previous research.

Since this category is vast and includes diverse antecedents, the option is to engage the discussion separating by subcategory, following the categorization structure presented above.

The subcategory “Person-organisation fit” (Code S3 on Table 17 Summary of the discussion on antecedents of organisational commitment) is revealed to be very important in terms of its impact on the development of organisational commitment. There was a general view that RENOVA is stable, reputable, and trustworthy, and most employees feel pride in working for a well-known, high-profile company and they identify the core strategy of brand strengthening. There was evidence that, in general, employees identify themselves with the culture of RENOVA, and that this contributed to their commitment to the organisation. This is consistent with works which establish relations between the person-organisation fit, regarding specifically organisational culture, and which find a predictive potential of organisational commitment in this person-organisation fit antecedent (O’Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell, 1991; Vandenberghe, 1999). The same consistency can be concluded regarding the work of Astakhova (2016), which reported that not only person-organisation fit but also person-supervisor fit is in evidence, both showing positive effects on organisational commitment (Astakhova, 2016). The present research also had findings related to the impact of the direct supervisor in organisational commitment which are discussed later in this chapter, in a specific subcategory.

In the case company, the fit between employees and organisation embraces several themes. Firstly, regarding the identification with the company’s history. RENOVA has accumulated good reputation in the market and has established a good position as a brand of quality products. This has been achieved through great and enduring efforts, especially throughout the last four decades. These facts were recognized by the employees who identified and showed congruence with the company’s values: innovation, brand strategy, but also a sort of David versus Goliath metaphor. RENOVA is a family-owned, smaller in size when compared to direct competitors, struggling to compete with much larger multinational corporations. Employees interviewed, all of Portuguese nationality, and most of them living in the countryside, i.e., in the small towns near RENOVA’s main plant and headquarters (Torres Novas region, Portugal), related to this “underdog” position, and associated this with the existing organisational commitment degree in the company.

Secondly, regarding the company’s culture, according to the findings, employees recognized RENOVA has a culture of quality, innovation, effort, trust, and openness, where employee

participation is often requested, employees' opinions are considered, and good relationships abound. It has a healthy atmosphere where relationships between employees are positive. The employees referred to these elements as having a positive impact on organisational commitment. This was clear evidence of fit between person and organisation, in this case related to organisational culture and values, and agrees with previous works (Lok & Crawford, 2004b; Meyer et al., 2010; O'Reilly et al., 1991; Vandenberghe, 1999). In the case of Lok & Crawford (2004b), innovative cultures emphasize the effects on organisational commitment, as opposed to bureaucratic cultures, which seems also strongly consistent with the present research findings, as RENOVA is reportedly an innovative company, with innovation embedded in its culture, as mentioned previously. The present research findings also seem to be consistent with Simosi & Xenikou (2010) whose findings indicated organisational culture's mediating role between the leader's behaviour and employees' organisational commitment.

Several respondents mentioned that it is common that someone, namely from top management, asks their opinion in matters which are not included in their daily jobs and responsibilities (e.g., marketing campaigns, ideas for solving some specific problem). This was perceived as something that motivated but also that increased organisational commitment (not just when their opinions and contributions were accepted and/or incorporated in the final solution, but also when this did not happen).

For all the above debate regarding this antecedent subcategory "Organisational culture" (S4) there is clear consistency with the literature, about the positive effects of organisational culture on the development of organisational commitment.

Regarding the subcategory "Organisational purpose and meaningful work" (S5) the findings revealed that employees understood that the RENOVA's good reputation has been achieved with great efforts, and thus felt obligation to contribute to the continuity of this success. Also, employees identified with the company's circumstance of being a smaller firm than direct competitors. This sense of purpose, meaning and impact on beneficiaries (the organisation's stakeholders) is consistent with Grant, (2007), Ditlev-Simonsen, (2015) and especially Geldenhuys et al., (2014) which reveal that meaningfulness at work positively affects organisational commitment.

However, the findings produced no evidence relating to corporate social responsibility in the sense observed by Ditlev-Simonsen, (2015). In fact, no mention whatsoever in the findings

related to “employees’ perception of the employer’s care for the world outside the company” as an explanation of organisational commitment as would be expected by the conclusions of previous research (Hofman and Newman, 2013; Ditlev-Simonsen, 2015, p. 243). There is also no mention in the responses that “organisation-sponsored causes and the organisation’s sponsorship”, an issue related to corporate social responsibility, had any effect on organisational commitment, contrary to Bingham et al., (2013, p. 187) .

The sub-category of antecedents “Human resource management strategies, policies, and practices” (S6) is usually present in the literature but it is somewhat difficult to grasp because it typically includes a wide variety of variables, e.g., policies, practices, activities, as observed by Whitener (2001, p. 532). It usually includes a diversity of antecedents that could be attributed to the human resource management category but at the same time could be a stand-alone antecedent, with its own value and significance, because these generate work experiences, (which is another category of antecedents) and therefore could be alternatively analysed from this perspective. For the present discussion, a choice was made between leaving out from this subcategory those antecedents that have been treated by extant research as independent categories and only to leave in this subcategory antecedents that are only dependent on human resource management performance, strategies and/or practices. For example, antecedents such as “socialization practices”, “career development”, or “job design” have been reported in human resource management practices antecedents but have also been studied separately, on their own. As such, the discussion of these will be presented later in this section, under the category “Work experiences” (CA3), and not in this section relating to the human resource management subcategory (S5).

From the findings it could be gauged that RENOVA has no specific formal human resource management strategy for improving organisational commitment, and that the company did not seem to target the development of organisational commitment *per se*. Most employees did not recognize (or recall) human resource management initiatives directed toward the development of organisational commitment. There was no direct investment in traditional initiatives such as teambuilding activities, “get-togethers”, workshops, or initiatives to promote employee social interactions. Despite this, in RENOVA’s case, it did not seem to have the expected negative impact on organisational commitment levels, as there was no evident concern with the absence of these human resource management strategies and initiatives. This is partly contradictory to Whitener’s (2001) claim regarding the crucial importance of human resource management for the development of organisational commitment (Whitener, 2001). Additionally, there was no evidence in the case study to

support Gellatly *et al.*'s (2009) conclusion that "the use of human resource management practices can strategically shape overall organisational commitment" (Gellatly *et al.*, 2009, p. 869). The work of Gellatly *et al.*, (2009) acknowledges the complexity of organisational commitment, as they use profiles that combine different components of organisational commitment. Additionally, this work details some of the human resource management practices, producing complex results, and suggesting the usefulness of performing a research analysis separately practice by practice, rather than considering human resource management as a single variable.

The case study seems to be consistent with the hypothesis that organisational commitment is positively affected by development-oriented practices (providing meaningful, and challenging work; providing development opportunities; providing increasing responsibility and autonomy; and providing skill development that increased value to the firm) (Gellatly *et al.*, 2009, p. 877). There is some minor evidence related to one of variables included in "stability-oriented" practices, namely providing stable wages over time. On the opposite direction, no evidence was found related to the existence of reward-oriented human resource management practices, such as providing bonus pay or performance-based incentives, providing increases in salary when the company was more profitable, or providing employees with opportunities to earn relative higher incomes (the findings point that the relative modest salaries and absence of bonus schemes had little or no negative impact on the development of organisational commitment).

Another absence of strong evidence relating to human resource management practices, which are present in previous works and thus were expected to be observed in the findings, are recruitment and selection policies (Caldwell, Chatman and O'Reilly, 1990) and training and development policies (Whitener, 2001). There are some few mentions regarding recruitment and selection, but not relevant, and not related to formal human resource management policies. There are some mentions regarding the amount of training that RENOVA gives to its employees, but these were scarce and/or unrelated to the impact on organisational commitment. Since these elements were not clearly found in this case study, with very little evidence, this research concludes on a partial inconsistency or inconclusiveness.

As explained above, although "job descriptions", "job design", "organic structures", "appraisal systems", "reward systems", and "mentoring" are sometimes included in the category of human resource management antecedents, these will be discussed later in this

section, under the category of “Work experiences”. This is justified by the findings themselves, as they indicated stronger associations between the development of organisational commitment and employees’ experiences, rather than human resource management practices, policies, or strategies.

As previously mentioned, the company does not seem to have a deliberate or formal human resource management strategy, and accordingly the respondents did not associate these elements with their human resource management. Rather they referred to these antecedents through the course of the interview and related them sometimes to top management (and/or CEO) performance, or to RENOVA’s initiatives as a whole, or even considered these issues as natural/regular “business as usual” type of initiatives. Speculation could be made as to whether these decisions of not adopting formal strategic human resource management are a reflexion of the contextual circumstances of RENOVA, namely being a family-owned, top management dominates for long (several decades). Strategic human resource management has been found to be “internally determined by the organizational/administrative/cultural heritage of a firm (i.e., its unique configuration: its history, strategy, structure, culture and human capital)” (Gallardo-Gallardo, Thunnissen and Scullion, 2019, p. 460). These contextual factors “affect the conceptualization, implementation and effectiveness of human resource management”, and namely talent management (Gallardo-Gallardo, Thunnissen and Scullion, 2019, p. 459). In spite of RENOVA being classified as a large company, by standard metrics, being family-owned maybe have something to do with practices that are generally associated with small and medium enterprises. Small and medium enterprises have been found more inclined to “informality and personalised management style to the organizational culture” and “prefer to adopt an informal approach to talent management and generally do not adopt approaches which require formal identification of talent” (Valverde, Scullion and Ryan, 2013; Krishnan and Scullion, 2017, p. 432). Although RENOVA has professionalized its procedures in other areas, it is questionable whether regarding strategic human resource management this is also the case, and previous studies have concluded that “human resource management practices appear to be one area where family business carries out practices differently to their non-family counterparts.” (Reid and Adams, 2001, pp. 318–319)

Moving to the category “work experiences” (code CA3 on the summary table below), the first antecedent sub-category to be discussed is “socialization practices” (S7), in the specific form of newcomer socialization. In RENOVA, there was a perception that younger employees, when entering the company, have lower organisational commitment and then

start developing it as they remain employees. Initial expectations, often low, about the attractiveness of their job are met, and usually raised, in the course of their membership and this is seen as overall a consequence of relationships with other employees. In particular, older employees seemed to have influence on newcomers through natural socialization and help them to develop organisational commitment. These findings are consistent with early works (Hellman and McMillin, 1994; Morrison, 2002) as well as more recently ones such as Allen & Shanock, (2013) and Simosi, (2010). However, at RENOVA, these socialization practices do not originate from corporate policies or standards, but rather happen casually (informally) and are more dependent on the initiative of direct supervisors. This evidence, far from reducing the significance of the antecedent (for not being formally or deliberately deployed by the company), makes it even more interesting and should be considered very relevant. This is because Allen and Meyer (1990) had previously pointed out that institutionalized socialization tactics were positively related to organisational commitment, and so the present research adds the proposition that non-institutionalized socialization seem to have positive effects on the development of organisational commitment. This has implications for practitioners who may establish internal strategies of promoting non-regulated socialization opportunities, linking older employees with newcomers.

Regarding the sub-category “interpersonal relations” (S8) and starting with antecedents related to leadership and supervision, the findings point to several interesting elements. Firstly, top management in RENOVA is perceived to care for employees and their problems. In particular, the CEO is very well respected, and people appreciate his openness, closeness, and care for everyone. In general, leaders in RENOVA are seen as very accessible, and this was widely mentioned as something that helps organisational commitment to develop. Direct supervisors’ performance was mentioned as very important in helping to cope with a so called “unpredictable nature” of some jobs/functions, or as they termed it “fluid job descriptions”, which meant that although formal job descriptions exist, they should be considered flexible and ought to accommodate real necessities coming from the work and the goals pursued. The typical leader in RENOVA is viewed as one who promotes autonomy, delegates fairly, and shows signs of trust in employees. Trust, as mentioned in earlier sections, was found to be a key element in the company’s culture and there was consistency on this issue from top to bottom of the hierarchy.

On a less positive aspect, frequent feedback and positive recognition were mentioned as opportunities for improvement since they are not characteristics of the typical leader in RENOVA. However, vertical communication was reported as a strength in this company,

both top-down and bottom-up, and was perceived as having a positive impact on organisational commitment. These findings are clearly consistent with the literature on organisational commitment, which regards leadership as a most important antecedent (Lok and Crawford, 2001, 2004a; Dale and Fox, 2008; Yahaya and Ebrahim, 2016) and more specifically to the possible indirect effects on organisational commitment from the proximity to power and/or centrality in power networks concluded by the early work of Ibarra and Andrews (1993).

Although hinting at transformational leadership, the present research findings did not justify a conclusion that the leadership style in RENOVA is transformational. There was just not enough data regarding delegation, empowerment, and concern about the development of employees, which are some of the key elements present in transformational leadership. On the other hand, autonomy, meaningfulness, and supportive leadership behaviours were clearly present in the findings, and all these are common elements when transformational leadership is the pattern style in a company. As such, the claim of several previous works (Park and Rainey, 2007; Behery, Paton and Hussain, 2012; Yahaya and Ebrahim, 2016, p. 207; Delegach *et al.*, 2017, p. 736) that transformational leadership promotes organisational commitment seems to be consistent with this research findings in as much as some elements of transformational leadership were present in the case company RENOVA.

This is also consistent with the work of Casimir *et al.* (2014), which finds that leader-employee relations in combination with perceived organisational support have even stronger positive effects on organisational commitment, as “the positive effects of a high-quality leader-follower relationship (...) appear to be enhanced in a high perceived organisation support context” and “similarly, the positive effects of perceived organisation support (...) appear to be accentuated when a follower has a high-quality relationship with the leader.” (Casimir *et al.*, 2014, p. 378).

Still related to leadership, but now focusing our perspective on direct supervision, i.e., the direct hierarchical relation between leaders and immediate subordinates, the research findings pointed out that, in RENOVA, direct supervisors are seen as promoters of autonomy, showing trust in employees. In the opposite direction, performance feedback and recognition, both formal and informal, were seen as a weakness and as having “room for improvement”. However, as mentioned above, vertical communication was perceived as a strength in the company and as having positive effects on organisational commitment. This is consistent with previous research showing a direct effect on organisational commitment

as “supervisor affective commitment influences subordinate affective commitment“ (Loi, Lai and Lam, 2012, p. 472), but also an indirect effect, as “perceived supervisor support may lead to perceived organisational support, which in turn, may increase affective commitment” (Rhoades, Eisenberger and Armeli, 2001, p. 874; Eisenberger *et al.*, 2002, p. 572).

