The Role of Communication in Enhancing Employees’ Organizational Commitment: Exploring the Relationship between Social-emotional-oriented Communication, Work-oriented Communication and Organizational Commitment in China

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the roles of social-emotional-oriented communication and work-oriented communication in enhancing organizational commitment in the context of the People’s Republic of China. Literature regarding the functions of different types of communication was reviewed and the human relations theory was applied as the main guidance of the current research. The study utilized the statistical method to analyze the data collected from questionnaires. A total of 69 employees working in a Chinese local governmental organization participated in the research. Horizontal and vertical social-emotional-oriented communication were examined separately by four indicators: employee’s perceived quantity of social interaction with peers (superiors) within the department, quantity of social interaction with peers (superiors) outside the department, quality of these interactions, and emotional coloring of the interactions. Work-oriented communication was measured by three indicators: employee’s perceived quantity of the organization’s strategic information regarding the policies and development, the employee’s perceived quantity of vertical interaction with management (downward and upward), and the employee’s satisfaction with management’s responsiveness to the upward feedback. Organizational commitment was tested by the three components model: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. The findings from regression analyses revealed that social-emotional-oriented communication between subordinates and superiors is a positive predictor of affective commitment, and the perceived quantity of organizational strategic information and vertical interaction with management; and that work-oriented communication is a strong positive predictor of affective commitment and normative commitment. However, the results failed to prove the effects of horizontal social-emotional-oriented communication. The conclusion is that in Chinese governmental organizations, vertical communication and communication regarding work-related topics help to make employees want to stay with and contribute to the employing organization; and the better social-emotional-oriented communication the employees have with
superiors, the better work-oriented communication they have at work.

**Key words:** Organizational communication, organizational commitment, human relations theory, vertical communication, horizontal communication.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Communication is an inevitable aspect of organizational functioning. The functions and importance of communication for organizations have been examined by researchers in various ways. This study explores the role of different types of communication in enhancing employees’ commitment to their employing organization in the context of China. Based on content, two types of communication are defined: communication regarding social and emotional topics, and communication regarding tasks and organization. Many previous studies based on the Western context have proved that vertical communication regarding tasks and organization helps to enhance organizational commitment, whilst horizontal communication regarding social and emotional topics does not affect organizational commitment significantly. However, first, there has been a lack of examination of the relationship between vertical communication regarding social and emotional topics and organizational commitment; second, there has been a lack of examination of the relationship between communication and organizational commitment in the context of China.

In contemporary society, organizations no longer focus only on bureaucratic and formal management and communication. The interpersonal interaction among employees in the organization is increasingly paid attention to. People do not only formally disseminate information related to work and their organization, but also talk about themselves and their emotions. Talking about non-work related topics for social reasons occurs commonly among members of organizations. Through this kind of communication, social networks can be built among employees in the organizations. As a result of the organization members’ curiosity, interpersonal attraction, and social interaction, informal communication have become a common feature of the social networks in today’s organizations (Kreps 1990, 208). Scholars have argued that informal communication in the organization is the second most frequently used channel to communicate (coming only behind communication between the employee and his or her immediate supervisor), although it may not be the preferred source of reliable information in the organization (Tubbs and Moss 2008, 495-6). In terms of
the communication in organizations, while the formal communication is primarily relied on, some organizations also do not discourage informal communication. One researcher has suggested that gossip plays a part in improving bonds between employees (Sostek 2006 in Tubbs and Moss 2008, 494). Especially, it stimulates productivity and helps the organization when the gossip is about how other groups in the organization are doing better (Sostek 2006, D1 in Tubbs and Moss 2008, 494). Generally speaking, communication among members of the organization flows horizontally and vertically; the content may contain work related and non-work related information; it may occur both within and outside of the workplace.

According to Farace, Monge, and Russell (1977), there are three main kinds of communication at a workplace. They are task-related communication, innovation-related communication (new ideas), and maintenance-related communication (social topics that maintains human relationships). In this study, however, the task-related communication and innovation-related communication (new ideas) are jointly referred to as work-oriented communication. For instance, in an organization, managers tell subordinates what their tasks are and how to accomplish these tasks; salesmen report to their superiors about how much they have sold this week; employees of a newsroom talk with the other employees of the technique support department about how to use a new system. This type of communication may happen at a weekly meeting within departments, or may just be via email. On the other hand, managers may also share the good news about their children with their subordinates; the salesmen may also tell superiors about the recent fighting with boyfriends or girlfriends; the journalists may also chat with the computer guy about an interesting online game. These kinds of communication are referred to as social-emotional-oriented communication. They may occur during the lunch, or when the organization holds an organizational activity, such as barbeque or party. Additionally, work-oriented and social-emotional-oriented communication may both take place in the same activity and even in the same conversation. That is to say, for instance, when the peers are talking about the football match, they might also mention
how much they have to work for to complete their current task and then exchange information about how to more efficiently do the task; at a weekly group meeting, the superior may also congratulate one employee on a newborn baby and then treat the whole group to afternoon tea; and whilst having tea, they may talk more about the baby and the new life he/she will entail for the employee.

Organizational commitment is “a strong belief in and acceptance of the organizational goals and values, a willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization and a desire to remain with the organization” (Porter et al. 1974). It has been found to be linked to organizational effectiveness as well as other outcomes specific to individual employees (for instance, job satisfaction, turnover intention, psychological well-being, etc.). Employees with a higher level of organizational commitment can be motivated to a higher level of job performance and make more valuable contributions (Meyer and Allen 1997). They are bound tighter than the others with a lower level of organizational commitment.

The current study draws upon the “three components model” of organizational commitment, which distinguishes between affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. The three component conceptualization of organizational commitment was proposed by Meyer and Allen (1984). The affective component of organizational commitment refers to “employees' emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in, the organization” (Allen and Meyer 1990, 1). The continuance component refers to “commitment based on the costs that employees associate with leaving the organization” (Allen and Meyer 1990, 1). The normative component refers to “employees' feelings of obligation to remain with the organization” (Allen and Meyer 1990, 1). Later, Meyer & Allen (1997) argued that employees who have strong affective commitment to the organization would be motivated to higher levels of job performance than employees who convey continuance or normative commitment. Additionally, they argued that those employees with strong affective commitment also make more meaningful contributions to the organization.
Furthermore, organizational communication is shown to be positively related to employee outcomes including organizational commitment (Madlock and Booth-Butterfield, 2008). This research is interested in finding the role of communication in improving organizational commitment.

1.1 Communication in the Organization

In order to accomplish tasks and achieve the organizational goals, every individual of an organization communicates with others about the various types of work in the organization. Superiors deliver tasks to the subordinate; subordinates report results or make proposals to the supervisors; members of a group discuss how to achieve the group goal; and so forth. However, there are also times when employees within the organization, no matter what positions they hold, talk informally and on subjects not related to work. The non-work related topics may relate to their personal lives, feelings, interests, thoughts, beliefs, fantasies, personal goals, and backgrounds. They may also be about other colleagues’ personal life. Moreover, researchers have found that when the relationship among people is closer, it is more likely that they talk about their feelings regarding the relationship and how much they care about this relationship (see, for instance, Madlock and Booth-Butterfield, 2008; Sias and Cahill, etc.). One of the reasons why people talk about emotional topics can be that they unintentionally or intentionally strive to build and maintain social networks and social support, as well as satisfy their emotional needs. In modern times, more and more organizations are organized and managed in an informal manner. People work like a big family. Communication in this kind of organization has different features and effects from that in organizations with a formal style of management. Some organizations have begun to realize the need to provide an opportunity for employees to get to know each other and interact in informal settings (Robbins et al. 2010, 58-59). They encourage employees to spend time together outside of work and to go on some kind of outing, such as going bowling, playing games, mountain climbing, and having dinner together (Robbins et al. 2010, 58; Tubbs and Moss 2008, 489). These kinds of experiences will open up the lines of communication and diminish
barriers to effective communication (Mowle, 2004). The result is more effective communication, contributing to improved organizational outcomes.

While employees are talking about non-work related topics within or outside the workplace, they get to know in what way their co-workers are used to, and like to, communicate. When they find the “key” to open others’ hearts and mouths, they receive access to a greater amount of knowledge and information. It is not rare that employees know what their co-workers are interested in and what is going on in their co-workers’ lives. As a result of getting to know their co-workers better they learn how to transmit information to them and make them understand it correctly, which is essential for communication regarding work and organization.

However, some empirical information shows that some people prefer to stay away from their co-workers when they are outside of work. They do not like to talk about themselves, share their thoughts and interests, and do not spend time together with colleagues outside of work, such as having lunch together. They want to keep a distance from their co-workers and maintain a large sphere of private space. They think that to keep a professional workplace relationship makes their formal work simpler and that it is good for their work. Additionally, some organizations always pay attention to employees’ personal relationships, and may attempt to control with whom they can form relationships and in what way they communicate (Cornelissen 2008, 194). However, the communication between close friends may be without any gate-keeping, and this kind of relationship may be built very strongly and hence be out of the organization’s control. Empirical studies have also shown that when the line between the public sphere and private sphere becomes ambiguous, conflict may also result (Miller 2009, 201). For instance, an employee’s private life may be revealed in a public meeting, and a rumor about a manager’s private life spreads like wildfire when the social network in the organization is well established.

However, contemporary organizations have realized the importance of meeting the employees’ needs while persuading them to act in the ways that meet the organization’s needs (Cornelissen 2008, 195). It must be balanced. Therefore,
investigating the effect of social-emotional-oriented communication on work-oriented communication and organizational commitment will be one of the contributions of the current study. Testing the effect of work-oriented communication on organizational commitment will be the other contribution of the study.

1.2 Communication’s Effects on the Organizational Commitment

Communication is argued to be related to organizational commitment conceptually (for instance, Gorden and Infante 1991; Eblen 1987; DeCotiis and Summers 1987; Eisenberg, Monge, and Miller 1983) and empirically. Previous studies regarding the relationship between organizational communication and organizational commitment also argued that informal communication of socio-emotional content with proximate colleagues is less strongly related to levels of organizational commitment than the formal bureaucratic communication of management content with superiors (Postmes et al. 2001). In these studies, the social-emotional communication was examined only in the horizontal direction. Therefore, it was concluded that horizontal communication is not a strong predictor of organizational commitment. However, the previous studies also suggested that horizontal communication is more related to vertical communication, which is about work, rather than to organizational commitment (Postmes et al. 2001, 238).

The current study focuses on the effect of social-emotional-oriented communication in both the horizontal and vertical direction on work-oriented communication and organizational commitment, and tests if work-oriented communication is a strong predictor of organizational commitment in the context of China. Social-emotional-oriented communication in this study is considered to be all communication with co-workers that is not directly related to work. In other words, it is the communication with non-work related content. It does not necessarily take place at the workplace, and thus includes communication outside of work. Moreover, it should be clarified that, in contrast to previous studies, the two kinds of communication in the current study are not divided according to the channels used - formal or informal. A formal channel is, used to discuss work-related issues, is a
“communication process that follows an organization’s chain of command” (Bratton et al. 2007, 329), while an informal channel, which is described as a “communication process that follows unofficial means of communication, sometimes called ‘the grapevine’, usually based on social relations”, can also be about work (Bratton et al. 2007, 329). However, talks that are not related to work are usually transmitted through informal channels. In the current study, the line between different kinds of communication among employees at the same or different levels is only drawn according to the content. For example, complaints about work or about the job performance of a co-worker at the workplace are considered as work-oriented communication. Additionally, the communication in the current study will be measured both in terms of the perceived quality and quantity.

Furthermore, other researchers have also explored the relationship between communication and commitment. For instance, Trombetta's research (1988) revealed that organizational communication, which was measured in the dimensions of information adequacy, communication openness, and decision participation, affects organizational commitment, while job satisfaction does not affect organizational commitment. DeCotiis and Summers (1987) suggested that organizational commitment could be enhanced by clear communication about organizational intentions, activities, and performance, a sense of cohesion among employees. Steers (1977) argued that adequate task-related information, and positive information regarding an organization’s ability to provide challenging and meaningful tasks, are positively related to organizational commitment. In Allen’s research (1992), it is found that employees’ perceptions of the communication relationship between top management and employees, and the perceptions of the quality of top management’s communication and superior-subordinate communication, are strongly linked to organizational commitment. Gorden and Infante (1991) showed that the employees with less perceived freedom of speech in the organization have less organizational commitment and are less satisfied with the work, the supervisors, and the organization. The research that applies qualitative methods found that interpersonal communication
skills can enhance the employees’ organizational commitment (Bambacas and Patrickson 2008).

The link between communication and organizational commitment is also related to several other areas of study. Previous research on leadership behavior, formal and informal organizational communication, workplace relationships, relationship maintenance communication, emotion at the workplace (for more about these see, for instance, Brown 2003; Miller 2009; Morrison 2003; Amber et al. 2008; Madlock and Booth-Butterfield 2008; Canary and Dainton 2002; Bratton et al. 2007), and so forth, has, to some extent, examined the effects of communication on both organizations and individuals, which is relevant for the current study. For instance, Madlock and Booth-Butterfield (2008) suggested that when employees apply relational maintenance strategies to communicate with fellow coworkers, the relationships can be retained and enhanced. Moreover, among the five factors of such a maintenance strategy, sharing tasks (performing one's responsibilities) and positivity (interacting with co-workers in a cheerful, uncritical manner) were identified as the strongest predictors of employee job satisfaction, communication satisfaction, organizational commitment, and work alienation. Barbara B. Brown (2003) found that relations-oriented leadership behavior is the strongest predictor for affective commitment, while it is a somewhat lesser predictor of normative commitment, and not at all of continuance commitment. Furthermore, task-oriented leadership behavior displayed the same pattern of relationships with the three types of organizational commitment, but weaker. Some researchers have argued that friendship development is communication-based (Parks 2007, etc.). Workplace friendship can be created and developed when people in an organization are given a chance to interact with others for some amount of time. Sunnafrank and Ramirez (2004) found that when people, at the beginning stages of a relationship, have a larger amount of interaction and more positive expectations towards the relationship and outcomes from it, conversations will ensue to a larger extent and the relationship will develop more at a later time. Emmers-Sommer (2004) demonstrated that both the quality and quantity of
communication contributed to relational closeness and relational satisfaction. Furthermore, in Morrison’s research (2005), it is found that the cohesiveness and opportunities for friendship are positively related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment and decreased turnover intention. In the research of Raile et al. (2008), friendship network centrality in term of closeness among employees is proved to be positively related to job satisfaction.

Moreover, research in Western contexts suggested that employees’ commitment to their organization indirectly develops from the satisfaction with the job, and is a mediator between job satisfaction, and turnover and intention to leave (see for example, Porter 1974). However, previous research also implied that the satisfaction-to-commitment model may be less valid in cultural contexts differing from those of the West (Morrison 2005, 41).

However, the current study merely focuses on communication’s direct role in the process of improving organizational outcomes rather than the effect of other variables, such as workplace relationships, on organizational outcomes. It is not the concern of this study to investigate whether or not the communication between employees within and outside the workplace builds friendships in an organization, or how job satisfaction affects the process. Instead, the current study examines the direct relationship between communication and organizational commitment. In other words, the mediated and indirect effects of communication on commitment are also not considerations of the current study. Although the focus is the relationship between communication among employees and organizational commitment, the findings of the research presented above that focused on other variables can be helpful for explaining the findings of the current study.

1.3 The Context of the People’s Republic of China

Of the studies examining the relationship between social-emotional-oriented communication, work-oriented communication, and organizational commitment, none has done so within a Chinese context. However, the effects of communication or
power as a predictor of organizational commitment may vary across cultural boundaries. For instance, a literature review of studies of organizational commitment across national cultures found that different factors are related to organizational commitment in different countries. For example, participation in decision making was found to have an effect in Canadian samples, while no similar effect could be found in Japanese or English samples (Randall 1993). A 2003 study comparing organizational commitment in China, Canada, and South Korea also found that although all three types of organizational commitment – affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment – could be identified in the three countries, their respective degrees of importance differs across countries (Cheng and Stockdale 2003). Moreover, Chen and Francesco (2000) suggested, in their research pertaining to the cultural differences, that as a result of the influence of traditional Chinese culture, Chinese employees in Chinese organizations behave differently from their Western counterparts. That is to say, according to the previous research, differences in cultural context produce different research results.

From the empirical point of view, there are some characteristics in the Chinese labor market that may influence the working environment and culture. For instance, many people complain that, due to the economic crisis in recent years and the large population, the competition in China is too stiff (Xie 2003; College students’ employment and the population problem 2009). Finding an interesting office job with a good salary has always been many Chinese employees’ dream; a dream which is difficult to fulfill for the common people. Among the older generation, there is much emphasis on a sense of loyalty; something they were taught is important and morally right ever since they were young. Therefore it is common that they work with only one organization for their whole lifetime. Moreover, since they do not have the advantage of young age anymore, for some kinds of jobs the employers prefer to hire younger people although they may not be as experienced as the older competitors. Besides, many in the older generation did not receive higher education and their skills do not make them competitive enough to find a good job. Furthermore, for the
younger generation, it is no longer unusual to change jobs (Li and Zax 2003, 15). To a larger extent, they tend to consider quitting or changing jobs. Loyalty seems to be valued less compared to their parents’ generation. However, it is still difficult for lots of them to get a good job that both provides a good income and is what they are interested in.

Additionally, in recent years, in Beijing, the speedily increasing consumer prices (see, for instance, National Bureau of Statistics of China 2011) and demands for a higher standard of life has led to increased economic pressure on people, so they need a source of good income. Moreover, due to the one child policy the young generation now not only is responsible for their own lives, but also need to take care of their parents and grandparents. The young workers usually live together with their parents if they work in the same city as the parents and are not yet married. In Chinese culture, it is common that when the children start to have an income, they give a part of it to their parents every month, whether they live with them or not, and it is also common to give money to the grandparents who raised them. After they are married and get children, they also need to take care of their own families, especially the children, and also need to take care of the spouse’s parents and grandparents. The cost of raising a child is high in China for lots of families so the additional pressure when raising a child is high for many families (Jiang and Ma 2003). Therefore, the heavy burden for the young generation causes them to be cautious about their jobs and salaries.

All these cultural (general culture and workplace culture) or economic differences between China and other countries, such as the U.S. or Sweden, may cause a different relationship between social-relation-oriented communication, work-oriented communication and organizational commitment. Therefore, it is not possible to know with any certainty whether or not the findings from the Western-based research are applicable in China, unless a study is conducted with China-based data, investigating China’s organizations. This is the main reason that the current study is undertaken in relation to the Chinese context.

Furthermore, the sample organization of the current study is a governmental
organization. The communication in government is commonly conducted in a bureaucratic and formal style. In other words, hierarchy, job position and titles are emphasized. Moreover, the work of government usually involves lots of citizens so the work demands a high degree of responsibility. The responsibility is more related to intangible issues that potentially change people’s life rather than one-time occurrences, such as 100 Yuan losses. Additionally, a job in government is relatively more stable than a job in the commercial sector and security and welfare are guaranteed, so the pressure on governmental workers is lower. (Jiang and Ma 2003). These special features make it interesting to only focus on the governmental organization, which allows for exclusion of other influential factors such as organizational culture.

Consequently, the research within this specific context can provide more concrete findings; thereby filling in the gap in the literature between theory and empirical knowledge.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

While various researches in different areas of study have shown that organizational communication affects employees’ commitment to the organization, the previous literature does not offer guidance on how different types of organizational commitment are affected by different kinds of communication in the organization and through different flows of the communication.

First, we do not know the situation of social-emotional-oriented communication between the employees at the same level or the employees at different levels in a Chinese organization. Second, we do not know the relationship between employees’ social-emotional-oriented communication with their peers or leaders and different types of organizational commitment. Third, we do not know the relationship between work-oriented communication and different types of employees’ organizational commitment in a Chinese organization. Finally, we do not know the relationship between employees’ social-emotional-oriented communication with their peers or
leaders and work-oriented communication in a Chinese organization.

As has been discussed above, it should be clarified that the relationship between communication in the organization and organizational commitment needs to be investigated in a particular context, which is China, in the current study.

