Emotional labour in a government service centre: Antecedents and consequences

A Erasmus

orcid.org 0000-0002-0468-9090

Thesis accepted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Doctor of Philosophy in Human Resource Management* at the North-West University

Promoter: Prof E Oosthuysen

Graduation: November 2022

COMMENTS

The reader is reminded of the following:

- The editorial style in the first and last chapters of this thesis follows the format prescribed by the Programme in Human Resource Management of the North-West University.
- This thesis's references and page numbers follow the format prescribed by the Publication Manual (7th edition) of the American Psychological Association (APA). This practice is in line with the policy of the Programme in Human Resource Management of the North-West University to use APA referencing style in all scientific documents.
- This thesis is submitted in the form of research articles. Four articles were written with the intention to publish in accredited Human Resource Journals.

DECLARATION

I, Amanda Erasmus, hereby declare that "Emotional labour in a government service centre: Antecedents and consequences" is my own work. I have quoted in-text and in the reference lists all the sources that I have used in this thesis. The opinions and views expressed in this thesis are my own and those of the authors as referenced both in the text and in the reference lists.

I further declare that this work will not be submitted to any other academic institution for qualification purposes.

AMANDA ERASMUS MAY 2022

DECLARATION BY SUPERVISOR/PROMOTER

I, **Elrie Oosthuysen**, confirm that the above declaration signed by the candidate is accurate to the best of my knowledge and that I have received a satisfactory similarity report from *Turnitin* before allowing the candidate to submit for examination/re-submit after extensive changes were made.

E Oosthuysen 30 May 2022

Prof E Oosthuysen Date

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: http://www.nwu.ac.za

Economic and Management Sciences Research
Ethics Committee (EMS-REC)

26 November 2021

Prof E Botha
Per e-mail
Dear Prof Botha,

EMS-REC FEEDBACK: 26112021
Student: Erasmus, A (25263307)(NWU-01308-21-A4)
Study leader: Prof E Botha – PhD in Human Resource Management

Your ethics application on, ***Emotional labour in a government service centre: Antecedents and consequences,*** which served on the EMSREC meeting of 26 November 2021, refers.

Outcome:

Approved as a minimal risk study. A number **NWU-01308-21-A4** is given for one year of ethics clearance.

Please note that the ethics approval of this application is subject to the Covid-19 protocols.

Kind regards,

Mark Rathbone

Digitally signed by Mark Rathbone
DN: cn=Mark Rathbone, o=North-West University, ou=Business management, email=mark.rathbone@nwu.ac.za, c=ZA
Date: 2021.11.30 15:59:04 +02'00'

Prof Mark Rathbone
Chairperson: Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC)

• PO Box 10148, Henbyl, 1906 South Africa • Mobile: +27 (0)83 304 1006 •
• E-mail: elizezywot631@gmail.com • Website: http://ezlang.wix.com/ezcommslang •

Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby confirm that I have language edited the dissertation entitled
Emotional labour in a government service centre: Antecedents and consequences
by Amanda Erasmus, for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Human Resource Management at the North-West University.

The responsibility of implementing the recommended changes and corrections rests with the author of the dissertation.

Elize Zywotkiewicz
Language Editor and Translator *

2022-05-25

• Accredited member of the South African Translator's Institute (SATI) •Membership No. 1000151
• Member of Professional Editors' Guild (PEG)

Jené Pretorius

Registered Coursellor - HPCSA PRC 0052948
B.Psych (Cum Laude) - PIHE
Research Psychology (MA Psychology) - UWC
Services: **Academic Assessments** (School Readiness, Subject Choice & Career Counselling) & Academic **Research Assistance**

082 737 4164

JP Research Assistance Services

Certification of Co-coding

This letter serves to confirm that Amanda Erasmus submitted transcribed interviews to myself for co-coding. For the study titled: "Emotional labour in a government service centre: Antecedents and consequences".

The co-coding process consisted of:

Co-coding all transcribed interviews

Identifying preliminary themes

And, having a discussion on the identified themes and the similarities and differences in the codes identified by the two co-coders

Should you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

Jené Pretorius

12 April 2022

PO Box 1174
Vanderbijlpark
Vanderbijlpark
South Africa 1900
Tel: 016 910 3111
Web: http://www.nwu.ac.za
www.optentia.co.za

30 April 2022

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This letter serves to confirm that the data from the study *Emotional labour in a government service centre: Antecedents and consequences* by Amanda Erasmus were analysed by me.

The output and interpretation of the results were discussed with the student, ensuring that she understood the statistical analyses and would be able to provide a comprehensive description and explanation for examination.

Regards,

Mrs E.M. Bothma
Statistical Consultant
Optentia Research Focus Area
NWU Vaal Triangle Campus
Building E4, G-01
Tel: +27 16 910 3419

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

What a journey…During the past few years, it was reaffirmed that without the love, grace, and mercy of our God Almighty, the success of this research project would not have been possible. I am humbled by the wisdom, strength, perseverance, and good health HE bestowed upon me during this research journey.

I also wish to extend my sincere gratitude and appreciation to several extraordinarily supportive and patient people in my life who assisted me in realising my PhD dream:

- First and foremost, a special thank you to the love of my life, my husband Lourens, for your unwavering love and support, your prayers and encouragement when things got difficult, I appreciate it, and I love you. Thank you to my children Lohan and Zandri for your love, support, and sacrifices you had to make to enable me to achieve the unthinkable.
- My supervisor Prof Elrie Botha being my pillar of strength. Thank you for your patience, guidance, insight, professionalism, and friendship that shaped me into a growing researcher.
- Prof Ian Rothmann, I am honoured to have had your support during this journey; thank you for your believe in me from day one and for giving me the courage to persevere no matter what.
- My late father, Peet. The adult I have become grew out of the struggles you helped me overcome. You were an epic example of how every father should raise his inquisitive daughters. To my mothers, Mariana and Patrys, my parents-in-law, siblings, and the rest of my extended family for your support and prayers.
- All the Optentia, NWU Library, and School of Behavioural Sciences personnel, thank you for your valuable inputs and continued interest in my research progress.
- Mr. Frank Stark, for the opportunity to conduct the study in his business environment and all the research participants who still contributed to this study despite the complex Covid-19 challenges faced, thank you for your time and sacrifices.
- My language editor, Elize Żywotkiewicz who assisted with the editing, thank you for your commitment and support.
- My statistician, Elizabeth Bothma, thank you for your endless patience in simplifying the statistically analysis making it possible for me to understand. Thank you for all the knowledge and wisdom you shared in this area.
- My co-coder, Jene thank you for your help with the coding and data analysis process, your professionalism and genuine care and concern is appreciated.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... **VII**

LIST OF TABLES ..... **X**

LIST OF FIGURES ..... **XI**

ABSTRACT ..... **XII**

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION **1**

1.1 Introduction and background 1

1.2 Problem statement 3

1.3 Research objectives 11

1.3.1 General objectives 11

1.3.2 Specific objectives 12

1.4 Research method 12

1.4.1 Literature study 12

1.4.2 Empirical study 12

1.5 Research design 13

1.5.1 Participants 14

1.5.2 Measuring instruments 15

1.5.3 Data collection procedures 16

1.5.4 Data analysis 18

1.6 Ethical considerations 20

1.7 Chapter layout 22

REFERENCES **24**

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH ARTICLE **36**

REFERENCES **64**

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH ARTICLE **78**

REFERENCES **111**

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH ARTICLE **124**

REFERENCES **149**

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH ARTICLE **161**

REFERENCES **213**

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS **223**

6.1 Conclusions 223

6.2 Limitations 227

6.3 Recommendations 228

6.3.1 Recommendations for practice 228

6.3.2 Recommendations for future research 229

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: *Characteristics of the participants (n=201)* 50

Table 2: *Internal consistency reliability of the ELS, UWES, and BAT* 55

Table 3: *Fit statistics of final and competing measurement models* 56

Table 4: *Correlation coefficients of measuring instruments* 57

Table 5: *Initial framework fit indices and standardised path coefficients* 57

Table 6: *Characteristics of the participants (n=201)* 95

Table 7: *Internal consistency reliability of the ELS, PCQ-12, and BAT* 100

Table 8: *Correlations coefficients of measuring instruments* 100

Table 9: *Fit statistics of final and competing measurement models* 102

Table 10: *Initial framework fit indices, and standardised path coefficients* 103

Table 11: *Moderation effects of psychological capital* 105

Table 12: *Characteristics of the participants (n=201)* 136

Table 13: *Internal consistency reliability of the ELS, REQ, and UWES* 141

Table 14: *Correlation coefficients of measuring instruments* 141

Table 15: *Fit statistics of final and competing measurement models* 143

Table 16: *Initial framework, fit indices, and standardised path coefficients* 143

Table 17: *Indirect effects of emotional labour on work engagement* 145

Table 18: *Characteristics of the participants (n=201)* 171

Table 19: *Strategies to ensure data quality* 175

Table 20: *Qualitative themes* 178

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 *Proposed study model* 11

Figure 2.1 *Proposed study model* 49

Figure 2.2 *Structural model for emotional labour, burnout, and work engagement* 59

Figure 3.1 *Research model and hypotheses* 93

Figure 3.2 *Structural model for EL, PC, and burnout* 104

Figure 3.3 *Moderating effect on work engagement* 105

Figure 4.1 *Research model and hypotheses* 134

Figure 4.2 *Structural model for EL, RE, and WE* 144

Figure 5.1 *Visual display of antecedents and consequences of emotional labour* 202

ABSTRACT

Title: Emotional labour in a government service centre: Antecedents and consequences

Key terms: Emotional labour, intensity; frequency, and variety of emotional display; deep acting, surface acting; burnout, exhaustion; emotional and cognitive impairment; mental distance; psychological and psychosomatic complaints; work engagement; vigour; dedication; absorption; psychological capital; hope; resilience; optimism; efficacy; recovery experiences; psychological detachment; relaxation; mastery; control; service centre environment.

The effect of emotional labour, defined as the regulation of internal feelings and modification of expressions, on service employees is well documented and a number of researchers are increasingly focusing on the effects of emotional labour on the individual, organisation, and client. Literature in fields such as business, health care, and psychology that focus predominantly on the private industry has shown mixed results concerning the antecedents and consequences of emotional labour. Unfortunately, previous research is mostly limited to profit-generated service industries where client satisfaction is a priority for survival. In contrast, emotional labour research regarding the public domain and specifically government organisations in South Africa is very rare. Key in service environments is the emotional strategy (i.e., surface or deep acting) that the service employee follows when interacting with clients, the antecedents (i.e., emotional intelligence) which leads to the choice of strategy, and the consequences of emotional labour (i.e., burnout). Government service centres form a critical link between the South African citizens and the government, and the most distinct feature of the public service centres is not efficiency but rather quality of care. As emotional labour has gained, more attention in the public sector, with the emphasis on quality service interactions, it is important to do some further exploration of this phenomenon in a South African government service centre. This study focuses on the principles of positive psychology specifically focusing on well-being in the workplace – not only in order to make practical contributions – but also to extend the existing emotional labour literature.

South African government organisations are often the sole providers of their kind in the country and clients therefore do not have any alternative but to make use of their unique services. It is therefore important for the organisation to provide "service with a smile" – hence the aim to explore the relationship between emotional labour, burnout, and work engagement in the organisation under research. The immense pressure on South African government organisations to adapt to demanding clients and an increased workforce diversity motivate the second aim of this study to investigate the effect of psychological capital, emotional labour, and burnout on governments' service delivery. The third aim of this study was to determine the relationship between emotional

labour, recovery experiences, and work engagement in order to better equip HR professionals to assist employees to cope with circumstances associated with emotional labour in the government service centres. The final aim of this thesis was to explore individual experiences in the South African government organisation in order to identify the influences or antecedents and consequences linked to this unique work environment.

To achieve these aims, participants were recruited from a South African government organisation located in Gauteng and Mpumalanga. A mixed method sequential explanatory design was used to collect and analyse data. In Study 1, quantitative data was collected by using the "Emotional labour, burnout, work engagement, psychological capital, and recovery experiences" questionnaires. A total number of 201 service centre employees participate in Study 1. The final sample for Study 2 consisted of 32 service employees of whom 23 participated before data saturation was reached during the qualitative semi-structured interviews. Results confirmed a significant correlation between emotional labour, burnout, and work engagement and a significant relationship between emotional labour and burnout with psychological capital moderating the relationship between the two constructs. Furthermore, a strong correlation was found between emotional labour and work engagement with recovery experiences having a mediating effect on this relationship. The findings of the qualitative study highlighted five themes that included (1) The importance of first impressions/greetings; (2) Reciprocal relationships: being friendly/approachable is beneficial to the client; (3) Importance of a support network to alleviate/diffuse the situation; (4) Difficult clients and the emotional toll; and (5) Constructive influences of positive client interactions on an individual on a personal level.

The results support the notion that inauthentic behaviour can be disruptive and harmful to the well-being of service employees. Recommendations were made to the South African government organisation under research and future researchers.

KGUTSUFATSO

Sehlooho: Mosebetsi wa maikutlo setsing sa ditshebeletso tsa mmuso: Tse pele le ditlamorao

Mantswe a bohlokwa: Mosebetsi wa maikutlo, matla, makgetlo a mangata, le mefuta e fapaneng ya pontsho ya maikutlo, ketso e tebileng, ho sebetsa ka hodima lefatshe, ho kgathala kelello, ho kgathala, ho senyeha ha maikutlo le kelello, bohole ba manahano, ditl etlebo tsa kelello le tsa monahano, ho kenya letsoho mosebetsing, mahlahahlaha, boinehelo, ho monya, boemo ba tswelopele kelellong, tshepo, ho tiya, ho ba le tshepo, ho sebetsa hantle, diphihlelo tsa ho hlaphohelwa, ho phomola kelellong, boqhetseke, taolo, tikoloho ya setsi sa ditshebeletso.

Kameho ya mosebetsi wa maikutlo ho basebetsi ba ditshebeletso e ngotswe hantle, mme bafuputsi ba bangata ba ntse ba tsepamisa maikutlo ho ditlamorao tsa mosebetsi wa maikutlo ho motho ka mong, mokgatlo le moreki. Dingolweng tse mafapheng a kang kgwebo, tlhokokelo ya bophelo bo bottle le kelello tse shebaneng haholo le indasteri ya poraefete di bontshitse ditholwana tse tswakaneng mabapi le tse pele le ditlamorao tsa mosebetsi wa maikutlo. Ka bomadimabe, dipatlisiso tse fetileng di haellwa haholo ke di-indasteri tse hlahisang pahello moo kgotssofalo ya bareki e tlang pele bakeng sa ho pholoha. Ho fapana le hoo, dipatlisiso tsa basebetsi ba maikutlo sebakeng sa setjhaba mme ka ho kgetheha mekgatlo ya mmuso Afrika Borwa e fumaneha ka sewelo. Hwa bohlokwa, dibakeng tsa tshebeletso, ke leano la maikutlo (k.h.r. bokahodimo kapa ketso e tebileng) eo mosebeletsi wa ditshebeletso a e latelang ha a sebedisana le bareki, tse pele (k.h.r. bohlale ba maikutlo) bo lebisang kgethong ya leano, le ditlamorao tsa mosebetsi wa maikutlo (k.h.r. ho kgathala kelello). Ditsi tsa ditshebeletso tsa mmuso di theha kamano e matla dipakeng tsa baahi ba Afrika Borwa le mmuso, mme karolo e ikgethileng ka ho fetisisa ya ditsi tsa ditshebeletso tsa setjh aba ha e sebetse hantle empa ke boleng ba tlhokomelo. Jwalokaha mosebetsi wa maikutlo o se o fumane, tsepamiso ya maikutlo e eketsehileng lekaleng la setjhaba, ka ho totobatsa ditshebedisano tsa ditshebeletso tsa boleng, ho bohlokwa ho etsa dipatlisiso tse ding hape ka ketsahahlo ena setsing sa tshebeletso sa mmuso wa Afrika Borwa. Boithuto bona bo shebisisa melaotheo ya kelello e ntle e shebileng ka kotloloho bophelo bo botle mosebetsing, mme ha e etse dinyehelo tse sebetsang feela empa e boetse e atolosa dingolwa tse teng tsa mosebetsi wa maikutlo.

Mekgatlo ya mmuso ya SA hangata ke yona feela e fanang ka mofuta wa bona naheng mme bareki ka hona ha ban a mokgwa o mong empa ba sebedisa ditshebeletso tsa bona tse ikgethang. Ka hona ho bohlokwa hore mokgatlo o fane ka “tshebeletso ka pososelo”, ka hona sepheo sa ho hlahloba kamano dipakeng tsa mosebetsi wa maikutlo, ho kgathala kelello le ho kenya letsoho mosebetsing wa mokgatlo o ntseng o etswa dipatlisiso. Kgatello e kgolo ho mekgatlo ya mmuso

ya SA ho ikamahanya le bareki ba batlang le ho eketseha ha basebetsi ho susumetsa sepheo sa bobedi sa thuto ena ho etsa dipatlisiso ka boemo ba tswelopele kelellong, mosebetsi wa maikutlo le ho kgathala kelello hwa phumantsho ya ditshebeletso tsa mmuso. Morero wa borar o wa thuto ena e ne e le ho kgetholla kamano dipakeng tsa mosebetsi wa maikutlo, diphihlelo tsa ho hlaphohelwa le ho kenya letsoho mosebetsing e le ho thusa ditsebi tsa HR ho thusa basebetsi ho sebetsana le maemo a amanang le mosebetsi wa maikutlo ditsing tsa ditshebeletso tsa mmuso. Morero wa ho qetela wa mohopolo ona e ne e le ho hlahloba diphihlelo tsa motho ka mong mokgatlong wa mmuso wa SA e le ho kgetholla ditshusumetso kapa tse pele le ditlamorao tse amanang le tikoloho ena e ikgethang ya tshebetso.

Ho fihlela merero ena, bankakarolo ba ile ba hirwa mokgatlong wa mmuso wa SA o fumanehang Gauteng le Mpumalanga. Moralo o hlalosang mokgwa o kopaneng wa tswelopele ya mokgwa o hlalosehang o sebedisitswe ho bokella le ho sekaseka data. Thutong ya 1 data e ngata e ile ya bokellwa ka ho sebedisa mosebetsi wa Maikutlo, Ho Kgathala Kelello, boitlamo ba Mosebetsi, Boemo ba tswelopele kelellong le ho Hlaphohelwa di fumana dipotso. Palohohle ya basebetsi ba setsi sa ditshebeletso ba 201 ba nka karolo thutong ya pele. Mohlala wa ho qetela wa thuto ya bobedi o ne o e na le basebetsi ba 32 ba ditshebeletso, bao ba 23 ba bona ba ileng ba nka karolo pele ho nako ya data e fihletswe nakong ya thuto ya boleng. Diphetho di netefaditse kgokahano e hlakileng dipakeng tsa mosebetsi wa maikutlo, ho kgathala kelello le ho nka karolo mosebetsing; kamano e hlakileng pakeng tsa mosebetsi wa maikutlo le ho kgathala kelello ka boemo ba tswelopele kelellong bo fetolang kamano dipakeng tsa tse peli tse hahang. Ho feta moo, ho ile ha fumanwa kamano e matla dipakeng tsa mosebetsi wa maikutlo le ho sebetsa le boiphihlelo ba ho hlaphohelwa bo nang le phello e matla kamanong ena. Se fumanweng thutong ya boleng bo phahameng se bontshitse dihlooho tse hlano tse kenyeletsang (1) Bohlokwa ba maikutlo /ditumeliso tsa pele; (2) Dikamano tsa ho kgutlisa: ho ba mosa /ho atameleha ho molemong wa moreki; (3) Bohlokwa ba marangrang a tshehetso ho fokotsa /ho thoba maemo; (4) Bareki ba thata le ba bakang maikutlo; le (5) Ditshusumetso tse hahang tsa tsh ebedisano e ntle ya bareki ho motho ka mong.

Diphetho di tshehetsa kgopolo ya hore boitshwaro bo sa nepahalang bo ka senya le ho ba kotsi bophelong bo botle ba basebetsi. Dikgothaletso di entswe mokgatlong wa mmuso wa Afrika Borwa tlasa dipatlisiso le bafuputsi ba bang.

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

The thesis investigates the antecedents and consequences of emotional labour in a government service centre in South Africa. More specifically, it investigates quantitatively the relationship between burnout, recovery experiences, work engagement, and emotional labour. Encouraged by the positive organisational behavioural (POB) concept, the thesis also investigates the relationship between the subdimensions of psychological capital on the subdimensions of emotional labour. Furthermore this PhD, through qualitative interviews, then contributes to the literature by exploring additional antecedents and consequences related explicitly to service centre agents in a government organisation in South Africa.

This chapter provides a brief background and introduction to contextualise the study and articulate the general and specific research objectives. This is followed by an outline of the research design, data collection procedure, and data analysis strategies. Lastly, the chapter concludes with an outline of the chapters.

1.1 Introduction and background

In 2010, the former Minister of Finance of South Africa, Mr Pravin Gordhan, reiterated the need for South Africa to expand the economy to grow competitively, invest in infrastructure, raise skills levels, and remove any possible obstacles to growth (Gordhan, 2010). In order to provide enough revenue to fund all of these government initiatives, South Africa largely depends on an efficient tax revenue institution that plays a vital enabling role in public service delivery. It is therefore expected of government organisations to be effective and ethical in revenue administration. Being effective and ethical will enable the government to expand and sustain spending on social investments that will improve the living standards of all South African citizens (Fourie, 2009). In South Africa, the tax administration agency functions in a complex and fast-changing environment, attributed to trade liberalisation, globalisation, rapid movement of capital across borders, and technological and telecommunication innovations (Gelb et al., 2007). Therefore, the organisation must ensure good governance, focusing specifically on the principles of excellent service delivery to encourage optimal tax compliance (Junpath et al., 2016).

Transformation of public service delivery is one of the most critical priorities of the South African government. Although the country has undergone various structural and governmental changes in the past decade, the main focus is on the Batho Pele initiative. Batho Pele means “people first”. This concept is explained in The White Paper on Public Service Delivery of 1997 (Batho Pele SA, 1997). In the South African democracy, political formations are voted into power. Once in power,

the government has to deliver on the expectations of the populace, which include trust in providing excellent public service delivery. Customer expectations refer to what customers wish for, what they expect from a service provider and what they think should happen during a service encounter (Modise et al., 2020).

With the continued growth of the South African population, the quest for better service delivery in South Africa has also increased. This can be seen in how local communities and citizens conduct themselves, embarking, amongst others, on violent mass actions to voice their dismay towards the current lack of public service delivery (Mbanyele, 2018). President Cyril Ramaphosa, during his State of the Nation Address (2018), confirmed that South Africa currently employs one million public servants, of whom the majority serve the citizens of South Africa with commitment and diligence. He, however, reiterated that in too many cases, poor service or no service at all exists in the government sector (Statistics South Africa [Stats SA], 2019).

The ultimate solution to the poor service delivery problem in the South African government would have been the application of information and communication technology (ICT) to change the nature of government-public relationships. However, obstacles such as economic disparities, low levels of literacy, and security concerns still necessitate customer-centric face-to-face encounters (Kanyemba, 2017). Therefore, walk-in service centres play a vital role in realising the Batho Pele principle of increasing access to information and services to empower citizens or government clients and to ensure quality service without incurring unnecessary expenditure (Sibanda, 2012).

Employees in the walk-in government service centres are called service agents. They play a vital role in the interaction between the organisation and the customer (Yang & Lau, 2019). In 2010 the government service centre introduced the branch queue management system (BQMS) to manage and measure the average queue time and service time of client visits or “walk-ins”. Service agents are not only expected to adhere to the strict measurements of BQMS but are also expected to be thorough, swift, and accommodating. Unfortunately, customers are becoming more impatient, argumentative, and frustrated due to various political and economic factors (Sibanda, 2012). Customer frustration can be attributed to severe concerns regarding the ever-growing public-sector wage bill (funded by the taxpaying customer), which results in less money invested in much-needed infrastructure such as education and health (Koma, 2010). In his 2019 budget speech, the then South African minister of finance, Mr Tito Mboweni, confirmed that the wage bill accounts for more than 35% of consolidated public spending (Mboweni, 2019).

Vyas-Doorgapersad (2014) argues that the government has to employ highly skilled employees to deliver on their service delivery commitments because of the direct correlation between the effectiveness and efficiency of the state and how services are delivered. Based on an analysis of

data collected by the Public Service Sector Education and Training Authority, it was confirmed that in 2018/2019, R988 million was spent on training in the public service sector (Stats SA, 2019). Therefore, taking into account the vast amount of time and money invested in training public sector employees, it is also imperative to focus on the emotional well-being of the employees in order to ensure return on investment.

Due to strict policy and procedure measurements in government organisations, employees are often overly focused on meeting governance metrics and expected to display appropriate emotions to satisfy the organisation's service charter (Mafini & Pooe, 2013). Therefore, at some point, every service centre agent has had to hide or manage emotions while dealing with a client (Hochschild, 1983). Emotional regulation is regarded as one of the most powerful predictors of customer satisfaction, service quality, and the overall performance of the organisation (Hülsheger et al., 2010; Scott & Barnes, 2011).

1.2 Problem statement

In 1997 the White Paper on Transforming Service Delivery was introduced to build a people-centred government in South Africa. The vision was to help the nation rise above the discrimination of the past to build a better future for all (Van der Waldt & Du Toit, 2002). This has drastically changed the mandates for government organisations and placed more emphasis on human capital management. According to Lee (2016), service agent behaviour is fundamental in government service centres, mainly because the emotions that they express may leave a deep-rooted impression on their clients, which in turn shape the clients' perception of service quality and attitude towards the government organisation (Allen et al., 2010; Barger & Grandey, 2006; Lee, 2016; Pugh, 2001). Good service delivery is crucial to building trust relationships with government clients or citizens. Although call centre facilities are available at the government service centre, citizens often have to speak to multiple parties before their questions are answered satisfactorily. Therefore, they prefer using the walk-in service centres (Booysen, 2007).

Service agents are expected to be good listeners in order to identify and anticipate clients' needs. They have to make the client feel important and appreciated by displaying appropriate body language. They have to be well trained to understand the organisation's systems; be sympathetic and apologetic when the client is feeling aggrieved, and to always put the clients' needs first by mobilising their emotional resources (Sabino & Bianchi, 2019). This social exchange that takes place during interactive relationships between clients and employees in a service centre creates the social construct of emotional labour, which leads to positive and negative outputs for the employee and the employer and is often subject to external forces (Hochschild, 1979). Although emotional labour is crucial for organisational effectiveness, it is often not identified as an essential

skill or type of required labour. This is mainly because emotional labour is difficult to quantify and measure. Therefore, it is not commonly found in job postings or job descriptions because it is invisible and challenging to substantiate (Guy et al., 2014). According to Guy and Lee (2015), emotional labour entails face-to-face encounters that include active listening, affectional sensing, astuteness, empathy, and negotiating possible solutions while simultaneously controlling one's feelings and that of the client.

The emotion regulation theory refers to the way that individuals can influence their own emotions at a certain point in time and how they express these emotions (Gross, 1998). The emotion regulation model by Gross (2002) highlights two broad levels of emotion regulation strategies, namely antecedent and response-focused strategies. Gross (1998) explains that the antecedent-focused regulation strategy focuses on altering an individual's emotion prior to the emotional response generation. In contrast, the response-focused regulation strategy focuses on modifying the emotional response after the emotion has been generated. Similar to the emotion regulation theory, the concept of emotional labour was defined by Hochschild (1983) as the management of an individual's feelings to display or hide specific emotional responses. In a study done by Grandey and Gabriel (2015), emotion regulation theory was used to define emotional labour. This study urged researchers to use the emotional regulation theory as a framework for emotional labour because the antecedent- and response-focused regulation strategies can be closely linked to the emotional labour concepts of deep acting (reappraisal) and surface acting (suppression) (Grandey, 2000). For this study, it was decided to use the emotional labour strategy as current literature conceptualised emotional labour more broadly regarding ways to regulate internal feelings and modify expressions (Winkler, 2018).

Since the inception of emotional labour research, this concept has been studied in more than ten thousand articles through different research lenses by many different disciplines such as marketing, sociology, business management, and psychology (Grandey, 2003). According to Hochschild (2012), the interdisciplinary interest and diverse findings in emotional labour studies support the importance of understanding emotional labour as a legitimate job function. Hochschild (2012) introduced three "main lenses" through which emotional labour should be explored. These are emotional display at work, occupational requirements, and intrapsychic processes. Emotional display at work focuses on how emotional expressions influence a service participant; the second lens entailing occupational requirements provides evidence that emotional labour is just as important as physical and cognitive labour, depending on the job and organisation. The third lens of intrapsychic processes explores emotional labour strategies found in the psychological literature (Grandey, 2003).

Service agents are required to display professionalism, enthusiasm, and an enduring willingness to serve clients, regardless of how they feel, in keeping with employer display rules (Grandey et al., 2015). Bono and Vey (2005) define display rules as social norms that are regarded as appropriate when displaying emotions. Nguyen et al. (2022) broadened this definition and regard display rules as the emotions that emotional labour workers are required to express as part of their jobs. The emotional labour concept has become increasingly crucial in service sectors as a service agent's behaviour plays a significant role in the quality of service (Bowen et al., 1989; Modekurti-Mahato et al., 2014; Moreo et al., 2019; Pugh, 2001; Yürür & Mengenci, 2014). Given the vital role that service centres play in the current economy, research to find ways to assist frontline employees to effectively regulate their emotions has proliferated (Grandey & Gabriel, 2015). Hochschild (1983) introduced the concept of *emotional labour* three decades ago. This concept could extend our knowledge of service-related challenges in addition to physical labour. She mainly focuses on the authenticity of emotional display. Grandey (2000) defined emotional labour as a process of altering your expressions and emotions to be compatible with the organisation's customer service rules. When service agents display the emotions prescribed by the service charter towards clients, they can choose between two strategies, which differ in terms of their degree of authenticity, namely deep or surface acting (Grandey, 2003). Brotheridge and Lee (2003) broadened this definition of emotional labour. They found that emotional labour also relates to behavioural responses to variations in the variety, intensity, frequency, and duration of service interactions.

Emotional labour research characterises the emotional regulation strategy of deep acting as a more authentic manifestation of emotions. Deep acting occurs before external factors provoke an emotional reaction. Therefore, it enables the service agent to align his/her true feelings with desired emotions prescribed by the service charter (Grandey, 2000). Service agents familiar with the strategy of deep acting often use it as an adaptive regulation to display appropriate expressions by cognitively reviewing an event or problem and then changing their understanding of the situation (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002). Therefore, this strategy is essential in obtaining positive feedback from clients and promoting employee accomplishment (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Cheung et al., 2011).

Hochschild (2012) argues that inauthentic behaviour can be disruptive, and according to Grandey (2015), it can even be harmful to an employee's well-being. The emotional labour strategy of surface acting is discussed extensively in international literature and mainly in the field of psychology, focusing on the relationship between the adverse effects of surface acting on an individual's well-being and intrapersonal psychological variables (Grandey, 2000; Grandey, 2015; Grandey et al., 2012; Guy & Lee, 2015; Hochschild, 2012; Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011). When

dealing with clients, surface acting necessitates suppressing one's actual feelings and faking emotional expressions (Grandey, 2000; Gross, 1998). Clients often notice the fake emotional expressions and interpret them as a sign of dishonesty or a lack of interest in their query or problem, which often elicits an adverse response (Côté, 2005; Groth et al., 2009). Empirical studies have found that surface acting was negatively associated with client quality service delivery and relationship building (Grandey, 2003; Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011). Service agents who are accustomed to surface acting may try to be friendly, even if they are upset or feeling emotionally drained after dealing with hostile or demanding clients, which in turn, according to Parajon (2011), contributes to low levels of work engagement (Bozionelos & Kiamou, 2008; Grandey, 2000; Grandey & Gabriel, 2015; Wang et al., 2016).

Although the adverse outcome of surface acting is well supported in the literature, research conducted by Allen et al. (2005) suggests that the emotional well-being of employees is not necessarily linked to a specific emotional labour strategy (surface or deep acting) that they follow but can also depend on the personal intrinsic qualities and characteristics of an individual. In addition, it is important to note that, according to Guy and Lee (2015), the effects of emotional labour may fluctuate in different industries. These different perceptions of emotional labour that are held across different organisations, underline the necessity for this study in a government service centre.

The unintended consequences of faking genuine emotions for extended periods could eventually lead to increased absenteeism, lower levels of work engagement, unwanted turnover, reduced individual performance, emotional exhaustion, a reduced sense of personal accomplishment, depersonalisation, and eventually burnout (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011; Kristensen et al., 2005; Low et al., 2001; Maslach et al., 2001; Mauno et al., 2016; Schaufeli et al., 2008). Existing research on emotional labour predominantly focuses on call centre and hospitality employees, teachers, and health care workers in an international context. There is limited research in a South African context on how emotional labour relates to burnout and work engagement in the public service sector. This lack of research perpetuates the government service centre's inability to correctly identify and diagnose employment issues related to burnout and work engagement levels. Therefore, the first objective of this study was to address the lack of empirical research that systematically investigates the relationship between emotional labour, burnout, and work engagement in South African government service centres. A result could be to codify emotional labour as a job requirement in the government organisation under research.

Emotional labour in service professions includes emotional regulation such as maintaining a neutral tone, showing sympathy and concern, and often suppressing feelings of irritation and impatience, all of which may lead to emotional exhaustion and burnout (Bono & Vey, 2005;

Cheung & Tang, 2007; Grandey et al., 2012). Service centre agents are faced with daily face-to-face interactions with clients, co-workers, and management, each with their own complex set of demands. It is, therefore, not surprising that these agents run the risk of *burnout* (Cho et al., 2013; Lings et al., 2014; Singh, 2000). According to Cordes and Dougherty (1993), burnout can be seen as a chronic affective response syndrome that develops over a prolonged period when working in stressful conditions. Leiter and Maslach (2005) describe job-related burnout as one of the most significant occupational hazards in our current economy, which could lead to devastating consequences for an organisational and personal level. Kristensen et al. (2005) conceptualise burnout as a phenomenon with exhaustion and fatigue at its core, with specific domains in a person's life as an additional key feature. One of the most critical domains in any person's life is the "work" domain and the participants in this study, specifically the "client work" domain.

Schaufeli et al. (2019) define burnout as a work-related state of exhaustion, characterised by the reduced ability to effectively regulate cognitive and emotional processes, extreme tiredness, mental distancing, depressed mood, and psychological and psychosomatic distress symptoms. Burnout is often associated with various adverse physical, emotional, and interpersonal outcomes such as fatigue, feelings of hopelessness, a decrease in employee performance, increased absenteeism, decreased organisational commitment, reduced job satisfaction, higher levels of turnover intention, and low work engagement levels (Demerouti et al., 2010; Ericson-Lidman & Strandberg, 2007; Han et al., 2016; Hoopes, 2006; Karl & Peluchette, 2006; Taris, 2006).

There is a definite need for employee turnover in the South African government to be kept to a minimum as turnover imposes a considerable cost burden on the South African taxpayer in terms of recruitment and training. Barkhuizen and Gumede (2021) found that employee turnover has a direct negative impact on organisational effectiveness. In addition, employee turnover may result in skills shortages that negatively affect service delivery. In a study done by Du Plooy and Roodt (2010), it was found that turnover intention is negatively related to work engagement because unengaged employees are likely to be more detached from the organisation and would have a higher propensity to leave. *Work engagement* refers to positive, high energy and affective-motivational state of mind, combined with high levels of vigour, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010). Vigour refers to high levels of energy, mental resilience, and flexibility displayed by working individuals. Dedication refers to individuals experiencing a sense of importance, pride, purpose, and meaning. Absorption entails being happy in one's work environment while still focusing on the job at hand (Bakker et al., 2003). Hochschild (2012) frequently argues in current literature that if employees' emotions could mirror the expected emotions in the organisation, they would feel a greater sense of engagement. In a study done by Yoo and Jeong (2017), it was found that deep acting in emotional labour has a positive effect on

work engagement, while surface acting has a negative effect. According to Lavigna (2015), government organisations have intrinsic qualities that create work engagement barriers. These include employees having less decision-making autonomy, political leadership, bureaucratic structures, and complex performance measures.

South African government organisations are faced with immense pressure to adapt to demanding stakeholders, a shortage of critical skills, increased workforce diversity, and high levels of employee dissatisfaction (Du Plessis & Barkhuizen, 2011). However, instead of focusing on "what went wrong" and how to remedy the outcome, a more positive approach is proposed (Strümpfer, 2005). Encouraged by this positive approach, organisational researchers started applying positive psychological research in organisations and came up with the concept of positive organisational behaviour (POB) (Tamer, 2015). Luthans et al. (2007a) identified a specific set of constructs that make up the POB concept: self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism. Together they make up the higher-order construct of *psychological capital* (PsyCap). Based on the theories of work motivation (Stajkovic, 2006), agentic and social cognition (Bandura, 2008), and positive psychology (Lopez & Snyder, 2009), PsyCap can be defined as an individual's positive psychological state of development. It was found that people who scored high on PsyCap were generally more satisfied with their jobs and had higher work performance levels (Avey et al., 2011; Luthans, 2012). *Self-efficacy* means having the confidence to engage in challenging tasks and to do whatever is needed to succeed; *Optimism* occurs when an individual makes positive attributions about succeeding at the moment and in future; *Hope* is an individual showing perseverance towards set goals and can redirect their plans in order to succeed; *Resilience* refers to the individual's ability to bounce back and excel in order to attain success (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). An individual with high levels of resilience will be able to improvise and identify beneficial opportunities by adapting to complex situations when servicing clients, thereby ensuring that the organisation's goals are achieved (Coutu, 2002; Donovan, 2013).

In public service, emotional labour forms an integral part of the job. However, it is seldom defined as a legitimate job duty, which results in very little development, support, and training to deal with emotional labour, leaving the organisation without mitigating measures to support employees (Guy & Lee, 2015). In order to determine the most appropriate PsyCap intervention to support employees on an organisational level, the second objective of this study was to investigate the effect of the subdimensions of psychological capital on the subdimensions of emotional labour in the government service centre under research and to determine any possible moderating effect of psychological capital on the relationship between emotional labour and burnout. In a study done by Cheung et al. (2011), the interaction between emotional labour and the psychological effect was established when they hypothesised that PsyCap modifies emotional labour, job

satisfaction, and burnout. According to Cheung et al., employees who possess high PsyCap levels use psychological well-being to overcome communicational stress factors in a work environment and to prevent inappropriate emotions from interfering with cognitive work tasks.

The South African government is faced with numerous challenges in dealing with the reform of human capital practices in the government organisation. One of these challenges is to enhance the work-related well-being of employees (Chou, 2009). Another challenge is the limited time available to introduce new interventions during the employee's regular working hours (Mpofu & Hlatywayo, 2015). Taking into account the positive and negative effects that performing emotional labour has on employees' well-being (e.g., burnout and work engagement), sound human resource practices (e.g., job design, training, intrinsic rewards, and selection) must be utilised to assist employees in coping with circumstances associated with emotional labour (Ramachandran et al., 2011). Therefore, the third objective of this study was to determine the relationship between emotional labour, work engagement, and *recovery experiences* (i.e., psychological detachment and relaxation). This objective will determine the most appropriate recovery strategy interventions to support employees on an individual level. Recovery from work-related demands, such as emotional labour, is used by employees to restore their psychological resources that have been depleted during their workday (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). According to Sanz-Vergel et al. (2012), emotional labour spills over to an employee's personal life away from work and impedes the employee's recovery experiences. Employees have to recover daily because the accumulation of strain is detrimental to their well-being (Xanthopoulou et al., 2014). According to Sonnentag and Geurts (2009), recovery experiences are the mechanisms used in the recovery process and include psychological detachment, relaxation, mastery, and control. This study focused on the most researched recovery strategies, namely psychological detachment and relaxation, because they are prototypical recovery experiences and show a strong correlation with service employee outcomes (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). *Psychological detachment* refers to being physically and psychologically absent from the workplace (Sonnentag & Bayer, 2005). *Relaxation* is characterised by positive emotions of low activation and is achieved when employees deliberately choose activities that enhance the relaxation of the mind and body (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007).

DeNisi and Griffin (2015) emphasize that human resource (HR) professionals have to understand and analyse all factors that may influence the organisation's work environment, considering that employees are the most critical resource in any organisation. Research in the service industry confirmed that emotional labour plays a vital role in the work environment, so when HR professionals in the government service centre under research have to manage job analysis and development, labour relations, compensation, performance management, and training and

development, it is essential for them to have updated, relevant information to provide support to employees. The fourth research objective of this study was to use semi-structured interviews to explain the nature of differences between service agents with high and low levels of emotional labour, also taking into account the biographical and demographical characteristics in each of the 16 Gauteng branch offices of the government service centre under research.

Based on the abovementioned discussion, the research questions were summarised as follows:

- What is the relationship between emotional labour, burnout, and work engagement in a government service centre?
- What is the effect of the subdimensions of psychological capital on the subdimensions of emotional labour in a government service centre?
- Will psychological capital (self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience) have a moderating effect on the relationship between emotional labour and burnout in a government service centre?
- Do recovery experiences (psychological detachment and relaxation) act as an antecedent to emotional labour levels in a government service centre?
- Will recovery experiences (relaxation and psychological detachment) have a mediating effect on the relationship between emotional labour and work engagement in a government service centre?
- What are the possible reasons or factors influencing high and low emotional labour levels in a government service centre?
- What other consequences could high emotional labour levels have on the government service centre agents?

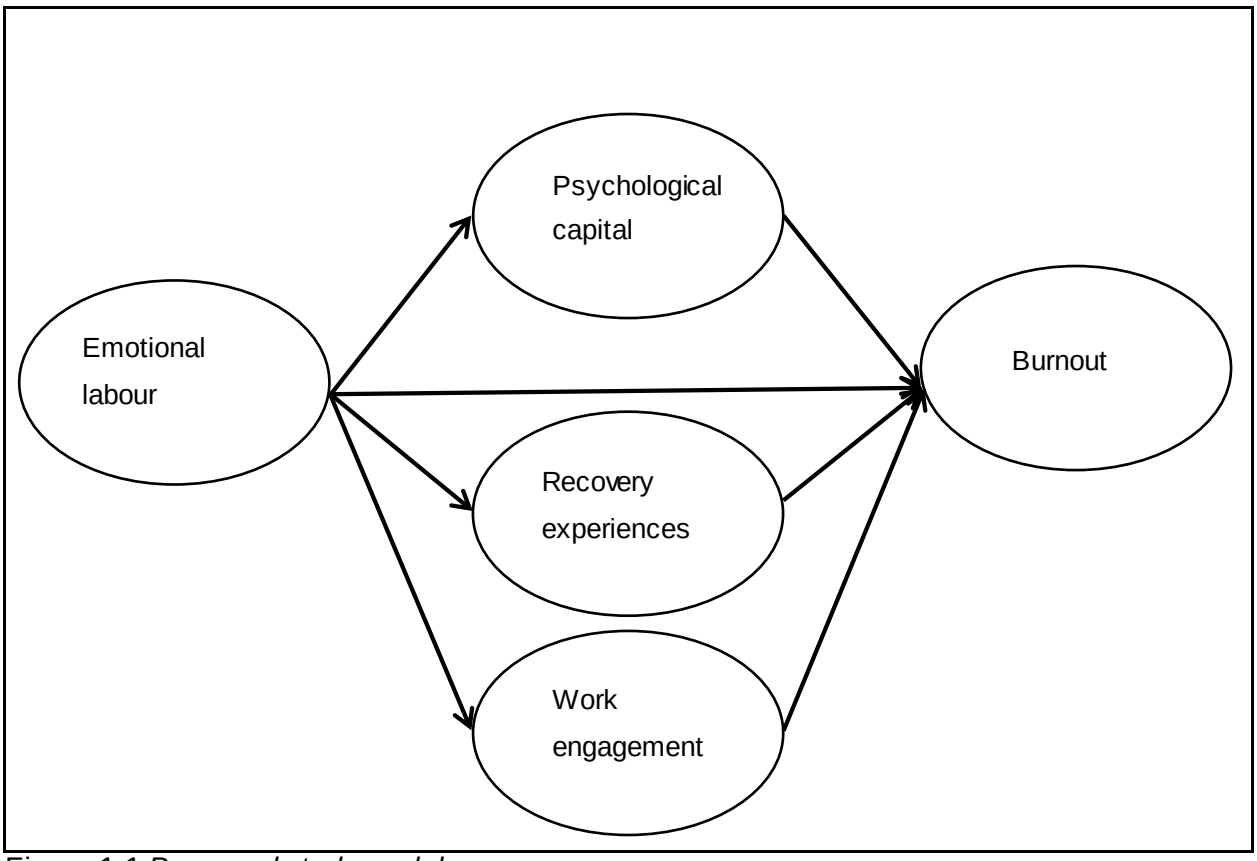

Figure 1.1 *Proposed study model*

1.3 Research objectives

1.3.1 General objectives

To address the gaps in South African literature and practice, the general objectives of this thesis was to investigate the relationship between emotional labour (surface acting, deep acting), burnout, and work engagement; to investigate the relationship between the subdimensions of psychological capital (hope, self-efficacy, optimism, and resilience) on the subdimensions of emotional labour; and to investigate whether psychological capital has a moderating effect on the relationship between emotional labour and burnout in a government service centre environment. It further investigated whether recovery experiences (psychological detachment and relaxation) acted as an antecedent to emotional labour; whether recovery experiences had a mediating effect on the relationship between emotional labour and work engagement and lastly, this study explored possible reasons or factors influencing high and low emotional labour levels as well as other consequences of emotional labour for government service centre employees.

1.3.2 Specific objectives

More specifically, this study had seven objectives.

- First, to investigate the relationship between emotional labour, burnout, and work engagement in a government service centre.
- Second, to examine the effect of the subdimensions of psychological capital (hope, self-efficacy, optimism, and resilience) on the subdimensions of emotional labour (surface and deep acting) in a government service centre.
- Third, to investigate the moderating effect of psychological capital on the relationship between emotional labour and burnout in a government service centre.
- Fourth, to determine whether recovery experiences (psychological detachment and relaxation) are an antecedent to emotional labour levels in a government service centre.
- Fifth, to investigate the mediating effects of recovery experiences on the relationship between emotional labour and work engagement in a government service centre.
- Sixth, to explore possible reasons or factors influencing high and low emotional labour levels in the 16 Gauteng branch offices of the government service centre under research.
- Seventh, to explore other consequences of emotional labour for service agents in the government service centre under research.

1.4 Research method

The research consisted of a literature and an empirical study.

1.4.1 Literature study

A literature review was conducted to gain insight and provide a theoretical background. The review was conducted using databases such as Emerald Online, EBSCOhost, ERIC, Google Scholar, Web of Science, SCOPUS, and JSTOR. Findings of previous studies and how they relate to the research had to be obtained and incorporated into the existing body of knowledge (Kumar, 2011).

A literature study was conducted to conceptualise the variables and the relationships between the variables (emotional labour, psychological capital, burnout, work engagement, and recovery experiences in a service centre environment).

1.4.2 Empirical study

This study employed a mixed method sequential explanatory design, a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches when collecting and analysing data (Creswell & Clark,

2017). The integration of research methods has become increasingly relevant in recent years because more comprehensive and detailed data can be collected to contribute to achieving research objectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In a mixed method sequential explanatory design, the results from the first study feed the design and purpose of the second study (Stich et al., 2017). Another benefit of this mixed method design is that the final research report can be explained in different stages, making it easier for the reader to get a clearer picture of the research findings (Creswell & Clark, 2007).

Quantitative research answers the following research questions:

- What is the relationship between emotional labour, burnout, and work engagement in a government service centre?
- What is the effect of the subdimensions of psychological capital on the subdimensions of emotional labour in a government service centre?
- Will psychological capital (hope, self-efficacy, optimism, and resilience) have a moderating effect on the relationship between employees' emotional labour and burnout levels in a government service centre?
- Do recovery experiences (psychological detachment and relaxation) act as an antecedent to emotional labour levels in a government service centre?
- Will recovery experiences mediate the relationship between emotional labour and work engagement levels in a government service centre?

The primary focus of the qualitative research phase was:

- To broaden the understanding and explain the differences identified during the quantitative research conducted amongst the client service agents in the government service centre under research.
- To understand the influence of high emotional labour levels on service agents in the government service centre under research better.

1.5 Research design

This study followed a mixed method sequential explanatory model (Creswell & Clark, 2011). A qualitative study followed after the quantitative data had been analysed, keeping in mind that each method primarily answered a specific research question.

Study 1

Quantitative data was collected using a cross-sectional, correlational, and nonexperimental design. According to Pearson (2010), the quantitative cross-sectional correlational study was designed to gather information from many participants at a certain point in time. In this study, it was used to explore the relationship between emotional labour, burnout, work engagement, psychological capital, and recovery experiences and to examine the potential relationship between two or more variables at a certain point in time. A survey research design was used in this study (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). The cross-sectional design includes statistical analysis and descriptive statistics that allow for a wide range of assessments (Pearson, 2010). Questionnaires were distributed to a sample of the population. The information obtained from the survey can be generalised to the whole population. This would require a representative sample (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1997). This survey design collected data to answer the first five research questions and provided valuable information to identify respondents for the subsequent qualitative study.

Study 2

Creswell and Clark (2011) believe that researchers use the sequential mixed method design to recognise particular quantitative findings that need further explanation. Therefore, qualitative data was collected from the participants in Study 1 through semi-structured interviews. After the survey data in Study 1 had been analysed, criterion sampling was used to narrow the range of variation and focus on one respondent who scored towards the higher end of the emotional labour spectrum and one respondent who scored towards the lower end of the emotional labour spectrum in each of the 16 Region 1 branch offices (32 participants). If the sampled respondent refused to take part in Study 2, the next participant on the list was sampled. Sampling was done in this manner to take possible differences in biographical and demographical characteristics and different management styles in the respective branch offices into account. By exploring the qualitative interview data, the researcher intended to get a better understanding of and to explain the nature of the differences between the emotional labour levels of the participants in the different offices and to explore the consequences of high emotional labour levels on service agents in the government service centre under research. According to Flick et al. (2004), qualitative research is a way for research participants to describe the world from the inside out.

1.5.1 Participants

The government service centre under research comprises 53 walk-in branch offices located in the four provinces of South Africa. These offices are grouped (geographically) into four regions.

Of the four regions, Region 1 accounts for the highest number of clients, mainly because the 16 offices in Region 1 are located in Gauteng, where the most active taxpayers in South Africa are located. Participants in this study were employed in Region 1 branch offices of a government service centre that employs 348 full-time staff that work eight hours per day, five days a week.

The participant characteristics covered in this study included gender, age, race group, educational level, and occupational status.

Study 1

A probability random sample was used. This type of sampling gives each person in the chosen population an equal opportunity to be included in the sample, which limits bias resulting from the selection procedure and produces a representative sample (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2016). Selection criteria: Region 1 branch office employees fluent in English; have basic computer literacy skills; some experience in using the internet to assist with web-based products; and a matric certificate. 348 participants were selected of whom 201 participated.

Study 2

Criterion sampling was used in Study 2 to narrow the range of variation and focus on one respondent who scored towards the higher end of the emotional labour spectrum and one respondent who scored towards the lower end of the emotional labour spectrum in each of the 16 Region 1 government branch offices. 32 participants were selected of whom 23 participated before data saturation was reached.

1.5.2 Measuring instruments

The *Emotional Labour Scale* (Lee & Brotheridge, 2011; Lee et al., 2010) was used to measured surface and deep acting. This emotional labour questionnaire is one of the most widely used scales and consists of a 17-item self-reported questionnaire that was used to measure five facets of workplace emotional display, which included the intensity, frequency, and variety of emotional display and deep and surface acting. The five facets of workplace emotional display were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). In contrast, the duration of a typical interaction was measured in minutes. Acceptable reliability of .76 for surface acting and .90 for deep acting was shown during previous studies using the scale (Lee & Brotheridge, 2011; Lee et al., 2010).

Burnout was measured using the *Burnout Assessment Tool* (BAT) (Schaufeli et al., 2019). The BAT focuses on the nature of burnout and distinguishes between core symptoms, which include exhaustion (measuring eight items), emotional impairment, cognitive impairment, and mental

distance (measuring five items each), and secondary or atypical symptoms, which include psychological and psychosomatic complaints (measuring five items each). Response options ranged from 1 (*never)* to 5 (*always*). The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the BAT was reported between 0.82 and 0.95 (Schaufeli et al., 2019).

The *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES)* (Schaufeli et al., 2002) was used to measure the work engagement levels of the government service agents. It is a self-reported questionnaire with 17 items scored on a seven-point frequency scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 6 (*always*). The UWES is divided into three subscales, namely vigour (six items), dedication (five items), and absorption (six items). The scale includes statements such as *"I am bursting with energy in my work"* (vigour), *"I find my work full of meaning and purpose"* (dedication), and *"I am immersed in my work"* (absorption). The scale has been found to have acceptable reliability coefficients reported internationally and in South Africa (Simons & Buitendach, 2013). Storm and Rothmann (2003) obtained alpha coefficients reliability and internal consistency for the three subscales of between 0.78 and 0.89 in a South African context.