Still in the sub-category of interpersonal relations (S8), regarding social interactions between employees (i.e., peers, members with no hierarchical relations between them) in RENOVA relationships are generally positive and healthy, and this was considered to have positive impact on organisational commitment, and there was evidence of several examples of this. To some extent this healthy environment was related to the easy access everyone enjoys to other areas/departments of the company. There was a sense that communication is good and adequate. For example, it is very easy to have direct access to top management and managers in general. Findings also revealed the existence of a culture of openness and social support, and the example of physical open spaces which were created to promote employees’ interactions is the most common mention regarding this issue.

These antecedents of organisational commitment can be found, as reported in the literature review chapter, both in seminal works (Sheldon, 1971; Buchanan, 1974, 1975; Eisenberger, Fasolo and Davis-LaMastro, 1990; Meyer and Allen, 1991; Podolny and Baron, 1997), as well as in more recent research. For example, the findings are consistent with the works of Grant *et al.* (2008) and Grant & Parker (2009) which point to a positive impact of social support, from co-workers, on organisational commitment, as well as on other beneficial behavioural outcomes.

Social support is a concept related to trust, both interpersonal as well as systemic trust (trust between the individual and the organisation). Systemic trust has been discussed above, regarding Person-organisation fit (S3) and Organisational culture (S4), as well as trust between supervisor and subordinate, regarding Interpersonal relations (S8) and specifically the antecedent perceived supervisor support. Findings revealed that interpersonal trust between employees is present in RENOVA, and this was mentioned as contributing to organisational commitment. This is consistent with previous works that observe the impact of trust on the development of organisational commitment (Nyhan, 1999; Farndale, Hope-Hailey and Kelliher, 2011) and indirectly by investing in social capital, which has impact on trust and then indirectly on the development of organisational commitment (Ellinger *et al.*, 2013).

From the case study findings, something rather unique and interesting emerged, included in the subcategory interpersonal relations (S8), namely that informal (purely social) interactions seemed to have less impact on organisational commitment than work activities and work-related interactions. Work-related interactions among employees were perceived to be more relevant in terms of their effects on organisational commitment, and this revealed that, when referring to the development of organisational commitment, the focus is the actual work/job and company's goals. Informal relationships and interactions between employees, although perceived as positive, seem to have much less impact on the development of organisational commitment.

This finding can be associated with the fact that, in RENOVA, there are numerous cases of family ties between employees. This seemed to be related to two main factors, (1) the company is located in the countryside, relatively distant from the most populous cities, thus attracting fewer people from far regions, and (2) the company, over decades, has promoted local recruitment among family and friends of current employees. Additionally, most employees in RENOVA have remained in the company for many years, as reported above in previous chapters. Using the same distinction of Ibarra & Andrews (1993) and Kim & Rhee (2010) between instrumental relationships (i.e., work-related interactions) and expressive relationships (i.e., nonwork-related interactions) it is possible to argue that the current findings support the conclusions of Kim & Rhee (2010). These authors state that "organisational commitment is affected by network properties (...) contingent upon whether the content conveyed in the relationship is instrumental or expressive" (Kim & Rhee, 2010, p. 494). The findings are thus consistent with the notion that instrumental relationships would have more effect on organisational commitment than expressive relationships.

Moving to sub-category "Employee-organisation relations" (S9), findings indicated evidence of the effects of compensation and financial rewards on employees' organisational commitment. A major finding, referred to consistently, was that employees view RENOVA as a company that provides fair, not necessarily high, monetary compensations for its employees, but even more importantly (in terms of impact on the development of organisational commitment) a company that always honours its part of the deal. There was a clear perception that the confidence infused by the company, related to this on-time payment for duties, is relevant for the development of organisational commitment.

On the other hand, specifically regarding salary levels, salary increases and bonuses as well as the policies related to schemes of performance compensation/reward, the research data

did not produce strong evidence about their impact on organisational commitment. However, it can be argued that employees viewed lower salaries and monetary incentives as a theoretical cause of lower commitment (i.e., if it were to occur, a reduction in salaries would produce lower organisational commitment). This can be taken into account in conjunction with the high levels of trust that employees revealed in the company, which in part was related to a financial stability the firm has always enjoyed.

These findings are relatively consistent with previous works (Weng *et al.*, 2010; Gao-Urhahn, Biemann and Jaros, 2016). Kuvaas in particular states that the “base pay level increases commitment partly via psychological processes and evaluations of competence and management autonomy” (Kuvaas, 2006, p. 377). Although turnover intention is only a part of organisational commitment, it is nonetheless relevant to understand organisational commitment and its development, and previous research observes relationships between pay levels and turnover intention, as expected (Kuvaas *et al.*, 2016, p. 668). Specifically, regarding fairness and justice climate, these findings are consistent with the works of Ohana (2014) and Marzucco *et al.* (2014), which report justice and fairness perceptions as having positive impacts on organisational commitment.

Included in this same subcategory “Employee–organisation relations” (S9) important findings indicated that RENOVA is viewed as a company that has a serious and consistent concern for employees’ well-being and strives to provide them with good overall conditions (tools, resources, etc.) for the work to be developed, but also concern directed at personal human needs. This concern was referred as covering all kinds of needs, and there is clear recognition of both RENOVA’s efforts to provide the best work conditions, as well as for a strong interest in personal issues and well-being of all the people. This preoccupation was evident in the mind of the CEO as well, who even questioned himself if exaggerated paternalistic policies and behaviours are typically present. Employees acknowledged this concern and had good memories about initiatives taken with the intention of promoting general employee well-being. This finding is consistent with a relevant study which concludes that perceived organisational support is a “major driver” of affective organisational commitment (Kim *et al.*, 2016, p. 579) and, at the same time, which perceived organisational support interacts with perceived organisational competence further increasing affective organisational commitment (Kim *et al.*, 2016, p. 578). Perceived organisational competence, being the “employees’ perception of the organisation’s ability to achieve its goals and objectives” was also a presence in the present research findings, so consistency is reinforced regarding these antecedents. There is also consistency between these research

findings and diverse previous works regarding perceived organisational support as a strong antecedent of organisational commitment (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2001; Rhoades, Eisenberger and Armeli, 2001; Whitener, 2001; Kinnie *et al.*, 2005b; Ditlev-Simonsen, 2015).

To finalize the subcategory Employee-organisation relations (S9) there is one last, but rather original theme that emerged. In RENOVA, formal job descriptions were said to be present but there was a general perception of autonomy and more importantly a strong degree of freedom to choose one's own goals, tasks, or activities. There is a degree of freedom to experiment, to participate in diverse and unexpected projects. The employees used specific terms for this such as "fluid" or "organic" job designs. Respondents mentioned that their activity was not restricted to merely their formal job responsibilities but could go beyond standard job descriptions. This was specifically mentioned when respondents were asked for factors impacting the development of organisational commitment and thus it can be proposed as a major finding. Contrary to other antecedents, there is limited research focused on this theme. Jørgensen & Becker (2015), building three case studies, concluded that "work design specifically influences organisational commitment directly" (Jørgensen and Becker, 2015, p. 37) and especially when it regards to flexible work. Related to this notion of high degrees of autonomy is the concept of empowerment. Although never mentioning specifically the term empowerment, findings showed that RENOVA's employees enjoy a high degree of autonomy (which is one of the key elements in empowerment (Raub and Robert, 2013, p. 137). As such, the findings are also consistent with this work (Raub and Robert, 2013, p. 143), and the authors' conclusion that "psychological empowerment is strongly related to organizational commitment".

The last subcategory to be analysed is "Career-related antecedents" (S10) and the research findings pointed to several issues, namely that (1) there was a perception that the longer people remain in the company, the more committed they are bound to be; (2) there was a potential perceived risk of decreasing organisational commitment, when employees feel they have fewer career opportunities, for example if they believe their career has peaked; and (3) apart from formal career moves, there was also a notion that job challenges (new goals, new projects, higher goals) could lead to a sense of being trusted by the company, which leads to greater organisational commitment. The company frequently asks employees to increase their contributions and to achieve new goals, in the context of the company's operations

which are inherently challenging, and constantly demanding effort and creativity from employees in general.

There is partial contradiction with an early study which by finding “relatively modest” effects suggests organizations will not “be at all successful in optimizing affective commitment by tailoring experiences to employees’ ages” (Allen & Meyer, 1993, p. 60). In an opposite direction the findings are consistent with the work by Weng et al. (2010) which concludes that “all four forms of career growth (...) positively influence affective organizational commitment” (Weng *et al.*, 2010, p. 397). Also, considering the specific topic of turnover intention, which is one of the usual elements used to understand organisational commitment, Joo & Park (2010) observe that career satisfaction is a predictor of turnover intention.

Specifically related to the effects of job challenge, the findings are clearly consistent with the literature, namely Dixon et al. (2005, p. 178) who conclude that job challenge has “significant, positive, and rather strong association with affective organizational commitment”, and also with Bashir & Gani (2020, p. 534) who in a broader study focusing on job satisfaction conclude that “job challenges, autonomy, skill variety and role clarity” are associated with organisational commitment as well as other consequences such as intrinsic motivation and work effectiveness, and refer to “a significant impact of job challenge on organisational commitment” (Bashir and Gani, 2020, p. 534).

5.1.2 Antecedents of organisational commitment: Summary

The summary of the discussion regarding antecedents of organisational commitment is presented in a table, at the beginning of the present chapter (see Table 17 Summary of the discussion on antecedents of organisational commitment), which distinguishes categories, subcategories and antecedents found to be consistent or inconsistent with previous works.

The summary of this discussion is that, in the case of RENOVA, the development of organisational commitment is shaped by elements and contextual circumstances that can be divided in the following categories:

- Personal characteristics:
 - Past work experiences may shape expectations about the company and the job which influences organisational commitment

- Cultural values of the individual may increase the propensity to commit, aligned with normative organisational commitment
- Person-organisation fit
 - Value congruence between the individual and the organisation impacts the development of organisational commitment
 - Organisational characteristics and situational fit impact the development of organisational commitment
- Organisation culture
 - Culture type (innovation) along with leadership type have impact on the development of organisational commitment
 - Culture fit between the individual and the organisation impacts the development of organisational commitment
- Organisational purpose and meaningful work
 - Meaningfulness of the organisation's purpose and of meaningful work/job have impact on organisational commitment (but not perception of corporate social responsibility)
- Socialization practices
 - Newcomer socialization tactics may have great impact on organisational commitment
- Interpersonal relations within the organisation have impact on organisational commitment, namely:
 - Leader-member exchange
 - Leadership performance and style
 - Perceived supervisor support (trust, feedback and recognition, vertical communication)
 - Social interactions between employees (peers), but especially instrumental relations, with expressive relations having less impact
- Employee-organisation relations which have more impact on organisational commitment are:
 - Perceived fairness regarding compensation
 - Perceived organisational support
 - Perceived organisational competence
 - Organisational support for personal goals
 - Flexible work design, and perception of autonomy and empowerment

- Career-related antecedents are evident and account for some of the effects on organisational commitment:
 - Career stage (opportunities, career growth)
 - Job challenges

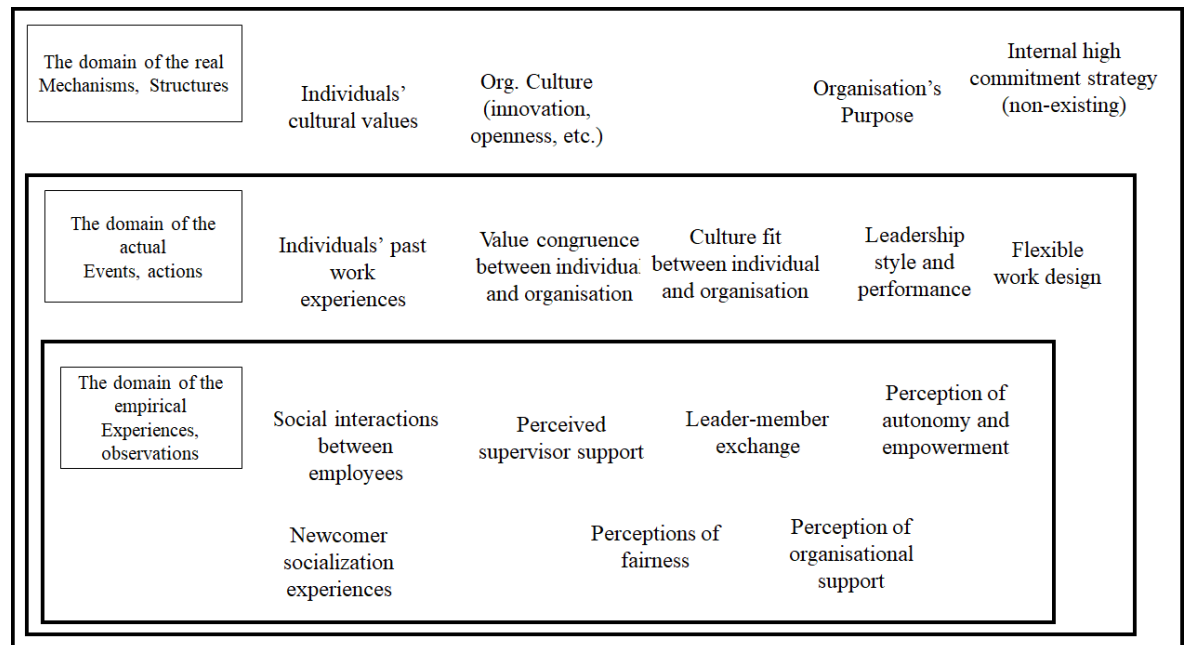
Another conclusion from the discussion is that the following antecedents seem to be not important, in the case study. Although they have been identified in previous research works as important, the RENOVA case shows that they have little weight in the development of organisational commitment. Again, each within the categories that follow:

- Personal characteristics:
 - Demographic variables (e.g., age, sex, tenure, education)
 - Personal dispositions (e.g., need for achievement, affiliation, personality traits)
- Organisational purpose and meaningful work
 - Corporate social responsibility (general perception)
 - Corporate social responsibility (organisation-sponsored causes)
- Human resource management strategies, policies, and practices
 - Human resource management high commitment strategies
 - Investment on human resource management initiatives
 - Recruitment and selection policies
 - Training and development policies

Using the three domains of critical realism to frame these results, we could say that the domain of “the real”, which includes the organisation’s culture, the organisation’s purpose, the non-existing (or not formal) organisation’s internal strategy for high organisational commitment, and the cultural values of the individuals, enables and/or constrains the domain of “the actual”. This layer includes for example the value congruence and the culture fit (between employee and organisation), the leadership style and performance, the past experiences of individuals, and the flexible work design. These actions/events allow for experiences to be empirically observed, such as perception of autonomy, the perception of organisational support, the perception of fairness, the experiences between individuals and their leaders, and social interactions with fellow employees.

