Chapter 10
Career Meta-Competencies in the Retention of Employees

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Abstract It is clear from the literature that the work context has changed dramatically during the 21st century (Baruch, *Managing careers.* Harlow: Pearson Education, 2004a; *Career Dev Int* 9:58–73, 2004b; Burke and Ng, *Human Resource Management Review,* 16:86–94, 2006). As a result of these changes, careers have also changed and moved away from what was known as the traditional career to the boundaryless career (Ashkenas et al., *The boundaryless organization.* San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1995; DeFillippi and Arthur, *Journal of Organizational Behaviour,* 15: 307, 1994; McArdle et al., *Journal of Vocational Behaviour,* 71:247–264, 2007). The more complex work environment in a rapidly expanding knowledge economy has influenced the skills and competencies of individuals wishing to enter the 21st century world of work. Higher qualifications or technical skills are no longer enough to secure a job (Cox and King, *Education and Training,* 48:262–274, 2006). Career adaptability and hardiness as psychological career meta-competencies and job embeddedness and organizational commitment as retention-related dispositions influencing the retention of valuable employees in an organization will form the basis of this chapter. Investigating the psychological career meta-competencies (career adaptability and hardiness) that influence individuals' retention-related dispositions (job embeddedness and organizational commitment) has become crucial in the light of the changing nature of careers and the global skills scarcity. Psychological career meta-competencies were found to influence the job embeddedness and organizational commitment in a changed organizational context and could make a vital contribution to the potential retention of talented staff (Ferreira, *Constructing a psychological profile for staff retention.* Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2012).

Keywords Psychological career profile · Psychological career resources · Hardiness · Career adaptability · Job embeddedness · Organizational commitment · Retention-related dispositions · Career meta-competencies · Staff retention

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Career Meta-Competencies in a Changing Workplace

Change has always existed, but the speed with which it happens seems to be increasing (Baruch 2004b). Business organizations (nonprofit, public and private organisations) are bombarded with rapid developments or changes in various areas such as the economy, technology and society in general. These developments or changes have wide implications for the management of individuals at work and specifically the planning and management of their careers. The current generation fails to see the boundaries in many facets of life, and this could have implications for their careers as such because careers are becoming multidirectional and boundaryless (Baruch 2004a).

As a result of the changes in the work world and focus on employability, individuals need to equip themselves with a wider variety of skills in order to be more flexible to meet the needs of organizations and customers. The onus is therefore on the individual to continuously undergo training to up skill himself or herself. This will ensure continued employment in the fast-changing world and the new challenges in 21st century careers. Fallows and Steven (2000) emphasise the fact that higher education plays a pivotal role in assisting graduates to gain the skills to become more employable, which can help them manage their careers successfully. Hence employability has become a concern for both the providers of educational services and those individuals wishing to enter the world of work (Cox and King 2006).

Organizations are also grappling with changing workforce demographics, attitudes and values, incorporating and utilizing the rapid advancements in technology and addressing globalization-related challenges such as increased competitive pressures, outsourcing and offshoring and a global workforce that places a higer premium on cross-cultural sensitivities and skills (Burke and Ng 2006). As new technology is invented, the way one does things changes, and these changes in turn affect one personally and directly, such as where one lives and work. According to Burke and Ng (2006), globalization has opened up new opportunities for workers and organizations alike and changed the work experience and evironment for individual workers, groups and organizations.

Conventional thinking suggests that organizations simply do not matter as much as they used to (Baruch 2004a). The boundaryless organization (Ashkenas et al. 1995) resulted in the emergence of the boundaryless career (DeFillippi and Arthur 1994). Careers have become transitional and flexible, and the dynamics of restructuring are blurring the tidy and firm former routes for success (requiring new perspectives on what success means). Linear career systems have become multidirectional (Baruch 2006).

If individuals are to acquire the necessary psychological attributes or career meta-competencies to flourish in the changing occupational world, they need to take responsibility for up-skilling themselves and managing their careers as effectively as possible. Individuals can engage in career counseling and development activities to identify their strengths and weaknesses and develop certain psycho-social capacities as tools for enhancing their employability. A psychological profile constituting the

psycho-social career meta-competencies that are required to adapt to and flourish in the contemporary workplace would be a powerful tool for industrial psychologists, human resource practitioners, managers, career counselors and individuals as career agents. As a career counseling and guidance tool, such a psychological profile could be used to deepen the understanding of how career agents' career meta-competencies influence their psychological attachment to the organization. This knowledge could be useful in the design of retention practices for talented staff in the light of the global scarce skills concerns.

Psychological Career Meta-competencies

Ferreira (2012) identified psychological career resources, career adaptability, and hardiness as important career meta-competencies for contemporary career development.

