

BURNOUT AND WORK ENGAGEMENT OF SOUTH AFRICAN PACKAGING MANUFACTURING MANAGERS

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COMMENTS

The reader is reminded of the following:

- The references as well as the editorial style as prescribed by the *Publication Manual (5th edition)* of the American Psychological Association (APA) were followed in this mini-dissertation. This practice is in line with the policy of the Programme in Industrial Psychology of the North-West University to use APA style in all scientific documents as from January 1999.
- The mini-dissertation is submitted in the form of a research article. The name of the study leader appears on the article.

DEDICATION

I want to take this opportunity to first thank my God who made it possible for me to write this dissertation. Father, without you I would never have been able to do this. Secondly, I'd like to thank the love of my life. Thank you for your patience and understanding. And last but not least, I would like to thank my mother and father who have continuously supported me. Thank you for your love and your faith in me. You keep me going and it gives me great pleasure to dedicate this research project to you.

“All things are possible to him who believes”

Mark 9: 23

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SUMMARY

Title: Burnout and work engagement of packaging manufacturing managers in South Africa.

Key terms: Job burnout, work engagement, job demands, job resources, packaging manufacturing, manager

Stress and burnout among workers are reaching epidemic proportions, resulting in loss of millions in revenue due to absenteeism and corresponding reduction in productivity. The question as to whether the participants of this study experience low levels of work wellness (i.e., low burnout and high work engagement) or not, is not easy to answer. Therefore, research is needed regarding the understanding of how burnout manifests itself, as well as underlying factors contributing to the work engagement of managers and their relationship with job demands and resources thereof. The objective of this study was to investigate which job demands and job resources will predict burnout and work engagement of managers in the packaging manufacturing sector and how different job characteristics will affect their levels of engagement.

A cross-sectional survey design was used. The study population ($N = 90$) consisted of managerial staff from various divisions of a national packaging manufacturing company in South Africa. The Maslach Burnout Inventory - General Survey, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, the Job-Demands-Resources Questionnaire and a biographical questionnaire were administered. The reliability of the measuring instruments was assessed with the use of Cronbach alpha coefficients. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data. Pearson correlations and multiple regression analyses were used to assess the relationships between burnout, job demands, job resources and work engagement.

The results showed that exhaustion was positively related to job demands (work overload). Both exhaustion and cynicism were negatively related to a lack of job resources such as *organisational support* and *growth opportunities*. Managers with low opportunities to learn, little work independence, poor relationship with colleagues, poor relationship with immediate supervisor, limited access to information, poor communication, insufficient participation,

lack of contact possibilities, poor remuneration and limited career possibilities were found to experience high burnout and less work engagement, presumably because stimuli from the environment did not promote growth, self-development, personal accomplishment and meaning for the manager. The results showed that both job demands and job resources contributed to burnout and work engagement.

Recommendations for future research have been made.

OPSOMMING

Titel: Uitbranding en werksbetrokkenheid by verpakkingsvervaardigingsbestuurders in Suid-Afrika.

Sleuteltermes: Werksuitbranding, werksbegeesteringskaal, werksvereistes, verpakkingsvervaardiging, bestuurder.

Stres en uitbranding by werkers is besig om epidemiese vlakke te bereik, en dit lei tot die verlies van miljoene in terme van inkomste as gevolg van afwesigheid en 'n ooreenkomstige verlies aan produktiwiteit. Die vraag of die deelnemers aan hierdie studie lae vlakke van werkswelstand (d.i. lae uitbranding en hoë werksbetrokkenheid) ervaar aldan nie, is geensins maklik om te beantwoord nie. Daarom is navorsing nodig om tot 'n beter begrip te kom aangaande hoe uitbranding manifesteer, asook daardie onderliggende faktore wat bydra tot die werksbetrokkenheid van bestuurders en die verhouding daarvan met werksvereistes en -hulpbronne. Die oogmerk van hierdie studie was om 'n ondersoek te doen om vas te stel watter werksvereistes en werkhulpbronne uitbranding en werksbetrokkenheid van bestuurders in die verpakkingsvervaardigingssektor kan voorspel, en hoe verskillende werkseienskappe hulle vlakke van betrokkenheid sal raak.

'n Kruisdeursnee-ondersoek is gebruik. Die studiepulasie ($N = 90$) het bestaan uit bestuurspersoneel uit verskeie afdelings van 'n nasionale verpakkings-vervaardigingsfirma in Suid-Afrika. Die Maslach-Uitbrandingsinventaris – Algemene Onderzoek, die Utrechtse Werksbegeesteringskaal, die Werkvereisteshulpbronne-vraelys en 'n biografiese vraelys is toegepas. Die betroubaarheid van die meetinstrumente is gemeet deur die gebruik van Cronbach-alfa-koëffisiënte. Beskrywende statistiek is gebruik vir analise van die data. Pearson-korrelasies en veelvuldige regressie-analises is gebruik om die verhoudinge tussen uitbranding, werksvereistes, werkhulpbronne en werksbetrokkenheid te assesser.