The following typical schematic figure, which is commonly used to illustrate these domains of critical realism (Mingers, 2004; Anderson, 2020), allows to visualise the elements present in each layer.

Figure 10 Critical realist framework



Author's own content, adapting a structure of the figure from Mingers (2004)

From these results, it is possible to answer the research questions. In the next chapter, "Conclusions", I will return to this topic, as the main theoretical developments from this research will be highlighted and suggestions for future research regarding antecedents of organisational commitment will be presented.

The following section, discusses the results regarding a different research question, focusing on the definition of organisational commitment.

5.2 Conceptualization of organisational commitment

Research question: How can organisational commitment be defined, from the perspective of the employees? (mRQ1)

As mentioned in the literature review chapter, so far, no proposed model focusing on the conceptualization of organisational commitment has generated a consensus among scholars. Some models have achieved more recognition within the academic debate, such as the three-component model (Meyer & Allen., 1991), but even this is far from being acclaimed by all scholars and has been frequently criticized.

Since the interviews collected in this research render such rich information, allowing integrated analysis of organisational commitment, an unexpected research opportunity emerged: to contribute to the debate on organisational commitment conceptualization, by confirming some elements and adding others to the definition of organisational commitment, with the possibility of attracting some consensus, and serving as an input for future research on the subject. This part of the discussion is this research's attempt to contribute to this academic debate, regarding the conceptualization of organisational commitment.

In the previous chapter, the first section was dedicated to the findings from the interviews that could be used to define organisational commitment. This discussion followed several steps, here divided into sections: firstly, a summary of the main findings is presented; secondly, the results from the findings are compared with the extant literature; and thirdly, a new model is proposed for the conceptualization of organisational commitment.

5.2.1 Organisational commitment: most important elements, according to the respondents

One conclusion is that organisational commitment is not a simple concept and cannot be captured using a unidimensional approach. Organisational commitment appears to be formed from several, distinct and diverse elements. This points to the perception that, to comprehensively understand what organisational commitment is, one ought to use a multidimensional perspective. The mere approach of organisational commitment as multidimensional already raises debates, contradicting one line of thought of Klein and Park (2016) while supporting an opposing opinion of Allen (2016b).

From all the elements emerging from the information gathered, different dimensions were selected, based on the frequency of response and the relevance to the respondents, resulting in the following most important elements for the definition of organisational commitment, according to in the perspective of the employees of the case company RENOVA.

To be emotionally attached to the organisation

This includes to have emotional affection and/or attachments for the organisation, for its brand and for its leaders, to feel proud about the company, to have good feelings when seeing the company's brand or something that identifies the company, to have the sense of

belonging to a team/group, to be frequently or constantly caring for the organisation and its problems/situations, to feel that the company is their property although non-materially.

To defend the company, to protect the company's interests

Always to have a positive flattering discourse about the company when dealing with external actors (although not necessarily agreeing with everything the company, or its leaders, do or say), to defend the company passionately, to share positive things about the company on external communications including social networks, to protect the company's best interest.

To cooperate toward company's goals

To cooperate constantly with others to achieve company's goals, to be aligned with the defined strategies, when in disagreement to contribute with constructive criticism for those strategies, to grasp their missions and carry them forward in a disinterested way, to do things in the best way possible so that the organisation can better fulfil its objectives, to get involved as much as possible.

To make discretionary efforts and to accept some levels of frustration

To sometimes put the company ahead of private life and to sacrifice one's own self-interest on behalf of the company's needs, to go beyond minimum required working hours, to have incessant focus on solutions in the face of work difficulties, to dedicate much of one's personal time to the company, to make efforts relentlessly and for years.

To be concerned and to care for the company

To be disturbed/preoccupied when noticing something that needs improvement in the company's processes, to balance the "giving and receiving" beyond transactional attitude, to be constantly thinking of what could be improved in the company.

To have a sense of importance and urgency regarding company's needs

To implement solutions with a sense of urgency, to have a clear notion of good timing, i.e., to criticize at the adequate moment but still implement what is needed even if not in full agreement with the solution/decision.

To feel obligation (duty) for honouring the agreements made with the company

To build a relationship with the company beneficial to both parties, to have a strong sense of duty towards the company, to feel some kind of obligation to give the most to the company, to be loyal and respectful to the company, to fully comply with what it is asked in terms of performance, to correspond equally (match) the same commitment the company has to its employees, to retribute in the same manner what the company delivers to its employees.

To be fully engaged in one's job

To be dedicated to day-to-day work, to be aware and to give everything one can in the best way possible, to have a clear conscience that one is doing the best one can to achieve goals, to deliver performance.

To be strongly motivated

To have and to show motivation for the job, and, if unmotivated still do all the necessary things that the company needs.

Since some of these nine elements are conceptually related, grouping them was found possible, and thus achieving a smaller number of fundamental concepts that facilitate a potential proposal for the conceptualization of organisational commitment.

The following table (Table 18 Grouping the elements that form organisational commitment) associates these nine elements found (grouping them) and establishes a code for each one, for later easier reference in this chapter.

Table 18 Grouping the elements that form organisational commitment

Organisational commitment elements present in the findings	Concise concept	Code	Joint concept (grouping)
To build a relationship with the company beneficial to both parties, to have a sense of duty towards the company, to feel some kind of obligation to give the most to the company, to be loyal, respectful to the company, to fully comply with what it is asked to perform, to correspond equally (match) the same commitment the company has with its employees, to retribute in the same manner what the company delivers its employees.	To feel obligation (duty) of honouring the agreements made with the company	C7	A sense of duty to correspond with the degree of perceived commitment from the organisation to its employees (Including behaviours of acting in the right manner at the right time, and to trust that the organisation and its leaders will support employees)
To cooperate constantly with others to achieve company's goals, to be aligned with the defined strategies, when in disagreement to contribute with constructive criticism for those strategies, to grasp their missions and carry them forward in a disinterested way, to do things in the best way possible so that the organisation can better fulfil its objectives, to get involved as much as possible.	To cooperate toward company's goals	C3	
To have a clear notion of timing, and criticize when it is the right time, but then implement (even if not fully agreeing), not to go against decisions but rather implement them with a sense of urgency.	To have a sense of importance and urgency regarding company's needs	C6	
Includes elements such as: to have emotional attachments and/or affection to the organisation and its leaders, to feel proud about the company, to have good feelings when seeing the brand or something else identifying the company, to have the sense of belonging to a team/group, to be frequently or constantly caring for the organisation and its problems/situations, to feel that the company is their "property", although materially it is not.	To be emotionally attached to the organisation	C1	A non-material bond (psychological, affective, emotional) to the organisation and to its interests and needs (Including some behaviours that evidence this bonding and the employee's pre-disposition to act in the way that most benefits the organisation)
To have a positive and flattering discourse about the company in external relations, even though not necessarily agreeing with everything the company or its leaders do, to defend the company passionately, to share positive things about the company on external communications, including social networks.	To defend the company, to protect the company's interests	C2	
To be disturbed when noticing something that need improvement in the company's processes, to balance the "giving and receiving" going beyond transactional attitude to be constantly thinking on what could be improved.	To be concerned and to care for the company	C5	
To (sometimes) put the company ahead of their private life and sacrifice own self-interest on behalf of the company's needs, to go beyond minimum required working hours, to have incessant focus on solutions in the face of difficulties, to dedicate much of their time to the company, to make efforts relentlessly and throughout years.	To make discretionary efforts and to accept some levels of frustration	C4	A strong dedication to the organisation, even exceeding individual, and immediate self-interest (Including some behaviours that evidence the overcoming of un motivating factors, some level of frustration and the need to make sacrifices on behalf of the organisation)
To be dedicated to day-to-day work, to be aware and to give everything one can in the best way possible, to have a clear conscience that they are doing their best to achieve the goals, to deliver.	To be fully engaged in one's job	C8	
To show motivation for the job, or, if unmotivated, to do necessary things.	To be strongly motivated	C9	

5.2.2 Organisational commitment conceptualization: Contrast with the literature

Consistencies with the literature

Emotional attachment to the organisation (code C1 in Table 18 Grouping the elements that form organisational commitment) is present in the definition of organisational commitment

as “a combination of affect (emotional attachment, identification), cognition (identification and internalization of its goals, norms, and values)” and other elements (Solinger, van Olffen and Roe, 2008, p. 80). Also present in the definitions “psychological state that (a) characterizes the employee’s relationship with the organisation (..)” (Meyer & Allen., 1991, p. 61) and “psychological attachment felt by the person for the organisation” (O’Reilly III and Chatman, 1986, p. 493) since both point to a psychological and emotional attachment to the organisation. There is also a clear consistency with the definition by Klein *et al.* (Klein, Molloy and Brinsfield, 2012, p. 137) of “...a perceived volitional bond with a target characterized by responsibility and dedication”, since not only responsibility and dedication are behaviours evident in the findings (which will be discussed later in this section in more detail), but particularly the volitional nature of the attachment is evident from the research data, and thus is strongly consistent with this conceptualization. This element is also partially consistent with propositions in the model by Meyer and Herscovitch (2001, p. 316), namely that “The mind-set of desire (affective commitment) develops when an individual becomes involved in, recognizes the value-relevance of, and/or derives his or her identity from, association with an entity or pursuit of a course of action”.

Still regarding this notion of emotional attachment to the organisation, it is possible to find some relations, although inconclusive (not strong enough to formulate a conclusion), with the seminal definition “an attitude or an orientation toward the organisation which links or attaches the identity of the person to the organisation.” (Sheldon, 1971, p. 143) since it is possible to establish some connections between identity attachment and feelings of pride in the company, and/or feelings of ownership (C1). However, this definition of organisational commitment is rather vague and unsuitable for comparison with the more concrete and specific concepts present in the findings, thus not allowing strong conclusions. Additionally, although related concepts, there is a clear conceptual distinction between organisational commitment and organisational identification (Gautam et al., 2004).

The same inconclusive result applies to the definition “relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organisation.” (Mowday, Steers and Porter, 1979, p. 226), as one can find relations between the concept of identification and the feelings of pride emerging in the data, but again not strong enough to allow conclusions.

The notion of organisational commitment as the individual’s involvement in the organisation appears in Mowday *et al.* (1979, p. 226) defining organisational commitment as “the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organisation”

is consistent with the findings. Respondents defined organisational commitment as a behaviour of constant cooperation to achieve company's goals, including an operative alignment with the defined strategies, carrying forward one's mission and doing things in the best way possible so that the organisation can better fulfil its objectives. This concept can be related to the proposal of Solinger *et al.* (2008, p. 80), in the last part of their definition: "an attitude of an employee vis-a-vis the organisation, reflected in a combination of affect (emotional attachment, identification), cognition (identification and internalization of its goals, norms, and values), and action readiness (a generalized behavioral pledge to serve and enhance the organisation's interests)". This definition of action readiness is evident in the research data, namely on the elements C3 and C6, and also behavioural pledge can be found on the elements C7 and C6.

Another consistency between the findings and literature can be observed regarding the element "discretionary efforts acceptance of some level of frustration" (C4). A part of the definition proposed by (Klein, Molloy and Brinsfield, 2012, p. 137), of organisational commitment being "a perceived volitional bond with a target characterized by responsibility and dedication", points to behaviours of responsibility and dedication, which are found in the research data.

Some relation to this element (C4) and, at the same time, a complete match to the element C8 "to be fully engaged in one's job" is described in the engagement definition by Kahn (1990, p. 694), "(...) the harnessing of organisation members' selves to their work roles; (...) people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances", which translates into the notion of attachment to the work role and to act fully toward role performance.

This may be further evidence to support a conclusion that, for the respondents of RENOVA, organisational commitment and employee engagement go together, with strong difficulties in separate the two concepts, in reality.

Again, the definitions by Kahn (1990, p. 694), pointing to "role performances" and even more so by Klein *et al.* (2012, p. 137), as pointing to "responsibility", have consistency with the findings (element C6) of organisational commitment including behaviours of "sense of importance and urgency regarding company's needs", and "to criticize at the adequate moment but still implement what is needed" for the organisation. Additionally, the last part of the definition by Solinger *et al.* (2008, p. 80) "(...) action readiness (a generalized

behavioral pledge to serve and enhance the organisation's interests)" may also be associated with this element.

Another clear consistency is the result of comparing the literature with the element "duty of honouring the agreements made with the company" (C7), as employees reported on a sense of moral obligation to give the most to the organisation (loyalty, respect), corresponding in equal terms and retributing what the commitment that the organisation shows to its employees (care for their well-being, good conditions to work, etc.). The definitions by Wiener (1982, p. 421), "the totality of normative pressures to act in a way which meets organisational goals and interests", and particularly with the normative component of the three-component model proposed by Meyer and Allen (1991, p. 67), referring to some moral obligation to remain with the organisation, for example for ethical reasons. Although turnover and turnover intention did not appear specifically in the primary information (interviews), the secondary data (statistic elements pointing to employees with a high average of years in the company) may be interpreted as organisational commitment levels in the case company are associated with low turnover intention. There is also consistency with the concept of "psychological contract", which is "the set of individual beliefs of a person in relation to the reciprocal obligations and benefits established in a relationship of exchange" (Rousseau, 1989, p. 135; Herrera and De Las Heras-Rosas, 2021, p. 2)

As mentioned, it is possible to find in the literature definitions of employee engagement very similar to organisational commitment, specially from a behavioural perspective. The findings from this research's case study are consistent with this and reveal that, for the respondents, there is no clear distinction between the two concepts (organisational commitment and employee engagement). One of the elements of organisational commitment, present in the findings, is "a full engagement in one's job" (C8), that is, to be dedicated to day-to-day work, to be aware and to give everything one can in the best way possible. This is consistent with the second part of the conceptualization by Mowday et al. (1979, p. 226), "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organisation". Organisational commitment as the employee's involvement can be found in the research data, as mentioned above, but these findings also relate, in fact are quite similar to the definition by Kahn (1990, p. 694) of employee engagement as being "(...) the harnessing of organisation members' selves to their work roles; (...) people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances". Of course, this definition points more to an attachment to the work role in the organisation, and not specifically to the organisation itself. However, there is an intrinsic relation between

the work done (for the organisation) and the organisation. Thus, consistency appears to exist as attachment to the work role is evident from the research data (element C8), along with behaviours of role performance (C7, C6) and expression of engagement (again element C8).