Psychological Career Resources

Psychological career resources is defined as the set of career-related preferences, values, attitudes and attributes that lead to self-empowering, proactive career behaviour that promotes general employability (Coetzee 2008). Psychological career resources are further regarded as individuals' inherent resources or meta-competencies which enable them to adapt to changing or uncertain career circumstances and shape and select environments in order to attain success in a particular socio-cultural context. Coetzee (2008) differentiates between (1) career preferences and (2) career values; (3) skills that enable effective and proactive career planning/self-design, reinvention and development (career enablers); (4) intrinsic career motivations that drive individuals' career actions and intentionalities (career drivers); and (5) psycho-social career meta-capacities that facilitate resiliency and adaptability within individuals' unique social-cultural contexts (career harmonizers). The construct of psychological career resources is discussed in detail by Coetzee in Chap. 6.

Career Adaptability

Career adaptability assists the individual to adjust and fit into a new career-related situation (Koen et al. 2010). Career adaptability incorporates factors such as, planfullness, exploration, decision making, information and realism (Super 1974), career planning and career exploration (Zikic and Klehe 2006), a boundaryless mind-set (McArdle et al. 2007) of career planning, career decidedness and career confidence (Skorikov 2007). Career adaptability may be particularly useful in understanding the

job search process because this conceptualization signifies the willingness and diverse adaptive resources that may assist individuals to prepare for and manage career transitions such as a move from unemployment to re-employment (Koen et al. 2010). According to Savickas (1997, 2002, 2005), career adaptability involves looking forward to one's future career (planning), knowing what career to follow (decision making), looking around at different career options (exploration) and having a feeling of self-efficiency to effectively perform the activities needed to accomplish one's career objectives (confidence).

Career adaptability includes an individual's capability to face, track or acknowledge changing career roles and to effectively handle career shifts (Savickas 1997, 2002, 2005), such as finishing a state of joblessness by searching for a job. Career adaptability can furthermore be used in terms of finding appropriate re-employment. It can be argued that the four dimensions of career adaptability (career planning, decision making, exploration and confidence) refer to an individual's preparation and psychological willingness to use diverse job search strategies, which in turn can influence the individual's re-employment results (Koen et al. 2010). Understanding an individual's career adaptability profile may influence staff retention in an organization.

In considering adaptability, the career construction theory (Savickas 2005) highlights a set of specific attitudes, beliefs and competencies, which shape the actual problem-solving strategies and coping behaviour that individuals use to synthesise their vocational self-concepts with work roles. Accordingly, the aim of a life design intervention is to increase career adaptability. For example, it seeks to increase the five "Cs" of career adaptability theory, namely concern, control, curiosity, confidence and commitment.

- *Concern* involves a tendency to consider life within a time perspective anchored in hope and optimism (becoming concerned about the vocational future).
- *Control* rests on the conviction that it is an advantage for people to be able not only to use self-regulation strategies to adjust to the needs of the different settings, but also to exert some sort of influence and control over the context (increasing personal control over one's vocational future).
- *Curiosity* about possible selves and social opportunities increases people's active exploration behaviours (they display curiosity by exploring possible selves and future scenarios).
- *Confidence* includes the capacity to stand by one's own aspirations and objectives, even in the face of obstacles and barriers (strengthening the confidence to pursue one's aspirations).
- *Commitment* to one's life projects instead of one's particular job means that career indecision should not necessarily be removed because it actually generates new possibilities and experimentations that allow individuals to be active, even in uncertain situations.

Hardiness

Hardiness explains a generalized style of functioning, characterized by a strong sense of commitment, control and challenge that serves to alleviate the negative effects of stress (Azeem 2010; Delahaij et al. 2010; Hystad et al. 2010; Zhang 2010). In their original work, Kobassa (1979), Kobassa (1982) and Kobassa and Puccetti (1983) defined hardiness as a collection of personality characteristics that function as a flexible resource during the encounter with demanding life events. Over the years, research has established and extended the original hardiness research across a number of groups, including army and police officers, nurses, teachers, emergency personnel and professional athletes, and consistently found that hardiness moderates the stress-health relationship (Barton et al. 2004; Bartone et al. 1989; Bohle 1997; Chan 2003; Golby and Sheard 2004; Hystad et al. 2010; Zach et al. 2007). Several studies headed by Kobassa found a comparable protecting effect of hardiness, as well as a moderating effect on stress (Kobassa 1982; Kobassa and Pucceti 1983). Analysis of these investigations led Kobassa to propose that hardy individuals have a clear sense of direction, a dynamic approach in demanding situations and a sense of self-belief and control that moderates the intensity of possible threats and dangers (Zakin et al. 2003).