The *Psychological Capital Questionnaire* (PCQ-12) (Luthans et al., 2007b) was used to measure resilience. The 12-item PCQ contains 12 items, with three measuring its four dimensions: hope, resilience, optimism, and efficacy. Response options ranged from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree*. The PCQ-12 is a shortened version of the original PCQ-24 and has been demonstrated to be valid and reliable with a reported Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.69 (Avey et al., 2011; Luthans et al., 2008; Norman et al., 2010).

The *Recovery Experience Questionnaire* (REQ) (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007) measured recovery experiences. The REQ includes four subscales, namely psychological detachment from work, relaxation, mastery, and control. However, only the psychological detachment and relaxation strategies were measured in this study. The instrument consists of two subscales, each containing four items. A sample item was "*Today, during my off-job time … I forgot about work*" and "*Today, during my off-job time … I used the time to relax*". Response options ranged from 1 = *totally disagree* to 5 = *totally agree*. The internal consistency (Cronbach alpha coefficient) for psychological detachment from work varies from 0.88 to 0.95, and relaxation varies from 0.90 to 0.95, depending on the measurement day (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007).

1.5.3 Data collection procedures

Study 1

Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the government organisation's research committee, group executive, and branch managers responsible for the 16 Region 1 branch

offices. The researcher employed a research assistant who, in person, requested the participants to complete an English covering letter that explained the purpose of the research study, emphasized the confidentiality of the research project, and confirmed that all data collected would be used for research purposes only.

For the first quantitative phase, the research assistant requested the selected branch office employees to voluntarily participate in the research by completing an English questionnaire at their workplace. To accurately analyse the data, participants received a uniquely coded questionnaire. Each questionnaire was hand-delivered to the participants in their different branch offices by the research assistant. The researcher and the research assistant were available to answer any questions relating to the research study.

The participants were requested to return the completed questionnaires to a sealed box made available before the research commenced. The researcher collected the sealed boxes, and all data was captured on an Excel spreadsheet, after which the analysis was done using the SPSS 27.0 and Mplus 8.6 software programs.

Study 2

After the statistical analysis of the quantitative data collected during Study 1, criterion sampling was used to narrow the range of variation and focus on one respondent who scored towards the higher end of the emotional labour spectrum and one who scored towards the lower end of the emotional labour spectrum in each of the 16 Region 1 government branch offices. In Study 2, qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Permission to conduct the qualitative research was obtained from the government organisation's research committee, group executive, and branch managers responsible for the 16 Region 1 branch offices. The researcher employed a research assistant who, electronically, via Microsoft Teams or Zoom, requested the participants to complete an English consent letter that outlined the purpose of the research and guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity of responses.

The researcher only conducted an interview after ensuring that the participant (who met the inclusion criteria and gave consent) fully understood the purpose and his/her role in the research project. Interviews were conducted digitally, via Microsoft Teams/Zoom, or telephonically. Interview details, such as the date and time, were negotiated with the participant during business hours. As far as possible, the researcher aimed to create an interview environment in which the participants felt safe to openly share their experiences (i.e., by requesting participants to find a private space where they could not be overheard).

Respondents were asked for permission to audio record the interviews for transcription. The researcher assured the participant that no identifiable information would be recorded. The interview duration depended on the responsiveness of the participant.

The recorded interview data was analysed with the help of a third-party coder who adhered to all ethical requirements to identify patterns that supported and built on the findings in Study 1. Audio files and transcript data (in MS Word format) are password protected and will be stored on Google Drive for a minimum of five years. The semi-structured interviews allowed for analytical comparisons between participants. During interviews, the researcher probed for clarity when answers were ambiguous.

Interview questions were structured in a non-threatening and non-intrusive way that does not elevate the risks above those encountered in regular day-to-day interactions. Before the research commenced, approval from the relevant scientific and research ethics committee was obtained.

1.5.4 Data analysis

Statistical analysis

The quantitative research data was investigated by latent variable modelling using Mplus 8.6 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2020) and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences – SPSS 27.0 (IBM Corporation, 2020). Latent variable modelling follows a two-step model building approach and is also known as structural equation modelling SEM (Kline, 2011). The factorial validity of the measurement model used was first tested, then the model was developed according to acceptable fit indicators. Next, the structural model was evaluated by adding the regression relationships in line with the hypotheses. The measurement model indicating correlational relationships was used as the basis for the structural model and was used as the best fitting model. Mediation or potential interaction effects was also evaluated. Validation of the models was done by determining whether the model provided a good fit to the data and obtaining estimates of the parameters of the models (Byrne, 2012). In order to take skewness and kurtosis of the data into account, all models were tested with a maximum likelihood robust (MLR) estimator.

To assess the model fit in both the abovementioned steps, the following indices were used: root means square error of approximation (RMSEA), chi-square (χ^2), degrees of freedom (*df*), the standardised root mean square residual (SRMR), and incremental fit indices, including the comparative fit index (CFI), and the tucker-Lewis index (TLI). CFI and TLI values higher than .90 are considered acceptable. RMSEA values lower than .08 indicate an acceptable fit between the data and the model (Hair et al., 2010). The Bayes information criteria (BIC) and Akaike information criteria (AIC) were used to compare the measurement models. Values lower than 0.05 and 0.08

are accepted as indicating a good fit between the data and the model for the SRMR and RMSEA indicators, respectively (Hu & Bentler, 1999). In order to calculate the reliability of scales, McDonald's omega reliability coefficient (Ω) was used because it was found to provide a more accurate degree of confidence of the regulating scales (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2013). The 0.70 cut-off value was used as a guideline for reliability (Wang & Wang, 2012).

Thematic analysis

Qualitative data was transcribed by the researcher and saved as an MS Word document. Each digital recording was given a unique code to be able to link it back to the time and date of the interview in order to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. By asking and listening to the research participants, the researcher created meaning by identifying patterns that emerged from the descriptive interpretations of the research participants.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data collected. This approach allowed the researcher to encode the gathered information by employing "coding". According to Gibbs (2018), coding data can be explained as simply labelling sections or passages of the text with a code word. By so doing, interesting or salient features can be identified. The different codes were used to create themes and subthemes for the study.

According to Braun et al. (2016), six phases can be identified in thematic analysis:

Phase 1: *Familiarisation with the data:* The researcher must become intimately familiar with the collected qualitative data by repeatedly listening to the recorded data and reading the transcripts.

Phase 2: *Coding:* entails that the coding or indexing process; this is where phrases, sentences, and words that are repeated several times are labelled, This phase ends with the collation of all the codes and relevant data extracts.

Phase 3: *Searching for themes:* a meaningful and coherent pattern found in the qualitative data, which is also relevant to the research question, is called a theme. The researcher "actively" searches for themes during this phase and collate the coded data relevant to each identified theme.

Phase 4: *Reviewing themes:* all themes identified during phase 3 have to be checked in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set to ensure it is relevant. During this phase, themes can be collapsed or split into two or more subthemes.

Phase 5: *Defining and naming themes:* during this phase, the researcher writes a detailed analysis of each theme to identify its crux. This leads to constructing informative names for each theme.

Phase 6: *Writing up:* in the last phase, the results are communicated, describing the connections, relationships, and interpretation of the data collected as well as be contextualised in relation to the existing literature.

Data quality

Trustworthiness in qualitative research has been frequently debated. However, it can be achieved through a rigorous verification process (Morse et al., 2002). Data quality was ensured by adapting Guba's criteria for ensuring trustworthiness (Shenton, 2004).

Shenton (2004) identified four constructs that can be used to obtain a trustworthy qualitative study. The first construct of **credibility** can be linked to internal validity and refers to the extent that the participants can relate to the findings. According to Shenton (2004), this can be achieved when the researcher constantly compares the reconstructed data to the participants' views. The second construct of **transferability** can be linked to external validity and refers to the extent to which the research findings of this study can be applied in other situations. Transferability ensures that the study outcome is not biased by the interviewer's opinion. The third construct of **dependability** can be linked to reliability and refers to the consistency of findings that can be replicated at any point in time. The fourth construct that Shenton (2004) identifies is **conformability**, which is linked to objectivity and relates to the potential for agreement between two or more independent investigators regarding data accuracy, meaning, and relevance.

1.6 Ethical considerations

The researcher is employed by the government organisation under research as a talent and capability development consultant and is responsible for assisting the organisation in identifying and developing human capital (talent) to respond to the increasing demands of the evolving work environment. The research assistant is also employed by the government organisation under research as a human resource administrator responsible for all administrative and statistical analysis in the Human Resource Business Partner division. The researcher and the research assistant do not have direct contact with or any authority over the participants of this study. They tried by all means possible to remain unbiased and neutral by bracketing their own views and experiences. From the onset of this study, the government organisation's research committee ensured that research was conducted fairly and ethically within the organisation.

It is often challenging to get a clear-cut clarification of ethical considerations, and researchers are frequently faced with ethical dilemmas during every stage of the research process (Resnik, 2018). Therefore, this study evaluated and attempted to mitigate ethical risks during the different stages of the research process.

Ethical considerations towards the participants

According to Creswell (2013), it is imperative to communicate the intended objectives of the research study to all stakeholders to avoid uncertainty or deception. The procedure and purpose of the research were communicated to each participant by providing a brief description in the cover letter attached to the questionnaire and the interview invitation. The expected time required to complete the questionnaire and interview was communicated to the participants so that they could prepare themselves properly.

The participants that were identified to take part in the qualitative study were briefed on the significance of their participation in the research by the research assistant. However, if they refused to take part, it was accepted and respected. In order to continue with the qualitative research, a new sample was drawn from the quantitative findings; this process was repeated until a representative sample had been identified. Only voluntary participants were included in the study.

The researcher and the research assistant adhered to strict ethical standards and ensured that they acted in the best interest of the participants by placing the participants' privacy, well-being, and dignity first. The participants were shown respect by protecting their privacy and considering their physical and emotional needs during the study. Participants were treated equitably and not discriminated against on any grounds (e.g., gender, race, disability). The research was conducted and planned in such a manner to as far as possible foster beneficence and to exclude exploitation and avoid any harm to participants. Participants were allowed to terminate their participation or withdraw from the research at any stage without fear of prejudice.

Ethical consideration in data collection, analysis, interpretation, and writing of results

Data and information collected during the research phases were treated as confidential and only used for research purposes. Special care was taken to conduct the research in such a manner that data collected could not be linked back to a specific candidate by anyone except the researcher. Each coded questionnaire and interview recording was linked to a specific branch office so that the data could be accurately analysed. Special care was taken to separate the identifying information on the consent letters from the actual responses. The researcher's identity, affiliation, and qualifications were made known before the research commenced, and all research

data was kept in a safe place. The completed quantitative questionnaires were locked in a cupboard in the researcher's office. All audio files and transcript data collected during the qualitative phase of the study are password protected and will be stored on Google Drive for a minimum of five years. The collected research data remains the property of the North-West University (NWU). Only the researcher and the promotor of the study has access to this information.

Adherence to the Personal Protection of Information Act

Personal identifying information collected during the different research phases (phone numbers, email and physical addresses) remained confidential. This information was dealt with in accordance with the stipulations of the Protection of Personal Information Act [POPIA] (Act 4 of 2013, p. 18) "accountability, processing limitation, purpose specification, further processing limitation, information quality, openness, security safeguards, data subject interpretation"). Information regarding race or ethnic origin is classified by Section 26 of the Protection of Information Act as special personal information and therefore prohibits the processing of such information. This prohibition is, however, waived by Section 27(1) (d) of POPIA if the information is processed for research purposes and in public interest (POPIA, 2013).

All information collected in this study was for research purposes only and appropriately limited to the sample for which the findings and conclusions were valid, to ensure that it is in the public's best interest. Personal identifying information was only used in the office context and not individually released. Participants had the option to provide their contact details if they wanted their results to be shared with them. The researcher and research assistant are the only people that have access to the participants' personal contact details. All personal identifying information was destroyed after individual feedback, if requested, had been provided.

The research was done honestly and with integrity; no evidence was manipulated to fit research needs.

1.7 Chapter layout

Chapter 1: Introduction, problem statement, and objectives.

Chapter 2: Article 1 – Emotional labour, burnout, and work engagement amongst service centre employees in a South African government organisation.

Chapter 3: Article 2 – The relationship between psychological capital, burnout and emotional labour in a South African government organisation.

Chapter 4: Article 3 – Emotional labour, recovery experiences and work engagement in a South African government organisation.

Chapter 5: Article 4 – The dimensions, consequences, and antecedents of emotional labour in a South African government organisation.

Chapter 6: Conclusions, contributions, limitations, and recommendations.

References

Allen, J. A., Pugh, S. D., Grandey, A. A., & Groth, M. (2010). Following display rules in good or bad faith?: Customer orientation as a moderator of the display rule-emotional labour relationship. *Human Performance*, *23*, 101-115. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/08959281003621695

Allen, D. G., Weeks, K. P., & Moffitt, K. R. (2005). Turnover intentions and voluntary turnover: the moderating roles of self-monitoring, locus of control, proactive personality, and risk aversion. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *90*(5), 980-990. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2005-10696-015

Avey, J., Reichard, R., Luthans, F., & Mhatre, K. (2011). Meta-analysis of the impact of positive psychological capital on employee attitudes, behaviours, and performance. *Human Resource Development Quarterly,* 22, 127-152.

Avey, J. B., Avolio, B. J., & Luthans, F. (2011). Experimentally analysing the impact of leader positivity on follower positivity and performance. *The Leadership Quarterly, 22*(2), 282-294.

Bakker, A. B., Demerouti, E., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2003). Dual processes at work in a call centre: an application of the job demands-resources model. *European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology, 12*(4), 393-417. https://www.isonderhouden.nl/doc/pdf/arnoldbakker/articles/articles_arnold_bakker_90.pdf

Bandura, A. (2008). An agentic perspective on positive psychology. *Positive psychology* (Vol. 1, pp. 167-196). Greenwood.

Barger, P. B., & Grandey, A. A. (2006). Service with a smile and encounter satisfaction: Emotional contagion and appraisal mechanisms. *Academy of Management Journal, 49*, 1229-1238.

Barkhuizen, N. E., & Gumede, B. (2021). The relationship between, talent management, job satisfaction and voluntary turnover intentions of employees in a selected government institution. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management Journal, 19*, 1-12.

Bono, J. E., & Vey, M. A. (2005). Towards understanding emotional management at work: A quantitative review of emotional labour research. In *Emotions in organisational behaviour* (pp. 224-244). Psychology Press.

Booysen, S. (2007). With the ballot and the brick: the politics of attaining service delivery. *Progress in Development Studies, 7*(1), 21-32.

Bowen, D. E., Siehl, C., & Schneider, B. (1989). A framework for analysing customer service orientations in manufacturing. *Academy of Management Review, 14*, 75-95.

Bozionelos, N., & Kiamou, K. (2008). Emotional work in the Hellenic frontline services environment: How it relates to emotional exhaustion and work attitudes. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 19*(6), 1108-1130.

Braun, V., Clark, L., & Weate, P. (2016). Using thematic analysis in sport and exercise research. In *Routledge handbook of qualitative research in sport and exercise* (pp. 213-227). Routledge. *Journal of Business Research*, *56*(12), 971-978. https://uwe-repository.worktribe.com/OutputFile/3123710

Brotheridge, C. M., & Grandey, A. A. (2002). Emotional labour and burnout: Comparing two perspectives of "people work". *Journal of Vocational Behaviour, 60*(1), 17-39.

Brotheridge, C., & Lee, R. (2002). Testing a conservation of resources model of the dynamics of emotional labor. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 7*, 57-67.

Brotheridge, C., & Lee, R. (2003). Development and validation of the emotional labour scale. *Journal of Occupational and Organisational Psychology, 76*(3), 365-379.

Byrne, B. M. (2012). *Structural equation modelling with Mplus: Basic concepts, applications, and programming*. Routledge.

Cheung, F. Y. L., & Tang, C. S. K. (2007). The influence of emotional dissonance and resources at work on job burnout among Chinese human service employees. *International Journal of Stress Management, 14*(1), 72-87.

Cheung, F., Tang, C. S., & Tang, S. (2011). Psychological capital as a moderator between emotional labor, burnout, and job satisfaction among school teachers in China. *International Journal of Stress Management, 18*, 348-371. https://www.academia.edu/download/59374280/CheungTangTang2011_IJSM

Cho, Y. N., Rutherford, B. N., & Park, J. (2013). The impact of emotional labour in a retail environment. *Journal of Business Research, 66*(5), 670-677.

Chou, H. Y. (2009). *The effects of job demands and resources on emotional labour and employees' psychological well-being* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Tasmania).

Cordes, C. L., & Dougherty, T. W. (1993). A review and an integration of research on job burnout. *Academy of Management Review*, *18*(14), 621-656.

Côté, S. (2005). A social interaction model of the effects of emotion regulation on work strain. *Academy of Management Review*, *30*, 509-530.

Couto, D. (2002). How resilience works. *Harvard Business Review*, *80*(5), 46-52.

Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research.* Sage publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE.

Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research.* Sage publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2017). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research.* Sage publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches.* Sage publications.

Demerouti, E., Mostert, K., & Bakker, A. B. (2010). Burnout and work engagement: a thorough investigation of the independency of both constructs. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 15*(3), 209-222. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2010-13667-001

DeNisi, A., & Griffin, R. (2015). *HR3.* Cengage Learning.

Donovan, J. F. (2013). Personal resilience: A Gateway to organizational health and progress. *Frontiers of Health Service Management*, *30*(2), 36-42.

Du Plessis, Y., & Barkhuizen, E. (2011, May). Strategic role of human resource professionals in a South African context. In *15th European Association of Work and Organisational Psychology Conference*, Maastricht, *The Netherlands* (pp. 25-28).

Du Plooy, J., & Roodt. (2010). Work engagement, burnout, and related constructs as predictors of turnover intention. *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology*, *36*(1), 1-13. https://journals.co.za/doi/abs/10.10520/EJC89193

Ericson-Lidman, E., & Strandberg, G. (2007). Meanings of being a supervisor for care providers suffering from burnout: From initial signs to recuperation. *Journal of Nursing Management*, *17*(3), 366-375.

Flick, U., Von Kardorff, E., & Steinke, I. (2004). *A companion to qualitative research*. Sage publications.

Fourie, D. (2009). Institutional mechanisms and good governance: A perspective on the South African public sector. *Public Administration*, *44*(4), 1114-1123. https://journals.co.za/doi/abs/10.10520/EJC51728

Foxcroft, C., & Roodt, G. (2013). *Introduction to psychological assessment in the South African context.* Oxford University Press.

Gelb, A., Ramachandran, V., & Turner, G. (2007). Stimulating growth and investment in Africa: From macro to micro reforms. *African Development Review, 19*(1), 26-51.

Gibbs, G. R. (2018). *Analyzing qualitative data.* (Vol. 6.) Sage publications.

Gordhan, P. (2010). Budget speech. *Pretoria, South Africa*.

Grandey, A. A. (2000). Emotional regulation in the workplace: A new way to conceptualize emotional labor. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 5*, 95-110. https://psycnet.apa.org/buy/1999-15533-009

Grandey, A. A. (2003). When "the show must go on": Surface acting and deep acting as determinants of emotional exhaustion and peer-rated service delivery. *Academy of Management Journal, 46*, 86-96.

Grandey, A., Diefendorff, J., & Rupp, D. E. (Eds.). (2015). *Emotional labour in the 21st century: Diverse perspectives on emotional regulation at work.* Routledge.

Grandey, A. A., Foo, S. C., Groth, M., & Goodwin, R. E. (2012). Free to be you and me: a climate of authenticity alleviates burnout from emotional labour. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 17*(1), 1-14.

Grandey, A. A., & Gabriel, A. (2015). Emotional labor at a crossroad: Where do we go from here? *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behaviour, 2*, 323-249.

Gravetter, F. J., & Wallnau, L. B. (2016). *Statistics for the behavioral sciences*. Cengage Learning.

Gross, J. J. (1998). Antecedents and response-focused emotion regulation: divergent consequences for experience, expression, and physiology. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 74*(1), 224-237. https://psycnet.apa.org/journals/psp/74/1/224.html?uid=1997-38342-016

Gross, J. J. (1998). The emerging field of emotion regulation: An integrative review. *Review of General Psychology, 2*, 271-299.

Gross, J. J. (2002). Emotion regulation: Affective, cognitive, and social consequences. *Psychophysiology, 39*(3), 281-291.

Groth, M., Henning-Thurau T., & Walsh, G. (2009). Customer reactions to emotional labor: The roles of employee acting strategies and customer detection accuracy. *Academy of Management Journal, 52*, 958-974.

Guy, M. E., & Lee, H. J. (2015). How emotional intelligence mediates emotional labour in public service jobs. *Review of Public Personnel Administration, 35*(3), 261-277. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0734371x13514095

Guy, M. E., Newman, M. A., & Mastracci, S. H. (2014). *Emotional Labour: Putting the Service in Public Service*. Routledge.

Hair, J., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2010). *Multivariate data analysis* (7th ed.). Pearson Education International.

Han, S. J., Bonn, M. A., & Cho, M. (2016). The relationship between customer incivility, restaurant frontline employee burnout, and turnover intention. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 52, 97-106. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0278431915001565

Hochschild, A. R. (1979). Emotion work, feeling rules, and social structure. *American Journal of Sociology, 85*(3), 551-575.

Hochschild, A. R. (1983). *The managed heart: A commercialization of human feelings.* University of California Press.

Hochschild, A. R. (2012). *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling.* University of California Press.

Hoopes, B. (2006). Key burnout warning signs. *Landscape Management, 45*(8), 16.

Hu, L. T., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cut off criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modelling: a Multidisciplinary Journal*, *6*(1), 1-55. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10705519909540118

Hülsheger, U. R., Lang, J. W. B., & Maier, G. W. (2010). Emotional labour, strain, and performance: Testing reciprocal relationships in a longitudinal panel study. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 15*, 505-521.

Hülsheger, U. R., & Schewe, A. F. (2011). On the costs and benefits of emotional labor: A meta-analysis of three decades of research. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 16*, 361-389.

IBM Corporation. (Released 2020). *IBM SPSS statistics for Windows, version 27.0*. IBM Corporation.

Junpath, S. V., Kharwa, M. S. E., & Stainbank, L. J. (2016). Taxpayers' attitudes towards tax amnesties and compliance in South Africa: an exploratory study. *South African Journal of Accounting Research*, *30*(2), 97-119. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10291954.2015.1070565

Kanyemba, D. (2017). *E-government innovation for effective service delivery: a case of the Gauteng Department of Education online applications.* (Doctoral dissertation, North-West University, South Africa.

Karl, K. A., & Peluchette, J. V. (2006). Does workplace fun buffer the impact of emotional exhaustion on job dissatisfaction: a study of healthcare workers. J*ournal of Behavioural and Applied Management*. *7*(2), 128-141.

Kerlinger, F. N., & Lee, H. B. (2000). *Foundations of behavioural research* (4th ed.). Harcourt College.

Kline, R. B. (2011). *Convergence of structural equation modelling and multilevel modelling*. Sage.

Koma, S. B. (2010). The state of local government in South Africa: Issues, trends, and options. *Journal of Public Administration, 45*(Special issue 1), 111-120. https://journals.co.za/doi/abs/10.10520/EJC51773

Kristensen, T. S., Borritz, M., Villadsen, E., & Christensen, K. B. (2005). The CopenhagenBurnout Inventory: A new tool for the assessment of burnout. *Work & Stress*, *19*(3), 192-207.

Kumar, R. (2011). *Research Methodology. A step-by-step guide for beginners.* Sage.

Lavigna, B. (2015). Commentary: Public service motivation and employee engagement. *Public Administration Review*, *75*(5), 732-733.

Lee, H. J. (2016). Effects of public-service employee age and performance of emotional labour on job pride. *Social Behaviour and Personality: An International Journal*, *44*, 1339-1348.

Lee, R. T., & Brotheridge, C. M. (2011). Words from the heart speak to the heart: A study of deep acting, faking, and hiding among child care workers. *Career Development International*, *16*, 401-420. https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/13620431111158805/full/html

Lee, R. T., Lovell, B. L., & Brotheridge, C. M. (2010). Tenderness and steadiness: Relating job and interpersonal demands and resources with burnout and physical symptoms of stress in Canadian physicians. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *40*, 2319-2342.

Leiter, M. P., & Maslach, C. (2005). *Banishing burnout: Six strategies for improving your relationship with work*. Jossey-Bass.

Lings, I., Durden, G., Lee, N., & Cadogan, J. W. (2014). Socio-emotional and operational demands on service employees. *Journal of Business Research*, *67*(10), 2132-2138.

Lopez, S. J., & Snyder, C. R. (2009). *Handbook of positive psychology* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

Low, G. S., Cravens, D. W., Grant, K., & Moncrief, W. C. (2001). Antecedents and consequences of salesperson burnout. *European Journal of Marketing*, *35*(5/6), 587-611. https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/03090560110388123/full/http;//www.emerald-library.com/ft

Luthans, F., Avey, J. B., Clapp-Smith, R., & Li, W. (2008). More evidence on the value of Chinese workers' psychological capital: A potentially unlimited competitive resource? *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 19*(5), 818-827.

Luthans, F., Avolio, B. J., Avey, J. B., & Norman, S. M. (2007). Positive psychological capital: Measurement and relationship with performance and satisfaction. *Personnel Psychology, 60*(3), 541-572.

Luthans, F., Youssef, C. M., & Avolio, B. J. (2007). *Psychological capital.* Oxford University Press.

Luthans, F. (2012). Psychological capital: Implications for HRD, retrospective analysis, and future directions. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 23*(1), 1-8. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/hrdq.21119

Luthans, F., & Youssef-Morgan, C. M. (2017). Psychological capital: An evidence-based positive approach. *Annual Review of Organisational Psychology and Organisational Behaviour, 4*, 339-366.

Mafini, C., & Pooe, D. R. (2013). The relationship between employee satisfaction and organisational performance: Evidence from a South African government department. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, *39*(1), 1-9.

Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W. B., & Leiter, M.P. (2001). Job burnout. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *52*(1), 397-422.

Mauno, S., Ruokolainen, M., Kinnunen, U., & De Bloom, J. (2016). Emotional labour and work engagement among nurses: examining perceived compassion, leadership and work ethic as stress buffers. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *72*, 1169-1181.

Mbanyele, S. S. (2018). *Marginalization as a source of insecurity: the securitization of service delivery protest in South Africa* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria).

Mboweni, T. (2019). Budget speech. *Pretoria, South Africa*.

Modekurti-Mahato, M., Kumar, P., & Raju, P. J. (2014). Impact of emotional labour on organisational role stress-a study in the services sector in India. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, *11*, 110-121. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2212567114001816

Modise, J. M., Taylor, D., & Ragga, K. (2020). Client service delivery in the South African Police Service's community service centres in the Kimberley cluster. *Just Africa*, *5*(2), 51-64.

Moreo, A., Woods, R., Sammons, G., & Bergman, C. (2019). Connection or competence: Emotional labour and service quality's impact on satisfaction and loyalty. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 31*(1), 330-348.

Morse, J. M., Barret, M., Mayan, M., Olson, K., & Spiers, J. (2002). Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *1*(2), 13-22.

Mpofu, M., & Hlatywayo, C. K. (2015). Training and development as a tool for improving basic service delivery; the case of a selected municipality. *Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Science, 20*(39), 133-136. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2077188615000633

Muthén, L. K., & Muthén, B. O. (1998 - 2020). *Mplus users 'guide* (8th ed.). Muthén & Muthén.

Nguyen, N., Cheung, F., & Stinglhamber, F. (2022). Emotional labour: A two-wave longitudinal person-centered approach. *International Journal of Stress Management, 29*(1), 1-41.

Norman, S. M., Avolio, B. J., & Luthans, F. (2010). The impact of positivity and transparency on trust in leaders and their perceived effectiveness. *The Leadership Quarterly, 21*(3), 350-364.

Parajon, A. M. (2011). *The impact of emotional labour and emotional dissonance on job satisfaction* (Doctoral dissertation).

Pearson, R. W. (2010). *Statistical persuasion: How to collect, analyse, and present data…accurately, honestly, and persuasively.* Sage Publications.

Protection of Personal Information Act (2013). *Protection of Personal Information Act No. 4 of 2013*. Republic of South Africa. https://www.gov.za/documents/protection-personal-information-act.

Pugh, S. D. (2001). Service with a smile: Emotional contagion in the service encounter. *Academy of Management Journal, 44*, 1018-1027.

Ramachandran, Y., Jordan, P. J., Troth, A. C., & Lawrence, S. A. (2011). Emotional intelligence, emotional labour and organisational citizenship behaviour in service environments. *International Journal of Work Organisation and Emotion*, *4*(2), 136-157.

Resnik, D. (2018). *The ethics of research with human subjects: Protecting people, advancing science, promoting trust.* (Vol. 74) Springer.

Sabino, W. T. R., & Bianchi, L. C. D. (2019). How quality of service can affect an organisation: A study on the importance of good customer service. *Research, Society and Development*, 8(1), 1-10.

Sanz-Vergel, A. I., Rodriguez-Muñoz, A., Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2012). The daily spillover and crossover of emotional labour: Faking emotions at work and at home. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *81*(2), 209-217. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0001879112001005

Schaufeli, W. B., & Bakker, A. B. (2010). Defining and measuring work engagement: Bringing clarity to the concept. *Work engagement: A handbook of essential theory and research*, *12*, 10-24.

Schaufeli, W. B., De Witte, H., & Desart, S. (2019). Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT) manual. *Internal report*.

Schaufeli, W.B., Taris, T. W., & Van Rhenen, W. (2008). Workaholism, burnout, and work engagement: Three of a kind or three different kinds of employee well-being?. *Applied Psychology,* 57(2), 173-203.

Schaufeli, W. B., Salanova, M., Gonzalez-Roma, V., & Bakker, A. (2002). The measurement of engagement and burnout: A confirmative analytic approach. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 3,* 71-92. https://cir.nii.ac.jp/crid/1363951794963363584

Scott, B. A., & Barnes, C. M. (2011). A multilevel field investigation of emotional labour, affect work withdrawal, and gender. *Academy of Management Journal*, *54*, 116-136.

Shaughnessy, J. J., & Zechmeister, E. B. (1997). *Research methods in psychology* (4th ed.). McGraw-Hill.

Shenton, A. K., (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information, 22*(2), 63-75. https://content.iospress.com/articles/education-for-information/efi00778

Simons, J. C., & Buitendach, J. H. (2013). Psychological capital, work engagement, and organisational commitment amongst call centre employees in South Africa. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology, 39*(2), 1-12.

Singh, J., (2000). Performance productivity and quality of frontline employees in service organizations. *SA Journal of Marketing, 64*, 15-34.

Sibanda, M. M. M. (2012). Monitoring customer-focused quality service delivery in local government: conceptual issues and perspectives for consideration. *Africa's Public*

Service Delivery & Performance Review, 1(1), 4-25. http://apsdpr.org/index.php/apsdpr/article/view/21

Sonnentag, S., & Bayer, U. V. (2005). Switching off mentally: predictors and consequences of psychological detachment from work during off-job time. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 10*(4), 393-414.

Sonnentag, S., & Fritz, C. (2007). The Recovery Experience Questionnaire: development and validation of a measure for assessing recuperation and unwinding from work. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 12*(3), 204-221.

Sonnentag, S., & Geurts, S. A. (2009). Methodological issues in recovery research. *In Current perspectives on job-stress recovery* (pp. 1-36). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Stajkovic, J. D. (2006). Development of a core confidence-higher order construct. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 91*, 1208-1224. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2006-20695-002

Statistics South Africa. (2019). *Service delivery improvement plan, 2018/19 – 2020/21. Pretoria, South Africa: Statistics South Africa.* Retrieved from www.statssa.gov.za/publications.

Stich, J. F., Tarafdar, M., Cooper, C.L., & Stacey, P. (2017). Workplace stress from actual and desired computer-mediated communication use: a multi-method study. *New Technology, Work and Employment, 32*(1), 84-100.

Storm, K., & Rothmann, S. (2003). A psychometric analysis of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale in the South African police service. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, *29*(4), 62-70.

Strümpfer, D. J. W. (2005). Standing on the shoulders of giants: Notes on early positive psychology (Psychofortology). *South African Journal of Psychology, 35*(1), 21-45. https://journals.co.za/doi/abs/10.10520/EJC98311

Tamer, I. (2015). The effect of positive psychological capital on emotional labour. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science (2147-4478), 4*(2), 20-34.

Taris, T. (2006). Is there a relationship between burnout and objective performance? A critical review of 16 studies. *Work & Stress, 20*(4), 316-334.

Vyas-Doorgapersad, S. (2014). Performance-focused organisations: An evolutionary approach to training and development of skills in South Africa. *Training in Africa: Competencies in Development Management, 63*.

Van der Waldt, G., & Du Toit, D. F. (2002). *Service excellence in governance*. Heinemann.

Wang, J., & Wang, X. (2012). *Structural equation modelling: Applications using Mplus*. Wiley.

Wang, W., Yin, H., & Huang, S. (2016). The missing links between emotional job demand and exhaustion and satisfaction: Testing a moderated mediation model. *Journal of Management & Organization, 2*, 80-95.

Winkler, I. (2018). Identity work and emotions: a review. *International Journal of Management Reviews, 20*(1), 120-133. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/ijmr.12119

Xanthopoulou, D., Sanz-Vergel, A. I., & Demerouti, E. (2014). Reconsidering the daily recovery process: New insights and related methodological challenges. *Contemporary occupational health psychology: Global perspectives on research and practice, 3*, 51-67

Yang, F. X., & Lau, V. M. C. (2019). Evil customers, an angel boss and competitive co-workers: Burnout of frontline employees. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 83*, 1-10.

Yoo, J., & Jeong, J. (2017). The effects of emotional labour on work engagement and boundary spanner creativity. *Asia Pacific Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, 11*(2), 214-232.

Yürür, S., & Mengenci, C. (2014). The role of person-job fit and organizational commitment on emotional labour: Evidence from Turkey. *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management United Kingdom, 2*, 1-14. http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/summary?doi=10.1.1.679.7765

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH ARTICLE

RESEARCH ARTICLE 1

Emotional labour, burnout, and work engagement amongst service centre employees in a South African government organisation

ABSTRACT

Orientation: The transformation of public service delivery has become one of the most critical priorities of the South African government; therefore, besides recognising the importance of physical labour, emotional labour, defined as an emotional display during client interaction, has to be recognised as an essential job-relevant task in government service centres.

Research purpose: This study examined the relationship between emotional labour (EL), burnout, and work engagement (WE) amongst service centre employees in a South African government organisation.

Motivation for the study: South African government organisations are often the sole provider of their kind in the country. Therefore, their customers do not have any alternative but to use their services provided through dedicated service centres. Government organisations play a crucial role in the country's economy and encourage their employees to provide "service with a smile". Unfortunately, this increased mental workload and demands often lead to new job stressors that cause negative physiological, psychological, and behavioural responses amongst service centre employees. Therefore, the study was motivated by the need to determine the effect of emotional labour on burnout and work engagement levels of government service employees in this unique work environment.

Research design, approach, and method: The researcher used a cross-sectional, correlational and nonexperimental quantitative research design. The sample consisted of service centre employees in a government organisation.

Main findings: SPSS 27 and Mplus 8.6 were used to investigate the current research. The main findings indicated a definite positive correlation between emotional labour and burnout, negative correlation between burnout and work engagement levels and a significant correlation between emotional labour and work engagement in these South African government service centres.

Practical/managerial implications: By acknowledging emotional labour as an essential workplace skill in modern society, management will ensure that their employees have a better understanding of the reasoning behind strict service charter display rules, which will result in,

lower levels of burnout, and according to this study, will contribute to higher work engagement levels and lower burnout levels.

Contribution/value-add: Emotional labour in the workplace is one of the most toxic and controversial issues faced by both employees and employers. It often leads to masked inner turmoil and potentially to the detriment of employees' emotional well-being. Limited research has been conducted to investigate the effects of emotional labour on burnout and work engagement levels in South African government organisations. By determining the level of emotional labour in service centre employees, the government organisation can grow and strengthen its employees emotionally thereby improving critical client service skills.

Key terms: Emotional labour, burnout, work engagement, service centre.

INTRODUCTION

The highly volatile and unstable economic and political climates in South Africa place tremendous pressure on government organisations to pay more attention to antecedents that could boost service delivery and increase customer satisfaction. To improve these two essential outcomes the government organisation introduced an inbound call centre that was supposed to minimise the need for face-to-face client service (Janse van Rensburg et al., 2013). Another remedy to service delivery problems was to focus intensely on information and communication technology (ICT) to allow customers to access self-help solutions on various platforms (Kanyemba, 2017). Regrettably, these implemented resolution avenues did not change the nature of government-public relationships – mainly because of obstacles, such as low levels of literacy, economic disparities, and security concerns associated with customer-centric face-to-face encounters (Kanyemba, 2017). This is also why walk-in service centres play a vital role in achieving the Batho Pele principle of increasing access to information and services to empower citizens or government clients and to ensure quality service without incurring unnecessary expenditure (Sibanda, 2012).

The South African government organisation's walk-in service centres, better known as branch offices, employ a range of personnel, from service agents who handle day-to-day queries to highly skilled service consultants who deal in-depth with more complex problems. In 2010 the government organisation introduced the branch queue management system (BQMS) to manage and measure the average service time and queue time of client visits. In addition to the strict BQMS measurements, service centre employees must display professionalism, enthusiasm, and an enduring willingness to serve clients, regardless of how they feel, in keeping with employer display rules (Grandey et al., 2015).

Branch office service employees are expected to be good listeners in order to identify and anticipate clients' needs. They have to make the client feel important and appreciated by displaying appropriate body language. Abramson et al. (2021) defined body language as a form of non-verbal communication that includes the movements and behaviours of the body, instead of words, to convey or express information. Branch office service employees must be well trained to understand the organisation's systems; be sympathetic and apologetic when the client is feeling aggrieved and to always put the clients' needs first by mobilising their emotional resources (Sabino & Bianchi, 2019). According to Hülsheger et al. (2010) and Scott and Barnes (2011), this display of appropriate emotions is regarded as one of the most powerful predictors of customer satisfaction, service quality, and the performance of the organisation as a whole.

This social exchange that takes place during interactive relationships between clients and employees in a service centre creates the social construct of emotional labour (EL) produces both positive and negative outputs for the employee and the employer and is often subject to external forces (Hochschild, 1979). One of the characteristics of EL is the management of an individual's feelings to display or hide specific emotional responses during customer encounters (Grandey, 2000) and to regulate internal feelings to modify expressions (Winkler, 2018). Cheung et al. (2011) believe that altering emotional responses is very important in terms of obtaining positive feedback from clients and promotes a sense of accomplishment in employees (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002). In contrast, Hochschild (2012) argues that inauthentic behaviour can be highly disruptive and harmful to employees' well-being (Grandey & Gabriel, 2015).

Although EL primarily focuses on employees' emotional regulation during customer interactions (Guy & Lee, 2015), it also indirectly influences how employees can organise and control their work input and output (Allen et al., 2005). For an employee to experience a sense of control, pride, enthusiasm, and involvement, an affective-motivational work-related state of mind that is characterised by dedication, as described in the definition of work engagement by Bakker et al. (2003), is essential. Steger et al. (2013) defined work engagement as the emotional, cognitive, and physical energy that employees expend in their daily work. An affective-motivational work-related state of mind assists employees to face and endure difficult working conditions and allows them to submerge themselves in their daily work activities. Hochschild (2012) frequently argues in the literature that if employees' emotions could mirror the expected emotions in the organisation, they would feel a greater sense of work engagement. Regulating displayed emotions to adhere to the prescribed display rules requires significant strenuous effort (Hochschild, 1983). According to Aziz et al. (2018), such effort may lead to different variances in burnout levels.

When service centre employees regulate their emotions during frequent and intense interpersonal interactions they have to maintain a neutral tone, show sympathy and concern, and often suppress feelings of irritation and impatience, which could lead to emotional exhaustion and burnout (Bono & Vey, 2005; Cheung & Tang, 2007; Grandey et al., 2012). Burnout, defined as a work-related state of exhaustion, is often characterised by the reduced ability to effectively regulate emotional and cognitive processes that contribute to extreme tiredness, mental distancing, fatigue, feelings of hopelessness, increased absenteeism, a decrease in employees' performance, decreased organisational commitment, reduced job satisfaction, higher levels of turnover intentions, and low work engagement levels (Demerouti et al., 2015; Han et al., 2016; Hoopes, 2006; Karl & Peluchette, 2006; Schaufeli et al., 2019; Taris, 2006).

This study aims to examine the relationship between emotional labour, burnout, and work engagement levels in a South African government organisation. Management can use this information to make informed decisions when determining key performance indicators relating to client service and professional emotional display.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Government service centre environment

The primary purpose of government organisations is to create an avenue through which citizens can effectively connect with the government. For this reason, government employees are expected to be proactive in their approach, be emotionally equipped to handle demanding customers, be responsible and committed to high-performance standards (Bakker et al., 2008; Hsieh, 2014; Mahesh & Kasturi, 2006). In South Africa, government organisations are faced with immense pressure to excel in the way that they deliver services and supply public goods (Van-Helden & Tillema, 2007). Nilsson (2010) argues that government service centres in South Africa find it extremely difficult to overcome service delivery challenges, mainly due to low institutional capacities, high levels of corruption, lack of demographic representation, lack of accountability, high rates of unemployment, rigid centralised control systems, and severe socio-economic challenges. Therefore, government service centres employ different strategies to attain service delivery goals, mainly because the face-to-face encounters between service employees and citizens indirectly influence the citizens' quality of life (Hsieh, 2014).

Walsh (2011) describe a service centre as an environment where customers walk into a designated office to discuss their problems, issues, or concerns with service centre employees face-to-face. Service centre employees have limited control over the way they are permitted to interact with customers, which makes it common practice for the service employees to be forced

to express unauthentic emotions, such as cheerfulness and sympathy, or to suppress authentic emotions, such as irritation, frustration, and anger – even when in some instances they are faced with brutal customer abuse and hostility (Grandey et al., 2004).

The service centre environment, strict emotional display rules, and employee well-being introduced an exciting and broad research field that focused on micro issues, such as burnout, work engagement, psychological capital, and organisational performance (Aziz et al., 2018; Hsieh, 2014; Walsh, 2011; Yoo & Jeong, 2017). Research has also been done regarding macro issues such as service delivery, (Allen et al., 2010; Barger & Grandey, 2006; Pugh, 2001), emotional labour (Guy & Lee, 2015; Hochschild, 2012; Lee, 2016; Sabino & Bianchi, 2019), and recovery experiences in service centres (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007; Xanthopoulou et al., 2014).

Emotional labour

In any organisational setting, providing "service with a smile" is one of the most critical job requirements to promote customer service satisfaction (Grandey et al., 2005). In service centres, interactions with customers are usually scripted and repetitive, and organisations have clear expectations regarding employees' emotional display: They have to be very polite and friendly, and to always put the customers' needs first (Diefendorff et al., 2006). Emotional regulation or emotional display rules have been researched in various occupational fields, and the overarching findings confirmed that the employee is typically required to express positive emotions and suppress negative emotions (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011; Kenworthy et al., 2014), which results in employees maintaining an accommodating and friendly interaction with customers – even when they have to tolerate abuse or in some instances verbal aggression (Grandey et al., 2005).

In 1979, the sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild labelled this social exchange between clients and employees, emotional labour. According to Hochschild (1983), jobs that require intense emotional labour share three important characteristics: They require face-to-face contact with customers, employees are required to produce an emotional state in the customer, and the employer is allowed to exert some form of control over employees' emotional activities through strict display rules, training, and supervision. Emotional labour can be defined as "the management of feelings to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display" (Hochschild, 1983, p.167), or the process when feelings and expressions are regulated as part of the work role (Grandey, 2000; Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011; Zapf et al., 1999) or "the act of effortfully changing one's emotional experience to display certain expected or acceptable emotions" (Cotè, 2005, p.512).

When service centre employees display regulated emotions towards customers, in accordance with the organisation's service charter, they can choose between two strategies, namely deep or surface acting, which differ in terms of their degree of authenticity (Grandey, 2003; Martínez-Iñigo et al., 2007).

Surface acting

According to Steinberg and Figart (1999), surface acting entails masking your true emotional response, which means that the employee is not actually feeling, or even trying to feel, the emotions that they are displaying in the presence of the customer. For example, a government service centre agent may be feeling overwhelmed and irritable. However, when a rude customer demands assistance regarding a problem, the employee may smile and say, "No problem. How can I assist?", when in fact, the employee is feeling annoyed and frustrated with the customer. The government service centre employee may do this to adhere to the organisational display rule expectations or may regard this as professional behaviour. The opposite may also be true, where a service centre employee feels happy and cheerful but has to pretend to feel sympathetic or act distressed when dealing with a distraught client without attempting to feel the distressing emotion. According to Groth et al. (2009), the problem with surface acting is that customers often notice the fake emotions displayed and interpret it as a sign of dishonesty or even a lack of interest in their problem on the part of the employee, which may elicit an adverse response.

Hochschild (2012) argues that besides the fact that surface acting is negatively associated with quality service delivery and relationship building with clients, inauthentic behaviour can also be disruptive and highly harmful to the well-being of employees. Grandey and Gabriel (2015) also support this opinion. Surface acting as one of the emotional labour strategies is discussed extensively in international literature, but predominantly in the psychology field. It focuses mainly on the relationship between the adverse effects of surface acting on an individual's well-being and intrapersonal psychological variables (Grandey, 2000; Grandey, 2015; Grandey et al., 2012; Guy and Lee, 2015; Hochschild, 2012; Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011). Increased absenteeism, lower levels of work engagement, unwanted turnover, emotional exhaustion, and even burnout are just some of the unintended consequences of faking genuine emotions. This finding is mentioned in international research that was predominantly conducted with regard to call centres, hospitality employees, teachers and health care workers (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011; Kristensen et al., 2005; Low et al., 2001; Maslach et al., 2001; Mauno et al., 2016; Schaufeli et al., 2008).

Deep acting

The second emotional labour strategy, namely deep acting, according to Hülsheger and Schewe (2011), is an effortful task in which an individual attempts to change his/her internal state to match the emotions that he/she is expressing during a client service interaction. Matching true emotions with the displayed emotions results in authentic interaction (Gross, 1998; Gross & John, 2003). For example, the service centre employee may feel overwhelmed and irritable. He/she is then approached by a rude customer demanding assistance with a problem. If engaged in deep acting, the employee may make an additional effort to focus on what the client needs, ignoring the rude, demanding tone of the clients' voice. The employee may also choose to look at the problem from the clients' perspective instead of focusing on his/her own distress. The attempt to feel authentic emotions results in less conflict between inner emotions and the perceived organisational rules and has different psychological consequences for the individual to surface acting (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011). In the meta-analyses done by Kammeyer-Mueller et al. (2013), deep acting had consistent and strong negative associations with depersonalisation, decreased job satisfaction, emotional exhaustion, and psychological strain, and may be more beneficial to employees.

Totterdell and Holman (2003), in testing their emotional labour model, found that the cognitive effort that an individual requires to change his/her emotions (deep acting) is remarkably less than when the individual is faking these emotions (surface acting). This was confirmed by the study done by Hülsheger and Schewe (2011), in which deep acting was associated with decreased psychological strain, emotional exhaustion and burnout, greater personal accomplishment, increased emotional performance and even better-quality customer service. According to Groth et al. (2009), customers perceive employees who apply deep acting during face-to-face interactions to be more customer orientated. This results in customers treating employees more positively and with greater respect (Yagil & Medler-Liraz, 2017). Better customer service interactions free up cognitive resources that enable employees to do their jobs more effectively, which results in better attitudes towards the organisation and an even higher level of work engagement (Yoo & Jeong, 2017).

Burnout

In the literature there is clear evidence that the burnout phenomenon has been extensively researched and that it was identified as early as 1947. However, this phenomenon that has been responsible for emotional, physical, behavioural, and interpersonal problems that cause harm to many individuals and organisations, was only termed *burnout* in the 1970s (Maslach et al., 2001). Since the first publication on burnout by Freudenberger in 1974, literature on the subject has

increased tremendously as researchers have never lost interest in this concept (Savicki & Cooley, 1982; Smit, 2011).

The three-component definition of burnout by Maslach et al. (2001) is the most widely accepted. It defines the burnout phenomenon as "a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and diminished personal accomplishment", which is most evident in individuals working with people. Emotional exhaustion, which is a key aspect of the burnout phenomenon, entails feelings of being emotionally drained because of excessive contact with people (Maslach et al., 2001). Employees or individuals suffering from emotional exhaustion feel that they cannot contribute anything psychologically because their emotional resources have been depleted (Leiter & Maslach, 2005). According to Maslach et al. (2001), *depersonalisation*, which is also called dehumanisation, occurs when employees or individuals develop negative feelings and callous attitudes towards customers that they have to serve. These employees or individuals distance themselves from customers by discarding qualities that make them unique (Maslach et al., 2001). *Diminished personal accomplishment* transpires when employees or individuals feel less competent and successful in their work and how they interact with customers (Maslach et al., 2001).

Schaufeli et al. (2019) define burnout slightly differently. They believe that it is a work-related state of exhaustion, mainly characterised by the reduced ability to effectively regulate emotional and cognitive processes, extreme tiredness, mental distancing, a depressed mood, and psychological and psychosomatic distress symptoms. Regardless of how burnout is defined, researchers in the literature agree that burnout is the prolonged response to interpersonal and chronic emotional stressors at work that are associated with various negative personal and organisational outcomes (Smit, 2011). Negative personal outcomes include physical symptoms, such as headaches, fatigue, insomnia (Armon, 2009; Hoopes, 2006; Nadaoka et al., 1997); emotional symptoms, such as deterioration in mental health, feelings of hopelessness, anxiety, anger, and depression (Ericson-Lidman & Strandberg, 2009, Jackson & Maslach, 1982, Takai et al., 2009, Toppinen-Tanner et al., 2005); behavioural symptoms, such as an increase in substance abuse, a decrease in job performance, an increase in absenteeism, and an increase in job turnover (Chen & Cunradi, 2008; Lambert et al., 2010; Taris, 2006; Toppinen-Tanner et al., 2005; Visser & Rothmann, 2008); and interpersonal consequences such as increased anger towards and withdrawal from family and friends, and the development of callous attitudes towards customers (Jackson & Maslach, 1982; Jackson & Schuler, 1983).

The relationship between emotional labour and burnout

The literature shows that burnout research has its roots in service centre industries where the entire focus of the work environment revolves around the relationship between service centre employees and customers (Jeung et al., 2018). In 1981 Maslach and Jackson defined burnout as a "syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that frequently occurs among individuals who do "people-work" of some kind", which is of utmost importance to organisations because of the direct and indirect costs associated with burned-out employees (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004). The prolonged exposure to a stressful work environment causes a negative emotional reaction that is dysfunctional for the employee and leads to employee turnover, absenteeism, reduced job performance, and eventually burnout (Maslach et al., 2001).

One of the major stressors in service centres is the extent to which service employees engage in the constant regulation of their emotions when dealing with customers, which causes stress-induced physiological arousal (Butler et al., 2003). Jeung et al. (2018) argue that in several studies on the relationship between burnout and emotional labour, researchers mainly focused on the "dissonance theory of emotional labour". This theory can be conceptualised as the conflict experienced by individuals when they have to display emotions that they do not necessarily feel (Van Dijk & Brown, 2006). A literature study done by Zapf (2002) confirmed that service employees are depleted of energy and become fatigued because of continued exposure to situations requiring emotional regulation. In such a case, as a coping strategy, they may demonstrate cynical and negative attitudes towards customers.

From the evidence mentioned above, it is apparent that greater attention should be paid to the relationship between emotional labour and burnout, as burnout is detrimental to the efficiency and productivity of the individual and the organisation. Although there is a growing body of research evidence that confirms that emotional labour could be stressful and could subsequently cause symptoms of burnout, research in a South African context and particularly in the government service centre environment has not been addressed sufficiently.

The following hypotheses is formulated regarding the relationship between surface acting, deep acting and burnout levels in the government service centre:

Hypothesis 1: Surface acting has a significant positive correlation with burnout levels in government service centres.

Hypothesis 2: Deep acting has a significant negative correlation with burnout levels in government service centres.

Work engagement

Considering that individuals spend more than a third of their lives performing some kind of work activity, they must be fully engaged while on the job (May et al., 2004). Work engagement is defined by Schaufeli et al. (2002, p.74) as "a positive, fulfilling work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption". According to Noesgaard and Hansen (2018), this means that engaged employees tend to present high levels of persistence and energy, have pride in their work, demonstrate enthusiasm, and feel that time at work passes quickly because they are entirely immersed in their job. The positive attitude of engaged employees is often noticeable in excellent performance levels because employees are willing to dedicate their cognitive, physical, and emotional resources to their employer (Christian et al., 2011; Kahn, 1990; Macey & Schneider, 2008).