Die resultate het getoon dat uitputting positief verbandhoudend staan tot werksvereistes (werkoorlaaiing). Beide uitputting en sinisme staan negatief verbandhoudend tot 'n gebrek aan werkhulpbronne soos *organisatoriese ondersteuning* en *groeimoonlikhede*. Bestuurders met min groeigeleenthede, lae vlakke van werksonafhanklikheid, swak verhoudings met kollegas, swak verhoudings met onmiddellike toesighouers, beperkte toegang tot inligting,

swak kommunikasie, ontoereikende deelname, 'n gebrek aan kontakgeleenthede, swak vergoeding en beperkte beroepsmoontlikhede het hoë uitbranding en minder werksbetrokkenheid getoon, waarskynlik aangesien stimuli uit die omgewing nie gunstig was ten opsigte van groei, selfontwikkeling, persoonlike sukses en betekenis vir die bestuurder nie. Die resultate het verder getoon dat werksvereistes en werkshulpbronne bygedra het tot uitbranding en werksbetrokkenheid.

Voorstelle vir verdere navorsing is gemaak.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This mini-dissertation is concerned with the manifestation of burnout and work engagement of managers in national divisions of a South African packaging manufacturing company.

This chapter presents the problem statement, objectives and basic hypothesis as well as the research method.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

South Africa has, over the last two decades, undergone significant change as local companies try to compete globally. Customer demands for high quality products, greater product variety and on-time delivery, have forced local South African companies/managers to reorganise jobs and their work processes to meet these demands (Appelbaum, Bailey, & Berg, 2000; Ichniowski, Shaw, & Prensushi, 1997; MacDuffie, 1995). For some, this has resulted in greater mismatches with huge job demands and fewer job resources.

According to Hamel (1996), organisations are under increasing pressure to improve productivity, while simultaneously reducing costs. This, according to Hamel (1996), has resulted in an epidemic of “corporate anorexia”, based on a new enterprise formula that is emerging, whereby half as many people are being paid twice as much to produce three times more (Handy, 1996). Quinn et al. (1996) and Reinhold (1997) advise that this “squeezing of the pips” trend is particularly evident in the case of managers, where the incidence of stress and burnout is increasingly common.

Conversely, Graham (1995), Godard (2001), Lewchuk, Steward, and Yates (2001) argue that, while the effect of high performance work practices in firms is well established, the effect of these practices on managers is much less studied and its outcomes are much less clear. According to the authors, some maintain that high performance work practices have a largely negative effect on workers, as per the pathogenic framework, while, on the other hand, Schaufeli and Bakker (2001) maintain that some individuals - even when exposed to high job demands and long working hours - do not show symptoms of burnout, but instead seem to

find pleasure in dealing with those stressors. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), like Schaufeli and Bakker (2001), support the view that from a positive psychology (fortigenic) perspective, such individuals could be described as being engaged in their work.

Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) define burnout (the opposite of engagement) as a persistent, negative, work-related state of mind in 'normal' individuals that is primarily characterised by exhaustion, decreased motivation, and the development of dysfunctional attitudes and behaviour at work. Maslach et al. (2001), on the other hand, maintains that the symptoms of job burnout, particularly cynicism (one of the subscales of burnout), have a way of spreading. She suggests that even employees who like their jobs and find them rewarding, may eventually perceive their co-worker's complaints about management and a lack of appreciation as valid. According to Maslach et al. (2001), it is an undeniable fact that burnout is non-discriminating and employees at all levels suffer.

Various theories could be used to understand and predict burnout and work engagement of packaging manufacturing managers in South Africa. Jones (1995) asserts that managers are pivotal to an organisation's productivity and effectiveness, since they have the ultimate responsibility for maximising the resources available for organisations to create value. Any decline in managers' performance inevitably results in foregone revenue, lost opportunities and increased costs (Williams, 1991).

Although it is important to understand the causes of burnout (a negative side effect of work) in organisations, it is also important to focus on the positive side effects of work. According to Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001), in order to cover the entire continuum of work-related experiences, we must study the 'opposite of burnout' as well. Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) state that while burnout is a metaphor that is commonly used to describe a state or process of mental exhaustion, engagement is defined as an **energetic state** in which the employee is dedicated to *excellent performance* at work and is confident of his or her effectiveness (Schutte, Toppinen, Kalimo, & Schaufeli, 2000). According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2001), rather than a momentary and specific state, engagement refers to a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual or behaviour. For instance, work engagement is positively related to social support from co-workers and superiors, performance feedback, coaching, job control, task variety and training facilities (Rothmann, Steyn, & Mostert, 2005; Schaufeli & Salanova, in

press); hence, the more job resources are available, the more likely it is that employees will feel engaged.