Over the last 25 years, hardiness has emerged in psychology as a pattern of attitudes that facilitate turning stressful circumstances from potential disasters into growth opportunities (Gerhardt et al. 2001; Maddi 1994, 1998, 2002, 2007; Maddi et al. 2006, 2010). These attitudes of hardiness constitute the courage and motivation to face and transform stressors, instead of denying or catastrophising, and to avoid or strike out against them, and are especially essential in our changing tubulent times (Maddi 1998, 2002; Maddi et al. 2009). According to Maddi and Khoshaba (2001), hardy individuals construct meaning in their lives by recognising that (1) everything they do contitutes a decision, (2) decisions invariably involve pushing towards the future or shrinking into the past, and (3) choosing the future explands meaning, whereas choosing the past contracts it (Sheard 2009).

Highly fussy individuals are described as being intellectually inquisitive and maybe more success oriented, hardworking and persistent (Komarraju and Karau 2005). Such a description of an individual fits well with the"hardy personality" (Kobassa 1979b). Hystad et al. (2010), Maddi (2002), Ramanaiah and Sharpe (1999) and Sheard and Golby (2007) have identified a positive correlation between hardiness and meticulousness.

The hardiness trait is described as a constellation of three attitudes: commitment, control and challenge (Kobassa 1979a, b). These attitudes reflect deeply held beliefs that influence the way people interpret stressful events. A hardy individual views potentially stressful situations as meaningful and interesting (commitment), sees stressors as changeable (control) and regards change as a normal aspect of life rather than a threat and as an opportunity for growth (challenge) (Funk 1992). High levels of commitment enable individuals to believe in the truth, importance and interest value of who they are and what they are doing, and therefore the tendency to involve

themselves fully in the many situations of life, including work, family, interpersonal relationships and social institutions (Kobassa 1987, p. 6). Commitment engenders feelings of excitement along with a strong sense of community and motivation to remain engaged during difficult times (Kobassa 1982, 1985).

Control

Control enhances motivation to engage in effortful coping because it predisposes the individual to view stressors as changeable (Kobassa 1982; Maddi 2002; Maddi and Kobassa 1984). Hardy individuals feel that attempting to control or change a demanding or undesirable situation (instead of fatalistically accepting the outcome) falls within their scope of personal responsibility. Individuals demonstrating control, perceive many stressful life events as predictable consequences of their own activities, which are subject to their direction and manipulation (Kobassa 1982, p. 7). When faced with difficulties, high control individuals are more likely to feel capable of acting effectively on their own. They reflect on how to turn a situation to their advantage instead of taking things at face value (Maddi and Kobassa 1984).

Challenge

Challenge generates a zest for facing up to (or even seeking out) difficult experiences because they are viewed as opportunities for personal growth rather than as potential threats to security (Maddi et al. 2002). Hence individuals who expect to thrive must learn to embrace the strenuousness of "authentic living", drawing strength from difficulties previously faced and successfully overcome as opposed to looking for ways to avoid stressful events.

Individuals high in challenge are motivated to become catalysts in their environments and to practise responding to the unexpected. They are apt to more thoroughly explore their surroundings in an on-going search for new and interesting experiences. As a result, they know where to turn for resources to help them cope with stress. High challenge individuals are characterised by cognitive flexibility and tolerance for ambiguity. This allows them to more easily integrate unexpected or otherwise stressful events (Kobassa 1982; Maddi 1999).

Hardiness and Coping

Although the relationship between hardiness and coping is not examined in this study, a brief explanation is necessary to clarify how hardiness can influence health and well-being. Hardiness theorists propose that hardiness influences the relationship between stressors and strain primarily through its effect on appraisal and coping process. In the hardiness literature, coping and appraisal processes are subsumed under the rubric of coping strategies (Maddi and Kobassa 1984). Coping strategies

include primary appraisals (challenge or threat appraisals), secondary appraisals (assessments of the adequacy of available resources for dealing with environmental demands) and the actions taken in response to those stressors (Lazarus and Folkman 1984). Hardiness allows the individual to appraise stressors in a way that minimises the level of threat perceived and limits the amount of negative arousal experienced (Kobassa 1982). Hardy individuals are thus expected to interpret stressful events as being less threatening and more controllable (Kobassa 1979b, 1982; Maddi 1987; Maddi and Kobassa 1984). Furthermore, hardy individuals are more likely to choose adaptive (or transformational) coping strategies over avoidant (or regressive) methods (Genry and Kobassa 1984; Kobassa 1979a, b, 1982, 1985; Kobassa and Puccetti 1983; Maddi 1987, 2002; Maddi et al. 1998; Maddi and Kobassa 1984).