Work engagement research has been conducted in various occupational settings, and it has consistently been made clear that it is vital to understand and define the particular work setting before making conclusions regarding whether job demands are perceived as having a negative or positive effect on work engagement (Bakker & Sanz-Vergel, 2013; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). This is also important in a government work setting in this regard, Lavigna (2015) argues that government organisations tend to have inherent characteristics that can promote barriers to work engagement. Less decision-making autonomy, political leadership interference, bureaucratic structures, and strict service display rules may be expected to negatively influence engagement in government organisations (Perry & Vandenabeele, 2015).

Research has confirmed that high levels of work engagement have a positive effect on key organisational outcomes, such as employee turnover (Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006), employee performance (Maslach et al., 2012), excessive sick leave, customer satisfaction (Salanova et al., 2005), and employees' quality of work (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014).

The relationship between emotional labour and work engagement

Increased customer expectations during employee-customer interactions require organisations to look differently at service centre employees and to realise their true value in promoting service quality and customer service satisfaction. Customer expectations can be defined as a set of behaviours that customers anticipate when interacting with a service employee (Hallencreutz & Parmler, 2021). Karatepe and Demir (2014) conducted a study involving full-time frontline employees who displayed high levels of work engagement and found that they were extremely committed to their jobs and delivered excellent customer service.

Work engagement research confirms that an engaged employee possesses high energy and resilience levels, is willing to work harder, displays a sense of enthusiasm and inspiration, and is deeply immersed in his/her work (Schaufeli et al., 2006). Therefore, when service employees have to perform the emotional labour strategy of surface acting during an interaction with a customer, they will experience emotional dissonance because of the difference between their true feelings and those that they are displaying (Wang & Groth, 2014). In a study done by Mróz and Kaleta (2016), it was confirmed that employees exposed to chronic dissonance will not feel integrated with their job roles and will also not find meaning in their work, which leads to diminished personal motivation. Brotheridge and Lee's (2002) conservation of resource theory concludes that surface acting produces significant resource consumption. This means that that fewer resources are available to perform the rest of the employees' job activities. It is therefore evident that surface acting leads to emotional disorder, which can have a definite influence on a decline in work engagement levels (Grandey & Gabriel, 2015; Yao et al., 2019).

In contrast with surface acting, deep acting reduces emotional disorder mainly because of the alignment of inner feelings with displayed feelings during employee-customer interactions (Grandey & Gabriel, 2015). This alignment and consistency of true feelings during deep acting motivate the individual to generate more vigour that enhances work engagement (Yoo & Arnold, 2014). High work engagement levels are beneficial to both the organisation and the employee. Benefits to the organisation include increased job satisfaction, improved work performance and lower turnover rates (Bakker et al., 2008). Benefits to the individual include increased proactive behaviour that results in less effort needed to accomplish tasks, increased feelings of attachment to the organisation, and willingness to work hard to make working conditions satisfying for themselves (Bakker, 2011; Demerouti et al., 2015; Mróz & Kaleta, 2016; Schaufeli et al., 2006; Schmitt et al., 2016).

The following hypotheses is formulated regarding the relationship between deep acting, burnout and employee work engagement levels in the government service centre:

Hypothesis 3: Surface acting significantly negatively effects work engagement levels in government service centres.

Hypothesis 4: Deep acting has a significantly positive effect on work engagement levels in government service centres.

The relationship between burnout and work engagement

The relationship between burnout and work engagement has been extensively researched. Several researchers believe that burnout and work engagement have to be seen as opposite indicators of occupational well-being (Gan & Gan, 2014; Mäkikangas et al., 2012; Narainsamy & Van der Westhuizen, 2013; Vassos et al., 2013). In their opinion, it is unlikely that an employee suffering from burnout would show high degrees of work engagement and that employees displaying high work engagement levels would not suffer from burnout. The literature also presents different views on whether work engagement and burnout should be regarded as independent or related constructs (Mäkikangas et al., 2012). Maslach and Jackson (1981), for example, found in their research that burnout is the polar opposite of work engagement, where work engagement is characterised by efficacy, energy, and involvement as opposed to burnout that is characterised by cynicism, exhaustion and reduced professional efficacy (Gan & Gan, 2014). Schaufeli et al. (2002) also claim in their research that the absence of burnout symptoms should not be regarded as an indication of high work engagement levels but should instead be seen as proof that work engagement and burnout are distinct, independent constructs.

In this research, the following hypothesis is formulated regarding the relationship between burnout and work engagement in a government service centre:

Hypothesis 5: Burnout has a significant negative effect on work engagement in a government service centre.

Depicted in Figure 2.1 is the series of hypotheses and their interrelationships.

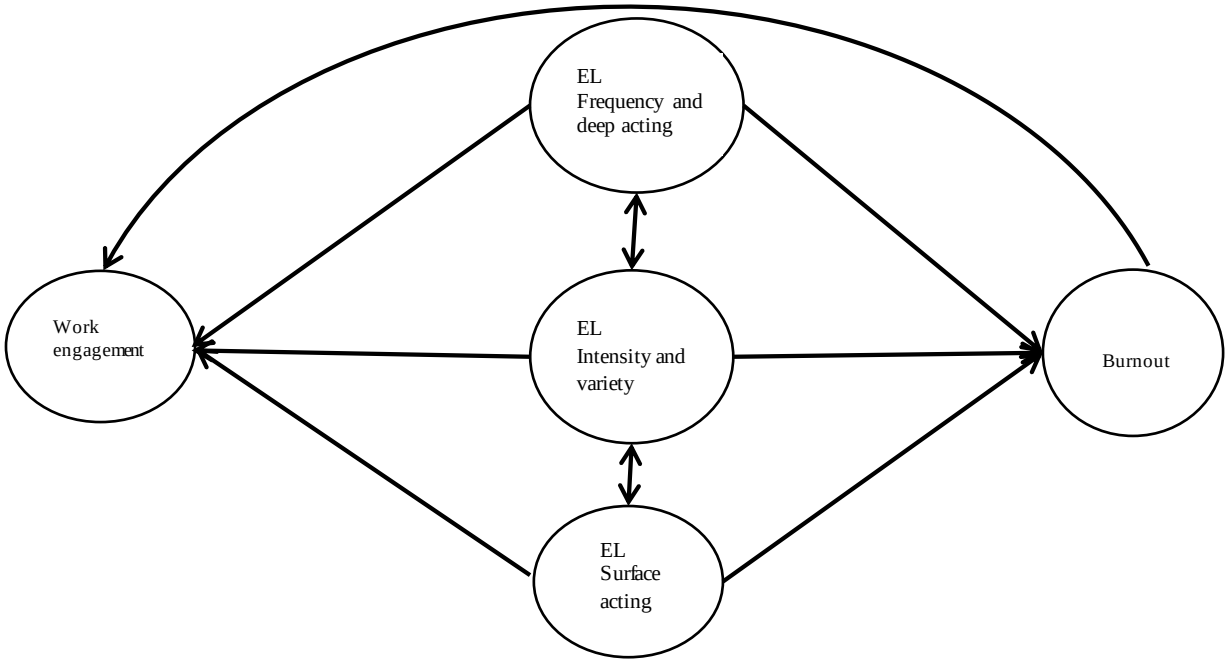

Figure 2.1 ***Proposed study model***

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research approach

To examine the potential relationships between two or more variables at a certain point and time, a cross-sectional, correlational, and nonexperimental quantitative research design was used in this research (Creswell, 2013). Quantitative survey research, according to Struwig and Stead (2001), is a systematic and objective investigation that permits the inclusion of a large representative sample and follows a relatively structured collection process to test the hypotheses. According to Creswell (2013), the purpose of this kind of research is primarily descriptive and explanatory – it describes or explains a specific phenomenon. The cross-sectional design includes statistical analysis that allows for a wide range of assessments (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000).

In the context of this study, the researcher aimed to gather information about a large population to explore the relationship between emotional labour, burnout, and work engagement by surveying a representative sample of this population.

Research method

Research participants

The participants in this quantitative study were chosen through probability random sampling. This type of sampling gives each person in the chosen population an equal opportunity to be included in the sample, which limits bias resulting from the selection procedure and produces a representative sample (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2016). Research participants in this study were service centre agents from a South African government organisation located in Gauteng and Mpumalanga. The organisation employees 348 service centre personnel in various positions, such as service centre agents, consultants, and managers. Of the total number of questionnaires distributed 201 (58%) were returned. The participant characteristics covered in this research study include gender, age, ethnic group, educational level, and occupational status.

The participants' characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: *Characteristics of the participants (n=201)*

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	37	18.4
	Female	164	81.6
Age	< 30 years	4	2.0
	31-40 years	30	14.9
	41-50 years	108	53.7
	> 50 years	59	29.4
Ethnic group	African	97	48.2
	Indian	4	2.0
	Coloured	18	9.0
	White	82	40.8
Educational level	Higher certificate (Grade 12)	107	53.2
	Diploma	58	28.8
	Degree	18	9.0
	Postgraduate degree	8	4.0
	Technical qualification	10	5.0
Occupational status	Manager	34	16.9
	Agent	121	60.2
	Consultant	36	17.9
	Other	10	5.0

The sample consisted of the sixteen Region 1 branch offices in a government organisation with 81.6% females and only 18.4% males. More than half (53.7%) of the sample was aged between

41 and 50 years. The majority of the participants were African (48.2%), with 9.0% Coloured, 2.0% Indian, and 40.8% White.

More than half of the participants (53.2%) had an educational level of Grade 12, with 28.8% having diplomas, 9.0% degrees, 5.0% technical qualifications, and 4.0% postgraduate degrees making up the other 46.8%. Most of the respondents (60.2%) were employed as agents, with 16.9% managers, 17.9% consultants, and 5.0% in other positions.

Measuring instruments

The following measuring instruments were used to achieve the objectives of this study:

Biographical questionnaire. To determine the demographics of the research participants and to provide a detailed description of the sample, a biographical questionnaire was used in this study. The questionnaire included gender, age, ethnic group, educational level, and occupational status.

Emotional Labour Scale (ELS) *(*Lee & Brotheridge, 2011; Lee et al., 2010). This scale was used because it is the most recent and updated emotional labour scale. It consists of a 17-item self-reported questionnaire. The ELS measured five facets of workplace emotional display. These included the frequency (three items; e.g., "Display specific emotions required by your job as a service agent"), intensity (two items; e.g., "Show emotions that you don't feel"), and variety (three items; e.g., "Express many different emotions in a single workday") of emotional display. The ELS also measured the emotional labour facets of deep acting (three items; e.g., "Try to actually experience the emotions that you must show in front of clients") and surface acting (six items; e.g., "Pretend to have emotions that you don't really have"). The five facets, mentioned above, were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). The duration of a typical interaction was measured in minutes. Acceptable reliability of .90 for deep acting and .76 for surface acting was reported during previous studies using the ELS (Lee & Brotheridge, 2011; Lee et al., 2010).

Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT) (Schaufeli et al., 2019). This tool was used to measure the nature of burnout and distinguished between core systems and secondary/atypical symptoms. The core symptoms include exhaustion (eight items; e.g., "When I get up in the morning, I lack the energy to start a new day at work"), emotional impairment (five items; e.g., "At work, I feel unable to control my emotions"), cognitive impairment (five items; e.g., "I am forgetful and distracted at work"), and mental distance (five items; e.g., "I feel indifferent in my job"). The secondary/atypical symptoms include psychological complaints (five items; e.g., "I feel anxious and/or suffer from panic attacks"), and psychosomatic complaints (five items; e.g., "I suffer from muscle pain, for

example in the neck, shoulder, or back"). Response options ranged from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). This scale was reliable, with Cronbach alpha coefficients of .82 and .95 (Schaufeli et al., 2019).

Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli et al., 2002). This scale was used to measure the work engagement levels of government service centre agents. The UWES is a self-reported questionnaire. It has 17 items scored on a seven-point frequency scale ranging from 1 (*never)* to 6 (*always*). This scale is divided into three subscales, vigour (six items; e.g., "When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work"), dedication (five items; e.g., "I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose"), and absorption (six items; e.g., "When I am working, I forget everything else around me"). The UWES has been found to have acceptable reliability coefficients that have been reported in South Africa and internationally (Simons & Buitendach, 2013). Storm and Rothmann (2003) found alpha coefficients for reliability and internal consistency of between .78 and .89 for the three subscales in a South African context.

Research procedure

Service centre employees (*N* = 348) in the Region 1 branch offices of a government organisation in South Africa were approached using a probability random sample. Permission for the study was obtained from the government organisation's research committee, group executive, and branch managers responsible for the sixteen Region 1 branch offices. Participation in this study was voluntary, and the service centre employees confirmed their willingness to participate by returning a signed consent form before research commenced. The researcher's assistant distributed hard copy questionnaires to all participating service employees.

Participants were requested to return their completed questionnaires to a sealed box provided by the researcher. Sealed boxes were collected from the 16 branch offices, and all data was captured on an Excel spreadsheet. Strict ethical guidelines were followed, and all information collected was treated with absolute confidentiality.

Statistical analysis

Statistical analysis was performed using the SPSS 27 (IBM Corporation, 2020) and Mplus 8.6 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2020) software programs and estimation of descriptive statistics was done to describe the data. The function of descriptive statistics is defined as the transformation of a set of observations or numbers into indices that characterise or describe the data (Maree, 2020). The suggestion of Steyn and Ellis to use effect sizes to determine practical significance (2003) was used in this study, and cut-off points of 0.30 for a medium effect and 0.50 for a large effect were applied. The reliability of scales was tested using McDonald's omega coefficients (Ω) as recommended by Foxcroft and Roodt (2013) as they were found to provide a more accurate

degree of confidence in the consistency of the regulating scales. The confidence interval levels were set at a value of 95% ($p < 0.05$) for statistical significance. Structural equation modelling (SEM) was performed using the Mplus 8.6 software program. SEM allows the simultaneous analysis of multiple relationships between latent and observed variables (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2020). According to Gefen et al. (2000), these multiple relationships can be modelled pictorially to get a better understanding of the theory being studied. Byrne (2010) found structural equation modelling more appropriate when estimating indirect effects in larger sample sizes, as was the case in this study.

To account for skewness and kurtosis of the data distribution, the maximum likelihood robust (MLR) estimator was used (Múthen & Múthen, 1998-2020; Satorra & Bentler, 2010). As the basis for the structural model, the measurement model showing the best fit was used (Iacobucci, 2009). The next step was to test two competing structural models against the original model. The Satorra-Bentler chi-square difference test was performed again to confirm which hypothesised structural model showed the better fit (Satorra & Bentler, 2010).

To assess the goodness-of-fit indices, the chi-square (χ^2) and its associated degrees of freedom (*df)*, the comparative fit index (CFI), the standardised root mean square residual (SRMR), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) were evaluated (Hu & Bentler, 1999). According to Iacobucci (2010), a non-significant chi-square statistic indicates a good fit with the sample data. Although values higher than 0.95 for TLI and CFI are preferred (Iacobucci, 2010), values higher than 0.90 are generally accepted in practice (Wang & Wang, 2012). According to Hu and Bentler (1999), values lower than 0.05 and 0.08 indicate a good fit between the model and the SRMR and RMSEA data indicators, respectively. Alternative models were compared to other fit statistics using the Bayes information criteria (BIC) and the Akaike information criteria (AIC). Kline (2015) found that the lower the value, the better the model is, as the BIC and AIC values serve as an index for model parsimony.

Ethical considerations

The intended objectives of the research study were communicated to all stakeholders to avoid deception or uncertainty. The purpose and procedure of the research were emphasized to each participant by providing a brief description in the cover letter attached to the questionnaire. The expected time required, approximately 60 minutes, to complete the questionnaire was made known to the participants to give them enough time to prepare themselves before data was collected. Participation in the research study was voluntary, and if any participants refused to take part, their decision was accepted and respected. Strict ethical standards were adhered to and the best interest of the participants was considered vital. The participants' privacy, well-being, and

dignity were prioritised, and their physical and emotional needs were taken into account during the study. All participants were treated equitably and not discriminated against on any grounds (e.g., race, gender, or disability). Participants were allowed to terminate their participation, and not submit their questionnaire to the designated box, or withdraw by requesting the retraction of their questionnaire from the study after submission, at any stage without fear of prejudice.

Personal identifying information (e.g., phone numbers, email and physical addresses) collected during the different research phases remained confidential. This information was dealt with in accordance with the stipulations of the Protection of Personal Information Act [POPI] (Act 4 of 2013, p. 18): "accountability, processing limitation, purpose specification, further processing limitation, information quality, openness, security safeguards, data subject interpretation").

RESULTS

First, the internal consistency reliability coefficients for the scales used in the study were calculated. Secondly, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), which, according to Brown (2015), determines the best-fitting measurement model for the available data, was done. The initial attempt at a CFA model of the emotional labour measuring instrument was unsuccessful. The factors were too highly correlated or resulted in a non-positive definite matrix. Therefore, it was decided to conduct exploratory factor analysis (EFA) on the emotional labour items to investigate any potential challenges in the current sample. Next, a correlation matrix was considered to explore the relationship between variables. The correlation matrix was interpreted based on Cohen's (1992) guidelines. Values of 0.30 and above are considered medium effect sizes, and those of 0.50 and above is considered a large effect. Lastly, a structural model was specified during a follow-up analysis by adding structural paths according to the research hypotheses. To reject or support the hypotheses, statistical significance ($p < 0.05$), direction, and size of the standardised estimates were considered.

Reliability

McDonald's omega (Ω) internal consistency reliability coefficients were calculated for each of the ELS, UWES, and BAT scales. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: *Internal Consistency Reliability of the ELS, UWES, and BAT*

	Variable	McDonald's (Ω)
1	EL – Frequency and deep acting (1-5)	0.82
2	EL – Intensity and variety (1-5)	0.85
3	EL – Surface acting (1-5)	0.81
4	Burnout (1-5)	0.92
5	Work engagement (0-6)	0.80

Ω ≥ 0.70 – satisfactory

Values of ≥ 0.70 on McDonald's omega (Ω) are considered satisfactory for use in individual decision making, and values above 0.60 are generally considered acceptable for group work (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2013; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). As shown in Table 2 above, all the scales in this study met this criterion and can be interpreted.

Testing the measurement models

The Mplus 8.6 software program was used to analyse different permutations of possible factor structures to verify the best fitting measurement model between emotional labour (ELS) with its five composites (frequency, intensity, variety, deep acting, and surface acting), burnout (BAT) with its six composites (exhaustion, mental distance, cognitive impairment, emotional impairment, psychological complaints, and psychosomatic complaints), and work engagement (UWES) with its three composites (absorption, dedication, and vigour) (Lee & Brotheridge, 2011; Lee et al., 2010; Schaufeli et al., 2019; Schaufeli et al., 2002).

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted for each measurement instrument used in this study, using the R-statistical framework (R Development Core Team, 2015). A series of models were tested to investigate the factor structures of the ELS, UWES, and BAT measures using the maximum likelihood (ML) estimator.

CFA conducted on the Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT) questionnaire indicated that all items loaded successfully onto their respective factors and were suitable for use. All attempts at various CFA models regarding the ELS measurement were unsuccessful as the modelling of the emotional labour factors was either too highly correlated or resulted in a non-positive definite matrix. To remedy the situation, it was decided to conduct exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to investigate the potential challenges with the model in the current sample. The exploratory factor analysis at the end revealed a three-factor model for emotional labour (frequency and deep acting; Intensity and variety; surface acting) instead of the hypothesised five-factor model. All the ELS items loaded successfully on the three factors, resulting in no items being excluded at this stage. Confirmatory factor analyses were run to test the factor structure of the UWES-17 measure as

initially hypothesised by the scale authors. The three-factor model tested raised some concerns due to the high intercorrelations between vigour, dedication, and absorption. Therefore, it was decided to test work engagement as a one-factor model, which was found reliable by Schaufeli et al. (2006) with items 1, 5 and 11. The one-factor solution was a better fit than the three-factor solution.

The various adjusted CFA models were combined into an initial measurement model. After assessing the initial measurement model, it was found that all factors loaded above 0.35 resulted in no exclusions of items. The modification indices reported a high error variance correlation between the psychological complaint and psychosomatic complaint factors in the BAT measuring instrument (MI = 40.281). The error variances were allowed to correlate, which resulted in a better fit. Upon assessing the residual variances, it was found that Item 5 in the ELS measuring instrument had four problematic values. It was therefore subsequently removed, resulting in measurement Model 1 that was found to be the best acceptable fit to the data. The results are reported in Table 3.

Table 3: *Fit statistics of final and competing measurement models*

Model	χ^2	*df*	AIC	BIC	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Model 1	1272.49	887	24237.51	24260.72	0.91	0.90	0.05	0.06
Model 2	Non-positive definite latent variable covariance matrix – results not trustworthy							
Model 3	1375.63	920	24283.34	24302.58	0.90	0.89	0.05	0.08
Model 4	1343.94	909	24265.77	24286.33	0.90	0.89	0.05	0.08
Model 5	1328.40	903	24265.13	24286.42	0.90	0.90	0.05	0.07
Model 6	Non-positive definite latent variable covariance matrix – results not trustworthy							
Model 7	1331.10	910	24256.19	24276.64	0.91	0.90	0.05	0.07
Model 8	1293.57	895	24239.27	24261.52	0.91	0.90	0.05	0.06

χ^2 = chi-square, *df* = degrees of freedom, AIC = Akaike information criteria, BIC = Bayesian information criteria, TLI = Tucker-Lewis index, CFI = comparative fit index, RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation, SRMR = standardised root mean square residual

Testing the structural model

To start with, Pearson's correlation coefficients were calculated between each of the measurements included in this study. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r), according to Maree (2020), is a measure of the strength of a linear association between two quantitative variables measured on a continuous scale. Correlations were done to identify possible links and these are reported in Table 4.

Table 4: *Correlation coefficients of measuring instruments*

	Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1	EL – Frequency and deep acting (1-5)	-				
2	EL – Intensity and variety (1-5)	0.63‡**	-			
3	EL – Surface acting (1-5)	0.53‡**	0.56‡**	-		
4	Burnout (1-5)	0.21 *	0.45†**	0.59‡**	-	
5	Work engagement (0-6)	0.06	-0.12	-0.28**	-0.55‡**	-

** p < 0.05 – statistically significant*
*** p < 0.01– statistically significant*
† r > 0.30 – practically significant (medium effect)
‡ r > 0.50 – practically significant (large effect)

Based on the results summarised in Table 4, it can be confirmed that burnout is practically and statistically significantly related to EL – Surface acting (large effect) and EL – Intensity/variety (medium effect) but only statistically significantly related to EL – Frequency /deep acting (small effect). Work engagement was found to be statistically significantly negatively related to surface acting (small effect), while both EL – Frequency /deep acting (positively) and EL – Intensity/variety (negatively) were found to have no significant relationship with work engagement. Work engagement correlated negatively with burnout, to a large extent from a practical and statistically significant point of view.

Next, a regression pathway analysis was done between the different constructs in the structural model. In the first model (which was also the proposed model), all the direct and indirect pathways were estimated simultaneously. The second model estimated only direct pathways from EL – Frequency /deep acting, EL – Intensity/variety, EL – Surface acting and work engagement directly to burnout. The paths from EL – Frequency /deep acting, EL – Intensity/variety, EL – Surface acting to work engagement were constrained to zero. The third model estimated only indirect pathways from EL – Frequency /deep acting, EL – Intensity/variety, EL – Surface acting via work engagement to burnout.

Table 5: *Initial framework fit indices and standardised path coefficients*

Measures		Direct and indirect pathways	Direct pathways	Indirect pathways
Fit indices	χ^2	1282.96	1450.64	1405.01
	df	895	922	904
	AIC	24232.60	2431.98	24325.72
	ABIC	24254.85	24380.98	24346.88

	CFI	0.91	0.88	0.89
	TLI	0.90	0.87	0.88
	RMSEA	0.05	0.05	0.05
	MLR – adjusted χ^2	1386.24	1569.59	1497.32
	SRMR	0.06	0.11	0.07
Direct pathway to burnout	EL – Frequency and deep acting	-0.20	-0.10	-
	EL – Intensity and variety	0.40**	0.31**	-
	EL – Surface acting	0.18	0.31**	-
	Work engagement	0.13	-0.10	0.03
Direct pathways to work engagement	EL – Frequency and deep acting	0.11	-	0.63
	EL – Intensity and variety	-0.05	-	-0.26
	EL – Surface acting	-0.06	-	-0.55**

* $p < 0.05$
** $p < 0.01$

Figure 2.2 contains the standardised path coefficients that were estimated by using Mplus 8.6 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2020).

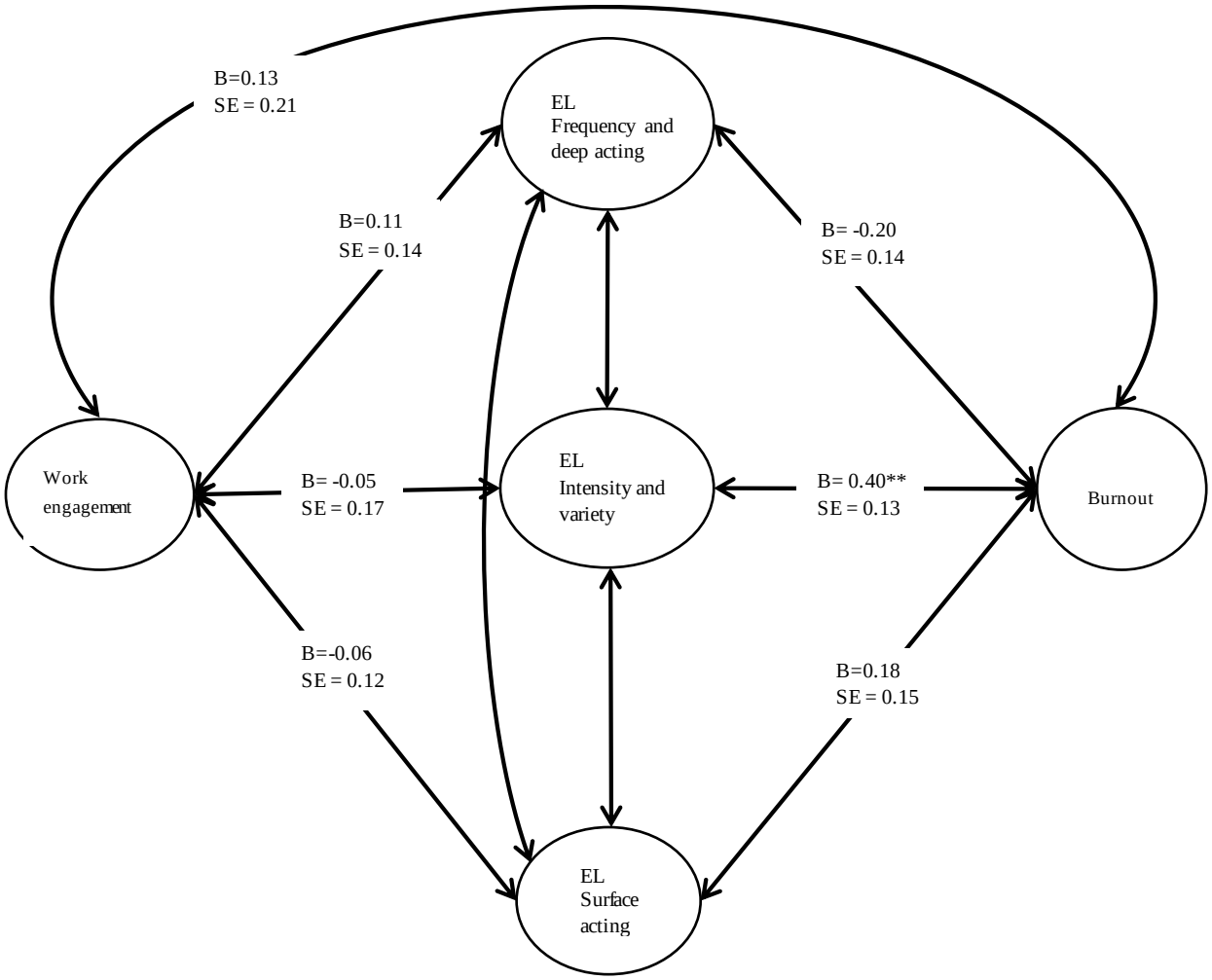

Figure 2.2 *Structural model for emotional labour, burnout, and work engagement*

DISCUSSION

Conclusions

The motivation for this study was the need to establish the relationship between emotional labour (EL), burnout (BO), and work engagement (WE), keeping in mind that the organisation under research renders a one of a kind service mandated to them by the South African government. Hallberg and Schaufeli (2006) are adamant that employees need a very high degree of work engagement to be committed and positively attached to their work environment, and to have high energy levels to perform optimally.

Results obtained in this study strongly support Hypothesis 1. It was evident that a positive, practical, and statistically significant relationship exists between burnout and EI – Surface acting in the government service centre under research. This is also consistent with the growing body of research evidence reiterating that emotional labour, and specific surface acting, can be seen as

an extremely stressful job demand that leads to high burnout levels (Bui et al., 2011; Diestel & Schmidt, 2011; Rogers et al., 2014). Surface acting is the continuous expression of certain emotions, contrary to an employee's genuine emotions, and it is especially detrimental employees working in the service industry (Pugh et al., 2011). Looking at the surface acting results from this study, there is reason for the organisation to feel apprehensive. The mean of surface acting was 3.33 with a standard deviation of 0.85. Considering that a 5-point scale was used, it is evident that the surface acting levels in these government service centres are high. An explanation for this phenomenon can be the consistent positive emotional and bodily display that the organisation expects employees to portray to clients. The literature repeatedly confirmed that surface acting causes employees to experience extremely high levels of stress, which results in increased levels of burnout. In line with the finding of Rogers et al., (2014), a recommendation could be made to the organisation to make an effort to limit the degree of surface acting required from service agents to partially assist in reducing the amount of burnout experienced by the employees, which according to Rogers et al. (2014), will result in improved well-being and reduced ill-health. Another recommendation to the organisation will align with research done by Diestel and Schmidt (2011). They found that person-job fit is crucial when establishing emotional labour levels amongst employees. Therefore, the organisation should pay specific attention to person-environment fit and personality traits of new job applicants during recruitment because if personality traits are more aligned, less emotional dissonance will occur, which will result in employees experiencing less burnout.

The second hypothesis of this study was to determine the relationship between EL – Deep acting and burnout and it was assumed that there would be a negative correlation between these two constructs in the government service centres under research. This assumption was made because deep acting, in contrast to surface acting, refers to the process that individuals employ when they try to alter their internal emotions before the actual interaction to adhere to the organisation's display rules, which has a negative effect on burnout levels (Hochschild, 2012). Hypothesis 2 corroborated the research done by Cheung et al., (2011), Hülsheger and Schewe (2011), and Scott and Barnes (2011) who found that deep acting was undeniably negatively related to burnout. However, the results obtained in this study proved Hypothesis 2 not to be true for the government service centres under research. This study found a positive statistically significant (small effect) relationship between EL – Deep acting and burnout. The mean of EL – Frequency and deep acting was 3.60 with a standard deviation of 0.82, which, keeping in mind that a 5-point scale was used, confirms high levels of deep acting amongst the service centre agents under research. A possible explanation for this positive relationship is found in research done by Grandey (2000) that suggests that although deep acting generates lower levels of inconsistency between outer and inner feelings than surface acting, a small degree of effort is still

required to alter authentic feelings, expressions, and thoughts that require a small amount of deliberate psychological effort, which could cause stress, emotional exhaustion, depletion of energy, and reduced personal accomplishment, which could result in possible burnout (Lee, 2018). Another possible explanation is found in research done by Keefer et al. (2018) who found a correlation between emotional intelligence and deep acting. They suggest that emotional intelligence varies from individual to individual, which highlights the importance of considering context when doing research. Despite the positive relationship with burnout, according to Roger et al. (2014), deep acting also illustrates positive correlations with increased job satisfaction and work engagement and should therefore be encouraged in service jobs. Possible recommendations to the government organisation under research include the roll-out of classroom training interventions to enhance EL – Deep acting skills, on-the-job interventions, such as magnifying job responsibilities, and increased task significance (Pugh et al., 2011). Managers in the government service centres should increase on-the-job autonomy support by providing a clear rationale for why specific display rules are enforced and emphasizing choice of the emotional display instead of absolute organisational control.

The results obtained in this study confirmed that a statistically significant negative relationship exists between work engagement and EL – Surface acting, which supports the third hypothesis in this study. This statistical outcome is also supported by various previous research outcomes that have confirmed that surface acting constantly leads to adverse outcomes, such as poor health, burned-out employees, job dissatisfaction, low commitment levels and disengaged employees (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011; Hülsheger et al., 2010; Pugh et al., 2011; Pugliesi, 1999). Unfortunately, feeling one emotion and attempting to express another is part of every employee's life and is often influenced from the moment an individual wakes up in the morning. Like all other individuals, service centre agents have to deal with upsetting family and financial issues and, in most cases, a frustrating commute to work. When arriving at work, there are explicit norms to engagement that impel employees to find ways to maintain a positive relationship with clients and colleagues, despite not necessarily experiencing particularly positive inner feelings. Recommendations to the organisation under research will be to get their service centre management involved to minimise high surface acting levels experienced in the government service centres. De Villiers (2015) suggests that managers should take a positive, proactive leadership role by encouraging acts of kindness and gratitude amongst co-workers and establishing an optimistic, favourable, and supportive culture, which is also known to be an antecedent for high work engagement levels. To become strengths-based training facilitators, service centre managers should be trained to be actively involved in the government service centre. This will ensure that managers know the service agents' strengths and weaknesses in order to enhance their ability to give meaningful, appropriate, and supportive feedback regarding

the emotional display between service agents and clients (De Villiers, 2015). Positive and supportive observations and remarks from managers during service delivery enhance employees' self-efficacy and lifted their morale (Lloyd et al., 2013). Interactive training interventions that suggest techniques for coping with unauthentic emotions and stress could be made available to service centre employees via their cell phones and computers to ensure a quick, hands-on approach when they need help to deal with surface acting. Emotional labour is known to be a complicated construct to influence. Therefore, taking into account the very stressful government service centre environment, there is not much that can be done to make the work environment less stressful or easier on the service centre employees. According to De Villiers (2015), this should be one of the reasons that the employment of suitable, supportive, and psychologically strong managers should be a priority.

The hypothesised (Hypothesis 4) significant positive relationship between deep acting and work engagement was found not to exist in the government service centre under research. Instead, no significant relationship was found between deep acting and work engagement. This deviates from previous research and propositions that found a strong positive relationship between the two constructs (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011; Hülsheger et al., 2010; Pugh et al., 2011; Pugliesi, 1999). A possible explanation for this could be the positive relationship found in this study between deep acting and burnout. In research done by Maslach and Leiter (2016), it was confirmed that burnout is the polar opposite of work engagement, which means that it is unlikely that employees that show high levels of burnout would show a high degree of work engagement.

Burnout showed a practical and statistically significant negative relationship with work engagement (supporting Hypothesis 5). This means that government service centre agents that display high levels of burnout experience low levels of work engagement. Looking at the work engagement and burnout results from this study, there is reason for the government organisation to be concerned. The mean of burnout was 2.78, with a standard deviation of 0.82. Measured on a 5-point scale, it is evident that the burnout levels in this organisation are leaning towards the higher end of the scale. The mean of work engagement was 3.59 with a standard deviation of 1.09, measured on a 7-point scale, which indicates that work engagement levels in the government service centres are not very high. Therefore, it is clear that the government organisation should consider implementing interventions to promote work engagement and reduce burnout in their service centres. According to research done by Maslach et al., (2001), there are several ways for the organisation to increase employee engagement. These include guarding against work overload, implementing appropriate fair and consistent recognition and reward programmes, creating a supportive work environment through specific and continuous feedback, setting clear company objectives and role profiles, and providing appropriate resources

and support during peak hours. Gómez-Gascón et al., (2013) also recommend continuous career development interventions to ensure that service centre jobs remain exciting and challenging.

Limitations and recommendations for future studies

Although the study makes a significant contribution to the research field in human resource management, some limitations should be mentioned. A cross-sectional design was used in this study, which made it impossible to reach conclusions on the direction of associations between the sample profile and dependant variables. Variables are considered at a certain point and do not leave any room for possible changes over time (Maree, 2016). Therefore, it is recommended that future research should aim at replicating this study but that a longitudinal design be used instead.

The second limitation of this study relates to the use of a self-reported survey in the form of a questionnaire as the only source of information. Podsakoff (2003) argues that this kind of information sourcing can be the reason for common method bias that contributes to measurement errors. A recommendation to future researchers would be to use multiple data-collection methods, for example, a mixed method research design.

Lastly, the study was conducted in a single government organisation in South Africa, which can be regarded as a concern and a limitation for generalising findings across the entire government sector. Therefore, it is recommended that future research should include more than one government organisation within the South African context.

References

Abramson, L., Petranker, R., Marom, I., & Aviezer, H. (2021). Social interaction context shapes emotion recognition through body language, not facial expressions. *Emotion*, *21*(3), 557-568. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2020-02994-001

Allen, J. A., Pugh, S. D., Grandey, A. A., & Groth, M. (2010). Following display rules in good or bad faith?: Customer orientation as a moderator of the display rule-emotional labour relationship. *Human Performance*, *23*, 101-115.

Allen, D. G., Weeks, K. P., & Moffitt, K. R. (2005). Turnover intentions and voluntary turnover: the moderating roles of self-monitoring, locus of control, proactive personality, and risk aversion. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *90*(5), 980-990. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2005-10696-015

Armon, G. (2009). Do burnout and insomnia predict each other's levels of change over time independently of the job demand control–support (JDC–S) model?. *Stress and Health: Journal of the International Society for the Investigation of Stress*, *25*(4), 333-342.

Aziz, S., Widis, A., & Wuensch, K. (2018). The association between emotional labor and burnout: the moderating role of psychological capital. *Occupational Health Science*, *2*(4), 365-383.

Bakker, A. B. (2011). An evidence-based model of work engagement. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *20*(4), 265-269. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0963721411414534

Bakker, A. B., Demerouti, E., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2003). Dual processes at work in a call centre: an application of the job demands-resources model. *European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology*, *12*(4), 393-417.

Bakker, A. B., & Sanz-Vergel, A. I. (2013). Weekly work engagement and flourishing: The role of hindrance and challenge job demands. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *83*(3), 397-409.

Bakker, A. B., Schaufeli, W. B., Leiter, M. P., & Taris, T. W. (2008). Work engagement: An emerging concept in occupational health psychology. *Work and Stress, 22*(3), 187-200. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02678370802393649

Barger, P. B., & Grandey, A. A. (2006). Service with a smile and encounter satisfaction: Emotional contagion and appraisal mechanisms. *Academy of Management Journal, 49*, 1229-1238.

Bono, J. E., & Vey, M. A. (2005). Towards understanding emotional management at work: A quantitative review of emotional labour research. In *Emotions in organisational behaviour* (pp. 224-244). Psychology Press.

Brotheridge, C. M., & Grandey, A. A. (2002). Emotional labour and burnout: Comparing two perspectives of "people work". *Journal of Vocational Behaviour, 60*(1), 17-39.

Brown, T. A. (2015). *Confirmatory factor analysis for applied research* (2nd ed.). Guilford publications.

Bui, J., Hodge, A., Shackelford, A., & Acsell, J. (2011). Factors contributing to burnout among perfusionists in the United States. *Perfusion*, *26*(6), 461-466. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0267659111411521

Butler, E. A., Egloff, B., Wlhelm, F. H., Smith, N. C., Erickson, E. A., & Gross, J. J. (2003). The social consequences of expressive suppression. *Emotion*, *3*(1), 48-67.

Byrne, B. M. (2010). *Structural equation modelling with AMOS: Basic concepts, applications and programming* (2nd ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Chen, M. J., & Cunradi, C. (2008). Job stress, burnout and substance use among urban transit operators: The potential mediating role of coping behaviour. *Work & Stress*, *22*(4), 327-340. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02678370802573992

Cheung, F. Y. L., & Tang, C. S. K. (2007). The influence of emotional dissonance and resources at work on job burnout among Chinese human service employees. *International Journal of Stress Management, 14*(1), 72-87.

Cheung, F., Tang, C. S., & Tang, S. (2011). Psychological capital as a moderator between emotional labor, burnout, and job satisfaction among school teachers in China. *International Journal of Stress Management, 18*, 348-371.

Christian, M. S., Garza, A. S., & Slaughter, J. E. (2011). Work engagement: A quantitative review and test of its relations with task and contextual performance. *Personnel Psychology*, *64*(1), 89-136. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2010.01203.x

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.

Cohen, J. (1992). A power primer. *Psychological Bulletin*, *112*(1), 155-159.

Coté, S. (2005). A social interaction model of the effects of emotion regulation on work strain. *Academy of Management Review*, *30*(3), 509-530. https://journals.aom.org/doi/abs/10.5465/amr.2005.17293692

Demerouti, E., & Bakker, A. B. (2011). The job demands-resources model: Challenges for future research. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, *37*(2), 1-9.

Demerouti, E., Bakker, A. B., & Gevers, J. M. (2015). Job crafting and extra-role behavior: The role of work engagement and flourishing. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *91*, 87-96.

Demerouti, E., Mostert, K., & Bakker, A. B. (2010). Burnout and work engagement: a thorough investigation of the independency of both constructs. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, *15*(3), 209-222.

Development Core Team. (2015). *R: A language environment for statistical computing.* R Foundation for Statistical Computing.

De Villiers, C. (2015). *The relationships between emotional labour, the HEXACO personality traits, work engagement and burnout in the hospitality industry* (Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University).

Diefendorff, J. M., Richard, E. M., & Croyle, M. H. (2006). Are emotional display rules formal job requirements? Examination of employee and supervisor perceptions. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, *79*(2), 273-298. https://bpspsychub.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1348/096317905x68484

Diestel, S., & Schmidt, K. H. (2011). The moderating role of cognitive control deficits in the link from emotional dissonance to burnout symptoms and absenteeism. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, *16*(3), 313-330.

Ericson-Lidman, E., & Strandberg, G. (2007). Meanings of being a supervisor for care providers suffering from burnout: From initial signs to recuperation. *Journal of Nursing Management*, *17*(3), 366-375.

Foxcroft, C., & Roodt, G. (2013). *Introduction to psychological assessment in the South African context.* Oxford University Press.

Gan, T., & Gan, Y. (2014). Sequential development among dimensions of job burnout and engagement among IT employees. *Stress and Health*, *30*(2), 122-133. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/smi.2502

Gefen, D., Straub, D., & Boudreau, M. C. (2000). Structural equation modeling and regression: Guidelines for research practice. *Communications of the association for information systems, 4(1)*, 2-79.

Gómez-Gascón, T., Martín-Fernández, J., Gálvez-Herrer, M., Tapias-Merino, E., Beamud-Lagos, M., & Mingote-Adán, J. C. (2013). Effectiveness of an intervention for prevention and treatment of burnout in primary health care professionals. *BMC Family Practice*, *14*(1), 1-7. https://bmcprimcare.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1471-2296-14-173

Grandey, A. A. (2000). Emotional regulation in the workplace: A new way to conceptualize emotional labor. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 5*(1), 95-110.

Grandey, A. A. (2003). When "the show must go on": Surface acting and deep acting as determinants of emotional exhaustion and peer-rated service delivery. *Academy of Management Journal*, *46*(1), 86-96.

Grandey, A. A., Dickter, D. N., & Sin, H. P. (2004). The customer is not always right: customer aggression and emotion regulation of service employees. *Journal of Organisational Behaviour, 25*(3), 397-418.

Grandey, A., Diefendorff, J., & Rupp, D. E. (Eds.). (2015). *Emotional labour in the 21st century: Diverse perspectives on emotional regulation at work.* Routledge.

Grandey, A. A., Fisk, G. M., Mattila, A. S., Jansen, K. J., & Sideman, L. A. (2005). Is "service with a smile" enough? Authenticity of positive displays during service encounters. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *96*(1), 38-55. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0749597804000743

Grandey, A. A., Foo, S. C., Groth, M., & Goodwin, R. E. (2012). Free to be you and me: a climate of authenticity alleviates burnout from emotional labour. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 17*(1), 1-14.

Grandey, A. A., & Gabriel, A. (2015). Emotional labor at a crossroad: Where do we go from here? *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behaviour, 2*(1), 323-249.

Gross, J. J. (1998). Antecedent-and response-focused emotion regulation: divergent consequences for experience, expression, and physiology. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *74*(1), 224-237. https://psycnet.apa.org/journals/psp/74/1/224.html?uid=1997-38342-016

Gross, J. J., & John, O. P. (2003). Individual differences in two emotion regulation processes: implications for affect, relationships, and well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *85*(2), 348-362.

Groth, M., Henning-Thurau T., & Walsh, G. (2009). Customer reactions to emotional labor: The roles of employee acting strategies and customer detection accuracy. *Academy of Management Journal, 52*(5), 958-974.

Guy, M. E., & Lee, H. J. (2015). How emotional intelligence mediates emotional labour in public service jobs. *Review of Public Personnel Administration, 35*(3), 261-277.

Halbesleben, J. R., & Buckley, M. R. (2004). Burnout in organizational life. *Journal of Management*, *30*(6), 859-879. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0149206304000662

Hallberg, U. E., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2006). "Same" but different? Can work engagement be discriminated from job involvement and organizational commitment?. *European Psychologist*, *11*(2), 119-127.

Hallencreutz, J., & Parmler, J. (2021). Important drivers for customer-satisfaction-from product focus to image and service quality. *Total quality management & business excellence*, *32*(5), 501-510. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14783363.2019.1594756

Han, S. J., Bonn, M. A., & Cho, M. (2016). The relationship between customer incivility, restaurant frontline employee burnout, and turnover intention. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 52, 97-106.

Hochschild, A. R. (1979). Emotion work, feeling rules, and social structure. *American Journal of Sociology, 85*(3), 551-575.

Hochschild, A. R. (1983). *The managed heart: A commercialization of human feelings.* University of California Press.

Hochschild, A. R. (2012). *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling.* University of California Press.

Hoopes, B. (2006). Key burnout warning signs. *Landscape Management, 45*(8), 16.

Hsieh, C.W. (2014). Burnout among public service workers: The role of emotional labor requirements and job resources. *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, *34*(4), 379-402.

Hu, L. T., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling: a Multidisciplinary Journal*, *6*(1), 1-55. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10705519909540118

Hülsheger, U. R., Lang, J. W. B., & Maier, G. W. (2010). Emotional labour, strain, and performance: Testing reciprocal relationships in a longitudinal panel study. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 15*, 505-521.

Hülsheger, U. R., & Schewe, A. F. (2011). On the costs and benefits of emotional labor: A meta-analysis of three decades of research. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 16*, 361-389.

Iacobucci, D. (2009). Everything you always wanted to know about SEM (structural equations modeling) but were afraid to ask. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *19*(4), 673-680.

Iacobucci, D. (2010). Structural equations modeling: Fit indices, sample size, and advanced topics. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *20*(1), 90-98. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1057740809001120

IBM Corporation. (Released 2020). *IBM SPSS statistics for Windows, version 27.0*. IBM Corporation.

Jackson, S. E., & Maslach, C. (1982). After-effects of job-related stress: Families as victims. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *3*(1), 63-77.

Jackson, S. E., & Schuler, R. S. (1983). Preventing employee burnout. *Personnel*, *60*(2), 58-68.

Janse van Rensburg, Y. J., Boonzaier, B., & Boonzaier, M. (2013). The job demands-resources model of work engagement in South African call centres. *SA Journal of Human Resources Management*, *11*(1), 1-13.

Jeung, D. Y., Kim, C., & Chang, S. J. (2018). Emotional labor and burnout: A review of the literature. *Yonsei Medical Journal*, *59*(2), 187-193. https://synapse.koreamed.org/articles/1032247

Kahn, W. A. (1990). Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. *Academy of Management Journal*, *33*(4), 692-724.

Kammeyer-Mueller, J. D., Rubenstein, A. L., Long, D. M., Odio, M. A., Buckman, B. R., Zhang, Y., & Halvorsen-Ganepola, M. D. (2013). A meta-analytic structural model of dispositional affectivity and emotional labor. *Personnel Psychology*, *66*(1), 47-90.

Kanyemba, D. (2017). *E-government innovation for effective service delivery: a case of the Gauteng Department of Education online applications.* (Doctoral dissertation, North-West University, South Africa.

Karatepe, O. M., & Demir, E. (2014). Linking core self-evaluations and work engagement to work-family facilitation: a study in the hotel industry. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *26*(2), 307-323. https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/IJCHM-01-2013-0008/full/html

Karl, K. A., & Peluchette, J. V. (2006). Does workplace fun buffer the impact of emotional exhaustion on job dissatisfaction: a study of healthcare workers. J*ournal of Behavioural and Applied Management*. *7*(2), 128-141.

Keefer, K. V., Parker, J. D., & Saklofske, D. H. (2018). Three decades of emotional intelligence research: Perennial issues, emerging trends, and lessons learned in education: Introduction to emotional intelligence in education. In *Emotional intelligence in education* (pp. 1-19). Springer, Cham.

Kenworthy, J., Fay, C., Frame, M., & Petree, R. (2014). A meta-analytic review of the relationship between emotional dissonance and emotional exhaustion. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *44*(2), 94-105. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/jasp.12211

Kerlinger, F. N., & Lee, H. B. (2000). Survey research. *Foundations of behavioral research,* (pp. 599-619).

Kline, R. B. (2015). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling*. Guilford publications.

Kristensen, T. S., Borritz, M., Villadsen, E., & Christensen, K. B. (2005). The CopenhagenBurnout Inventory: A new tool for the assessment of burnout. *Work & Stress*, *19*(3), 192-207.

Lambert, E. G., Hogan, N. L., & Altheimer, I. (2010). An exploratory examination of the consequences of burnout in terms of life satisfaction, turnover intent, and absenteeism among private correctional staff. *The Prison Journal*, *90*(1), 94-114. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0032885509357586

Lavigna, B. (2015). Commentary: Public service motivation and employee engagement. *Public Administration Review*, *5*(75), 732-733.

Lee, R. T., & Brotheridge, C. M. (2011). Words from the heart speak to the heart: A study of deep acting, faking, and hiding among child care workers. *Career Development International*, *16*, 401-420.

Lee, H. J. (2016). Effects of public-service employee age and performance of emotional labour on job pride. *Social Behaviour and Personality: An International Journal*, *44*, 1339-1348. https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/sbp/sbp/2016/00000044/00000008/art00010

Lee, H. J. (2018). How emotional intelligence relates to job satisfaction and burnout in public service jobs. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, *84*(4), 729-745.

Lee, R. T., Lovell, B. L., & Brotheridge, C. M. (2010). Tenderness and steadiness: Relating job and interpersonal demands and resources with burnout and physical symptoms of stress in Canadian physicians. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *40*, 2319-2342.

Leiter, M. P., & Maslach, C. (2005). *Banishing burnout: Six strategies for improving your relationship with work*. Jossey-Bass.

Lloyd, J., Bond, F. W., & Flaxman, P. (2013). Identifying psychological mechanisms underpinning a cognitive behavioural therapy intervention for emotional burnout. *Work & Stress*, *27*(2), 181-199. https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/6325/

Low, G. S., Cravens, D. W., Grant, K., & Moncrief, W. C. (2001). Antecedents and consequences of salesperson burnout. *European Journal of Marketing*, *35*(5/6), 587-611.

Macey, W. H., & Schneider, B. (2008). The meaning of employee engagement. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, *1*(1), 3-30.

Mahesh, V, S., & Kasturi, A. (2006). Improving call centre agent performance. *International Journal of Service Industry Management, 17*(2), 136-157. https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/09564230610656971/full/html

Mäkikangas, A., Feldt, T., Kinnunen, U., & Tolvanen, A. (2012). Do low burnout and high work engagement always go hand in hand? Investigation of the energy and identification dimensions in longitudinal data. *Anxiety, Stress & Coping*, *25*(1), 93-116.

Martínez-Iñigo, D., Totterdell, P., Alcover, C. M., & Holman, D. (2007). Emotional labour and emotional exhaustion: Interpersonal and intrapersonal mechanisms. *Work & Stress*, *21*(1), 30-47.

Maree, K. (2020). *First steps in research*. Van Schaik Publishers.

Maslach, C., & Jackson, S. E. (1981). The measurement of experienced burnout. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *2*(2), 99-113. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/job.4030020205

Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2016). Understanding the burnout experience: recent research and its implications for psychiatry. *World Psychiatry*, *15*(2), 103-111.

Maslach, C., Leiter, M. P., & Jackson, S. E. (2012). Making a significant difference with burnout interventions: Researcher and practitioner collaboration. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *33*(2), 296-300.

Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W. B., & Leiter, M.P. (2001). Job burnout. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *52*(1), 397-422.

Mauno, S., Ruokolainen, M., Kinnunen, U., & De Bloom, J. (2016). Emotional labour and work engagement among nurses: examining perceived compassion, leadership and work ethic as stress buffers. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *72*, 1169-1181. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/jan.12906

May, D. R., Gilson, R. L., & Harter, L. M. (2004). The psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety and availability and the engagement of the human spirit at work. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, *77*(1), 11-37.