There is an overall consensus, in the literature, that motivation and organisational commitment are “closely linked constructs, yet they also display discriminant validity, indicating the usefulness of maintaining them as separate concepts” (Gagné and Howard, 2016, p. 67). One of the main differences regards the target, which in motivation is the work itself and in organisational commitment is the organisation. This is evident in the data, as some respondents point to elements in organisational commitment such as “to show motivation for the job”, “even if unmotivated still to do the necessary things that the company needs”.

Inconsistent and/or inconclusive results

As mentioned above it is not possible to strongly conclude on the consistency of the finding “emotional attachment to the organisation” (element C1) with the seminal definition “an attitude or an orientation toward the organisation which links or attaches the identity of the person to the organisation.” (Sheldon, 1971, p. 143). This definition seems unsuitable for comparison with the specific and concrete concepts present in the findings. An “inconclusive” result appears when contrasting the definition “relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organisation.” (Mowday, Steers and Porter, 1979, p. 226), as there are findings pointing to feelings of pride, but again not strong enough to allow conclusions about strong identification.

Some elements present in the following definitions of organisational commitment were absent from the findings of this research. All of these are definitions well-regarded by following authors, which have mentioned them in literature reviews and posterior studies. As such, these were expected to be found in such rich study about the understanding of organisational commitment. However, this was not the case, and these elements were deemed inconsistent.

This is the case for the seminal definition by Becker (1960, p. 32), “Commitments come into being when a person, by making a side bet, links extraneous interests with a consistent line of activity”. This definition of commitment can be related to the continuance component in the three-component model (Meyer & Allen., 1991), and was very popular in early years.

In the case study, there were no reports pointing to this concept. Even though the employees seem to rely on the company, there was no mention of personal investments (nor side-bets) as being related to their perception of organisational commitment. This can also be referred as inconsistent with one of the propositions in the model by Meyer and Herscovitch (2001, p. 316), namely that “The mind-set of perceived cost (continuance commitment) develops when an individual recognizes that he or she stands to lose investments, and/or perceives that there are no alternatives other than to pursue a course of action of relevance to a particular target”. There is a possibility that this absence is due to their laity and language, but the researcher’s interpretation is that it is more probable that the respondents really do not consider this element (personal investments and side-bets) as part of the definition of organisational commitment.

The same happens with the definition by Meyer & Allen. (1991, p. 61), whereby “a psychological state that (...) (b) has implications for the decision to continue or discontinue membership in the organisation.”. As mentioned above, neither turnover nor turnover intention appeared specifically as defining organisational commitment in the data, although could be slightly associated with the element C7, sense of obligation and duty, more as a consequence than as a defining element.

Specific elements not found in the literature

This section presents some very specific elements of organisational commitment that are present in this research’s findings but cannot be found in the extant literature.

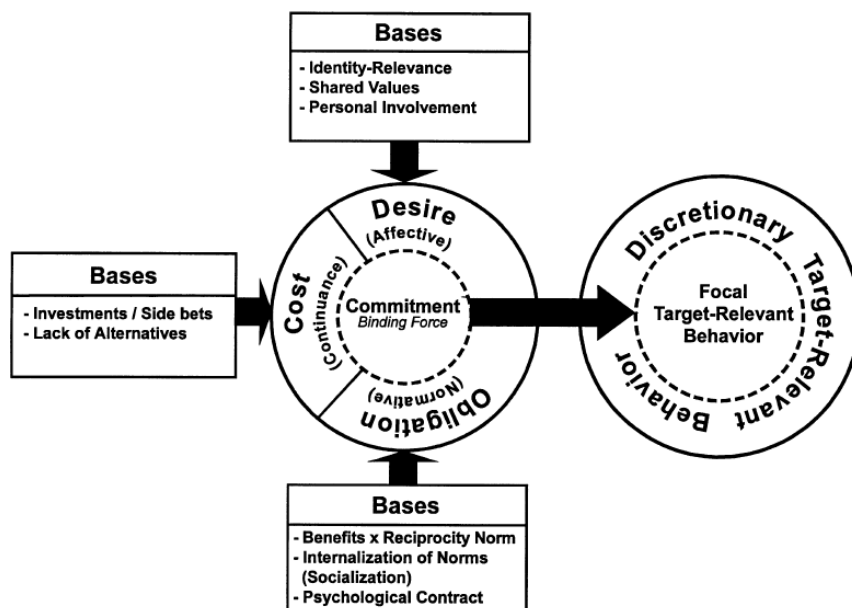
The definition by O’Reilly III & Chatman (1986, p. 493) as “the psychological attachment felt by the person for the organisation; it will reflect the degree to which the individual internalizes or adopts characteristics or perspectives of the organisation” implies a psychological state/attachment and points to the concept of internalization, both attitudinal in nature and possibly related to affective organisational commitment. The first part, psychological attachment, is evident in the data and has been discussed above. However, the second part, internalization, does not emerge from the research data, and I suggest that, although it could be deduced as a consequence of these elements (C2 and C5), it would be a farfetched proposition to indicate that internalization is the same as “to defend the company, to protect the company’s interests” (C2) or “to be concerned and to care for the company” (C5). Internalization is said to exist when the values of the organisation and the values of the individual are the same. The findings are more concrete than this, as pointing to behaviours

as “positive and flattering discourse about the organisation”, “to defend the company passionately”, etc, as mentioned above in previous sections, “preoccupation with the organisation”, “giving back exceeding a transactional attitude”, “constant thinking of what could be improved”.

5.2.3 Organisational commitment conceptualization: Proposition for a model

Throughout the last decades, academic works on organisational commitment presented numerous models to specifically conceptualize a definition of organisational commitment. One of these examples is the well-cited three-component model by Meyer & Allen (1991) which has been widely cited in this dissertation and used as an important framework to understand organisational commitment. Closely following the three-component model, a subsequent proposal for a “general model of commitment” was developed by model by Meyer and Herscovitch (2001, p. 317), which defines as core essence “the sense of being bound to a course of action of relevance to a particular target”, separates three mind-sets that characterize commitment (desire, cost, and obligation), and also incorporates in the model the consequences of commitment and the so-called “bases”, or factors that influence commitment (see Figure 11 General model of workplace commitment).

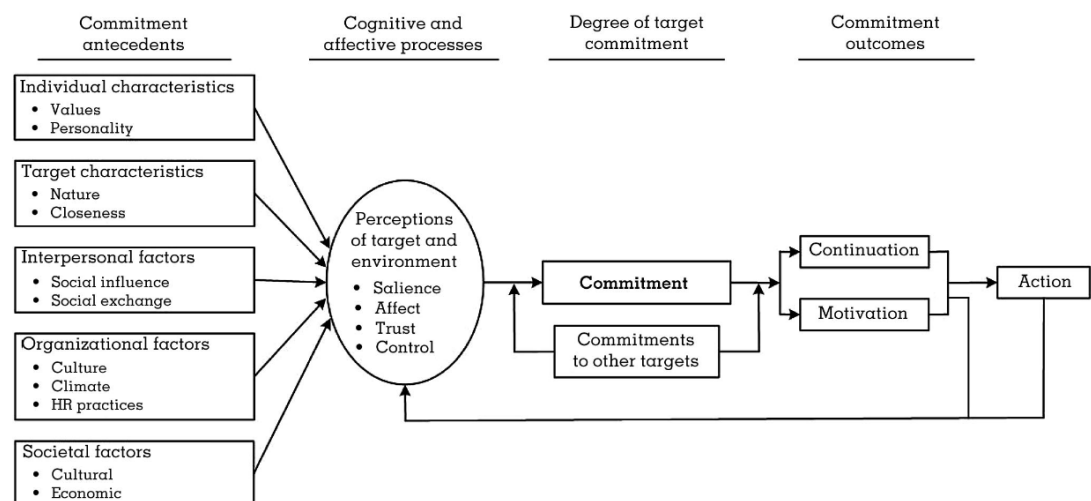
Figure 11 General model of workplace commitment



Source: Meyer and Herscovitch (2001, p. 317)

Another important example is the model by Klein, Molloy and Brinsfield (2012) which is a so-called “process model” that gives a dynamic perspective and distinguishes itself (in numerous arguments) from the acclaimed three-component model (see Figure 12 Process model of commitment). Klein’s model also offers a broader vision by including in the process both the antecedents, the perceptions, and the outcomes of organisational commitment, while at the same time providing a very focused definition of organisational commitment, by stripping out from the concept itself all those “ancillary” elements and producing a so-called “unidimensional” conceptualization of organisational commitment which can be summarized as “a volitional psychological bond reflecting dedication to and responsibility for a particular target” (Klein, Molloy and Brinsfield, 2012, p. 137).

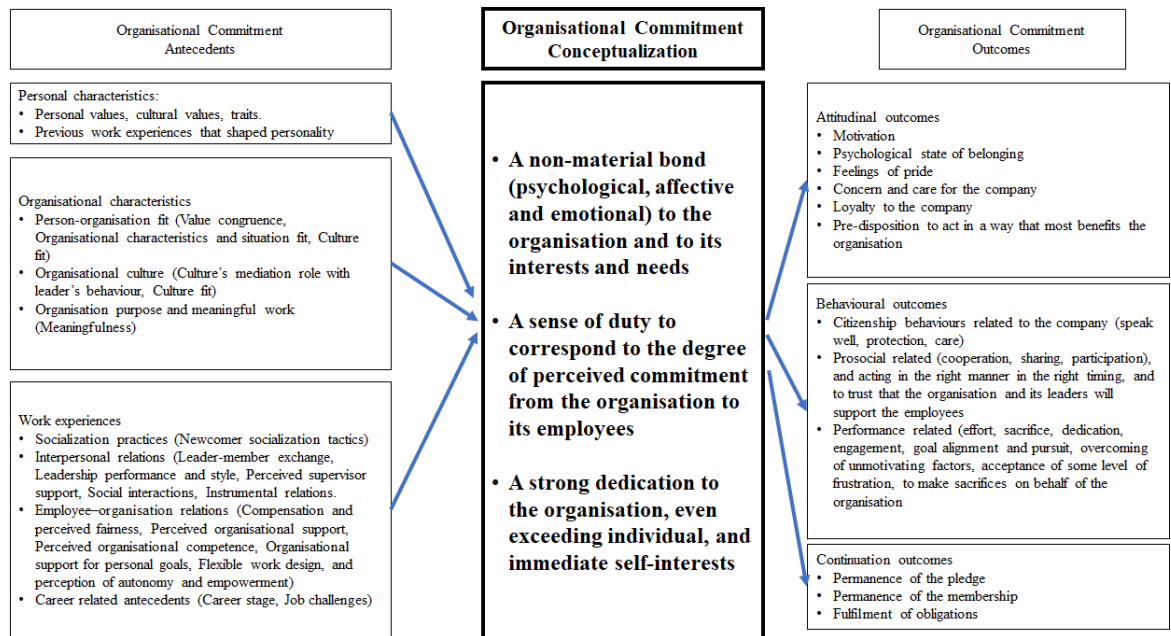
Figure 12 Process model of commitment



Source: Klein, Molloy and Brinsfield (2012)

Using the research findings, analysing, and comparing them with the literature, the RENOVA’s case study improves our understanding of organisational commitment and allows the formulation of proposition for a model which defines organisational commitment. The intent is not to generalize this model to all organisations, but rather to use it to enhance our understanding of organisational commitment in an organisation, and to use this understanding to point directions for future research (see Figure 13 Proposition for a model for the definition of organisational commitment). Following the logic of the process model by Klein, Molloy and Brinsfield (2012) and the general model by Meyer and Herscovitch (2001), both antecedents and outcomes of organisational commitment are included in the proposed model, separated and distinguished from the essence of organisational commitment.

Figure 13 Proposition for a model for the definition of organisational commitment



Author's own model

Conceptualization of organisational commitment

Regarding the definition itself of organisational commitment, there are three elements proposed.

Element 1) A non-material bond (psychological, affective and emotional) to the organisation and to its interests and needs

Firstly, our model includes in the definition of organisational commitment “A non-material bond (psychological, affective and emotional) to the organisation and to its interests and needs”. This is related to observed behaviours that evidenced this bonding and the employee’s pre-disposition to act in the way that most benefits the organisation.

Why is it termed “non-material bond (psychological, affective and emotional)”? This formula joins together several of the terms previously used by academic works because no single one of these terms is able to translate the whole concept, and none of these concepts are material in the sense of being based on a written contract or on a “signed and sealed” commitment.

Additionally, each of these elements though may overlap in some definitions, are distinct and point to different substantial elements. Here is an etymological explanation.

(1) Organisational commitment is a psychological¹ bond because its development is a process that is mental, cerebral, internal. Psychological derives from the ancient Greek word *psykhē* "breath, spirit, soul".

(2) Organisational commitment is an affective² bond, not so much in the sense that affects something (i.e., it produces an effect or influences), but rather meaning that it is related to affects and affections³. Affective comes from the Latin *affectus* which is "disposition, mood, state of mind", and is related to *ad+facere* which means "doing something for someone or toward something".

(3) Organisational commitment is an emotional bond because it relates to emotions⁴ in the sense that it is a conscious mental reaction experienced as a feeling directed toward a specific object, and typically accompanied by behavioral changes. Emotions come from the Latin *e+movere*, meaning to move, or to displace. From these explanations, and looking back to the findings, it is clear that all three aspects are present in this bond that is termed "organisational commitment".