Conceptually, not one of the three Cs per se is enough to provide the necessary courage and motivation to turn stress into an advantage. What is needed is all three of the Cs operating together (Maddi 2002). American psychology is currently proccupied with the importance of the control attitude, and some feel that it is this attitude that fully defines hardiness. Imagine people high in control but simultaneously low in commitment and challenge. They would want to determine outcomes, but not waste time and effort learning from experience or feeling involved with people, things and events (Maddi 2004). They would be egotistical and vulnerable to seeing themselves as better than others and as having nothing more to learn. They would be riddled with impatience, irritability, isolation and bitter suffering whenever control efforts fails. This is not hardiness so much as the Type A behaviour pattern with all its physical, mental and social vulnerabilities (Maddi 2002, 2004).

Retention-Related Dispositions

The retention-related dispositions included in the suggested psychological profile have been identified as job embeddedness and organizational commitment (Ferreira 2012).

Job Embeddedness

According to Mitchell et al. (2001a, p. 1104), job embeddedness presupposes that there are several strands that unite an employee and his or her family in a social, psychological, and financial network that contains work and non-work friends, groups, the community, and the physical environment in which he or she lives. Job embeddedness represents a broad set of influences on an employee's decision to stay on the job. These influences include on-the-job factors such as bonds with co-workers, the fit between one's skills and the demands of the jobs, and organization-sponsored community-service activities (Crossley et al. 2007; Holtom et al. 2006). Job embeddedness also includes of-the-job factors such as personal, family and community

commitments. The value of the construct job embeddedness was also demonstrated by Holtom et al. (2006). Job embeddedness is a stronger predictor of significant organizational outcomes such as employee attendance, retention and performance that the best-known and accepted psychological explanations (e.g., job satisfaction and organizational commitment) (Holtom et al. 2006).

Mitchell et al. (2001a) developed the organizational embeddedness concept as a construct that merges the retention research focused on job satisfaction, job involvement, and organizational commitment with turnover models on structural economic and external reasons for leaving an organization. The concept of being embedded in a job involves a wide array of options that influence employee retention. Building on the turnover models of Steers and Mowday (1981), Mitchell and Lee (2001) advanced their model by adding a new dimension to the understanding of turnover; -a counter-intuitive notion that individuals may leave an organisation for reasons other than job dissatisfaction. Job embeddedness is a multi-dimensional construct that focuses on the factors that make an individual more likely to remain in the job, namely the work and social, non-work attachements that are developed over a period of time. Job embeddedness includes multiple factors: such as work or organizational options like choosing one's own clients, empowerment, or mentoring activities, or non-work or social embeddedness (Van Emmerik and Sanders 2004) which may include links to family, non-work and off-the-job interests, and job and organisational embeddedness (Mitchell et al. 2001a).

Job embeddedness is a relatively new construct developed to indicate a more comprehensive view of the employee-employer relationship than is typically reflected by attitudinal measures such as satisfaction or commitment (Mitchell et al. 2001b). Job embeddedness also differs from the traditional model of turnover in that it focuses on at employee retention, instead of employee turnover (Holtom and O'Neill 2004). Thus, the central focus is how to keep people in an organization, as opposed how to keep them from moving to a different organisation.

According to Feldman and Ng (2007), researchers have only recently begun to pay more attention to questions about why people stay in their jobs, organizations, and occupations even when other (and better) opportunities are available elsewhere. Starting primarily with the work of Mitchell et al. (2001a), there is now increased interest in the constructs of embeddedness, namely, the totality of forces that keep people in their current employment situations.

Job embeddedness assesses a broad set of influences on employee retention. The critical aspects of job embeddedness include the following: (1) the extent to which an employee's job and community fit with the other aspects of his or her life space; (2) the extent to which employees have links to other people or activities; and (3) the ease with which links can be broken—what employees would give up if they were to leave, expecially if they were to physically move to another home or city (Holtom and O'Neill 2004). The concept of embeddedness goes well beyond the organization. It extends to the employee's family members fitting into an organisation and a community. Links, fit and sacrifice are considered at two different levels: (1) on the job and (2) off the job, generating the three job embedded dimensions discussed above (Mitchell et al. 2001b).

Although off-the-job embeddedness may be more crucial when relocation is involved, it may still apply in situations requiring only a change in jobs. In addition, if people are embedded they may remove job alternatives that require relocation from the set of job options they consider (Mitchell et al. 2001a).

Job embeddedness implies that the evaluation of social relationships influences the decision-making process leading to turnover. The theory proposes that people who consider themselves embedded (as measured by questions relating to their working environment and community experience) are less likely to indicate their intention to leave (Mitchell et al. 2001b).