Mróz, J., & Kaleta, K. (2016). Relationships between personality, emotional labor, work engagement and job satisfaction in service professions. *International Journal of Occupational Medicine and Environmental Health*, *29*(5), 767-782.

Muthén, L. K., & Muthén, B. O. (1998 - 2020). *Mplus users 'guide* (8th ed.). Muthén & Muthén.

Nadaoka, T., Kanda, H., Oiji, A., Morioka, Y., Kashiwakura, M., & Totsuka, S. (1997). Headache and stress in a group of nurses and government administrators in Japan. *Headache: The Journal of Head and Face Pain*, *37*(6), 386-391.

Narainsamy, K., & Van Der Westhuizen, S. (2013). Work related well-being: Burnout, work engagement, occupational stress and job satisfaction within a medical laboratory setting. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, *23*(3), 467-474. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14330237.2013.10820653

Nilsson, J. (2010). What's the problem? Local officials' conceptions of weaknesses in their municipalities' crisis management capabilities. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, *18*(2), 83-95.

Noesgaard, M. S., & Hansen, J. R. (2018). Work engagement in the public service context: The dual perceptions of job characteristics. *International Journal of Public Administration*, *41*(13), 1047-1060.

Nunnally, J. C., & Bernstein, I. H. (1994). *Psychometric theory* (3rd ed.) McGraw-Hill.

Perry, J. L., & Vandenabeele, W. (2015). Public service motivation research: Achievements, challenges, and future directions. *Public Administration Review*, *75*(5), 692-699.

Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *885*(879), 897-903. https://www.iges.or.jp/system/files/publication_documents/pub/peer/10694/21baae66a93e9c7e5b3cbce0dbc6ffbc70c2.pdf

Protection of Personal Information Act (2013). *Protection of Personal Information Act No. 4 of 2013*. Republic of South Africa. https://www.gov.za/documents/protection-personal-information-act.

Pugh, S. D. (2001). Service with a smile: Emotional contagion in the service encounter. *Academy of Management Journal, 44*, 1018-1027.

Pugh, S. D., Groth, M., & Hennig-Thurau, T. (2011). Willing and able to fake emotions: A closer examination of the link between emotional dissonance and employee well-being. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *96*(2), 377-390. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2010-23149-001

Pugliesi, K. (1999). The consequences of emotional labor: Effects on work stress, job satisfaction, and well-being. *Motivation and Emotion*, *23*(2), 125-154.

Rogers, M. E., Creed, P. A., & Searle, J. (2014). Emotional labour, training stress, burnout, and depressive symptoms in junior doctors. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, *66*(2), 232-248.

Sabino, W. T. R., & Bianchi, L. C. D. (2019). How quality of service can affect an organisation: A study on the importance of good customer service. *Research, Society and Development*, *8*(1), 1-10.

Salanova, M., Agut, S., & Peiró, J. M. (2005). Linking organizational resources and work engagement to employee performance and customer loyalty: the mediation of service climate. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *90*(6), 1217-1227. https://psycnet.apa.org/journals/apl/90/6/1217/

Satorra, A., & Bentler, P. M. (2010). Ensuring positiveness of the scaled difference chi-square test static. *Psychometrika*, *75*, 243-248.

Savicki, V., & Cooley, E. J. (1982). Implications of Burnout Research and Theory for Counselor Educators. *Personnel & Guidance Journal*, *60*(7), 415-419.

Schaufeli, W. B., Bakker, A. B., & Salanova, M. (2006). The measurement of work engagement with a short questionnaire: A cross-national study. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, *66*(4), 701-716. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0013164405282471

Schaufeli, W. B., De Witte, H., & Desart, S. (2019). Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT) manual. *Internal report*.

Schaufeli, W. B., Salanova, M., Gonzalez-Roma, V., & Bakker, A. (2002). The measurement of engagement and burnout: A confirmative analytic approach. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 3,* 71-92.

Schaufeli, W. B., & Taris, T. W. (2014). A critical review of the job demands-resources model: Implications for improving work and health. *Bridging Occupational, Organizational and Public Health*, (pp. 43-68). https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-94-007-5640-3_4

Schaufeli, W. B., Taris, T. W., & Van Rhenen, W. (2008) Workaholism, burnout, and work engagement: Three of a kind or three different kinds of employee well-being? *Applied Psychology, 57*(2), 173-203.

Schmitt, A., Den Hartog, D. N., & Belschak, F. D. (2016). Transformational leadership and proactive work behaviour: A moderated mediation model including work engagement and job strain. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, *89*(3), 588-610.

Scott, B. A., & Barnes, C. M. (2011). A multilevel field investigation of emotional labour, affect work withdrawal, and gender. *Academy of Management Journal*, *54*, 116-136. https://journals.aom.org/doi/abs/10.5465/amj.2011.59215086

Simons, J. C., & Buitendach, J. H. (2013). Psychological capital, work engagement and organisational commitment amongst call centre employees in South Africa. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology, 39*(2), 1-12.

Smit, A. M. (2011). *Psychometric properties of the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory in a South African context* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria).

Sonnentag, S., & Fritz, C. (2007). The Recovery Experience Questionnaire: development and validation of a measure for assessing recuperation and unwinding from work. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 12*(3), 204-221.

Statistics South Africa. (2019). *Service delivery improvement plan, 2018/19 – 2020/21. Pretoria, South Africa: Statistics South Africa.* Retrieved from www.statssa.gov.za/publications.

Steger, M. F., Littman-Ovadia, H., Miller, M., Menger, L., & Rothmann, S. (2013). Engaging in work even when it is meaningless: Positive affective disposition and meaningful work interact in relation to work engagement. *Journal of Career Assessment, 21*(2), 348-361.

Steinberg, R. J., & Figart, D. M. (1999). Emotional labor since: The managed heart. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *561*(1), 8-26. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/000271629956100101

Steyn, H. S., & Ellis, S. M. (2003). Practical significance (effect sizes) versus or in combination with statistical significance (p-values): research note. *Management Dynamics: Journal of the Southern African Institute for Management Scientists*, *12*(4), 51-53.

Storm, K., & Rothmann, S. (2003). A psychometric analysis of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale in the South African police service. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, *29*(4), 62-70.

Struwig, F. W., & Stead, G. B. (2001). *Research: Planning, designing and reporting research*. Pearson Education.

Takai, M., Takahashi, M., Iwamitsu, Y., Ando, N., Okazaki, S., Nakajima, K., & Miyaoka, H. (2009). The experience of burnout among home caregivers of patients with dementia: Relations to depression and quality of life. *Archives of Gerontology and Geriatrics*, *49*(1), e1-e5.

Taris, T. (2006). Is there a relationship between burnout and objective performance? A critical review of 16 studies. *Work & Stress, 20*(4), 316-334. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02678370601065893

Toppinen-Tanner, S., Ojajärvi, A., Väänänen, A., Kalimo, R., & Jäppinen, P. (2005). Burnout as a predictor of medically certified sick-leave absences and their diagnosed causes. *Behavioral Medicine*, *31*(1), 18-32.

Totterdell, P., & Holman, D. (2003). Emotion regulation in customer service roles: testing a model of emotional labor. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, *8*(1), 55-73.

Van Helden, G. J., & Tillema, S. (2007). Public sector performance measurement in developing countries: A literature review and research agenda. *Journal of Accounting & Organizational Change*, *3*(3), 192-208.

Van Dijk, P. A., & Brown, A. K. (2006). Emotional labour and negative job outcomes: An evaluation of the mediating role of emotional dissonance. *Journal of Management & Organization*, *12*(2), 101-115.

Vassos, M., Nankervis, K., Skerry, T., & Lante, K. (2013). Work engagement and job burnout within the disability support worker population. *Research in Developmental Disabilities*, *34*(11), 3884-3895.

Visser, W. A., & Rothmann, S. (2008). Exploring antecedents and consequences of burnout in a call centre: empirical research. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, *34*(2), 79-87. https://journals.co.za/doi/abs/10.10520/EJC89150

Walsh, G. (2011). Unfriendly customers as a social stressor–An indirect antecedent of service employees' quitting intention. *European Management Journal*, *29*(1), 67-78.

Wang, K. L., & Groth, M. (2014). Buffering the negative effects of employee surface acting: The moderating role of employee–customer relationship strength and personalized services. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *99*(2), 341-350.

Wang, J., & Wang, X. (2012). *Structural equation modelling: Applications using Mplus*. Wiley.

Winkler, I. (2018). Identity work and emotions: a review. *International Journal of Management Reviews, 20*(1), 120-133. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/ijmr.12119

Xanthopoulou, D., Sanz-Vergel, A. I., & Demerouti, E. (2014). Reconsidering the daily recovery process: New insights and related methodological challenges. *Contemporary occupational health psychology: Global perspectives on research and practice, 3*, 51-67.

Yagil, D., & Medler-Liraz, H. (2017). Personally committed to emotional labor: Surface acting, emotional exhaustion and performance among service employees with a strong need to belong. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, *22*(4), 481-491.

Yao, L., Gao, J., Chen, C., & Mu, D. (2019). How Does Emotional Labor Impact Employees' Perceptions of Well-Being? Examining the Mediating Role of Emotional Disorder. *Sustainability*, *11*(23), 6798-6815. https://www.mdpi.com/585104

Yoo, J. J., & Arnold, T. J. (2014). Customer orientation, engagement, and developing positive emotional labor. *The Service Industries Journal*, *34*(16), 1272-1288.

Yoo, J., & Jeong, J. (2017). The effects of emotional labor on work engagement and boundary spanner creativity. *Asia Pacific Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, *11*(2), 214-232.

Zapf, D. (2002). Emotion work and psychological well-being: A review of the literature and some conceptual considerations. *Human Resource Management Review*, *12*(2), 237-268.

Zapf, D., Vogt, C., Seifert, C., Mertini, H., & Isic, A. (1999). Emotion work as a source of stress: The concept and development of an instrument. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, *8*(3), 371-400. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/135943299398230

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH ARTICLE

RESEARCH ARTICLE 2

The relationship between psychological capital, burnout, and emotional labour in a South African government organisation

ABSTRACT

Orientation: In the relatively new democratic South Africa, characterised by the continued growth of the population, the transformation of public service delivery is one of the most critical and debated priorities of the South African government. It is therefore important to employ highly skilled and emotionally strong government employees because of the direct correlation between the effectiveness and efficiency of the state and how services are rendered. It is critical to investigate emotional labour, psychological capital, and burnout levels that severely affect government employees' ability to serve clients.

Research purpose: This study examined the relationship between the subdimensions of psychological capital and the subdimensions of emotional labour and investigated the moderating effect of psychological capital on the relationship between emotional labour and burnout levels amongst service centre employees in a South African government organisation.

Motivation for the study: The transformation of service delivery, as depicted in the White Paper 1997, was introduced to build a people-centred government in South Africa with the vision to assist the nation in rising above the discrimination of the past. This has placed immense pressure on the South African government organisations to adapt to demanding stakeholders, shortage of critical skills, increased workforce diversity and high levels of employee dissatisfaction. However, this study focused on a more positive approach instead of "what went wrong". It was motivated by the need to investigate psychological capital, emotional labour and burnout, affecting government employees' service delivery.

Research design, approach, and method: The researcher used a cross-sectional, correlational and nonexperimental quantitative research design. The sample consisted of service centre employees in a South African government organisation.

Main findings: SPSS 27 and Mplus 8.6 were used to investigate the current research. The main findings indicated a definite positive correlation between emotional labour and burnout, a negative correlation between psychological capital and burnout, with psychological capital moderating the relationship between emotional labour and burnout in these South African government service centres.

Practical/managerial implications: To control the effects of emotional labour on employees' burnout levels more effectively, management has to focus on wellness and training interventions to support and develop current employees' efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism levels. Furthermore, during recruitment, the organisations' psychological assessment process has to be refined to include measurements that can determine psychological capital levels to ensure that the appropriate individuals are appointed in the service centres.

Contribution/value-add: By determining the level of efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism of current employees, training needs can be identified and incorporated in training interventions. Identification of psychological capital traits of prospective employees during the recruitment process can assist the government organisation to strengthen and grow their service centre employees emotionally, thereby reducing the levels of exhaustion, emotional and cognitive impairment, mental distancing, and psychological and psychosomatic complaints.

Key terms: Psychological capital (PsyCap), hope, resilience, optimism, efficacy, emotional labour, intensity, frequency, variety, deep acting, surface acting, burnout, exhaustion, emotional impairment, cognitive impairment, mental distance, psychological and psychosomatic complaints, service centre.

INTRODUCTION

The former South African Minister of Finance, Mr Pravin Gordhan, in 2010, re-emphasized the need for economic expansion in South Africa, higher investment in infrastructure, an improvement of skills levels, and the removal of any possible obstacles to growth (Gordhan, 2010). South Africa largely depends on its government organisations' tax revenue collection and administration to fund these government initiatives. By being effective, efficient, and ethical these organisations enable the government to sustain and expand spending on social investments that will improve the living standards of all South African citizens (Fourie, 2009).

The South African government organisation under research functions in a very complex and fast-changing environment, mainly due to globalisation, trade liberalisation, rapid movement of capital across borders, and technological and telecommunication innovations (Gelb et al., 2007). Therefore, the organisation must ensure good governance, focusing specifically on the principles of excellent service delivery to encourage optimal tax compliance (Junpath et al., 2016). Good governance in the public sector is very important to ensure that the government entity always act in the best interest of the South African citizens (Danielle & Masilela, 2020). In 1997 the White Paper on Transforming Service Delivery envisaged helping the nation to rise above the discrimination of the past in order to build a better future for all, which drastically changed the

mandates for government organisations, placing more emphasis on human capital management (Van der Waldt & Du Toit, 2002). Delivering exceptional and exemplary client service necessitates the appointment and retention of highly skilled employees who are capable of handling the interactive relationship between themselves and the taxpaying public during their social exchange in the government service centre.

Government service centre agents are expected to display appropriate emotions during this social exchange and to alter their emotional responses to elicit positive feedback from clients because, according to Hülsheger et al. (2010) and Scott and Barnes (2011), this display of appropriate emotions is regarded as one of the most powerful predictors of service quality, customer satisfaction, and the overall performance of the organisation. As early as 1979, Hochschild coined the term "emotional labour" to describe the process of managing an individual's feelings during customer/client encounter better. According to Grandey (2000), emotional labour describes the deliberate suppression or expression of emotion in order to adhere to the organisation's display rules. However, Brown (2011) positions emotional labour as a social construct that also enables individuals to plan, control, and develop skills to present authentic feelings during service interactions. The intensity, complexity, and importance of interaction between service centre agents and clients have increased significantly over the past few years, making the use of a measure of emotional altering in order to adhere to the high-order standards of the organisation unavoidable (Tamer, 2015). Despite the valuable role of emotional labour during client interaction, the negative side effects of this emotional display altering process cannot be overlooked. Research over time has demonstrated that emotional labour often leads to work-family conflict and work withdrawal due to excessive emotional exhaustion and burnout (Austin et al., 2008; Bakker & Geurts, 2004; Peng, Wong & Che, 2010). Burnout, which is described by Leiter and Maslach (2005) as one of the "biggest occupational hazards of the twenty-first century", should be avoided by all means possible by any organisation, as it has been linked to various individual and organisational problems, such as the development of depression, low self-esteem, increased turnover intention, and a decrease in job performance (Hakanen & Schaufeli, 2012; Leung et al., 2011; Rosse et al., 1991; Surana & Singh, 2012).

This study followed a more positive approach, concentrating more on employees' strengths than on their dysfunctions and weaknesses. This was done by focusing on positive organisational behaviour (POB) in general, and the constructs of self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism, that constitute the higher-order psychological capital construct (PsyCap), in particular. POB is defined by Luthans (2012, p. 3) as "the study and application of positively orientated human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement in the current workplace". In the past few

decades, it was also found that employees' work expectations have changed drastically. They are leaning towards employment opportunities that will provide them with more personal development, fulfilment, and psychological well-being, which in turn result in more meaning and happiness in the workplace (Wrześniewski et al., 1997). Therefore, it is imperative to appoint service centre employees who display high levels of PsyCap because they might possess the energy, attitude, and strength that will protect them from the negative effects, such as burnout, of emotional labour. Research done by Cheung et al. (2011) established a definite interaction between emotional labour, psychological capital, and burnout. They hypothesised that PsyCap served as a moderator in the relationship between the two constructs and argued that employees with high PsyCap levels would decrease the negative effect of emotional labour which leads to lower burnout levels.

This study, therefore, examined the role that emotional labour, psychological capital and burnout plays in a South African government service centre seeing that the knowledge-intensive products that the government service centre employees have to administer place a strong emphasis on planning, pre-employment screening, recruitment and sustainable employee wellness and engagement practices. More emphasis has also been placed on the moderating effect of psychological capital on the relationship between emotional labour and burnout in order to make informed decisions when implementing training and development interventions, manage job analysis, and correctly identify burnout-related employment issues.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional labour

According to Othman et al. (2008), there are three types of "labour" that employees perform in their employment by an organisation. The first is "mental labour", which refers to the knowledge, expertise and cognitive skills of employees. The second type is "physical labour" which refers to the employee's physical effort to achieve goals set by the organisation, and the third, which is "emotional labour".

Various definitions have been linked to emotional labour, but all of these embody the same principles. For instance, Hochschild (1983), who first defined emotional labour, described this construct as the deliberate management of feelings in order to create publicly observable bodily and facial expressions, whereas Grandey (2000) defines emotional labour as the deliberate expression or suppression of specific emotions in order to adhere to the organisation's display rules. However, no matter how emotional labour is defined, it is evident from the literature that this concept has become an important topic in the fast-growing organisational behaviour research

field (Tosten & Toprak, 2017). In the current business environment, much emphasis is placed on appropriate behavioural display when an employee interacts with clients and is in most cases strictly regulated by a range of formal and informal display rules. In most cases, display rules prescribe that the employees' facial expressions should align with their overall bodily display to portray an integrated positive message to the client. This is very important, according to Groth et al. (2009), because if clients notice a difference between an employee's body language and facial expression, they will feel that the behaviour is insincere and express disappointment with in the client service that they received. Researchers across the world strongly agree that emotional labour is an essential characteristic of a professional workforce. They are steadfast in their opinion that the perceived and actual value of service quality is strongly influenced by emotional labour (Bozionelos & Kiamou, 2008; Brunetto et al., 2014; Li et al., 2014; Sohn & Lee, 2012).

Emotional labour is a routine part of the lives of many service employees, which leans intensely on the emotional dissonance theory that includes three different aspects, namely felt emotions, expressed emotions, and display rules (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011; Li et al., 2014; Wrobel, 2013). Cheung and Tang (2012) explain emotional dissonance as a subjective emotional state that represents a mismatch between genuinely felt emotional expressions and the organisations' prescribed requirements for emotional display. Emotional dissonance impairs employees' psychological well-being by creating a double-bind situation (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011). In one instance, employees will overrule their feelings, character, and values and strictly adhere to the organisation's display rules, thereby threatening their sense of authenticity. On the other hand, employees can decide to hold onto their aspirations. However, by doing that, they then disregard their professional duties, which results in the dissatisfaction of their employer and clients. Therefore, an organisation must try and create ideal circumstances in a service environment in which client service employees are trained to have the ability to adjust their actual feelings and emotions felt to be aligned with the organisation's display rules (Brunetto et al., 2014).

In research, emotional labour primarily focuses on two critical dimensions, namely deep acting and surface acting. Deep acting refers to an attempt by the individual to modify felt emotions prior to the interaction to match their genuine emotional display (Groth et al., 2009). The surface acting dimension of emotional labour, could be explained as faking or amplifying emotions during client interactions (Sohn & Lee, 2012). In research done by Hülsheger and Schewe (2011), it was also confirmed that surface acting closely correlates with emotional dissonance because of the discrepancy between required and felt emotions and expressed and felt emotions. In contrast, deep acting is often associated with emotional consonance that occurs when an individual comfortably feels and displays the emotions in line with the organisation's display rules (Näring et al., 2006). In line with current and previous theoretical models of emotional labour, surface

acting can be defined as an antecedent of emotional dissonance and often result in job dissatisfaction, stress, alienation, and burnout because of the incongruence between felt emotions and emotions required by organisational display rules causing an unpleasant state of tension (Hülsheger et al., 2010; Karimi et al., 2014). Pugh et al. (2011) found that deep acting results in less tension and subsequently less burnout because employees who align their display and felt emotions experience less emotional exhaustion, which can positively affect the employees' psychological well-being. In addition to surface and deep acting, Bozionelos and Kiamou (2008) identified three additional dimensions of emotional labour. Frequency, intensity, and variety of displayed emotions, also referred to as "emotion-related role requirements", are considered secondary dimensions of emotional labour. However, it was found that these secondary dimensions have been inconsistent and hold weaker relationships with other constructs (Bozionelos & Kiamou, 2008).

In the service industry, and also in the government service centre under research, it is almost impossible to have a workforce that does not experience some emotional labour. Therefore, examining factors that can reverse the unfavourable outcomes associated with emotional labour, such as burnout, is of utmost importance for the organisation and the employee (Cheung et al., 2011). In research, psychological capital has often been employed to moderate the negative effects of performing emotional labour and it is expected that it will decrease the emotional strain (Aziz et al., 2018). Therefore, the organisation must provide employees with the right job resources by employing appropriate emotional labour strategies that contribute to the mastery of enhanced efficacy, and lead to amplified feelings of hope, resilience, and optimism (Aziz et al., 2018).

Psychological capital

In the past two decades, triggered mainly by the positive psychology movement, there has been renewed interest to advance beyond human capital traits, such as levels of education, knowledge, and experience and to focus more on the "psychological capital" of human resources (Luthans et al., 2007; Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014; Sheldon & King, 2001). According to Luthans et al. (2007), psychological capital or PsyCap does not only entail "who the employee is" but also "whom the employee is becoming" and how to employee can be his/her "best self". PsyCap is also the highest core order construct, containing various positive organisational behaviour constructs (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). PsyCap is defined by Luthans et al. (2007) as a state-like variable, which is therefore open to change and development, and is closely related to behavioural, attitudinal, and performance outcomes. PsyCap consists of the positive psychological capacities efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience. Stajkovic (2006), in his proposed motivational model, also included the same four capacities, thereby supporting the

work by Luthans et al. Growing evidence confirms that PsyCap is significantly related to employees' desired behaviours and attitudes and that it has implications for combating stress in the work environment (Avey et al., 2011; Norman et al., 2010).

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is defined as "the individual's conviction or confidence about his or her abilities to mobilise the motivation, cognitive resources, or courses of action needed to successfully execute a specific task within a given context" (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998, p. 70). From the literature, it is evident that efficacy is the most extensively researched and theorised PsyCap construct and that it differs from the other three construct in important ways (Bandura, 2008). Luthans et al. (2010) argue that efficacy is more of a belief within the borders of a specific context. In contrast, the PsyCap construct "optimism" refers to a general expectation of an overall positive outcome. Another difference identified by Avey et al. (2006) is the perception that efficacy evolves around applying an individual's abilities, whereas optimism is less connected to the persona.

Bandura (1997) identified four primary sources of efficacy development: emotional arousal, task mastery experiences, personal vicarious experiences, and social persuasions. Physiological, psychological, or emotional arousal influences levels of personal efficacy and, according to Bandura an individual's positive mood plays a vital role in enhancing his/her capabilities. For example, a loving, caring, and supportive manager that provides emotional support and shows appreciation towards employees will most likely prevent burnout and keep them physically and mentally healthy (Bandura, 1997). Task mastery experiences can be described as the psychological state of an individual when he/she accomplish a challenging task. This will result in the individual having more confidence in his/her abilities and most likely ensure the successful completion of similar tasks in future (Bandura, 1995). Personal vicarious experiences are mainly influenced by observing other people. If a role model excels at a given task, it will encourage the individual to follow suit and to believe that he/she will also be successful. The fourth primary source mentioned by Bandura (1997), namely social persuasions, relates to an individual's self-belief which is influenced by a respected role model. The individual gets persuaded by the role model to be more confident. A good example would be when a respected role model informs the individual that he/she believes that the individual can accomplish the given task, followed by regular supportive feedback. Therefore, according to Luthans et al. (2010), these four primary sources suggest that employees' self-efficacy can be positively influenced by training them to believe in themselves and assigning them to role model managers that they can look up to and mimic.

A study done by Bandura (2012) suggested that self-efficacy forms the essence of human motivation, achievement, and well-being, and influences the perceptions of performance. In other words, how individuals and particularly employees contemplate obstacles, opportunities, emotional challenges, stress, depression, and vulnerability.

Optimism

According to Carver and Scheier (2014), optimism is a cognitive construct based on the self-regulation model and it is closely associated with motivation. Self-regulation is known to be part of the goal setting, implementation, and coherent achievement of goal-orientated actions that coexist with behavioural and motivational mechanisms (Carver & Scheier, 2002). Segerstrom et al. (2017, p. 197) argue that "optimists are people who expect good things to happen to them" and "pessimists are people who expect bad things to happen to them" and that the difference between the two is significant because optimists "differ in how they approach problems and challenges and differ in the manner and success with which they cope with adversity". In the positive psychology literature it is evident that there are two major complementary theoretical streams in terms of their definition and theories of optimism. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2014) focus on an attribution framework in which optimists are seen as those who form external, fluctuating, and specific attributions of negative occurrences and internal, anchored, and global causal attributions of positive occurrences. The second theoretical stream emanated from research done by Segerstrom et al. (2017) whose theory is rather based on an expectancy perspective. According to them, optimistic individuals have a positive expectancy that a desirable outcome will result from an increased effort. In other words, the individual believes that continuous effort – even when faced with increasing adversity – will result in a positive outcome. On the other hand, pessimists mostly lack a positive expectation of a desirable outcome. Therefore, they will not even try to initiate any action or effort to arrive at the desired outcome.

In earlier research by Scheier and Carver (1985), optimism is characterised as dispositional and not a skill that could be developed. It was only later, in 1998, that Martin Seligman, in his book *Learned Optimism,* mentioned that an individual must learn how to use the power of positive thinking when he/she fails. This was also supported in follow-up research done by Carver and Scheier (2002) that confirmed the possibility of an individual's ability to change for the better by participating in development interventions. Carver and Scheier (2017) believe that optimistic individuals can keep their attention focused on a set target, control their behaviour and attention, and exert their efforts amid distractions.

Hope

The PsyCap construct of hope, according to Snyder et al. (2003), encompasses substantial research support and is considered an individual's perseverance to redirect paths through empowering their thinking, to succeed in particular goals. In formulating his hope theory, Snyder began with the belief that all individuals are generally goal-orientated. This means that they will behave in a specific manner to try to accomplish the set goals. His research revealed that hope comprises two components or actions – agency thinking and pathway thinking (Snyder, 2002).

Agency thinking represents a person's capacity or inherent motivation or willpower to work on a set goal and to persevere and continue until the goal has been accomplished. (Snyder et al., 2003). An excellent example of agentic thinking is an individual that makes comments such as "I will persevere until I reach my goal" or "I know I can do this" (Snyder et al., 1998). On the other hand, pathway thinking, according to Snyder's hope theory, is an individual's ability to generate pathways/routes to accomplish set goals (Snyder et al., 1998). It can therefore be anticipated that an individual with high hope will proactively generate multiple pathways to accomplish a set goal in any given situation, and if this pathway becomes blocked, they will be able to launch into predetermined alternative pathways in order to accomplish their set goal (Snyder, 2002; Snyder et al., 1998; Snyder et al., 2003).

In the literature, hope has been linked to various benefits for the individual but also for organisations; it has been found to positively influence job performance, psychological and physiological well-being, building confidence, job satisfaction, and even lowering burnout levels (Du, Bernardo & Yeung, 2015; Herbert, 2011; Hirschi, 2014; Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). Therefore, it is comforting that Snyder et al. (2003) demonstrated that hope could be developed through appropriate training and development interventions.

Resilience

Resilience is defined by Masten and Reed (2002, p. 120) as "a class of phenomena characterised by patterns of positive adaption in the context of significant adversity or risk". This positive adaption enables the individual to bounce back quickly and effectively from adverse circumstances. Therefore, it can be argued that resilience is the difference between individuals who recover well when needed and those who are unable to move ahead and remain devastated (Block & Kremen, 1996). In a study done by Richardson (2002), it was found that individuals with high resilience levels bounce back emotionally and psychologically to their previous levels of homeostasis.

Resilience research stemmed from clinical psychology where interventions focused on an individual's assets and risk factors (Masten, 2001). Personal assets refer to measurable characteristics associated with positive outcomes and an individual's ability to adapt to difficult circumstances. In contrast, risk factors refer to those measurable characteristics that predict negative outcomes, such as poor adaptation in the workplace and an abusive manager (Masten & Reed, 2002). It is, therefore, according to Masten (2001), the aim of the organisation to develop resilience interventions that enhance personal assets and minimise risk factors. In support of Masten (2001), Youssef and Luthans (2007) also confirmed that resilience could be increased through development interventions. Individuals can be trained to reactively recover and proactively learn when faced with adverse or challenging situations.

The relationship between emotional labour and psychological capital

A thorough literature review confirmed that limited research has been done on the relationship between emotional labour and psychological capital (PsyCap) – specifically in a South African context. This is unfortunate because it is of utmost importance to identify factors that can mitigate adverse organisational and personal outcomes due to the performance of emotional labour. Hülsheger and Schewe (2011) reiterate that it would be unrealistic to expect service employees not to perform some emotional labour. They therefore empasise the importance of examining factors that can reduce the burdens of emotional labour on the organisation and the employee. PsyCap was found to serve as a personal resource when employees perform emotional labour to assist in employing proper emotional labour strategies which leads to mastery and increasing employees' sense of efficacy (Aziz et al., 2018). A higher sense of efficacy, in turn, increases the employees' optimism and hope for the future, which leads to higher resilience levels when faced with unexpected setbacks (Cheung et al., 2011).

Service centre employees faced with the adversity associated with surface and deep acting will be better equipped to handle the situation if they possess high levels of resilience, efficacy, hope, and optimism because emotional labour tends to deprive employees of the autonomy that they have over their emotional expression in the workplace (Aziz et al., 2018). According to Scheier et al. (1994), optimistic and resilient individuals experience job demands as challenging rather than depleting, which helps them to cope with emotional labour-intensive jobs more effectively. In the literature, conflicting information was found on the relationship between PsyCap and emotional labour. Cheung et al. (2011) found no significant relationship between PsyCap and surface or deep acting. In contrast, Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) found that deep acting has a significant relationship with personal efficacy.

Therefore, the following hypotheses are introduced to determine the relationship between emotional labour and psychological capital in South Africa.

Hypothesis 1: PsyCap is negatively related to surface acting in the South African government service centres.

Hypothesis 2: PsyCap is positively related to deep acting in the South African government service centres.

Burnout

In 1974, an assistant medical specialist, Freudenberger, introduced the expression "burnout" and linked it to bodily fatigue, conditions of enthusiastic consumption, and failure of commitment and inspiration. He stated that "after some time, we started to note changes in the state of mind, disposition, inspiration and identity among the volunteers" (Freudenberger, 1989, p. 5). In the early years, burnout was mainly linked to societal concerns and was primarily observed in the "welfare" callings. (Maslach, 2011). However, since 1974, a commendable amount of research has been done to test, define, and develop knowledge regarding the burnout construct, which is a widespread concern within the corporate world (Dall'Ora et al., 2020). Genuine concern for individuals' emotional and physical wellness formed the basis of work-related burnout in the earlier years, with the primary objective to explain the burnout phenomenon (Maslach et al., 2001; Maslach & Schaufeli, 2018). It is important to note that Maslach's analysis and Freudenberger's examination (still acknowledged as the mainstream viewpoints of burnout) were primarily based on the very demanding work environment, acting as an underlying driver of burnout (Maslach, 2011). During the second experimental stage of burnout research, a more orderly, quantitative approach was followed. Substantial testing and more detailed studies were used in the poll and study approach (Maslach et al., 2001).

Burnout was found to be a non-discriminatory phenomenon, evident in all professions and occupations, with a definite negative effect on organisations and individuals (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). According to Leiter et al. (2014), burnout diminishes an individual's dignity, spirit, and will, which leads to erosion of the human soul. It is therefore suggested that employers should prioritise ways to eradicate the burnout phenomenon (Leiter et al., 2014). An array of definitions has been proposed in the literature aiming to conceptualise burnout. Schaufeli (2003) describes burnout as an instance when individuals or employees are plagued with mental exhaustion. Van Tonder and Williams (2009), on the other hand, view burnout as a cluster of physical, psychological (cognitive and affective) and behavioural symptoms. The most common and widely used definition found in the literature was, however, the one proposed by Maslach and Jackson (1981). They

conceptualise burnout as "a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur in individuals who do 'people work' of some kind" (Maslach & Jackson, 1981, p. 100). Van Tonder and Williams (2009) state that burnout develops over time. They describe it as a self-perpetuating process that negatively affects the individual achievement of goals while depleting the individuals' resources. In line with this argument, Maslach et al. (2001) found three inherent dimensions to burnout – emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal efficacy. It is thus evident from the literature that burnout research has been abundant over the past several decades.

During the literature review, it was interesting to note that there was renewed interest in the burnout phenomenon, which can be attributed, according to De Beer (2021), to the announcement made by the World Health Organization regarding the inclusion of burnout as an "occupational phenomenon" in the 2022 International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) (WHO, 2019). It can therefore be argued that the burnout research landscape is still very active and diverse, with significant complexities and nuances that affect how researchers operationalise and define burnout (Van der Vaart & De Beer, 2021). The current study used the Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT) to measure burnout in South Africa. The BAT considers burnout to be a syndrome that consist of four primary dimensions, exhaustion, mental distance, cognitive impairment, and emotional impairment, and two secondary dimensions, psychological complaints and psychosomatic complaints (Schaufeli et al., 2019). According to Schaufeli et al. (2019), the four primary dimensions refer to an individual's inability (impaired cognitive and emotional control and exhaustion) or his/her unwillingness (mental distance) to put some effort into their daily work.

Exhaustion – from the literature review on burnout, it is evident that exhaustion is the most apparent symptom of burnout. It is characterised by intense emotional feelings at work, such as irritability or feeling overwhelmed, frustrated, angry, upset, and even sad for no reason (Schaufeli et al., 2019). It is important to note that although exhaustion is a very prominent and important dimension of burnout, it is not sufficient to conceptualise burnout alone (Desart & De Witte, 2019). *Mental distance* refers to an instance where an employee psychologically distances him/herself from work and becomes reluctant to perform his/her daily duties. Such employees usually avoid contact with others (e.g., clients and colleagues) and display a cynical or indifferent attitude at work (Schaufeli et al., 2019). Employees suffering from mental distance usually function on autopilot and have no or very little interest in what they are doing (De Beer, 2021).

Cognitive impairment can be described as "memory problems, attention and concentration deficits, and poor cognitive performance" (Schaufeli et al., 2019). Most individuals suffering from cognitive impairment cannot think clearly, are forgetful, unable to learn new things at work, have

attention deficiencies, are absent-minded, cannot concentrate and suffer from short-term and/or long-term memory loss (Desart & De Witte, 2019).

Emotional impairment is characterised by feelings of frustration, intense anger and the inability to control one's emotions at work (Schaufeli et al., 2019). Desart and De Witte (2019, p. 148) support this definition and refer to emotional impairment as "the reduced functional capacity to adequately regulate emotional processes, which leads to overreaction and the inability to control emotions at work".

Psychological complaints refer to psychological problems, such as excessive worrying, irregular sleep patterns, feeling anxious and stressed, being very sensitive and easily disturbed by noisy crowds, and even weight fluctuations without being on a special eating plan (Schaufeli et al. 2020).

Psychosomatic complaints relate to an individual's physical health complaints/problems, such as chest pain and palpitations, stomach and intestinal problems, muscle pains, and excessive headaches that a diagnosed physical disorder cannot explain because it is predominantly caused by psychological problems (Schaufeli et al., 2020).

The literature study revealed that burnout is associated with a variety of adverse effects and influences on the psychological and physical health of employees, for example, insomnia, depression, anxiety, stress, headaches, exhaustion, and diabetes (Armon et al., 2008; Leiter et al., 2013; Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Peterson et al., 2008; Shirom, 2009). Therefore, it can be concluded that employers must focus intensely on intervention programmes to improve employees' psychological and physical health to prevent high levels of turnover, low performance, and disengagement, which could harm the organisation (Lubbadeh, 2020).

The relationship between burnout and psychological capital

Due to the significant effect that burnout has on an individual's psychological and physical health, past interventions have traditionally focused on eliminating, or at least reducing, any antecedents that have caused burnout symptoms in employees (Schonfeld & Bianchi, 2016). However, over the past decade, this reactive approach has been systematically replaced by a proactive approach that focuses on developing and promoting healthy organisations (Ferradás et al., 2019). This novel proactive approach is primarily framed by psychological sustainability and development, which include socioeconomic and environmental questions and the well-being and health of human beings (Di Fabio, 2017). Di Fabio (2017) argues that workplace environments can be seen as one of the primary drivers for the development of healthier and more sustainable societies and that it is therefore imperative to promote employee well-being for the organisation's growth,

productivity, and sustainability. According to Luthans (2002), a proactive approach to conquer burnout has been significantly influential in researching psychological capabilities and personal strengths, which, when effectively managed, developed and measured, can improve employee performance and well-being in the organisation.

Subsequently, Luthans et al. (2007) embarked on a research project to identify specific psychological resources that would accommodate the organisation's positive behaviour standards. They came up with the higher-order construct of psychological capital, which, according to their research, represents the state of positive individual psychological development. They argued that an employee's confidence in his/her own ability to succeed in performing challenging tasks (efficacy); perseverance to pursue set goals and redirect paths when needed (hope); positive expectations of future success (optimism), and to quickly recover from adverse circumstances (resilience), all contribute to positive individual psychological development in the workplace. Research on the psychological capital phenomenon in the past decade confirmed that this higher-order construct yields significant benefits in the workplace. These include better work satisfaction, higher levels of employee involvement, increased employee performance, positive behaviour and attitudes, improvement in employees' psychological health, and significantly lower burnout levels (Avey et al., 2011; Culbertson et al., 2010; Hansen et al., 2015; Luthans et al., 2007; Paek et al., 2015; Schulz et al., 2014).

The high levels of burnout amongst service employees have led to renewed interest in studying the role of psychological capital in service employees who suffer from this syndrome. Existing research suggests that employees with high levels of psychological capital will be able to effectively combat symptomatology associated with burnout (Stratman & Youssef-Morgan, 2019)

Hypothesis 3: PsyCap is negatively related to burnout levels in the South African government service centres.

The relationship between psychological capital, emotional labour, and burnout

Emotional labour, burnout, and psychological capital as individual constructs provide a prevalent research choice, which over the years, has been investigated or studied in great detail. However, during the literature review in this study, it became apparent that research on the link between these variables has been limited. In 2011, Cheung et al. embarked on one of the few studies conducted to date to determine the moderating effect of psychological capital on the relationship between emotional labour and burnout. This study was conducted amongst schoolteachers in China, and it was found that the relationship between burnout and emotional labour was weaker amongst the teachers with higher PsyCap levels (Cheung et al., 2011).

Aziz et al. (2018) supported these results. They argued that PsyCap could be regarded as a positive personal resource, implying that individuals with high levels of efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience should be able to draw from these resources when performing emotional labour, which would result in less burnout. In this study, the researcher sought to expand the current literature by getting a better understanding of and to investigate the associations between emotional labour, burnout, and psychological capital in a South African service centre environment.

Hypothesis 4: PsyCap will moderate the relationship between emotional labour and burnout in a government service centre.

Depicted in Figure 3.1 is the series of hypotheses and their interrelationships.

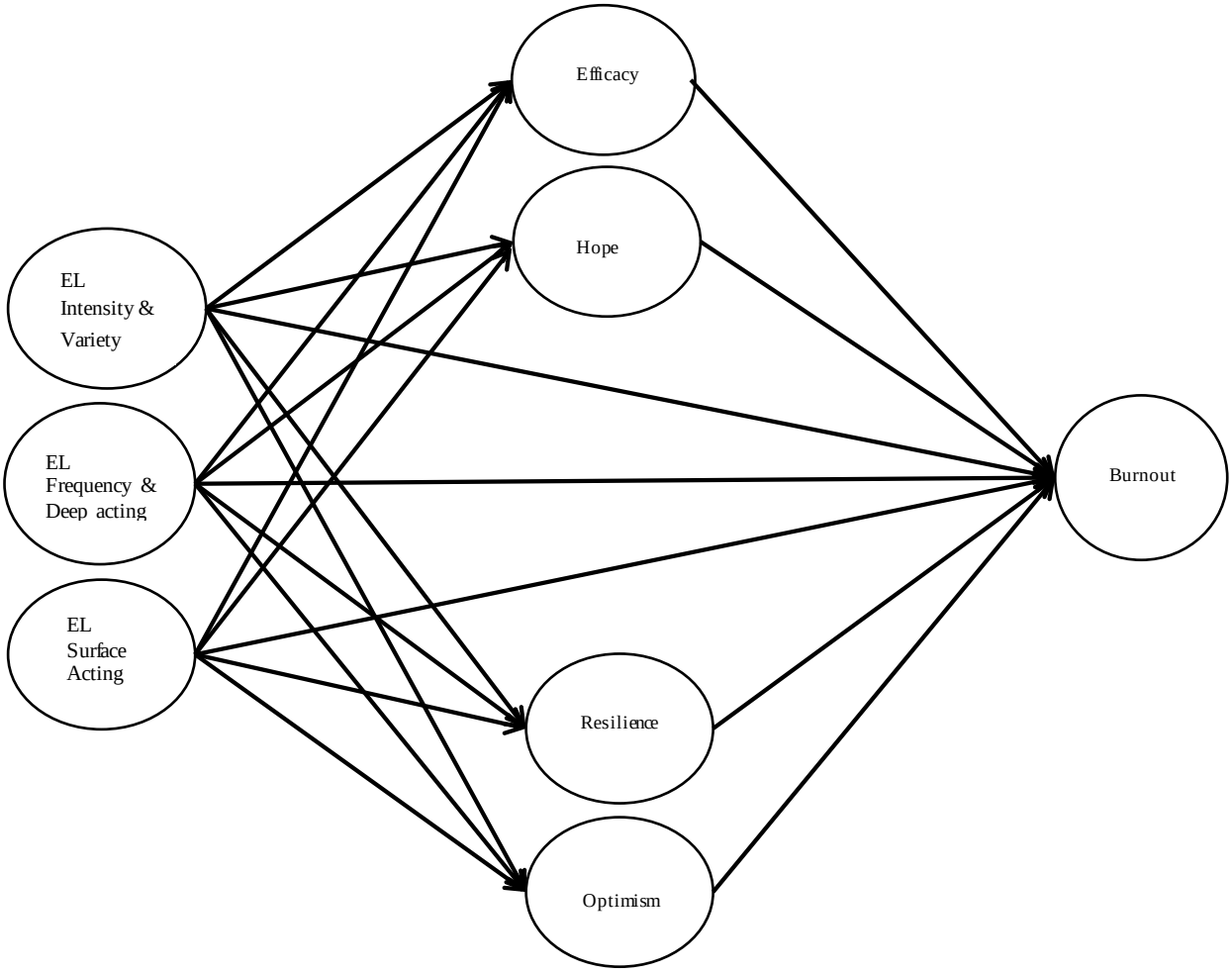

Figure 3.1 *Research model and hypotheses*

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research approach

A quantitative approach was followed to test the hypotheses as it permitted the inclusion of a large representative sample and a relatively structured collection process (Creswell, 2013; Struwig & Stead, 2001). The cross-sectional, correlational, and nonexperimental quantitative research design allowed the researcher to examine the potential relationships between two or more variables at a certain point and time (Creswell, 2013). The cross-sectional design includes statistical analysis that allows for a wide range of assessments (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). Quantitative research designs maximise objectivity by using structure, numbers, statistics, and researcher control, which facilitates external validity (McMillan & Schumacher, 2011). A quantitative design also maximises objectivity by using numbers, statistics, structure and researcher control, and it facilitates external validity (McMillan & Schumacher, 2011; Creswell 2013). The descriptive and explanatory purpose of this research approach assists the researcher to explain and describe a specific phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

For this study, the researcher aimed to gather information about a large population, to explore the relationship between the subdimensions of emotional labour and the subdimensions of psychological capital and to investigate the moderating effect of psychological capital on the relationship between emotional labour and burnout levels in a government service centre, by surveying a representative sample of this population.

Research method

Research participants

Creswell and Creswell (2018) refer to a sample of participants as a subset of the population. Information is acquired to enable the researcher to draw conclusions representative of the whole population. Researchers conducting quantitative research make use of a large population and can make use of different sampling techniques. In this study, participants were sampled through probability random sampling, which according to Gravetter and Wallnau (2016), gives each person in the chosen population an equal opportunity to be included in the sample, which limits bias resulting from the selection procedure and produces a representative sample.

Research participants sampled in this study were service centre employees from a South African government organisation located in Gauteng and Mpumalanga. The government service centres consisted of 348 employees who hold various positions, ranging from managers, consultants, and service centre agents. 348 questionnaires were distributed, of which 201 (58%) were returned.

The participant characteristics covered in this research study include gender, age, ethnic group, educational level, and occupational status.

The participants' characteristics are presented in Table 6:

Table 6: *Characteristics of the participants (n=201)*

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	37	18.4
	Female	164	81.6
Age	< 30 years	4	2.0
	31-40 years	30	14.9
	41-50 years	108	53.7
	> 50 years	59	29.4
Ethnic group	African	97	48.2
	Indian	4	2.0
	Coloured	18	9.0
	White	82	40.8
Educational level	Higher certificate (Grade 12)	107	53.2
	Diploma	58	28.8
	Degree	18	9.0
	Postgraduate degree	8	4.0
	Technical qualification	10	5.0
Occupational status	Manager	34	16.9
	Agent	121	60.2
	Consultant	36	17.9
	Other	10	5.0

Sixteen of the Region 1 branch offices in a government organisation made up the sample with 81.6% females and only 18.4% males. More than half (53.7%) of the sample was aged between 41 and 50 years. Most of the participants were African (48.2%), with 9.0% Coloured, 2.0% Indian and 40.8% White.

More than half (53.2%) of the participants had an educational level of Grade 12, with 28.8% diplomas, 9.0% degrees, 5.0% technical qualifications, and 4.0% postgraduate degrees making up the other 46.8%. Most of the respondents (60.2%) were employed as agents, with 16.9% managers, 17.9% consultants, and 5.0% other.

Measuring instruments

The measuring instruments and constructs used to achieve the objectives of this study are discussed below.

Biographical questionnaire. To determine the participants' biographical characteristics and provide a detailed description of the sample, a questionnaire was used to determine: the gender, age, ethnic group, educational level, and occupational status of the research participants. This information was collected to present a basic composition of the sample.

Emotional Labour Scale (ELS) *(*Lee & Brotheridge, 2011; Lee et al., 2010). The ELS was used because it is the most updated emotional labour scale. It consists of a 17-item self-reported questionnaire. The ELS measured five facets of workplace emotional display. These included the frequency (three items; e.g., "Adopt certain emotions required as part of your client service duties"), intensity (two items; e.g., "Express intense emotions when dealing with a client"), and variety (three items; e.g., "Display many different kinds of emotions when dealing with a client") of emotional display. The ELS also measured the emotional labour facets of deep acting (three items; e.g., "Make an effort to actually feel the emotions that you have to display") and surface acting (six items; e.g., "Show emotions that are expected rather than what you feel"). The five facets, as mentioned above, were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). The duration of a typical interaction was measured in minutes. Acceptable reliability of .90 for deep acting and .76 for surface acting was reported during previous studies using the ELS (Lee & Brotheridge, 2011; Lee et al., 2010).

Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ-12) (Luthans et al., 2007) was used to measure PsyCap. The PCQ contains 12 items measuring four dimensions. These included self-efficacy (three items; e.g., "I feel confident in representing my work area in meetings with management"), optimism (three items; e.g., "I always look on the bright side of things regarding my job"), hope (three items; e.g., "If I should find myself in a jam at work, I could think of many ways to get out of it") and resilience (three items; e.g., "I usually take stressful things at work in stride"). Response options ranged from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree*. The PCQ-12 is a shortened version of the original PCQ-24 and has been demonstrated to be valid and reliable, with a reported Cronbach alpha coefficient of .69 (Avey et al., 2011; Luthans et al., 2008; Norman et al., 2010).

Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT) (Schaufeli et al., 2019). The BAT was used to measure the nature of burnout. It distinguished between core systems and secondary or atypical symptoms. The core symptoms include exhaustion (eight items; e.g., "At the end of my workday, I feel mentally exhausted and drained"), emotional impairment (five items; e.g., "I do not recognise

myself in the way I react emotionally at work"), cognitive impairment (five items; e.g., "I make mistakes in my work because I have my mind on other things"), and mental distance (five items; e.g., "At work, I do not think much about what I am doing and I function on autopilot"). The secondary/atypical symptoms include psychological complaints (five items; e.g., "I feel tense and stressed") and psychosomatic complaints (five items; e.g., "I suffer from palpitations or chest pain"). The response options ranged from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). This scale was reliable, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .82 and .95 (Schaufeli et al., 2019).

Research procedure

A probability random sampling approach was used to recruit service centre employees ($N = 348$) in the Region 1 branch offices of a government organisation in South Africa. Before research commenced, permission was obtained from the government organisation's group executive, and branch managers responsible for the sixteen Region 1 branch offices, and the research committee. Participation in this study was entirely voluntary, and participants confirmed their preparedness to participate by signing and returning a consent form before the research commenced.

After receiving the participants' signed consent forms, a hard copy questionnaire was distributed to all the participants by the research assistant. Participants were requested to return their complete questionnaires to a sealed box, placed in a central area, provided by the researcher. The sixteen sealed boxes were collected from the branch offices, and all data was captured on an Excel spreadsheet. All information collected was treated with absolute confidentiality, and strict ethical guidelines were followed throughout the research process.

Statistical analysis

The software programs, SPSS 27 (IBM Corporation, 2020) and Mplus 8.6 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2020), were used to conduct statistical analysis. Maree (2020) defines descriptive statistics as transforming a set of numbers into indices that characterise the data. Effect sizes were used to determine the practical significance of the correlations with cut-off points of 0.50 for a large effect and 0.30 for a medium effect (Steyn & Ellis, 2003). Scale reliability was tested using McDonald's omega reliability coefficients (Ω), mainly because it was found to provide a more accurate degree of confidence of the regulating scales (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2013). Confidence interval levels for statistical significance were set at a value of 95% ($p < 0.05$).

The Mplus 8.6 software program was used to perform structural equation modelling (SEM), which allows for the simultaneous analysis of multiple relationships between latent variables (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2020). According to Gefen et al. (2000), the multiple relationships can be modelled

pictorially to get a clearer understanding of the theory under research. In this study, a larger sample size is evident. Therefore, structural equation modelling was found to be more appropriate to estimate indirect effects (Byrne, 2010). Skewness and kurtosis of data distribution were accounted for using the maximum likelihood robust estimator (MLR) (Wang & Wang, 2012). Unfortunately, the use of the MLR prevented the direct comparison of the chi-squares of the competing models. Therefore, in order to overcome this problem, the Satorra-Bentler chi-square difference test was performed (Múthen & Múthen, 1998-2020; Satorra & Bentler, 2010).

The measurement model that showed the best fit was used as the basis for the structural model, after which two competing structural models were tested against the original model (Iacobucci, 2009). The Satorra-Bentler chi-square difference test was again performed to confirm which hypothesised structural model showed the better fit (Satorra & Bentler, 2010). The goodness-of-fit indices were assessed by evaluating the chi-square (χ^2) and its associated degrees of freedom (*df)*, the comparative fit index (CFI), the standardised root mean square residual (SRMR), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

A non-significant chi-square statistical outcome is, according to Iacobucci (2010), considered an indication of a good fit with the sample data. She also argues that although values higher than 0.95 for CFI and TLI are preferred, a value higher than 0.90 is also accepted in practice (Wang & Wang, 2012). Values lower than 0.05 and 0.08 indicate a good fit between the model and the RMSEA and SRMR data indicators, respectively (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The Bayes information criteria (BIC) and the Akaike information criteria (AIC) were used to compare alternative models to other fit statistics. According to Kline (2015), the lower the value, the better the model because the AIC and BIC values serve as an index for model parsimony.

Ethical considerations

In this study, each participant received an informed consent form explaining the aim, purpose, procedure, anticipated risk, benefits, and expected duration of the study. After the voluntary nature of participation was emphasized, the participants were requested to sign a consent form. Any decision by a participant not to participate was accepted and respected. Permission to withdraw and request the retraction of their questionaire, without any fear of prejudice, from the study at any given time was clearly communicated. The participants were given ample time to prepare themselves for data collection. Participants who agreed to participate and submitted a signed consent form completed the self-reported questionnaire and placed it in a sealed box provided by the researcher before the study commenced. Strict ethical standards were adhered

to. The best interest of the participants was protected by taking the participants' privacy, well-being, and dignity, and their physical and emotional needs into account during the study.