1.5 Significance of the Problem

In practice, contemporary organizations have realized the importance of applying organizational communication to help organization management; thereby, organization performance is improved. These topics have been documented in many academic fields, such as organization management style, leadership behavior, work environment, psychological job satisfaction, and so forth. However, the current study is devoted to the field of communication studies. It examines the role of different types of organizational communication in the process of enhancing organizational commitment and provides knowledge about how to use communication to improve employees’ commitment to the employing organization. Consequently, this study contributes to the communication literature by providing information on the relationship between social-emotional-oriented and work-oriented communication and different types of organizational commitment in Chinese organizations.

1.6 Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research is to investigate the relationship between horizontal and vertical social-emotional-oriented communication and work-oriented communication in Chinese organizations, and different types of organizational commitment.

1.7 Research Questions

The research question of this study is: what is the relationship between social-emotional-oriented communication, work-oriented communication, and organizational commitment. Specifically, the sub research questions are:

1. Social-emotional-oriented communication and organizational commitment

1a. To what extent do employees in the Chinese organization engage in
social-emotional-oriented communication with other members both at the same level and different levels in the organization?

1b. Does social-emotional-oriented communication predict organizational commitment?

1c. Does social-emotional-oriented communication in the horizontal direction predict organizational commitment?

1d. Does social-emotional-oriented communication in the vertical direction predict organizational commitment?

1e. What type of organizational commitment is strongly related to what direction of social-emotional-oriented communication?

2. Work-oriented communication and organizational commitment

2a. Does work-oriented communication positively predict organizational commitment in the Chinese organization?

2b. Which types of work-oriented communication are more related to which type of organizational commitment?

3. social-emotional-oriented communication and work-oriented communication

3a. Does social-emotional-oriented communication predict work-oriented communication?

3b. What types of work-oriented communication are strongly predicted by social-emotional-oriented communication?

By testing these sub research questions, the relation between social-emotional communication, work-related communication and organizational commitment can be found.

Summary

The functions of communication in contemporary organizations have been
demonstrated by scholars in various areas of study in the last decades. Organizational commitment is found to be related to the effectiveness of the organization and the output of individuals. Communication regarding management is proved to be a predictor of employees’ commitment to the organization. There are also times when members of organizations talk about non-work related topics – which is described as “social-emotional-oriented communication” in the current study. Previous research suggested that social-emotional communication in the horizontal direction does not significantly affect organizational commitment, but organizational commitment is related to vertical communication with work content. Moreover, there is no China-based research that has tested the relationship between social-emotional-oriented communication in both horizontal and vertical directions, work-oriented communication, and organizational commitment. Therefore, the current study aims to identify the relationship between them. Moreover, basic demographical variables are considered in the research. It contributes to the further understanding of communication in Chinese organizations, theoretically and empirically, by examining what effects the different types of communication among employees, at the same or different levels in the organization, have on organizational commitment.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The present research investigates how communication among members in Chinese organizations affect their commitment to the organization. In addition, the effect of communication with social-emotional content on communication with work-related content is examined as well. One contribution of the study is to show how different types of communication in the organization – social-emotional-oriented communication and work-oriented communication – explain and improve organizational and individual outcomes. The other contribution is the analysis of social-emotional-oriented communication and work-oriented communication in the specific context of a Chinese organization. In this chapter, the relevant theories and literature are reviewed as guidance for the present research.

2.1 Social-emotional-oriented Communication among Employees

According to Farace, Monge, and Russell (1977), there are three main kinds of communication at a workplace. They are task-related communication, innovation-related communication (new ideas), and maintenance-related communication (social topics that maintain human relationships). Social-emotional-oriented communication in the current study refers to the last kind. That is to say, it is the communication that is oriented by topics that are not related to work and the organization. Instead, it involves topics that express emotion and plays a role in social needs and relationship maintenance. The current study aims to find the role of this kind of communication in the organization.

Through interpersonal communication people create social networks, and from these networks they get social support. Interpersonal communication has been studied as a means of social support in the workplace (see, for instance, Beehr et al. 1990; Madlock and Booth-Butterfield 2008). Social support provides not only emotional support such as love, acceptance and respect, but also information, including knowledge and advice, and tangible assistance, including goods and services (Dunkel-Schetter and Skokan 1990; Greenglass 1993; Jacobson 1986). Studies have
also found that co-workers in the workplace can offer unique emotional support that family or friends cannot offer (Etzion, 1984). Social support is necessary for employees to be successful and satisfied in their jobs and careers (Stackman and Pinder 1999, 40). The organization that can provide an opportunity for employees to achieve self-actualization tends to get higher levels of commitment from the employees (McGregor 1960, 47-48) (this will be discussed further below). Partially based on this, the current study assumes that social-emotional-oriented communication helps to improve both work-oriented communication and organizational commitment.

2.2 Work-oriented Communication in the Organization

No organization can exist without communication among its members. Communication is “the process by which a person, group, or organization (the sender) transmits some type of information (the message) to another person, group, or organization (the receiver)” (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 334). Communication performs an important role in organizational functioning. In this sub chapter, the general understanding of communication that contributes to organizational functioning will be reviewed. Specifically, some relevant communication theories that can be employed for organizational management are presented.

2.2.1 Organizational Communication

In the context of an organization, members gather, send, and interpret relevant information about the organization and the changes occurring within the organization (Kreps 1990, 11-12). This process is organizational communication. Through communication the sender transmits a message to the receiver verbally or nonverbally. However, communication is not only about imparting a message but also involves understanding of its meaning. It is inarguable that an idea without a successful transmission and correct understanding, no matter how great it is, is useless (Robbins et al. 2010, 288). Perfect communication is when the receiver understands exactly what the sender wants to express. However, in reality, in an organization, there are
many reasons restraining perfect communication. Some of the reasons will be presented in the current chapter later.

Previous studies have demonstrated that there is a relationship between the quality of communication and total performance in organizations (Tubbs and Moss 2008, 496). Lack of effective communication is one of the most inhibiting factors of successful organizational performance (Robbins et al. 2010, 288). For instance, communication helps members in the organization to discuss relevant organizational issues and generate and share information for creating ideas and making decisions, so that both the organizational and individual goals are achieved. Members transmit commands, inform each other of changes, and coordinate to resolve problems and help each other with improvements.

According to Conrad (1985) the functions of organizational communication can be summarized as: the command function, the relational function, and the ambiguity-management function. The command function is that communication helps people to give and receive orders, and then act on these orders. It allows interdependent members in the organization to coordinate to accomplish the overall organizational goals (Conrad 1985, 7). The relational function of communication allows people to develop and maintain personal relationships with others in the organization (Conrad 1985, 7-8). In addition, since the work group is the primary source for social interaction for many people, communication provides them with a way to express emotions and feelings and fulfill their social needs (Scott and Mitchell 1976). The ambiguity-management function is that communication deals with and reduces the uncleanness and uncertainty in organizations. People talk, interpret, and make sense of new situations, so that everyone understands correctly. As a result of better understanding of different situations people can predict situations, make decisions, and direct their actions (Kreps 1990, 11-13). Effective communication is essential for accomplishing tasks in organizations.

2.2.2 Directions of Communication in an Organization: Downward, Upward, Horizontal Communication
The communication in an organization flows vertically and horizontally. Further, in the vertical direction, communication may be directed downward and upward. A discussion of the features and functions of different communication flows will aid understanding of the measures and results presented later in the current study.

**Downward communication**

Downward communication is the communication flows from an upper-level employee to a lower-level employee. It is “initiated by the organization’s upper management and then filters downward through the ‘chain of command’” (Tubbs and Moss 2008, 478).

It is not difficult to imagine that downward communication is used to give orders, assign tasks, provide instructions and directions, inform employees of job procedures and policies, point out problems that need attention, and offer feedback on employees’ past performance (Robbins et al. 2010, 291; Greenberg and Baron 2008, 350). In other words, it is mainly used to tell the employees what they should do and how well they are doing. In respect of satisfying employees’ needs for organizational communication, it is important that employees can receive sufficient and accurate information about the organization and their jobs, and get feedback about the performance (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 350).

Scholars found six crucial areas that employees want to know about from the upper-level management (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 350-1): 1). what, exactly, does my job entail? 2). how well am I doing? 3). does anyone care about me? 4). how is my work unit doing? 5). where is the organization headed? 6). how can I help the company to meet its objectives?

Moreover, previous research also found that it is important to explain the reason behind a decision when a manager communicates downward to the subordinate. But in the practice, managers tend to ignore the need for explanation (Robbins et al. 2010, 291). They are either too busy to explain to the employees or think that it is not necessary to let the employees know since they are just like “machines” following orders. However, research has revealed that such explanations can enhance employees’
commitment and support for decisions (Dvorak 2007). When the employee knows why the management made the decision, it is twice as likely that he/she commits to the change.

Furthermore, there are some deficiencies of downward communication. Employees do not only expect to receive information about the organization and their tasks, and feedback from managers, but also want to participate in the communication. In the one-way communication, it is only the upper-level management that speaks and the lower-level employees listens, and the upper-level management rarely ask for the lower-level employees’ opinions and suggestions. However, people need to be respected and considered to be able to think and provide useful ideas. Therefore, in an organization with a good quality of communication, upward communication is regarded as important as downward communication (Robbins et al. 2010, 291). In the next sub-chapter, upward communication will be presented.

**Upward Communication**

Conversely, upward communication in an organization flows from a lower-level employee to an upper-level employee. Upward communication is used to keep managers informed of what is going on in the work and what the subordinates are feeling. Specifically, it provides management with the information they need for doing their work, such as data for making decisions, the current status of projects, and information on new problems. Through upward communication, superiors also get to know their subordinates’ feelings about their work, colleagues, and the organization, so that they can adjust for better individual and organizational performance. Moreover, as discussed earlier, superiors and the organization needs advice and opinions from employees as well. Managers rely on upward communication to collect suggestions for improvement and new ideas (Robbins et al. 2010, 291; Greenberg and Baron 2008, 351).

Upward communication is important. Failing to relay the necessary information upward, such as changes and problems in a project, or creative ideas to enhance the
profits, may cause detrimental and even disastrous results (Tubbs and Moss 2008, 484-5). The functions of upward communication are summarized by researchers as: “provides management with needed information for decision making”, “helps employees relieve the pressures and frustrations of the work situation”, “enhances employees’ sense of participation in the enterprise”, “serves as a measure of the effectiveness of downward communication”, and “suggests more rewarding uses of downward communication for the future” (Tubbs and Moss 2008, 485). A previous study proved that the higher levels of freedom the employees have to speak to their superiors, the higher levels of commitment they have to the organization (Wayne et al. 1997).

Therefore, an organization should encourage upward communication and undertake efforts to ensure that it is of a good quality. However, it is not uncommon that organizations lack in upward communication. Upward communication is not simply a reverse direction of downward communication, since when communication flows from lower-level employees there may be some problems due to the characteristics of job positions (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 351). People may fear the bureaucracy and possible retaliation so they prefer to not face the risks. Even though in today’s organizations the emphasis on hierarchy is lower and team work is emphasized, there still are some limitations of upward communication.

Previous research found that upward communication happens less frequently than downward communication in organizations (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 351). In addition, the conversation time of upward communication is shorter compared to the communication flows in the other direction (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 351).

Importantly, upward communication often displays a lack of comprehensiveness. Subordinates often fear to tell bad news to their superiors. When they report to the superiors they may emphasize their merits and achievements but avoid the mistakes they made and troubles they caused. Therefore, the bad things are often omitted in the communication. But managers make decisions based on the information they gain from other employees, and all the information has the potential of changing the result
dramatically. That is to say, bad news can also be pivotal. If the higher-level managers are not informed with accurate and sufficient information and that information is necessary for the managers to do their job, then it is very possible that a worse result will be caused. Therefore, to encourage effective upward communication, managers should not behave unreceptively to bad news so that their subordinates will not be afraid of rebukes, punishment, or retaliation (Tubbs and Moss 2008, 485).

Furthermore, it is also common that subordinates simply choose to agree with their superiors when they are asked about for comments. Or the subordinates may choose to keep silent even though they have ideas for improvements. The reason might be that subordinates are not sure if their suggestions and comments are truly welcome. Therefore, it is important that managers make time to listen to subordinates and let them know that they are willing to take suggestions and listen to critical opinions (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 353; Robbins et al. 2010, 291).

Additionally, previous research suggested that, in order to encourage effective upward communication, besides not giving responding badly to subordinates, managers can also reward upward communication. Furthermore, they can also share their own feelings, opinions and difficulties with their subordinates, so that the subordinates will follow the model to communicate upward effectively (Tubbs and Moss 2008, 487).

**Horizontal Communication**

Horizontal communication flows among the employees at the same level in the organization. In today’s organization, horizontal communication is becoming increasingly common with the flattening of organizational hierarchy and the advent of team work (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 353).

Horizontal communication in an organization can serve for an efficient and accurate transfer of information and facilitate coordination, hence no accidents will happen because of lack of necessary communication and the organization functions more effectively (Robbins et al. 2010, 292; Tubbs and Moss 2008, 490). Goldhaber (1993) concluded that there are four important functions of horizontal communication. It can
help to: 1). improve the task coordination especially between departments to meet the overall organizational goals; 2). solve problems by having, for instance, brainstorming between co-workers in a department; 3). share information with other departments especially update changes that may affect other departments; 4). resolve conflict among members in a department or between departments (Tubbs and Moss 2008, 490).

Since in horizontal communication people are horizontally equivalent, the communication is usually friendlier in nature than the vertical communication. It is often also more casual and easier since the social barriers are fewer between people, and they are often more satisfied with it (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 353). However, there are some problems that may cause bad horizontal communication, especially between different groups or departments. Members in a group or department are usually required to demonstrate loyalty, especially when there is competition between groups or departments. As a result, they tend to avoid communication with those outside and also not trust and help others (Tubbs and Moss 2008, 490; Greenberg and Baron 2008, 353). Moreover, when there is a conflict between co-workers, they may behave antagonistically and show their resentment more openly, since they do not need to bow to hierarchy (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 353). All these problems may impact on the overall organizational benefits of horizontal communication.

Schein (1997) summarized a guideline to reduce the barriers to horizontal communication: 1). put more emphasis on the overall organizational effectiveness and the importance of different departments’ role in contributing to this overall effectiveness; 2). facilitate the high interaction and frequent communication between groups to work on the intergroup coordination and help each other; 3). employ frequent rotation of members among different groups or departments to stimulate mutual understanding and empathy for others’ difficulties and problems; 4). avoid any win-lose situation to reduce competition for reward so that the resources and information are shared equally and fairly (Tubbs and Moss 2008, 491). Additionally, empirical studies found that games and team challenges outside of the office can open
up the lines of communication and reduce the barriers to effective communication across equivalent personnel in the organization (Mowle 2004, 1; Tubbs and Moss 2008, 489). Partially based on this, the current study assumes that social-emotional-oriented communication affects work-oriented communication.

2.2.3 Formal and Informal Communication

Two styles of communication that occur in an organization can be distinguished – formal communication and informal communication. Formal communication is “the sharing of messages regarding the official work of the organization”, while informal communication is “the sharing of unofficial messages that are unrelated to the organization’s formal activities” (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 348).

Formal communication in an organization follows an organization’s “chain of command” (Bratton et al. 2007, 329). It is impacted by the organizational formal structure, which indicates “the formally prescribed pattern of interrelationships existing between the various units of an organization” (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 349). Therefore, the formal communication follows the prescribed rules about who is to communicate with whom (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 349). In this formal communication structure, it is settled who the authority in the organization is that is responsible for answering the subordinate, and who is responsible for answering the superior. These rules about who may communicate with whom for the organization to operate properly are fixed and defined (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 349-350). That is to say, they do not change just because of personal reasons.

Informal communication in today’s organizations is often used as a means of work-oriented communication. The informal connections between members in the organization build an informal communication network through which they share informal information. People in the network transmit information to others with whom they come into contact, so the informal communication breaks off the organizational boundaries (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 354; Greenberg and Baron 2008, 356). Moreover, informal communication is usually performed orally. Therefore,
the information is usually widespread and spreads rapidly (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 356).

The informal channel is sometimes called and known as “the grapevine”, and it is mainly based on social relations (for example, friendship, or acquaintance) among the members in an organization (Bratton et al. 2007, 329; Greenberg and Baron 2008, 356). Information disseminated through the grapevine without official verification is often rumor. Rumors about the organization and the work are caused by ineffective or inadequate organizational communication. However, informal communication without official verification can still be helpful for bonding between members of the organization and improving performance (Sostek 2006). Sostek (2006) proposed two types of rumors. When the rumor is about individuals, it usually hurts people. When the rumor is about how the other groups in the organization are doing better, it is likely to stimulate productivity and help the organization. Therefore, sometimes the management allows the spreading of rumors in the organization (Sostek 2006, D1). Furthermore, it has been shown that socializing informally among employees can improve work groups’ cohesiveness, provide better opportunities for satisfying employees’ social needs, and ensure a stimulating work environment in the organization (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 356; Baskin and Aronoff 1989).

Davis (1953) stated that grapevine communication is one of the fastest channels and often it is also accurate. It can also carry plenty of information. Nevertheless, grapevine communication is largely considered to be unreliable because of message distortion in the communication process (Tubbs and Moss 2008, 495). The distortion occurs when people omit some parts they think are unrelated, exaggerate some parts to make the story sound better, or distort the message to make it accord with their own ideas or fit their own purposes (Tubbs and Moss 2008, 495). As a consequence, employees do not prefer to get information about the organization and work through the informal channel, although this channel is frequently used and important (Tubbs and Moss 2008, 496).

In order to avoid the disadvantages of grapevine communication, the empirical study
suggested some alternatives that can also be applied by the organization to share the organizational values with the employees (Tubbs and Moss 2008, 495). It includes one-on-one informal conversations with employees, bringing up values as secondary agenda of meetings, social activities, organization wide meetings, and meetings with middle managers (Tubbs and Moss 2008, 495-6). Some of these alternatives contain social-emotional-oriented communication. One of the current study’s assumptions is that social-emotional-oriented communication affects organizational commitment.

In an organization, the informal communication network which is based on the informal connections between people is sometimes divided according to the similarities between people, such as age, gender, and race (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 354-5). It is not difficult to understand that people tend to spend more time and communicate more with those who are similar to themselves since it feels more comfortable. Moreover, by communicating with others who are similar to themselves, they usually receive a lot of useful and valuable information. It is because they have similar backgrounds and situations, that the knowledge from similar people can be used in their own cases (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 355).

A previous study found that the informal communication pattern between people has a predictive effect on employees’ voluntary turnover (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 355). Specifically, among those who come into contact and share information with each other, the turnover can be caused by their influence on each other. That is to say, who is going to quit the organization for a better job in another organization can be known from familiarity with the informal communication patterns within the social groups in the organization (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 355).

Additionally, the informal communication network can cross the organizational structure and hierarchy. When the information is not related to the job, members at different levels – including both the managerial and non-managerial level – dare to share information, such as jokes or interesting movies, to a larger extent. In contrast, it is not common that a worker at a lower organizational level formally communicates to the superior about how to do a job (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 355-6).
2.2.4 Classical, Human Relations and Human Resources Approaches

Management is crucial to an organization and it penetrates all areas of an organization, including communication. Management theories can be traced to the early twentieth century. Afterwards, various theories emerged to be consistent with the needs of the day. The classical approach, the human relations approach and the human resources approach are considered to be “founding perspectives” that provide the basis for the field of organizational communication and are still influential in today’s study of organizational communication (Miller 2009, 13). In today’s business and professional organizations, the influence of the three approaches can still be seen widely. Furthermore, there are also other, more contemporary theoretical perspectives. The ones that have received the largest attention are the social systems approach, the cultural approach and the critical approach (Miller 2009).

The social systems approach was popularized in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Theorists such as March and Simon (1958), Katz and Kahn (1966) and Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) adopted the general systems theory to organizational behavior in order to describe sets of properties and patterns of organizations (Kreps 1990, 93). The proponents insisted that the “founding perspectives” oversimplified the operation of organizations. The social systems theory considers organizations as complex interrelations of system components and processes (Miller 2009, 14).