It is easy to associate embeddedness with tenure, since time allows for the development of links. In support of the embeddedness concept, Griffeth et al. (2000) meta-analysis shows the two best demographic predictors of turnover as tenure and children in the household.

Mitchell et al. (2001) in a study of two organizations, reported correlations of -0.41 and -0.47 ($p < 0.01$) between job embeddedness and intentions to leave the organisation. In addition, the study demonstrates that job embeddedness significantly imporved the prediction of turnover beyond that accounted for by job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Job embeddedness reflects those on-and off-the-job factors that keep people in their current positions.

According to Mitchell et al. (2001, p. 1104), job embeddedness suggests that there are several strands that unite an employee and his or her family in a social, psychological and financial network that contains work and nonwork friends, groups, the community and the physical environment in which he or she lives. Job embeddedness represents a broad set of influences on an employee's decision to stay on the job. These influences include on-the-job factors such as bonds with co-workers, the fit between one's skills and the demands of the jobs, and organization-sponsored community-service activities (Crossley et al. 2007; Holtom et al. 2006). They also includes off-the-job factors such as personal, family and community commitments. The value of the construct of job embeddedness was also demonstrated by Mitchell et al.

In the work and the community environments, an individual can have three kinds of attachments: links, fit and sacrifice. Hence with the two factors (work and community) and the three kinds of attachments (links, fit and sacrifice), the job embeddedness model has six dimensions: work links, work fit, work sacrifice (organisational embeddedness) and community links, community fit and community sacrifice (community embeddedness). An individual is embedded when he or she has multiple links to the people in the employing organization and non-work community, when the workplace and the community environment are a good fit for the individual and when the individual feels he or she would have to sacrifice too much to leave the organization and community (Mitchell et al. 2001a).

Organizational Commitment

According to Meyer and Allen's (1991) definition of organizational commitment reflects three extensive elements namely (1) affective, (2) continuance and (3) normative. Commitment can therefore be defined as reflecting an affective point of

reference towards the organisation, acknowledgement of the consequences relating to leaving the organization and an ethical responsibility to remain with the organisation (Meyer and Allen 1991). For the purposes of this study, this definition will be adopted.

According to Mathieu and Zajac (1990), various definitions and measures of organizational commitment have been formulated over the years. By examining the diverse definitions and measures, it is obvious that they have a common universal idea, namely that organizational commitment is regarded as a person's connection with or link to his or her organization. The definitions vary in respect of how this link is deemed to have developed. Commitment to an occupation suggests the desire to stay with an organisation in order to develop business and professional associations (Colarelli and Bishop 1990). Commitment to an internally defined occupation may turn out to be a vital foundation of occupational significance and stability because modern organizations are in a state of flux and are less able to ensure employment protection (Colarelli and Bishop 1990). Career commitment is differentiated by the development of individual occupational objectives, and the connection to, classification with and participation in those objectives. According to Hall (1976), career commitment should go beyond career and employment.

Organizational commitment is the psychological connection an individual has with the organization, which includes a sense of job involvement, loyalty and belief in the organization's values (O'Reilly 1989, p. 17). Here organizational commitment is reported as an employee's recognition of organizational goals and his or her enthusiasm into making an effort on the organization's behalf (O'Reilly 1989).

According to Meyer and Allen (1991), organizational commitment is a psychological condition that (1) differentiates the association with the organization, and (2) has repercussions for the choice to continue memebership thereof. Meyer and Allen (1991) thus identified these three components as affective, continuance and normative commitment. these components will be discussed in detail below.

Affective Commitment

According to Meyer and Allen (1997), affective commitment is the individual's affecting connection to, recognition as part of and participation in the organisation. Employees who are affectively committed to the organisation will probably continue work for it because they want to (Meyer and Allen 1991). Individuals who are dedicated at an emotional level usually remain with the organisation because they see their individual employment relationship as being harmonious with the goals and values of the organization for which they are currently working (Beck and Wilson 2000).

Kanter (1968) describes affective commitment as the connection of an individual's support of affective feelings towards the group. Affective commitment is an outlook or point of reference towards the organization, which links the individuality of the individual to the organization(Sheldon 1971).

Hall et al. (1970) regard the affective component as the procedure whereby the objectives of the organization and those of the individual become increasingly harmonious. Affective commitment is also considered to be a supporting factor, commitment to the objectives and principles of the organization, to the individual's responsibility in relation to objectives and principles, and to the organization for its own sake, apart from its merely active value (Buchanan 1974). Some individuals put more into their careers than is required to complete the job successfully and qualify this as the affective component or organizational commitment (Gould 1979). Affective commitment is also influenced by factors such as work challenge, role clearness, clarity about objectives and the difficulty of the objectives, openness on the part of management, peer unity, equity, individual significance, feedback, contributions and steadiness (Meyer and Allen 1997).