Participants were ensured of the absolute confidentiality of their answers, the self-reported questionnaire, and the handling of the data by the researcher, promotor, and statistician. Personal identifying information (e.g., phone numbers, email and physical addresses) collected during the different research phases remained confidential. This information was dealt with according to the stipulations of the Protection of Personal Information Act ([POPI] Act 4 of 2013, p. 18) "accountability, processing limitation, purpose specification, further processing limitation, information quality, openness, security safeguards, data subject interpretation").

The focus of ethical consideration in this study was mainly on confidentiality and voluntary participation.

RESULTS

Statistical analysis commenced with calculating the internal consistency reliability coefficients for each scale used in the study. This was followed by performing a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), which according to Brown (2015), is used to determine the best-fitting measurement model for the available data. The first attempt at a CFA model of the emotional labour measuring instrument proved problematic because factors were either too highly correlated or resulted in a non-positive definite matrix. To address this problem it was decided to conduct exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using the emotional labour items to investigate any potential challenges in the current data sample. Cohen's (1992) guidelines were followed to interpret the correlation matrix. Values of 0.50 and above are considered a large effect, and values of 0.30 and above are considered a medium effect. The statistical analysis was concluded by specifying a structural model during a follow-up analysis by adding structural paths according to the hypotheses mentioned in the research. To support or reject the research hypotheses, statistical significance ($p < 0.05$), size and direction of the standardised estimates were considered.

Reliability

McDonald's omega (Ω) internal consistency reliability coefficients were calculated for each of the scales of ELS, PCQ-12, and BAT. The results are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: *Internal consistency reliability of the ELS, PCQ-12, and BAT*

	Variable	McDonald's (Ω)
1	EL – Frequency and deep acting (1-5)	0.82
2	EL – Intensity and variety (1-5)	0.85
3	EL – Surface acting (1-5)	0.81
4	Burnout (1-5)	0.92
5	PC – Efficacy (1-6)	0.88
6	PC – Hope (1-6)	0.76
7	PC – Resilience (1-6)	0.64
8	PC – Optimism (1-6)	-

Ω ≥ 0.70 – satisfactory

Values of ≥ 0.60 on McDonald's omega (Ω) criterion are generally considered acceptable for group work, and values of ≥ 0.70 are considered satisfactory for use in individual decision making (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2013; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). PsyCap – optimism only contained two items, which made it impossible to determine reliability. However, according to the information in Table 7 above, it can be confirmed that all the other measurement scales in this study met the McDonald omega criterion and can be interpreted.

Correlations

Pearson's correlation coefficients were calculated between each measuring instrument used in this study. According to Maree (2020), the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) measures the strength of a linear association between two quantitative variables measured on a continuous scale. Correlations done to identify possible links are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: *Correlations coefficients of measuring instruments*

	Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	EL – Frequency and deep acting (1-5)	-							
2	EL – Intensity and variety (1-5)	0.63‡**	-						
3	EL – Surface acting (1-5)	0.53‡**	0.56‡**	-					
4	Burnout (1-5)	0.21 *	0.45†**	0.59‡**	-				
5	PC – Efficacy (1-6)	0.21*	-0.09	-0.18	-0.51‡**	-			
6	PC – Hope (1-6)	0.17	-0.14	-0.20*	-0.50‡**	0.78‡**	-		
7	PC – Resilience (1-6)	0.30†**	-0.04	0.01	-0.24*	0.63‡**	0.61‡**	-	
8	PC – Optimism (1-6)	0.03	-0.12	-0.34†**	-0.69‡**	0.71‡**	0.65‡**	0.63‡**	-

** p < 0.05 – statistically significant*
*** p < 0.01– statistically significant*
† r > 0.30 – practically significant (medium effect)
‡ r > 0.50 – practically significant (large effect)

Based on the results contained in Table 8, it can be confirmed that burnout is practically and statistically significantly positively related to EL – Intensity/variety (medium effect) and EL – Surface acting (large effect), but only statistically significantly related to EL – Frequency /deep acting (small effect). Burnout was also found to be practically and statistically significantly negatively related to PsyCap – Efficacy (large effect), PsyCap – Hope (large effect), and PsyCap – Optimism (large effect) but only statistically significant negative related to PsyCap – Resilience (small effect).

EL – Intensity/variety was found to have no significant relationship with any of the PsyCap variables, whereas EL – Frequency and deep acting was found to have a practically and statistically significant positive relationship with PsyCap – Resilience (medium effect), and statistically significant positive relationship with PsyCap – Efficacy (small effect), but no significant relationship with either PsyCap – Hope or PsyCap – optimism. EL – Surface acting was found to have a practically and statistically significant negative relationship with PsyCap – Optimism (medium effect), statically significant negative relationship with PsyCap – Hope (small effect) and no significant relationship with either PsyCap – Efficacy or PsyCap – Resilience.

Measurement model

Different permutations of possible factor structures were analysed using the Mplus 8.6 software, to verify the best fitting measurement model between emotional labour (ELS) with five composites (frequency, intensity, variety, deep acting, and surface acting), psychological capital (PCQ-12) with its four composites (efficacy, hope, resilience, optimism), and burnout (BAT) with its six composites (exhaustion, mental distance, cognitive impairment, emotional impairment, psychological complaints, and psychosomatic complaints) (Lee & Brotheridge, 2011; Lee et al., 2010; Luthans et al., 2007; Schaufeli et al., 2019).

Using the R-statistical framework, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted for each measurement instrument used in this study (R Development Core Team, 2015). By using the maximum likelihood (ML) estimator, a series of models were tested to investigate the factor structures of the ELS, PCQ-12, and BAT measures.

Confirmatory factor analysis conducted on the psychological capital (PCQ-12) and burnout (BAT) measuring instruments indicated that all items in the questionnaire loaded successfully onto their respective factors and were suitable for use in the statistical analysis. This was, however, not the case with the ELS measurement, as all attempts at loading various CFA models were unsuccessful. The modelling of the emotional labour factors was either too highly correlated or resulted in a non-positive definite matrix. To find a solution for this problem, it was decided to

conduct exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to investigate the potential challenges with the model in the current sample. This resulted in a three-factor model for emotional labour (frequency and deep acting), intensity and variety, and surface acting) instead of the hypothesised five-factor model. All the ELS items loaded successfully on the three factors, which resulted in no items being excluded at this stage.

The next step was to combine the various adjusted CFA models into an initial measurement model. This initial measurement model was assessed, and it was found that all factors loaded above 0.35 resulted in no exclusions of items. The modification indices found high error variance correlations between psychological complaint and psychosomatic complaint factors in the BAT measuring instrument (MI = 40.281). Error variances were allowed to correlate, which resulted in a better fit. Assessment of the residual variances revealed that Item 5 of the ELS measuring instrument had four problematic values and it was therefore removed, resulting in measurement Model 1.

The AIC and BIC fit models were used to compare the best fit models, taking into account that the lower the values, the better the model fit. The model fit results are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: *Fit statistics of final and competing measurement models*

Model	χ^2	*df*	AIC	BIC	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Model 1	1272.49	887	24237.51	24260.72	0.91	0.90	0.05	0.06
Model 2	Non-positive definite latent variable covariance matrix – results not trustworthy							
Model 3	1375.63	920	24283.34	24302.58	0.90	0.89	0.05	0.08
Model 4	1343.94	909	24265.77	24286.33	0.90	0.89	0.05	0.08
Model 5	1328.40	903	24265.13	24286.42	0.90	0.90	0.05	0.07
Model 6	Non-positive definite latent variable covariance matrix – results not trustworthy							
Model 7	1331.10	910	24256.19	24276.64	0.91	0.90	0.05	0.07
Model 8	1392.92	895	24239.27	24261.52	0.91	0.90	0.05	0.06

χ^2 = chi-square, *df* = degrees of freedom, AIC = Akaike information criteria, BIC = Bayesian information criteria, TLI = Tucker-Lewis index, CFI = comparative fit index, RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation, SRMR = standardised root mean square residual

Structural model

The specification of a structural model is done in such a way to determine the influence of variables on each other following a specific order. In this study, three different models were tested for acceptable fit to interpret the best structural model's output. The first model included all the possible pathways amongst the identified variables, the second model only included the direct

pathways, and the third model included only the indirect pathways. The results are reported in Table 10.

Table 10: *Initial framework fit indices and standardised path coefficients*

Measures		Direct and indirect pathways	Direct pathways	Indirect pathways
Fit indices	AIC	24232.60	24361.98	24325.72
	ABIC	24254.85	24380.98	24346.88
	χ^2	1282.96	1450.64	1405.01
	df	895	922	904
	MLR – adjusted χ^2	1386.24	1569.59	1497.32
	RMSEA	0.05	0.05	0.05
	CFI	0.91	0.88	0.89
	TLI	0.90	0.87	0.88
	SRMR	0.06	0.11	0.07
Direct pathway to burnout	EL – Frequency and deep acting	-0.20	-0.10	-
	EL – Intensity and variety	0.40**	0.34**	-
	EL – Surface acting	0.18	0.31**	-
	PC – Efficacy	-0.11	-0.15	0.10
	PC – Hope	-0.07	-0.06	-0.28
	PC – Resilience	0.39	0.33*	0.87
	PC – Optimism	-0.80*	-0.34**	-1.27*
Psychological capital – efficacy	EL – Frequency and deep acting	0.53**	-	0.73**
	EL – Intensity and variety	-0.25*	-	-0.33
	EL – Surface acting	-0.32**	-	-0.45*
Psychological capital – hope	EL – Frequency and deep acting	0.52**	-	0.74**
	EL – Intensity and variety	-0.29*	-	-0.33
	EL – Surface acting	-0.32**	-	-0.45*
Psychological capital – resilience	EL – Frequency and deep acting	0.57**	-	0.69**
	EL – Intensity and variety	-0.34*	-	-0.24
	EL – Surface acting	-0.11	-	-0.28
Psychological capital – Optimism	EL – Frequency and deep acting	0.32*	-	0.66
	EL – Intensity and variety	-0.04	-	-0.34
	EL – Surface acting	-0.49**	-	-0.63**

* $p < 0.05$
** $p < 0.01$

From the results of the structural model, it is evident that EL – Intensity and variety directly influenced burnout (β = 0.40**), as well as PC – Efficacy (β = -0.25*), PC – Hope (β = -0.29*) and PC – Resilience (β = -0.34*) to a slightly lesser significant extent. EL – Frequency and deep acting significantly influenced PC – Efficacy (β = -0.53**), PC – Hope (β = 0.52**) and PC – Resilience (β = 0.57**) and PC – Optimism (β = 0.32*) to a lesser significant extent. From the results it can also be seen that EL – Surface acting directly influenced PC – Efficacy (β = -0.32**), PC – Hope (β = -0.32**) and PC – Optimism (β = -0.49**). PC – Optimism influenced the level of burnout (β = - 0.80*) to a slightly lesser significant extent.

Figure 3.2 contains the standardised path coefficients estimated using Mplus 8.6 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2020).

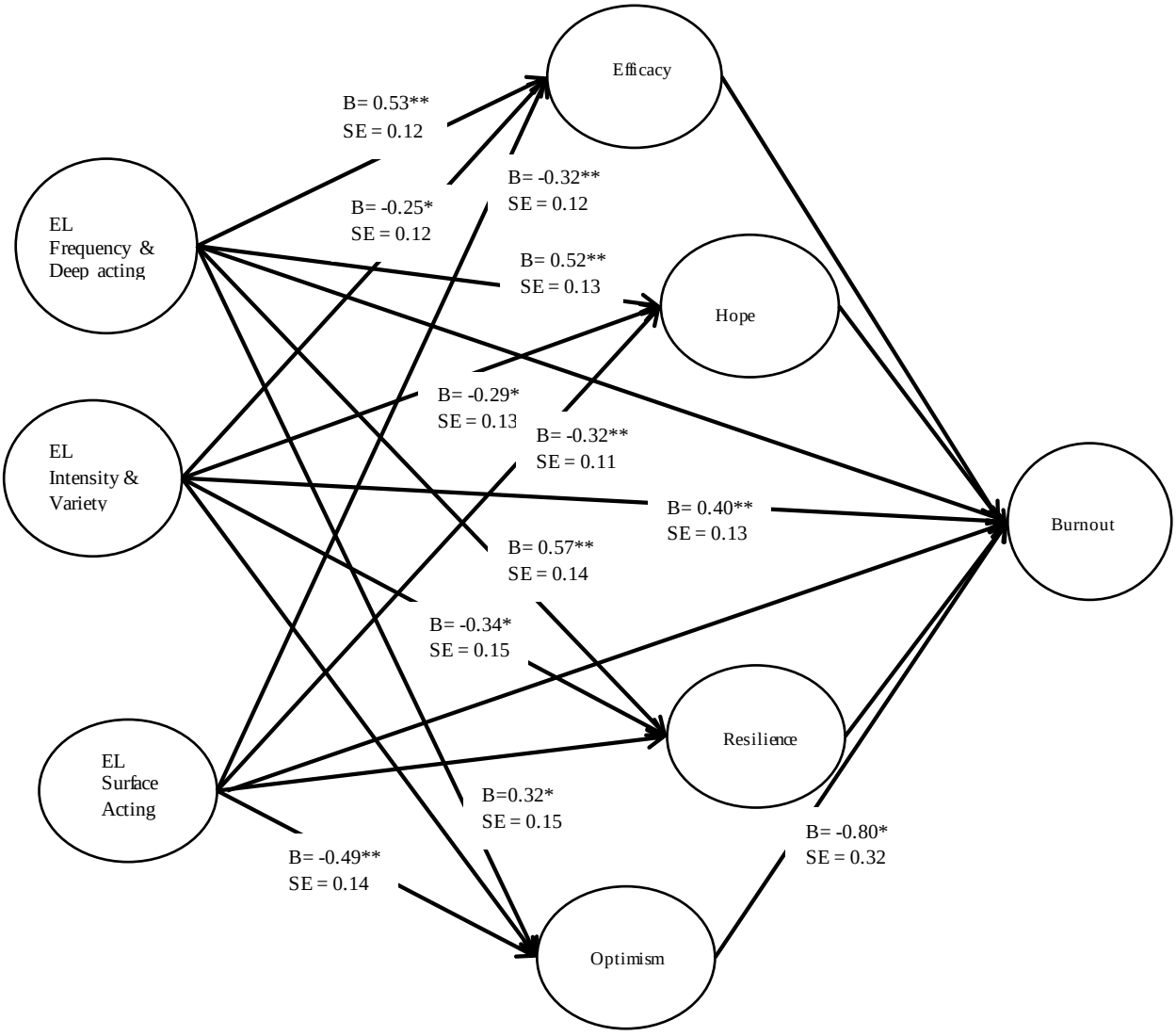

Figure 3.2 *Structural model for EL, PC, and burnout*

Moderation

To determine the moderating effect of psychological capital on the relationship between emotional labour and burnout, moderation analysis was performed in Mplus 8.6 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2020). An interaction variable was created to establish how the interaction between emotional labour and psychological capital influenced burnout levels in the service centre of the government organisation under research. The interaction between emotional labour – Intensity and variety and psychological capital – Resilience on burnout was significant at 0.09.

Table 11: *Moderation effects of psychological capital*

Variable	PC Efficacy		PC Hope		PC Resilience		PC Optimism	
	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	Est.	SE
EL – Frequency and deep acting	0.01	0.03	-0.05	0.06	-0.08	0.06	-0.05	0.04
EL – Intensity and variety	-0.01	0.03	-0.05	0.04	-0.09*	0.04	-0.03	0.03
EL – Surface acting	0.02	0.03	-0.04	0.05	-0.05	0.05	-0.02	0.04

* $p < 0.05$
** $p < 0.01$

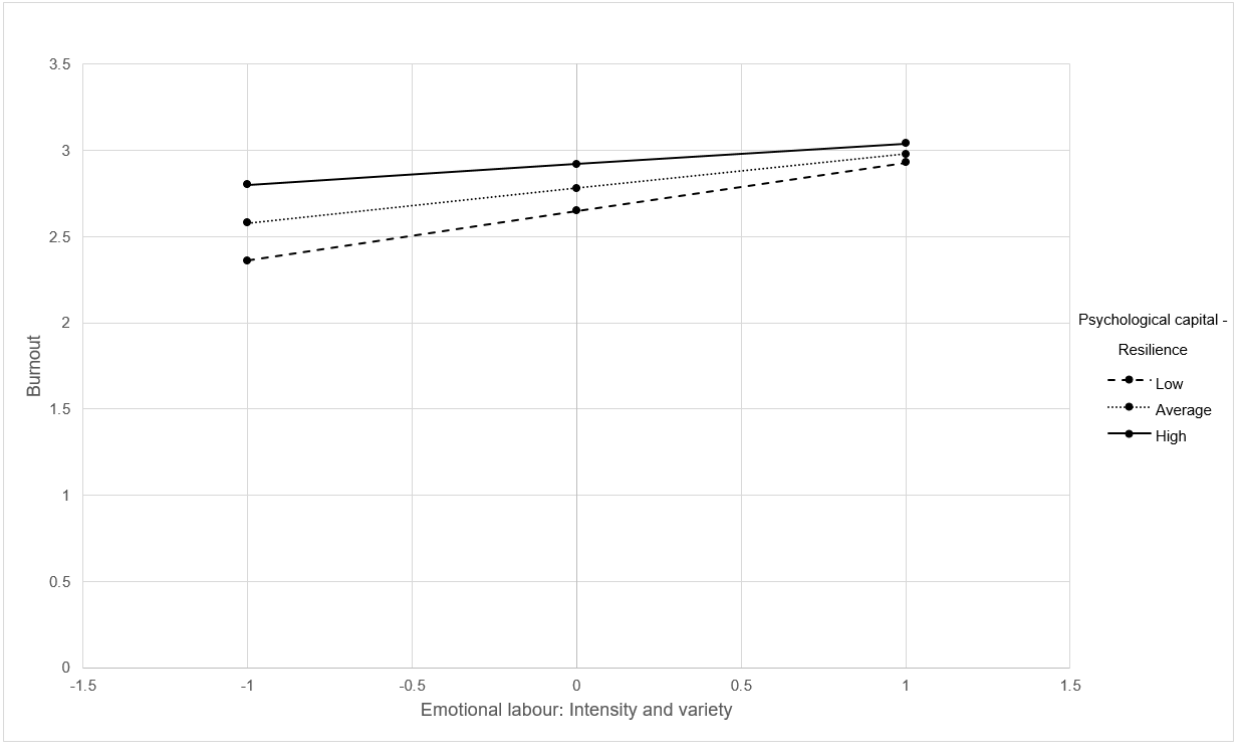

Figure 3.3 *Moderating effect on work engagement*

Above is an illustration of the effect of interaction between emotional labour and psychological capital on levels of burnout. It can be seen that employees with higher levels of psychological capital – Resilience were slightly less burned out at higher levels of emotional labour – Intensity and variety.

Therefore, the results partially support Hypothesis 4.

DISCUSSION

Conclusions

The way in which service agents express their emotions in the workplace has always been a topic of great interest. The ability to adhere to the display rules, in accordance with the organisation's service charter, by applying emotional labour strategies, holds significant benefits for the organisation because of the client's perception of the friendliness demonstrated by the employees (Grandey, 2000). However, the opposite is true for individuals working in service jobs. The continuous interpersonal interactions, especially with clients, put employees at risk of, for example, deteriorating psychological and physical health outcomes and even burnout (Gross, 1998; Gross, 2002; Hochschild, 1983). The best solution to this problem will be to minimise or even eliminate emotional labour in the workplace. It is, however, doubtful that any service orientated organisation will agree to abandoning their display rules. The motivation for this study was therefore the need to study variables, such as psychological capital (PsyCap), that may decrease the negative effects of emotional labour (EL) and also weaken the relationship between EL and burnout (BO) in the service centre of a government organisation.

The relationships between the subdimensions of emotional labour and the subdimensions of psychological capital were first explored.

Emotional labour, particularly the surface acting dimension, is associated with negative workplace outcomes mainly because of its impact on employees' psychological well-being (Pugh et al., 2011). This statement should be of concern to the government organisation under research, taking into account that the mean of surface acting was 3.33, using a 5-point scale with a standard deviation of 0.85, which confirms high levels (66%) of surface acting in the service centres. The strict client service charter, and especially the display rules in the service centres under research, are a possible explanation for this phenomenon. The first hypothesis of this study was to determine the relationship between EL – Surface acting and PsyCap. Results obtained by this study only partially supported Hypothesis 1 because no significant relationship was found between PC – Efficacy, PC – Resilience, and EL – Surface acting. It was, however, found that a

negative statistically significant relationship exists between PC – Hope and EL – Surface acting, and a negative practical and statistically significant relationship exists between PC – Optimism and EL – Surface acting. This is in line with Toor and Ofori's (2010) research that argues that hopeful and optimistic individuals tend to be more independent in their way of thinking and more often possess an internal locus of control, which enables them to be motivated by their successful accomplishments. Optimistic individuals are more likely to take the initiative to explore new ways to alter negative situations (Tamer, 2015). Empirical research on hope, conducted by Peterson and Byron (2008), found that employees with high hope levels also produce better-quality solutions to challenges arising in their daily jobs. Therefore, the positive state created by hope and optimism may provide a more effective psychological base for individuals to overcome communicational and relational stress factors in the work environment, which enables the employees to show the genuine emotions that they experience during client interaction (Tamer, 2015). In line with recommendations made by Luthans et al. (2006), the government organisation should consider implementing psychological capital interventions (PCI), specifically focusing on the hope and optimism dimensions of PsyCap. In their PCI model, Luthans et al. (2006) suggest a three-pronged strategy for hope. The participating employees will first be guided to identify personal goals after which they will be trained to divide these personal goals into several steps and then be encouraged to think about multiple creative pathways to attain these personal goals. Lastly, the participants will be encouraged to identify and consider any possible obstacles that they might encounter and to find alternative solutions to these obstacles.

The second hypothesis of this study – to determine the relationship between EL – Deep acting and psychological capital – was also only partially supported by the results obtained. No significant relationship was found between PC – Hope, PC – Optimism, and EL – Deep acting, but it was found that a positive, statistically significant (small effect) relationship exists between PC – Efficacy and EL – Deep acting and positive practical and statistically significant relationship exist between PC – Resilience and EL – Deep acting. Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) state that deep acting individuals, unlike those that employ surface acting, aim to change their inner emotions in such a way to match what is expected of them in the organisation's display rules. Although they also feel disassociated from their true inner feelings, these employees have a sense of achievement because of the lower levels of inconsistency between outer and inner feelings. According to Stajkovic and Luthans (1998), efficacy relates to an individual's conviction about his/her ability to induce cognitive resources, motivation, and courses of action needed to successfully execute a specific task in a particular situation. The significant relationship between EL – Deep acting and PC – Efficacy, identified in the study results, can therefore be explained by Tamer's (2015) study, which shows that employees with high levels of efficacy will have the required psychological ground that will intercept inappropriate emotions to enter his/her

conscious. The positive practical and statistically significant (medium effect) relationship between PC – Resilience and EL – Deep acting can be explained in terms of a study done by Avey et al. (2010). They argue that the PsyCap – Resilience dimension acts as a vital positive resource needed to navigate stressful and turbulent work environments. Luthans (2012) supports this argument. He defines resilience as an individual's developable aptitude to bounce back from conflict, adversity, or failure, which leads to a decrease in cognitive strain. Aziz et al. (2018) describe PsyCap as a state-like variable that employees can draw from when performing emotional labour in the workplace. Although, as seen in the study results, some employees might have naturally higher PsyCap levels, it is possible to develop these states within an individual. Another recommendation to the government organisation under research could be to allow service centre employees to attend webinars that explain and conceptualise the concept of emotional labour. This will help employees to more effectively manage and cope with emotional arousal during client interactions.

Next, the relationship between psychological capital and burnout was examined. It was hypothesised that psychological capital would have a negative relationship with burnout (BO). Hypothesis 3 was supported by the results obtained in this study with PC – Efficacy, PC – Hope, and PC – Optimism having a strong practical and statistically significant negative (large effect) relationship with BO and PC – Resilience showed a statistically significant negative (small effect) relationship with BO. Results in this study are consistent with research findings in various studies described in the literature that confirm the strong negative relationship between PsyCap and BO (Görgens-Ekermans & Herbert, 2013; Hansen et al., 2015; Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017; Youssef-Morgan & Luthans, 2015). These findings are also in line with studies that confirm that the different dimensions of PsyCap are related to subjective well-being (Avey et al., 2010; Hansen et al., 2015; Luthans et al., 2007; Luthans et al., 2010). Pu et al. (2017) argue that PsyCap may be one of the most critical psychological resources used by individuals when dealing with stress and burnout. It is therefore important to develop employees' levels of PsyCap as it will equip them with the psychological skills to deal with high workloads, demanding clients, and unauthentic emotional display rules. Luthans and Youssef-Morgan (2017) propose that employers should be cognisant of the relationship between these constructs as it could affect employees' behaviour, attitudes, and even performance.

Lastly, Hypothesis 4 aimed to investigate the moderating effect of PsyCap on the relationship between emotional labour and burnout. From the literature study, it can be confirmed that individuals forced to express socially desired emotions at work may be negatively affected and eventually be plagued by high burnout levels (Aziz et al., 2018). Results obtained in this study partially supported hypothesis four as only PC – Resilience moderated the relationship between

EL – Intensity and variety and BO. As the level of resilience increased, the strength of the relationship decreased, which means that the feelings, moods, and attitudes of workers performing emotional labour will be changed by the absence or presence of PsyCap – Resilience (Aziz et al., 2018).

The overwhelming benefits of PsyCap demonstrated in the literature and also in the current study suggest that the government organisation under research should try, by all means possible, to ensure that their service centre employees have sufficient PsyCap to cope with the daily demands of emotional labour. This can be done by possibly implementing psychological capital intervention programmes as suggested by Luthans' (2012). In addition, the employer should consider on-the-job training, increased job enrichment, and increased quality of communication to address emotional labour issues and facilitate the development of resilience, optimism, hope, and self-efficacy (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan 2017; Youssef-Morgan & Luthans, 2015). The employer should further assist employees to understand the rationale behind their display rules and client charter better to foster feelings of higher job autonomy amongst service agents.

Limitations and recommendations for future studies

Although the study findings contribute to the existing literature on emotional labour, burnout, and psychological capital, some limitations should be noted.

Firstly, the study was conducted in only one government organisation within South Africa. This could raise concerns since the results cannot be generalised across all South African government organisations. It is therefore recommended that future research should include a greater variety of government employers.

Secondly, research data was collected at only one point in time. Therefore, although it is expected that emotional labour leads to burnout, a casual inference cannot be made. Future researchers should expand on the results by replicating the study but they should also incorporate a longitudinal design to allow for the interactions between the various variables to be investigated on more than one occasion. This will also allow the researcher to assess the degree and direction of change over a more extended period (Maree, 2020). Longitudinal studies will also enable the researcher to determine whether the results could be attributed to a long-term phenomenon or whether the variables changed over time.

The third limitation relates to the self-reported questionnaires used in the current study. According to Podsakoff (2003), this kind of information sourcing can be the reason for common method bias, contributing to measurement errors. However, in contrast to this view, Avery et al. (2010) argue that PsyCap might be best evaluated by self-reporting, considering that the PsyCap concept is

subjective in nature. The recommendation to future researchers would be to use multiple data collection methods to address these concerns.

References

Armon, G., Shirom, A., Shapira, I., & Melamed, S. (2008). On the nature of burnout–insomnia relationships: A prospective study of employed adults. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, *65*(1), 5-12. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0022399908000470

Austin, E. J., Dore, T. C., & O'Donovan, K. M. (2008). Associations of personality and emotional intelligence with display rule perceptions and emotional labour. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *44*(3), 679-688.

Avey, J. B., Avolio, B. J., & Luthans, F. (2011). Experimentally analysing the impact of leader positivity on follower positivity and performance. *The Leadership Quarterly, 22*(2), 282-294. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1048984311000178

Avey, J. B., Luthans, F., Smith, R. M., & Palmer, N. F. (2010). Impact of positive psychological capital on employee well-being over time. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, *15*(1), 17-28.

Avey, J. B., Patera, J. L., & West, B. J. (2006). The implications of positive psychological capital on employee absenteeism. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, *13*(2), 42-60.

Avey, J. B., Reichard, R. J., Luthans, F., & Mhatre, K. H. (2011). Meta-analysis of the impact of positive psychological capital on employee attitudes, behaviors, and performance. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, *22*(2), 127-152. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/hrdq.20070

Aziz, S., Widis, A., & Wuensch, K. (2018). The association between emotional labor and burnout: the moderating role of psychological capital. *Occupational Health Science*, *2*(4), 365-383.

Bakker, A. B., & Geurts, S. A. (2004). Toward a dual-process model of work-home interference. *Work and occupations*, *31*(3), 345-366.

Bandura, A. (1995). *Self-efficacy in changing societies*. Cambridge University Press.

Bandura, A. (1997). Self-efficacy: the exercise of control. Freeman.

Bandura, A. (2008). An agentic perspective on positive psychology. *Positive psychology* (Vol. 1, pp. 167-196). Greenwood.

Bandura, A. (2012). On the functional properties of perceived self-efficacy revisited. *Journal of Management*, *38*(1), 9-44. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0149206311410606

Block, J., & Kremen, A. M. (1996). IQ and ego-resiliency: conceptual and empirical connections and separateness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *70*(2), 349-361.

Bozionelos, N., & Kiamou, K. (2008). Emotional work in the Hellenic frontline services environment: How it relates to emotional exhaustion and work attitudes. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 19*(6), 1108-1130.

Brotheridge, C. M., & Grandey, A. A. (2002). Emotional labour and burnout: Comparing two perspectives of "people work". *Journal of Vocational Behaviour, 60*(1), 17-39. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0001879101918159

Brown, E. L. (2011). *Emotion matters: Exploring the emotional labour of teaching* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pittsburgh).

Brown, T. A. (2015). *Confirmatory factor analysis for applied research* (2nd ed.). Guilford publications.

Brunetto, Y., Shacklock, K., Teo, S., & Farr-Wharton, R. (2014). The impact of management on the engagement and well-being of high emotional labour employees. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *25*(17), 2345-2363.

Byrne, B. M. (2010). *Structural equation modelling with AMOS: Basic concepts, applications and programming* (2nd ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Carver, C. S., & Scheier, M. F. (2002). The hopeful optimist. *Psychological Inquiry*, *13*(4), 288-290.

Carver, C. S., & Scheier, M. F. (2014). Dispositional optimism. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, *18*(6), 293-299.

Cheung, F. Y. L., & Tang, C. S. K. (2012). The effect of emotional dissonance and emotional intelligence on work–family interference. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science*, *44*(1), 50-58. https://psycnet.apa.org/journals/cbs/44/1/50/

Cheung, F., Tang, C. S., & Tang, S. (2011). Psychological capital as a moderator between emotional labor, burnout, and job satisfaction among school teachers in China. *International Journal of Stress Management, 18*, 348-371.

Cohen, J. (1992). A power primer. *Psychological bulletin*, *112*(1), 155-159.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE.

Culbertson, S. S., Fullagar, C. J., & Mills, M. J. (2010). Feeling good and doing great: the relationship between psychological capital and well-being. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, *15*(4), 421-433. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2010-22711-007

Dall'Ora, C., Ball, J., Reinius, M., & Griffiths, P. (2020). Burnout in nursing: a theoretical review. *Human Resources for Health*, *18*, 1-17.

Danielle, N. E. L., & Masilela, L. (2020). Open governance for improved service delivery innovation in South Africa. *International Journal of eBusiness and eGovernment Studies*, *12*(1), 33-47. https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/ijebeg/issue/51621/669856

De Beer, L. T. (2021). Is There Utility in Specifying Professional Efficacy as an Outcome of Burnout in the Employee Health Impairment Process. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *18*(12), 1-9.

Desart, S., & De Witte, H. (2019). Burnout 2.0—A New Look at the Conceptualization of Burnout. *The Fun and Frustration of Modern Working Life. Contributions from an Occupational Health Psychology Perspective*, 140-152.

Development Core Team. (2015). *R: A language environment for statistical computing.* Vienna, Austria: R Foundation for Statistical Computing.

Di Fabio, A. (2017). The psychology of sustainability and sustainable development for well-being in organizations. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *8*, 1534-1546. https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01534/full

Du, H., Bernardo, A. B., & Yeung, S. S. (2015). Locus-of-hope and life satisfaction: The mediating roles of personal self-esteem and relational self-esteem. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *83*, 228-233.

Ferradás, M. d. M., Freire, C., García-Bértoa, A., Núñez, J. C., & Rodríguez, S. (2019). Teacher profiles of psychological capital and their relationship with burnout. *Sustainability*, *11*(18), 1-18.

Fourie, D. (2009). Institutional mechanisms and good governance: A perspective on the South African public sector. *Public Administration*, *44*(4), 1114-1123. https://journals.co.za/doi/abs/10.10520/EJC51728

Foxcroft, C., & Roodt, G. (2013). *Introduction to psychological assessment in the South African context.* Oxford University Press.

Freudenberger, H. J. 1974. Staff burnout. *Journal of Social Issues*, 30(1), 159-165.

Freudenberger, H. J. (1989). Burnout: Past, present, and future concerns. *Loss, Grief & Care*, *3*(1-2), 1-10.

Gefen, D., Straub, D., & Boudreau, M. C. (2000). Structural equation modeling and regression: Guidelines for research practice. *Communications of the association for information systems, 4(1)*, 2-79. https://aisel.aisnet.org/cais/vol4/iss1/7/

Gelb, A., Ramachandran, V., & Turner, G. (2007). Stimulating growth and investment in Africa: From macro to micro reforms. *African Development Review, 19*(1), 26-51.

Gordhan, P. (2010). Budget speech. *Pretoria, South Africa*.

Görgens-Ekermans, G., & Herbert, M. (2013). Psychological capital: Internal and external validity of the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ-24) on a South African sample. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, *39*(2), 1-12. https://journals.co.za/doi/abs/10.10520/EJC144503

Grandey, A. A. (2000). Emotional regulation in the workplace: A new way to conceptualize emotional labor. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 5*, 95-110.

Gross, J. J. (1998). The emerging field of emotion regulation: An integrative review. *Review of General Psychology, 2*, 271-299.

Gross, J. J. (2002). Emotion regulation: Affective, cognitive, and social consequences. *Psychophysiology, 39*(3), 281-291.

Groth, M., Henning-Thurau T., & Walsh, G. (2009). Customer reactions to emotional labor: The roles of employee acting strategies and customer detection accuracy. *Academy of Management Journal, 52*, 958-974.

Hakanen, J. J., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2012). Do burnout and work engagement predict depressive symptoms and life satisfaction? A three-wave seven-year prospective study. *Journal of*

Affective Disorders, *141*(2-3), 415-424. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0165032712001966

Hansen, A., Buitendach, J. H., & Kanengoni, H. (2015). Psychological capital, subjective well-being, burnout and job satisfaction amongst educators in the Umlazi region in South Africa. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, *13*(1), 1-9.

Herbert, M. (2011). *An exploration of the relationships between psychological capital (hope, optimism, self-efficacy, resilience), occupational stress, burnout and employee engagement* (Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University).

Hirschi, A. (2014). Hope as a resource for self-directed career management: Investigating mediating effects on proactive career behaviors and life and job satisfaction. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *15*(6), 1495-1512. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10902-013-9488-x

Hochschild, A. R. (1979). Emotion work, feeling rules, and social structure. *American Journal of Sociology, 85*(3), 551-575.

Hochschild, A. R. (1983). *The managed heart: A commercialization of human feelings.* University of California Press.

Hu, L. T., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural equation modeling: a multidisciplinary journal*, *6*(1), 1-55. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10705519909540118

Hülsheger, U. R., Lang, J. W. B., & Maier, G. W. (2010). Emotional labour, strain, and performance: Testing reciprocal relationships in a longitudinal panel study. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 15*, 505-521.

Hülsheger, U. R., & Schewe, A. F. (2011). On the costs and benefits of emotional labor: A meta-analysis of three decades of research. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 16*, 361-389. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2011-13471-007

Iacobucci, D. (2009). Everything you always wanted to know about SEM (structural equations modeling) but were afraid to ask. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *19*(4), 673-680.

Iacobucci, D. (2010). Structural equations modeling: Fit indices, sample size, and advanced topics. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *20*(1), 90-98. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1057740809001120

IBM Corporation. (Released 2020). *IBM SPSS statistics for Windows, version 27.0*. IBM Corporation.

Junpath, S. V., Kharwa, M. S. E., & Stainbank, L. J. (2016). Taxpayers' attitudes towards tax amnesties and compliance in South Africa: an exploratory study. *South African Journal of Accounting Research*, *30*(2), 97-119.

Karimi, L., Leggat, S. G., Donohue, L., Farrell, G., & Couper, G. E. (2014). Emotional rescue: The role of emotional intelligence and emotional labour on well-being and job-stress among community nurses. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *70*(1), 176-186. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/jan.12185

Kerlinger, F. N., & Lee, H. B. (2000). Survey research. *Foundations of behavioral research,* (pp. 599-619).

Kline, R. B. (2015). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling*. Guilford publications.

Lee, R. T., & Brotheridge, C. M. (2011). Words from the heart speak to the heart: A study of deep acting, faking, and hiding among child care workers. *Career Development International*, *16*, 401-420. https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/13620431111158805/full/html

Lee, R. T., Lovell, B. L., & Brotheridge, C. M. (2010). Tenderness and steadiness: Relating job and interpersonal demands and resources with burnout and physical symptoms of stress in Canadian physicians. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *40*, 2319-2342.

Leiter, M. P., Hakanen, J. J., Ahola, K., Toppinen-Tanner, S., Koskinen, A., & Väänänen, A. (2013). Organizational predictors and health consequences of changes in burnout: A 12-year cohort study. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *34*(7), 959-973.

Leiter, M. P., & Maslach, C. (2005). *Banishing burnout: Six strategies for improving your relationship with work*. Jossey-Bass.

Leiter, M. P., Maslach, C., & Frame, K. (2014). Burnout. *The encyclopedia of clinical psychology*, 1-7. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/9781118625392.wbecp142

Leung, M. Y., Chan, Y. S. I., & Dongyu, C. (2011). Structural linear relationships between job stress, burnout, physiological stress, and performance of construction project managers. *Engineering, Construction and Architectural Management*, 18, 312-328.

Li, J. H., Gao, P., Shen, X. Y., & Liu, X. (2014). A process model of emotional labor of nursing: case study of two Chinese public hospitals. *International Journal of Public Administration*, *37*(10), 695-707. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01900692.2014.907310

Lubbadeh, T. (2020). Job burnout: a general literature review. *International Review of Management and Marketing*, *10*(3), 7-15.

Luthans, F. (2002). The need for and meaning of positive organizational behavior. *Journal of Organizational Behavior: The International Journal of Industrial, Occupational and Organizational Psychology and Behavior*, *23*(6), 695-706.

Luthans, F. (2012). Psychological capital: Implications for HRD, retrospective analysis, and future directions. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 23*(1), 1-8. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/hrdq.21119

Luthans, F., Avey, J. B., Avolio, B. J., Norman, S. M., & Combs, G. M. (2006). Psychological capital development: toward a micro-intervention. *Journal of Organizational Behavior: The International Journal of Industrial, Occupational and Organizational Psychology and Behavior*, *27*(3), 387-393.

Luthans, F., Avey, J. B., Clapp-Smith, R., & Li, W. (2008). More evidence on the value of Chinese workers' psychological capital: A potentially unlimited competitive resource?. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 19*(5), 818-827.

Luthans, F., Avey, J. B., Avolio, B. J., & Peterson, S. J. (2010). The development and resulting performance impact of positive psychological capital. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, *21*(1), 41-67. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/hrdq.20034

Luthans, F., Avolio, B. J., Avey, J. B., & Norman, S. M. (2007). Positive psychological capital: Measurement and relationship with performance and satisfaction. *Personnel Psychology, 60*(3), 541-572.

Luthans, F., & Youssef-Morgan, C. M. (2017). Psychological capital: An evidence-based positive approach. *Annual Review of Organisational Psychology and Organisational Behaviour, 4*, 339-366.

Maree, K. (2020). *First steps in research*. Van Schaik Publishers.

Maslach, C. (2011). Burnout and engagement in the workplace: New perspectives. *The European Health Psychologist*, *13*(3), 44-47. https://www.ehps.net/ehp/index.php/contents/article/download/ehp.v13.i3.p44/997

Maslach, C., & Jackson, S. E. (1981). The measurement of experienced burnout. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *2*(2), 99-113.

Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2008). Early predictors of job burnout and engagement. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *93*(3), 498-512.

Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2016). Understanding the burnout experience: recent research and its implications for psychiatry. *World psychiatry*, *15*(2), 103-111. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/wps.20311

Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W. B., & Leiter, M. P. (2001). Job burnout. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *52*(1), 397-422.

Maslach, C., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2018). Historical and conceptual development of burnout. In *Professional burnout: Recent developments in theory and research* (pp. 1-16). CRC Press.

Masten, A. S. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist*, *56*(3), 227-238. https://psycnet.apa.org/journals/amp/56/3/227.html?uid=2001-00465-004

Masten, A. S., & Reed, M. G. J. (2002). Resilience in development. *Handbook of Positive Psychology*, *74*, 117-131.

McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2011). Research in Education: Evidence-Based Inquiry, My Education Lab Series. *Pearson.*

Muthén, L. K., & Muthén, B. O. (1998 - 2020). *Mplus users 'guide* (8th ed.). Muthén & Muthén.

Näring, G., Briët, M., & Brouwers, A. (2006). Beyond demand–control: Emotional labour and symptoms of burnout in teachers. *Work & Stress*, *20*(4), 303-315. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02678370601065182

Norman, S. M., Avolio, B. J., & Luthans, F. (2010). The impact of positivity and transparency on trust in leaders and their perceived effectiveness. *The Leadership Quarterly, 21*(3), 350-364.

Nunnally, J. C., & Bernstein, I. H. (1994). *Psychometric theory* (3rd ed.) McGraw-Hill.

Othman, A. K., Abdullah, H. S., & Ahmad, J. (2008). Emotional intelligence, emotional labour and work effectiveness in service organisations: A proposed model. *Vision*, *12*(1), 31-42.

Paek, S., Schuckert, M., Kim, T. T., & Lee, G. (2015). Why is hospitality employees' psychological capital important? The effects of psychological capital on work engagement and employee morale. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *50*, 9-26. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0278431915001012

Peng, K. Z., Wong, C. S., & Che, H. S. (2010). The missing link between emotional demands and exhaustion. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 25*, 777-798.

Peterson, S. J., & Byron, K. (2008). Exploring the role of hope in job performance: Results from four studies. *Journal of Organizational Behavior: The International Journal of Industrial, Occupational and Organizational Psychology and Behavior*, *29*(6), 785-803. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/job.492

Peterson, U., Demerouti, E., Bergström, G., Samuelsson, M., Åsberg, M., & Nygren, Å. (2008). Burnout and physical and mental health among Swedish healthcare workers. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *62*(1), 84-95.

Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *885*(879), 897-903.

Protection of Personal Information Act (2013). *Protection of Personal Information Act No. 4 of 2013*. Republic of South Africa. https://www.gov.za/documents/protection-personal-information-act.

Pu, J., Hou, H., Ma, R., & Sang, J. (2017). The effect of psychological capital between work–family conflict and job burnout in Chinese university teachers: Testing for mediation and moderation. *Journal of Health Psychology*, *22*(14), 1799-1807.

Pugh, S. D., Groth, M., & Hennig-Thurau, T. (2011). Willing and able to fake emotions: A closer examination of the link between emotional dissonance and employee well-being. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *96*(2), 377-390.

Richardson, G. E. (2002). The metatheory of resilience and resiliency. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, *58*(3), 307-321. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/jclp.10020

Rosse, J. G., Boss, R. W., Johnson, A. E., & Crown, D. F. (1991). Conceptualizing the role of self-esteem in the burnout process. *Group & Organization Studies*, *16*(4), 428-451.

Satorra, A., & Bentler, P. M. (2010). Ensuring positiveness of the scaled difference chi-square test static. *Psychometrika*, *75*, 243-248.

Schaufeli, W. B. (2003). Past performance and future perspectives of burnout research. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, *29*(4), 1-15. https://journals.co.za/doi/abs/10.10520/EJC88982

Schaufeli, W. B., De Witte, H., & Desart, S. (2019). Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT) manual. *Internal report*.

Schaufeli, W. B., Desart, S., & De Witte, H. (2020). Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT)—development, validity, and reliability. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *17*(24), 1-21.

Scheier, M. F., & Carver, C. S. (1985). Optimism, coping, and health: assessment and implications of generalized outcome expectancies. *Health Psychology*, *4*(3), 219-247.

Scheier, M. F., Carver, C. S., & Bridges, M. W. (1994). Distinguishing optimism from neuroticism (and trait anxiety, self-mastery, and self-esteem): A Reevaluation of the Life Orientation Test. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *67*(6), 1063-1078. https://psycnet.apa.org/buy/1995-07978-001

Schonfeld, I. S., & Bianchi, R. (2016). Burnout and depression: two entities or one?. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, *72*(1), 22-37.

Schulz, S. A., Luthans, K. W., & Messersmith, J. G. (2014). Psychological capital: A new tool for driver retention. *International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management*, *44*, 621-634.

Scott, B. A., & Barnes, C. M. (2011). A multilevel field investigation of emotional labour, affect work withdrawal, and gender. *Academy of Management Journal*, *54*, 116-136. https://journals.aom.org/doi/abs/10.5465/amj.2011.59215086

Segerstrom, S. C., Carver, C. S., & Scheier, M. F. (2017). Optimism. In *The happy mind: Cognitive contributions to well-being*. Springer, Cham, 195-212.

Seligman, M.E.P. (1998). *Learned optimism*. Pocket Books.

Seligman, M. E., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2014). Positive psychology: An introduction. In *Flow and the foundations of positive psychology* (pp. 279-298). Springer, Dordrecht.

Sheldon, K. M., & King, L. (2001). Why positive psychology is necessary. *American Psychologist*, *56*(3), 216-217. https://doi.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2F0003-066X.56.3.216

Shirom, A. (2009). Burnout and health: Expanding our knowledge. *Stress and Health, 25*(4), 281-285.

Snyder, C. R. (2002). Hope theory: Rainbows in the mind. *Psychological Inquiry*, *13*(4), 249-275.

Snyder, C. R., LaPointe, A. B., Jeffrey Crowson, J., & Early, S. (1998). Preferences of high-and low-hope people for self-referential input. *Cognition & Emotion*, *12*(6), 807-823.

Snyder, C.R., Lopez, S. J., Shorey, H., Rand, K. L., & Feldman, D. B. (2003). Hope theory, measurements, and applications to school psychology. School Psychology Quarterly, *18*(2), 122-139. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2003-07012-005

Sohn, H. K., & Lee, T. J. (2012). Relationship between HEXACO personality factors and emotional labour of service providers in the tourism industry. *Tourism Management*, *33*(1), 116-125.

Stajkovic, A. D. (2006). Development of a core confidence-higher order construct. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *91*(6), 1208-1224. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2006-20695-002

Stajkovic, A. D., & Luthans, F. (1998). Social cognitive theory and self-efficacy: Going beyond traditional motivational and behavioral approaches. *Organizational Dynamics*, *26*(4), 62-74.

Steyn, H. S., & Ellis, S. M. (2003). Practical significance (effect sizes) versus or in combination with statistical significance (p-values): research note. *Management Dynamics: Journal of the Southern African Institute for Management Scientists*, *12*(4), 51-53.

Stratman, J. L., & Youssef-Morgan, C. M. (2019). Can positivity promote safety? Psychological capital development combats cynicism and unsafe behavior. *Safety Science*, *116*, 13-25. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0925753518304600

Struwig, F. W., & Stead, G. B. (2001). *Research: Planning, designing and reporting research*. Pearson Education.

Surana, S. J., & Singh, A. K. (2012). The effect of job burnout on job outcomes among call centre customer service representatives in India. *International Journal of Intelligent Enterprise*, *1*(3-4), 270-289.

Tamer, I. (2015). The effect of positive psychological capital on emotional labour. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science (2147-4478), 4*(2), 20-34. http://ssbfnet.com/ojs/index.php/ijrbs/article/view/138

Toor, S. U. R., & Ofori, G. (2010). Positive psychological capital as a source of sustainable competitive advantage for organizations. *Journal of Construction Engineering and Management*, *136*(3), 341-352.

Tosten, R., & Toprak, M. (2017). Positive psychological capital and emotional labor: A study in educational organizations. *Cogent Education*, *4*(1), 1-11. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/2331186X.2017.1301012

Van der Vaart, L., & De Beer, L. T. (2021). Engaged but exhausted: Work-related wellbeing profiles of South African employees. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, *11*(4), 88-105.

Van Tonder, C. L., & Williams, C. (2009). Exploring the origins of burnout among secondary educators. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, *35*(1), 1-15. https://journals.co.za/doi/abs/10.10520/EJC89170

Van der Waldt, G., & Du Toit, D. F. (2002). *Service excellence in governance*. Heinemann.

Wang, J., & Wang, X. (2012). *Structural equation modelling: Applications using Mplus*. Wiley.

World Health Organization (2019). *Burn-out an "occupational phenomenon": International Classification of Diseases*. https://www.who.int/mental_health/evidence/burn-out/en/

Wróbel, M. (2013). Can empathy lead to emotional exhaustion in teachers? The mediating role of emotional labor. *International Journal of Occupational Medicine and Environmental Health*, *26*(4), 581-592.

Wrześniewski, A., McCauley, C., Rozin, P., & Schwartz, B. (1997). Jobs, careers, and callings: People's relations to their work. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *31*(1), 21-33. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0092656697921620

Youssef, C.M., & Luthans, F. (2007). Positive organisational behavior in the workplace: The impact of hope, optimism, and resilience. *Journal of Management*, *33*(5), 774–800.

Youssef-Morgan, C. M., & Luthans, F. (2015). Psychological capital and well-being. *Journal of the International Society for the Investigation of Stress 31*, 180-188. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2015-36813-003

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH ARTICLE

RESEARCH ARTICLE 3

Emotional labour, recovery experiences and work engagement in a South African government organisation

ABSTRACT

Orientation: In South Africa, government organisations are expected to rigorously attain their mandatory vision and mission of delivering government services that are responsive and satisfying to the needs of the South African citizens. This can only be achieved by fully engaged employees who are innovative and emotionally equipped to address the economic and social needs of the South African population.

Research purpose: This study examined the relationship between emotional labour, recovery experiences, and work engagement and investigated the mediating effect of recovery experiences on the relationship between emotional labour and work engagement levels amongst service centre employees in a South African government organisation.

Motivation for the study: One of the numerous challenges that the South African government organisations face is enhancing the work-related well-being of employees, taking the limited available time to introduce new interventions during regular working hours into account. Therefore, sound human capital resource practices should be utilised to assist employees to cope with circumstances associated with emotional labour in the service centres. Work demands and strains spill over to an employee's personal life, necessitating daily recovery to decrease the accumulation of strain and eventually lower levels of work engagement. Therefore, this study was motivated by the need to determine the relationship between emotional labour, recovery experiences, and work engagement levels of government service centre employees.

Research design, approach, and method: The researcher used a quantitative research approach to include a large representative sample. A cross-sectional, correlational, and nonexperimental design was followed to allow the examination of the potential relationship between two or more variables at a certain point and time. The sample consisted of service centre employees in a South African government organisation.

Main findings: SPSS 27 and Mplus 8.6 were used to investigate the current research. The main findings indicated a definite correlation between emotional labour, recovery experiences, and work engagement in the South African government service centres, with recovery experiences mediating the relationship between emotional labour and work engagement.

Practical/managerial implications: By expanding training and coaching programmes on the antecedents and consequences of emotional labour and actively seeking recovery experiences, employees can be sensitised to reflect on the balance of their work-life. By being proactive, management can prevent employees from becoming psychologically exhausted and unengaged and can positively influence their employees' overall well-being.

Contribution/value-add: Currently, limited literature is available on the three variables studied in this research, and most certainly in relation to each other in a South African context. Investigating these relationships within a multicultural South Africa will enhance and enrich the existing body of literature and provide valuable direction for future empirical studies.

Key terms: Recovery experience; psychological detachment; relaxation strategies; emotional labour; intensity; frequency; variety; deep acting; surface acting; work engagement; vigour; dedication; absorption; service centre.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, citizens worldwide have called upon private and public organisations to pay more attention to the quality of their service delivery. In South Africa, one only has to observe the service protests reported by television, radio, and social media to realise that service delivery in the South African sphere has been a challenge for many years (Reddy, 2016). Therefore, the South African government organisation under research systematically started redefining their relationship with the South African citizens, concentrating on strategies to improve IT systems, self-help technology, and face-to-face client service (Kanyemba, 2017).