The organizational cultural approach became popular in the early 1980s. It “describes the powerful interpretive nature of organizational life” and considers organizations as nature networks of “shared symbolic logics” (Kreps 1990, 60; 123-124). The culture in an organization is considered to provide the organizational members with collective sense-making logics so that they can interpret the organizational life and “attach significance to organizational activities” (Kreps 1990, 124).

The important roots of the critical approach in organizational communication can be traced to the work of Karl Marx (Miller 2009, 100). It emphasizes organizational power and takes a radical frame of reference. The critical theory insists on the
importance of emancipation of marginalized social groups in organizations (Miller 2009, 14, 118).

The founding perspectives were built with the intent to prescribe how organizations ought to work. They are prescriptive theories for organizations. In contrast, the social systems approach, the organizational culture approach and the critical approach are descriptive approaches that focus on understanding and explaining how organizations actually work in reality. These three approaches are not used as widely as the founding perspectives. The current study's interest is in testing the role of different types of communication in enhancing employees' commitment, therefore the social system approach with focus on explaining how organizations work as complex systems, the culture approach with focus on understanding the role of organizational culture and the critical approach with focus on emancipating oppressed social groups are not directly relevant to the current study.

In the current study, the human relations theory, especially the ideas of the human resources approach, is the theory that the study mainly refers to and the assumptions it is mainly based on. The human relations approach and the human resources approach respectively emphasize the importance of human needs and of providing conditions for each employee to achieve their human potential. These two approaches and the classical approach discuss how persons in different roles in the organization should communicate with each other so that both the individual and organizational outcomes can be improved (the classical approach focuses only on the organizational outcomes). In particular, the human relations approach and the human resources approach emphasize the importance of informal communication. However, the beliefs of the classical approach are nearly in every way contrary to the human relations approach. Therefore, the current subchapter briefly reviews these three "founding approaches" that are relevant to the current study. Specifically, the beliefs related to communication are the main concern. By understanding these theoretical approaches, it is possible to show how communication in an organization can contribute to improving organizational and individual outcomes.
**Classical Approaches**

In the early twentieth century, the classical management theory dominated, with the aims to enhance organizational efficiency and productivity (Miller 2009, 35). Classical management theory emphasizes organizational output. It considers the organization as a machine and the members as mere cogs in the machine, so the role of individuals is not important and they are replaceable. Moreover, the motivation is primarily identified as financial rewards. Therefore, under this mechanistic view of organizations, communication serves to establish managerial control, ensure organizational command, and provide information for managers to make plans and organize the work (Kreps 1990, 75-76; Miller 2009, 32-33).

However, certain aspects of an organization are absent in classical management theory and this limitation makes the approach impractical. The assumption of classical management theory is that the workers are simply cogs of a machine and that they are “orderly, precise, and predictable” (Kreps 1990, 77). But human beings are conspicuously much more complicated than that. They have different personalities and personal lives. They have their own thinking, ideas, understandings and feelings. They get tired, get bored, get annoyed, get worried, get angry, feel disappointed, feel frustrated, act emotionally, make mistakes, and do all kinds of unpredictable things. They control themselves and decide what to do and how to do it. But classical management theory paid little attention to the individual’s role in the organization and the needs of individuals. It is also not interested in nonfinancial rewards as a motivating factor; in social interaction as a means to satisfy personal needs, nor in using individual employees’ knowledge, skills, and abilities to meet the organizational goals (Miller 2009, 35). The lack of human factors evoked another management theory.

**Human Relations Approaches**

Human relations theory began around the 1930s and it was introduced as an alternative perspective to the classical theory (Kreps 1990, 78). It developed largely in
reaction to the classical approach’s mechanistic tenets that merely focus on strict regulations and control and overlook the individual’s role in the organization (Kreps 1990, 78). The human relations perspective rejects financial rewards as the primary motivation. It asserts that members’ long-term motivation for conscientiously contributing to the organization is to facilitate their personal development, growth and self-actualization (Kreps 1990, 78). Self-actualization is “the process by which a human being develops individual knowledge, skills and abilities” (Kreps 1990, 77). Therefore, human relations theory emphasizes the importance of human needs and satisfaction in the workplace. It stresses that organizational performance is improved by satisfying individual members’ needs.

Human relations theory was initially supported by evidence from the landmark series of experiments by Mayo, Roethlisberger and Dickson’s which became well known as the Hawthorne Studies (Roethlisberger and Dickson 1939). These experiments took place from 1924 to 1933 and the results established the competitive position of human relations theory as an alternative perspective to the classical theory. There were four major phases of the Hawthorne Studies: the illumination studies, the relay assembly test room studies, the interview program, and the bank wiring room studies. The results of the relay assembly test room studies revealed that “social satisfactions arising out of human association in work” (Carey 1967, 404) are more important determinants than the physical environment. The interview program proposed that many problems between workers and managers are caused by emotional attitudes rather than objective problems. The bank wiring room studies found that the influence of social groups on workers’ behavior is stronger than the leverage imposed by the formal organizational power structure (Miller 2009, 37).

Consequently, these studies showed that informal social factors can improve the employee’s output; better social interaction in a group increases the productivity in the group; and, the communication style of managers may affect organizational productivity (Miller 2009, 37-38). Although some studies later argued that the conclusions were incorrect, the findings of Hawthorne Studies made people realize
the importance of social interaction and satisfaction of the human needs of employees in organizational functioning. The existence of informal aspect in organizations was realized. With respect to communication, they especially highlighted the role of informal communication and group communication in organizational functioning. The Hawthorne Studies marked the great shift from classical theory to human relations theory.

**Maslow’s Needs Hierarchy Theory**

The tenet of human relations theory suggests that the organization should gear management design to meet the human needs of employees. This idea is illustrated by its proponents. Abraham Maslow developed the Hierarchy of Needs Theory (Maslow 1943) that is applied as a prototype of a human relations approach to organizing and management (Miller 2009, 38-9). According to this theory, human beings are motivated by a series of basic needs. It identified five types of needs as showed in the table 2.1. The first three types are usually considered to be the lower-order needs and the final two types are referred to be the higher-order needs.

Maslow stated that the five types of human needs are sequenced in a hierarchy of prepotency. When the lower-level needs are satisfied, the higher-level needs will emerge and dominate conscious life and the organizational behavior (Maslow 1943, 35). That is to say, in an organization, if the employees are not provided adequate wages and safe working conditions, the social interaction among employees at the workplace will not be satisfied. Maslow’s theory, together with the Hawthorne Studies, manifests the importance of social interaction and managerial attention to this at the workplace, and reflects the move from classical approaches to human relations approaches (Miller 2009, 36-40).
Table 2.1 Maslow’s Needs Hierarchy in the Organizational Context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need Level</th>
<th>Example of Need Satisfaction in Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 5: Self-actualization</td>
<td>Work allowing the exercise of responsibility and creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4: Esteem</td>
<td>Internal: challenging work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>External: compensation and reward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3: Affiliation</td>
<td>Social relationships with coworkers and managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2: Safety</td>
<td>Physically safe working conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1: Physiological</td>
<td>“Living wage” that allows purchase of food, clothing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

McGregor’s Theory X and Theory Y

In Douglas McGregor’s Theory X and Theory Y which represent two distinct managerial assumptions that managers hold about organizational functioning, Theory X represents the ideas that are held by managers who are influenced by the classical theory, while Theory Y represents the beliefs of human relations theory managers. According to Theory X, people are indolent, gullible, irresponsible and self-centered; they lack ambition and are resistant to change (McGregor 1957, 109). Therefore, the three propositions of Theory X are: managers are responsible for organizing the tangibles and people for financial motivation; employees must be controlled and motivated to meet the organizational needs; and employees would be passive and indifferent to achieve the organizational needs if they are not directed and intervened (McGregor 1957, 108-9). On the contrary, Theory Y asserts that employees at a workplace naturally expend mental and physical effort; they exercise self-control and self-direction to which they are committed; they are willing to be responsible, imaginative, creative, and ingenious; they are highly motivated to achieve the organizational goals and self-actualization needs; furthermore, commitment to the organizational objectives is a function of the rewards associated with their self-fulfillment (McGregor 1957, 112). Therefore, the role of managers should be to explore these motivated employees’ natural intellectual potentialities. It is not only the
managers that are capable but also the workers. The managers should explore and use the intelligent workers’ resources, and nurture participative management and decision making among all the members in the organization to enhance organizational effectiveness (Kreps 1990, 84).

What should be highlighted about Theory Y in the current study is the assumption regarding employees’ commitment. McGregor (1957) believes that the level of commitment to the organization is more effective than managerial control in improving employee’s performance. Therefore, managers should work to build and foster employees’ commitment, and the means is to provide opportunities for individual growth by increasing their responsibility and involvement in the organizational activities. When they are committed to working hard in the organization they would be able to fulfill their tasks in the workplace and satisfy their self-actualization needs.

McGregor advocated using Theory Y which is representative of human relations theory. He suggested that behavior directed by these managerial assumptions (such as confidence in human capability, management towards organizational objectives and participation in decision making) could ensure a more satisfied and more productive workforce (McGregor 1957, 113). McGregor, as a proponent of human relations theory, emphasized employees’ needs for attention, social interaction and individual achievement. Moreover, the motivation of employees is not only the tangible rewards but also the satisfaction of the higher-order needs of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory. Consequently, a human relations approach organization is like a family and the family thrives when the needs are satisfied and the opportunities for self-actualization are provided through “interaction with others in the workplace and the choices managers make about motivating and rewarding employees” (Miller 2009, 41).

**Human Resources Approaches**

However, in practice, managers’ implementation of human relations principles was
often superficial. They claimed that the organization valued its employees and increased the involvement of employees in the organization but actually the claim was just a guise. Because of this, human relations principles had a bad reputation as a manipulative management strategy that provided false hope and empty platitudes for employees (Kreps 1990, 85). In the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, there was an increasing feeling that the model of satisfying human needs was not sufficient to handle the complexities of organizational life (Miller 2009, 43). Moreover, in empirical tests, the human relations approaches lacked supportive evidence. To be clearer, the evidence of some human relations theorists’ theoretical propositions, such as Maslow’s Needs Hierarchy Theory and McGregor’s Theory X and Theory Y, was insufficient.

The human resources perspective developed in response to this predicament of the human relations perspective and represents the managers’ personal authentic desire for satisfying organizational members’ needs and increasing participation among the members in the organizational activities (Kreps 1990, 85). It emphasizes the match between action and word. Specifically, the human resources approach requires fundamental changes in the assumptions about organizational functioning and fundamental changes in the organizational structure and interaction, rather than merely surface changes in the communication (Miller 2009, 46). Furthermore, while the classical approach theorists pay attention to workers’ work and the human relations approach theorists pay attention to workers’ feelings, the human resources approach theorists emphasize workers’ thinking and participating in the various aspects of organizational functioning to meet the organizational goals (Miller 2009, 42).

Generally speaking, the human resources and human relations approaches suggest the same kind of managerial behavior in the organization, but they see different purposes in its implementation. Like the human relations approach, the human resources approach also advocates the participation of all the employees, but human relations managers aim to satisfy the employees’ needs for affiliation and esteem, and then hope they are happier so they become more productive; whereas the human resources
managers aim to use the intelligent ideas and thinking of employees. That is to say, human resources managers consider employees as resources that can be used in organizational functioning to meet the organizational goals, by which the individuals’ needs are satisfied. The human relations managers may regard a form of participation, such as a suggestion box and weekly meetings, as sufficient for satisfying employees’ needs, but the human resources managers would truly consider the ideas from employees’ participation rather than just construct a form of participation (Miller 2009, 45).

To some extent, the human resources approach is like an ingenious mix of the classical approach and the human relations approach. On the one hand, the organizational effectiveness and productivity, which the classical theory emphasizes, can not be neglected; on the other hand, the human resources approach agrees with the value of satisfaction of human higher-order needs for self-actualization. Blake and Mouton’s Managerial Grid seeks the most optimized combination of the classical approaches and human relations approaches into a management style that can maximize the satisfaction and potential of employees as resources in the organization, as well as organizational effectiveness and productivity (Blake and Mouton, 1964). In the grid, they marked five typical types of leadership style: impoverished management, country club management, authority-compliance, team management, and middle-of-the-road management. Blake and Mouton (1964) proposed using team management that maximizes the concern for both productivity goals and people’s needs.

**Communication in Classical, Human Relations and Human Resources Approaches**

Not surprisingly, by following the different management styles, the types of communication associated with the three approaches appear as distinct patterns to meet communication goals and practices. Table 2.2 displays a summary of communication in the classical, human relations, and human resources organization.
Table 2.2 Communication in Classical, Human Relations, and Human Resources Organization (Miller 2009, 49)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication content</th>
<th>Classical Approach</th>
<th>Human Relations Approach</th>
<th>Human Resources Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication direction</td>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Task and social</td>
<td>Task, social, and innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication direction</td>
<td>Vertical (downward)</td>
<td>Vertical and horizontal</td>
<td>All directions, team-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication channel</td>
<td>Usually written</td>
<td>Often face-to-face</td>
<td>All channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication style</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Both, but especially informal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Content of Communication**

Generally speaking, the three main kinds of communication at a workplace are task-related communication, innovation-related communication (new ideas), and maintenance-related communication (social topics that maintains human relationships) (Farace, Monge, and Russell 1977). Communication in the classical approach narrowly focuses on task-related issues. It discourages innovation-related communication since employees’ capabilities are not believed to be good enough to improve the current ideas in the organization, while maintenance-related communication is also discouraged since it is considered to be counterproductive to achieve the organizational goals (Miller 2009, 29).

In the human relations organization, besides task-related communication, maintenance-related communication is widely used to maintain relationships among the organizational members (Miller 2009, 50) and satisfy employees’ social needs. This reflects the assumption regarding the effect of social-emotional-oriented communication in the current study – satisfying the employees’ social needs leads to a higher level of commitment to the organization.
For human resources organizations, innovation-related communication is also valued. The organization encourages employees to deliver new ideas and suggestions about how to do different tasks, develop new products, and so on (Miller 2009, 50), since it regards employees as sources that can contribute to the organization. This together with the use of task-related communication reflects the assumption regarding the effect of work-oriented communication in the current study.

**Direction of Communication Flow**

As expected, the classical organization applies vertically downward communication concerning orders, rules, and directives, from the managers to their subordinates. However, there is also a little upward feedback from the lower-level employees to higher-level employees. Moreover, at the higher level of the organization, horizontal communication exists to serve for coordination and planning among different parts of the organization (Miller 2009, 29-30).

In the human relations organization, while the downward communication remains, the horizontal communication is more emphasized. The horizontal interaction among employees is considered to be as important as the downward communication since human relations theory emphasizes the importance of satisfying employees’ needs, and communication satisfaction is an important aspect of the needs satisfaction (Miller 2009, 50).

A human resources organization encourages communication flow in all the directions throughout the whole organization. Specifically, it includes the downward, upward, horizontal, and diagonal communication. Furthermore, this multidirectional communication flow often takes place in team-based settings. That is to say, in a human resources organization, the communication flow often breaks down the hierarchical organizational chart; it reconfigures the structure to optimize the flow of new ideas (Miller 2009, 50). The measure of the current research contains communication flows in all the directions.

**Channel of Communication**
As mentioned earlier, the communication in an organization may take place through different channels, including face-to-face, written, or various mediated channels including telephone, computer and so on. In the classical organization, written communication dominates. The classical theory insists on permanent rules and procedures to improve the organizational effectiveness and efficiency. This kind of organization prefers to apply the instructions, handbooks, guidelines, mission statements, regulations, and performance evaluations in the written form of communication (Miller 2009, 30).

In contrast, the human relations organization prefers face-to-face communication which is considered to be a richer channel. When people interact face-to-face, the immediate feedback and nonverbal cues are more important. Therefore, this kind of communication is more suitable according to the needs satisfaction model of the human relations approach (Miller 2009, 51).

In a human resources organization, there is no single communication channel that is considered to be more important than others. The main principle of the human resources approach is to use intelligent human resources so that organizational effectiveness and productivity can be maximized. In this kind of organization, communication which is relatively lean, like written communication, is used to deliver tasks with a low level of uncertainty; while the communication which is relatively rich, like face-to-face interaction, is applied to deliver tasks with a high level of uncertainty (Miller 2009, 51). Therefore, one of the important tasks of managers is to match the communication channel to the task (Trevino, Lengel, and Daft).

**Style of Communication**

In the classical organization, the bureaucratic and professionalized climate is emphasized. Therefore, the tone and style of communication is highly formal. Specifically, in this kind of organization, when people communicate with each other, the form of address is usually distant instead of familiar. For example, they say Mr. or
Ms. rather than use given names. Besides, titles, such as supervisor, secretary, or administrative assistant, are also used to distinguish the managers from ordinary employees. Moreover, in the communication, the vocabulary selection is usually discreet to be highly standard language. The use of colloquial terms and slang is discouraged. Furthermore, the formal style is also reflected in the nonverbal communication. For example, the dress style is dominated by suits and ties or uniforms rather than the casual or personal style of attire (Miller 2009, 30).

In the human relations organization, in order to satisfy the employees’ social needs, the informal style is more favored. Specifically, the status differential between superiors and subordinates is usually broken down; and titles, business dress and bureaucratized language are less emphasized (Miller 2009, 51).

In the human resources organization, both the formal style and informal style of communication are applied for different reasons. While the managers use formal communication when it is appropriate, informal communication is also used to satisfy the employees’ need for affiliation. Moreover, in respect of enhancing productivity and effectiveness, an informal manner still seems to be better since human beings tend to feel more comfortable contributing in a relatively informal manner (Miller 2009, 51). This study contains both the two styles, although they were not measured specifically based on the form. It is possible that in an informal communication style organization, people talk about social and emotional topics after or before they talk about the work.

2.3 Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is a work-related attitude of employees towards the employing organization as a whole (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 206; George and Jones 2002, 97). It is generally used to measure organizational effectiveness (Steers 1975). Much previous research has proposed that there is a relationship between organizational commitment and organizational outcomes including performance, absenteeism, turnover, and organizational goals (Meyer and Allen 1997, 12).
Employees with a higher degree of commitment to their organization are less likely to resign, be absent, or act counterproductively such as steal or sabotage, but more likely to be willing to share and make sacrifices that are required for the organization to thrive (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 237; Levy 2003).

2.3.1 Definition and Three Types of Organizational Commitment

Scholars of different fields, in the past, have defined the concept of organizational commitment in various ways. The behavioral approach to organizational commitment focuses on the obvious manifestations of commitment (Mowday et al. 1979). That is to say, when an employee chooses to link him/herself to the organization, the researchers’ focus is on this commitment-related behavior. Attitudinal commitment defines commitment in term of employees’ attitudes (Mowday et al. 1979). Generally, it is considered to be related to identification. Lee (1971) defines organizational commitment as “the identification with the organization”, while Steers (1977) and Levy (2003) define it as “identification with and involvement in an organization”. The most used definition is that “organizational commitment is a strong belief in and acceptance of the organizational goals and values, a willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization and a desire to remain with the organization” (Porter et al. 1974). However, all of them lack, to a greater or lesser extent, certain factors of organizational commitment. Moreover, none of the measurements for them has been proven to have a significantly high reliability (Mowday et al. 1979).

Based on the definition of organizational commitment as “the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization” (Porter and Smith 1970), Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979) proposed three factors of organizational commitment, which include some aspects of commitment-related behaviors. They are: 1. “a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization’s goals and values”; 2. “a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization”; and 3. “a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization”. Additionally, Becker (1960) regarded commitment as “consistent lines of activity” in his “side-bets” theory. It expounds that when someone cannot continue his/her action
he/she has a sense of loss. However, each of the two conceptualizations cannot fully conceptualize organizational commitment.