According to Hackman and Oldham (1980), such results on the positive relationship between job resources and engagement are in line with the Job Characteristics Theory. This theory assumes that particular job characteristics such as skill variety, autonomy and feedback contribute to intrinsic motivation (which is closely related to work engagement). Furthermore, work contexts that provide resources such as job control (autonomy), feedback (competence) and social support (relatedness) enhance well-being (e.g. vitality) and increase intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Frederick, 1997). For instance, in their study Schaufeli and Bakker (2003, 2004) found that managers, entrepreneurs and farmers scored high in terms of engagement as opposed to blue collar workers, police officers and home care staff.

In support of the Job Characteristics Theory, Maslach et al. (2001) maintain that good fits promote engagement while mismatches lead to burnout. She maintains that a mismatch will occur when any one of the six areas, namely workload, control, reward, recognition (from one's immediate work community), fairness and values is out of tune with the worker's expectations and capabilities. She also states that when an employee/manager feels that there is a lack of control over the job, such an individual interprets the situation as having little opportunity to use creativity and problem-solving abilities - "[t]here's no control over the process of achieving outcomes for which he or she is being held accountable". With regards to insufficient rewards, the individual will experience a devaluation of both work and workers around him or her. Likewise, she maintains that: "the breakdown of community will result in a loss of positive connections with others, and will produce chronic and unresolved conflict with others on the job".

Although positive states are not popular in psychology, the field of positive psychology is rapidly gaining momentum in industrial/organisational psychology (Snyder & Lopez, 2002). Erez and Isen (2002) have shown that inducing positive emotional states in people (in this context, managers) facilitates flexible, effective problem-solving, decision-making and evaluation of events. Frederickson's (1998) 'broaden-and-build' theory of positive emotions states that positive emotions, including, joy, interest, contentment and happiness all share the ability to 'broaden' an individual's momentary thought-action repertoires. In addition, these positive emotions assist in building the individual's enduring personal resources. The

tendency to experience the positive is proposed to be central to one's ability to flourish, prosper mentally and grow psychologically. Therefore, positive emotions have a potentially adaptive and interactive nature and might moderate the relationship between job satisfaction and job performance. In the same breath, results from the surveys of recent and upcoming generations of employees show that a majority of managers desire greater meaning and personal development from their work, and many see their work as a calling – enjoyable, fulfilling and socially useful (Avolio & Sosik, 1999; Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997). According to Nelson and Simmons (2003), meaningful work leads to eustress, which can promote engagement even in demanding conditions. Eustress reflects the extent to which cognitive appraisal of the situation is seen to benefit or enhance an individual's well-being.

In summary, according to Kelloway and Barling (1991), the positive psychology paradigm helps one to understand the relationship between work, and more specifically goal-directed, structured activity, and well-being. Maslach et al. (2001) concluded therefore that burnout and work engagement are specific areas for research and intervention. Rothmann (2003) in consensus argues that, as symptoms of exhaustion and cynicism (caused by burnout) are not only problematic for the individual but also for the organisation, burnout as a psychological phenomenon will be taken seriously by management of organisations only to the extent to which it demonstrably contributes to poor business performance, whilst Schaufeli and Bakker (2002) argue that feeling emotionally drained from one's work once a week does by no means exclude that in the same week, one might feel "bursting with energy".

According to Salovey, Rothman, Detweiler, and Steward (2000), therefore, the focus on engagement as the positive antithesis of burnout promises to yield new perspectives on interventions in order to promote healthy perceptions, beliefs, and physical well-being and to alleviate burnout (Maslach et al., 2001).

The following research questions arise on the basis of the contextualisation of the research problem:

- How is burnout conceptualised in literature, and what are the causes thereof in the packaging manufacturing sector?

- How is work engagement conceptualised in the literature, and what are the causes thereof in the packaging manufacturing sector?
- Which job demands and job resources predict burnout and work engagement of managers in the packaging manufacturing sector?

1.2 AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The research aim is divided into a general aim and specific objectives.

1.2.1 General aim

The aim of the current study is to investigate the relationship among job demands, job resources, burnout and work engagement of managers in national divisions of a packaging manufacturing company in South Africa.

1.2.2 Specific objectives

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

- To research how burnout is conceptualised in literature and what its causes are within the packaging manufacturing sector;
- To research how work engagement is conceptualised in literature and what its causes are within the packaging manufacturing sector;
- To determine which job demands and job resources predict burnout and work engagement of managers in the packaging manufacturing sector.

1.3 RESEARCH METHOD

The research consists of a literature review and an empirical study.