Affective commitment development involves recognition of the organization and internalisation of organisational principles and standards (Beck and Wilson 2000).

Continuance Commitment

The second component of Allen and Meyer's (1990) model of organizational commitment is continuance commitment. Continuance commitment includes the awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization (Meyer and Allen 1997, p. 11). Kanter (1968, p. 504) concurs with this definition stating that it is the gain associated with sustained involvement and the costs associated with leaving the organization. Because of the individual's awareness of consideration of expenses and threats linked to leaving the existing organization it is considered to be calculative (Meyer and Allen 1997) Meyer and Allen (1991) also indicate that individuals whose primary connection to the organization is based on continuance commitment, stay because they need to.

Continuance commitment can be seen as a helpful accessory to the organization, where the individual's relationship is based on an evaluation of the financial benefits received (Beck and Wilson 2000). Another perception of continuance commitment is that it is a structural occurrence, because of the individual-organizational contract and ammendments to sidetakes or saving over a period of time (Hrebiniak and Alutto 1972).

Meyer et al. (1990, p. 715) also maintain that "accrued investments and poor employment alternatives tend to force individuals to maintain their line of action and are responsible for these individuals being committed because they need to". Individuals remain with a specific organization because of the money they add as a result of the time spent in the organisation, not because they want to. This differs from affective commitment where individuals remain with an organisation because they want to, and because they are familiar with it and its principles.

Normative Commitment

Normative commitment is defined as a sense of responsibility to continue employment with a specific organization (Meyer and Allen 1997). The internalised normative idea of responsibility and commitment allows employees to appreciate continued memebership of a specific organisation (Allen and Meyer 1990). The normative element is viewed as the commitment individuals think about morally regarding their right to remain with a specific organization, in spite of how much status improvement or fulfilment the organization provides them over the years (March and Mannari 1977).

Normative commitment illustrates development whereby organizational procedures (which include choice and socialisation actions) and individual tendencies (which include the personal-organisational importance similarity and generalised reliability or responsibility approach) direct the way to the progression of organizational commitment (Wiener 1982).

Commitment behaviours are generaly acknowledged behaviours that go beyond formal and/or normative prospects relating to the purpose of commitment (Wiener 1982). Normative commitment is also regarded as the sum of internalized normative forces that unite organisational objectives and organizational wellbeing (Wiener 1982).

According to Suliman and Iles (2000), acknowledgement of the regulations pertaining to mutual responsibility between the organization and its employees influences the strength of normative organisational commitment. The mutual responsibility is based on the social exchange theory, which proposes that an individual who benefits has a normative responsibility to give something back to the organization (McDonald and Makin 2000). Normative career commitment engenders thoughts or faithfulness to an occupation (Kidd 2006). Meyer et al.'s (1993) model focuses on feelings or the responsibility to remain in an occupation and a sense of accountability to stay in the occupation and organization.

Affective, continuance and normative commitment are components of organizational commitment, instead of types of commitment because the employee-employer relationship imitates variable degrees of all three components (Meyer and Allen 1997). The multidimensional structure or conceptualization appears to be suitable. The lack of consensus on the definition of commitment was generally responsible for its being dealt with as a multidimensional construct (Meyer and Allen 1997).

A Psychological Career Profile for Staff Retention

Figure 10.1 provides an overview of the psychological career profile that can be constructed to guide retention practices (Ferreira 2012).

As shown in Fig. 10.1, the suggested psychological career meta-competencies profile is described in terms of four psychological behavioral dimensions: cognitive, affective, conative and interpersonal levels.