Government clients were approached to get a better understanding of their needs regarding the choice of compliance channels, tailored services and long-term interactive relationships (Gordhan, 2010). To keep in line with international trends that focus on client service, the South African government adopted the Batho Pele "people first" principle, and shifted towards a capability model and transformational strategy that would result in, higher efficiency and service delivery (Nleya, 2011). The transformation strategy focused firmly on customer management and the empowerment of *frontline* employees (Smulders & Stiglingh, 2008). According to Hulshof et al. (2020), empowered service employees have adequate resources to make the right decisions autonomously. The government organisations' service charter, introduced in 2018, committed itself to be trader- and client-centric, proactive, accessible, and to improve all service levels (Pieterse et al., 2018).

According to Lee (2016), tactics to improve service delivery in government organisations should originate from the frontline service centres, where the behaviour and emotions of service employees may leave deep-rooted impressions on their clients. In the literature, several researchers remark on the importance of service employee behaviour as it shapes the client's perception of service quality and their attitude towards the government organisation (Allen et al., 2010; Barger & Grandey, 2006; Lee, 2016; Pugh, 2001). As the first entry point for many South African citizens, the government service employees under research are expected to make their clients feel important and appreciated. They have to behave sympathetically and apologetically towards aggrieved clients by mobilising their emotional resources (Sabino & Bianchi, 2019). In terms of the organisation's service charter, stringent display rules compel these service employees to alter their emotional responses to elicit positive feedback from and provide a service to the clients (Scott & Barnes, 2011).

According to Hochschild (1979), the social exchange that occurs during client service interactions can be referred to as the social construct of emotional labour. Emotional labour is difficult to quantify and is therefore not commonly mentioned in job postings or job descriptions because of its invisible nature (Lee, 2016). Active listening, astuteness, affective sensing, and negotiating possible solutions while simultaneously controlling one's feelings are all part of emotional labour (Guy et al., 2014). From an organisational point of view, the controlled emotional display is highly beneficial and is a predictor of service quality and customer satisfaction (Tamer, 2015). In contrast, acts of altering genuine emotions result in highly adverse side effects, such as work-family conflict, withdrawal, excessive emotional exhaustion, and very low work engagement levels for individuals (Austin et al., 2008; Bakker & Geurts, 2004; Peng et al., 2010). According to Allen et al. (2005), emotional labour indirectly influences an employee's pride, control, involvement, and enthusiasm. These are closely linked to the emotional, cognitive, and physical energy that individuals invest in their daily jobs. In government organisations, many intrinsic qualities, such as bureaucratic structures, limited decision-making autonomy, and complex performance measures, already contribute to work engagement barriers. Therefore, the additional job demand of emotional labour can be detrimental to already disengaged employees (Lavigna, 2015).

The numerous challenges and job demands in the service environment of government organisations emphasize the need for human resource professionals to analyse and understand possible internal and external factors that may influence the work environment (DeNisi & Griffin, 2015). Therefore, Ramachandran et al. (2011) suggest that emotional labour, one of the challenges faced in the work environment, should be managed through sound human resource practices, for example, training, development interventions, job design, intrinsic rewards, and selection. Unfortunately, implementation of training and development interventions in the

government organisation under research is not always possible due to considerable time constraints during working hours. This study therefore focused on recovery experiences (psychological detachment and relaxation) as a potential perceived buffer against the harmful effects of emotional labour. Recovering from work-related demands such as emotional labour is used to restore psychological resources after work, during leisure time (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). Sanz-Vergel et al. (2012) found that emotional labour often spills over into an employee's personal life and accumulates devastating strain, which has a detrimental effect on the employee's well-being, making the need for recovery just so much more important.

This study therefore examined the role that emotional labour, work engagement, and recovery experiences play in South African government service centres. The mediating effect of recovery experiences on the relationship between emotional labour and work engagement has also been emphasized in order for HR to propose the most relevant training and development interventions to decrease the harmful effects of emotional labour.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional labour

Emotional labour as it is currently known was first proposed by Arlie Hochschild (2012) in her book *The Managed Heart: Commercialisation of Human Feeling*, in which she defined the construct as "the management of feelings to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display". There are certain norms, also called display rules, about the intensity, range, and duration for these specific desired emotional displays in any organisation. Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) agree with the term "display rules" in conceptualising emotional labour. According to them, it refers to specific behaviour and not to an internal personal state. This means that employees may adhere to display rules without altering their inner feelings. Another definition found in the literature was that of Morris and Feldman (1996), who focus firstly on the "effort" required to manage emotions and secondly on "organizationally desired emotions", which makes emotional labour part of the labour process, which once displayed, becomes a market commodity.

In Morris and Feldman's (1996) definition of emotional labour, they identified four dimensions: frequency, attentiveness, variety, and emotional dissonance: *Frequency* refers to the intervals of interaction between the service employee and the client, which subsequently may differ amongst different jobs in the service industry and is one of the leading indicators of emotional labour. The second dimension of "a*ttentiveness* to required display rules" also differs, depending on the number of client interactions taking place within a certain period. Jobs requiring high levels of attentiveness to display rules demand more mental and physical effort, which results in higher

levels of emotional labour. Attentiveness is dependent on the intensity and duration of emotional display. According to Calvo and Lundqvist (2008) duration of emotional display predicts how scripted or unscripted the interaction will be. Scripted communication becomes difficult during more extended emotional displays and requires greater attention and emotional stamina. The intensity of emotional display refers to the magnitude of emotion expressed or experienced and is one of the leading predictors of how client and employee behaviour will change during an interaction (Verduyn et al., 2009). The aforementioned is supported by the literature, and specifically by Hochschild's (2012) explanation of how emotional labour can be performed in one of two ways. The first, surface acting, involves hiding or faking felt emotions to comply with organisational display rules and regulations (Yoo, 2016). Individuals practising surface acting display disingenuous emotions by strictly controlling their tone of voice, gestures, behaviour, and facial expressions (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002).

In contrast to surface acting, an employee can choose to adopt the deep acting emotional labour strategy when interacting with clients. Deep acting is a genuine attempt by the employee to experience, express, and feel the emotions desired by the organisation (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). The third dimension of emotional labour mentioned by Morris and Feldman (1996) is the *variety* of emotional displays required during an employee-client interaction. To experience or express a variety of emotions during interaction with clients requires significant effort and necessitates individuals to do more active planning and conscious monitoring of their behaviours. Lastly, according to Morris and Feldman (1996), emotional dissonance describes the conflict between the actual feelings of individuals compared to their displayed emotions while interaction takes place.

Any work-related activity that includes intense interactions with others has the potential, according to Kinnunen et al. (2010), to negatively affect psychological and physical well-being due to the prolonged emotional involvement during the interaction. Service centre employees, for example, are not only required to concede to the clients' demands or to solve their problems but also have to invest emotional effort while interacting with the client (Grandey & Gabriel, 2015). In their study, Taxer and Frenzel (2018) found that the persistent, structural discrepancy between displayed and felt emotions alienates the individual from his/her own authentic emotions, leads to psychological strain. According to Zapf (2002), emotional labour can be regarded as a job demand that strongly predicts work-related stress when combined with other organisational stressors such as time pressure, work overload, and role conflicts, and in the long run it leads to the depletion of mental resources causing exhaustion.

Recovery experiences

From the literature, it is evident that job, demands such as work pressure and emotional and cognitive demands, leads to the depletion of energy and creates a definite need for recovery through social support and autonomy (Demerouti et al., 2001; Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). All working individuals mobilise their energy daily to complete specific work-related tasks. For instance, service centre employees are expected to smile during client interactions and to stay calm and compassionate when dealing with annoying and rude clients. It is then foreseeable that the employees may feel stressed, tired, and de-energised because of the intense effort invested in their daily work. These individuals are subsequently prone to experiencing higher levels of work-life stress, which causes high blood pressure, disturbed sleep patterns, and negative emotions that affect the overall well-being of individuals (De Bloom et al., 2010; Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004; Ilies et al., 2007). According to Sonnentag et al. (2010a), it is crucial that individuals make time after work to recover from these stressful physical and psychological job demands.

Meijman and Mulder (1998, p. 20) define recovery as the "psychophysical system galvanised in the state of a stressful occasion", a process during which the mood is reconstructed to reduce strain, which results in feelings of replenished mental and physical resources. According to Binnewies et al. (2009), the recovery process can be based on two main theories: the effort-recovery model and the conservation of resources theory. The *Effort-Recovery Model (E-R)* suggests that an individual devotes much effort to fulfilling job demands, which can cause load reactions, such as fatigue. After hours, when the employee is not confronted with job demands anymore, the load reactions cease, and recovery occurs. However, it also happens that the individual cannot distance him or /herself from these job stressors, which results in prolonged exposure to stress and leads to negative physical and psychological outcomes (Meijman & Mulder, 1998). *Conservation of Resource Theory (COR)* assumes that individuals strive to maintain and protect their social and personal resources, which result in anxiety and stress if circumstances threaten this valued state (Hobfoll, 1998).

Drawing on the Conservation of Resources theory and the Effort-Recovery model, Sonnentag and Fritz (2007) identified four behaviours that individuals engage in during their attempt to recover from work stress: psychological detachment, relaxation, mastery, and control. In this study, the researcher focused on the most researched recovery strategies, which include psychological detachment and relaxation, because they are prototypical and show strong relations with service employee outcomes (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007).

Psychological detachment

Etzion et al. (1998, p. 580) define psychological detachment as the "individual's sense of being away from the work situation", which means that employees that are psychologically detached do not feel mentally preoccupied with stressful job-related problems anymore. Sonnentag and Fritz (2007) agree with this statement and argue that recovery will be obstructed if individuals cannot disengage from work. Siltaloppi et al. (2011) urge employees not to attend to work-related emails or telephone calls during non-working hours as this may hinder the process of detachment and recovery. Various empirical research studies have confirmed that psychological detachment positively influences the recovery process, which contributes to reduced fatigue and increases an individual's positive affective state (Brosschot et al., 2006; Sonnentag & Bayer, 2005; Sonnentag et al., 2008).

Relaxation

Various researchers have found relaxation to support the recovery process because of the buffering effect that it has on stress and the positive, stimulating effect that it has on an individual's mood (Carlson & Hoyle, 1993; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007; Stone et al., 1995; Van der Klink et al., 2001). Chawla et al. (2020) defined relaxation as the relief from mental or bodily work, effort or application. Examples of relaxation activities in which individuals can engage include muscle relaxation through exercise, meditation, listening to music, yoga, reading, and sleeping (Grossman et al., 2004; Pelletier, 2004; Siltaloppi et al., 2011; Stone et al., 1995).

Relationship between emotional labour and recovery experiences

As previously mentioned, Hochschild (1983) defines emotional labour as a specific expression of appropriate emotions during a client service interaction. Therefore, in line with this definition, Morris and Feldman (1996, p. 992) described emotional labour as "the effort, planning, and control needed to express organisationally desired emotions during interpersonal transactions". Furthermore, as in any other organisation, the organisation under research also has specific display rules, which specify which emotions may and may not be expressed during client interactions. This, however, may become problematic when the desired display rules of the organisation do not match an employee's true feelings. Hülsheger and Schewe (2011), among many other researchers, hold that faking emotions during client interactions may cause feelings of emotional dissonance and stress, which may eventually lead to impaired well-being and health.

In contrast to this view, it should, however, be pointed out that various researchers found that if employees were adequately equipped with "coping resources", it is possible to protect themselves against these negative consequences when performing emotional labour (Bechtoldt et al., 2011;

Pugh et al., 2011). Coping resources, according to Mauno et al. (2017), include various contextual (e.g., formal and informal support) and individual (e.g., skills and personality factors) resources. In this study, the focus was specifically on the individual coping strategy of recovery. Recovery from job stress can be regarded as an individual's ability to successfully adapt to and cope with job stressors and is in line with Cohen and Wills' (1985) stress buffer model. They stated that recovery is a "stress-buffering resource" assumed to mitigate negative effects of job stressors, such as emotional labour.

According to Fritz et al. (2010), the recovery process can be seen as a way for individuals to replenish their psychobiological resources, which enhances long-term work performance and employee well-being and subsequently helps the organisation to retain skilled employees. In this study, the definition of recovery by Sonnentag and Fritz (2015) refers to the level of how much individuals feels mentally and physically refreshed during non-working hours, was accepted. A literature review confirmed that limited research had been done regarding the stress-buffering role of recovery experiences, but those done found a negative relationship between recovery experiences and job stressors (e.g., time demands, work-family conflict, and job insecurities) (Kinnunen et al., 2010; Mauno et al., 2017; Moreno-Jimenez et al., 2009). Therefore, it is essential to enrich the body of literature by examining the relationship between recovery experiences and emotional labour in a service centre environment of a South African government organisation.

Hypothesis 1: Emotional labour has a negative relationship with recovery experiences amongst service centre employees in a South African government organisation.

Work engagement

There has always been disagreement amongst practitioners and even academics on the definition of work engagement and how to measure this construct (Bakker et al., 2011). Bakker (2011) suggests more than 50 different work engagement definitions. Kahn (1990, p. 715) defined engagement as the "harnessing of organisational members selves to their work role by which they employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performance".

From the literature, it is evident that there are two ways to conceptualise work engagement. The first approach is put forward by Maslach and Leiter (2016), who are adamant that work engagement is characterised by involvement, energy, and efficacy – the direct opposite of the burnout dimensions – which means that when individuals experience feelings of burnout, involvement changes to cynicism, energy to exhaustion, and efficacy changes to ineffectiveness (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). The measurement of work engagement, according to Maslach et al. (2001), is done by the reverse pattern of scores on the Maslach Burnout Inventory-General

Survey (MBI-GS) dimensions, which means that low scores on cynicism and exhaustion and high scores on professional efficacy are indicators of high work engagement (Chughtai & Buckley, 2008). The second approach is suggested by Schaufeli et al. (2002), who point out that Maslach and Leiter's (2016) conceptualisation of engagement restricts the examination of the relationship between engagement and burnout because the same instrument measures both constructs. Schaufeli et al. (2002, p. 85) define work engagement as an energetic link between individuals and their jobs that can be characterised as "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that includes vigour, dedication, and absorption".

In this study, the second approach of Schaufeli et al. (2002) was adopted, mainly because their definition of work engagement includes both cognitive and affective aspects and highlights that work engagement also involves an active utilisation of feelings and emotions (Salanova & Schaufeli, 2008). This study also used the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) to measure the three work engagement dimensions of vigour, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2008). *Vigour* – Bakker et al. (2011) describe vigour as high energy levels and mental resilience at work. Schaufeli et al. (2002, p. 75) argue that "vigour reflects the readiness to devote effort in one's work, an exhibition of high levels of energy while working and the tendency to remain resolute in the face of task difficulty or failure". *Dedication* is defined as involvement and a sense of pride while performing your job (Bakker et al., 2011). *Absorption* is described as being happily engrossed and concentrated in your job and finding it difficult to detach yourself from work (Schaufeli et al., 2006).

Relationship between work engagement and recovery experiences

According to May et al. (2004), engaged employees experience high levels of enthusiasm and energy, which is beneficial to both the organisation and the individual and has been related to various positive work outcomes. Therefore, it can be assumed that the overarching goal of any organisation should be to promote higher work engagement levels amongst their employees. In this study, the focus was therefore on the relationship between work engagement and recovery experiences seeing that the literature presented ample empirical support for the significant positive relationship between employee well-being and relaxation after work (Bakker et al., 2004; Demerouti et al., 2001; Salanova et al., 2005; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007).

Sonnentag et al. (2010b) confirm that several theoretical arguments support the notion that feeling relaxed in the morning fosters engagement at work. The first theory is the conservation of resource (COR) theory by Hobfoll (2002), which confirms that individuals possessing personal resources such as directed attention, resilience and energy seem to be better equipped to avoid problematic situations and handle stressful circumstances. Therefore, employees that feel full of

energy and optimistic in the morning maintain a vigorous work style, are dedicated, and have the resilience to stay absorbed in their work (Hobfoll et al., 2003; Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). The second theory, Fredrickson's (2001) broaden and-build theory, regards vigour as a positive factor that helps employees to be more sensitive to opportunities, which cultivates a more proactive work style. Finally, Rusting and DeHart's (2003) mood-spillover theory suggests that positive emotions persist across various domains in an individual's life.

Based on the above-mentioned theories, it is expected that employees, who took part in some form of recovery activity the night before, will feel more vigorous, dedicated, and engaged the following day and will have enough personal resources to face job demands, such as emotional labour, in their workday.

Hypothesis 2: Recovery experiences positively affect work engagement amongst service centre employees in a South African government organisation.

Hypothesis 3: Recovery experiences mediate the relationship between emotional labour and work engagement amongst service centre employees in a South African government organisation.

Depicted in Figure 4.1 is the series of hypotheses and their interrelationships.

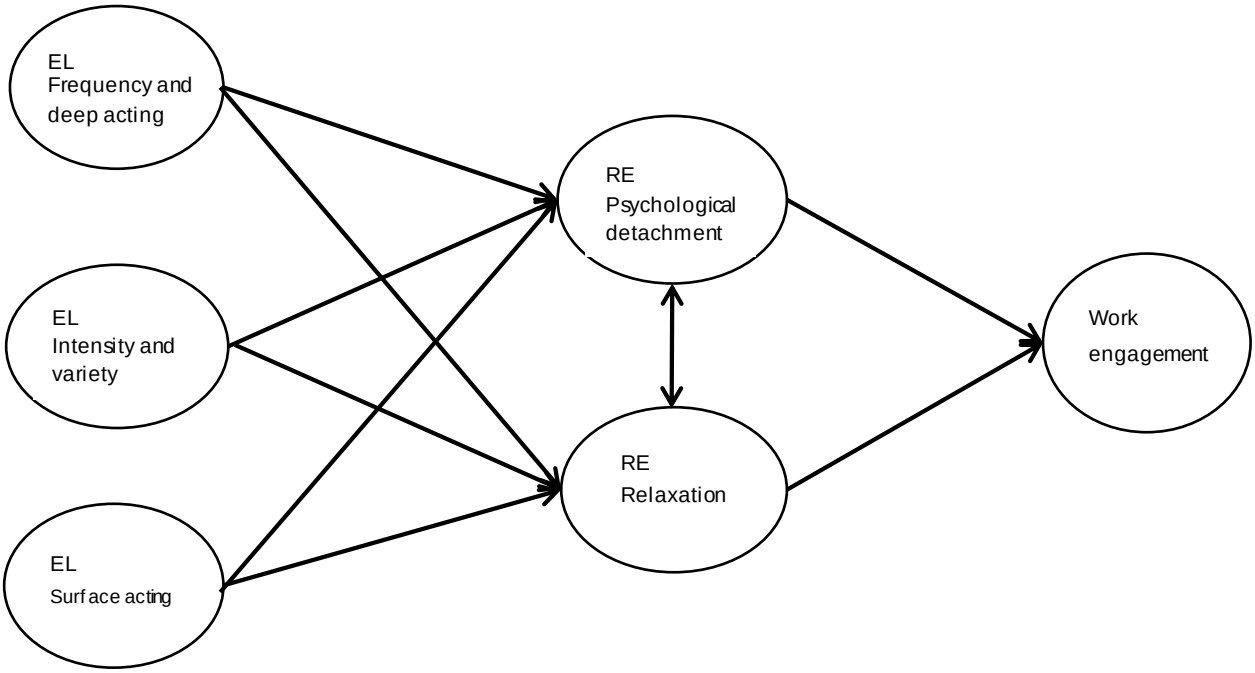

Figure 4.1 *Research model and hypotheses*

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research approach

A quantitative research approach was followed to permit the inclusion of a large representative sample and to follow a relatively structured collection process (Creswell, 2013; Struwig & Stead, 2001). According to Creswell (2013), the purpose of quantitative research is primarily descriptive and explanatory as it describes or explains a specific phenomenon. A cross-sectional, correlational, and nonexperimental design was followed to allow the researcher to examine the potential relationship between two or more variables at a certain point and time (Creswell, 2013). The statistical analysis used in cross-sectional designs allows for a wide range of assessments and maximises objectivity by using numbers, structures, and researcher control, which facilitates validity (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

In the context of this study, the researcher aimed to gather information about a large population to explore the relationship between emotional labour and recovery experiences and to investigate the mediating effect of recovery experiences on the relationship between emotional labour and work engagement levels in a government service centre, by surveying a representative sample of this population.

Research method

Research participants

Participants sampled in this study included 348 employees working in a government service centre of a government organisation in either the Gauteng or Mpumalanga province of South Africa. Creswell and Creswell (2018) refer to a sample of participants as a subset of the population. Information is acquired to enable the researcher to draw conclusions representative of the whole population. The participants were recruited using probability random sampling, which according to Gravetter and Wallnau (2016) gives each person in the chosen population an equal opportunity to be included in the sample. Limiting bias resulting from the selection procedure. The service centre employees hold various positions, such as managers, consultants, and service centre agents. 348 questionnaires were distributed, of which 201 (58%) were returned for analysis. Personal characteristics covered in this research included participants' gender, age, ethnic group, educational level, and occupational status.

The participants' characteristics are presented in Table 12.

Table 12: *Characteristics of the participants (n=201)*

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	37	18.4
	Female	164	81.6
Age	< 30 years	4	2.0
	31-40 years	30	14.9
	41-50 years	108	53.7
	> 50 years	59	29.4
Ethnic group	African	97	48.2
	Indian	4	2.0
	Coloured	18	9.0
	White	82	40.8
Educational level	Higher certificate (Grade 12)	107	53.2
	Diploma	58	28.8
	Degree	18	9.0
	Postgraduate degree	8	4.0
	Technical qualification	10	5.0
Occupational status	Manager	34	16.9
	Agent	121	60.2
	Consultant	36	17.9
	Other	10	5.0

The sample consisted of sixteen Region 1 branch offices in a government organisation, with only 18.4% males and 81.6% females. The majority of the sample (53.7%) was aged between 41 and 50 years. The most significant part of the sample consisted of African participants. 48.2% of the participants were African, with 9.0% Coloured, 2.0% Indian, and 40.8% White.

More than half of the participants (53.2%) had an educational level of Grade 12, with 28.8% having diplomas, 9.0% degrees, 5.0% technical qualifications, and 4.0% postgraduate degrees making up the other 46.8%. The sample consisted primarily (60.2%) of service agents, with 16.9% managers, 17.9% consultants, and 5.0% other.

Measuring instruments

Constructs and measuring instruments used to achieve the research objections of this study are explained below:

Biographical questionnaire. The biographical characteristics of participants, used to provide a detailed description of the sample, were determined by using a quantitative questionnaire that

included the gender, age, ethnic group, educational level, and occupational status of the research participants.

Emotional Labour Scale (ELS) *(*Lee & Brotheridge, 2011; Lee et al., 2010). The researcher opted to use the ELS because it is the most recent and updated emotional labour scale. The ELS consists of a 17-item self-reported questionnaire. The ELS measured five facets of workplace emotional display; which included the frequency (three items; e.g., "Express particular emotions needed to be able to perform your service agent duties."), intensity (two items; e.g., "Express intense emotions when dealing with a client"), and variety (three items; e.g., "Display many different emotions when interacting with others") of emotional display. The ELS also measured the emotional labour facets of deep acting (three items; e.g., "Really try to feel the emotions you have to show as part of your service agent job") and surface acting (six items; e.g., "Resist expressing your true feelings"). A 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*) was used to measure the five facets mentioned above. The duration of a typical interaction was measured in minutes. Acceptable reliability of .90 for deep acting and .76 for surface acting was reported during previous studies using the ELS (Lee & Brotheridge, 2011; Lee et al., 2010).

Recovery Experience Questionnaire (REQ) (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). The REQ was used to measure recovery experiences and includes four subscales: psychological detachment from work, relaxation, mastery, and control. In this study, only the psychological detachment and relaxation strategies were measured. Psychological detachment from work included four items (e.g., "I did not think about work at all") and relaxation four items (e.g., "I used the time to relax"). Response options ranged from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 5 (*totally agree*). According to Sonnentag and Fritz (2007), the internal consistency (Cronbach alpha coefficient) for psychological detachment from work varies from .88 to .95, and relaxation varies from .90 to .95, depending on the measurement day.

The *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES)* (Schaufeli et al., 2002) was used to measure the work engagement levels of the government service agents. It is a self-reported questionnaire with 17 items scored on a seven-point frequency scale ranging from 0 *(never)* to 6 *(always)*. The UWES is divided into three subscales, namely vigour (six items), dedication (five items), and absorption (six items). The scale includes statements such as *"At work I always persevere, even when things do not go well"* (vigour), *"I am proud of the work that I do"* (dedication), and *"It is difficult to detach myself from my job"* (absorption). The scale has acceptable reliability coefficients reported internationally and in South Africa (Simons & Buitendach, 2013). Storm and Rothmann (2003) obtained alpha coefficients reliability and internal consistency for the three subscales of between 0.78 and 0.89 in a South African context.

Research procedure

Before the study commenced, permission was obtained from the government organisation's group executive, branch managers, and research committee to conduct the research amongst the service centre employees. After written permission was obtained, service centre employees (N = 348) in the sixteen Region 1 branch offices of a government organisation in South Africa were approached using a probability random sample. Participation in this study was voluntary, and the service centre employees confirmed their willingness to participate by returning a signed consent form before research commenced.

Participants, who had indicated their willingness to be part of the study, received hard copy questionnaires from the research assistant. The researcher provided a sealed box in each of the sixteen offices and requested the participants to return their completed questionnaires to the box. The sealed boxes were placed in a central area in the office. The researcher collected the sealed boxes from the offices and captured all the data on an Excel spreadsheet. Strict ethical guidelines were followed and all information collected was treated with absolute confidentiality.

Statistical analysis

SPSS 27 (IBM Corporation, 2020) and Mplus 8.6 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2020) software programs were used to perform statistical analysis. According to Maree (2020), descriptive analysis allows the researcher to summarise raw data to describe basic characteristics found in the data, such as distribution and variability. Descriptive analysis is regarded as the most basic statistical analysis, which allows the researcher to organise and summarise data significantly (Maree, 2020). This study used descriptive statistical techniques to report on means, frequencies and standard deviation of the variables. According to the suggestion by Steyn and Ellis (2003), the effect size was used to determine practical significance, and cut-off points of 0.30 for medium effect and 0.50 for a large effect were applied. Scale reliability, according to Foxcroft and Roodt (2013), can be described as an agreement between independent attempts to quantify the same theoretical concept. Sürücü and Maslakqi (2020) define reliability as the stability of measurement. They argue that measurement is reliable if the instrument repeatedly produces the same results. This study's measurement reliability was tested using McDonald's omega reliability coefficients (Ω) because it was found to provide a more accurate degree of confidence than the other regulating scales (Foxcroft &Roodt, 2013). The confidence interval levels were set at a value of 95% ($p < 0.05$) for statistical significance.

The Mplus 8.6 software program was also used to perform structural equation modelling (SEM). As stated by Ullman (2006), SEM can be defined as a collection of statistical techniques that permit an examination of a set of relationships between dependent and independent variables. SEM represents the pictorial modelling of structural processes, which allows a more precise conceptualisation of the theory under research (Gefen et al., 2000). SEM determines the extent to which the sample supports the theoretical model, allowing the more complex models to be hypothesised (Byrne, 2010). SEM's popularity amongst researchers can be attributed to several unique characteristics (Ullman, 2006). Firstly, structural equation modelling takes a confirmatory approach, bearing on some phenomenon, lending itself well to data analysis for inferential purposes. According to Ullman (2006), it also provides explicit estimates of error variances, something that traditional multivariate techniques cannot do. Lastly, the SEM procedures also allow the possibility of incorporating observed and unobserved variables, catering for an alternative and more efficient method for modelling sophisticated theoretical models. In this study, SEM was employed to determine the goodness-of-fit, the chi-square (χ^2) and its associated degrees of freedom (*df)*, the comparative fit index (CFI), the standardised root mean square residual (SRMR), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) were evaluated (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

In addition, a multivariate statistical procedure. called confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), was used in this study to test how well the measured variables represent the number of constructs (Brown, 2015). Ullman (2006) describes CFA as a confirmatory technique used to test a hypothesised structure. It allows the researcher to specify the number of factors required in the data to validate the measurement scales. Brown (2015) holds that CFA is mainly used to reject or confirm the measurement theory identified during exploratory analysis.

Ethical considerations

The research objectives were communicated to all stakeholders to avoid any deception or uncertainty. This was done through an informed consent form handed out to all participants by the research assistant. The consent form clearly explained the purpose, aim, procedure, benefits, anticipated risk, and the expected duration, approximately 60 minutes, of the study. Special care was taken to provide the research participants with enough time to prepare themselves before the data was collected. The research assistant emphasized the fact that participation was voluntary and assured the participants that a decision not to participate would be accepted and respected. Service centre employees who agreed to participate in the research were asked to sign the consent form and to deposit it into the sealed box provided by the researcher. Strict ethical standards were adhered to by focusing on the best interest of the participants. Permission was granted to all participants to withdraw and request the retraction of their questionnaire from

the study should they want to, without any fear of prejudice. The participants' privacy, dignity and well-being were prioritised, and their physical and emotional needs were taken into account during the study. All participants were treated equitably and not discriminated against on any grounds (e.g., gender, race, or disability).

Participants were ensured absolute confidentiality with regard to answering the self-reported questionnaire and the handling of the data by the researcher, promotor, and statistician. Personal identifying information (e.g., phone numbers, email and physical addresses) collected during the different research phases remained confidential. This information was dealt with according to the stipulations of the Protection of Personal Information Act ([POPI] Act 4 of 2013, p. 18): "accountability, processing limitation, purpose specification, further processing limitation, information quality, openness, security safeguards, data subject interpretation").

The focus of ethical consideration in this study was mainly on confidentiality and voluntary participation.

RESULTS

The statistical analysis for this study started with the calculation of the internal consistency reliability coefficients using McDonald's' omega (Ω) reliability coefficients. Next, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to determine the best-fitting measurement model for the available data (Brown, 2015). The first attempt at a CFA model of the emotional labour measuring instrument proved problematic. The factors for this model were either too highly correlated or resulted in a non-positive definite matrix. Subsequently, it was decided to address the problem by conducting exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using the emotional labour items. By conducting EFA, it was possible to investigate any potential challenges in the current data sample. Cohen's (1992) guidelines were followed to interpret the correlation matrix. Cohen (1992) states that any values of 0.50 and above in the correlation matrix are considered a large effect, and any values of 0.30 and above are considered a medium effect.

In conclusion, the statistical analysis was done by specifying a structural model during a follow-up analysis. This was done by adding structural paths according to the hypotheses mentioned in this study. To support or reject the hypotheses, statistical significance ($p < 0.05$), size, and direction of the standardised estimates were considered.

Reliability

McDonald's omega (Ω) internal consistency reliability coefficients were calculated for each of the scales of ELS, REQ and UWES. The results are shown in Table 13.

Table 13: *Internal consistency reliability of the ELS, REQ, and UWES*

	Variable	McDonald's (Ω)
1	EL – Frequency and deep acting (1-5)	0.82
2	EL – Intensity and variety (1-5)	0.85
3	EL – Surface acting (1-5)	0.81
4	Work engagement (0-6)	0.80
5	RE – Psychological detachment (1-5)	0.92
6	RE – Relaxation (1-5)	0.93

Ω ≥ 0.70 – satisfactory

McDonald's omega (Ω) values of ≥ 0.70 are considered satisfactory when individual decision-making is required and values of ≥ 0.60 acceptable for group work (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2013; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Table 13 above confirms that the scale in this study was ≥ 0.70 and can therefore be interpreted.

Correlations

At first, Pearson's correlation coefficients were calculated between each of the measuring instruments used in this study. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) is primarily used when the strength of a linear association between two quantitative variables are measured on a continuous scale (Maree, 2020). Table 14 presents correlations that were done to identify possible links.

Table 14: *Correlation coefficients of measuring instruments*

	Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1	EL – Frequency and deep acting (1-5)	-				
2	EL – Intensity and variety (1-5)	0.63‡**	-			
3	EL – Surface acting (1-5)	0.53‡**	0.56‡**	-		
4	Work engagement (0-6)	0.06	-0.12	-0.28**	-	
5	RE – Psychological detachment	0.04	0.01	-0.06	-0.18*	-
6	RE – Relaxation	0.03	0.04	-0.19*	-0.11	0.76‡**

** p < 0.05 – statistically significant*
*** p < 0.01– statistically significant*
† r > 0.30 – practically significant (medium effect)
‡ r > 0.50 – practically significant (large effect)

Results shown in Table 14 confirm that work engagement is statistically significantly negatively (small effect) related to EL – Surface acting and RW – psychological detachment, while EL – Intensity and variety, EL – Frequency and deep acting, and RE – Relaxation were found to have no significant relationship with work engagement.

EL – Surface acting was found to have a statistically significant negative (small effect) relationship with RE – Relaxation. No other significant relationship was found between any of the other dimensions of EL and RE.

Measurement model

Mplus 8.6 software was used to analyse eight different permutations of possible factor structures. This was done to verify the best fitting measurement model between emotional labour (ELS) with five composites (frequency, intensity, variety, deep acting, and surface acting), recovery experiences (REQ) with two composites (psychological detachment, and relaxation) and work engagement (UWES) with its three composites (absorption, dedication, and vigour) (Lee & Brotheridge, 2011; Lee et al., 2010; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007; Schaufeli et al., 2002).

The R-statistical framework was used to conduct a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for each measurement instrument used in this study (R Development Core Team, 2015). The maximum likelihood (ML) estimator was used to test a series of models to investigate the factor structures of the ELS, REQ, and UWES measures.

Confirmatory factor analysis conducted on the recovery experience (REQ) questionnaire indicated that all items in the questionnaire loaded successfully onto their respective factors and were suitable for use in the statistical analysis. CFA was also run to test the factor structure of the UWES-17 measure, as was initially hypothesised by the scale authors. However, the three-factor model tested raised some concerns, which could be attributed to the high intercorrelations amongst dedication, vigour, and absorption. It was then decided to test work engagement as a one-factor model, which was found to be reliable by Schaufeli et al. (2006) with the inclusion of items 1, 5, and 11. The one-factor solution was a better fit than the three-factor solution. All attempts at various CFA models regarding the ELS measurement were unsuccessful, as the modelling of emotional labour factors resulted in a non-positive definite matrix or correlated too highly. To address this problem, it was decided to conduct exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to investigate the potential challenges with the model in the current sample. This EFA investigation resulted in a three-factor model for emotional labour (frequency and deep acting, intensity and variety, and surface acting) replacing the hypothesised five-factor model. All the ELS items loaded successfully on the three factors, which resulted in no items being excluded.

Subsequently, the various adjusted CFA models were combined into an initial measurement model, where it was found that all factors loaded above 0.35, resulting in no exclusions of items. The assessment of residual variances revealed that Item 5 of the ELS measuring instrument had four problematic values. It was therefore removed, resulting in measurement Model 1. The AIC

and BIC fit models were used to compare the best fitting models. The model fit results are presented in Table 15.

Table 15: *Fit statistics of final and competing measurement models*

Model	χ^2	*df*	AIC	BIC	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Model 1	1272.49	887	24237.51	24260.72	0.91	0.90	0.05	0.06
Model 2	Non-positive definite latent variable covariance matrix – results not trustworthy							
Model 3	1375.63	920	24283.34	24302.58	0.90	0.89	0.05	0.08
Model 4	1343.94	909	24265.77	24286.33	0.90	0.89	0.05	0.08
Model 5	1328.40	903	24265.13	24286.42	0.90	0.90	0.05	0.07
Model 6	Non-positive definite latent variable covariance matrix – results not trustworthy							
Model 7	1331.10	910	24256.19	24276.64	0.91	0.90	0.05	0.07
Model 8	1392.92	895	24239.27	24261.52	0.91	0.90	0.05	0.06

χ^2 = chi-square, *df* = degrees of freedom, AIC = Akaike information criteria, BIC = Bayesian information criteria, TLI = Tucker-Lewis index, CFI = comparative fit index, RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation, SRMR = standardised root mean square residual

Structural model

In order to determine the influences of variables on each other following a particular order, the structural model is done according to certain specifications. In this study, three different models were tested for acceptable fit to interpret the best structural model's output. Model 1 included all the possible pathways between the identified variables. The second model only included the direct pathways, and the third model included only the indirect pathways. The results are reported in 16.

Table 16: *Initial framework, fit indices and standardised path coefficients*

Measures		Direct and indirect pathways	Direct pathways	Indirect pathways
Fit indices	AIC	24232.60	24361.98	24325.72
	ABIC	24254.85	24380.98	24346.88
	χ^2	1282.96	1450.64	1405.01
	df	895	922	904
	MLR – adjusted χ^2	1386.24	1569.59	1497.32
	RMSEA	0.05	0.05	0.05
	CFI	0.91	0.88	0.89
	TLI	0.90	0.87	0.88
	SRMR	0.06	0.11	0.07
Direct pathway to work engagement	EL – Frequency and deep acting	0.11	-	0.63
	EL – Intensity and variety	-0.05	-	-0.26
	EL – Surface acting	-0.06	-	-0.55**

	RE – Psychological detachment	-0.11	-	-
	RE – Relaxation	-0.17	-	-
Direct pathways to recovery experiences – psychological detachment	EL – Frequency and deep acting	0.07	-	0.01
	EL – Intensity and variety	0.04	-	0.05
	EL – Surface acting	-0.12	-	-0.07
Direct pathways to recovery experiences – Relaxation	EL – Frequency and deep acting	0.10	-	0.07
	EL – Intensity and variety	0.17	-	0.16
	EL – Surface acting	-0.34**	-	-0.31**

* $p < 0.05$
** $p < 0.01$

From the structural model results, it is evident that only RE – Relaxation significantly influenced EL – Surface acting (β = -0.34**).

Figure 4.2 contains the standardised path coefficients estimated using Mplus 8.6 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2020).

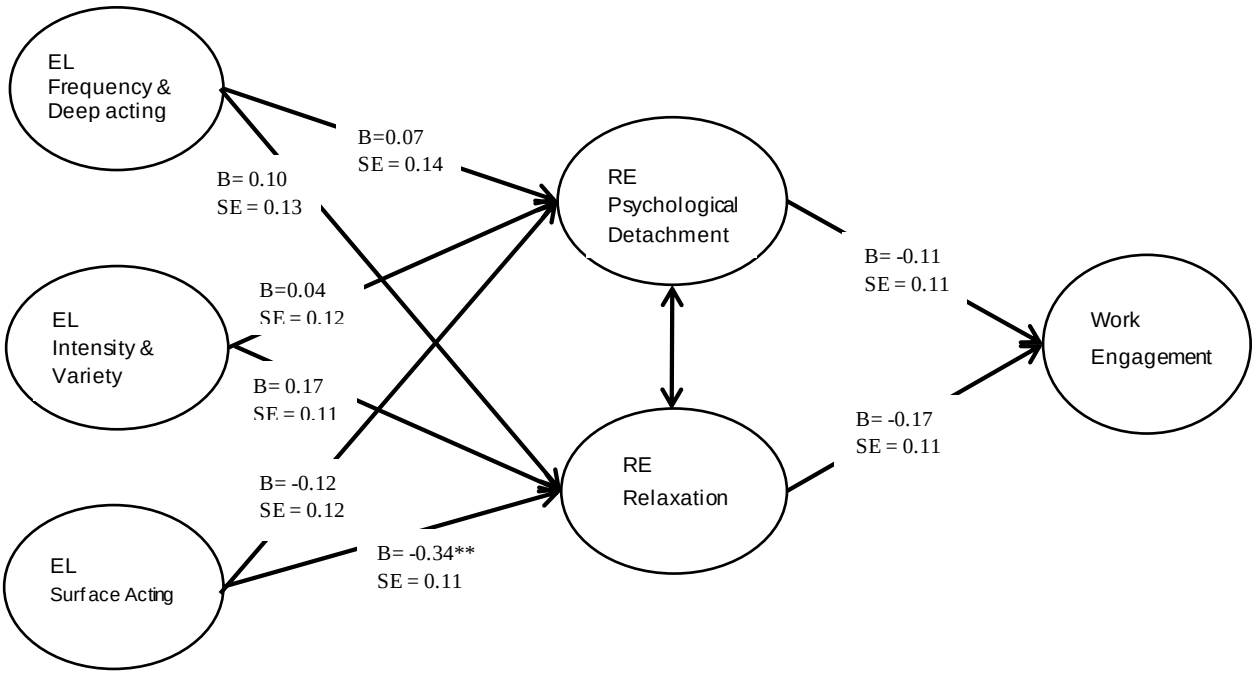

Figure 4.2 *Structural model for EL, RE, and WE*

Indirect effects

Finally, indirect effects were evaluated. The specified model tested whether the influence of the factors of EL on the factors of WE could be affected by adding the factors of RE to the equation. In order to determine the indirect effects of RE, bootstrapping was used. As shown in Table 17, it was found that the indirect relationship between EL – Surface acting and WE is made stronger through RE – Relaxation.

Table 17: *Indirect effects of emotional labour on work engagement*

Variable	Recovery experiences – Psychological detachment		Recovery experiences – Relaxation	
	Est.	95% BCCI	Est.	95% BCCI
Emotional labour – Frequency and deep acting	0.00	[-0.02, 0.01]	0.00	[-0.02, 0.03]
Emotional labour – Intensity and variety	0.00	[-0.01, 0.02]	-0.02	[-0.05, 0.01]
Emotional labour – Surface acting	0.00	[-0.02, 0.01]	0.02*	[-0.00, 0.07]

BCCI = Bootstrap corrected confidence interval

DISCUSSION

Conclusions

Rendering high-quality client service is considered a competitive advantage in the private sector, but excellent client service is regarded as absolutely crucial in the public sector. Government organisations therefore enforce specific display rules to ensure “service with a smile” (Diefendorff & Greguras, 2009). Service employees may react in one of two ways when adhering to display rules: They may either display a genuine smile or feign their smiles. This phenomenon predicts the relationship between emotional labour and customer satisfaction. Emotional labour, regarded as a job demand, increases, amongst other things, fatigue levels during working hours, which decreases individuals’ work engagement levels (Pace & Sciotto, 2021). A possible solution to safeguard service agents against the harmful effects of emotional labour would be to provide them with training regarding recovery techniques, such as psychological detachment and relaxation. This study was therefore motivated by the need to establish the relationship between emotional labour (EL) and work engagement (WE) in a South African government service centre and to study additional variables, such as recovery experiences (RE), that may decrease the

harmful effects of emotional labour and also weaken the relationship between EL and WE in the government organisation under research.

Hypothesis 1 (Emotional labour negatively affects recovery experiences amongst service centre employees in a South African government organisation). Results obtained in this study only partially supported Hypothesis 1 because no significant relationship was found between EL – Frequency and deep acting and RE, EL – Intensity and variety and RE and EL – Surface acting and RE – psychological detachment. However, it was found that a statistically significant negative relationship exists between EL – Surface acting and RE – Relaxation amongst service centre employees in a South African government organisation. One of the possible reasons for this finding could be that RE – Relaxation counteracts and minimises the levels of anxiety experienced due to stressful demands at work, such as surface acting. These findings emphasize the need for employees who had to engage in high surface acting at work to actively seek engagement in recovery activities during their leisure time. This finding is in line with research done by Fritz et al. (2010) who confirmed that recovery activities, such as relaxation, are directly negatively related to the feeling of exhaustion caused by EL – Surface acting. Engaging in recovery activities, such as relaxation, after work may result in better sleep patterns and lead to the employee being more effective and prepared for work the following day (Sonnentag et al., 2010b). Research done by Sonnentag et al. (2010) also suggests that activities to recover from negative experiences can help to erase the psychological link between workplace stressors, such as emotional labour, and strain experienced by employees. Besides the effective recovery activities of relaxation, psychological detachment, personal control, and engagement in mastery mentioned by Sonnentag et al. (2008), Erfurt et al. (1992) also propose daily exercise as a way to recover after a strenuous day at work. Results obtained in this study confirmed a very high level of surface acting amongst the service centre employees, with a mean of 3.33 for surface acting with a standard deviation of 0.85 (5-point scale). This means that it is even more critical for the organisation under research to focus on efforts to mitigate the strain-based outcomes of emotional labour. The government organisation under research should consider offering specific training interventions related to different types of recovery experiences. These interventions should include teaching employees how to positively alter and monitor recovery activities. In addition, the organisation should encourage its employees and managers to limit after hours work to allow individuals time to detach from work psychologically. Employee value proposition programmes should be explored further and a reward system should be incorporated for individuals who engage in recovery activities such as healthy physical exercise.

In addition, this study hypothesised that recovery experiences positively correlate with work engagement amongst service centre employees in a South African government organisation. This

assumption was made because the psychological and physiological efforts that an employee invests in work activities lead to resource depletion, which ideally would be replenished when the employee has the opportunity to recover after work (Van Beek et al., 2011).

Hypothesis 2 corroborated the research done by Crawford et al. (2010) and Siltaloppi et al. (2009), who found that work engagement was associated with fewer psychological and physical ill-health symptoms that are usually associated with job stress, which means that there should be a positive relationship between recovery experiences and work engagement. Thus, although *Hypothesis 2* corroborated the research done by Crawfors et al. (2010) and Siltaloppi et al. (2009), results obtained in this study only partially supported Hypothesis 2 because no significant relationship was found between RE – relaxation and WE, and a statistically significant negative relationship (small effect) between RE – psychological detachment and WE. A possible explanation for the negative relationship is found in research done by Poulsen et al. (2014), who found that high work engagement levels were associated with low levels of psychological detachment. Literature regarding RE – Psychological detachment show that it has constantly been linked to highly engaged workers, who can "switch off" after work and replenish their vigour, dedication, and energy (Schaufeli et al., 2008; Sonnentag et al., 2008). However, in research done by Bakker et al. (2011) and Halbesleben (2011), it was suggested that "over engaged" employees find it extremely difficult to detach. Although research in this respect is limited, it can be assumed that highly engaged employees work long hours because of their investment in their jobs, which results in the limited time available for psysical and mental recovery activities. Sonnentag et al. (2008) in fact found that highly engaged employees continue to think about work, even outside working hours, which potentially contributes to work-family conflict and a lack of detachment. According to Halbesleben (2011), engaged workers display greater organisational citizenship and they do not hesitate to go the extra mile by taking work home, thereby limiting the recovery period. It is therefore recommended that the government organisation under research should improve psychological detachment from work by teaching employees time management skills in order for individuals to finish work tasks timeously, which will give them more time to participate in recovery activities. The government organisation should include well-being interventions to provide employees guidance on how to maintain a healthy work-life balance that enables adequate recovery. Lastly, managers should advocate, create, and support a work climate that limits working overtime to the bare minimum.

In terms of *Hypothesis 3* (Recovery experiences mediates the relationship between emotional labour and work engagement amongst service centre employees in a South African government organisation), it was found that the results obtained only partially supported the hypothesis, as only RE – Relaxation mediated the relationship between EL – Surface acting and WE. Theoretical

and empirical studies suggested that surface acting leads to a significant need for recovery because it depletes valuable emotional resources and requires a more significant degree of relaxation for recovery (Xanthopoulou et al., 2018).

Limitations and recommendations for future studies

The significance of the research findings in this study should be interpreted within the context of several limitations.

First, the measuring instruments used in this research study were self-reported survey questionnaires, which limited the participants' perception about how they viewed each construct. This may have resulted in failure to measure the actual construct content, which raises concerns regarding "common method variance" (Podsakoff, 2003). Future researchers should consider using multiple data collection methods, for example, longitudinal research to allow for a more in-depth examination of casual inferences.

Secondly, the national Covid-19 pandemic lockdown limited access to employees and had a negative effect due to unplanned absences, which limited the investigation period to pre-lockdown.

Thirdly, data was gathered in only one region of a South African government service centre and did not involve all the services centres in the organisation. This could have a significant influence on the demographics of the sample. Future research could be extended to other regions to gain a better, more detailed understanding of how emotional labour influences work engagement in the organisation.

Lastly, this research focused on only two of the four dimensions of recovery experiences, namely psychological detachment and relaxation. Future studies may consider including all the dimensions of recovery experiences to understand the possible mediating effect they may have on the relationship between emotional labour and work engagement better.

References

Allen, J. A., Pugh, S. D., Grandey, A. A., & Groth, M. (2010). Following display rules in good or bad faith?: Customer orientation as a moderator of the display rule-emotional labour relationship. *Human Performance*, *23*, 101-115. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/08959281003621695

Allen, D. G., Weeks, K. P., & Moffitt, K. R. (2005). Turnover intentions and voluntary turnover: the moderating roles of self-monitoring, locus of control, proactive personality, and risk aversion. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *90*(5), 980-990.

Ashforth, B. E., & Humphrey, R. H. (1993). Emotional labor in service roles: The influence of identity. *Academy of management review*, *18*(1), 88-115.

Austin, E. J., Dore, T. C., & O'Donovan, K. M. (2008). Associations of personality and emotional intelligence with display rule perceptions and emotional labour. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *44*(3), 679-688. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0191886907003492

Bakker, A. B. (2011). An evidence-based model of work engagement. *Current directions in psychological science*, *20*(4), 265-269.

Bakker, A. B., Albrecht, S. L., & Leiter, M. P. (2011). Key questions regarding work engagement. *European journal of work and organizational psychology*, *20*(1), 4-28.

Bakker, A. B., Demerouti, E., & Verbeke, W. (2004). Using the job demands-resources model to predict burnout and performance. *Human Resource Management, 43*(1), 83-104. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/hrm.20004

Bakker, A. B., & Geurts, S. A. (2004). Toward a dual-process model of work-home interference. *Work and occupations*, *31*(3), 345-366.

Barger, P. B., & Grandey, A. A. (2006). Service with a smile and encounter satisfaction: Emotional contagion and appraisal mechanisms. *Academy of Management Journal, 49*, 1229-1238. https://journals.aom.org/doi/abs/10.5465/amj.2006.23478695

Bechtoldt, M. N., Rohrmann, S., De Pater, I. E., & Beersma, B. (2011). The primacy of perceiving: emotion recognition buffers negative effects of emotional labor. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *96*(5), 1087-1094.

Binnewies, C., Sonnentag, S., & Mojza, E. J. (2009). Feeling recovered and thinking about the good sides of one's work. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, *14*(3), 243-256. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2009-09794-003

Brotheridge, C. M., & Grandey, A. A. (2002). Emotional labour and burnout: Comparing two perspectives of "people work". *Journal of vocational behaviour, 60*(1), 17-39.

Brosschot, J. F., Gerin, W., & Thayer, J. F. (2006). The perseverative cognition hypothesis: A review of worry, prolonged stress-related physiological activation, and health. *Journal of psychosomatic research*, *60*(2), 113-124. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0022399905002151

Brown, T. A. (2015). *Confirmatory factor analysis for applied research* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Guilford publications.

Byrne, B. M. (2010). *Structural equation modelling with AMOS: Basic concepts, applications and programming* (2nd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Calvo, M. G., & Lundqvist, D. (2008). Facial expressions of emotion (KDEF): Identification under different display-duration conditions. *Behavior research methods*, *40*(1), 109-115. https://link.springer.com/article/10.3758/BRM.40.1.109

Carlson, C. R., & Hoyle, R. H. (1993). Efficacy of abbreviated progressive muscle relaxation training: a quantitative review of behavioral medicine research. *Journal of consulting and clinical psychology*, *61*(6), 1059-1067.

Chawla, N., MacGowan, R. L., Gabriel A. S., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2020). Unplugging or staying connected? Examining the nature, antecedents, and consequences of profiles of daily recovery experiences. *Journal of applied psychology*, *105*(1), 19-39. https://psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037/apl0000423

Chughtai, A. A., & Buckley, F. (2008). Work engagement and its relationship with state and trait trust: A conceptual analysis. *Journal of Behavioral and Applied Management*, *10*(1), 47-71.

Cohen, J. (1992). A power primer. *Psychological bulletin*, *112*(1), 155-159.

Cohen, S., & Wills, T. A. (1985). Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. *Psychological bulletin*, *98*(2), 310-357. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1986-01119-001

Crawford, E. R., Le Pine, J. A., & Rich, B. L. (2010). Linking job demands and resources to employee engagement and burnout: a theoretical extension and meta-analytic test. *Journal of applied psychology*, *95*(5), 834-848.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE.

De Bloom, J., Geurts, S., & Kompier, M. (2010). Vacation from work as prototypical recovery opportunity. *Gedrag & Organisatie*, *23*(4), 333-349. https://www.aup-online.com/content/journals/10.5117/2010.023.004.005

Demerouti, E., Bakker, A. B., Nachreiner, F., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2001). The job demands-resources model of burnout. *Journal of Applied psychology*, *86*(3), 499-512.

DeNisi, A., & Griffin, R. (2015). *HR3.* Cengage Learning.

Development Core Team. (2015). *R: A language environment for statistical computing.* Vienna, Austria: R Foundation for Statistical Computing.

Diefendorff, J. M., & Greduras, G. J. (2009). Contextualizing emotional display rules: Examining the roles of targets and discrete emotions in shaping display rule perceptions. *Journal of Management,* 35, 880-898. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0149206308321548

Erfurt, J. C., Foote, A., & Heirich, M. (1992). The cost-effectiveness of worksite wellness programs for hypertension control, weight loss, smoking cessation, and exercise. *Personnel Psychology*, *45*(1), 5-27.