In 1984 Allen and Meyer (1984) proposed two components of organizational commitment, which are affective commitment and continuance commitment. Affective commitment can be considered equal to Mowday, Steers and Porter’s (1979) definition of organizational commitment. This component has been the most commonly considered in related research. Continuance commitment is based on Becker’s (1960) “side-bets” theory. In 1990, Meyer and Allen suggested a third component of organizational commitment, which is normative. Thus, the three components model of organizational commitment was built. Although there are plenty of researches in different study fields that have examined organizational commitment, only a few have paid attention to all the components of organizational commitment in the same research (Meyer et al. 1993; Randall et al. 1990). Moreover, the instrument that was developed by Meyer et al. (1993) that measures the three components is suggested by a large number of researches as one that has high reliability and validity (this will be discussed more in Chapter 3). Therefore the current research operationalizes organizational commitment as affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment.

The affective component of organizational commitment refers to “employees' emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in, the organization” (Allen and Meyer 1990, 1). In other words, employees who have affective commitment work for the employing organization because they emotionally attach to the organization and agree with the organizational goals and values. When they highly endorse what the organization does and stands for, they will be willing to help it in its mission (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 236).

The continuance component refers to the “commitment based on the costs that employees associate with leaving the organization” (Allen and Meyer 1990, 1). Specifically, it is “the perceived economic value of remaining with an organization compared with leaving it” (Robbins et al. 2010, 63). The employees may want to stay
in the organization just because they do not want to bother finding a new job that is better than the current one (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 235). It may be because of the good salary and welfare in the organization, or because losing the job will hurt their family (Robbins et al. 2010, 63). However, today’s employees are not like the older generations who tend to work in the same organization for their entire working lives and work from the bottom and way up to the top; rather, today it is not rare that employees change workplace for one with higher salary. Thus, in contemporary society, the continuance commitment tends to be lower than it used to be (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 235).

The normative component refers to “employees' feelings of obligation to remain with the organization” for moral and ethical reasons (Allen and Meyer 1990, 1). It is usually a result of pressure from others. People who have a high degree of normative commitment remain with the organization because they do not want to leave their employer in the lurch and disappoint them, and they worry that their colleagues would think poorly of them for resigning (Robbins et al. 2010, 63; Greenberg and Baron 2008, 236).

To summarize, as Meyer and Allen (1991) argued, the employees with a high degree of affective commitment remain with the employing organization because they want to do so; the employees with a high degree of continuance commitment remain with the employing organization because they need to do so; and, the employees with a high degree of normative commitment remain with the employing organization because they ought to do so (p. 67).

Additionally, Meyer & Allen (1997) argued that employees who have strong affective commitment to the organization would be motivated to higher levels of job performance than employees who convey continuance or normative commitment; while those employees with strong affective commitment also make more meaningful contributions to the organization. Moreover, Cohen (1996) in his study of 238 nurses found that the employees who stayed working with the organization because they wanted to – which is affective commitment – were more committed to their work, job,
and career. Furthermore, Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch and Topolnytsky's meta-analysis of the antecedents, correlates and consequences of the three types of organizational commitment (2002) suggested that, compared with the other two types of organizational commitment, affective commitment is stronger correlated to organizational-relevant outcomes, such as attendance, performance, and organizational citizenship behavior, and employee-relevant outcomes, such as stress and work-family conflict. Similarly, Dunham, Grube and Castaneda (1994) found that affective commitment significantly predicted various outcomes, such as career satisfaction, perception of task characteristics, and intention to leave, in 72 per cent of the cases in the study, compared to 36 per cent for normative commitment, and only 7 per cent for continuance commitment. Additionally, research by Cohen and Kirchmeyer (1995) revealed that affective commitment and normative commitment indicated higher level of involvement and enjoyment with work activities than continuance commitment did.

2.3.2 The Ways to Develop Organizational Commitment

Managers in the organization are not able to deal with all the factors that may influence employees’ commitment to the organization. There are some unchangeable reasons that managers cannot control. For instance, when the broad environment is prosperous and provides plenty of employment opportunities for people to choose from, the cost to change a job will be lower, and then it is very likely that people’s continuance commitment will decrease. Although there is not so much that the organizations can do about such an unchangeable situation, they can endeavor to make people want to stay with the organization – that is to say, to enhance their affective commitment (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 238).

The empirical study suggested that employees’ affective commitment will be higher if they have a higher level of autonomy to decide how to accomplish their tasks, and if they feel that their contribution to the organization is considered to be important (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 238). This is consistent with the human resources approach of human relations theory which considers the employees as intelligent
resources. These talented employees can contribute to the organization with their creative and ingenious thinking and ideas. Employee involvement may enhance employees’ affective commitment to their organization (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 238).

In addition, there are other ways to enhance employees’ organizational commitment. Bonuses are used to align the organization’s profits with the employees’ profits so that the employees consider organizational benefits as their own. Thus their organizational commitment is increased.

Moreover, recruitment is also important as a means for organizations to get high commitment from employees. On the one hand, since employees’ organizational commitment is their acceptance of the organizational values and goals (Porter et al. 1974), the organization should, at the very beginning of employment, recruit the people whose values are consistent with that of the organization. On the other hand, an organization that shows the people that they value their employees and pay effort to attract them are likely to get the employees with strong organizational commitment to this organization (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 239).

Additionally, Mathieu and Zajac (1990) identified some antecedents to the organizational commitment in their large meta-analysis of the commitment literature. It includes the personal characteristics of employees such as the attitudes, beliefs and skills of individuals in the organization, job characteristics, group-leader relations, co-worker relations and organizational characteristics. Furthermore, other research found other antecedents of organizational commitment in organizational mechanisms including reward systems, socialization and newsletters. Additionally, affective commitment was enhanced by supportive communication and the communication told employees that there was fairness in the organization (Levy 2003; Meyer and Allen 1997).

2.4 Communication and Commitment in the Organization

There are many previous studies which have paid attention to the relationship between
communication and organizational commitment. It is widely supported by research that communication plays an important role in enhancing organizational commitment (for instance, Eblen, 1987; Gorden & Infante, 1991; Eisenberg, Monge, & Miller, 1983).

One such study which investigated the relationship between communication and commitment include Postmes, Tanis and Wit’s research (2001) based on a sample of 105 office employees working in a large education institute in The Netherlands. It applied the statistical method and collected data from questionnaires. As mentioned in the earlier chapter, Postmes et al. were interested in the effects of different types of communication in term of the senders, content, and the communication context. The study defined vertical communication as formal communication with managers, on work-related topics; and horizontal communication as informal communication with proximate colleagues, related to social and emotional topics. Vertical communication in this research was examined by three indicators: the quantity of strategic communication and vertical interaction, and the degree of satisfaction with management’s responses to the upward feedback; while horizontal communication was measured by the perceived quantity of social interaction with colleagues within the unit, the quality of these interactions, and the perceived quantity of social interaction with colleagues outside the unit. In statistical analyses, the researchers found that vertical communication was more strongly related to the levels of affective commitment than horizontal communication. Additionally, horizontal communication emerged to be a potential predictor of vertical communication in the organization. The current study is to some extent similar to their study, and some of the questionnaires used in the current study were adapted from the ones used in their study.

A previous statistical research (Allen 1992) with a sample of 244 university employees examined the relationship between communication, organizational commitment, and employees’ perceived organizational support. It measured six variables in communication: employees’ perceived quality of information received from three communication sources (top management, co-workers, and immediate
superior) and the quality of their communication relationship with each source. The results revealed that employees’ perceived top management-employee communication relationship, the perceived quality of top management’s communication and the superior-subordinate communication were strongly related to organizational commitment. Besides, perceived support was a mediator of the relationship between co-worker communication and organizational commitment.

Furthermore, the literature (DeCotiis & Summers, 1987; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990) suggested that variables related to communication such as leadership communication and input into decision-making are more strongly related to organizational commitment (affective communication) than are personal and organizational characteristics and individual roles. Moreover, other variables in communication were also proved to be important for enhancing organizational commitment. These variables include clear communication about organizational activities, intentions and performances, and a sense of cohesiveness among the members in the organization (DeCotiis & Summers, 1987), abundant work-related information, and positive information about an organization’s ability to provide meaningful tasks and challenges for employees (Steers, 1977).

A study (Trombetta and Rogers 1988) with a sample of 521 nurses in New York also proved the role of communication in enhancing organizational commitment. It measured communication by the participation in decision making, communication openness, and information adequacy. The results regarding the communication-commitment relationship suggested that information adequacy was directly related to organizational commitment, and communication openness is indirectly related to organizational commitment, while participation in decision making is weakly related to organizational commitment. Additionally, organizational commitment affected job satisfaction but job satisfaction did not affect organizational commitment. However, in the current study, all these three indicators were embodied.

Based on the previous studies that suggested the effects of communication on commitment, the current study assumes that work-oriented communication is
predictive of organizational commitment.

### 2.5 Hypotheses

The hypotheses of the current study were generated based on the literature review. This is illustrated in Figure 2.1.

**Figure 2.1 Hypotheses of the relationship between social-emotional-oriented communication, work-oriented communication, and organizational commitment**

First, communication regarding social and emotional topics helps in enhancing organizational commitment. Employees have the human needs for social support and social interaction. When the organization management meets the human needs of employees, the employees tend to convey higher levels of commitment; thereby they contribute better to the organization. Communication in the organization serves as a way for them to express their emotions. Vertical social-emotional-oriented communication makes superiors know more about employees’ personal lives so that they can adjust work arrangements for them to meet the organizational goal better;
horizontal social-emotional-oriented communication reduces the communication barriers between members and departments so that they can coordinate and cooperate better. When the organizational goals are achieved, the employees’ needs for self-actualization are also met (Miller 2009, 45).

Second, work-oriented communication plays an important role in organizational functioning. Sufficient and good work-oriented communication, in respect of clear and sufficient transmission of command and relevant information, feedback of employees’ performance, participation in decision making, encouragement of upward suggestion and advice, and communication for coordinating and cooperating to meet the overall goals, is essential for organizational and individual success. An organization that provides a good opportunity for employees to achieve self-actualization tends to receive higher levels of commitment from employees.

Third, based on social networks that are built through social interaction, social support provides information including knowledge and advice (see, for instance, Beehr et al. 1990; Greenglass 1993). Beside, social interaction is considered to be able to reduce the communication barriers to effective communication (Mowle 2004, 1; Tubbs and Moss 2008, 489). Additionally, Postmes et al. (2001) suggested in their study that horizontal informal social-emotional communication is likely to be a predictor of vertical formal work-related communication.

However, the literature did not explain in detail how social-emotional-oriented communication affects organizational commitment and work-oriented communication in respect of communication flows. The literature also did not elaborate on how communication affects the three components of organizational commitment respectively. They examined either only the affective commitment or the general commitment that is not subdivided into different types. The influences of the three types of commitment to the organizational and individual outcomes are different. Therefore it is interesting to investigate the three types of commitment specifically.

Furthermore, as discussed in the earlier chapter, all the theories were formulated in
Western societies. There is a lack of research taking place in the context of China. The literature suggests that there may be differences between different contexts (see, for instance, Randall 1993; Cheng and Stockdale 2003; Chen and Francesco, 2000). The applicability of the assumptions of human relations theory in the context of a Chinese governmental organization can be tested in the current study. The literature regarding organizational functions can also be examined.

Therefore, in light of the research questions, the hypotheses of the current study are:

H1. Social-emotional-oriented communication is a positive predictor of organizational commitment.

H2. Work-oriented communication is positively predictive of organizational commitment.

H3. Social-emotional-oriented communication positively affects work-related organizational communication.

**Summary**

Communication plays an important role in organizational functioning. Communications that flow in different directions appear as distinct patterns and serve for different functions. Not only formal communication but also informal communication performs various functions to meet both organizational and individual needs. The mechanistic view of organizations – the classical theory – insists on an increase of organizational efficiency and productivity through the system of organizational structure, power, and compensation (Miller2009, 35). In contrast, the human relations theory, including human relations approaches and human resources approaches, emphasizes the importance of human needs to maximize the individual satisfaction and organizational productivity (Miller2009, 54-55). Social needs and communication needs are one of the important aspects of human needs.

Organizational commitment is generally employed to measure organizational effectiveness. Among the three types of organizational commitment, affective
commitment is more related to job performance and makes more meaningful contributions to the organization than continuance and normative commitment.

Many previous studies attested that communication affects organizational commitment. Therefore, the current study examines the relationship between social-emotional-oriented communication and work-related communication among organizational members, and how the different types of communication predict organizational commitment.
Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter, the approach to the current study is presented. It includes detailed information on the samples, an explanation of the variables to be examined, an introduction of the measurement instruments, and the means of data collection and data analysis. A summary is provided at the end of the chapter.

In order to answer the research question of the current study, communication among members in Chinese organizations regarding social and emotional topics, and communication about work and organization, was investigated based on the perceptions of employees in a Chinese governmental organization. The types of commitment of these employees’ to the organization they work with were examined.

Since the aim of the current study is to test the predictive relationship between employees’ social-emotional-oriented communication, work-oriented communication, and three types of organizational commitment in Chinese organizations, the quantitative method was chosen. Data was statistically analyzed based on questionnaires. First, the relationship between employees’ social-emotional-oriented communication in the horizontal and vertical direction, and three types of organizational commitment was examined respectively. Second, the relationship between work-oriented communication and three types of organizational commitment was examined respectively. Third, the relationship between employees’ social-emotional-oriented communication in the horizontal and vertical direction, and work-oriented communication was examined respectively.

Additionally, the demographic data of the respondents was also collected. These data included gender, age, total number of years worked in their lifetime, education, job title and position, ethnicity, hometown, and cultural background. Moreover, data was also collected regarding whether the respondent’s work needed cooperation with other peers, whether the respondent supervised other employees, the length of time working in the organization and the length of time working for the current immediate superior.

The original concepts that the current research is based on are in English. Since all the
respondents are from China, all of the questionnaires used were in Chinese. In order to assure the equivalence of the measurements in the Chinese and English versions, the researcher of the current study and two other Chinese translated it separately and then they revised together. One of the other two Chinese is a translator in China, and the other one is a scholar who has been abroad and spoken English for 8 years. Moreover, a back-translation was performed by another Chinese translator. In addition, the questionnaire was tested by some Chinese employees who do not know English, are of different ages and with different levels of education. They were separately asked about how they understood each item in the Chinese version of the questionnaire. The specific procedure was that the researcher asked the first employee and then revised, and then asked another one and then revised again, and so on, until two of them at the end understood all the questions accurately. Eventually, it ended with the fifth person until the final version was produced.

3.1 Sample

The sample for the current study was drawn from a governmental organization in Beijing, China. It is an organization that services the bureau of human resources and social security of Beijing. Their functions are to: make the development strategies of the social security management and employment service, and implement them; make the operational policies of the social security management and employment service; operate and manage the socialization of social security; identify and manage the labor employment service enterprises and the employment type enterprises; operate and manage the unemployment insurance fund that is used to improve employment promotion; make the service specifications and standard of all the local social security organization; accomplish the statistics work of the social insurance socialization management and employment service management.

There are 76 employees who work in the organization across 5 departments. Departments vary in terms of specific functioning and size. A total of 69 employees from the 5 departments participated in the current study. Study participants included employees that are at different levels of management. The departments and the
respective number of participants are as follows:

1. Unemployment Insurance: 26
2. Socialization Management: 21
3. Small Businesses Employment Management: 13
4. Authority Affairs Service: 3
5. Administrative Affairs: 6

The questionnaire was sent to all the 76 employees. Of the 76, 69 usable responses were returned back (a 91% response rate). The demographic statistics data of these participants was collected from the questionnaire as well. The summary of the general demographics is shown in Table 3.1.

The gender balance in this governmental organization is almost even. Therefore, the current study got nearly equal numbers of male (46.38%) and female (53.62%) respondents. Moreover, most of them are between 26 and 35 years old (52.17%). The person that had been working in the organization the longest has worked there 25 years and the newest employee has worked 4 months. However, most of them worked there less than 10 years and on average those 69 employees worked 6.76 years in the organization. Furthermore, the lowest academic level of the respondents is high school degree (17.39%) and the highest is master degree (14.49%). Most of them had received undergraduate education (68.12%) although they studied in different kinds of schools. Besides, since the organization is a Beijing local governmental organization, most of the respondents are from Beijing (68.1%). Consistent with the China’s population, Han (91.3%) is the most common ethnic group in the organization and there are three other groups (Man: 4.3%, Hui: 2.9%, Chao Xian: 1.4%). Additionally, there are five levels of management in the organization, but none of the top managers returned the questionnaire. Of the 69 participants, 55.1% are ordinary staff.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency (n)</th>
<th>Valid percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>46.38 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>53.62 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 26 years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.14 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>26-35 years</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>52.17 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>36-45 years</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>46-55 years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13.04 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tenure</strong></td>
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<td>&lt; 1 years</td>
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<td>1-5 years</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20+ years</td>
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<td>2.9 %</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school or equivalent</td>
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<td>17.39 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years college or equivalent</td>
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<td>21.74 %</td>
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<td><strong>Hometown</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Shan Dong Province</td>
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<td>5.8 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>He Bei Province</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ji Lin Province</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He Nan Province</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hu Bei Province</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Hui Province</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hei Longjiang Province</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shan Xi Province</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jiang Su Province</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hu Nan Province</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Si Chuan Province</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xin Jiang Province</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>91.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hui</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chao Xian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Management Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 (Lowest)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>55.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>6.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>34.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4(Highest)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, since there are small teams in departments, the ones at the lowest management level might also supervise other employees. Complementally, most of
them (78.26%) need to cooperate with others in a team and the size of the team mostly is less than 5 people (75.4%).

3.2 Instrumentation

The current study applied three separate instruments. The instruments were completed using a self-report approach and paper-and-pencil administration. Following is the description of the instruments that were used in this research.

3.2.1 Social-emotional-oriented Communication Questionnaire

The social-emotional-oriented communication questionnaire measured the employees’ perceptions of their non-work related communication with peers and superiors in the organization. It was based on a questionnaire which was used in a previous research that examined the effects of social-emotional communication and management communication on organizational commitment (Postmes et al. 2001). There were three subscales in the prior questionnaire and they measured the employees’ perceptions of the quantity and quality of the social interaction with their colleagues who were at the same level with them. Specifically, in the previous research, social-emotional horizontal communication was stated to be predicted by three indicators: the perceptions of (1) the quantity of social interaction with colleagues within the unit, (2) the quantity of social interaction with colleagues outside the unit, and (3) the quality of these interactions. The reliability was satisfied in the previous research. In the current study, the responses were rated using a 7-point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1-point) to strongly agree (7-point).

As discussed in the earlier chapters, among the previous studies regarding the relationship between communication and commitment in the organization, vertical work-related communication and horizontal social-emotional communication were examined, but none of them tested vertical social-emotional communication. However, previous studies suggested that the communication of leaders affect organizational outcomes. In order to address the research questions of the current study, besides social-emotional-oriented communication with peers, social-emotional-oriented
communication with the superiors was tested as well. This scale was produced by using “superior(s)” to replace “colleagues” in the prior questionnaire.

However, regarding vertical social-emotional communication, one thing that should be clarified is that the current study was merely interested in the nature of the communication about non-work related topics among employees at different management levels. It was not the focus to analyze whether it is upward or downward communication. The current study assumed that the emotional-social-oriented communication between superiors and subordinates can be examined as a mutual activity. Therefore the current study merely examined the communication between the respondent and his/her superior(s). In other words, it did not ask every respondent to answer about the communication with his/her superior and subordinate separately so that the study would not calculate a same thing twice. Moreover, the examination stood at the macro level which aimed to view the general situation in an organization instead of each particular individual’s situation. That is to say, it did not ask respondents to point out exactly with which fellow co-workers, superiors or subordinates they communicated. (It can be useful to examine the relationships between the variations of each individual to explore more profound causes and consequences. However, due to the time limitation it is not within the scope of the current study.)

Moreover, one item was added in the questionnaire to test that whether the content the employees usually talked about was positive or negative. Negative emotion in the social networks of organizations spreads fast (Miller 2009, 201-3). Rumors about individuals hurt people while rumors about other departments may help the productivity of the organization (Tubbs and Moss 2008, 488-9). So the current research considered the emotional coloring of communication as one of the indicators of social-emotional-oriented communication.