Element 2) A sense of duty to correspond to the degree of perceived commitment from the organisation to its employees

¹ Definition of psychological: 1a: relating to psychology, 1b: mental; 2: directed toward the will or toward the mind. "Psychological." Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster

² Definition of affective: 1: relating to, arising from, or influencing feelings or emotions; 2: expressing emotion. "Affective." Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster

³ Definition of affection: 1: a feeling of liking and caring for someone or something: tender attachment: fondness; 2: a moderate feeling or emotion. Middle English *affecioun* "capacity for feeling, emotion, desire, love," borrowed from Latin *affectiōn-*, *affectiō* "frame of mind, feeling, feeling of attachment". "Affection." Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster

⁴ Definition of emotion 1a: a conscious mental reaction subjectively experienced as strong feeling usually directed toward a specific object and typically accompanied by physiological and behavioral changes in the body b: a state of feeling c: the affective aspect of consciousness: feeling. Middle French, from *emouvoir* to stir up, (...) from Latin *emovēre* to remove, displace, from *e-* + *movēre* to move. "Emotion." Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster

Secondly, the organisational commitment model built from the RENOVA case study, adds to the definition of organisational commitment the element “A sense of duty to correspond with the degree of perceived commitment from the organisation to its employees”. This element relates to the findings which included evidence of behaviours such as “acting in the right manner and in the right timing”, and “to trust that the organisation and its leaders will support the employees”. This element may be associated with the definition of “normative organisational commitment”, from the three-component model. However, while the normative organisational commitment inclines toward a pre-disposition from the individual to be committed, particularly due to previous education and/or experiences prior to entering the organisation, in this research’s case study the evidence pointed to the relevance/importance of the experiences within the company, meaning those relationships between the individual (employee) and the organisation. This was especially true, regarding the employees’ perceptions that the organisation was also committed to them and to their well-being (which itself could be associated with the antecedent “perceived organisational support”). As such, the element “sense of duty” may be closer and more consistent with the well-known concept of psychological contract, which has been defined as “the set of individual beliefs of a person in relation to the reciprocal obligations and benefits established in a relationship of exchange” (Rousseau, 1989, p. 135; Herrera and De Las Heras-Rosas, 2021, p. 2).

Going deeper into this comparison, if we observe in detail how the normative organisational commitment is measured (Allen and Meyer, 1990, p. 7), we find the following elements: the belief that a person must always be loyal to the organization; the perception that jumping from organization to organization is unethical; the belief that loyalty is important and the sense of moral obligation to remain; the feeling of wrongdoing when leaving the present organization; the belief in the value of remaining loyal to one organization; the sense that the right thing is when people stay with one organization for most of their careers.

In the detailed results of this research, the second element in the proposed model seems to be much more oriented and related to the specific company than to organisations in general, or to a sense of loyalty towards any firm. Here are some examples, from the findings: “to have a sense of duty towards the company”, “to feel some kind of obligation to give the most to the company, to be loyal, respectful to the company”, “to correspond equally (match) the same commitment the company has with its employees”, “to retribute in the same manner what the company delivers its employees”.

Comparing these elements with the detailed results from this research, it is possible to conclude that these two concepts, “normative organisational commitment” and “A sense of duty to correspond with the degree of perceived commitment from the organisation to its employees”, are not equivalent, although associated and in some parts overlapping.

Another detailed comparison is with the seminal multidimensional definition of organisational commitment by Buchanan (1975), and specifically to understand whether Buchanan’s “feeling of loyalty” is equivalent to the element “A sense of duty (...)”. Buchanan’s view of “feeling of loyalty” includes the following detailed concepts (Buchanan, 1975, p. 70): (1) “loyalty resides in a specific organisation” - this notion of company-related or even company-specific is similar to the one regarding the second element of the proposed model of this research (as mentioned above); (2) “loyalty is the mucilage that binds people firmly to the particular organizational setting in which identification and involvement take shape” and “loyalty is a consequence of the growth of identification and involvement” - the findings of the present research do not allow to establish a direct comparison with these ideas; (3) “encompasses conscious and unconscious feelings of appreciation, a generalized sense of affection for comfortable and familiar surroundings, and the feeling, born of identification and involvement, that the organization is somehow right for one” - again, there are no specific findings that allow a direct comparison with this claim.

Element 3) A strong dedication to the organisation, even exceeding individual, and immediate self-interests

A third element in this proposed model for a definition of organisational commitment, based on the RENOVA’s case, is “A strong dedication to the organisation, even exceeding individual, and immediate self-interests”. This element is consistent with part of the definition proposed by Klein, Molloy and Brinsfield (2012), “a perceived volitional bond with a target characterized by responsibility and dedication”. Although “responsibility” could not be explicitly found in the case study, it was possible to implicitly extract it from topics such as “conscience that they are doing their best”, “incessant focus on solutions in the face of difficulties”, “sacrifice own self-interest on behalf of the company’s needs”. On the other hand, “dedication” was clearly found in the evidence from the case study, and is evidently related to “strong motivation”, “full engagement”, and “acceptance of some levels of frustration”.

It becomes evident, from the above description, that the current model proposed inclines predominantly to the attitudinal perspective of organisational commitment. Although some behaviours serve as base to identify (and define) organisational commitment, as would be expected considering the more concrete and palpable nature of observable behaviours, in the final result, the organisational commitment model proposed is more aligned with the attitudinal conceptualizations.

Antecedents of organisational commitment

The antecedents are explained in detail in the previous sections of this chapter, as they respond to a subsidiary research question. This explanation will not be repeated here, but the antecedents are included in the model (see Figure 13 Proposition for a model for the definition of organisational commitment) and separated by category (Personal characteristics, Organisational characteristics, and Work experiences).

Outcomes of organisational commitment

Although the study of the consequences and outcomes of organisational commitment was outside the scope and objectives of this research, there was an opportunity to extract from the research information some knowledge about this topic. This was achieved because the respondents when trying to define organisational commitment would sometimes deviate to talk about the consequences of organisational commitment. As such, this model opted to use these findings, directly from the case study, and include them in this schematical representation of the outcomes of organisational commitment.

These consequences or outcomes are divided into three categories: Attitudinal outcomes, Behavioural outcomes, and Continuation outcomes. Regarding Attitudinal outcomes, there is evidence relating to: motivation, psychological state of belonging, feelings of pride, concern and care for the company, loyalty to the company, and pre-disposition to act in a way that most benefits the organisation. Regarding Behavioural outcomes, there is evidence relating to: Citizenship behaviours related to the company, such as to speak well about the company, feeling of protection and care toward the company, prosocial related behaviours such as cooperation, sharing of knowledge and participation in the decision making and the creative processes, acting in the right manner in the right timing, and to trust that the organisation and its leaders will support the employees. Additionally, there are performance related outcomes such as effort, sacrifice, dedication, engagement, goal alignment and

pursuit, overcoming of unmotivating factors, acceptance of some level of frustration, and to make sacrifices on behalf of the organisation. Regarding Continuation outcomes, it can be outlined the permanence of the pledge, the permanence of the membership and the fulfilment of job obligations.

This proposed model does not intend to generalize the theoretical conceptualization of organisational commitment to all cases, but rather to present a content that is complete (holistic perspective) using a format that is attractive. This model uses some already validated elements, from previous academic works, and adds new elements that emerged from the case study results.

5.2.4 General propositions for organisational commitment conceptualization

In a more generic perspective, this section proposes that future research on the conceptualization of organisational commitment should consider and question the following assumptions.

a) Multidimension. In companies with the characteristics of RENOVA, organisational commitment may not be a simplistic concept, as it seems to be formed from different and diverse elements/components. Therefore, contradicting the unidimensional perspectives of this topic, if one is to comprehensively understand what organisational commitment is on such firms, a multidimensional perspective should be considered.

b) Organisational commitment and employee engagement. The case study reveals that employees from this company do not have a clear distinction between these two concepts: organisational commitment and employee engagement. Particularly when trying to define organisational commitment using behavioural perspectives, the respondents bring up elements that are typically associated with employee engagement (*e.g.*, “immersion in work”, “working for very long periods at a time”, getting “carried away when working”, dedication, etc). As such, future research is needed to confirm this assumption, that organisational commitment and employee engagement are probably overlapping concepts, in the perception of employees.

c) Regarding the three-component model of Meyer and Allen, this dissertation suggests that continuance and normative components may be perceived in a lesser degree than affective organisational commitment. Affective organisational commitment was, by far, the most

emphasized component in the responses. Normative component does appear in the findings, and is included in our proposed model, although with some specificities already explained above. Continuance commitment was not found at all in all the results from the case study.

d) According to the responses, turnover is not consensually considered a consequence of lower commitment (*e.g.*, some employees may be highly committed while members of the organisation, but after leaving the company will be committed to the new employer, and still may have some commitment towards the previous employer, for example for its brand, or for the organisation as a whole). This organisational commitment outcome has been frequently used, even as much as to define organisational commitment itself (in some previous works), but from the results of this case study I recommend that turnover should not be used in the conceptualization of organisational commitment, although it could be used in organisational commitment research when focusing on the outcomes (or consequences) of organisational commitment.

In the next chapter the main conclusions and contributions from this research are presented and summarized.

Chapter 6 Conclusions and thesis contributions

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this dissertation was to contribute to the debate about organisational commitment using the case of RENOVA, a fairly large and highly innovative company which has a strongly committed and stable workforce. Using rich qualitative primary information from the interviews with employees and managers, organisational commitment was considered from a holistic perspective. The gathering of that information was possible because of unlimited access granted by RENOVA. Although a piece of academic work, this dissertation is also intended to contribute to the management practice relating to the development of organisational commitment. The study analysed the most relevant dimensions of organisational commitment, and the antecedents for its development in an organisation.

The next sections list all the results obtained in this research, acknowledge and reflect on possible limitations and summarize the main contributions.

6.2 Final results for each research question

6.2.1 How is the current development of organisational commitment explained, from the perspective of the employees?

Our questions were: **How is the current development of organisational commitment explained, from the perspective of the employees? What contextual circumstances or events play a role?**

In the case of RENOVA, many elements, circumstances and conditions account for the development of organisational commitment. The most important of these are, first, employee–organisation relations, such as perceived fairness and perceived organisational support, support for personal goals, flexible work design and perception of autonomy and empowerment, all of these have a positive impact on organisational commitment.

Second, interpersonal relations, especially leader-member relationships, perceived supervisor support (trust, feedback and recognition, vertical communication), instrumental social interactions between peer employees and newcomer socialization, once again had positive effects on the development of organisational commitment.

Third, person-organisation fit, namely value congruence between the individual and the organisation, cultural fit between the individual and the organisation, and perception of meaningfulness from the organisational purpose and from meaningful work had some but minor positive effects on organisational commitment.

Finally, a small but significant effect on organisational commitment was found regarding personal characteristics and personal expectations, such as expectations about the company and the job, individual pre-entry cultural values, and expectations for career growth, i.e., the perception of having career opportunities (for example when sensing a career peak there is the perception of less career growth opportunities, and this has negative effect on organisational commitment)

6.2.2 Patterns found in the antecedents of organisational commitment

Analysing these results, some patterns can be observed, and the following conclusions can be drawn. The company has a strongly committed and stable workforce and, at the same time, has very specific characteristics that allow speculation on whether these case-specific conclusions apply to similar companies, elsewhere.

One pattern emerging from this study concerns the quantity of antecedents. In the case of RENOVA, it is possible to observe that, instead of a small number of factors common to most respondents, there is a large number of different and diverse antecedents of organisational commitment. All of them have some effect on organisational commitment, and most of them seem relatively important, also because respondents are aware that changes, or adjustments, in one or a few of these antecedents may produce relevant effects on organisational commitment.

One suggestion here is that since organisational commitment depends on a large number of contextual circumstances (events, practices, policies, actions, behaviours, etc.), if the objective is to understand comprehensively the factors that impact organisational commitment development, one needs to pursue adequate methodological research choices, and qualitative research studies that may cover a wide range of elements, more than quantitative studies that only focus on a few variables. That suggestion could be useful for practitioners who, when needing to foster organisational commitment in their organisations, should then carefully consider which antecedents to address, better than narrowing down the focus to just some of them, a practice that could be detrimental to their goals.

A second conclusion here is about the specific characteristic of most of the antecedents of organisational commitment. Organisational commitment, in RENOVA, does not seem to be shaped by grand elements of strategy, such as company's deliberations formal policies implemented top-down, or structural projects specifically aimed at increasing organisational commitment. Some of these grand elements have not been addressed by the case company in a formal way. This fact is confirmed by the absence of a strategy of human resource management aimed at high organisational commitment, and by a relative low investment in traditional initiatives of human resource management. The absence of those elements apparently did not affect organisational commitment in this firm, while levels of organisational commitment remained quite high (according to the findings, all the respondents said that organisational commitment in this firm is either "high" or "very high").

By contrast, most of the important antecedents, as mentioned, seem to be "small things", that is to say trivial elements, day-to-day practices, routines, usual behaviours, individual's perceptions, or ordinary actions. These elements, which taken alone could seem unimportant, taken together seem to have a great impact on organisational commitment. In sum, those elements, entrenched in the experience of the company's employees on a daily basis, are more significant in shaping organisational commitment than high-level strategies and decisions from the top management.

Thirdly, from a good number of the identified antecedents, it is possible to view a pattern relating to the concept of freedom to choose, or autonomy. In RENOVA employees enjoy a relative high degree of freedom. The analysis of RENOVA's employees' actions and behaviour, indicate the existence of a pattern that relates to personal/individual freedom. There is a perception that employees have the possibility of making their own decisions, thus contributing to the profile of the company.

This pattern was observed, for example, in the employees' possibility of choosing their own "fluid" job/task/project (RENOVA's own coined term, as reported in detail in previous chapters), having a good degree of autonomy instead of being restricted to a rigid job description. Of course, in the production department, for instance, rigorous processes and procedures must be attended to produce highly standardized products, such as the consumer goods that RENOVA delivers. A "fluid" understanding of tasks is most common in marketing and logistics. However, some respondents in the production department mentioned that in solving manufacturing problem there is a high degree of autonomy while people are expected to be creative in developing their solutions.

Another example is the freedom to choose internal social networks, since social interactions and relationships between employees are not imposed, nor are they promoted by the company. By contrast, each employee is free to engage in social interactions with co-workers. There is freedom to attend teambuilding events, anniversary parties, get-togethers, whether these are organised by the company or not, and, in fact, the social events where the company takes the initiative are very few. Another example is the freedom to choose day-to-day options. If employees prefer to eat in the firm's cafeteria or to bring their own meals, they will not lose their complementary food compensations required by the law.

Finally, another example involves creative freedom. This includes the freedom of expression (e.g., the company has allowed employees to participate in the production of art using industrial waste materials, namely paints and old equipment), the freedom to be creative, by having the autonomy to put into practice own ideas regarding the job.

There is also a high degree of freedom to access top management and employees from other departments.

In conclusion, freedom and autonomy, although not always mentioned explicitly, can be found throughout the findings, and are implicit in many of the antecedents found in the case study. Also, this was consistent with the CEO's vision, explicitly mentioned in his interview. This could be said to be a part of RENOVA's organisational culture, which was also found to be an antecedent of organisational commitment. Organisational culture is a complex reality itself and may change over time. In this company the culture has not changed much over time (a stable workforce, and the same CEO and top management for more than 20 years may help to explain). This suggests that organisational culture represents an important variable to assess when studying changes, for example via a longitudinal study, in the levels of organisational commitment that take place over a long period.