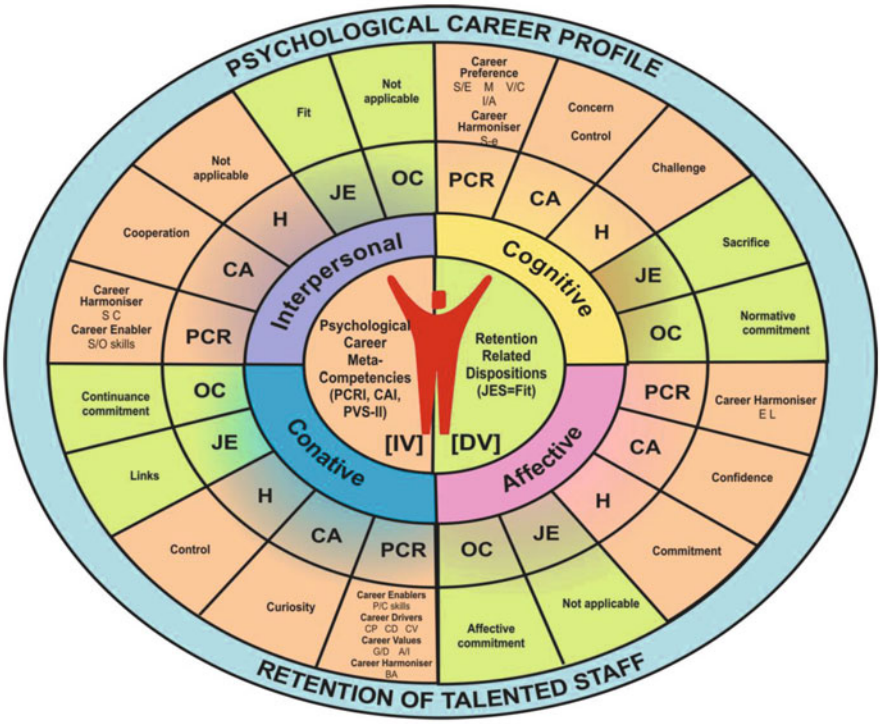

Fig. 10.1 Psychological career meta-competencies profile for staff retention (Ferreira 2012). *PCR* psychological career resources, *CA* career adaptability, *H* hardiness, *JE* job embeddedness, *OC* organizational commitment

On a **cognitive level**, the retention of individuals may be influenced by their career preferences and career harmonizers (psychological career resources), concern and control (career adaptability), control, commitment and challenge (hardiness), sacrifice (job embeddedness) and normative commitment (organizational commitment) (Coetzee 2008; Ferreira et al. 2010; Savickas 2002; Schreuder and Coetzee 2011). Career development support practices and career counseling should focus on creating a work environment that provide stability, managerial opportunities, enhance creativity, provide independence, and enhance positive self-esteem as well as social connectivity. Furthermore, it is important for organizations to assist individuals with coping skills, commitment towards the organization as well as how to deal with challenges within the workplace. Employees should also be assisted with the dealing with the sacrifice that needs to be made between work and family time. Organizations should also be assisted within these interventions to enhance individuals' organizational commitment and engage them in managing their own careers. Such interventions could possibly assist the organization with the retention of talented staff.

On an **affective level**, individuals' retention may be influenced by their career harmonizers (psychological career resources), curiosity (career adaptability), commitment (hardiness) and affective commitment (organizational commitment) (Allen and Meyer 1990; Brown et al. 2003; Coetzee and Bergh 2009; Ferreira 2012). Career development support practices and career counseling should assist individuals with gaining personal insight. This may help individuals to improve their personal self-esteem, behavioral adaptability, emotional intelligence, social connectivity, curiosity and commitment but also to utilize their emotions appropriately within the work context. This will ensure that employees feel a sense of belonging (he or she fits in the organization) towards the organization and show an emotional connection with the organization. Having a high personal self-esteem and ability to manage and utilize emotions within the career context, could possibly assist organizations with the retention of talented staff.

On a **conative level**, individuals' retention may be influenced by their career values, career enablers and career drivers (psychological career resources), cooperation and confidence (career adaptability), control, commitment and challenge (hardiness), fit, links and sacrifice (job embeddedness) and continuance- and normative commitment (organizational commitment) (Coetzee 2008; Koen et al. 2010; Maddi 2002; Meyer and Allen 1991; Mitchell and Lee 2001; Savickas 1997). Career development support practices and career counseling could possibly assist individuals to encouraging their growth and development of different skills, provide opportunities for authority and influence, and assist employees to establish career purpose and direction. By assisting individuals in the suggested manner, their cooperation, confidence, job embeddedness and commitment towards the organization might increase. This in turn might assist organizations with the retention of talented staff.

On an **interpersonal level**, individuals' retention may be influenced by their career harmonizers (psychological career resources), cooperation and concern (career adaptability), fit and links (job embeddedness) and affective-, continuance- and normative commitment (organizational commitment) (Coetzee 2008; Ferreira et al. 2010; Koen et al. 2010; Maddi 2002; Meyer and Allen 1991; Mitchell and Lee 2001; Savickas 1997, 2001, 2002). Effective interaction and social connectivity with others may create a feeling of security within the individual, which might have a positive effect on the retention of talented staff. Career development support practices and career counseling could assist individual to enhance their self-esteem, behavioral adaptability, emotional literacy, cooperation and address concerns, which might have a positive effect on their commitment towards the organization. It is also important for organizations to help individual fit into the organization and assist them with dealing with the connection and sacrifice between the work situations and the community, which include their family.

Keeping employees committed to the organisation is a top priority for many contemporary organizations (Neininger et al. 2010). Especially in times of crisises and job cuts, committing top performers to the organization becomes a challenge. Organizations that fail to accomplish this will have reduced resources for the capability of competing in the future (Neininger et al. 2010; Rappaport et al. 2003).