The current study focuses on the employees’ perceptions about their working environment and their levels of commitment to the organization. Previous research suggested that the communication satisfaction and communication climate to some
extent affect the general nature of communication in an organization. However, in some cases, it can happen that the organization claims one thing but in fact it is totally different. Therefore, the current study pays attention to the communication situation in the organization.

In addition, in order to avoid misunderstandings of respondents, the definitions of relevant terms that were used in the current research were explained at the beginning of the questions. The explanation was that the content of communication in this questionnaire includes all the topics that are not related to the work and organization, such as the ones about the personal life, interest, career planning and thoughts of you and others; the place includes both within and outside the workplace; the time includes working hours and personal time, such as lunch and outing activity; channel includes all kinds, such as oral communication, phone calls, SMS, e-mail and instant messaging.

3.2.2 Work-oriented Communication Questionnaire

The work-oriented communication questionnaire measured employees’ perception of the communication related to different tasks and to the organization. It was used in Postmes, Tanis and Wit’s research (2001), which was about the relationship between communication and commitment in organizations. It was adapted from standardized communication audits (Downs and Adrian 1997). The reliability was high in both the original and adapted research. The questionnaire that was used in the current study measured three aspects that are indicators of work-oriented communication. The three scales included (1) the employee’s perceived quantity of the organization’s strategic information regarding policies and development (including horizontal and vertical, 5 items, alpha = .90), (2) the perceived quantity of vertical interaction with management (downward and upward, 4 items, alpha= .90), and (3) the satisfaction with management’s responsiveness to the upward feedback (3 items, alpha= .78). Both formal and informal styles were included in the three scales.

In this questionnaire what was paid attention to was the perception of employees in
the organization. The quantity of the organization’s strategic information was measured using a 7-point self-report approach ranging from “nothing” (1-point), “a few” (2 point), “some” (3 point), “moderated” (4 point), “relatively enough” (5 point), “abundant” (6 point), to “everything” (7 point). The quantity of the vertical interaction was rated using a 7-point self-report approach from “never” (1-point), “a few” (2 point), “some times” (3 point), “moderated” (4 point), “relatively often” (5 point), “very often” (6 point), to “continually” (7 point). It is assumed that the need of information and vertical interaction varies from organization to organization, and from work to work. The current study focused more on whether or not the employees think the communication is enough and good.

Besides, the third aspect was the employees’ satisfaction with management’s responsiveness to the upward feedback. The responses were rated using a 7-point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1 point) to strongly agree (7 point).

The items contain issues about the information regarding changes, personnel management, organizational overall performance, organizational strategy and other departments’ functions, the upward communication, downward communication, participation in decision making, feedback regarding the performance, channels for suggestions, advices, and critical opinions. All the functions of these issues have been discussed in the chapter 2.

Additionally, it was explained before the questions in the questionnaire that the information the respondents were asked to evaluate included that coming from formal channels which were the official information, as well as that received through informal channels (the “grapevine”), but which must have already been proven to be true. Therefore, the information which they heard from friends and they do not know if it is true does not count.

3.2.3 Organizational Commitment Questionnaire

The organizational commitment questionnaire measured the three components of employees’ commitment to the employing organization. It was developed by Meyer et
al. (1993) and it is the most common measurement for studying organizational commitment. The three components the questionnaire measures are affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. The questionnaire is an 18-item scale and there are 6 items for each scale. The responses were rated using a 7-point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1 point) to strongly agree (7-point).

Meyer and Allen have produced several versions of this questionnaire. However, the reliability of the one that was used in the current study was examined to be high. Dunham et al. (1994) found that the Cronbach alpha ranges of .74 to .87 for affective commitment, .73 to .81 for continuance commitment, and .67 to .78 for normative commitment and Cohen (1996) discovered the Cronbach alphas of .79 for affective commitment, .69 for continuance commitment, and .65 for normative commitment. Furthermore, the reliability and validity were tested to be consistently high not only in the Western context but also in China (Barbara B. Brown, 2003; Chen and Francesco, 2003). The Cronbach alphas in Chen and Francesco’s research that measured organizational commitment in China for these scales were .91, .86, and .78, respectively.

The examples of items for each scale from this questionnaire are: (1) affective commitment - I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization; (2) continuance commitment - too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organization now; and (3) normative commitment - I do not feel any obligation to remain with my current employer.

3.3 Dependent and Independent Variables
Table 3.2 Dependent and Independent Variables Measuring the Relationship between Communication and Commitment in the Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Measures</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Scales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|                    | Organizational Commitment Questionnaire | Organizational Commitment | 1. Affective Commitment  
2. Continuance Commitment  
3. Normative Commitment |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Measures (Predictor)</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Scales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|                                 | Social-Emotional-Oriented Communication Questionnaire | Horizontal Social-emotional-oriented Communication | 1. the quantity of social interaction with peers within the department  
2. the quantity of social interaction with peers outside the department  
3. the quality of these interactions  
4. emotional coloring of these interactions |
|                                 | Vertical Social-emotional-oriented Communication | 1. the quantity of social interaction with superiors within the department  
2. the quantity of social interaction with superiors outside the department  
3. the quality of these interactions  
4. emotional coloring of these interactions |
|                                 | Work-oriented Communication Questionnaire | Work-oriented Communication | 1. quantity of strategic information  
2. quantity of vertical interaction  
3. satisfaction with management’s responses to the upward feedback |
To sum up, Table 3.2 and Table 3.3 elaborate the dependent and independent variables in the current study. Regarding the relationship between communication and commitment in organizations (refer Table 3.2), three scales of organizational
commitment were applied as dependent variables, while the independent variables measuring social-emotional-oriented communication and work-oriented communication were considered and measured separately. The measures of the three components of commitment are the affective commitment scale, continuance commitment scale, and normative commitment scale of the organizational commitment questionnaire. The measures of social-emotional-oriented communication are divided into two directions – horizontal and vertical – and these two directions of the social-emotional-oriented communication were considered and measured separately.

To address research question 3, the relationship between social-emotional-oriented communication and work-oriented communication was also tested (refer Table 3.3). In this model, work-related communication was set to be the dependent variable. The independent variables measuring horizontal social-emotional-oriented communication and vertical social-emotional-oriented communication were considered and measured separately. Additionally, the overall social-emotional-oriented communication was also measured.

### 3.4 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher of the current study firstly contacted the human resources department of several organizations in China but only one of them accepted to participate in this research. This organization ultimately was the sample of the current study.

The social-emotional-oriented communication questionnaire, work-oriented communication questionnaire and organizational commitment questionnaire, along with the demographic form, were stapled together and presented as one questionnaire. This questionnaire was printed out so it was completed by using the paper-and-pencil self-report administration. The questionnaires were handed out by the human resources staff and all the respondents were asked to answer the questionnaire anonymously. When they finished the questionnaire they were asked to put it in their own envelope and then return them back to the mail box of the human resources
office.

Furthermore, in order to obtain honest answer from the employees, a statement was presented at the top and bottom of the questionnaire. It stated that participation in the research was voluntary and that all the information would remain confidential.

In addition, at the end of the questionnaire’s introduction at the top of questionnaire, it stated that if there was any confusion or question the respondent could contact the researcher and the contact information of the researcher was shown.

3.5 Description of the Analyses

This sub-chapter describes the approach of analyses in the current study.

3.5.1 Preliminary Analyses

Since it is a statistics analysis, the statistical software program – SPSS® version 19.0 for Windows – was used to analyze all the data. Before the advanced statistical analyses of the data were performed to get the result of the study, the preliminary analyses were carried out first. In this step, the basic statistical indicators were measured as preparation for the data analyses.

Firstly, three of the statistical five-number of the quantitative variables in the demographic data were calculated. The three numbers are minimum, mean, and maximum. The standard deviation was also examined. Secondly, descriptive statistics were also used to analyze the mean and standard deviation of each scale of the three questionnaires. Thirdly, in term of demographics, the statistically significant differences in the mean for the three types of organizational commitment – affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment – were examined. In other words, it included the one-sample t-tests for gender, talking about social-emotional topics with immediate superiors the most among all the superiors, experience of living abroad and working with a foreign company, supervising others, departments, hometowns, and ethnicities; Pearson correlations for the time worked with the organization, the time worked with the current immediate superior, the
working year, the number of people with whom they cooperate for work, and the level of management position; Spearman correlations for age and education. Fourthly, in order to ensure the reliability of the current research, the Cronbach’s alphas of all the three questionnaires were examined.

The elaborations of the results of the preliminary analyses, along with diagrammatical illustrations, are presented in the next chapter – results.

### 3.5.2 Data Analyses

The research purpose of the current study is to examine the predictive relationship between social-emotional-oriented communication, work-oriented communication, and organizational commitment in the context of China. Therefore, in the data analyses, the regression calculation was performed as the means and the statistical software program SPSS® version 19.0 for Windows was applied as the tool.

According to the sub research questions, there were three main steps in the data analyses procedure.

**Step 1:** test the regression between social-emotional-oriented communication and the three types of organizational commitment; test the regressions between the two flows (horizontal and vertical) of social-emotional-oriented communication and the three types of commitment respectively.

**Step 2:** test the regression between work-oriented communication and the three types of organizational commitment; test the regressions among the scales of the two variables respectively.

**Step 3:** test the regression between social-emotional-oriented communication and work-related communication; test the regression between the two flows of social-emotional-oriented communication and work-oriented communication respectively; test the regression between the two flows of social-emotional-oriented communication and the three scales of work-oriented communication respectively.

Additionally, before the regressions were analyzed to gain the predictive relationship
between social-emotional-oriented communication, work-oriented communication and organizational communication, the correlations between each of the dependent and independent variables were examined firstly.

**Summary**

The method that was used in the current study to address the research question is presented in this chapter. The regression analyses based on the data from the questionnaire research were performed as the main means. The findings from these analyses provided a suggestion of how the communication among members in the Chinese local governmental organization affects the three types of organizational commitment, and how the non-work related communication in the different flows affect the work-related communication. Besides, the investigation of the demographics of the sample helped to know the background of the sample. Moreover, the other statistical analyses, such as the mean and standard deviations, provided information about the perceptions of the employees in the sample organization about the two types of communication, and the three types of the commitment these employees felt toward the organization.
Chapter 4: Results

The current chapter presents findings of the research from the questionnaire. It contains the demographics of the research participants, preliminary analyses of the data, and the correlation and regression analyses that were applied to answer the research question of the current study.

4.1 Sample

As has been introduced in the last chapter, the sample for the current study was drawn from a governmental organization that services the bureau of human resources and social security of Beijing. 69 employees returned usable responses to the questionnaire. 53.62% of these participants were females and 52.17% of these participants were between 26 and 35 years old. The mean time for working with this organization was a little over six and half years and working for their immediate supervisor was a little over two and half years. 68.12% of them had received undergraduate education. 68.1% were from Beijing and 91.3% were Han. 55.1% were at the bottom of the management level and 65.2% did not supervise anyone even in the work group. 76.8% worked in a group. In addition, almost all the participants were Chinese who were born and grown up in mainland China and did not directly have a strong foreign culture background. Only one of them lived in the United Kingdom for one year and then worked with a South Korean company for one year, and another employee worked at an American company before for two years.
## Table 4.1 Descriptive Statistics for Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency (n)</th>
<th>Valid percent</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency (n)</th>
<th>Valid percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hometown</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>46.38 %</td>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>68.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>53.62 %</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>31.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>91.3 %</td>
<td>&lt; 26 years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.14 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.3 %</td>
<td>26-35 years</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>52.17 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hui</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9 %</td>
<td>36-45 years</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24.64 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chao Xian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4 %</td>
<td>46-55 years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13.04 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Level</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 (Lowest)</td>
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<td>17.39 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Undergraduate or equivalent</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>68.12 %</td>
</tr>
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<td>24</td>
<td>34.8 %</td>
<td>University Master</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 (Highest)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Variables</td>
<td>F (n)</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Min</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5-10 years</td>
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<td>36.3 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;10 years</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>0.33</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 2 years</td>
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<td>29.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2-3 years</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; 3 years</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>0.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total number of years worked</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&lt; 5 years</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
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<td>5-10 years</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
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<td>11-25 years</td>
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<td>30.4%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;25 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>10.49</td>
<td>2.809</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
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<td>Supervise</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 person</td>
<td>45</td>
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<td>&gt;0 person</td>
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<td>34.8%</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>2.834</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Cooperate with</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 person</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-5 persons</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>65.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;5 persons</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note: n = 69. F (n) = Frequency (n); P = Valid percent; M = Mean; S = Standard deviation; Min = Minimum; Max = Maximum.)
4.2 Descriptive Statistics for Communication and Commitment

In this sub chapter, descriptive statistics are used to examine the mean, standard deviation and other relevant information of the data. Table 4.2 illustrates the descriptive data for the four scales of the communication related to social and emotional topics and flows in the horizontal direction; four scales of the communication related to social and emotional topics and flows in the vertical direction. Table 4.3 shows the descriptive information for the three scales of the communication related to work. These three scales are (1) the employee’s perceived quantity of the organization’s strategic information regarding the policies and development, (2) the perceived quantity of vertical interaction with management, and (3) the satisfaction with management’s responsiveness to the upward feedback. Table 4.4 presents the descriptive statistics for the three types of organizational commitment scales: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment.

The scores for the horizontal social-emotional-oriented communication and the vertical social-emotional-oriented communication scales suggests the employees in the sample mildly applied communication that was solely related to social and emotional topics instead of work-related topics with both peers and superiors. However, the communication with peers and superiors within the same department received a slightly higher mean score than that with those outside the department, and the communication with peers both within and outside the department received a slightly higher mean score than that with superiors did. The employees’ perceived quality of the social-emotional-oriented communication was satisfactory with the mean scores 4.32 for that with peers and 4.16 for that with superiors. However, for both the communication with peers and superiors, they all communicated positively, while the score for superiors was slightly higher than for peers ($m = 4.67$, and $m = 4.68$).

In the work-oriented communication in the organization, the quantity of the information employees perceived seemed to be satisfactory. The mean score which was 4.06 suggests that employees on average perceived that they received moderate
amounts of strategic information regarding the politics and development of the organization. Specifically, this was about changes, personnel management, overall performance, the organization’s strategy, and functions of other departments within the organization. As stated earlier, in the current study, the channels through which they got the information include both formal and informal communication. Furthermore, the employees’ perceived quantity of vertical interaction with management including both the downward and upward communication between superiors and subordinates and the satisfaction with management’s responsiveness to the upward feedback \((m = 3.97, \text{ and } m = 3.59)\) did not receive as high mean scores as those relating to the organization’s strategic information regarding policies and development \((m = 4.06)\). That is to say, employees on average perceived that the vertical communication was marginally not frequent enough, they could not participate so much in the decision making process, and they were slightly dissatisfied with the quantity of feedback on their work performance. Moreover, employees were not satisfied with the responsiveness they received from higher level management towards the communication they had initiated with superiors regarding the feedback. In other words, they did not think they had a good way to provide advice or criticism, and they thought their opinions were not valued enough by the organization.

The mean scores for employees’ organizational commitment reflect that the employees moderately committed to the organization. The mean scores of all the three types of organizational commitment are around 4. However, continuance commitment received the highest mean score \((m = 4.09)\), and it is marginally higher than for affective commitment \((m = 3.95)\) and normative commitment \((m = 3.90)\).

Consequently, all the mean scores of the scales in the current research are closely around the moderate score – 4. The highest mean score is on the emotional coloring of the social-emotional interactions with superiors, and the lowest mean score is on the quantity of social interaction with superiors outside the department. However, the mean score for the overall social-emotional-oriented communication is slightly higher than that for the overall work-oriented communication in the organization.
Table 4.2 Descriptive Statistics for Social-emotional-oriented Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scales</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quantity of social interaction with peers within the department</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>1.262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantity of social interaction with peers outside the department</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>1.384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of these interactions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>1.194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional coloring of the interactions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>1.133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantity of social interaction with superiors within the department</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>1.203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantity of social interaction with superiors outside the department</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>1.298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of the interactions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>1.133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional coloring of the interactions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>1.219</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Four horizontal social-emotional-oriented communication subscales:** the employee’s perceived quantity of social interaction with peers within the department, quantity of social interaction with peers outside the department, quality of these interactions, and emotional coloring of the interactions.

**Four vertical social-emotional-oriented communication subscales:** the employee’s perceived quantity of social interaction with superiors within the department, quantity of social interaction with superiors outside the department, quality of the interactions, and emotional coloring of the interactions.

*(Note: Each scale has 1 item and n = 69.)*
Table 4.3 Descriptive Statistics for Work-related Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scales</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quantity of the organizational strategic information</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantity of vertical interaction with management</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with management’s responsiveness to the upward feedback</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Three work-related communication subscales:** the employee’s perceived quantity of the organization’s strategic information regarding the policies and development, the employee’s perceived quantity of vertical interaction with management (downward and upward), and the employee’s satisfaction with management’s responsiveness to the upward feedback.

*(Note: the first scale has 5 items, the second scale has 4 items, and the third scale has 3 items. n = 69.)*

Table 4.4 Descriptive Statistics for Organizational Commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Commitment</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affective commitment</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuance commitment</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative commitment</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>6.33</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(Note: Each scale has 6 items and n = 69)*
4.3 Demographics and Organizational Commitment

Although investigating the relationship between demographics and organizational commitment is not the purpose of the current study, an additional analysis of it can be helpful to understand the findings in the later analysis procedure. This preliminary analysis aims to find out if there are statistically significant differences in the mean scores of the three types of organizational commitment based on demographics.

Independent-samples t-tests were conducted to compare each of the three types of employees’ organizational commitment mean scores in each group of the demographical variable including gender (male and female), whether the immediate superior is the superior with whom social-emotional topics are discussed the most (yes and no), have experience of living abroad and working with a foreign company (yes and no), and supervise others (0 and >= 1). For instance, it compared the males’ mean score of affective commitment with the females’ mean score of affective commitment. The only statistically significant difference in mean scores occurred between supervisors and non-supervisors for both affective commitment (for supervisors: \( m = 4.34, SD = 0.97; \) for non-supervisors: \( m = 3.75, SD = 0.91, t (67) = 2.53, p = 0.01, \) two-tailed) and normative commitment (for supervisors: \( m =4.24, SD = 0.95, t (67) = 2.45, p = 0.02, \) two-tailed; for non-supervisors: \( m = 3.72, SD = 0.77).\)

The magnitude of the differences in the means (for affective commitment: mean difference = 0.59, 95% CI: 0.12 to 1.06; for normative commitment: mean difference = 0.51, 95% CI: 0.09 to 0.93) were moderate (eta squared = 0.09 for affective commitment, and 0.08 for normative commitment). That is to say, when the employees in the organization supervised others, they were likely to have a little higher level of commitment due to want to and ought to than those that did not supervise anyone else.

Moreover, for the five departments, hometowns, and ethnicities, independent-samples t-tests were conducted to compare the commitment mean scores for one group and “others” of these demographical variables. The results suggested that there was no statistically significant difference between people from the local city – Beijing - and
people from other places in the commitment mean scores. Han employees \( (m = 4.03, SD = 0.90) \) tended to have moderately higher level of affective commitment than other ethnic groups of employees \( (m = 3.06, SD = 1.22; t (67) = -2.48, p = 0.02, \text{two-tailed}; \text{mean difference} = -0.98, 95\% CI: -1.78 \text{ to } 0.19; \eta \text{ squared} = 0.08) \). Additionally, people that worked in the department of Small Businesses Employment Management \( (m = 4.51, SD = 0.53) \) seemed to have higher level of affective commitment than others \( (m = 3.82, SD = 1.00; t (67) = 2.40, p = 0.02, \text{two-tailed}; \text{mean difference} = 0.69, 95\% CI: 0.12 \text{ to } 1.27; \eta \text{ squared} = 0.08) \).

For the questions where participants rank the number of years and months they had worked for the organization, their immediate superiors and for their whole career life, the number of people they corporate for work, and the level of management position, Pearson correlations between the three types of employees’ organizational commitment and these numbers for the aforementioned variables were performed. The results are presented in Table 4.5. Although there were several variables significantly related to organizational commitment, the correlations were not really high.