6.2.3 What role do employees' interactions and relationships play?

Regarding the conditions under which organisational commitment develops, the following conclusions respond to another question: **What role do employees' interactions and relationships play?**

The social relationships and interactions of employees in RENOVA constitute a relevant element in the development of organisational commitment. In relation to previous literature,

which suggests a great impact of social relationships on organisational commitment, particularly regarding affective organisational commitment, our case study points to a less, yet still, important antecedent.

This case study sheds light on a specific issue regarding the content of social interactions between employees. The conclusion is that, in RENOVA, the type of interaction that reportedly seems to have more effect on organisational commitment is work-related interactions, while interactions and relationships with different content such as friendship, family ties or other nonwork-related interactions and relationships seem to have a minor impact on organisational commitment. Friendship relationships seem to be unimportant, when compared to work-related interactions.

Another conclusion resulting from the case study is that the socialization of newcomers seemed very relevant as an antecedent of organisational commitment. The influence exerted by older employees seems to be important to the development of organisational commitment of the recent hires, which are viewed to be more prone to be influenced by other employees. Again, work-related interactions seemed to be more important, as knowledge sharing from older to younger employees was mentioned as very relevant in the process of inter-generation socialization. An important point here is that not only institutionalized socialization (i.e., regulated and formally promoted by the organisation) has a positive impact on organisational commitment, but also that non-institutionalized socialization (spontaneous, non-formalized actions and behaviours that result in the socialization of newcomers in the organisation).

The specific interaction between employee and supervisor was found to be most important to the development of organisational commitment. It was through this type of relationships (between leader and direct subordinate) that important antecedents were conveyed, such as trust, respect, politeness, and perceived supervisor support. All these are elements identified as promoting organisational commitment in RENOVA, along with other elements that foster organisational commitment, namely good top-down communication, sense of recognition, information and knowledge sharing, access and good communication between departments, healthy cooperation due to open spaces and a culture of openness and diversity of opinions valued. Additionally, it was observed that, in RENOVA, relationships and interactions helped to improve sense making, and that in the specific case where an individual had low commitment, this individual would have an influence on the organisational commitment levels of other individuals.

Our case study was consistent with extant works regarding the importance of social interactions and relationships between employees for organisational commitment and showed a greater importance of instrumental relationships and interactions, relative to expressive relationships. In addition, it underlined the importance of freedom and autonomy in the internal social networks of employees, as mentioned in the previous section.

6.2.4 Do internal human resource management strategies and policies contribute to commitment? And, if so, how?

The following conclusions relate to the set of questions: **Do internal human resource management strategies and policies contribute to commitment? And, if so, how?**

Some elements that in previous studies have been included in the human resource management category, were found in our case study. However, since this research has made the choice of analysing these elements separately, there is less ground to make strong claims regarding human resource management. This is the case of the antecedents “job descriptions and job design”, “organisational structure”, “appraisal and reward systems”, and “mentoring”. These seem relevant for organisational commitment in our case study and could be related to human resources management.

The single conclusion that this research makes regarding human resource management is that an absence of a formal deliberate strategy of human resource management aiming at increasing organisational commitment had a minor or no impact on the development of organisational commitment, in RENOVA, relative to other factors. Although this was a clear finding, this conclusion may be related to the context of the case company, being family-owned and having some practices that are generally associated with small and medium enterprises, despite by standard metrics being classified as a large company.

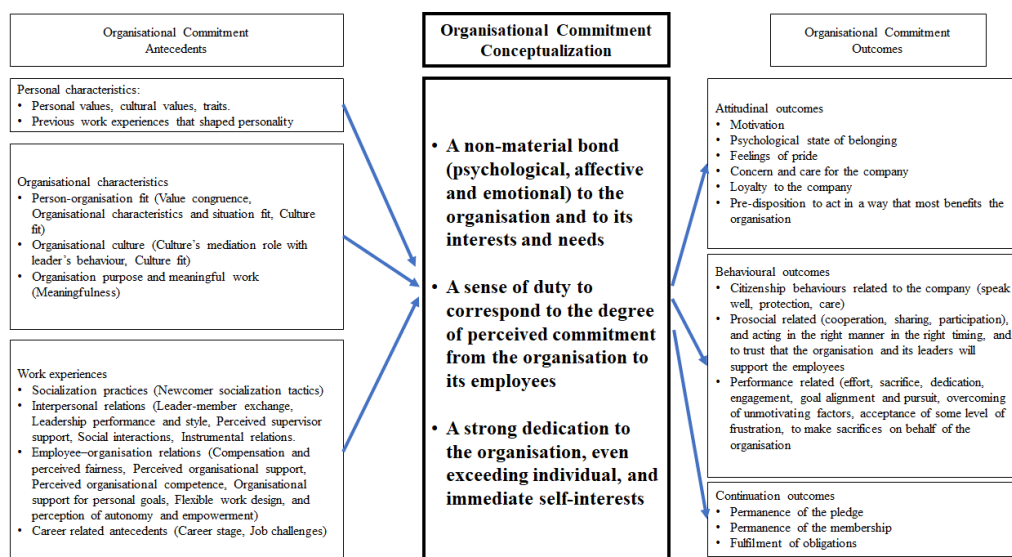
No other claims are possible, regarding the human resource management field, considering the results from this research.

6.2.5 How can organisational commitment be defined, from the perspective of the employees?

Another set of conclusions relate to the following research question **How can organisational commitment be defined, from the perspective of the employees? (mRQ1)**

In a previous chapter (Discussion), a general model for the definition of organisational commitment was proposed and was based on the case study of RENOVA. The process taken to achieve such a model used an abductive approach, and the following pathway. First, an initial review to the literature was made but only to draw a general definition of the concepts and an initial identification of gaps, then a theoretical framework was attempted, not as in deductive research, but simply to have an initial grounding for methodological choice. After the design of the methodology, the interviews were conducted and secondary data were collected. The information was transcribed and a first cycle of analysis (coding) was made. Informed by this data analysis, another review of the literature was carried out. This focused on the concepts left behind in the first literature review which were also identifiable in the data. Sequential phases of coding were made whereas the findings were put together, and the interviews were translated into English. These findings were then used to engage the academic debates on the topics at hand. Finally a proposition for a model was attempted. This proposition is summarised in the model (see Figure 13 Proposition for a model for the definition of organisational commitment), shown again below.

Figure 13 Proposition for a model for the definition of organisational commitment



Author's own model

This proposed model is based solely on the case-study of RENOVA, and therefore questions of usefulness, plausability and objectivity could legitimately be raised. The results from this research should then be taken with caution. Given that most of the findings are consistent with conclusions present in the extant literature, there may be a possibility of generalization (i.e., the RENOVA case study may be generalizable to other cases, eventually to form a general theory). On the other hand, due to the qualitative nature of this project, and to some unexpected variables brought up by the research, which were not found in extant theories, there is also the possibility that the proposed model is non-generalizable. To some extent, the proposed definition of organisational commitment should be taken as contextualized and plausible.

Since the main objective of this research was to improve our understanding of organisational commitment, and not necessarily to reach an explanation for the phenomenon as a whole, the results and the model drawn from this research should be contextualized. This contextualization is developed in more detail in the next section.

6.3 Limitations and further research

6.3.1 Limitations and further research: Data collection

Case study selection

Although theoretical sampling was used to choose the company case, with justification for the choice of a single case study, there are clear limitations to this approach in relation to the possibility of generalization. However, as presented in this dissertation, the choices made in this research appear to have been adequate for the research objectives. One recommendation for future research would be to broaden the sample without eliminating the possibility of an approach that allows all elements to emerge.

Selection of respondents

Although criteria were defined for the choice of participants to respond to the interviews, the selection and final decision were made by the company's managers, which could be viewed as a risk of bias related to the type of participant that took part in the study. However,

although a clear limitation to be acknowledged, the researcher believes that there was no bias. Firstly, at every point in the process there was a possibility of excluding and/or requesting for other respondents. Secondly, almost all of the questions posed in the interview did not address the respondent's level of organisational commitment and also did not imply a qualitative evaluation of the company, rather it was made explicit (and it was also implicit in the questions), that the objective of the research was not to be judgemental of the company, but rather to reach academic conclusions and goals. Thirdly, confidentiality was assured and explicitly explained to all the respondents.

Additionally, employees from other geographical regions (Azores, France and Spain) were not included in the list of respondents, which may cause some under-representation from the international divisions of the company, as well as an absence of non-Portuguese employees. In the specific case of the operation in France (the largest with around 50 employees), a plant was bought, and it had just started to operate under RENOVA's management, so it was still in a phase of adapting to the strategy and culture of RENOVA. For this reason, it did not make sense to include it in the research. However, the CEO of RENOVA mentioned that they would try to replicate their organisational culture in the French operation, thus future research may focus on a comparison between local employees and international employees and investigate whether the cultural change has been successful in that particular plant.

Number of respondents

As mentioned, this research applied theoretical sampling of participants that met selection criteria, following guidelines already suggested by cited authors. Further research may involve a wider sample (this research used fourteen extended interviews), and could chose to make comparisons according to the employees' functional department (Marketing, Production, Logistics, etc.) and/or hierarchical level (top management, middle management, shopfloor employees, etc.)

6.3.2 Limitations and future research: Data analysis

Several indications for future research are identified, consistent with the ambitious task of this research, the great number of results presented, covering a wide and much debated topic as is the case of organisational commitment.

Firstly, there is the suggestion that future research could attempt an international comparison within RENOVA, since this research only focused on their domestic operations and departments. Additionally, research could focus on the investigation of how managers from different countries use different strategies and tactics to develop organisational commitment and comparing their results.

A second possible step in research could be to find companies with similar characteristics (such as the ones mentioned in the previous section) which could be included in the study in order to identify patterns and compare results across cases. RENOVA, as an innovative company with a stable workforce enables speculation on the applicability of this case study and its findings to other related firms. The original finding is that RENOVA does not pursue organisational commitment, but rather has a total focus on innovation and marketing. Nevertheless, the firm ends up enjoying a high level of organisational commitment. Other organisational variables could be added to understand how unique RENOVA is, e.g., in terms of dynamic capabilities, the agility of innovative firms, the flexibility of a non-unionised workforce, and without the presence of rigid job descriptions.

Related to this one could speculate and further investigate if RENOVA, which falls into a “large firm” category in terms of total employees, is engaging in the type of human resource management practices that typically large firms use, or if its human resource management is closer to those practices from small and medium enterprises. This was not explored in this research and seems a very interesting topic to develop further.

Another avenue for research could be a follow-up over time, within the organisation studied, enabling evaluation of the progress in the level of organisational commitment and to determine what contextual elements have changed that could justify that evolution. Changes in strategy could be analysed, including the evolution of the human resource management policies and practices, and its effect on organisational commitment. Such longitudinal analysis could be very interesting, enabling assessment of the extent to which the results from this research were accurate and whether employees developed more organisational commitment.

Finally, regarding the debate whether organisational commitment and engagement are clearly distinct or overlapping concepts, this thesis inclines to the latter. However, since this was not the focus, nor were the results strong enough to support the claim, future research is

necessary to confirm this assumption (that organisational commitment and employee engagement are probably overlapping concepts, in the perception of employees).

6.4 Final conclusion

6.4.1 Main academic contributions

This section summarises the main contributions of this thesis and the implications for management practice.

The first point to be made is that after a review of the extant literature and what seemingly are research gaps in the study of organisational commitment, the dissertation developed a qualitative research approach to answer the research questions, involving the collection and analysis of information from the above-mentioned case study, that included twelve extended interviews and the use of secondary information about the organisation. The findings allowed the achievement of the main goal: a better understanding of the concept of organisational commitment and the antecedents of its development. However, these conclusions should be contextualized, rather than generalized to all cases (Reuber and Fischer, 2022), to enhance the theoretical understanding of how organisational commitment develops in organisations such as RENOVA. In addition, these findings may be helpful for practitioners, because they offer some insights into empirical research and an important case study revealing the conditions for the development of organisational commitment. There are in addition indications for practitioners who need to foster organisational commitment. For example, when organisations focus solely on incentives, salaries, or career plans to improve commitment, some organisations overlook other more important factors shaping commitment, notably relationships between employees, or perceived fairness, or organisational support, which may be more important to the development of organisational commitment.

An important conclusion here is that organisational commitment, at least in the case study presented here, has numerous determinants shaping its development, a fact suggesting the need to address multiple antecedents to organisational commitment, when the goal is to foster it. Also, conceptually, organisational commitment appears to be a concept escaping unidimensional explanations. This research presented here, by contrast, seems to show a need to use several elements when defining organisational commitment.

Here follows a summary of the results from this dissertation.

- (a) Organisational commitment is a multidimensional concept, thus unsuitable for unidimensional definitions.
- (b) In the list of the most important antecedents, “small things” (e.g., little day-to-day actions or behaviours) seemed to be more important than “grand” elements (e.g., formal strategies or big events).
- (c) Employee autonomy and promotion of freedom are important antecedents, although this is implicit in several topics and not explicitly mentioned using these exact terms.
- (d) Social interactions and relationships between employees seemed to have a positive effect on the development of organisational commitment.
- (e) Specifically instrumental relationships (work-related) were more important than expressive relationships (non-work-related) which seemed to account for minor effects.
- (d) The inexistence of a formal strategy of human resource management had a small or no effect on the development of organisational commitment.

6.4.2 Managerial implications of the research

Practitioners, in organisations with similar context of the present case study, can take advantage of the insights presented in this dissertation, and integrate them with other internal strategies and practices, to achieve greater development of organisational commitment.

The main recommendation raised by this dissertation is that practitioners, in similar contexts, may wish to follow closely the conclusions about the antecedents of organisational commitment, as the findings of our case study are mainly consistent with previous literature. These conclusions, explained in previous sections, may help practitioners to have a better understanding of organisational commitment before reflecting and taking decisions regarding internal strategies, change management programs, or other managerial initiatives. Such recommendations are, of course, intended to help organisations with similar context as the case company, RENOVA. This knowledge may allow managers to identify which factors may impact greatly organisational commitment and should observe them more closely and address them with managerial initiatives.