Etzion, D., Eden, D., & Lapidot, Y. (1998). Relief from job stressors and burnout: reserve service as a respite. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *83*(4), 577-585. https://psycnet.apa.org/journals/apl/83/4/577.html?uid=1998-10357-006

Foxcroft, C., & Roodt, G. (2013). *Introduction to psychological assessment in the South African context.* Cape Town, South Africa: Oxford University Press.

Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American psychologist*, *56*(3), 218-226.

Fritz, C., Sonnentag, S., Spector, P. E., & McInroe, J. A. (2010). The weekend matters: Relationships between stress recovery and affective experiences. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *31*(8), 1137-1162. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/job.672

Fritz, C., Yankelevich, M., Zarubin, A., & Barger, P. (2010). Happy, healthy, and productive: the role of detachment from work during nonwork time. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *95*(5), 977-983.

Gefen, D., Straub, D., & Boudreau, M. C. (2000). Structural equation modeling and regression: Guidelines for research practice. *Communications of the association for information systems, 4(1)*, 2-79. https://aisel.aisnet.org/cais/vol4/iss1/7/

Gordhan, P. (2010). Budget speech. *Pretoria, South Africa*.

Grandey, A. A., & Gabriel, A. (2015). Emotional labor at a crossroad: Where do we go from here? *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behaviour, 2*, 323-249.

Grossman, P., Niemann, L., Schmidt, S., & Walach, H. (2004). Mindfulness-based stress reduction and health benefits: A meta-analysis. *Journal of psychosomatic research*, *57*(1), 35-43. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0022399903005737

Guy, M. E., Newman, M. A., & Mastracci, S. H. (2014). *Emotional Labour: Putting the Service in Public Service*. Routledge.

Hackman, J. R., & Oldham, G. R. (1976). Motivation through the design of work: Test of a theory. *Organizational behavior and human performance*, *16*(2), 250-279.

Halbesleben, J. R. (2011). The consequences of engagement: The good, the bad, and the ugly. *European journal of work and organizational psychology*, *20*(1), 68-73. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1359432X.2010.514327

Halbesleben, J. R., & Buckley, M. R. (2004). Burnout in organizational life. *Journal of management*, *30*(6), 859-879.

Hobfoll, S. E. (1989). Conservation of resources: a new attempt at conceptualizing stress. *American psychologist*, *44*(3), 513-524. https://psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037/0003-066X.44.3.513

Hobfoll, S. E. (2002). Social and psychological resources and adaptation. *Review of general psychology*, *6*(4), 307-324.

Hobfoll, S. E., Johnson, R. J., Ennis, N., & Jackson, A. P. (2003). Resource loss, resource gain, and emotional outcomes among inner city women. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *84*(3), 632-643.

Hochschild, A. R. (1979). Emotion work, feeling rules, and social structure. *American journal of sociology, 85*(3), 551-575. https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/227049

Hochschild, A. R. (1983). *The managed heart: A commercialization of human feelings.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Hochschild, A. R. (2012). *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Hu, L. T., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural equation modeling: a multidisciplinary journal*, *6*(1), 1-55.

Hülsheger, U. R., & Schewe, A. F. (2011). On the costs and benefits of emotional labor: A meta-analysis of three decades of research. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 16*, 361-389.

Hulshof, I. L., Demerouti, E., & Le Blanc, P. M. (2020). Providing services during times of change: Can employees maintain their levels of empowerment, work engagement and service quality through a job crafting intervention?. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *11*(87), 1-15.

IBM Corporation. (Released 2020). *IBM SPSS statistics for Windows, version 27.0*. Armonk, NY: IBM Corporation.

Ilies, R., Schwind, K. M., & Heller, D. (2007). Employee well-being: A multilevel model linking work and nonwork domains. *European journal of work and organizational psychology*, *16*(3), 326-341. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13594320701363712

Kahn, W. A. (1990). Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. *Academy of management journal*, *33*(4), 692-724.

Kanyemba, D. (2017). *E-government innovation for effective service delivery: a case of the Gauteng Department of Education online applications.* (Doctoral dissertation, North-West University, South Africa.

Kerlinger, F. N., & Lee, H. B. (2000). Survey research. *Foundations of behavioral research,* (pp. 599-619).

Kinnunen, U., Mauno, S., & Siltaloppi, M. (2010). Job insecurity, recovery and well-being at work: Recovery experiences as moderators. *Economic and industrial democracy*, *31*(2), 179-194. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0143831X09358366

Lavigna, B. (2015). Commentary: Public service motivation and employee engagement. *Public Administration Review*, *75*(5), 732-733.

Lee, H. J. (2016). Effects of public-service employee age and performance of emotional labour on job pride. *Social Behaviour and Personality: An International Journal*, *44*, 1339-1348. https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/sbp/sbp/2016/00000044/00000008/art00010

Lee, R. T., & Brotheridge, C. M. (2011). Words from the heart speak to the heart: A study of deep acting, faking, and hiding among child care workers. *Career Development International*, *16*, 401-420.

Lee, R. T., Lovell, B. L., & Brotheridge, C. M. (2010). Tenderness and steadiness: Relating job and interpersonal demands and resources with burnout and physical symptoms of stress in Canadian physicians. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *40*, 2319-2342.

Maree, K. (2020). *First steps in research*. Van Schaik Publishers.

Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2016). Understanding the burnout experience: recent research and its implications for psychiatry. *World psychiatry*, *15*(2), 103-111. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/wps.20311

Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W. B., & Leiter, M. P. (2001). Job burnout. *Annual review of psychology*, *52*(1), 397-422.

Mauno, S., Ruokolainen, M., De Bloom, J., & Kinnunen, U. (2017). Does recovery buffer against emotional labor outcomes at work? Analyzing age differences amongst care professionals. *Applied Nursing Research, 36,* 88-94.

May, D. R., Gilson, R. L., & Harter, L. M. (2004). The psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety and availability and the engagement of the human spirit at work. *Journal of occupational and organizational psychology*, *77*(1), 11-37. https://bpspsychub.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1348/096317904322915892

McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2010). Research in Education: Evidence-Based Inquiry, My Education Lab Series. *Pearson*.

Meijman, T. F., & Mulder, G. (1998). Psychological Aspects of Workload. In P. J. D. Drenth (Ed.), *Handbook of Work and Organizational Psychology* (pp. 5–33). Hove, UK: Psychology Press.

Moreno-Jiménez, B., Mayo, M., Sanz-Vergel, A. I., Geurts, S., Rodríguez-Muñoz, A., & Garrosa, E. (2009). Effects of work–family conflict on employees' well-being: The moderating role of recovery strategies. *Journal of occupational health psychology*, *14*(4), 427-440. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2009-18896-007

Morgan, D. L. (2007). Paradigms lost and pragmatism regained: Methodological implications of combining qualitative and quantitative methods. Journal of mixed methods research, 1(1), 48-76.

Morris, J. A., & Feldman, D. C. (1996). The dimensions, antecedents, and consequences of emotional labor. *Academy of management review*, *21*(4), 986-1010.

Muthén, L. K., & Muthén, B. O. (1998 - 2020). *Mplus users 'guide* (8th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Muthén & Muthén.

Nleya, N. (2011). Linking service delivery and protest in South Africa: an exploration of evidence from Khayelitsha. *Africanus*, *41*(1), 3-13.

Nunnally, J. C., & Bernstein, I. H. (1994). *Psychometric theory* (3rd ed.) New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Pace, F., & Sciotto, G. (2021). The effect of emotional dissonance and mental load on need for recovery and work engagement among Italian fixed-term researchers. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *18*(1), 99-116.

Pelletier, C. L. (2004). The effect of music on decreasing arousal due to stress: A meta-analysis. *Journal of music therapy*, *41*(3), 192-214. https://academic.oup.com/jmt/article-abstract/41/3/192/998398

Peng, K. Z., Wong, C. S., & Che, H. S. (2010). The missing link between emotional demands and exhaustion. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 25*, 777-798.

Pieterse, D., Gavin, E., & Kreuser, C. F. (2018). Introduction to the South African Revenue Service and National Treasury Firm-Level Panel. *South African Journal of Economics*, *86*, 6-39. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/saje.12156

Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *885*(879), 897-903.

Poulsen, A. A., Meredith, P., Khan, A., Henderson, J., Castrisos, V., & Khan, S. R. (2014). Burnout and work engagement in occupational therapists. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, *77*(3), 156-164. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.4276/030802214x13941036266621

Protection of Personal Information Act (2013). *Protection of Personal Information Act No. 4 of 2013*. Republic of South Africa. https://www.gov.za/documents/protection-personal-information-act.

Pugh, S. D. (2001). Service with a smile: Emotional contagion in the service encounter. *Academy of Management Journal, 44*, 1018-1027.

Pugh, S. D., Groth, M., & Hennig-Thurau, T. (2011). Willing and able to fake emotions: A closer examination of the link between emotional dissonance and employee well-being. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *96*(2), 377-390. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2010-23149-001

Ramachandran, Y., Jordan, P. J., Troth, A. C., & Lawrence, S. A. (2011). Emotional intelligence, emotional labour and organisational citizenship behaviour in service environments. *International Journal of Work Organisation and Emotion*, *4*(2), 136-157.

Reddy, P. S. (2016). The politics of service delivery in South Africa: The local government sphere in context. *TD: The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa*, *12*(1), 1-8.

Rusting, C. L., & DeHart, T. (2000). Retrieving positive memories to regulate negative mood: consequences for mood-congruent memory. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *78*(4), 737-752. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2000-08135-009

Sabino, W. T. R., & Bianchi, L. C. D. (2019). How quality of service can affect an organisation: A study on the importance of good customer service. *Research, Society and Development*, *8*(1), 1-10.

Salanova, M., Agut, S., & Peiró, J. M. (2005). Linking organizational resources and work engagement to employee performance and customer loyalty: the mediation of service climate. *Journal of applied Psychology*, *90*(6), 1217-1227.

Salanova, M., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2008). A cross-national study of work engagement as a mediator between job resources and proactive behaviour. *The international journal of human resource management*, *19*(1), 116-131. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09585190701763982

Sanz-Vergel, A. I., Rodriguez-Muñoz, A., Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2012). The daily spillover and crossover of emotional labour: Faking emotions at work and at home. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *81*(2), 209-217.

Schaufeli, W. B., & Bakker, A. B. (2004). Job demands, job resources, and their relationship with burnout and engagement: A multi-sample study. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *25*(3), 293-315. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/job.248

Schaufeli, W. B., Bakker, A. B., & Salanova, M. (2006). The measurement of work engagement with a short questionnaire: A cross-national study. *Educational and psychological measurement*, *66*(4), 701-716.

Schaufeli, W. B., Salanova, M., Gonzalez-Roma, V., & Bakker, A. (2002). The measurement of engagement and burnout: A confirmative analytic approach. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 3,* 71-92. https://cir.nii.ac.jp/crid/1363951794963363584

Schaufeli, W. B., Taris, T. W., & Van Rhenen, W. (2008). Workaholism, burnout, and work engagement: three of a kind or three different kinds of employee well-being?. *Applied psychology*, *57*(2), 173-203.

Scott, B. A., & Barnes, C. M. (2011). A multilevel field investigation of emotional labour, affect work withdrawal, and gender. *Academy of Management Journal*, *54*, 116-136.

Siltaloppi, M., Kinnunen, U., & Feldt, T. (2009). Recovery experiences as moderators between psychosocial work characteristics and occupational well-being. *Work & Stress*, *23*(4), 330-348. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02678370903415572

Siltaloppi, M., Kinnunen, U., Feldt, T., & Tolvanen, A. (2011). Identifying patterns of recovery experiences and their links to psychological outcomes across one year. *International Archives of Occupational and Environmental Health*, *84*(8), 877-888.

Simons, J. C., & Buitendach, J. H. (2013). Psychological capital, work engagement, and organisational commitment amongst call centre employees in South Africa. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology, 39*(2), 1-12. https://journals.co.za/doi/abs/10.10520/EJC146980

Smulders, S., & Stiglingh, M. (2008). Research findings: the progress of South African Revenue Service on its service quality journey. *Journal of Public Administration*, *43*(4), 607-628.

Sonnentag, S., & Bayer, U. V. (2005). Switching off mentally: predictors and consequences of psychological detachment from work during off-job time. *Journal of occupational health psychology*, *10*(4), 393-414. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2005-13344-008

Sonnentag, S., Binnewies, C., & Mojza, E. J. (2008). "Did you have a nice evening?" A day-level study on recovery experiences, sleep, and affect. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *93*(3), 674-684.

Sonnentag, S., Binnewies, C., & Mojza, E. J. (2010). Staying well and engaged when demands are high: the role of psychological detachment. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *95*(5), 965-976. https://psycnet.apa.org/journals/apl/95/5/965/

Sonnentag, S., & Fritz, C. (2007). The Recovery Experience Questionnaire: development and validation of a measure for assessing recuperation and unwinding from work. *Journal of occupational health psychology, 12*(3), 204-221.

Sonnentag, S., & Fritz, C. (2015). Recovery from job stress: The stressor-detachment model as an integrative framework. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *36*, 72-103.

Sonnentag, S., Kuttler, I., & Fritz, C. (2010). Job stressors, emotional exhaustion, and need for recovery: A multi-source study on the benefits of psychological detachment. *Journal of vocational Behavior*, *76*(3), 355-365. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0001879109000803

Steyn, H. S., & Ellis, S. M. (2003). Practical significance (effect sizes) versus or in combination with statistical significance (p-values): research note. *Management Dynamics: Journal of the Southern African Institute for Management Scientists*, *12*(4), 51-53.

Stone, A. A., Kennedy-Moore, E., & Neale, J. M. (1995). Association between daily coping and end-of-day mood. *Health Psychology*, *14*(4), 341-349.

Storm, K., & Rothmann, S. (2003). A psychometric analysis of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale in the South African police service. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, *29*(4), 62-70. https://journals.co.za/doi/abs/10.10520/EJC88976

Struwig, F. W., & Stead, G. B. (2001). *Research: Planning, designing and reporting research*. Pearson Education.

Sürücü, L., & Maslakqi, A. (2020). Validity and reliability in quantitative research. *Business & Management Studies: An International Journal*, *8*(3), 2694-2726.

Tamer, I. (2015). The effect of positive psychological capital on emotional labour. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science (2147-4478), 4*(2), 20-34. http://ssbfnet.com/ojs/index.php/ijrbs/article/view/138

Taxer, J. L., & Frenzel, A. C. (2018). Inauthentic expressions of enthusiasm: Exploring the cost of emotional dissonance in teachers. *Learning and Instruction*, *53*, 74-88.

Ullman, J. B. (2006). Structural equation modeling: Reviewing the basics and moving forward. *Journal of personality assessment*, *87*(1), 35-50.

Van Beek, I., Taris, T. W., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2011). Workaholic and work engaged employees: Dead ringers or worlds apart?. *Journal of occupational health psychology*, *16*(4), 468-482.

Van der Klink, J. J., Blonk, R. W., Schene, A. H., & Van Dijk, F. J. (2001). The benefits of interventions for work-related stress. *American journal of public health*, *91*(2), 270-276. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1446543/

Verduyn, P., Van Mechelen, I., Tuerlinckx, F., Meers, K., & Van Coillie, H. (2009). Intensity profiles of emotional experience over time. *Cognition and Emotion*, *23*(7), 1427-1443.

Xanthopoulou, D., Bakker, A. B., Demerouti, E., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2009). Work engagement and financial returns: A diary study on the role of job and personal resources. *Journal of occupational and organizational psychology*, *82*(1), 183-200.

Xanthopoulou, D., Bakker, A. B., Oerlemans, W. G., & Koszucka, M. (2018). Need for recovery after emotional labor: Differential effects of daily deep and surface acting. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *39*(4), 481-494. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/job.2245

Yoo, J. (2016). Perceived customer participation and work engagement: the path through emotional labor. *International Journal of Bank Marketing, 34*(7), 1009-1024.

Zapf, D. (2002). Emotion work and psychological well-being: A review of the literature and some conceptual considerations. *Human resource management review*, *12*(2), 237-268. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1053482202000487

RESEARCH ARTICLE 4

The dimensions, consequences, and antecedents of emotional labour in a South African government organisation

ABSTRACT

Orientation: The experiences of service centre employees relating to the dimensions, consequences, and antecedents of emotional labour were explored to get a better understanding of and to explain differences in emotional labour levels within a South African government organisation.

Research purpose: The study aimed to understand possible reasons and factors that influence emotional labour levels and to explore possible consequences of high emotional labour levels for service employees in a South African government service centre.

Motivation for the study: Current literature focuses mainly on antecedents and consequences of emotional labour in private organisations, reporting various adverse outcomes on an individual and organisational level. In contrast, the public or government service domain is regulatory, which results in fewer pecuniary benefits linked to customer satisfaction for both the individual and the organisation. By exploring individual experiences in a South African government organisation, this study sought to identify the unique influences or antecedents that can lead to emotional labour, ranging from strict display rules to controlled personal behaviour by service centre employees. Additionally, by integrating previous research, this study aimed to broaden the understanding of the consequences of performing emotional labour within this unique work environment.

Research design, approach, and method: The research design consisted of a sequential mixed method approach to recognise particular quantitative findings that needed further explanation (Creswell & Clark, 2011). This article will focus on the qualitative phase of the study. Survey data collected during the quantitative research phase was analysed and followed up by qualitative semi-structured interviews to get a better understanding of and to explain the antecedents and consequences of emotional labour in a South African government organisation. The qualitative sample consisted of 32 service centre employees in a South African government service centre.

Main findings: Five themes emerged. These included (1) The importance of first impressions/greetings; (2) Reciprocal relationships: Being friendly or approachable is beneficial to the client; (3) The importance of a support network to alleviate or diffuse the situation, (4)

Difficult clients and the emotional toll; and (5) Constructive influence of positive client interactions on an individual on a personal level (participant).

Practical implications: The results of this study will provide valuable information to the organisation as it extends knowledge on the emotional demands experienced by government service employees. It provides knowledge that is imperative when designing interventions aimed at preparing service employees for the emotional requirements involved in their work, proper development of support models, and the development of attainable display rules within the unique government service centre environment.

Contribution/value-add: The study aimed to fill the identified gap in the literature on the antecedents and consequences of emotional labour in the public domain. The study further enhances human resource practitioners understanding of emotional labour, in general and how it influences work experiences of government service centre agents, in particular.

Keywords: Emotional labour, surface acting, deep acting, antecedents, consequences.

INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, digitisation globally and in South Africa provided multiple opportunities for citizens to use online and automated services when attempting to communicate with government organisations. In spite of these new communication avenues, Masiya et al. (2019) are of the opinion that South African citizens still prefer the human-to-human exchange or voice-to-voice communication due to the complex nature of queries; therefore, they prefer to use the walk-in service centres available in the government organisation under research. According to the South African democracy, political formations are voted into power, and once elected, the government has to deliver on the expectations regarding the provision of excellent public service. This place the service centre employees in the government organisation under research at the centre of importance. Guy and Azhar (2018) argue that these frontline government employees are doing double duty, applying their cognitive skills, which they ostensibly are paid for, and employing their emotional skills when appeasing highly distressed citizens. Although the democracy is designed to be process-orientated, the reality in the public domain is that when customer service in government organisations is performed well, it restores the faith in government's ability to produce results and is personally meaningful to the taxpaying citizen (Yang & Lau, 2019).

The customer-orientated approach requires service employees to be good listeners, to make the government's clients feel important and appreciated, to be sympathetic and apologetic, and to always put the clients' needs first (Lavee & Strier, 2019). Thus, the service employees earn their

living not by manual labour but by emotional labour. Various policy manuals direct these employees on how to perform their jobs. However, more importantly, the unwritten rules specify how they have to manage their emotional state, the government client's emotional state, and their emotive responses during interactions (Lee, 2016). Although emotional labour is an essential part of the service job, it is in most instances invisible. It is not rewarded by compensation nor specified in job descriptions and, according to Sabino and Bianchi (2019), can produce positive feelings of meaningfulness and pride but can also lead to detrimental exhaustion. As cited by sociologist Arlie Hochschild, emotional labour in the government service environment is not linked to sales commissions but rather to compliance, citizen engagement, and mission fulfilment (Hochschild, 2012). Emotional labour requires service employees to express job-appropriate emotions regardless of their actual feelings. This is done by either pretending or authentically reflecting true feelings to accomplish their job with competence and compassion – something that is referred to as the human touch that cannot be delivered via the electronic platform (Winkler, 2018).

Guy and Lee (2015) argue that, like cognitive labour, emotional labour can either lead to positive or negative outcomes. In some instances, it can contribute to job satisfaction and feelings of achievement and can encourage self-expression (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Cheung et al., 2011). Conversely, the more intense the emotional exchange, the more stressful the encounter. Without formal rewards, training and development, and salary increments linked to emotional competencies, emotional labour can lead to various adverse outcomes such as increased absenteeism, lower levels of work engagement, and unwanted turnover (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011; Mauno et al., 2016).

South African government organisations are faced with immense pressure to adapt to demanding stakeholders, shortage of critical skills, increased workforce diversity, and high levels of employee dissatisfaction (Du Plessis & Barkhuizen, 2011). This places the focus on numerous challenges to deal with the reform of human capital practices in the government organisation, such as work-related well-being (Chou, 2009). According to Wu et al. (2020), work-related wellbeing describes a state of mind in which the social, physical and mental health of an employee is in perfect harmony with each other. DeNisi and Griffin (2015) emphasize that human resource (HR) professionals have to understand and analyse all factors that may influence the organisation's work environment, considering that employees are the most critical resource in any organisation. Research in the service industry confirmed that emotional labour plays a vital role in the work environment. Therefore, when HR professionals in the government service centre under research have to manage job analysis and development, labour relations, compensation, performance management, and training and development, it is essential for them to have updated, relevant information to support the employees. Through exploring the experiences of service employees

when performing emotional labour in a South African government organisation, the role of management and human resources can be understood, thus narrowing the gap in research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional labour

Emotional labour has prompted a longstanding interest in the research arena. Since its initial development by Arlie Hochschild (1983), this social construct has increasingly been explored to get a better understanding of why and how service employees manage and express their emotions during client interactions. Hochschild (1983, p. 7) defined emotional labour as "the management of feelings to publicly create desired facial and bodily displays, which is sold for a wage and has an exchange value". From the literature, it became evident that emotional labour occurs in most jobs that entail face-to-face or voice-to-voice contact with the public, where certain emotions are displayed to elicit an emotional state in others, and where the employer or organisation has control over these emotions by enforcing strict display rules (Grandey et al., 2015). Hur et al. (2015) emphasize the critical importance of emotional labour for the service industry, which includes the government sector, where "service with a smile" is a vital requirement for employees who have to suppress any negative emotions that they may have while performing their duties, in order to ensure excellent client service. However, according to Hochschild (2012), conveying organisational desired emotions is not always easy. Service employees who do so may experience emotional dissonance due to the employees' genuine emotions that are not in line with the organisation's display rules. For example, a government service employee who has to smile, in spite of verbal abuse by a rude client.

According to Chiwawa and Wissink (2021), the emotional climate in a service environment can be described as an endless cycle starting with the client's perception of service quality, dominated by the exhibited emotions of service employees as desired by the organisation, in addition to their job expertise. In most instances, felt emotions during client interaction differ from those intended by the organisation, which results in substantial efforts by service employees to express appropriate emotions in accordance with the organisation's display rules. Ways to react during an interaction while adhering to the organisation's display rules have been the main focus of emotional labour research. The literature continuously identifies two main strategies, namely surface acting and deep acting (Gabriel et al., 2016; Grandey & Gabriel, 2015). Surface acting requires the suppression of genuine feelings and faking of unfelt emotions, which means that facial expressions and gestures are changed while inner feelings are kept authentic (Hochschild, 2012). In contrast, deep acting is a genuine attempt to control or change one's inner feelings to be consistent with the organisation's display rules. Thoughts are invoked to generate the

appropriate emotions displayed through empathy, which leads to increased customer satisfaction, as it is perceived as more genuine (Grandey, 2003; Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011).

It is thus evident that the emotional atmosphere in a service environment is of significant importance to the employee, the organisation, and the client, which underlines the importance of research to determine the antecedents and consequences of emotional labour in the government service centre under research.

Antecedents of emotional labour

A better understanding of the emotional labour concept, as well as why (emotional labour antecedents, e.g., client behaviour) and how (emotional labour strategies, e.g., deep vs surface acting) service employees manage their emotions during client interaction; can be a helpful development tool for both the organisation and the individual.

According to Hochschild (2012), the need for employees to perform emotional labour is influenced by organisational (situational) and individual characteristics. Researchers reported various antecedents that create a need to perform emotional labour. In their study, Morris and Feldman (1996) found closeness of monitoring, task variety, job autonomy, the explicitness of display rules, and affectivity to be some of the antecedents of emotional labour. Kruml and Geddes (2000) found that individual characteristics such as gender, experience, and empathy and organisational characteristics, such as customer affect, training, and display latitude affect emotional labour. First impressions and self-presentation were crucial in shaping future relations and, therefore, important in social interaction (Mroz & Kaleta, 2016). First impressions, defined as how individuals attempt to create generally positive specific impressions, are essential to influence initial judgements during client interaction but require a certain amount of effort from the service employee (Choi & Kim, 2015). Length of service, work experience, and age were also successfully linked to emotional labour levels, suggesting that employees with more extended service or experience performed lower levels of emotional labour (Barry & Cassidy, 2013).

Service industry researchers, Ramachandran et al. (2011) reiterate the importance of managing emotions in the workplace. They found emotional intelligence (EQ) to be one of the key drivers determining emotional labour acting strategies. Their study found that individuals portraying higher levels of EQ can manage emotions better and, in turn, can regulate their behaviour during client interaction. Another critical objective of emotional labour, according to Diefendorff and Gosserand (2003), is to produce adequate emotional displays that enhance the client's experience, something that is highly influenced by the service employee's experience of how the client is behaving. This applies to both pleasant and unpleasant clients, and is consistent with

Cote's (2005) social interaction model of emotion regulation that confirms employees' and clients' mutual influences on one another during an interaction.

Hackman and Oldman (1975) focused more on job characteristics as antecedents of emotional labour. They found that skill variety, friendly work relationships, task identity, and autonomy were closely related to emotional labour. Oldman (1976) agreed with this finding but proposed that task significance should be added to the list. According to the American Psychological Association (2022), task significance refers to jobs that are perceived as having a significant effect on the organisation or have a great influence on the lives of people inside or outside the organisation. Individuals who experience task significance find their jobs meaningful because of the physical and psychological impact on others, which makes it easier to display authentic feelings.

In contrast, Thomas and Ganster (1995) studied organisational characteristics as antecedents of emotional labour. Organisational support systems, performance pressure, social support and job satisfaction were just some of the factors mentioned in this study. Yazdanshenas and Khorsandi (2020) believe that a solid organisational support system can create a more stable and predictable environment, which reduces employee stress during client interaction. Social support in the organisation refers to the support received from managers, co-workers, and family members and includes the positive support received during interpersonal relationships (Wu et al., 2020). Duke et al. (2009) reported that social support tends to reduce surface acting because the support of managers or colleagues creates favourable working conditions. Likewise, Erickson (2008) noted that employees could minimise the negative consequences of emotional labour and increase job satisfaction by using managerial support and communicating more openly with colleagues.

Over the years, research has emphasized the importance of accepting emotional labour as a critical construct in the service industry. In spite of this, service employees still struggle daily with the detrimental consequences of engaging in any form of emotional labour.

Consequences of emotional labour

A widely studied topic from different perspectives, emotional labour and its different strategies have many consequences. These consequences do not only have repercussions for the individual that performs emotional labour but also affect the organisation and its clients.

Consequences for service employees

Emotional labour can be just as tiring to the individual as physical labour because in both instances energy is needed to perform the labour. Therefore, both forms of labour have the potential to lead to exhaustion in the long run (Boucher, 2016). Hülsheger and Schewe (2011)

agree with this and argue that the surface acting strategy of emotional labour is detrimental to service employees because it is energy-depleting, triggers negative emotions, results in felt and expressed inauthenticity, and impedes social interactions. Individuals performing surface acting are usually more likely to experience negative psychological, psychic, and somatic consequences (Tidmarsh, 2020). This can be attributed to unresolved emotional dissonance, impaired self-evaluation, and depression (Yin, 2015). The negative consequences of emotional labour for employees are substantiated by several studies. Surface acting, in particular, was found to be negatively associated with occupational stress (Hülsheger et al., 2010), low levels of job satisfaction (Zhang & Zhu, 2008), high levels of burnout (Lee, 2019), depersonalisation (Akin et al., 2014), and lower levels of perceived personal accomplishment (Yilmaz et al., 2015). Jett and George (2003) are also of the opinion that when service employees use surface acting, they are so busy monitoring and regulating their emotions that they do not have time to focus on their primary task, enjoy it, or perform to the best of their ability.

In contrast, deep acting was not detrimental to employees because it elicits positive emotions, prevents discrepancies between expressed and felt emotions, and facilitates social interaction (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011). This means that deep acting helps to preserve resources and to gain resources because of the amplified favourable responses received from clients, which enhances employees' sense of efficacy and personal accomplishment (Cote, 2005). When employees perform deep acting during client interactions, they reduce the risk of a dichotomy of expected emotions and felt emotions, which creates an appropriate emotional atmosphere for the next client interaction and reduces the need for emotional labour (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003). Therefore, deep acting may help service employees to feel good about themselves even if the interaction is not ideal, which helps the employee to save energy and enhances their workflow.

Consequences for clients

The perception that emotional labour only affects service employees is not entirely accurate. In a study, Pugh (2001) found that higher emotional labour levels positively affected clients in the retail banking environment. According to Pugh (2001), this can be attributed to the fact that when employees adhere to organisational display rules, clients receive better service because the employees control their emotions and provide "service with a smile". In most instances, clients want more than just an economic exchange; they want an emotional connection to feel cared for, welcomed, and respected. When service employees perform emotional labour, clients feel that they are treated with dignity and, in most instances, respond in a way that shows that they feel valued (Han et al., 2018).

In a study by Allen et al. (2010), they found that clients can distinguish between fake or superficial emotional display and authentic expression, which makes it very important for organisations to ensure that their service employees master the art of emotional labour. Should clients notice any fake emotional display, they could interpret it as a sign of dishonesty or a lack of interest in their query, which may elicit an adverse response (Groth et al., 2009). However, if clients sense authentic emotional expressions from the service employee, they will respond favourably because of the illusion that their needs and wishes are taken seriously (Groth et al., 2009).

In addition, clients exposed to positive experiences of emotional labour report higher levels of satisfaction with the organisation, are more likely to give positive word-of-mouth reviews and tend to be more loyal to the organisation (Moreo et al., 2018).

Consequences for the organisation

Service employees are frequently confronted with organisational expectations linked to emotional, mental, and physical requirements. Strict display rules prescribe the duration of client interactions, probability of regular clients, quality of service, and strict facial and bodily displays (Grandey & Sayre, 2019). Consequently, service employees must control their emotions during client interactions by applying emotional labour strategies (Wang et al., 2019). The performance of emotional labour predominantly benefits the organisation because employees' homogenous behaviour and attitude ensure high-quality service, efficient task execution, an increased number of satisfied clients, and a reputable image (Bodenheimer & Shuster, 2020).

However, the opposite is also true, as various studies have found that the continual monitoring and modifying of emotional expressions drains limited resources and negatively affects employee well-being (Grandey & Gabriel, 2015). Fatigue, feelings of hopelessness, decrease in employee performance, increased absenteeism, lower commitment to the organisation, reduced job satisfaction, higher levels of turnover intentions, and low work engagement levels are all examples of the depleting effects associated with performing emotional labour for an extensive period (Demerouti et al., 2010; Ericson-Lidman & Strandberg, 2007; Han et al., 2016; Hoopes, 2006; Karl & Peluchette, 2006; Taris, 2006).

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research purpose and objectives

The purpose of the study was to broaden the understanding and explain the differences in emotional labour levels identified amongst service centre employees in a South African government organisation.

The general objective of the study was to identify possible antecedents and consequences of emotional labour within this unique public work environment.

The specific objectives of the study were to:

- Explore possible reasons or factors that influence high and low emotional labour levels in the identified branch offices of a government organisation.
- Explore other consequences of emotional labour for service agents in the government service centre under research.

Research design

Research approach and strategy

The research strategy consisted of literature and an empirical study. The literature review provided insight, conceptualised the variables, and provided a theoretical background of the dimensions, antecedents, and consequences of emotional labour. The review was conducted using EBSCOHost, Google Scholar, Emerald online, ERIC, JSTOR, SCOPUS, and Web of Science. A mixed method sequential explanatory design was applied, which according to Creswell and Clark (2017), entails a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches when collecting and analysing data. This study took a pragmatic approach to research that is informed by the belief that research practicalities cannot be exclusively driven by data or theory. Morgan (2007) recommends a process of abduction that enables the researcher to move back and forth between deduction and induction through a process of enquiry. The first quantitative study results fed the purpose and design of the second qualitative study. The qualitative research methodology applied in this study allowed for the exploration and understanding of service employees' experiences related to emotional labour.

Research setting, entrée, and researcher roles

The research study was conducted in a South African government organisation, and in particular, sixteen service centres in the Region 1 branch offices located in Gauteng. Due to the health

regulations associated with Covid-19, semi-structured interviews were conducted electronically on MS Teams and in person. In-person interviews were held in designated private boardrooms at the different government offices, with strict adherence to the Covid-19 measures prescribed by the South African government. Permission to conduct qualitative research was obtained from the government organisation's research committee, group executive, and the respective branch managers responsible for the sixteen Region 1 branch offices. The researcher employed a research assistant who, electronically via MS Teams, requested the participants to complete an English consent letter that outlined the purpose of the research and guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity of responses.

Research participants and sampling methods or sample

The South African government organisation under research consists of 53 walk-in branch offices located in the four provinces of South Arica. These offices are grouped (geographically) into four regions. Of the four regions, Region 1 accounts for the highest number of clients, mainly because the sixteen offices in Region 1 are located in Gauteng. The Gauteng province is home to the most active government clients in South Africa. Participants in this study were employed in Region 1 branch offices that employ 348 full-time staff that work eight hours, five days a week. After the survey data that collected in Study 1 was analysed, criterion sampling was used to narrow the range of variation. One respondent who scored towards the higher end and one who scored towards the lower end of the emotional labour spectrum in each of the sixteen Region 1 branch offices (32 participants) were sampled to participate in the qualitative study. Sampling was done in this manner to account for differences in biographical and demographical characteristics and different management styles in the respective branch offices.

The participant characteristics covered in this study included gender, age, racial group, educational level, and occupational status. Wellness counsellors were made available by the organisation's wellness division to provide debriefing and support where needed. Interviews were scheduled according to the availability of participants. The participants' characteristics are listed in Table 18.

Table 18: *Characteristics of the participants (n=32)*

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	3	9
	Female	29	91
Age	< 30 years	0	0
	31-40 years	13	41
	41-50 years	16	50
	> 50 years	3	9

Ethnic group	African	15	47
	Indian	1	3
	Coloured	4	12.5
	White	12	37.5
Educational level	Higher certificate (Grade 12)	22	68.7
	Diploma	6	19
	Degree	2	6.3
	Postgraduate degree	1	3
	Technical qualification	1	3
Occupational status	Manager	5	15.6
	Agent	21	65.6
	Consultant	4	12.5
	Other	2	6.3

Data collection methods

After the statistical analysis of the quantitative data collected during Study 1, criterion sampling was used to narrow the range of variation. The focus was on one respondent who scored towards the higher end of the emotional labour spectrum and one who scored towards the lower end of the emotional labour spectrum in each of the 16 Region 1 government branch offices. Permission to conduct the qualitative research was obtained from the government organisation's research committee, group executive, and branch managers responsible for the 16 Region 1 branch offices. Before the research commenced, approval from the relevant scientific and research ethics committee was also obtained.

The research process started with the employed research assistant, who requested the participants to complete an English consent letter that outlined the study title and purpose of the interview and guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity of responses. Participants were provided the contact details of the researcher and the supervisor. Qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Interview skills obtained during the researcher's postgraduate studies enabled her to conduct the interviews. Respondents were asked for permission to audio record the interviews for transcription. All interviews were conducted in English and recorded using a recording device. Each interviews lasted approximately 10 minutes.

The researcher only started the interview after ensuring that the participant (who met the inclusion criteria and had given prior consent) fully understood the purpose and his/her role in the research project. Interviews were conducted digitally via Microsoft Teams/Zoom or telephonically. Interview details such as the date and time during business hours were negotiated with the participant. As far as possible, the researcher aimed to create an interview environment in which the participants

felt safe to openly share their experiences (i.e., by requesting participants to find a private space where they could not be overheard). Interview questions were structured in a nonthreatening and non-intrusive way that does not elevate the risks above those encountered in day-to-day interactions. 23 participants out of 32 were interviewed as the study reached saturation after participant 23. Of the 23 participants, 12 scored towards the higher end of the emotional labour spectrum and 11 participants scored towards the lower end of the emotional labour spectrum.

Before each interview, the researcher explained that the reason for the interview was to gain a better understanding of the participant's view in relation to quantitative data collected during Study 1. The participant was requested to *first focus on an interaction that he/she had with a client that they would describe as pleasant*. The participant was asked to *describe this interaction with the client and give as much detail as possible*. Depending on the response received, the researcher probed for more clarity. The next question requested the participants to *focus on an interaction he/she had with a client that they would describe as unpleasant*. The participant was asked to *describe this interaction with the client and give as much detail as possible*. Again, the answer was further investigated, if necessary. Interview skills, such as questioning, active listening, probing, summarising, and paraphrasing, were used to facilitate the conversation and to get as much information as possible.

The recorded interview data was analysed with the help of a third-party coder who adhered to all ethical requirements to identify patterns that supported and built on the findings in Study 1. Audio files and transcript data (in MS Word format) are password protected and will be stored on Google Drive for a minimum of five years. The semi-structured interviews allowed for analytical comparisons between participants. During interviews, the researcher probed for clarity when answers were ambiguous.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis

Qualitative data was transcribed by the researcher and saved as a Microsoft Word Document. Each digital recording was given a unique code in order to be able to link it back to the time and date of the interview in order to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. By asking and listening to the research participants, the researcher created meaning by identifying patterns that emerged from the descriptive interpretations of the research participants.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data collected. This approach allowed the researcher to encode the gathered information employing "coding." According to Gibbs (2018), coding data can be explained as simply labelling sections or passages of the text with a code

word; by doing this, interesting or salient features can be identified. The researcher appointed a co-coder, a registered research psychologist, to assist with co-coding and identifying themes. The different codes were used to create themes and subthemes for the study.

According to Braun et al. (2016), six phases in thematic analysis can be identified:

Phase 1: *Familiarisation with the data:* The researcher became intimately familiar with the collected qualitative data by transcribing the recorded interviews. Repeated listening to the recorded data and in-depth reading of the transcripts was essential. It was important for the researcher to be fully submerged in the collected qualitative data.

Phase 2: *Coding:* After completing phase 1, the coding or indexing process started. This entailed the labelling of phrases, sentences, and words. This process was repeated several times. This phase ended by collating all the codes and relevant data extracts.

Phase 3: *Searching for themes:* A meaningful and coherent pattern found in the qualitative data, which is also relevant to the research question, is called a theme. During this phase, the researcher and co-coder "actively" searched for themes and collated the coded data relevant to each identified theme.

Phase 4: *Reviewing themes:* After identifying themes during phase 3, both the co-coder and researcher went back to the data to check the reviewed themes in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set to ensure that the were relevant. During this phase, themes can be collapsed or split into two or more subthemes.

Phase 5: *Defining and naming themes:* During this phase, the researcher and co-coder worked together to write a detailed analysis of each theme to identify its crux. This led to constructing informative names for each theme.

Phase 6: *Writing up:* In the last phase, the results were communicated. The connections, relationships, and interpretation of the data collected were described and contextualised according to the existing literature. The first draft prepared by the researcher was sent to the co-coder to review and eliminate any biases from the researcher.

Data quality

Trustworthiness in qualitative research has been frequently debated. It can, however, be achieved through a rigorous verification process (Morse et al., 2002). In this study, data quality was ensured by adapting Guba's criteria regarding trustworthiness (Shenton, 2004).

Table 19: *Strategies to ensure data quality*

Criteria	**Guideline**	**Application**
Credibility (similar to internal validity)	Refers to the extent that the participants can relate to the findings (Shenton, 2004).	During data analysis, the researcher constantly compared the reconstructed data to the participants' views.
Transferability (similar to external validity)	Refers to the extent to which the research findings of this study can be applied in other situations (Shenton, 2004).	Participants from various age groups, ethnic backgrounds, gender, educational levels, and occupational status were included in this study.
Dependability (similar to reliability)	Refers to the consistency of findings that can be replicated at any point in time. (Shenton, 2004).	The researcher employed a co-coder to audit the collection and data analysis process during the study.
Confirmability (similar to objectivity)	Implies that data should accurately represent the information that the participants provided, free from the researchers' biases, preconceived ideas and preferences (Shenton, 2004). There should be potential for agreement between two or more independent investigators regarding data accuracy, meaning, and relevance.	The researcher often presents representative quotations from transcribed text in the findings section to confirm the connection between data and results.

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the North-West University's Economic and Management Sciences Research Committee (EMS-REC), who allocated reference number NWU-01308-21-A4 to the qualitative study. It is often challenging to get a clear-cut clarification of ethical considerations, and researchers are often faced with ethical dilemmas during every stage of the research process (Resnik, 2018). Therefore, this study evaluated and attempted to mitigate ethical risks during the different stages of the research process.

Ethical considerations towards the participants

Creswell (2013) argues that it is imperative to communicate the research objectives to all relevant stakeholders to avoid deception and uncertainty. The researcher therefore ensured that the procedure and purpose of the study were communicated clearly to each interview participant by providing a brief description in the cover letter attached to the interview consent form. The expected time required to complete the interview was communicated to the participants so that they could prepare themselves adequately. The participants that were identified to take part in the qualitative study were briefed on the significance of their participation. However, if they refused to take part, their decision was accepted and respected. In order to continue with the qualitative research, a new sample was drawn from the quantitative findings. This process was repeated until a representative sample had been identified. Only voluntary participants were included in the study. Ample time was allocated for the researcher to go through the consent form with the participants to ensure that they clearly understood the research objective before consenting to participate.

Strict ethical standards were adhered to during the study and every effort was made to prioritise the participants' privacy, well-being, and dignity. The participants were shown respect by protecting their privacy and considering their physical and emotional needs during the study. Participants were treated equitably and not discriminated against on any grounds (e.g., gender, race, or disability). The research was conducted and planned in such a manner that it, as far as possible, fostered beneficence and excluded exploitation or harm to participants. Participants were allowed to terminate their participation or withdraw from the research at any stage without fear of prejudice.

Ethical consideration in data collection, analysis, interpretation, and writing of results

Interview data and information collected during the qualitative research study were treated as confidential and only used for research purposes. Special care was taken to conduct the research in such a manner that data collected could not be linked back to a specific candidate by anyone but the researcher. Each coded interview recording was linked to a specific branch office in order for the data to be accurately analysed. Caution was exercised to separate the identifying information on the consent letters from the actual responses. The researcher's identity, affiliation, and qualifications were made known before the research commenced. All audio files and transcript data collected during the qualitative phase of the study are password protected and will be stored on Google Drive for a minimum of five years. The collected research data remains the property of the NWU. Only the researcher and the promotor of the study have access to this information.

Adherence to the Personal Protection of Information Act

Personal identifying information collected during the qualitative research phase (phone numbers, email and physical addresses) remained confidential. This information was dealt with according to the stipulations of the Protection of Personal Information Act [POPIA] (Act 4 of 2013, p. 18): "accountability, processing limitation, purpose specification, further processing limitation, information quality, openness, security safeguards, data subject interpretation"). Information regarding race or ethnic origin is classified by Section 26 of the Protection of Information Act as special personal information and the processing of such information is therefore prohibited. This prohibition is, however, waived by Section 27(1) (d) of POPIA if the information is processed for research purposes and in public interest (POPIA, 2013).

All information collected in this study was for research purposes only and was appropriately limited to the sample for which the findings and conclusions were valid to ensure that it is in the public's best interest. Personal identifying information was only used in an office context and not individually released. Participants had the option to provide their contact details if they wanted their results to be shared with them. The researcher and research assistant are the only people that have access to the participants' personal contact details. The personal identifying information was destroyed after individual feedback, if requested, had been provided. The research was done honestly and with integrity. No evidence was manipulated to fit research needs.

FINDINGS

The following body of work details the findings and explores the possible reasons or factors that influence emotional labour levels and consequences of emotional labour for government service centre employees.

Interviews in South African government branch offices

This section of the research report focused on the findings obtained from the interviews with service centre employees on the antecedents and consequences of emotional labour within their work environment. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed by adopting a thematic analysis approach. Five main themes emerged, which included (1) the importance of first impressions/greetings, (2) reciprocal relationship, that is, being friendly/approachable is beneficial to the client, (3) the importance of a support network to alleviate/diffuse the situation, (4) difficult clients and the emotional toll, and (5) constructive influences of positive client interaction on the individual (participant) on a personal level.

Following is a representation of the themes that emerged and the subsequent subthemes to support the main themes.

Table 20: *Qualitative themes*

Theme	Subtheme
The importance of first impressions/greetings	First impressions/greetings Emotional intelligence Work experience
Reciprocal relationship: being friendly/approachable is beneficial to the client	Client behaviour Lack of product specific knowledge
Importance of a support network to alleviate /diffuse the situation	Managerial support Collegial support Organisational support
Difficult clients and the emotional toll	Emotional/psychological effect Effect on home life
Constructive influences of positive client interaction on the individual (participant) on a personal level	Job satisfaction Positive emotions Effect on service delivery

The experiences shared during the interviews varied between interactions with rude/unpleasant and pleasant/friendly clients during and shortly after the Covid-19 pandemic, which had a substantial financial and emotional effect on South African citizens.

Theme 1: The importance of first impressions/greetings

First impressions, emotional intelligence, and work experience were identified as playing a vital role in the experiences of service employees expected to perform emotional labour. Participant 6 captures this sentiment as follows: “How you kick off, is how you will end”.

Participants felt that friendly clients influence and motivate them to assist them to the best of their ability. The first impressions that the clients have motivate them to be friendlier and more cooperative. The subsequent paragraphs discuss the three subthemes by conveying the researchers’ insight and participants’ remarks according to the thematic analysis process.

- **First impressions/greetings**

The impact of first impressions/greetings was identified through various experiences that participants shared with regard to their response to their daily interactions with pleasant and unpleasant clients daily. First impressions are, according to the American Psychological Association (2022), an initial perception of another person. This could involve a positive or negative evaluation and a sense of the psychological and physical characteristics of the other person. First impressions are derived from the first information received about an individual during a direct encounter. They mainly persist, even if later information proves that the first encounter was inconsistent with reality. Theoretical analyses confirm the primary effect of first impressions and give it greater weight in the perceiver’s mind than later information during the interaction (American Psychological Association, 2022).

Various participants mentioned the importance of first impressions and elaborated on why it is essential to greet clients in a friendly, helpful manner. For participant 2, her friendly greeting diffused a difficult situation, as illustrated by the following remark:

> The guy was actually very furious when he came to the branch, but with my personality, I greeted him with a smile. I welcomed him, giving him a warm welcome. Then the client was at ease. He explained to me his frustration.

Participant 4 felt that her friendly first greeting avoided a client’s negative behaviour:

> I usually greet the people with a smile, and always asking… “Good morning, how are you today” and I think that puts the client a bit at ease. Because there is a lot of them that are on their nerves, like I am now *(laughing)* … and if I see the client is still not actually comfortable in front of me, I will try and make a joke or just to let them be at ease.

> When the client gets to me, like I said, I will greet him friendly and sometimes that helps a little bit for that client not to be rude at all.

For participant 18, it is imperative to sum up the situation and the client and then to adjust his/her initial approach to remain professional at all times:

> If I approach him or her, I must greet friendly because you can see when you have a rude, unfriendly or unpleasant client. So, then it is very important to greet friendly, introduce yourself, tell him who you are and what is your position.

Participant 6 shared her practical philosophy on client service during the interview as follows:

> So, when I interacted with her, I firstly apologised because the problem was on our side. So, I think how you deal with clients as well is very important. It all depends on you. How you kick off, is how you will end. So, I think we should keep that in mind.

The interview data shows that first impressions and how employees greet clients are critical in determining how the rest of the interaction unfolds. Emotional intelligence was closely linked to first impressions, which the next subtheme explores.

- **Emotional intelligence**

Emotional intelligence proved to be a very influential factor in client interactions. Participants described various experiences that they have had during which they tried to understand the client's frustration by putting themselves in the client's shoes. Petrides and Mavroveli (2018) define emotional intelligence (also known as emotional quotient or EQ) as an individual's ability to understand, manage, and use their own emotions positively to communicate more effectively, relieve stress, have empathy with others, and alleviate conflict.

The participants cited positive and negative experiences in which they had to rely on their EQ to diffuse the situation. Participant 15 particularly empathised with the frustrated client:

> I think on a daily basis, we do face tremendous rude, arrogant clients. But on the other hand, I would say there are days that one would understand why a client will be rude and how can we accommodate the client[1] in his rude circumstances.

[1] Client is a synonym used to avoid exposing the organisation

> It is pressure times. That is why I can accommodate a client when relating to the clients' situation when they explain and … . … but some days I feel like our organisation is just purely unfair.

By associating with the rude clients' circumstances, participant 11 was able to understand the client's unpleasant behaviour:

> It didn't ... I know, I'd also be cross if I don't owe money. So, I put myself in his shoes. So, I know that was the reason why he was acting like that.

Participant 6 indicated that by managing her own emotions, she could influence the interaction with clients:

> She started by coming into the reception, and she was just rude to everyone, the security and even the receptionist.
>
> I turned the whole mood upside down, and I started … you know… hmm … making humorous jokes and silly comments. So *ja*, that is why I always say your manner of approach is very important to a client.

The interview data confirmed the importance of emotional intelligence during any client interaction. Data confirmed that being emotionally in tune, through years of experience, and learning how to go about handling demanding clients may be beneficial when deciding which emotional labour strategy to follow. The influence of work experience is explored in the next subtheme.

- **Work experience**

Another suggestion on how to deal with clients during a service interaction was to rely on the years of experience in the organisation. During the qualitative research process, the researcher noted that most participants with a longer service record had controlled interactions with clients more effectively. Participant 14 was confident that her years of service influenced her behaviour towards clients:

> No, not at all. For me, a new day is a new day. For me, actually, I focus on what is there at that certain point. I am in the organisation for 30 years, and experience comes with time; I have learnt a lot. The interaction with clients over the years makes it easier every time. Time teaches you how to work with clients, not only clients but people in general.

Participant 1 shared a similar sentiment and indicated that she uses her years of experience to sum up the client within the first few seconds of the encounter and then alters her emotions and reactions accordingly:

> Because I am working forever at the organisation, for something like 33 years, the moment the client comes through to my cubicle and he greets me, then I pick up, okay, this is going to be easy, or this is going to be difficult. But normally, yes, when they come, they greet you, and you know, okay, this client will listen to you.

Participant 2 felt that his years of experience enabled him to empathise with angry or upset clients. He uses this advantage to try to diffuse the situation by altering his emotions and subsequent reaction to the client:

> With sixteen years knowledge in the organisation, I have learned that even if the client[1] is rude or angry, there is always a way for the client to react the way that they react, up until you explain to him. You must be calm, you must stay calm and try to explain, and then the person will understand.

Interesting enough, from the data collected, it becomes clear that client interaction is a two-way street. A positive, reciprocal relationship between the service employee and client could result in, productive encounters leaving both parties happy and content with the interaction. The next theme elaborates on the effect of clients' behaviour on the quality of interactions with the service agents.

Theme 2: Reciprocity: Being friendly/approachable is beneficial to the client

Thematic analysis of the interview data suggests that service employees' client service interaction experiences depend on the reciprocal relationship between them and the client. The principle of reciprocity leans towards an individual's internal sense of obligation. If someone treats the individual in a certain way, he/she feels obliged to react in a similar manner.

According to the American Psychological Association (2022), a reciprocal relationship refers to the situation in which two variables mutually influence each other, which means that both can be a cause and an effect. Participants interviewed shared their personal views on experiences associated with the reciprocal relationship in the government service centre environment. Two subthemes emerged during the thematic analysis process. These themes, client behaviour and lack of product specific knowledge, will subsequently be discussed.

[1] Client is a synonym used to avoid exposing the organisation

- **Client behaviour**

The importance of client behaviour was found to be a key factor contributing to the service employee's experiences of emotional labour. Social behaviour can be defined as behaviour amongst two or more organisms from the same species, where their interaction has a definite effect on each other (American Psychological Association, 2022). Social behaviour is influenced by individual qualities and environmental (situational) factors (Grandey & Sayre, 2019). Participants cited positive and negative client experiences and elaborated on how those experiences influenced the interaction.