For the six groups of age and five groups of highest education, Spearman correlations were conducted to examine the correlations between them and organizational commitment respectively. The results are presented in Table 4.6. According to the results, older people seemed to be more committed to the organization because they \textit{needed to}, and employees with lower level of education tended to be more committed to the organization because they \textit{needed to}. 
### Table 4.5 Correlations between Demographics and Organizational Commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Pearson Correlation</th>
<th>Continuance Commitment</th>
<th>Normative Commitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.377**</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>.080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporation</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.266*</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>.196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.180</td>
<td>.140</td>
<td>.341**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time worked for immediate superiors</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>Continuance Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.139</td>
<td>.256</td>
<td>.294*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of years worked</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>Continuance Commitment</td>
<td>Normative Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.239*</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>.296*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>.013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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

### Table 4.6 Correlations between Demographics and Organizational Commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spearman’s rho</th>
<th>Affective commitment</th>
<th>Continuance Commitment</th>
<th>Normative Commitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>.549</td>
<td>.353**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.957</td>
<td>-.319**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>.008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).
4.4 Reliability of the Questionnaires

In order to investigate whether the scales of questionnaires that were used in the current research were reliable or not, the reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) of all the three questionnaires – the social-emotional-oriented communication questionnaire, the work-oriented communication questionnaire, and the organizational commitment questionnaire – was calculated. The results are presented in Table 4.7.

For the social-emotional-oriented communication questionnaire, the reliability statistics of the horizontal social-emotional-oriented communication scale and the vertical social-emotional-oriented communication scale was conducted. As can be seen in Table 4.7, both of the scales have reasonably high internal consistency with the samples in the current study, with Cronbach alpha coefficients reported of .735 and .702 respectively.

Results of the work-oriented communication scales revealed very good internal consistency reliability for all the scales with the sample. The Cronbach alpha coefficient was .939 for the scale of the employee’s perceived quantity of the organization’s strategic information regarding the policies and development, .889 for the scale of the perceived quantity of vertical interaction with management (downward and upward), and .929 for the scale of the satisfaction with management’s responsiveness to the upward feedback.

Results for the organizational commitment scales revealed moderate to high internal consistency. The Cronbach alpha coefficients for affective commitment and normative commitment are relatively high with alpha = .849 and alpha = .833 respectively. However, the alpha for continuance commitment is only .646, which is not so high. Many previous researches also reported that the reliability of the continuance commitment scale is lower than that of the affective commitment scale and sometimes is also lower than that of normative commitment scale (Allen and Meyer 1990; Brown 2003). However, the producers of the scales argued that the full continuance commitment scale is acceptable and it is unnecessary to develop further (Allen and

---

1 The ideal Cronbach alpha coefficient of a scale should be above .7 (DeVellis 2003).
For a few scales of the three questionnaires, deletion of one item would slightly improve the reliability. These scales were item 2 for satisfaction with management’s responsiveness to the upward feedback, item 5 for continuance commitment, and item 2 for normative commitment. However, since the improvement of reliability from deleting these items would not be significant at all, they all were retained in the later analyses.

**Table 4.7 Reliability Analysis (Coronbach alpha)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social-Emotional-Oriented Communication Scales</th>
<th>Work-oriented Communication Scales and Items</th>
<th>Organizational Commitment Scales and Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horizontal Social-emotional-oriented Communication:</td>
<td>Quantity of the organizational strategic information:</td>
<td>Affective commitment:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alpha = .735</td>
<td>Alpha = .939</td>
<td>Alpha = .849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical Social-emotional-oriented Communication:</td>
<td>Quantity of vertical interaction with management:</td>
<td>Continuance commitment:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alpha = .702</td>
<td>Alpha = .889</td>
<td>Alpha = .646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If Item Deleted</td>
<td>If Item Deleted</td>
<td>If Item Deleted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QOSI1</td>
<td>.927</td>
<td>QVI1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QOSI2</td>
<td>.922</td>
<td>QVI2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QOSI3</td>
<td>.926</td>
<td>QVI3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QOSI4</td>
<td>.917</td>
<td>QVI4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QOSI5</td>
<td>.934</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Normative commitment:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alpha = .833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If Item Deleted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note: n = 69)
4.5 Correlations between Social-emotional-oriented Communication, Work-oriented Communication and Organizational Commitment

Correlation analysis provides the associated relationship between two variables. In the current study, Pearson correlation coefficient was applied to investigate the strength and direction of the associated relationships and the significance level in the results obtained.

**Correlations between Social-emotional-oriented Communication and Organizational Commitment**

In line with the procedure elaborated in Chapter 3, the first relationships examined are the correlation between social-emotional-oriented communication with peers and organizational commitment, and the correlation between social-emotional-oriented communication with superiors and organizational commitment. The results are shown in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8 Pearson Correlations among Social-emotional-oriented Communication and Organizational Commitment Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>1a</th>
<th>1b</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Social-emotional-oriented communication</strong></td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>.95**</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a. Horizontal social-emotional-oriented communication</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>.80**</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b. Vertical social-emotional-oriented communication</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Affective commitment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.79**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Continuance commitment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Normative commitment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

(Note: n = 69)
The results revealed low Pearson correlation coefficients between overall social-emotional-oriented communication and all the three types of organizational commitment. Furthermore, they also showed low Pearson correlation coefficients between both social-emotional-oriented communication with peers and all the three types of organizational commitment with \( r = 0.09, 0.08, \) and \(-0.06, \) and social-emotional-oriented communication with superiors and all the three types of organizational commitment with \( r = 0.23, -0.01, \) and \(0.08.\) However, compared to horizontal social-emotional-oriented communication, vertical social-emotional-oriented communication is more related to affective commitment. But the coefficient of determination indicated that the communication regarding social and emotional topics between subordinates and superiors helps to explain only about 5 per cent of the variance in respondents’ scores on the affective commitment.

**Correlations between Work-oriented Communication and Organizational Commitment**

Secondly, the correlation between work-oriented communication and the three types of organizational commitment scales was examined. Table 4.9 illustrates the results.

The Pearson correlation coefficients indicated a strong and positive relationship between overall work-oriented communication and two of the three types of organizational commitment – affective commitment and normative commitment. As elaborated in Chapter 3, work-oriented communication was measured from three aspects: (1) the employee’s perceived quantity of the organization’s strategic information regarding the policies and development, (2) the perceived quantity of vertical interaction with management (downward and upward), and (3) the satisfaction with management’s responsiveness to the upward feedback. The items included, for instance, quantity of organizational information, upward communication, downward communication, involvement in decision making, feedback on performance, channel for criticism and advice, and so on. According to the correlation results in the current research, all the three aspects of communication regarding the work and organization are strongly and positively related to both affective
commitment and normative commitment. Specifically, employees’ perceived quantity of the organization’s strategic information regarding the policies and development significantly ($p < 0.01$) helps to explain about 30 per cent and 28 per cent of the variance in respondents’ scores on affective commitment and normative commitment respectively; the employee’s perceived quantity of vertical interaction with management (downward and upward) significantly ($p < 0.01$) helps to explain nearly 44 per cent and 49 per cent of the variance in respondents’ scores on affective commitment and normative commitment respectively; the satisfaction with management’s responsiveness to the upward feedback significantly ($p < 0.01$) helps to explain about 37 per cent and 30 per cent of the variance in respondents’ scores on affective commitment and normative commitment respectively.

In contrast, the results revealed weak correlations between these three scales of work-oriented communication and continuance commitment. Moreover, the correlation between the employees’ perceived quantity of vertical interaction with management (downward and upward) and continuance commitment, and between the satisfaction with management’s responsiveness to the upward feedback and continuance commitment were negative. In other words, very few per cent of high scores on continuance commitment were associated with very few per cent of low scores on both the employees’ perceived quantity of vertical interaction with management and the satisfaction with management’s responsiveness to their upward feedback.
Table 4.9 Pearson Correlations among Work-oriented Communication and Organizational Commitment Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>1a</th>
<th>1b</th>
<th>1c</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Work-oriented communication</strong></td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>.91**</td>
<td>.93**</td>
<td>.89**</td>
<td>.67**</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.65**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a. Quantity of organizational strategic information</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>.74**</td>
<td>.67**</td>
<td>.55**</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.53**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b. Quantity of vertical interaction with management</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>.79**</td>
<td>.66**</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.70**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1c. Satisfaction with management’s responsiveness to the upward feedback</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
<td>.61**</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>.55**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Affective commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.79**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Continuance commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Normative commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

(Note: n = 69)

Correlations between Social-emotional-oriented Communication and Work-oriented Commitment

Lastly, correlation analyses were also processed to examine the relationship between social-emotional-oriented communication and work-related communication. The results are presented in Table 4.10.
Table 4.10 Pearson Correlations among Social-emotional-oriented Communication and Work-oriented Communication Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>1a</th>
<th>1b</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>2a</th>
<th>2b</th>
<th>2c</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Social-emotional-oriented communication</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>.95**</td>
<td>.95**</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a. Horizontal social-emotional-oriented communication</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>.80**</td>
<td></td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b. Vertical social-emotional-oriented communication with superiors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
<td>.25*</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Work-oriented Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>.91**</td>
<td>.93**</td>
<td>.89**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a. Quantity of organizational strategic information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>.74**</td>
<td>.67**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b. Quantity of vertical interaction with management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
<td>.79**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2c. Satisfaction with management’s responsiveness to the upward feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

(Note: n = 69)

The Pearson correlation coefficients were not high between social-emotional-oriented communication and work-oriented communication. Furthermore, the correlation coefficients were also not high either between horizontal social-emotional-oriented
communication and work-oriented communication, or between vertical social-emotional-oriented communication and work-oriented communication. However, the social-emotional-oriented communication that flows vertically seemed to be more related to work-oriented communication than that which flows horizontally. Moreover, social-emotional-oriented communication between subordinates and superiors, and employees’ satisfaction with superiors’ responsiveness to their upward feedback have a statistically significant mediocre positive correlation ($r = .26$, $n = 69$, $p = .032$).

Table 4.11 Significant Pearson Correlations among Social-emotional-oriented Communication, Work-oriented Communication and Organizational Commitment Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vertical social-emotional-oriented communication</th>
<th>AC</th>
<th>NC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quantity of organizational strategic information</td>
<td>.55**</td>
<td>.53**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantity of vertical interaction with management</td>
<td>.66**</td>
<td>.70**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with management’s responsiveness to the upward feedback</td>
<td>.26*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.61**</td>
<td>.55**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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

(Note: $n = 69$. AC = Affective commitment; NC = Normative commitment.)

Consequently, the correlation analyses between the horizontal and vertical social-emotional-oriented communication, work-oriented communication and organizational commitment scales revealed a statistically significant strong and
positive relationship between work-oriented communication and two types of organizational commitment – affective commitment and normative commitment. Moreover, social-emotional-oriented communication was statistically significantly \( (p < 0.01) \) related to employees’ satisfaction with management’s responsiveness to their upward feedback. The summary of significant correlations among all the scales of the three variables is illustrated in Table 4.11.

### 4.6 Regression between Social-emotional-oriented Communication, Work-oriented Communication and Organizational Commitment

In order to address the research question of the current study, standard multiple regression analyses were performed. According to the sub research questions, as explained in Chapter 3, the standard multiple regression analyses were conducted step by step.

#### Step 1. The Regression between Social-emotional-oriented Communication and Organizational Commitment

In order to derive more reliable findings from the analyses, potential issues regarding multicollinearity, singularity, and outliers were checked preliminarily in every regression analysis.

To investigate the effect of social-emotional-oriented communication on the three types of organizational commitment, affective commitment was first entered as the dependent variable, while horizontal social-emotional-oriented communication and vertical social-emotional-oriented communication were entered as two independent variables. Then continuance commitment and normative commitment were entered as dependent variable instead of affective commitment respectively. The results are presented in Table 4.12.

The results failed to provide evidence that social-emotional-oriented communication is a strong predictor of affective commitment. Their relationship did not reach statistical significance \( (\text{sig.} = .07, \text{ which is } p > .05) \) and only 8 per cent of the variance in affective commitment was explained by the overall social-emotional-oriented
communication.

Table 4.12 Standard Multiple Regression between Social-emotional-oriented Communication and Organizational Commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Affective commitment</th>
<th>Continuance commitment</th>
<th>Normative commitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social-emotional-oriented communication</td>
<td>R Square = .08</td>
<td>R Square = .02</td>
<td>R Square = .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. = .07</td>
<td>Sig. = .50</td>
<td>Sig. = .21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horizontal social-emotional-oriented communication</td>
<td>Standardized Coefficients: Beta = -.27</td>
<td>Standardized Coefficients: Beta = .24</td>
<td>Standardized Coefficients: Beta = -.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ANOVA: Sig. = .18</td>
<td>ANOVA: Sig. = .24</td>
<td>ANOVA: Sig. = .10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correlations: Part = -.16</td>
<td>Correlations: Part = .14</td>
<td>Correlations: Part = -.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical social-emotional-oriented communication</td>
<td>Standardized Coefficients: Beta = .46</td>
<td>Standardized Coefficients: Beta = -.20</td>
<td>Standardized Coefficients: Beta = .35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ANOVA: Sig. = .03</td>
<td>ANOVA: Sig. = .33</td>
<td>ANOVA: Sig. = .09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correlations: Part = .27</td>
<td>Correlations: Part = -.12</td>
<td>Correlations: Part = .21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note: n = 69)

However, of the social-emotional-oriented communication that flows in the two different directions, when the variance explained by the other variable is controlled for, vertical social-emotional-oriented communication (beta = .46) made a stronger unique contribution to explain affective commitment, and this unique contribution to the prediction of affective commitment was significant (sig. = .03). 27 per cent of affective commitment was uniquely and positively explained by vertical communication.

All the scales should be included to obtain the effect of the variable as a whole, since the overall result was computed with all the sub variables in the equation (Leech et al. 2008, 99).
social-emotional-oriented communication.

The relationship between social-emotional-oriented communication and continuance commitment was examined by the same means. The result suggested that social-emotional-oriented communication was not a statistically significant predictor of continuance commitment. Although horizontal social-emotional-oriented communication made a slightly greater unique contribution to the prediction of continuance commitment than vertical social-emotional-oriented communication did, none of them made a significant contribution.

The relationship between social-emotional-oriented communication and normative commitment was examined by the same means as well. The result revealed that social-emotional-oriented communication was not a statistically significant predictor of normative commitment. Although vertical social-emotional-oriented communication made a slightly greater unique contribution to the prediction of normative commitment than horizontal social-emotional-oriented communication did, none of them made a significant contribution.

In summary, the overall social-emotional communication as a whole was not a statistically significant predictor of any of the three types of organizational commitment. Among the scales of social-emotional-oriented communication and organizational commitment, when the variance of the dependent variables explained by the other variable of social-emotional-oriented communication was controlled for, only vertical social-emotional-oriented communication made a statistically significant unique contribution to the prediction of affective commitment.

**Step 2. The Regression between Work-oriented Communication and Organizational Commitment**

To investigate the effect of work-oriented communication on the three types of organizational commitment, affective commitment was first entered as the dependent variable, while the three scales of work-oriented communication – the employee’s perceived quantity of the organization’s strategic information regarding the policies
and development, the employee’s perceived quantity of vertical interaction with management (downward and upward), and the employee’s satisfaction with management’s responsiveness to the upward feedback – were entered as independent variables. Then, continuance commitment and normative commitment were entered as dependent variable instead of affective commitment respectively.

Like in the last regression analyses, issues regarding multicollinearity, singularity, and outliers were checked in every regression analysis. The results are presented in Table 4.13.

As can be seen in Table 4.13, the results provided fairly strong evidence that work-oriented communication as a whole is a statistically significant positive predictor of both affective commitment and normative commitment. 46 per cent of the variance in affective commitment was explained by work-oriented communication which was measured by the three indicators, while 49 per cent of the variance in normative commitment was explained by work-oriented communication. Both of them reached statistical significance (sig. = .00).

In the relationship between work-oriented communication and affective commitment, among the three indicators – (1) the employee’s perceived quantity of the organization’s strategic information regarding the policies and development, (2) the employee’s perceived quantity of vertical interaction with management (downward and upward), and (3) the employee’s satisfaction with management’s responsiveness to the upward feedback, the perceived quantity of vertical interaction made the strongest unique contribution to the prediction of affective commitment, when the variance explained by all other variables were controlled for. This scale explained 23 per cent of the variance in affective commitment and reached statistical significance (sig. = .02).
Table 4.13 Standard Multiple Regression between Work-oriented Communication and Organizational Commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work-oriented communication</th>
<th>Affective commitment</th>
<th>Continuance commitment</th>
<th>Normative commitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R Square = .46</td>
<td>R Square = .07</td>
<td>R Square = .49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. = .00</td>
<td>Sig. = .22</td>
<td>Sig. = .00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantity of organizational strategic information</td>
<td>Standardized Coefficients: Beta = .10</td>
<td>Standardized Coefficients: Beta = .14</td>
<td>Standardized Coefficients: Beta = .03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ANOVA: Sig. = .48</td>
<td>ANOVA: Sig. = .44</td>
<td>ANOVA: Sig. = .85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correlations: Part = .07</td>
<td>Correlations: Part = .09</td>
<td>Correlations: Part = .02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantity of vertical interaction with management</td>
<td>Standardized Coefficients: Beta = .42</td>
<td>Standardized Coefficients: Beta = .22</td>
<td>Standardized Coefficients: Beta = .70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ANOVA: Sig. = .02</td>
<td>ANOVA: Sig. = .32</td>
<td>ANOVA: Sig. = .00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correlations: Part = .23</td>
<td>Correlations: Part = .12</td>
<td>Correlations: Part = .38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with management’s responsiveness to the upward feedback</td>
<td>Standardized Coefficients: Beta = .21</td>
<td>Standardized Coefficients: Beta = -.42</td>
<td>Standardized Coefficients: Beta = -.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ANOVA: Sig. = .17</td>
<td>ANOVA: Sig. = .04</td>
<td>ANOVA: Sig. = .89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correlations: Part = .13</td>
<td>Correlations: Part = -.25</td>
<td>Correlations: Part = -.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note: n = 69)

In the relationship between work-oriented communication and normative commitment, among the three indicators, the perceived quantity of vertical interaction made the strongest unique contribution to the prediction of normative commitment, when the
variance explained by all other variables were controlled for. This scale explained 38 per cent of the variance in normative commitment and it reached statistical significance (sig. = .00).

In contrast, the result failed to provide evidence that work-oriented communication predicts continuance commitment. Surprisingly, among the three scales of work-oriented communication, satisfaction with management’s responsiveness to their upward feedback made the strongest unique contribution to the prediction of continuance commitment and this contribution is negative, when the variance explained by all other variables in work-oriented communication is controlled for. It negatively explained 25 per cent of the variance in continuance commitment and this relationship reached statistical significance (sig. = .04). That is to say, the more satisfied the employees are with their management’s responsiveness to their upward communication (regarding criticisms and suggestions), the less likely that they have a high level of continuance commitment which indicates the level of their feeling that they need to remain with the organization.

In summary, work-oriented communication was proved as a statistically significant positive predictor of affective commitment and normative commitment, while there was no evidence suggesting a predictive relationship between work-oriented communication and continuance commitment. Among the scales of work-oriented communication, the employee’s perceived quantity of vertical interaction was the strongest unique predictor of both the affective commitment and normative commitment, when the variance of the dependent variables explained by the other variable in the work-oriented communication was controlled for.