The following are some of the most important initiatives, as concluded from this research, that, if practitioners in firms similar to RENOVA wish to improve the development of organisational commitment, should be followed: to care for the relations between employee and organisation, to improve perceived organisational support, namely support for achievement of goals, to be fair, to implement processes that allow for autonomy and more flexible work design, to promote good relationships between leaders and subordinates, namely with good feedback and recognition, and where trust is a strong characteristic, to promote social interactions especially related to the job itself, to promote socialization of newcomers especially related to their training and development, to seek cultural congruence between the values of the company and the values of the individual, to promote the perception of the meaningfulness of each job, and to develop a leadership culture of openness and accessibility.

Both the propositions regarding the conceptualization of organisational commitment and the antecedents that may contribute to its development may not be generalizable, without clear boundary conditions. It is imperative to contextualise the reality of RENOVA thus understanding and interpreting the results of this study in relation to the characteristics of our case company. The generalized application of these insights should be underpinned by the knowledge and characterization of the concrete reality of each organisation considered, and these recommendations should only be applied to firms with similar situations and aspirations as RENOVA. It is not certain that firms with different characteristics from RENOVA would enjoy the same outcome (high organisational commitment) using the same antecedents.

The following contextual characteristics of RENOVA are identified as affecting the results, and as such should be taking into account when the managerial initiatives proposed in this research are followed.

By traditional standards, RENOVA is considered a relatively large consumer goods manufacturer. However, since it competes with much larger firms in a worldwide context, it is perceived by its employees as being “small” and thus “struggling” to compete with such “gigantic” corporations, and this has been found to impact the development of their organisational commitment. The company has its industrial operation strongly based in a small country and located in a peripheral, rural region, somewhat distant from great cities. This has led to continuously having employed several individuals from the same families, across generations. These specific characteristics are found to have some impact on the

retention levels, the permanence of people as members and their organisational commitment. Strategically, RENOVA relies on innovation to differentiate from larger competitors and focus on strengthening its own brand in all its markets. This is recognized by its employees and is associated with a positive impact on organisational commitment. In terms of corporate culture, RENOVA, being family-owned in terms of property, and having the same leadership for decades (CEO and top managers) has develop an idiosyncratic culture (described earlier in this dissertation), which its employees identify and are aligned with, and this has also had an impact on organisational commitment.

Appendices

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Appendix 1 Information about RENOVA

Public information about the case company, RENOVA

Source: Renova's website. <https://www.myrenova.com/us/en/about-us.html>

Renova is a European brand of high quality and innovative products. Available in more than 60 countries worldwide, it offers colourful designs and new functional solutions through stylish and environmentally happy products.

The origins of the Renova brand date back to the second decade of the 19th century, existing records dating back to 1818 of the use of Renova watermark on paper manufactured in the location where Renova still maintains its headquarters today. 200 years later, the 100% Portuguese company is present in more than 70 countries, distributed in five continents. In 2021, it has about 620 direct employees, supporting two industrial units and a logistics centre in Portugal - Torres Novas, and a third production unit in Saint-Yorre, France.

Renova's first years of activity were dedicated to the manufacture and sale of writing, printing and packaging paper, beginning then, in the late 1950s, a pioneering and very innovative path in the development of tissue paper products for domestic and sanitary use. Renova founded this market in Portugal and remains the leading brand. The strong innovative matrix, organizational agility and the ability to anticipate trends, has enabled Renova to continuously present new solutions to meet the needs and expectations of citizens.

A milestone in the history of the Renova was the launch of Renova Black, the first black toilet paper in the world, reaching the status of an iconographic product, breaking the dogma of "unthinkable" products. Innovation is the brand differentiation strategy, allowing it to continue to perform a mission of first mover. Renova's strong product innovation is always combined with a disruptive communication and the development of irreverent advertising campaigns or artistic commissions grounded on Renova's values.

In the beginning of the millennium, Renova launched the first range of paper products certified with the European Union Ecolabel. Renovagreen are products manufactured with 100% recycled paper, emphasizing a solid strategy regarding the environment.

More recently, the brand launched a range of products with paper packaging, biodegradable and recyclable, replacing plastic, in response to a growing expectation of citizens around the world.

Renova recently consolidated an investment plan for the construction in Torres Novas of a new tissue paper manufacturing unit. Renova's No. 7 Paper machine was a technologically innovative and pioneering project across Europe, allowing it to increase its papermaking capacity by 50%.

The success of an exporting company is much more complex than showing temporary results, as it depends on a set of long-term sustainability factors, including the consistency of its philosophy and organizational values, the strength of its strategy and the efficiency of processes, as well as the strength of investment and market knowledge.

Renova's Future: The brand remains aware to the society in which it operates and will always try to turn ideas into solutions to surprise its fans and customers and at the same time create real business and value opportunities. The work developed by the different departments of Renova is the foundation and essence of the development of the brand that tries to surprise the market, leveraging the credibility and notoriety of an increasingly global brand.



People management challenges (internal documentation)

The source of this information is an internal document provided by the human resource Manager. These challenges were, apparently, identified by himself and there was no reference to collaboration with other people in the organisation.

Challenges:

- Technological: Robotization, information networks, knowledge digitalization
- Globalized labour market: job rotation, broader vision of the labour market, recruitment of people from all over the world, progressive retirement plans
- Demographical: Population aging, low fertility rates, migration, balancing professional and personal life
- Cultural and social: new ethical frameworks, adaptation to rapid change, languages and expatriate management, hard and soft skill, work hours flexibility, networking, increasing women qualification, urban culture

New standards for the company:

- Performance evaluation
- Health insurance
- New shifts
- Professional training, more intense and continuous for all, especially in the behavioural domains
- Promote new ideas and initiatives, rewarding the most valuable
- Employer branding (...)
- Employees are the first ambassadors of the company
- (...) better benefits and compensations
- Labour relations flexibility, with new models of work: technological connectivity and remote teamwork
- Employee engagement, with intercultural management, in companies which are ever more transnational

Appendix 2 Selective overview of organisational commitment definitions

Table 19 Overview of organisational commitment definitions

Author's own table.

Reference	Organisational commitment (and employee engagement) definitions found in literature
(Becker, 1960, p. 32)	"Commitments come into being when a person, by making a side bet, links extraneous interests with a consistent line of activity."
(Sheldon, 1971, p. 143)	"An attitude or an orientation toward the organisation which links or attaches the identity of the person to the organisation."
(Mowday, Steers and Porter, 1979, p. 226)	"The relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organisation."
(Wiener, 1982, p. 421)	"The totality of normative pressures to act in a way which meets organisational goals and interests"
(O'Reilly III and Chatman, 1986, p. 493)	"The psychological attachment felt by the person for the organisation; it will reflect the degree to which the individual internalizes or adopts characteristics or perspectives of the organisation."
(Meyer and Allen, 1991, p. 61)	"Commitment is a psychological state that (a) characterizes the employee's relationship with the organisation and (b) has implications for the decision to continue or discontinue membership in the organisation."
(Klein, Molloy and Brinsfield, 2012, p. 137)	"a perceived volitional bond with a target characterized by responsibility and dedication."
(Kahn, 1990, p. 694)	"(...) engagement is the harnessing of organisation members' selves to their work roles; (...) people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances"
(Solinger, van Olffen and Roe, 2008, p. 80)	"An attitude of an employee vis-a-vis the organisation, reflected in a combination of affect (emotional attachment, identification), cognition (identification and internalization of its goals, norms, and values), and action readiness (a generalized behavioral pledge to serve and enhance the organisation's interests)"

Appendix 3 Examples of coding structures

Table 20 Example of code structure (during cycle of coding)

Name	Files (Number of Interviews)	References (Number of References)
RENOVA Case Study 1.2	0	0
Company facts, characteristics, etc	0	0
Company Culture, distinct characteristics.	0	0
Down to earth. Focus on essential vs accessory.	2	6
Innovative. Creative. Risk taking (yet conservative).	7	10
Leadership peculiar, creative, uncommon.	4	7
Employee tenure is high.	11	15
Growth is strong, past 25 years.	5	6
Internationalization	4	4
Medium size family company, limited resources.	6	10
Openness to local community	1	1
Open space layout	2	5
Organisational Structure	0	0

Name	Files (Number of Interviews)	References (Number of References)
Family ties among employees are common	1	1
Flexible job descriptions, dynamic structures	5	14
Prudent management, not taking high risks	1	2
Regional Market Leadership	0	0
HR Management evidence	2	3
Employee Engagement (EE)	0	0
EE Antecedents	0	0
Activity is naturally hard, demanding, exciting	4	4
Causes of lower engagement	1	1
Feedback and evaluation regarding individual performance	1	1
EE Conceptualisation	6	7
Concepts OC and EE are confounded, blended	3	3
Even unmotivated people may stay committed	2	2
EE level in this company	5	5
Organisational Commitment	0	0
Conceptualisation of OC	1	6
Affective Commitment	5	8
Behavioural perspective of commitment	3	3
Accepting some level of frustration (and injustice, etc)	3	3
Alignment (...) agreement with company mission and purpose	2	3
Behaviours associated with low commitment	1	3
Committed employees give ideas and suggestions	1	1
Constantly linked and thinking about the job	1	1
Cooperation as manifestation of commitment	5	6
Discretionary Effort	9	17
contradiction, work-life balance leads to more commitment	1	1
Low commitment behaviours	4	7
Employee low committed not showing distinct behaviours	1	1
Low committed employee may still perform	4	4
Low commitment evidence bad behaviours	5	6
Turnover may not be a sign of low commitment	3	3
Loyalty	2	2
Talking good things about the company	2	2
Continuance Commitment	2	2
Side-bets	1	1
Motivation (related construct or confusion)	3	7
Normative OC	4	7
Notion of belonging to a group (team, company...)	1	2
Satisfaction (I like my job)	1	1
Consequences of OC	2	2
Consequences of high commitment	7	8
Consequences of low commitment	4	8
OC Antecedents	0	0
Access and good communication between Departments	4	5
Good cooperation due to open space and openness atmosphere (culture)	2	2
Career growth and development opportunities	9	16

Name	Files (Number of Interviews)	References (Number of References)
Backlash of losing career opportunities leads to bad behaviours	2	2
Feeling of reaching potential and less career opps leads to low commitment	4	5
No negative backlash to those with slower careers	1	1
Causes of lower commitment	3	3
Challenges proposed to employee, reveal trust in the employee	7	15
Rotation between production lines improves knowledge sharing and professional development	1	1
Communication, knowledge sharing by company	2	3
Company is stable, trustworthy, notorious	6	11
Brand, Notoriety. (also) Pride in the company	8	20
Company is local as opposed to other multinational firms (and family owned)	3	4
Company's mission	2	2
Conditions, Tools, Training, Resources, etc are good	3	5
internationalization, new plant in France	1	1
Conditions and concern for employees' general well-being	6	13
Flexible job description, organic dynamic structures, freedom, autonomy	6	19
Flexibility of schedule in some areas, and homeworking	1	1
Job descriptions (formal) and targets are yet needed	4	6
People like to learn new things and have diverse tasks	1	1
Freedom (in general), tolerance (explicitly mentioned, Openness (in general)	1	2
Identification, culture, person-organisation fit	2	2
Knowledge about other departments in the company	2	2
Landmarks events that impacted OC	1	3
Leadership effects on OC	6	8
Access to top level hierarchy	5	9
Careful not to surpass of direct supervisor	1	1
Closeness to higher levels of hierarchy	7	9
Geographic proximity to top level is relevant	3	3
As company grows people may feel more distant	2	2
Identification with Top Management	3	4
Information and knowledge sharing	1	1
Allows broader perspective	0	0
Leads to feelings of trust	0	0
Makes easier to understand the company (direction, decisions, strategy, etc)	2	3
Communication top-down or effect supervisor-employee relationship	5	6
Feedback about performance (individual, evaluation)	3	5
Improve alignment (=OC) is leaders' responsibility	1	2
Supervisor support, trust, respect, politeness	9	22
Location Employee is far from management decision centres	2	2
Monetary compensations (salary etc)	9	19
Company does not use bonus to motivate	3	4
Compensation schemes negative impacts	2	2
Monetary Compensation in relation to conjuncture (crisis)	2	2
Participation, employee's opinion is asked and heard	7	17
Participation is asked more in Marketing than Production	1	1
Purpose, goal achievement, productivity impacts	5	9
Recognition (informal), employees are recognised (not just by direct supervisors)	4	6

Name	Files (Number of Interviews)	References (Number of References)
Relationships and interactions between employees	6	6
Family ties account for some but small effect on commitment	2	2
Friendship relationships account for low impact on OC etc	6	9
Inter-generation relationships	0	0
Knowledge sharing, older with younger	3	4
Recent hires are more susceptible to influence regarding commitment	2	4
Socialization, newcomers are influenced by older employees	4	6
Key people, a group	1	1
Low commitment negative cycles	1	1
Low commitment is difficult to recover	3	4
People low committed may influence others	2	2
Low impact on OC from relationships	1	1
Mid-level commitment is more influenced	1	1
Strong positive impacts on OC from relationships	5	11
Informal Expressive ties account for cohesion	2	2
Relationships and interactions help to improve sense making	5	7
Satisfaction, employee likes the job, Person-Job Fit	4	6
OC Development	0	0
Cycle of OC development	2	2
Decreasing marginal gains in professional development	2	3
HR Strategies specifically target to improve commitment	1	1
Company does not take action specifically to improve commitment	4	5
Events specifically targeted to improve commitment have low impact	4	5
HRM No formal events to improve commitment	8	12
Daily work routines already implicate frequent interaction	1	2
exception canteen inauguration	2	2
No existence of deliberate strategy, just some events occur	7	10
Indistinct factor	1	1
Individual characteristics	1	1
Ambition (versus career opps)	3	3
Generation differences (some differences other equal...)	7	14
Personal characteristics (+previous experiences)	5	17
Time as a key issue	3	7
Commitment level oscillates, some days are better than others	2	2
Employee permanence associated with higher commitment	3	8
Employee permanence leads to more information about the company	2	4
OC levels in the company, present days	13	32
Comparison OC level according to geography	2	3
Comparison OC level between departments	8	11
Hierarchical level associated with OC levels	3	3
High OC necessary on middle managers	2	2
Higher OC in higher levels of hierarchy	1	1
Low OC on the top of hierarchy	1	1
Relationships and interactions - company shows evidence of high connectivity	3	3
Canteen as source of interactions	3	4
Company does not promote relationships usually	5	9