1.3.1 Literature review

A complete literature review is undertaken in accordance with the following steps:

- Step 1: Conceptualise burnout from the literature
- Step 2: Conceptualise work engagement from the literature
- Step 3: Conceptualise the relationship between burnout and work engagement on the one hand, and job demands and resources on the other.

1.3.2 Empirical study

The following steps in the empirical study can be mentioned:

1.3.2.1 The choice of a research design

A cross-sectional survey design, by means of which a sample is drawn from a population at a particular point in time (Shaugnessy & Zechmeister, 1997), is used to achieve the research objectives. Information collected is utilised to report on the population at that time. Cross-sectional designs are used to examine groups of subjects in various stages of development simultaneously, while the survey describes a technique of data collection in which questionnaires are used to gather data about an identified population (Burns & Grove, 1993). The design can also be used to assess interrelationships among variables in the population.

1.3.2.2 Choice of participants

The study sample consists of 90 managers employed by various divisions of a national packaging manufacturing industry in South Africa. The sample is drawn from executives, senior management, top management, and middle and junior management only. Of the 170 distributed questionnaires, only 90 participants responded.

1.3.2.3 Measuring instruments

The following research instruments are used in the research:

An Adapted version of the *Maslach Burnout Inventory – General Services Survey* (MBI-GS) (Maslach et al., 1996) is used to measure burnout. The following subscales of the MBI-GS are used: exhaustion (example of a question “I feel used up at the end of the workday”), and mental distance (example of a question “I have become less enthusiastic about my work”).

All items are scored on a seven-point frequency rating scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 6 (*daily*). A total of 13 items loaded significantly on two scales: exhaustion (5 items) and mental distance (8 items). The internal consistencies (Cronbach's alpha coefficients) reported by Schaufeli et al. (1996) varied from 0,87 to 0,89 for exhaustion and from 0,73 to 0,84 for cynicism. Test-retest reliabilities after one year were 0,65 (exhaustion), and 0,60 (cynicism). Storm and Rothmann (2003a) found support for the construct validity of the MBI-GS for employees of the South African Police Services.

The *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES)* (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzáles-Romá, & Bakker, 2002) is used to measure the levels of engagement of managers in national divisions of a packaging manufacturing company. The UWES measures levels of engagement on a 17-item 7-point frequency rating scale, ranging from 0 (*never*) to 6 (*every day*). Three dimensions can be distinguished, namely vigour, dedication, and absorption. Examples of statements relating to the three dimensions are the following: "I am bursting with energy in my work" (vigour); "I find my work full of meaning and purpose" (dedication); and: "When I am working, I forget everything around me" (absorption). Engaged individuals are characterised by high levels of vigour and dedication as well as elevated levels of absorption.

The *Job Demands-Resources Scale (JDERS)*, developed by Barkhuizen, Rothmann, and Tytherleigh (2004) is used to measure job demands and job resources for employees. The JDERS consists of 48 items. The questions are rated on a four point scale 1 (*never*) and 4 (*always*). The dimensions of the JDERS include pace and amount of work, mental load, variety in work, opportunities to learn, independence in work, relationships with colleagues, relationship with immediate supervisor, ambiguities about work, information, communications, participation, contact, uncertainty about the future, remuneration and career opportunities (Frey, Jonas, & Greitemeyer, 2003; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). According to Strydom, Rothmann, and Mostert (in press) five factors were extracted from this measuring instrument. These factors are: growth opportunities, organisational support, advancement, overload and job insecurity. Strydom and Rothmann (in press) found that these factors show highly acceptable alpha coefficients, ranging from 0,76 to 0,92.

1.3.2.4 Data analysis

The SPSS-program is used to carry out statistical analysis regarding reliability and validity of the measuring instruments, descriptive statistics, correlation coefficients, and multiple regression analysis (SPSS Inc., 2003). Cronbach alpha coefficients are used to determine the internal consistency of the measuring instruments as discussed by Clark and Watson (1995). Coefficient alpha conveys important information regarding the proportion of error variance in a measuring instrument.

Descriptive statistics are used to analyse the data. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients are used to assess the relationship between the variables. A cut-off point of 0,30 was set for the practical significance of correlation coefficients. The level of statistical significance is set at $p < 0,05$. Effect sizes are used to decide the significance of findings. Regression analysis is used to determine the proportion of variance in exhaustion, cynicism and professional efficacy that is attributable to job characteristics.

1.4 DIVISION OF CHAPTERS

The division of chapters in this mini-dissertation is as follows:

- Chapter 1 Introduction
- Chapter 2 Article
- Chapter 3 Conclusions, limitations and recommendations.

1.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter the problem statement, the aims of the research and the research method were discussed. A prospective chapter division was also indicated.

Chapter 2 contains the research article.