**Step 3. The Regression between Social-emotional-oriented Communication and Work-oriented Communication**

In accordance with the research question, the relationship between social-emotional-oriented communication and work-oriented communication was examined by means of standard multiple regression analyses.
**Table 4.14 Standard Multiple Regression between Social-emotional-oriented Communication and Work-oriented Communication**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social-emotional-oriented communication</th>
<th>Work-oriented communication</th>
<th>Quantity of organizational strategic information</th>
<th>Quantity of vertical interaction with management</th>
<th>Satisfaction with management’s responsiveness to the upward feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Horizontal social-emotional-oriented communication</strong></td>
<td>R Square = .09, Sig. = .05</td>
<td>R Square = .07, Sig. = .09</td>
<td>R Square = .09, Sig. = .05</td>
<td>R Square = .07, Sig. = .08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized Coefficients: Beta = -.28</td>
<td>Standardized Coefficients: Beta = -.29</td>
<td>Standardized Coefficients: Beta = -.32</td>
<td>Standardized Coefficients: Beta = -.13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANOVA: Sig. = .16</td>
<td>ANOVA: Sig. = .15</td>
<td>ANOVA: Sig. = .11</td>
<td>ANOVA: Sig. = .51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlations: Part = -.17</td>
<td>Correlations: Part = -.17</td>
<td>Correlations: Part = -.19</td>
<td>Correlations: Part = -.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vertical social-emotional-oriented communication</strong></td>
<td>Standardized Coefficients: Beta = .47</td>
<td>Standardized Coefficients: Beta = .43</td>
<td>Standardized Coefficients: Beta = .36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized Coefficients: Beta = .47</td>
<td>ANOVA: Sig. = .02</td>
<td>ANOVA: Sig. = .03</td>
<td>ANOVA: Sig. = .07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANOVA: Sig. = .02</td>
<td>Correlations: Part = .28</td>
<td>Correlations: Part = .26</td>
<td>Correlations: Part = .22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(Note: n = 69)*

Firstly, in order to answer research question 3b, the relationship between the overall work-oriented communication and social-emotional-oriented communication was computed. Then the relationship of social-emotional-oriented communication to the three scales of work-oriented communication was examined respectively. The employee’s perceived quantity of the organization’s strategic information regarding
the policies and development was first entered as the dependent variable, while horizontal social-emotional-oriented communication and vertical social-emotional-oriented communication were entered as two independent variables. Then the two other scales of work-oriented communication – employee’s perceived quantity of vertical interaction with management (downward and upward), and employee’s satisfaction with management’s responsiveness to the upward feedback – were respectively entered as the dependent variable instead of the perceived quantity of the organization’s strategic information. In order to get more reliable findings from the analyses, the issues regarding multicollinearity, singularity, and outliers were checked in every regression analysis. The results are described in Table 4.14.

The results suggested that social-emotional-communication as a whole was a statistically significant predictor of overall work-oriented communication (Sig. = .05). Furthermore, it is also a statistically significant predictor of employees’ perceived quantity of vertical interaction with management including both downward and upward communication (Sig. = .05). 9 per cent of the variance in the perceived quantity of vertical interaction was explained by the overall social-emotional-oriented communication. Vertical social-emotional-oriented communication made a stronger unique contribution to the prediction of the perceived quantity of vertical interaction than horizontal social-emotional-oriented did, when the variance explained by the other variables was controlled for. Vertical social-emotional-oriented communication explained 28 per cent of the variance in the perceived quantity of vertical interaction and it reached statistical significance (sig. = .02). In other words, employees who have better communication with superiors about social and emotional topics are also more likely to have abundant vertical communication about the organization and work with the management.

In contrast, the results did not provide evidence that overall social-emotional-communication can predict the perceived quantity of organizational strategic information regarding the policies and development. However, vertical social-emotional-communication was proved to be a significant predictor of it (Sig.
When the variance explained by the other variables was controlled for, vertical social-emotional-communication uniquely explained 26 per cent of the variance in the perceived quantity of organizational strategic information. That is to say, employees who have better communication with superiors about social and emotional topics are more likely to be satisfied with the organizational strategic information regarding the policies and development.

In the relationship with employees’ satisfaction with management’s responsiveness to the upward feedback, results failed to prove any predictive effect of social-emotional-communication (R Square = .07, Sig. = .08). Vertical social-emotional-communication made a stronger unique contribution to the prediction of the employee’s satisfaction with management’s responsiveness to the upward feedback than horizontal social-emotional-communication did, when the variance explained by the other variables was controlled for. Although 22 per cent of the variance in the satisfaction with management’s responsiveness to the upward feedback was explained by vertical social-emotional-communication, it failed to reach statistical significance (Sig. = .07).

In summary, social-emotional-oriented communication has more effect on work-oriented communication than on organizational commitment. Especially social-emotional-oriented communication between superiors and subordinates significantly predicted work-oriented communication in terms of the employee’s perceived quantity of organizational strategic information regarding the policies and development, as well as the perceived quantity of vertical interaction with management including both downward and upward communication.
Table 4.15 Significant Regressions among Social-emotional-oriented Communication, Work-oriented Communication and Organizational Commitment Scales, and Significant Pearson Correlations among the Subscales If the Significant Regression is Absent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Commitment</th>
<th>Social-emotional-oriented communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Affective</td>
<td>Continuance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-oriented communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantity of organizational strategic information</td>
<td>R Square</td>
<td>= .46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.55**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ANOVA</td>
<td>Sig. = .02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.61**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical social-emotional-oriented communication</td>
<td>ANOVA</td>
<td>Sig. = .03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

(Note: n = 69. In the regression analyses, the rows in the table are the predictors of three types of organizational commitment, while the column – social-emotional-oriented communication – is the predictor of work-oriented communication.)

Consequently, overall work-oriented communication statistically significantly predicted affective commitment and normative commitment. In relation to the scales,
social-emotional-oriented communication predicted the perceived quantity of vertical interaction with management. Especially vertical social-emotional-oriented communication made statistically significant unique contributions to the prediction of affective commitment, perceived quantity of organizational strategic information and vertical interaction with management. Moreover, the perceived quantity of vertical interaction with management statistically significantly predicted affective commitment and normative commitment, and the satisfaction with management’s responsiveness to the upward feedback statistically significantly predicted continuance commitment. The summary of statistically significant regression can be seen in Table 4.15.

Additionally, Table 4.15 also illustrates the significant Pearson correlations among social-emotional-oriented communication, work-oriented communication and organizational commitment scales that failed to reach statistical significance in the regression analyses. As can be seen in the Table, all the three scales of work-oriented communication either were related to or predicted the scales of affective commitment and normative commitment, and vertical social-emotional-oriented communication either was related to or predicted affective commitment, and the overall work-oriented communication and its scales.

**Summary**

In the quantitative research with 69 participants, all the questionnaires used in the current study were proved to be reliable. Descriptive statistics showed that the mean scores of all the scales were around 4 (from 3.30 to 4.68). Moreover, results indicated that the correlations between demographics and organizational commitment were not very strong, although there were some moderately positive relationships, such as position, supervision, age, time worked with the organization and immediate superiors, and the total number of years worked, and one moderately negative relationship, which was the educational level.

Pearson correlation analyses found that work-oriented communication and all three
scales of it were significantly related to affective commitment and normative commitment, while vertical social-emotional-oriented communication was significantly related to work-oriented communication, especially to the employee’s satisfaction with management’s responsiveness to the upward feedback.

Lastly, standard multiple regression analyses were performed to answer the research question. The results revealed that the employees who have good social-emotional-oriented communication with their superiors tend to have higher levels of affective commitment. Moreover, overall work-oriented communication in an organization causes higher levels of employees’ affective commitment and normative commitment. Particularly, one indicator of work-oriented communication – perceived quantity of vertical interaction – was found to be a predictor of affective commitment and normative commitment, while another indicator – satisfaction with management’s responsiveness to the upward feedback – was found to be a negative predictor of continuance commitment. Moreover, the result also suggested that better overall social-emotional-oriented communication predicts overall work-oriented communication in the Chinese governmental organization, and especially predicts the indicator – perceived quantity of vertical interaction. Furthermore, vertical social-emotional-oriented communication was proved to be predictive for the perceived quantity of organizational strategic information and vertical interaction.

The results will be discussed in greater details in chapter 5. Additionally, the chapter will also analyze the limitations of the current study and suggest implications for further research.
Chapter 5: Discussion

The current study explored the relationship between communication with different content and organizational commitment. Specifically, it examined the relationship of communication among peers or between subordinates and superiors in the Chinese organization regarding social-emotional-oriented topics to the employees’ commitment to the organization; the relationship of communication regarding work-oriented topics to the employees’ organizational commitment; and the relationship between the two different types of communication in the organization.

The findings of the current study partially supported the previous relevant studies. The findings emphasized the important role of work-oriented communication in the improvement of affective commitment and normative commitment. Additionally, communication about social and emotional topics between subordinates and superiors also positively affected affective commitment and the communication related to work and organization.

The current chapter discusses the findings of the current study in the light of the research question. The general results are presented in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1: The Relationship between Communication and Commitment in a Chinese Governmental Organization

5.1 Research Question 1
As stated in Chapter 1, sub research question 1 concerned the relationship between social-emotional-oriented communication and organizational commitment. To address this question, five points need to be answered:

1a. To what extent do the employees in the Chinese organization engage in social-emotional-oriented communication with the other members both at the same level and different levels in the organization?

1b. Does social-emotional-oriented communication predict organizational commitment?

1c. Does social-emotional-oriented communication in the horizontal direction predict organizational commitment?

1d. Does social-emotional-oriented communication in the vertical direction predict organizational commitment?

1e. What type of organizational commitment is strongly related to what direction of social-emotional-oriented communication?

The results from the social-emotional-oriented communication questionnaire suggested that in respect of overall quantity, the employees in the Chinese governmental organization communicate moderately about social and emotional topics with others in the organization. The mean score (3.63) was slightly less than the median score 4. Not surprisingly, social-emotional-oriented communication among peers (m = 3.81) received a slightly higher mean score than that among subordinates and superiors (m = 3.46) did. Further, communication within the same department (m = 3.76) received a slightly higher mean score than that with those outside the department (m = 3.50) did. In term of the quality of the interactions, the communication among peers seemed to be satisfactory (m = 4.67), while that with superiors was also satisfactory but with a lower mean score (m = 4.16). Moreover, whether with peers or superiors, employees tended to talk positively. That is to say, they did not complain, talk badly about others or spread negative emotion, and this concept was explained in the questionnaire. In short, the results implied that the
overall communication regarding social and emotional topics was moderately good in the Chinese governmental organization, and the mean score of communication with peers (m = 4.15) was slightly higher than that with superiors (m = 3.94).

The regression analysis failed to demonstrate that overall social-emotional-oriented communication predicts organizational commitment. The correlation analysis also did not reveal an association between them.

Furthermore, the regression analysis failed to show that horizontal social-emotional-oriented communication is a predictor of organizational commitment. The correlation analysis also failed to find that horizontal social-emotional-oriented communication is related to the three types of organizational commitment respectively. The one with normative commitment even appeared as a negative correlation, but the r value was quite low. Therefore, it is not reasonable to say that the employees who have better communication about social and emotional topics with others tend to have higher levels of commitment to the organization.

This result is consistent with the findings from the relevant study of Postmes, Tanis and Wit (2001). As explained in Chapter 3, the social-emotional-oriented communication questionnaire that the current study used was based on the questionnaire of their study. Their research explored the relationship between horizontal social-emotional-oriented communication and affective commitment. The affective commitment questionnaire they employed was fairly similar to the one that was used in the current study. Although the questionnaires were not completely the same, the results in both the two studies suggested a weak association between horizontal social-emotional-oriented communication and affective commitment; and both studies suggested that the perceptions of horizontal social-emotional-oriented communication are not very predictive of affective commitment (Postmes et al. 2001, 237).

In a classical theory organization, social communication is strongly discouraged since it is considered to be counterproductive to achieve the organizational goals (Miller
2009, 29). Human relations theory suggested that the classical theorists overlooked the importance of the individual needs of employees, such as the need for social interaction. Organizational commitment, as a common measurement of organizational effectiveness, has been proposed to be related to several organizational outcomes including performance, absenteeism, turnover, and organizational goals (Steers 1975; Meyer and Allen 1997, 12). Since the result of the current study did not find a statistically significant negative effect of horizontal social interaction on organizational commitment, it implies that human relations theorists have grounds to suspect the idea of classical theorists that social communication is counterproductive.

In contrast, the results of the regression analysis proved that vertical social-emotional-oriented communication is a statistically significant predictor of affective commitment. That is to say, employees who have better communication with their superiors about social and emotional topics are more likely to have higher levels of affective commitment to the organization.

The human relations theory emphasizes the importance of satisfying employees’ needs. The social interaction, social satisfaction and the emotionally based attitude of managers’ communication style were argued to be influential for organizational productivity (Miller 2009, 37-38). Moreover, affiliation is stated to be the third level of Maslow’s Needs Hierarchy. It refers to the “necessity of giving and receiving human affection and regard” (Miller 2009, 39). Social and emotional communication is essential for achieving affiliation with other employees. On the other hand, the affective component of organizational commitment refers to “employees' emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in, the organization” (Allen and Meyer 1990, 1). A high degree of affective commitment indicates that the employees want to remain with the organization, and employees who have strong affective commitment to the organization would be motivated to higher levels of job performance and make more meaningful contributions to the organization (Meyer and Allen 1991). Therefore, since the current study proved the effect of vertical social-emotional-oriented communication on affective commitment, it supports
human relations theory’s assertion regarding the importance of meeting employees’
needs for social interaction.

However, the result has the particular condition that the effect only takes place
through vertical communication. In organizational functioning, vertical
communication plays an important role. Only when the employees’
social-emotional-oriented communication happens with superiors do the employees
feel more emotionally attached to, identified with, and involved in the organization. A
possible explanation for this is that when employees talk a lot and talk well with their
colleagues who are at the same management level about, for instance, their interest in
writing, career ambitions, or feelings toward tasks, then, even though they have
emotional attachment and identification with each other, and involvement in each
other’s lives, usually no meaningful changes regarding the organization and their
employer will happen, whether in terms of the work they do or their attitude.
Attachment, identification or the involvement with the organization is a different
matter. Private communication between peers does not necessarily influence their
attitudes toward the organization. This communication primarily impacts on
interpersonal communication, whereas interpersonal communication does not
necessarily lead to commitment to the organization. Furthermore, in accord with the
opinion of human relations theory that employees would not be fully motivated until
the higher-need is met (Miller 2009, 45-6), the satisfaction of employees’ needs for
social interaction with peers may represent a happy working life and well-being, but it
does not necessarily represent an identification with the organization, or the
fulfillment of participating in the organization or self-achievement. It also does not
represent that they have higher levels of autonomy to decide the way they accomplish
their tasks, nor that their contribution to the organization is considered to be important
(Greenberg and Baron 2008, 238). Because of these they may consider leaving the
organization. So in this way, human relations theory helped to understand that it is not
enough to only satisfy employees’ lower needs.

However, the results implied that the managers’ personal communication with
subordinates helps in retaining the intelligent employees and thereby in highly motivating them to contribute to the best of their ability by making them feel “I want to do so”. Commitment is considered to be an affective bond between the individual and the organization (Pratt, 1998; van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2000). Previous research suggested the potential advantage of holding social activities for all the employees, such as lunch meetings, outings, and parties, so that the interaction among members in the organization may be reinforced. People get opportunities to communicate with each other and get to know each other better, share happy experience with each other, and have fun with colleagues. According to the findings of the current study, probably the organization can benefit from this, in that peers get to know that they have the same interest, same habits, same thinking, same feelings and same dreams, so due to similarity they like each other more and become committed to each other; but this does not lead to a higher (or lower) level of commitment to the organization. If the organization benefits from this kind of communication, it may be because the peers have better interpersonal relationship and are happier. But it is not likely that good horizontal social-emotional-oriented communication can cause a high level of organizational commitment, and also not likely that the organization in the light of organizational commitment benefits directly from the horizontal social-emotional-oriented communication. In contrast, the current findings proved at least that the social interaction between managers and their subordinates and discussion of non-work-related topics (at the workplace as well as outside it) can do something good to enhance those employees’ commitment to the organization. Outside of work, in such previously mentioned organizational activities, the superiors can listen to their subordinates talking about their personal lives, pay attention to their personal demands, express concern for the employees’ individual needs, encourage them, spread a positive attitude, and can also talk about themselves when it is appropriate. Such communication between superiors and subordinates regarding social and emotional topics helps in making employees reach a higher level of affective commitment to the employing organization. The result is consistent with some ideas of human relations theory.
5.2 Research Question 2

As stated in Chapter 1, sub research question 2 involves finding out the relationship between work-oriented communication and organizational commitment. To address this question, there are two points which need to be answered:

2a. Does work-oriented communication positively predict organizational commitment in the Chinese organization?

2b. Which items of work-oriented communication are more related to which type of organizational commitment?

The results of regression analyses revealed that work-oriented-communication is a statistically significant positive predictor of both affective commitment and normative commitment. It supported Hypothesis 2, and is consistent with the findings of Postmes, Tanis and Wit’s research (2001) that work-oriented-communication is predictive of affective commitment (Postmes et al. 2001, 237). In the current study, nearly half of the variance in affective commitment and normative commitment can be explained by work-oriented communication. Among the three indicators of work-oriented communication, the employee’s perceived quantity of vertical interaction with management uniquely contributed the most to the prediction of the two types of organizational commitment respectively, when the variance explained by the other variables was controlled for. Moreover, although the other two scales of work-oriented communication were not proved to be the statistically significant unique predictors of the two types of commitment, the correlation analyses suggested the significant association between them respectively.

The results supported the findings from previous studies about the importance of communication. With an abundant and high quality of communication related to the work, the orders are sent and understood accurately. Work-oriented communication helps to deal with and reduce unclearness and uncertainty in the organization (Conrad 1985). Employees get to know the organization better and based on this they may identify themselves with the organization. Good management always keeps
employees well informed about the latest status, changes and the performance of the organization, and encourages fluent communication between different departments so that they can coordinate and cooperate better to achieve the overall organizational goals (Schein 1997).

The significant predictive scale of work-oriented communication – the employee’s perceived quantity of vertical interaction with management – contains upward communication and downward communication, including the participants in decision making in the department or organization, and the feedback from the management regarding individual performance. Previous literature argued for the importance of vertical communication in organizational functioning (Tubbs and Moss 2008, 477-89; Greenberg and Baron 2008, 350-3; Robbins et al. 2010, 291-2). From subordinates, the manager receives the latest information, and changes and problems in a project, in order to make decisions. A previous study proved that employees who have more freedom of upward communication tend to have higher levels of commitment to the organization (Wayne et al. 1997). In addition, superiors get to know subordinates’ thoughts about tasks or the organization so they can adjust the management to stimulate better performances. Moreover, by the managers, subordinates are informed what they should do and how good their performances were (Robbins et al. 2010, 291; Greenberg and Baron 2008, 350). When they receive feedback employees can improve their performances.

Furthermore, the literature suggested that a good organization offers a channel for employees to submit creative ideas, advice and suggestions, and encourages critical opinions to enhance organizational profits (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 353; Robbins et al. 2010, 291). The organization should value such upward communication and respond appropriately to stimulate more valuable upward communication from employees.

The results of this study supported the relevant ideas of human relations theory. Human relations theory emphasizes the importance of satisfying employees’ individual needs, especially the highest level needs – self-actualization (Maslow 1943,
It assumes that all human beings are willing and able to reach high achievement. High quality organizational communication provides the condition for employees to fulfill individual goals and self-actualization, and it is important for the organization to motivate employees to join and work for the organization so that their personal development, growth, and self-actualization are facilitated (Kreps 1990, 78). In addition, employees also expect involvement in the job and organization, and aspire to participate in the task and decision making. Human relations theory suggests that when the high level needs are satisfied by the organization, the employees are more likely to have higher levels of commitment (McGregor 1960, 47-48).

Human relations theory also emphasizes the abilities of all employees. Human relations management realizes that employees at all management levels are able to make organizational improvements by contributing with intelligent ideas, opinions, and thoughts. It advocates that managements should value individuals’ talent and express that individual contributions to the organization are necessary and important. So creative opinions, suggestions and advice should be encouraged. Communication in a human relations theory organization, especially according to the human resources approaches, values the two-way communication between superiors and subordinates, and innovation-related communication. This idea is supported by the result of the current study in the way that abundant two-way communication can make employees want to stay with the organization and think that they ought to do so.