Name	Files (Number of Interviews)	References (Number of References)
Consequences of knowledge sharing	1	1
Content of relationships are mainly work-related	6	9
Facts about relationships but not necessarily associated with OC	10	21
24h schedule induces people connect more with people on the same shift	1	1
less connectivity with people abroad (France...)	1	1
High connectivity and availability to contact is a prerequisite to company's production activities	7	12
Key group of employees, at intermediate level	2	2
WhatsApp usage as a tool - recent	2	3

Table 21 Example of code structure (during cycle of coding)

Name	Files (Number of Interviews)	References (Number of References)
RENOVA Case Study 2.1	0	0
Company facts, characteristics, etc	0	0
Culture and Management. Distinct characteristics.	0	0
Down to earth. Focus on essential vs accessory.	2	6
Innovative. Creative. Risk taker yet prudent.	7	11
Leadership peculiar, creative, uncommon.	4	7
Prudent, conservative.	1	2
Facts	0	0
Employee tenure is high.	11	15
Medium size, family owned, limited resources.	6	10
Openness to local community	1	1
Open space layout	2	5
History	0	0
Growth is strong, past 25 years.	5	6
Internationalization	4	4
Regional Market Leadership	0	0
HR Management initiatives	2	3
Organisational Structure	0	0
Family ties among employees are common	2	2
Flexible jobs, fluid, organic, dynamic missions.	5	10
Relationships and interactions DESCRIPTION	3	3
Cantine as source of interactions	3	4
Company does not promote relationships usually	5	9
Consequences of knowledge sharing	1	1
Content of relationships are mainly work-related	6	9
Facts about relationships but not necessarily associated with OC	10	21
24h schedule induces people connect more with people on the same shift	1	1
less connectivity with people abroad (France...)	1	1
High connectivity and availability to contact is a prerequisite to company's production activities	7	12
Key group of employees, at intermediate level	2	2
WhatsApp usage as a tool - recent	2	3

Name	Files (Number of Interviews)	References (Number of References)
Organisational Commitment	0	0
Conceptualisation of OC	0	0
TCM Three Component Model of OC Meyer Allen	0	0
1. Affective Commitment - emotional attachment to organisation and belief in values	5	9
Notion of belonging to a group (team, company...)	1	2
2. Continuance Commitment - perceived value of remaining compared to leaving	1	1
3. Normative OC - moral obligation to remain, e.g., ethical reasons	4	7
Loyalty	2	2
Behavioural perspective of commitment DISTINGUISH CONSEQUENCES	3	3
Accepting some level of frustration (and injustice, etc)	3	3
Alignment (...) agreement with company mission and purpose	2	3
Citizenship behaviours (=prosocial=extra role)	2	2
Discretionary effort (extra job description, extra role)	11	20
(contradiction) extra effort may lead to worse work-life bal. may lead to less OC	1	1
Sharing ideas and suggestions	1	1
Constantly thinking about the job (=always alert and or available)	1	1
Cooperation (=teamwork=goal oriented)	5	6
Low commitment behaviours	5	9
Low commitment evidence bad behaviours	5	6
Low committed employee may still perform	4	4
Turnover may not be a sign of low commitment	3	3
Talking good things about the company	2	2
Related constructs mentioned	0	0
Employee engagement	8	13
Motivation	3	7
OC Antecedents	0	0
1. Individual characteristics	1	1
Ambition	3	3
Generation, age	7	15
Personal characteristics and Previous experiences	5	17
2. Employee-environment fit	0	0
3. Strategic (=Systemic) HR Management practices	0	0
4. Leadership	6	8
Access to top level hierarchy	5	9
Careful not to surpass of direct supervisor	1	1
Closeness to higher levels of hierarchy	7	10
Geographic proximity to top level is relevant	3	3
As company grows people may feel more distant	2	2
Identification with Top Management	3	4
Information and knowledge sharing	1	1
Allows broader perspective	0	0
Leads to feelings of trust	0	0
Makes easier to understand the company (direction, decisions, strategy, etc)	2	3
Communication top-down or effect supervisor-employee relationship	5	6
Feedback about performance (individual, evaluation)	4	6
Improve alignment and OC is leaders' responsibility	1	2

Name	Files (Number of Interviews)	References (Number of References)
Supervisor support, trust, respect, politeness	9	23
Relationships and interactions as an antecedent of OC	6	6
Family ties account for some but small effect on commitment	2	2
Friendship relationships account for low impact on OC etc	6	9
Inter-generation relationships	0	0
Knowledge sharing, older with youngers	3	4
Recent hires are more susceptible to influence regarding commitment	2	4
Socialization, newcomers are influenced by older employees	4	6
Key people, a group	1	1
Low commitment negative cycles	1	1
Low commitment is difficult to recover	3	4
People low committed may influence others	2	2
Low impact on OC from relationships	1	1
Mid-level commitment is more influenced	1	1
Strong positive impacts on OC from relationships	5	11
Informal Expressive ties account for cohesion	2	2
Relationships and interactions help to improve sense making	5	7
Access and good communication between Departments	4	5
Good cooperation due to open space and openness atmosphere (culture)	2	2
Career growth and development opportunities	9	16
Backlash of losing career opportunities leads to bad behaviours	2	2
Feeling of reaching potential and less career opps leads to low commitment	4	5
No negative backlash to those with slower careers	1	1
Causes of lower commitment	3	3
Challenges proposed to employee, reveals trust in him.	7	15
Activity is naturally hard, demanding, exciting	4	4
Rotation between production lines improves knowledge sharing and professional development	1	1
Communication, knowledge sharing by company	2	3
Company is stable, trustworthy, notorious	6	11
Brand, Notoriety. Pride in the company	9	21
Company is local as opposed to other multinational firms (and family owned)	3	4
Company's mission	2	2
Conditions, Tools, Training, Resources, etc are good	3	5
internationalization, new plant in France	1	1
Conditions and concern for employees' general well-being	6	13
Flexible job description, organic dynamic structures, freedom, autonomy	6	20
Flexibility of schedule in some areas, and homeworking	1	1
Job descriptions (formal) and targets are yet needed	4	6
People like to learn new things and have diverse tasks	1	1
Freedom, tolerance	1	2
Identification, culture, person-organisation fit	2	2
Knowledge about other departments in the company	2	2
Landmarks events that impacted OC	1	3
No impact	2	2
Location Employee is far from management decision centres	2	2
Monetary compensations (salary etc)	9	19

Name	Files (Number of Interviews)	References (Number of References)
Company does not use bonus to motivate	3	4
Compensation schemes negative impacts	2	2
Monetary Compensation in relation to conjuncture (crisis)	2	2
Participation, employee's opinion is asked and heard	7	17
Participation is asked more in Marketing than Production	1	1
Purpose, goal achievement, productivity impacts	6	10
Recognition (informal), employees are recognised (not just by direct supervisors)	4	6
Satisfaction, employee likes the job, Person-Job Fit	4	6
Satisfaction (I like my job)	1	1
OC Consequences	2	2
Consequences of high commitment	7	9
Consequences of low commitment	4	8
OC Development	0	0
Cycle of OC development	2	2
Decreasing marginal gains in professional development	2	3
HR Strategies specifically target to improve commitment	1	1
Company does not take action specifically to improve commitment	4	5
Events specifically targeted to improve commitment have low impact	4	5
HRM No formal events to improve commitment	8	12
Daily work routines already implicate frequent interaction	1	2
exception cantina inauguration	3	3
No existence of deliberate strategy, just some events occur	7	10
Indistinct factor	1	1
Individual characteristics	1	1
Ambition (versus career opps)	3	3
Generation differences (some differences other equal...)	7	15
Personal characteristics (+previous experiences)	5	17
Time as a key issue	3	7
Commitment level oscillates, some days are better than others	2	2
Employee permanence associated with higher commitment	3	8
Employee permanence associated with lower commitment	1	1
Employee permanence leads to more information about the company	2	4
OC levels in the company, present days	13	32
Comparison OC level according to geography	2	3
Comparison OC level between departments	8	11
EE level in this company	5	5
Hierarchical level associated with OC levels	3	3
High OC necessary on middle managers	2	2
Higher OC in higher levels of hierarchy	1	1
Low OC on the top of hierarchy	1	1

Appendix 4 Examples of Data Analysis Memos

Memo “First cycle of coding completed. 2019-06-05”

Brief explanation of events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with 12 employees were performed • Full transcription of the interviews was performed personally by the researcher, in the original language (Portuguese) • Full review of all the transcriptions and coding was performed
Summary of accomplishments (outcomes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Code structure first version (previous to Second Cycle Coding) • List of additional questions for final Management interviews (CEO, HR Director, and Marketing Director) • List of secondary data to obtain from the company
Further action needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given the first cycle of coding was performed through the course of several months, there is a feeling of high degree of duplication of codes (redundancies) • Although there • Given the deliberate structural openness of the interviews, there is a feeling of clear opportunities for going back to some interviewees and ask them questions about topics aroused in interviews with other employees.

Memo “Second cycle of coding. 2019-06-26”

Brief explanation of events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of all codes and elimination of similar/redundant codes • Review of categories and redefinition of code structure • Discover of patterns
Summary of accomplishments (outcomes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Code structure second version (previous to Second Cycle Coding) • List of additional questions for final Management interviews (CEO, HR Director, and Marketing Director) • List of secondary data to obtain from the company
Further action needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given the first cycle of coding was performed through the course of several months, there is a feeling of high degree of duplication of codes (redundancies) • Although there • Given the deliberate structural openness of the interviews, there is a feeling of clear opportunities for going back to some interviewees and ask them questions about topics aroused in interviews with other employees. •

Appendix 5 Examples of researcher notes

List of further questions to top management

- Questions to HR Manager:
 - what were the company's goals on the Father's Day initiative? were there other similar actions?
 - did a measurement of OC ever occur? What were the results?
 - what is the goal behind open space layout? when did it start? what are the evaluations made?
 - Company does not resort to bonus usually. (Daniel production says does not exist...?)
 - has the organisation has implemented internal strategies to promote internal social networks?
 - has the organisation implemented internal strategies to promote organisational commitment?
 - is there High prevalence of internal knowledge-sharing processes (typically motivated by consequences such as innovation, flexibility, creativity, performance)?
 - explain the "projecto das cores", which involved all the company... had a great impact?
 - performance evaluation exists. (Logistics people refer that it does not exists...)
 - bonus compensations for performance exist? in all departments (from INGRID: logistics has no evaluation nor even supervisor feedback!)
- to CEO:
 - is Higher organisational commitment a critical element for overall organisational performance?
 - has the organisation implemented internal strategies to promote internal social networks?
 - has the organisation implemented internal strategies to promote organisational commitment?
 - is there High prevalence of internal knowledge-sharing processes (typically motivated by consequences such as innovation, flexibility, creativity, performance)?
 - explain the "projecto das cores", which involved all the company... had a great impact? followed the launch of black toilet paper... someone said "as pessoas acordaram porque estavam a fazer a mesma coisa há muito tempo..."
- General questions (to all):
 - OC leads to retention or retention leads to OC?
 - The relationship between employee and company may be analogous to a relationship between two persons
 - Individual's commitment level is not stable "some days is high; some days is low"

List of further secondary data to collect from the company

- data about the tenure statistics in the company, to confirm if most employees are in the company for long years.
- studies or surveys about the level of OC in the company
- other internal surveys (mentioned by Daniel as being frequent and common. somehow related to training activities?)
- organisational structure
- intranet metadata (stats about usage)
- suggestion/ideas box on the intranet (stats, etc) - years of existence (since 2005!) "Humberto": "estão nos relatórios da empresa..."
- social networks stats (what is there, ...?)

Appendix 6 Participation Information Sheet for interviewees

Participant Information Sheet

Study title: Organisational Commitment: The Roles of Internal Social Interactions and Strategies

Researcher: Eduardo Pereira

Principal Supervisor: Valerio Cerretano

Second Supervisor: Trevor Buck

Invitation to participate in the research

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this research is to better understand how interactions between members of an organisation impact the development of commitment, through the perspective of organisational internal strategies.

Why have I been chosen?

You are being invited to participate because you are knowledgeable about the organisation where you work.

Do I have to take part? What will happen if I take part?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or may withdraw at any time from the study for any reason. If you would like to withdraw from the project after the interview, please contact Eduardo Pereira and any records about your interview will be destroyed.

You will be asked a series of open-ended questions about your work and your organisation. The interview will take about one hour, at a location of your choice. With your permission, the interview will be audio taped so that it can be transcribed, allowing the researcher to read the transcript. You have the option of consenting to audio taping or declining to consent. A copy of the transcript from your interview recording may be returned to you for verification if you so request it.

Will my participation in this research be kept confidential?

The only people who will have access to the audiotapes and transcripts produced in this research is the researcher and supervisors. Your participation is confidential. Confidentiality will be respected unless there are compelling and legitimate reasons for this to be breached. If this was the case, we would inform you of any decisions that might limit your

confidentiality. This data may also be accessed by others under the original conditions of confidentiality.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The researcher intends to publish and make public presentations about the research results. In these reports and presentations, participants will be referred to by pseudonym. None of the participants in the research will be identified by name without their consent. There will be no commercial use of the data.

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is part of a PhD research conducted by Eduardo Pereira at the Adam Smith Business School of the University of Glasgow.

Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been reviewed by the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Contact for Further Information

For further information regarding the study, you can contact Eduardo Pereira by phone +xxxxxxxxxxxx or by email e.pereira.1@research.gla.ac.uk, or Valerio Cerretano by email Valerio.Cerretano@glasgow.ac.uk.

In case of ethical complaints, you can contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer Dr Muir Houston (email: Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk).

_____ End of Participant Information Sheet _____

Appendix 7 Consent Form signed by the interviewees

Consent Form

Title of Project: **Organisational Commitment: The Roles of Internal Social Interactions and Strategies**

Name of Researcher: **Eduardo Pereira**

Principal Supervisor: **Valerio Cerretano**

Second Supervisor: **Trevor Buck**

I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

I consent / do not consent (delete as applicable) to interviews being audio-recorded. Additionally, I acknowledge that copies of transcripts may be returned to me for verification.

I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by pseudonym.

I acknowledge that I was informed that:

- All names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised.
- The material will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.
- The material will be destroyed after respecting University Code of Good Practice, which determines that this data should be securely held for a period of ten years after the completion of a research project, or for longer if specified by the research funder or sponsor.
- The material may be used in future publications, both print and online.
- I agree to waive my copyright to any data collected as part of this project.
- The material will only be accessed by the researchers named above.

I agree to take part in this research study

I do not agree to take part in this research study

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

..... **End of consent form**

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