Research by Ferreira (2012) indicated that psychological career resources (self/other skills, career directedness and behavioral adaptability), career adaptability (concern, control, cusiosity, cooperation and confidence) and hardiness (commitment and control) contributed most significantly to the psychological career meta-competencies construct, while job embeddedness (fit) contributed significantly to the retention-related factors construct. The psychological career meta-competencies also relsated signifcantly to the retention-related dispositions. Ferreira (2012) found the cognitive, affective, conative and interpersonal psychological dimensions to be significant in a psychological career meta-competencies profile. These behavioral dimensions contributed significantly in explaining the retention-related dispositions (job embeddedness and organizational commitment). The retention-related dispositions mostly related to the interpersonal psychological dimension, suggesting that individuals should be developed at an interpersonal level in order to increase their job embeddedness, especially their fit.

Practical Implications for Career Counseling and Guidance

The psychological career meta-competencies profile adds a broader perspective on how individuals' psychological career resources, career adaptability and hardiness explain their job embeddedness and organizational commitment (Ferreira 2012). The behavioural dimensions and the underpinning career meta-competencies could be used to help clients develop greater insight into their psychological career meta-competencies and how these influence their psychological attachment to the organization. This new awareness, in turn, may inform the career development and retention of talented staff.

The primary focus of a manager, career practitioner and industrial psychologist is to help individuals seeking career advice by removing as much uncertainty in them as possible about their career choice and environment. If organisations invest in positive contracts with their employees, this could result in employees who are more embedded and committed, motivated and trustworthy towards the organization. However, if the psychological contract is neglected, employees could experience reduced levels of embeddedness and commitment and their intentions to leave the organization could become stronger. It is recommended that organizations should have a sound commitment strategy in place which will enable employees to remain committed to the organization (Ferreira 2012).

Ferreira (2012) recommends the following organizational interventions in terms of career development and retention strategies:

- Organizations that are endeavouring to retain valuable employees should attempt to provide career development interventions that strengthen employees' underlying self/other skills, behavioral adaptability, career adaptability and hardi-commitment and hardi-control.

- Individuals' psychological career meta-competencies should be developed or enhanced as an essential career development support technique in order to retain embedded and committed employees.
- Organizations should ensure that the nature of work offered to employees is challenging and provides them with the level of skills and experience aligned with their own personal and professional growth needs.
- Organizations could develop a career development counseling framework that could be used to help employees sharpen their career decision-making competencies. This would help them to develop their career directedness and self-awareness by identifying the relationship between their own psychological career meta-competencies (self/other skills, career directedness, behavioral adaptability, career adaptability, hardi-commitment and hard-control) and their fit with and commitment to the organization. Employees may experience emotional attachment to the organization when their abilities and values match those of the work environment and when their need for movement in the organization is satisfied.

The following recommendations apply to career practitioners and industrial psychologists working in the field of careers and retention:

- Individuals can engage in self-reflection when receiving feedback on their psychological career meta-competencies at a cognitive, affective, conative and interpersonal level.
- Individuals can engage in career counselling interventions in order to enhance their psychological career meta-competencies and job embeddedness at a cognitive, affective, conative and interpersonal level.

The positive outcomes of possible future research could include raising awareness of the fact that individuals in the workplace have different psychological career resources, career adaptability and hardiness levels. Every individual needs to be treated in a manner that is appropriate to him or her in order to promote job and career satisfaction, which will culminate in job embeddedness and organizational commitment. Another positive outcome was the realization of the way in which employees' psychological career meta-competencies influence their level of embeddedness and commitment towards the employing organization (Ferreira 2012).

There is a need for future research on psychological career resources, career adaptability, hardiness, job embeddedness and organizational commitment, specifically in South Africa. Further studies would be valuable for career counseling purposes because it would help career practitioners provide guidance to individuals when making career choices, based on their ability to translate their career self-concept and motivators into occupations what would meet their personal needs.

Conclusions

Individuals' psychological career meta-competencies (psychological career resources, career adaptability, and hardiness) and their retention-related dispositions (job embeddedness and organizational commitment) seem to be important attributes

to consider in career counseling and development. These constructs therefore need to be developed to help the individuals to proactively manage their career development and assist organizations in the retention of valuable staff.

Chapter Summary

This chapter identified the implications of the theoretical relationship between psychological career resources, career adaptability and hardiness (as a set of composite career-meta competencies) and job embeddedness and organizational commitment (as a set of composite retention-related dispositions) for staff retention. The suggested psychological career meta-competencies profile discussed in this chapter can be used for career counselling and guidance purposes for retaining staff in the contemporary work world.

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