The literature in human relations theory suggested that when the lower-level needs are satisfied, the higher-level needs will emerge and dominate the conscious life and the organizational behavior (Maslow 1943, 35). That is to say, when the employees generate the needs for self-actualization, their needs for social interaction are likely to be satisfied and the dominant needs for self-actualization serve as the center of their behavior. This explains why vertical communication regarding non-work related topics and communication regarding work-related topics are predictors of employees’ organizational commitment, as opposed to horizontal social-emotional-oriented communication. When they expect promotion at work and high achievement in their
career, it is more likely that employees like to communicate with superiors who directly are able to help them with fulfilling the ambitions, and communicate about work and organizational matters that are helpful for their job performances. Affective commitment refers to emotional attachment, identification, and involvement. When employees have good communication which provides a condition for them to be successful, they reach a higher level of affective commitment to the organization.

Normative commitment refers to “employees' feelings of obligation to remain with the organization” for moral and ethical reasons (Allen and Meyer 1990, 1). The results of the current study suggested that good communication regarding work and the organization enhances employee’s normative commitment. It is reasonable to say that effective communication may educate employees that they are responsible for their job, other members in the organization, and the organization.

In contrast, there was no evidence to prove that work-oriented communication is a statistically significant predictor of continuance commitment. Continuance commitment refers to “commitment based on the costs that employees associate with leaving the organization” (Allen and Meyer 1990, 1). A study by Cohen and Kirchmeyer (1995) proposed that affective commitment and normative commitment indicated higher levels of employees’ involvement and enjoyment with work activities rather than what continuance commitment did. Continuance commitment seems to be related to different variables compared with affective commitment and normative commitment. The literature implied that there are some unchangeable factors management cannot deal with to generate high levels of employee commitment, such as a prosperous broad environment leading to a low cost to change jobs, and then it is very likely that people’s continuance commitment will decrease (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 238).

Examining the situation of the labor market of office work in China, the large population always provides for a sizable supply of labor force and the competition for good jobs is stiff. The current research took place in the summer, 2011. The economic environment was not prosperous, while the consumer price was increasing (see for
instance, National Bureau of Statistics of China 2011). For many employees it has always been difficult to change jobs without considering the cost, especially when there is a family that needs to be fed by the incomes from their current job. Not to mention that the sample in the current study is a governmental organization that deals with employment issues, so these employees know the cost of leaving their jobs very well. Besides, a job in government maybe does not make the employees rich, but at least it is stable in terms of the position, income, and working hours. So they may be hesitant to leave for these reasons (Riley 1996, in Zhen and Francesco 2000, 882). It is reasonable that the communication in organization is predictive of affective commitment and normative commitment, but it is also reasonable that the communication in an organization is not effective enough to substantially change the cost of leaving for employees.

However, the regression analysis also revealed a statistically negative significant predictive relationship. It occurred between the employees’ satisfaction with management’s responsiveness to the upward feedback and their continuance commitment to the organization. As discussed earlier, continuance commitment refers to the cost of leaving the organization. The employees who have high capabilities to contribute to the organization the most are usually valued more than the others by the management and organization. The organization is very likely to treat them better than others. Especially when they give suggestions and critical opinions the management tends to respond welcomingly and accept those upward communications, so these employees would be more satisfied with these responses from the management. However, since they are very capable, the cost for them to leave the organization will probably not be so high. They can find another job and even a better job, and do not rely on the work in the organization so much to support themselves. Therefore, those kinds of people may have lower levels of continuance commitment.

Additionally, according to the results of preliminary analyses, compared to the communication, some demographics seem to be more related to continuance commitment. They are the time worked with the organization, time worked for
immediate superiors, total number of years worked, age, and education. Among them, education is negatively related to continuance commitment while the rest are positively related. It suggested that the people who are older, worked with the organization or immediate superiors longer, or received lower levels of education seemed also to have a higher level of commitment to the organization in the light of necessity. It is consistent with the findings of some previous researches (for instance, Steers et al. 1981).

5.3 Research Question 3

As stated in Chapter 1, sub research question 3 relates to the relationship between social-emotional-oriented communication and work-oriented communication. To address this question, two points need to be answered:

3a. Does social-emotional-oriented communication predict work-oriented communication?

3b. What items of work-oriented communication are strongly predicted by social-emotional-oriented communication?

The results revealed that social-emotional-oriented communication is a statistically significant predictor of work-oriented communication (Sig. = .05). Particularly, social-emotional-oriented communication is a statistically significant predictor of employees’ perceived quantity of vertical interaction with management (Sig. = .05). Without exception, vertical social-emotional-oriented communication made a stronger unique contribution to the prediction of both overall work-oriented communication and each of the three scales of work-oriented communication than horizontal social-emotional-oriented communication did.

The relationship between overall social-emotional-oriented communication and overall work-oriented communication that the current study proved is consistent with Hypothesis 3. Moreover, in practice, some organizations have started to pay attention to the means by which they can improve organizational communication since good organizational communication helps organizational functioning. Organizations
provide opportunities such as social activities for employees to improve their personal inter-interactions and to share the organizational values with them (Hendrickson and Psarouthakis 1998). This is also a way to reduce ambiguity in work-oriented communication. Therefore, organizations can benefit from good communication in the organization (see, for instance, Robbins et al. 2010, 58).

In human relations organizations, satisfying employees’ individual needs is crucial. According to Blake and Mouton’s Managerial Grid, good management should not only have concern for organizational effectiveness and productivity, but also for individuals’ human needs (Miller 2009, 46-47). So it is important that management communicates with their subordinates about their personal needs and situations and shows that it cares for the employees. Following this idea, communication in a human relations organization not only favors formal communication, but also informal communication. In respect of the content of communication, maintenance-related communication is as advocated just as much as task-related communication and innovation-related communication (Miller 2009, 50). In addition, as the literature proposed (Greenberg and Baron 2008, 351), employees may fear the bureaucracy, or possible rebukes and retaliations so they may prefer to avoid any unnecessary interaction with superiors and always agree with superiors. Through social-emotional-oriented communication subordinates and superiors get to know each other better in person, and misunderstandings mutual misconceptions may be reduced or even eliminated. Thus, the ambiguity-management function of communication, which deals with and reduces the unclearness and uncertainty in organizations, is embodied in social-emotional-oriented communication. It is fair to say that the people who have a larger amount and better quality of private communication with each other are more likely to have positive impressions of each other. For instance, if a subordinate is afraid of his leader because he looks a bit tough and may respond in an unkind way to bad news, the employee might prefer to hide a mistake, which may cause a big problem for the organization. But if they instead got to know each other better personally, he might find his conjecture to be wrong, and in
the future he dares to communicate honestly and frankly with the leader and is willing to give suggestions and critical opinions, which are good for the organization. Therefore it makes the communication between them related to work easier and more comfortable.

Furthermore, it is fair to imagine that when subordinates talk with their superiors about social and emotional topics, they naturally also talk about something related to work. Through this communication, they somewhat participate in the decision making, and get feedback on their performance from the superiors. Therefore, vertical social-emotional-oriented communication is able to predict the perceived quantity of vertical communication with management regarding the work. In short, social-emotional-oriented communication helps employees to understand that the organization cares about their needs and that it is good for them to work better. It is consistent with human relations theory’s proposition.

In contrast, horizontal social-emotional-oriented communication is not as predictive as vertical social-emotional-oriented communication according to the current findings. This can be explained by the fact that horizontal communication in an organization is usually much freer than vertical communication. There usually is no fear between peers since they do not need to account for hierarchy. As a result of private communication they may come to know each other better but it is not necessarily the case that the work-oriented communication between them will substantially change because of this. More obviously, horizontal communication by nature does not have so much to do with vertical communication. Therefore horizontal communication cannot affect at least two scales of work-oriented communication – the perceived quantity of vertical interaction and satisfaction with managements’ responsiveness to the upward feedback – so much.

Additionally, the results of the current study revealed the irrationality of some opinions of the classical approach. Employees in the current study apparently appreciate the social-emotional-oriented communication with their superiors and the upward communication regarding work they have carried out. The human resources
approach followed the main principle of human relations theory and extended the human relations approach. The common opinions of these two similar approaches were reflected in the findings of the current study. The human resources approach emphasizes the benefit of meeting employees’ needs with the purpose of using them as resource for improving the organizational outcomes. Although this part is not directly visible in the current research, the assumption is not rejected either. However, the relevant issues in the human relations approach gain positive proof from the current research, and the human relations approach provides explanations for the results of the current research.

5.4 Conclusion

The results suggested that work-oriented communication is a statistically significant positive predictor of affective commitment and normative commitment. Moreover, vertical social-emotional-oriented communication significantly predicts affective commitment. Furthermore, social-emotional-oriented communication affects work-oriented communication; especially social-emotional-oriented communication that flows vertically significantly predicts work-oriented communication.

These results are consistent with the literature regarding the general functions and the features of communication flows in different directions and the features of formal and informal communication. Particularly, vertical communication with both social-emotional-oriented content and work-oriented content plays an important role in enhancing affective and normative commitment. Therefore, communication in the organization serves for transmitting, for instance, commands and regulations, for reducing the ambiguous, and for creating and maintaining social relationships among the members in the organization (Conrad 1985), which contributes to enhancing the employees’ organizational commitment.

On the one hand, in the light of work-oriented communication, in an abundant horizontal communication, different members or departments at the horizontal level communicate to coordinate and share information and experiences to achieve the
overall organizational goals. In an abundant downward communication, employees get enough information to accomplish their tasks and receive feedback from managers to improve their performances. In an abundant upward communication, employees can give feedback to superiors about their tasks and give suggestions and critical opinions on how to improve organizational performance. All of these allow employees to know the organization better and it may cause them to form attachments with, identification to and involvement in the organization; good communication also provides an opportunity for employees to achieve their individual goals together with organizational goals; it also educates employees in the importance of obligation.

On the other hand, through vertical communication, superiors and subordinates can also communicate about their emotions and social topics, such as their feelings, interests, and problems in families. Therefore they may become emotionally attached. Since managers are the linchpin between workers and the organizational leadership (Kreps 1990, 88-90), the superiors can behave like they represent the organization, and thus the employees form an attachment to the organization as well. Moreover, better vertical social-emotional-oriented communication is predictive of better work-oriented communication. That is to say, the superiors and subordinates who have better quality and larger quantity of communication regarding social and emotional topics tend to have better communication related to work as well, especially the perceived quantity of vertical interaction with management. It might be because they get to know each other better, so the communication barriers are reduced and thereby they know how to communicate during work as well.

Furthermore, these results supported the relevant assumptions of human relations theory that emphasizes human needs and favors informal communication. It is important that the organization satisfies employees’ needs for social interaction with management and especially provides opportunities for employees to achieve their self-actualization. Good communication is an essential condition for an organization to achieve the organizational goals, as well as individual goals (Robbins et al. 2010, 288). When the organization works well and cares about employees’ individual
development, the employees’ highest level of need - that for self-actualization - can be fulfilled; thereby they can contribute best to the organization. If the organization highlights each individual’s capability and contribution, provides opportunities for them to participate in decision making, and encourages them to be more involved in the organizational operations, then the employees tend to commit at higher levels to the organization because they want to or ought to do so.

5.5 Implications

The findings revealed that vertical social-emotional-oriented communication is a positive predictor of affective commitment in the Chinese local governmental organization. The superiors should communicate with their subordinates regarding the social and emotional topics. For instance, the superiors could show their considerations for employees, communicate in a way that shows that they care about employees’ individual needs, and like to improve their lives and help with their personal problems if they can.

The current study also found that work-oriented communication, especially the employees’ perceived quantity of vertical interaction with management including both the upward and downward communication, is a positive predictor of both affective commitment and normative commitment. The management, as the linchpin between the workers and the organization (Kreps 1990, 88-90), should work to guarantee good communication in the organization. The information regarding the work and organization should be abundant; the channels for both upward communication and downward communication should be smooth; the communication should allow employees’ participation and involvement in the decision making process and organizational activities. Furthermore, the management should encourage suggestions and critical opinions from employees for the organizational good.

The result also suggested that social-emotional-oriented communication is a positive predictor of work-oriented communication; especially vertical social-emotional-oriented communication is a positive predictor of work-oriented
communication of the employees who perceived quantity of vertical interaction with management. The subordinates who communicate better with the superiors regarding social and emotional topics tend to communicate better regarding the work and the organization as well. They especially communicate more frequently with managers and participate more than the people who do not communicate on social and emotional topics as well as them.

Therefore, in practice, in order to enhance employees’ commitment to the organization, especially affective commitment, which it was proposed by previous studies would motivate higher levels of employee job performance and more meaningful employee contributions to the organization, organizations and managers should work to guarantee those aforementioned impacts of communication that were proved as predictors. The ways can include one to one informal conversations with employees, social activities, organization-wide meetings, and so on. For instance, the organization can provide opportunities for employees at different levels to communicate, such as have coffee breaks, lunches or dinners together, parties, barbecues, picnics, outdoor games, sports, and other outing activities. But it should be noted that, generally, vertical communication has a larger effect than horizontal communication does. So in these activities, the superiors must participate and together with the subordinates without acting as leaders. They should keep the idea in mind that these organizational activities are not aimless but for the organizational benefit. That is to say, the managers are representative of the organization. As a result of these activities the employees are expected to remember the kindness of the organization and the managers. That is not to say that the managers must spell it out or emphasize it, rather, they could express it by nonverbal behavior for instance. The key is to make the activities related to the organization, and the superiors must join in and interact with the subordinates in a friendly and non-bureaucratic manner. Additionally, the current study examined employees’ perceptions. Managers’ acts should be consistent with their words. Therefore, the managers’ behavior must not be superficial and hypocritical. Instead, they should behave genuinely and authentically. For instance,
when a subordinate gives a critical opinion or suggestion for decision making, the superior should authentically communicate with him/her rather than just palter with perfunctory words.

5.6 Limitations and Future Research

One limitation of the current research is the size of the population. There were 76 persons in total who worked in the sample organization and 69 of them returned useful responses. The total population is not really large although it is large enough for performing the current statistical analyses. Future research could try a larger size of population.

Besides, the sample organization may have certain characteristics of the special context in which it works, i.e. for the government, and it may to some extent be more traditional, and emphasizing bureaucracy and collectivity; and the workers were committed to the governmental work. Therefore the findings of the current study can only be interpreted as a result applicable to the Chinese local governmental organization instead of as a universal result. However, for future research it could be interesting to examine the communication-commitment relationship in different kinds of organizations. Moreover, the result might also be different if the sample is in a different group of age, total number of years worked, education level, ethnicity, position, corporation and supervision situation, and time worked with the organization and immediate superior.

Moreover, the social-emotional-oriented communication questionnaire could be tested further since it was adapted by the researcher of the current study. The first two scales seem to examine similar factors, while the third and fourth scales could be defined more precisely and concretely. The second questionnaire was used to examine vertical communication. The current study adapted it and added some horizontal factors in it but it probably is only able to test one aspect of work-oriented communication. Although the organizational commitment questionnaire is a classic measurement that is used most frequently, the continuance commitment measurement appeared to be
only moderately reliable. Although Meyer insists there is no problem, it still could be interesting for further research to improve the measurement.

Furthermore, the current study is a purely statistical research. It can find valid, reliable and scientific results of the relationship between variables. Thus, it is good at answering “yes” or “no”, but not good at interpreting the story behind it. It can also be interesting to follow particular individuals to explore more concrete and profound causes and consequences of the relationship between communication and commitment. According to the findings of the current research, future research could apply interview or field study methods to explore why there is a relationship. Knowing the reasons (why) that caused the relationships and the ways it develops (how) helps understanding the whole picture and the details; hence the organization could apply the most appropriate communication in a certain condition to achieve a certain purpose. Moreover, experimental research could also be considered, for instance, the researcher could use two groups of superiors, one as a control group, and then train the leaders in one of the groups with special skills, and then compare the subordinates’ commitment level both before and after the training. But this kind of research requires a long research period and continued collection of data, which was impossible for the current study.

Additionally, given the time limitation the current research as a communication study only focused on the direct role of communication in the process. But apparently, there are other factors which may also be influential in the process, for instance, like the literature suggested, interpersonal relationships, cohesion, leadership style, communication climate, and so on. Moreover, other organizational outcomes such as work performance, job satisfaction, communication satisfaction, intention to leave, and so on, could also be included. Future research could test more variables and do a deeper statistical analysis to investigate the possibilities of mediator, interaction effects, and so on.

Lastly, the current study is a one-way research. The opposite causal direction may reveal an interesting finding as well. That is to say, it could be interesting to
investigate the possibility that the employees with high levels of commitment have better perceptions of communication with others in the organization. Thus, it can be investigated whether communication is not simply a predictor of commitment but more of a consequence.
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Appendixes

Appendix 1. Social-Emotional Communication Questionnaire

A.
1. I often talk about non-work-related topics with my coworkers in my department.
2. I often talk about non-work-related topics with the workers who are at other department and at the same management level as me.
3. I think when I talk with my coworkers about non-work-related topics, we talk really well.
4. When I talk with my coworkers about non-work-related topics, I always say something positive, and never say something bad or complain

B.
1. I often talk about non-work-related topics with my immediate superior or even more upper-level leaders.
2. I often talk about non-work-related topics with the managers who are at other department and at the higher management level as me.
3. I think when I talk with the leaders about non-work-related topics, we talk really well.
4. When I talk with the leaders about non-work-related topics, I always say something positive, and never say something bad or complain
Appendix 2. Organizational Communication Questionnaire

Quantity of Strategic information:
1. How much information do you receive about changes within the organization?
2. How much information do you receive about personnel management?
3. How much information do you receive about the overall performance of the organization?
4. How much information do you receive about the organization’s strategy?
5. How much information do you receive about the functioning of other departments within the organization?

Quantity of vertical interaction:
1. How often does management take the initiative to discuss organizational issues with you?
2. How often do you take the initiative to communicate with the organization’s management?
3. How often do you take part in decision making concerning issues involving the organization as a whole?
4. How often do you receive feedback about the work you do?

Satisfaction with management’s responsiveness:
1. There are sufficient opportunities within the organization to critically reflect on managerial policies, or to give suggestions for improvement.
2. Management of this organization pays attention to employees’ suggestions.
3. If I would want to criticize the strategy of the organization, I know how to communicate this within my organization.
Appendix 3. Organizational Commitment Questionnaire

(Sorted by types)

**Item**

AC1. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization

AC2. I really feel as if this organization’s problems are my own

AC3. I do not feel a strong sense of "belonging" to my organization

AC4. I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this organization

AC5. I do not feel like "part of the family" at my organization

AC6. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me

CC1. Right now, staying with my organization is a matter of necessity as much as desire

CC2. It would be very hard for me to leave my organization right now, even if I wanted to

CC3. Too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organization now

CC4. I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization

CC5. If I had not already put so much of myself into this organization, I might consider working elsewhere

CC6. One of the few negative consequences of leaving this organization would be the scarcity of available alternatives

NC1. I do not feel any obligation to remain with my current employer

NC2. Even if it were to my advantage, I do not feel it would be right to leave my organization now

NC3. I would feel guilty if I left this organization now

NC4. This organization deserves my loyalty

NC5. I would not leave my organization right now because I have a sense of obligation to the people in it

NC6. I owe a great deal to my organization

(Note: AC = affective commitment; CC = continuance commitment; NC = normative commitment.)
Appendix 4. Demographic Questionnaire

1. What is your Sex?

2. What is your Job?

3. What is your management level?

4. Do you supervise others? How many are they?

5. Do you work in a team? How many are you?

6. How long have you been working for the organization?

7. How long have you been working for your immediate supervisor?

8. How long have you been working with the higher level manager with whom you communicate the most frequent for non-work reasons?

9. Is the manager you refer to in the last question your immediate superior or even his/her superior?

10. How long have you been working?

11. How old are you?

12. What is your highest level of Education?

   Did not complete High School          Some master's credits, no degree
   High school degree/equivalent        Master's degree
   Some college, no degree              Some post-master's credits, no degree
   Associate's/2-year degree            Doctorate degree or professional degree
   Bachelor's degree

13. Which province are you from?

14. What is your ethnic group in China?

15. Do you have foreign culture background? What is it and how long? (For example, lived or studied abroad, worked at a foreign company, have foreign family members or friends)