For most participants it was important that clients should stay focused on the problem and not get personal. Incidents where clients got very personal that had a detrimental emotional effect on the participants were reported and it. Participant 5 shared her horrific client interaction with the researcher:

> … but he did not talk to me. He was shouting at me, and every time I told him to please calm down, that I can see what is on the system, the more he became personal. *Né*, he takes me on personally. He did not keep it work-related. He told me that I am stupid, and that I don't know what I am doing, and then he was talking in a Black language to the client that was sitting behind him. And then they would laugh at me. All of them would look at me and then talk to one another, and then they would laugh at me. So, that was very, very humiliating for me.
>
> The minute I tried to say something, he would tell me ... Shut up, I want to talk ... things like that. And I said, Sir, but I want to explain to you ... Then he would say, I don't want to listen to your explanation. SHUT UP! You know things like that. So *ja*, that is very difficult.

Participant 16 shared a similar experience that he had with a client that attacked him personally:

> You know you get frustrated and one thing about me, my tone starts going up and which it doesn't make things to be much better because now my voice is also up now. In addition, the client[1]'s voice goes up, and you know, eventually, you know, the "k" word came out. You know, and it was like *whoa* … Wait, I am not going to tolerate this, and you know when I stood up, the client stood up as well. So, it was like, let us take it outside, … *laughing* … and I said okay let's go. I was explaining the processes. It was not me, but I felt it was taken personally with me instead of the organisation and the processes we embark on.

[1] Client is a synonym used to avoid exposing the organisation

Participant 19 was also a victim of rude client behaviour:

> So, if you attack the organisation, I will still try and explain and keep calm as possible. But some of the clients will attack you personally. And they will say things to you, for instance, the very bad thing of racial issues. They will, for instance, say, it is because I am Black or Coloured or whatever, because me being a white person. But that is not what it is about. We have to follow rules, policies, and procedures.
>
> Ugh, you feel, I will be honest with you, you feel that you know what, I am here to do a job, I love my job, but you are angry, you are hurt. Well, in my case sometimes I feel I just want to walk them right through a wall. You really feel hurt. I am following instructions, and I am getting this behaviour. It is very hurtful and very stressful.

From the participants responses it became clear that they, in most instances, understand the client's frustration with the organisation, but still expect client behaviour to be controlled during an interaction. Participant 1 believes that if a client is in a reasonable frame of mind, they listen more accurately and communicate more effectively, which makes the service employee more receptive and open to assist them by any means possible:

> But normally, yes, when they come, they greet you, and you know, okay, this client will listen to you because the problem is what we picked up with clients is that if they are furious, they can't listen. They don't listen to you.
>
> *Hmmm*, so it is much easier to interact with a friendly person because even if he is upset and he is friendly, then you can help him because then he will listen to you …
>
> Even if you are upset, but you still treat me with respect, I will go the extra mile, and I will talk to you because I will calm you down, and then we can talk about this. Like I said, if they are not calm, even if they are upset ... They can't listen to you ... You can't get through to them, to tell them ...
>
> If you are very furious and I am not comfortable with how you talk to me ... I will not go the extra mile. I will not follow up with this or call you back for stuff. I will just tell you to get another ticket, and do this and bring this ... I will not go that extra mile ...

Participant 5 agrees with the above sentiment:

> I appreciate it when a client greets me and asks me how I am. So yes, when it is a nice client, I will walk the extra mile for that client. I will help him to the best of my ability wherever I can, with the questions that he has, within the rules.

Participants expressed high levels of appreciation towards clients that display positive, receptive behaviour, indicating that this kind of behaviour induces a healthy trust relationship between the client and service employee: Participant 18 reiterated this as follows:

> Trust is a very big thing between a client and me as an employee.

Which was something participant 19 also felt very strongly about:

> Something like that is what makes your day worthwhile. Because for every nasty client … I have been with this organisation for almost 28 years, and that is what makes it nice. Because for every one nasty client that you have, you have ten and even twenty nice ones. So, it makes up for that one rude one. So, you know, not all our clients treat us badly.

Experiences shared by participants highlighted the fact that client frustration, in many instances, is caused by uncertainty, a lack of knowledge and misconceptions about the processes and procedures in the government organisation.

- **Lack of product specific knowledge**

Processes and procedures within the government service centre under research can be described as often complex, web-based, and rely heavily on self-help technology. This causes clients to feel overwhelmed, uncertain, and frustrated when they experience a problem. Having to educate clients on organisational products, their unwillingness to educate themselves on newly introduced online models, and their lack of effort when researching were some of the main issues raised during the participant interviews. Participant 8 felt very strongly about client education:

> The one thing that I have realised is that our clients are not so difficult. They just do not understand our language – our organisational language. They are not educated in our affairs. They think that if they've paid their dues, there is nothing else to do. So, unfortunately, we still have a long way to go, especially with educating the client.
>
> It is becoming so difficult, especially with the ones that do not have any patience and do not even want to understand. They want it as in *nowww* because again, our people they tend to think that if they are coming into the organisation, they have to get immediate service. Whatever they need, they do not even check the requirements, and the organisation has even now introduced a lot of information on our website where they can get it, but they do not do that. For example, when they want a certain document, they want it with immediate effect, not knowing that they maybe have outstanding documents and …

Participant 23, in turn, experienced feelings of intense sympathy towards a client that was scared and feeling uncertain:

> Okay, I had a client that came in that had to update details. She was very scared, and I could see she did not really know what to do. You could see she was half intimidated because she did not know what she was doing. She was very friendly towards me, and I felt that that type of friendliness, you can only be friendly and helpful towards a person like that. I set her at ease told tell her not to stress; we will help her. I did what she required and did what we had to do. Afterwards, she was so thankful that she could not thank me enough. So, when she left my table, I actually felt good. You could really see the humbleness and the thankfulness in her face and her appreciation. That made me feel good for the rest of the day.

Gabriel and Diefendorff (2015) agree with the participants and confirm that customer behaviour plays a prominent role in helping to shape employee behaviour throughout an emotional labour episode.

Theme 3: Importance of a support network to alleviate/diffuse situations

Continuous support during daily interactions in the government service centre played a pivotal role in participant experiences. Participant 19 highlighted the importance of support as follows: "I will then call someone, and they will take it from there. That help things not to escalate and get any further". Within the framework of this study, support refers to the perceived assistance received from managers, colleagues and the organisation. Support networks were identified on three levels managerial, collegial, and organisational networks. The subsequent paragraphs discuss each of the support subthemes by relaying research insights and participants' remarks as informed by the process of thematic analysis.

- **Managerial support**

The importance of managerial support was flagged through various experiences that participants shared during the interviews. It was evident that managerial support is often used when nothing else will help to calm down a client during an interaction. Support refers to perceived assistance received from either the direct or branch manager. It can take many different forms, which include facilitating effective communication between service employees and clients, involving employees in making important decisions that can influence their work environment, and giving employees feedback regarding their performance during complex client interactions.

Participants shared their experiences in the following remarks. Participant 15 felt that having a branch manager with good people skills was to her advantage in her daily dealing with clients.

> Our clients are not ashamed. You will get some of them that are abrupt. So, when you tell them, you have done this wrong, or you have done that wrong, this is a fraudulent, this is relating to … then they become suddenly arrogant. And when you actually want to lay out the whole matter, then they will say, Mam, what is your manager's name? Proudly I will then supply my manager's name.
>
> I must say, I have had the privilege to have a branch manager that was very good in understanding people's characters, which makes it much easier.

Participant 19 re-emphasized the importance to remain professional at all times and to ask for assistance from the manager before a situation escalates into an explosive event:

> So yes, sometimes, I do get very, very hot under the collar, but within those cases, I would rather ask the person ... look, just hold on for me; I will go and call an ops manager. I will then call an ops manager, and they will take it from there. That helps things not to escalate and get any further.

Management support is also often used to retain the organisation's reputation and isolate the irate client to avoid involving other clients. Participant 10 said:

> If, for instance, the client is getting more aggrieved, I will speak to a supervisor and say, we can't handle this one outside because there are other clients around. Can we then maybe just allow this rude client into the office so that we can check where the money comes from, and explain. In most instances, it helps to focus and check on where the core problem is coming from, and the solution will be how to fix it. Yes, it does not help to argue with the client.

In contrast with the positive experiences above, participant 19 emphasized the negative emotional impact that the lack of managerial support could have on a service employee:

> You really feel hurt, and I will be honest with you, where it actually makes you even feel worse is where the ops managers takes the clients' side. So, no support, they don't know what happened, because the client will do certain things to you, now you go call the ops manager, which is also not their fault. Then this client will turn around and as we say in Afrikaans … be as "mak as a lammetjie" (as tame as a little lamb). I personally will then feel, you know what, this is not fair. How can you take the client's word against mine

because they were wrong? I am following instructions, and I am getting this behaviour. It is very hurtful and very stressful.

- **Collegial support**

The importance of collegial support and camaraderie also came to the fore during the data analysis. Because colleagues face similar challenges during client interaction in the government service centre, they can offer support through various acts of kindness and selfless assistance by taking over the intricate interaction with a rude client. Collegial support can be defined as assistance asked for and received from individuals working in the same organisation as the participants.

Participant 9 welcomed the support of a colleague and believed this diffused the difficult situation she was caught up in:

> I had a client, I think, about two weeks ago. He was an African gentleman, but as he came in, you could see he had that arrogant, rude kind of attitude. As he sat down, he wanted to know why he is owing us money. So, I started the interview with him, but a few counters down, one of my other colleagues also sat with an African gentleman. This colleague was listening to the conversation. He was busy with stats on his computer. He could hear this gentleman is very, very rude and in the way that he spoke to me, he was arrogant. Then my colleague came to me and said … "I also called a client. Now, can we just please switch clients because you will not be able to assist this client, I can hear the manner that he is talking to you … he will not be satisfied. So let me take him". So, we switched clients, and … hmm … after the gentlemen left, the colleague came to me and said the client started with him as well, being arrogant and everything, but the moment he saw he was not going to get away with it, he stopped.

Participant 17 uses her calm and collected personality to assist other colleagues regularly. In this way she does not only assist the client, but also decreases the amount of stress on her colleagues:

> To be honest, there are quite a number of times where other employees call me to assist where they have already had an initial interaction with the client, and both them and the client are now agitated. And then they call me because I have this knack of telling the client exactly the same thing that the colleague has already told them. But the way I speak to them makes the difference. I am very friendly, sympathetic, and sometimes I actually realise that the colleague did not listen and understand properly what the core problem was. So, I actually have a knack to calm that client down, and by the time the conversation

> end and even if they did not receive the result that they wanted, they feel much better. Obviously, that makes me feel good because I helped in that situation.

Participant 6 also utilises her personality to assist her colleagues and even her manager when there is a difficult client in the office:

> What I saw was that this person is dealing with her own things, and I decided not to react with the same energy.
>
> I, as a person, understand how people think, how people look at things. We are not all the same. We are all different, but if you are the one that needs help, reach out, reach out. We are here to assist. We are here to help you. So, all you needed to do was just to reach out to us.

Some colleagues can identify when situations get out of hand and will then intervene before their colleague gets into trouble for not abiding by the organisations' display rules. Participant 16 shared his experience in this regard:

> So, it was like, let us take it outside, … *laughing* … and I said okay let's go. And you know, as I was moving to go out, one of my colleagues pulled me back and said, no, you don't want to do that, so just leave.

As shown by the data, besides collegial support, organisational support was also very prominent in the participants' experiences and will be discussed in the next subtheme.

- **Organisational support**

A good support network is crucial to alleviate/diffuse situations. Along with managerial and collegial support, the participants perceive organisational support as very important in the service centre environment. Eisenberger et al. (1986) describe organisational support as employees' perceptions of how much the organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being.

Data revealed that participants experienced negative organisational support when it comes to sufficient recovery opportunities between client interactions, process and procedure changes related to the Covid-19 pandemic and system changes done without consulting with the service centre employees.

Participant 15 believes that organisational support should be demonstrated by valuing employee inputs when changing the system. This sentiment is expressed in the following observation:

> You know what will be heaven on earth? If the organisation could come back to us on the ground – not Amanda the senior manager, come and say listen "Piet Pompies" we want to implement this. Or go to the branch manager and ask for the three most active branch employees, who are they that can pick up this and this and this? Maybe say…. Listen, we are having this seminar or "bosberaad". What you do think about this new system that we want to implement? So, get the input from the ground … Yes, yes, here comes the client, "Piet Pompies" and tell you where to get it. I have to say, okay, yes, thanks, "Piet Pompies", this is how it is going to work … Did the organisation even think what I am going to say to "Piet Pompies" regarding this?

With the Covid-19 pandemic came a lot of challenges. A "new normal" was introduced in most organisations to ensure continuation of service while embracing the disaster management regulations of the country. Participants expressed concerns that the economic effect of the pandemic, as well as an increase in online processes in the "new normal" environment, have increased the frustration levels of clients.

Participant 7, in particular, believes that the Covid-19 pandemic made client interaction very challenging:

> Due to the effect of the Covid pandemic, our work environment has changed quite drastically. In the sense of … a number of our things were … our work system changed a lot to become electronic. Hence, we opened a lot of things to clients electronically to do themselves. In order for a client to get interaction within a branch environment, which can only happen through an actual booking, whereby clients have to make a booking in order to get to a branch. Unscheduled walk-ins, we still try to assist where we possibly can, but that is not always easy.
>
> Obviously, it upsets a person. In this specific scenario, the client … we knew about the client. The arrangement was made on Friday. The client would come to the branch on Monday morning, and we actually made it clear to the client that he needs to visit us with all the documents. Which he on the Monday morning didn't have, and now he wanted to come and blame us. We actually did the arrangement upfront, but he did not play his part in this case. So, by default, it is upsetting to a person, and especially on a Monday morning. It is not always a nice way to start work, and *ja* … it actually upsets a person, maybe in a bigger sense of things. Because, on the one hand, you are upset with the client due to his approach to it, but on the other side of it as well, we also understand where they come from as well. So, *ja,* the pandemic made it a bit more difficult … hmm … because obviously,

> we can't help clients in the normal ways that they are used to … So *ja,* ... I think it is difficult for both sides to adapt to it.

Participant 8 mentioned a similar experience:

> Yes, nowadays we receive a lot of angry clients. I think now we are living in the uncertainty of our lives. The past two years it was very bad for each and every client because now most of the clients have in the past two years been retrenched. It is becoming even worse – especially with this Covid now. We had to reduce our clients in the office. Before, they could come here without an appointment, but now, they have to make an appointment. Luckily in our office, we have the capacity to deal with even the no appointment clients. But unfortunately, part of it they have to stay in the queue for a long time because we are first catering for the appointments. So, they are becoming frustrated of sitting and not getting assistance. Unfortunately, they are seeing the ones with an appointment … We call them and then they are helped and leave our office … We are receiving a lot of client[1] that are unhappy.

Participant 12's experience in this regard was as follows:

> Another problem is the Covid. I know that a lot of clients are very frustrated with the situation. They are battling financially, and then we are sending them away. They want to come in as they did in the past.

For participant 15, the lack of organisational support negatively influences her emotional state, which in turn has a detrimental effect on service delivery:

> The organisation needs to change their game plan and the way they are conducting business. I am not saying that they have to change the game plan so that we can be rude or arrogant, but we must be able to tell the client. Whether you like it or not, you are obligated. You are accountable for how this is. And you must understand, it is drilled into you that … even if you can hear on the other side that this person is arrogant, I will say, Yes, thank you, mam. And now it is even more difficult over the phone, you can just say, Yes Sir, … hmm … yes Sir, … and you suppress, and you suppress ...
>
> They have to come with a strategy and tell us … They are GOD in this scenario … They need to teach us, and because emotions are something else, they won't be able to teach us.

[1] Client is a synonym used to avoid exposing the organisation

The third prominent concern raised was the allowed time between client interactions in accordance with the organisation's prescribed client service rules. Participants felt that they did not have enough time to recover emotionally before calling the next client. Participant 16 shared his feelings after he had to deal with an obnoxious client:

> And the problem is, you don't even get the chance to calm yourself down because if it is busy, you are required to immediately call the next client. And depending on that next client, how he analysed the situation, you know, and then you will be in trouble.

Participant 5 explained that even after breaking down emotionally, she was expected to return to her table and assist the next client:

> Then I went to the kitchen, and I started crying because he was insulting me so much and with all the clients sitting in the back … laughing at me ... I really, really felt this strong disappointment. So, when he left, I had to go back to my table, and I must sit there and help the next client that was previously laughing at me. So, *ja* that was not very good at all.

After participant 10 had to face yet another rude client, she just wanted to take a short break to recover before facing the next client, but she was not allowed to do so:

> But if they are rude, the feeling is not nice. After that rude client[1], you feel like taking a short break, although it is not allowed. So, you just quickly take a break so that your emotions don't affect the next client.

Participant 22 felt the same emotional strain and summed it up as follows:

> I still felt that I was furious inside. I did help the next client. I tried to be polite because it had nothing to do with the next client. So, I tried my best to accommodate this client and smile, although I was still furious inside. I just had to carry on as if nothing happened.

The data shows that a good support network contributes to participants' overall experience during client interactions. When interacting with clients, emotional labour strategies must be chosen in line with the organisation's display rules.

Theme 4: Difficult clients and emotional toll

Client interactions that require service employees to suppress their true emotions and create a fake emotional display have various negative consequences for individuals. They vary from

[1] Client is a synonym used to avoid exposing the organisation

emotional and psychological distress to a negative effect on the employee's home life. The consequences suffered are not always the same, but the thematic data analysis confirmed that each participant in the government service centre had an unpleasant experience to share. Participant 2 voiced her distress in the following way: "Life doesn't require that we be the best, but only that we try our best … So, every day I try to do my best, but when you are getting a client like that, it is feeling as if they are taking the ground out under your feet".

- **Emotional/psychological effect**

In the literature, extensive research has examined the emotional and psychological effect of suppressing true feelings when dealing with unpleasant clients. For the participants in the government organisation under research, the detrimental consequences were not significantly different from those identified in the literature. However, the organisation should take note of the variety and intensity of emotions expressed during the interviews.

For participant 1, the amount of effort that she had to expend in the client interaction left her feeling emotionally and physically exhausted because the professional yet rigid manner in which she handled the situation could quickly escalate and cause employment relation problems for her:

> I myself, … hmm, I am not a very pleasant person with clients. I do not make chats with them ... I know how to be professional. You cannot just "chippies chat" with them. You can't talk politics with them. You can't talk church and stuff like that. But if you ask me a question, I will give you an answer, but I will not debate the answer ... because sometimes it feels to me they come to us just to interact with other people, and they want all of these discussions on whatever … and it tires you because you know, hallo ... I have to serve all these other clients.
>
> I had one [client] that was really, really rude.
>
> I just told him, you need to listen me ... If you don't calm down, I am not going to help you. I stopped the person just there. And I think the person was so shocked because I was stopping him … because I am not supposed to stop you … but you don't get to swear at me ... I am very sorry I am here to do my job and … But yes, the first thing you have to do is to calm down the client because like I said, in my experience, they don't listen, they don't hear.

The immense pressure felt by participants when they are personally held accountable for whatever problem a client might experience produce an array of different negative emotional and

psychological burdens. In the following scenario, participant 4 experienced feelings of disappointment and doubt regarding whether she was worthy to assist the client:

> How can I say it? … Disappointed. He is rude to me, but it is not my fault. I am just working for the organisation. I am doing my best. If I can assist him, I will. If I can make his problem less, I will try and do that.
>
> Not very nice, but okay, that feeling of ... I am not worth it. I am not knowing my job.

Participant 16 felt belittled and unappreciated:

> You know, I really felt belittled. I felt he was not appreciating what I was giving.
>
> I felt a little bit belittled – as if I don't know what I am doing. Which you know is not true.

Participant 20 felt degraded in front of her colleagues after going out of her way to assist the unpleasant client:

> I always try to keep my emotions in check … where I said to the lady … this is not how it works. I am here, and I am explaining to you the situation. And she still told me, what are you doing here, get away … that really affected me. But I still remained standing there, and the woman again said to me, I told you, get lost. I don't want you here … And I said, I am standing here because I need to look after the staff member, because she was really abusive.
>
> But I must be honest with that lady that day. She degraded me in front of the staff. Because it was a shouting match and whatever, and the more I was trying to be reasonable, the worse the client got.

For, participant 5 the emotional and psychological effect of an unpleasant client had already started before the client came to her table. She could hear the rude client coming from the front of the office and already started feeling anxious:

> I had a client a few weeks back. He was very rude and shouting when he came into the front door. He was already shouting. So *ja,* he was very difficult. So, before the time, I felt quite anxious because every time there is a client that comes in that is rude, and you see that client is rude, every time you call a ticket you have this expectancy of … ooh word, am I going to call that client … *Ja,* so that day I was the lucky one …

Unfortunately, the psychological effect did not end there. The participant shared that she was shouted at and told that she was stupid, which made her feel insulted and humiliated. She

continuously tried to remain calm and to suppress her real feelings but eventually broke down in tears:

> I tried to be professional, and you try to keep your pose, but sometimes they are just too rude and too arrogant.

Participants 6, 9, and 12 described themselves as "normally calm" and able to handle irate clients. However, this does not mean that suppressing actual feelings doesn't have an emotional or psychological effect on them. Feelings such as irritation, negativity, and depression were mentioned during the participants' discussions regarding their experiences:

Participant 6:

> I did feel irritated with the client, but I will never show emotions to the client if I can put it that way.

Participant 9:

> Usually, I can deal with it. They will sit down, and they will be arrogant and nasty. But usually, I can calm them down when I start explaining to them. But sometimes it really feels like, why do I need to assist this client? He comes here with arrogance. He comes and sits down. As soon as you start explaining, you feel like he is attacking you. So, then you think, why did you even come here? If you did not want assistance, why did you then come here?

Participant 12:

> Well, I am a very calm person, so I don't show my emotions immediately in front of the clients. It also depends on my mood and how I am feeling on the day. Because if I am in a calm mood, I just let them finish first. Then I will tell them that I understand their frustration but that this is what we need to do now. So, it is important to focus on the problem. But afterwards, when the client leaves, then I usually feel very depressed, very negative. I feel like just going home and never coming back. It severely affects me emotionally.

One of the participants even feared for her physical safety, which illustrates the immense pressure that the participants work under while trying to abide by the display rules prescribed by the organisation.

Participant 3:

> There is a thin thread so that you don't offend the client, but also, you know you cannot allow him to exploit the political scenarios in the country. So yes, I was just getting a bit calmer inside; then he stormed into my office, and he picked up his documents, tore them and put them into the dustbin. I was so afraid. I was really so, so afraid, and I was actually shocked that someone could do that. So, … hmm *ja,* … then I was a bit shocked, and only afterwards I was a bit scared you know. Because, you know, he could have perhaps grabbed me or slapped me instead of the documents.

Another thought-provoking fact that emerged during the participants' description of their experiences was the impact that these emotionally taxing encounters had on their home lives. Several of the participants indicated that they find it difficult to detach themselves from the negative emotions experienced at the office.

- **Impact on home life**

Results of a study done by Chi et al. (2018) show that negative emotions caused by the mistreatment by a client can accumulate and persist and, in turn, severely influence employees' behaviour at home. Emerging from the data, it was evident that the participants in this study felt the same way. For some of them, "being human" was a primary factor for not being able to leave their negative emotions in the office when returning home.

During the interview with participant 15, powerful emotions emerged:

> I understand where we are currently living. Everyone feel pressured, but why can we, as employees, never feel pressured? Why can we not throw some tantrums? We also don't have enough time to recuperate before we see the next client. And, you know what makes it so difficult. I just had a chat yesterday with one of my ops managers. One of our reps mentioned it … we are burnt out. We are burnt out without even considering … and the organisation just wants and wants and wants ... Under these extreme circumstances.
>
> And you go home ... that is the bad part ... You go home (remember it is difficult being a human) and say, okay, I am leaving everything at the office and be normal. Your whole day is messed up ... And you are just a human who needs to suppress and suppress. The organisation needs to tell us how you can balance out professionalism and emotion ...

Participant 19 also felt that, although unintentionally, it is almost impossible to not have a spillover of emotions:

> You know I will be honest with you. I very seldom do that, but me being a human, it sometimes does creep through. So, I will not have this good day at work, and yes, of course, I will take some of it home, because I am only human.

An unpleasant, rude client had a long-lasting negative effect on participant 22, which she still thinks about often:

> I had a client, and she was very rude. She insulted me very badly, calling me ugly names. I was so furious. I was so furious, and I was boiling. And the next moment, I just said to myself, you know what, just get up from your seat, and then go out of the office, and go and get some fresh air. And that is what I did. I just left my table because the way she was carrying on, it was so bad. And I left her there, and I went out, and when I returned, she had packed up her stuff, and left. And my whole day was just one big mess. Because what she called me and the way she insulted me *yoo* … it was just so bad. I had to do that because I think if I didn't, something else could have happened. So, I just thought to myself, let me just leave this old lady here and let me get up and just go out of the office.
>
> I still actually think about her and wonder … very often.

Interestingly, participants 16 and 18 shared their cognitive efforts in dealing with negative emotions after work. Instead of suppressing these emotions when at home, participant 16 shares it with his wife to get her unbiased opinion:

> I think at some point, you need to vent it out, and I am one of those people. When I am sitting with my wife there … I will say, you know there was this client. One, two, three … you know, and that is when you get to see, maybe somewhere you lost it. Because, you know, my wife is neutral. So, she will be able to tell you, no you should have not said that, that is what triggered the whole thing. And when you look at it and say to yourself, okay, maybe tomorrow I can look at doing it differently. But it is difficult not to take it home. You will definitely go home with it. Not the whole time, but there will be moments where you reflect back.

Participant 18 firmly believes that it is not fair to burden her loved ones with her negative emotions. Therefore, she tries to get rid of them before she arrives home:

> Sometimes, you do take the emotions home because at work, you need to keep your emotions in all the time, which is not right. Sometimes in my car, I get rid of my emotions.

> I will put the volume very high and sing with the music to try and get all of these emotions out before I reach home because it is not their fault what happened to you during the day.

Luckily, in the government organisation under research, not all clients are rude or unpleasant, and participants were able to share pleasant experiences regarding friendly clients.

Theme 5: Constructive influences of positive client interaction

The influence of positive client behaviour on emotional labour has been studied. According to Maneotis et al. (2014), positive, prosocial or beneficial behaviour from clients elicits a positive mood, lower levels of emotional labour, and exerts less emotional strain on in-service employees.

In line with the above findings, the participants confirmed the constructive influences that positive client interactions had on them as individuals. Some participants reported a change in their job satisfaction levels. Some were able to bounce back after having a bad day. Some specifically mentioned the effect of positive interactions on service delivery.

The constructive influences of positive client interaction were categorised into three subthemes: job satisfaction, positive emotions, and impact on service delivery.

- **Job satisfaction**

Job satisfaction can be defined as an employee's attitude towards his/her job, often expressed as a hedonic response of liking or disliking the rewards, recognition, the work itself, working conditions, clients or colleagues (American Psychological Association, 2022). As mentioned before, within the service environment, service employees are constantly investing efforts to change their emotional expressions by suppressing their true feelings and replacing them with organisational desired ones. According to Adams and Webster (2013), this often leads to very low job satisfaction levels.

So, when friendly, positive interactions take place, the service employee does not need to suppress true feelings which results in, as participant 3 mentioned, work satisfaction:

> ... *Ag,* we have a lot of friendly clients … hmm … I think what happens is, when you encounter a friendly client[1], it makes your day better. The rest of your day feels better. And I think it also makes you feel okay. I feel my job is worth something. I have reached a goal, I have served the client well. She is happy, or he is happy. So, I think it gives you a work

[1] Client is a synonym used to avoid exposing the organisation

> satisfaction and I think, personally it also motivates you ... you know, to come back the next day and to try and do that again.

For participant 9, positive feedback from a client relates directly to an individual's ability to overturn a negative experience, which results in less emotional labour and provides satisfaction for both parties.

> So, when he left, he said, you know what? Thank you very, very much. He said he thought he was not going to be satisfied, I came in with the idea that I won't be satisfied, and I don't like coming to your organisation because it is always these arrogant people assisting you and, and, and ... But I can really say thank you very much today. And that made me feel much, much better and satisfied with the job I had done. So, he came in with that arrogant frame of mind. So, it makes me happy to be able to change his mind.

Manner of approach was an essential aspect for participant 18 to ensure job satisfaction:

> It is not that difficult to work with a friendly client, but yes, you must always first greet friendly. Even if you don't feel friendly, you must be. Listen to his query. Listen to his questions and what he wants to ask you. And in a calm and polite way show your respect in your behaviour. And sort out the query calmly and friendly. As this is my job and the organisational policy is to conduct a certain behaviour. At the end of the query, I feel good and satisfied about what I did and how I approached the client, and I feel that I have succeeded in my job.

- **Positive emotions**

Working for the government organisation under research is not easy, and due to the nature of their business, clients tend to be rude. Participant 2: "The only thing that I can add is … working for this organisation is not easy, and we get the nastiest clients sometimes."

Fortunately, not all clients are the same. In the words of participant 19: "For every one nasty client that you have, you have ten and even twenty nice ones. So, it makes up for that one rude one…". In a study by Liu et al. (2019) it was found that friendly clients compensate for the more hostile ones, which allows service employees to restore their lost regulatory resources and bounce back after a complex interaction.

Participant 2 described her encounter with a friendly client as a blessing in disguise:

> While I was busy helping her, she was going on and on, saying no wonder you are so pretty because you are so competent. And she just made my day. Because that day, I

> didn't have a good day, but after meeting her, I just felt maybe there was a reason why she had to come to my office that day. She really brightened up my day.

A friendly interaction left participant 17 feeling optimistic and resilient to face the rest of the workday:

> But yes, it is just a different kind of feeling when you have a good interaction. You *sommer* feel optimistic for the rest of the day, and you feel that you have enough strength to continue with the rest of the day.

Being appreciated and feeling valued were other constructive emotional outcomes of facing friendly clients, that enable the participants to express their true feelings during the interaction. Participant 4 shared her experience:

> I feel appreciated, and I love it when they say, thank you for your service, your friendliness and so on …

Participant 5 shared her feelings in this regard:

> And then I will feel happy, and I will feel good if I helped him and he is satisfied. Most of the time, that kind of person will always thank you and tell you to enjoy your day or have a nice day. They really appreciate what you are doing for them.

To contribute to the organisation's success is of high importance to the participants. Therefore, during the experiences that they shared, it became clear that their role in the organisation is crucial to them, hence their continuous efforts to adhere to the organisation's display rules. Participant 7 explained this as follows:

> Friendly clients, by default in our work environment, are not always that easy to come by. Due to the nature of our work, but yes, when you do get these friendly clients, it is obviously a breath of fresh air for us. Because we don't always get friendly clients, we also don't normally get acknowledgement from clients when we do the job well. But yes, when you do encounter them, it makes you feel good about your job as well. It makes you feel valued to also know that clients realise your role and the importance of what you are doing and the circumstance that you actually work in.

Participant 16 added:

> You have to explain it in detail, and you know they will shower you with compliments. You know, and you will feel like you know I am valued, and I am contributing, I am doing something.

During the thematic analysis of the data, it was interesting to note that the ability to display authentic behaviour during client interaction directly influenced the service delivery by the employee.

- **Impact on service delivery**

Emotional labour performed by service employees affects their psychological well-being at an individual level, which affects results, such as the quality of service delivery at an organisational level (Han et al., 2018). According to the American Psychological Association (2022), service delivery refers to a complex, interrelated set of organisational and technological processes and inputs, which result in providing a service rendered to clients and providers.

The effort participants had to put into the client interactions had a definite effect on the quality of the service that they rendered. For participant 10, clients returning the next day, asking specifically to be helped by her because of her excellent service was a huge compliment:

> At the end of the day, you feel really great. Because they will come back the next visit and say ... I would like to see such and such a person because the last time I had a pleasant visit at the organisation.

Participant 13 firmly believes that easier interactions result in better service:

> You know some clients are friendly. They make your task much easier, and your interaction with them is much easier as well, and you give the best service to them.

Participant 22 shared this same sentiment:

> And you know, when you get a client coming to your table, greeting you and making a conversation, you know, a short conversation, it actually makes things so much easier to work with a client because you understand what the client wants, and you do what you have to do for a client. So, *ja,* … after helping the client and giving them what they came here for, you actually feel good when your client is leaving your seat, and saying, thank you very much, the service was great … There should be more people like you who are willing to assist, and you always have a smile on your face, even if it is not your happy day

today, but still, you just keep on going. Then you feel so much better. It feels so nice that you are actually able to help the clients and that they feel good about your service.

Participant 19 felt that she would easily "walk the extra mile" for a friendly client:

> You have some wonderful clients, and … hmm … for those clients, I will be honest with you, I will go out of my way. I will do whatever I can to assist.

DISCUSSION

The overarching aim of this study was to explore possible reasons or factors influencing high and low emotional labour levels and other consequences of emotional labour for government service centre employees. In addition, the study aspired to meaningfully contribute to South African research literature on enhancing client service processes in the public domain by exploring service centre employees' experiences of emotional labour. Five themes were identified and classified according to the research objectives, as shown in Figure 5.1:

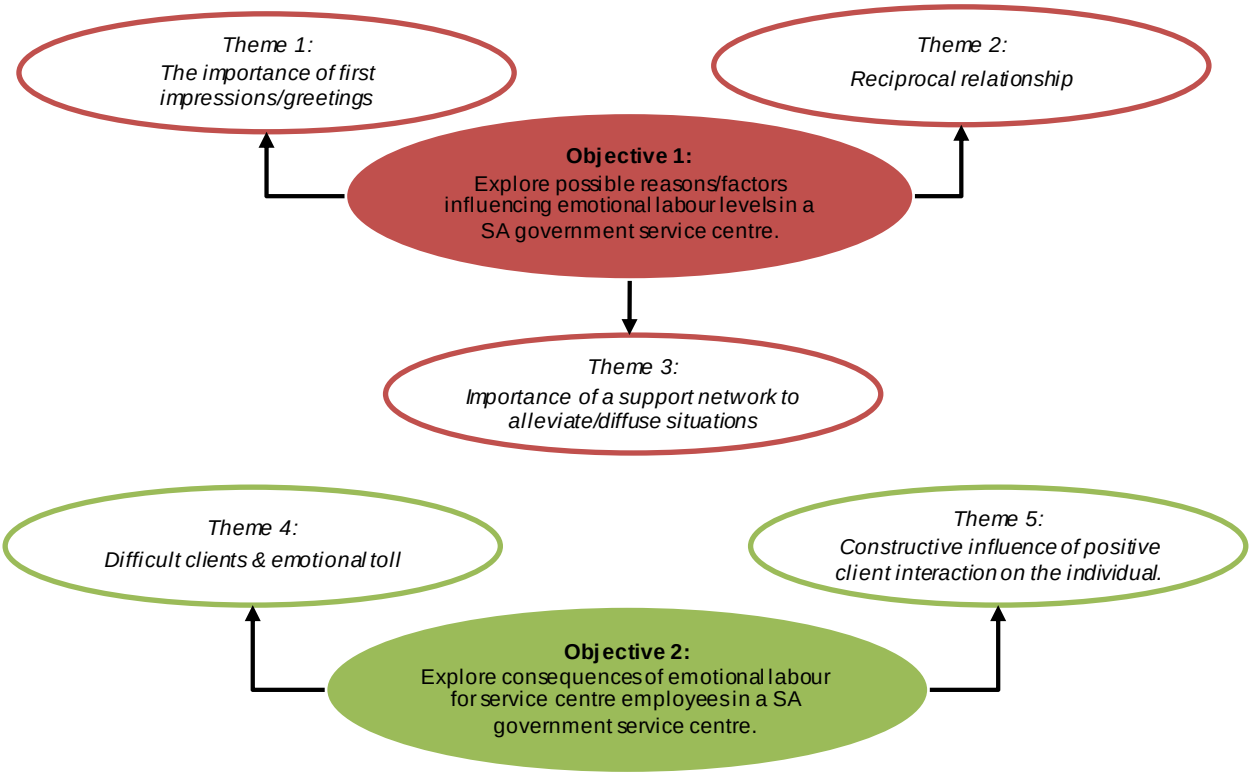

Figure 5.1 *Visual display of antecedents and consequences of emotional labour*

Nowadays, service interactions play a pivotal role in the public domain, and government organisations have to continuously focus on improving service encounters. Yet, often when management strategizes about innovative ways to enhance service, they usually think about operational and process enhancements (Dasu & Chase, 2010). They often neglect to pay attention to the subtleties, such as emotion regulation, during client interaction (Vargo & Lusch, 2008).

The first objective of this study was to explore possible reasons or factors that influence emotional labour levels in a South African government service centre. Three themes emerged during the semi-structured interviews: the importance of first impressions/greetings, reciprocal relationships, and a proper support network to alleviate or diffuse situations.

Theme 1: The importance of first impressions/greetings

Based on data gathered, it was evident that "How you kick off, is how you will end", according to the experience shared by participant 6. In theme one, three additional subthemes, first impressions/greetings, emotional intelligence, and work experience were identified during the thematic data analysis.

First impressions can be defined as the initial perception of another person, which can be perceived either as negative or positive (American Psychological Association, 2022). Theoretical analyses confirm the primary effect of first impressions and give it greater weight in the perceiver's mind than information gathered later in the interaction (American Psychological Association, 2022). Gardner et al. (2009) believe that initial impressions shape future relationships, which make them essential in the service industry. For participants in this study, the first impression during client interaction was essential and set the tone for the rest of the engagement. According to participant 2, her friendly initial greeting of a client often diffuses a problematic situation, which is in line with research done by Shuler and Morgan (2013), who found an important psychological element linked to how an employee greets a client. They believe that an emotional bond is established during the initial greeting, which minimises the need to perform emotional labour.

Due to the nature of the service rendered by the government service centre under research, most clients who visit the branch are somewhat nervous or anxious, which subsequently affects their behaviour. Therefore, it is crucial for the participant to accurately assess the situation and then to adjust his/her initial approach to remain professional. Participant 11 mentioned that by trying to associate with the client's circumstances and frustrations, it is possible to use *emotional intelligence* to understand, manage, and use alternative emotions to communicate more

effectively, relieve stress, and empathise with the client. In a study done by Petrides and Mavroveli (2018), emotional intelligence was one of the key drivers determining the emotional labour strategy. Lopes (2016) argues that individuals with high levels of emotional intelligence manage their emotions better and regulate behaviour more effectively in response to a situation that demands emotional regulation.

Another thought-provoking observation made during data analysis was that participants with long *years of service* could control their emotions during client interactions more effectively. Participant 1 was confident that she could analyse client behaviour better within the first few seconds of the encounter due to her experience over her 28 years of service. Participant 2 used his 16 years of experience as a service employee to have empathy with an angry or upset client. By doing this, he has the advantage to diffuse the difficult situation by altering his own emotions and, subsequently, his reaction to a rude client. Ericson and Grove (2008) found a definite relation between age, length of service, and emotional labour levels, where higher levels of emotional labour positively related to shorter length of service.

Theme 2: Reciprocal relationships

A reciprocal relationship develops two variables that mutually influence each other, which means that both can be a cause and an effect (American Psychological Association, 2022). Two additional subthemes, client behaviour and lack of product specific knowledge were identified during data analysis. From the participants' experiences, it became clear that the success of client interaction is a two-way street, where a positive, reciprocal relationship between the service employee and client could result in, productive encounters leaving both parties happy and content with the interaction. The principle of reciprocity leans towards an individual's internal sense of obligation, which means that if someone treats the individual in a certain way, he/she feels obliged to react in a similar manner (Gabriel & Diefendorff, 2015).

During the thematic analysis of data, *client behaviour* was one of the critical factors that influence service employees' experiences of emotional labour. According to the American Psychological Association (2022), social behaviour refers to the behaviour amongst two or more organisms from the same species, where their interaction has a definite effect on each other. For participants 5, 16, and 19 the client needed to remain focused on the problem/possible solution and not get personal. Estes and Wang (2008) labelled rude/unpleasant client behaviour as "customer incivility". They defined it as "low-intensity deviant behaviour, perpetrated by someone in a customer or client role, with ambiguous intent to harm an employee, in violation of social norms of mutual respect and courtesy". Diefendorff et al. (2008) found that a critical variable monitored by service employees during emotional labour episodes is how pleasant or friendly a client is

during his/her interaction. In a study done by Diefendorff and Gosserand (2003), they theorised that rude behaviour by a client produces a discrepancy in the organisational objective of satisfying the client, which forces the service employee to enhance or change his/her emotional display in an attempt to rectify the situation. Participant 1 further explained that if a client is friendly and kind, she tends to listen more attentively and to communicate more effectively, which results in a more authentic behavioural display by the service employee. Grandey and Sayre (2019) found that clients who display positive receptive behaviour receive better service and establish a healthy trust relationship between themselves and the service employee, which reduces the need for the employee to fake emotions during an interaction.

Experiences shared by participants highlighted the fact that client frustration, in many instances, is caused by uncertainty, a *lack of product-specific knowledge,* and misconceptions about the processes and procedures in the government organisation. Participants described the processes and procedures employed by the government service centre under research as complex, web-based, and heavily reliant on self-help technology. These barriers cause clients to feel overwhelmed, uncertain, and frustrated when they experience a problem. Clients' lack of knowledge regarding organisational products, their unwillingness to educate themselves regarding newly introduced online models, and their lack of effort to do research in this regard were some of the critical reasons that service employees had to regulate or suppress their emotions during complex client interactions.

Theme 3: Importance of a support network to alleviate/diffuse situations

Participant 19 described the importance of a support network in alleviating difficult situations as follows: "I will then call someone, and they will take it from there. That help things not to escalate and get any further". In the experiences that they shared, participants reiterated the importance of continuous support during daily interactions and identified three support networks: managerial, collegial, and organisational. Grandey (2000) agrees with this opinion and states that amongst the wide variety of job resources that have an effect on emotional regulation, a service employees' perception of organisational, managerial, and collegial support appears to be very important.

Managerial support was continuously flagged during the experiences that participants shared. It became evident that service employees in the government organisation under research often relied on managerial support and intervention when nothing else would calm the client down during a complex interaction. Managerial support was perceived by participants as assistance received from either the branch manager or the direct operations (ops) manager and took various forms, which included employee involvement during decision-making on issues pertaining to the service centre work environment and facilitating effective communication between the client and

the service employee during an interaction. Kim et al. (2017) argue that managers are a powerful source of social support because their encouragement may strengthen the internalisation of display rules motivating service employees to reappraise challenging client encounters to minimise the suppression of authentic feelings. Lam and Chen (2012) agree with this. They argue that providing sufficient managerial support increases the service employees' positive perceptions of interactional justice, which decreases negative emotions and leads to higher deep acting and lower surface acting levels.

Collegial support refers to the assistance asked for and received from individuals working in the same organisation as the interviewed participants. For participant 9, the support that she received from a kind and selfless colleague diffused a problematic situation. Continuous collegial support and camaraderie were identified during the thematic analysis of the data. Strack and Deutsch (2004) believe that asking a colleague to take over a difficult client may decrease negative emotions by modifying the emotional situation. In contrast, this strategy may also backfire on the service employee because seeking help may be seen as personal incompetence, inadequacy, or even immaturity to perform your duty. Participants 6 and 17 indicated that their calm and collected personalities are often relied upon to assist their colleagues when they realise that a situation is getting out of hand, which helps to avoid unnecessary problems and disciplinary action.

Organisational support can be defined as an employee's perception of how much the organisation cares about his/her well-being (Yoo & Arnold, 2016). The thematic analysis of the data revealed that participants experienced negative organisational support in terms of system changes that are done without prior consultation with the service centre employees, process and procedure changes related to the Covid-19 pandemic, and insufficient opportunity to recover between client interactions. Participant 15 expressed her desire to be part of the decision-making process when changes to the system are made in the branch office. She shared an experience where she was not aware of the changes that had been made by the organisation. She then had to explain the changes to a client. This situation resulted in a very unpleasant interaction that required many fake emotions. Duke et al. (2009) suggest that if improvements or changes are made to organisational processes and systems, it is imperative to consider the input of employees directly involved with the particular system as this will reduce the need for emotional labour due to in-house changes. With the Covid-19 pandemic, the need arose to set a "new normal" to ensure the continuation of service while embracing the disaster management rules of the country. Unfortunately, in the government organisation under research, client interactions with the organisation had to change dramatically. Participants shared experiences in which they had had to face extremely frustrated and rude clients due to the changed way of working. This contributed to challenging client encounters, which forced the service employees to constantly suppress felt

emotions to adhere to the organisation's display rules. A third very prominent concern raised by the participants was the allowed timeframe between client interactions according to the organisational client service rules. Participants 5, 10, 16, and 22 shared highly unpleasant experiences that involved rude clients, directly after which they we expected to immediately call the next client, without being allowed any time to recuperate from their previous negative emotional ordeal. Service employees who experience care and respect from the organisation are likely to feel that their basic need for emotional support is satisfied. This increases the sense of belonging and reduces the need to rely on emotional labour (Grandey, 2000). Yoo and Arnold (2016) found that social support was positively linked to deep acting and negatively related to surface acting.

The second objective of this study was to explore the consequences of emotional labour for service centre employees in a South African government service centre. Two themes emerged during the semi-structured interviews: difficult clients and the emotional toll and the constructive influence of positive client interaction on the individual.

Theme 4: Difficult clients and the emotional toll

Participant 2 summarises the emotional toll of having to deal with a difficult client as follows: "Life doesn't require that we be the best, but only that we try our best … So, every day I try to do my best, but when you are getting a client like that, it feels as if they are taking the ground out under your feet". Performing emotional labour, which is defined as suppressing or altering authentic feelings, was found to have various consequences for service employees during client interactions (Hochschild, 2012). The consequences suffered by participants in this study were not always the same. However, the thematic data analysis confirmed that each participant in the government service centre had an unpleasant experience to share. Consequences of emotional labour in theme 4 were categorised into two subthemes, emotional and psychological distress and the negative effect on the home life of service employees.

In the literature, extensive research examined the *emotional and psychological effect* of suppressing true feelings when dealing with unpleasant clients (Scott & Barnes, 2011). Participants' experiences recorded in this study confirmed detrimental consequences similar to those identified in the literature. Alarmingly, data from the current study confirmed that the variety and intensity of the emotions expressed by the participants were very high and something the organisation should take note of. The professional yet rigid manner that participant 1 uses when interacting with demanding clients was described as having a draining effect on her emotional and physical health, which leaves her feeling exhausted after each client encounter. Emotional exhaustion can be defined as being overextended and totally depleted of physical and emotional

resources and often results in additional efforts needed to continue to suppress felt emotions during client interactions (Wagner et al., 2014).

During a client interaction where the client held participant 4 personally accountable for his problems, a feeling of disappointment was sparked and caused her to feel unworthy to assist him. This is in line with research done by Thompson et al. (2020), who confirmed that chronic exposure to adverse events such as complex interactions over which the employee has little or no control, may result in a feeling of worthlessness. Participants 16 and 20 felt unappreciated, degraded, and belittled after going out of their way to serve the client to the best of their ability by strictly adhering to organisational display rules. Research done by Erickson (2004) confirmed that employees often choose to intensify their emotional labour to feel proud rather than belittled by the problematic client.

Due to the open-plan concept in the government service centre under research, service employees can catch a glimpse of all clients entering the office. Participant 5 described this as cumbersome because a rude client can be heard and seen even before he/she reaches the participant's counter. She confirmed that this contributed immensely to her feelings of anxiety, and fear of abuse and humiliation. Wagner et al. (2014) define anxiety as a negatively valenced emotion associated with constructs such as fear and tension. In their research, it was confirmed that service employees would intensify their surface acting when dealing with a difficult client in order to avoid disappointment and abuse. Unfortunately, the nature of business in which the government organisation is involved produces many frustrated and angry clients, which makes it almost impossible for service employees to avoid emotional labour. During the thematic data analysis, it became evident that participants have to constantly ignore their feelings due to the strict organisational display rules, which causes service employees to experience high levels of emotional labour, which often spill over to the employees' *home life*.

Wagner et al. (2014) are of the opinion that an employee's place of work should not be seen as an island in an individual's life because stress, attitude, emotion, and behaviour tend to spill over between family and work domains. Chi et al. (2018) confirm that negative emotions caused by client mistreatment can accumulate and persist and can, in turn, severely influence employees' behaviour at home. The thematic analysis of data confirmed that participants in this study shared the same sentiment. For some of them, "being human" was a primary factor for not being able to leave their negative emotions caused by emotional labour in the office when returning home. In the words of participant 19: "So, I will not have this good day at work, and yes, of course, I will take some of it home because I am only human" During data analysis, participants 16 and 18 shared their cognitive efforts in dealing with negative emotions after work. For them, it was unfair

to project their negativity onto their family members, and so instead, they found ways to deal with and minimise the effect.

Theme 5: Constructive influence of positive client interaction on the individual.

Various studies have been conducted to determine the influence of positive client behaviour on emotional labour. According to Maneotis et al. (2014), positive prosocial behaviour from clients elicits a positive mood and lower levels of emotional labour and less emotional strain on service employees. Humphrey et al. (2015) agree with this statement. They found that positive organisations display rules, encourage positive emotions, and have beneficial outcomes. In contrast, negative organisational display rules, that encourage suppression of emotions, generally have poor outcomes for the employee, clients, and the organisation. In line with the above findings, participants in this study confirmed the constructive influences that positive client interactions had on them as individuals.

During the thematic data analysis, constructive influences of positive client interaction were categorised into three subthemes, namely job satisfaction, positive emotions, and effect on service delivery.

Job satisfaction refers to an individual's positive or pleasurable emotional state resulting from an appraisal of their job (Nguyen & Stinglhamber, 2021). According to the American Psychological Association (2022), job satisfaction can be defined as an employee's attitude towards his/her job, which is often expressed as a hedonic response of liking or disliking the rewards, recognition, and the work itself, working conditions, clients or colleagues. Adams and Webster (2013) found a strong relationship between job satisfaction and various relevant workplace behaviours, which include counterproductive workplace behaviour, job performance, and organisational citizenship. In a service environment, the service employees are constantly investing effort to change their emotional expressions by suppressing or altering their true feelings and replacing them with organisational desired ones. According to Adams and Webster (2013) this often results in very low job satisfaction levels. It can therefore be argued that when friendly, positive interactions occur, the service employee does not have to suppress his/her true feelings, which results in, as participant 3 mentioned, work satisfaction. Participants 9 and 18 shared similar experiences and reiterated that when confronted with a friendly client, they feel satisfied and content with their service. This, in turn results in an authentic display of behaviour and lower levels of emotional labour. Pugh 2001 confirms that clients' friendly behaviour during service interactions may lead to various organisationally desired outcomes, better service quality, enhanced client satisfaction, and engaged employees.

"The only thing that I can add is … working for this organisation is not easy, and we get the nastiest clients sometimes..", participant 2. During the thematic analysis of data, it became evident that not all clients are the same, as confirmed by participant 19: "For every one nasty client that you have, you have ten and even twenty nice ones. So, it makes up for that one rude one…". As stated by Liu et al. (2019), this makes it possible for the participants to restore their lost regulatory resources and bounce back after a complex interaction. The *positive emotional* experience shared by participant 17 left her feeling optimistic and resilient to face the rest of the day. Resilience from a service employee's perspective refers to an individual psychological trait that enables the employee to reassess situations instead of automatically reacting to stimuli (Lee & Kim, 2020). This means that there is a definite relationship between resilience and the deep acting strategy of emotional labour (Masten, 2001). Most of the participants mentioned that they feel very strongly about contributing to the organisation's success, hence their continuous efforts to adhere to the organisation's display rules and the importance of being resilient.

According to Han et al. (2018), service employees' psychological well-being is affected when they perform emotional labour, which subsequently affects results at an organisational level, such as the quality of service delivery. *Service delivery* is a complex, interrelated set of organisational and technological processes and inputs that result in the provision of a service rendered to clients (American Psychological Association, 2022). Experiences shared by participants confirmed that client interactions have a distinct impact on the service that they render. Participants 10, 13, and 22 felt that more accessible, friendly client interactions contribute to better service because they can be authentic when displaying emotions, which enables them to "walk the extra mile".

In conclusion, this study found some subtle differences in the antecedents and consequences of emotional labour compared to previous studies. These differences can be attributed to the fact that the antecedents and consequences of emotional labour were explored within the public domain where the client dynamics are different from those in a typical service environment. The subtle differences are not contradictory to existing literature but are rather a refinement and expansion of the current knowledge. The researcher strongly believes that the results obtained through this study will contribute to the development of the emotional labour theory of emotional labour in a South African context.

Recommendations and conclusions

Given the significant association between client service, employee well-being, organisational outcomes, and emotional labour, organisations should start to proactively prepare themselves to manage emotional labour in the workplace. One way to do this is to develop relevant and

progressive standard operating procedures and policies that address organisational display rules and to have open conversations with service employees.

Organisations should consider targeted training interventions to introduce and explain the different strategies of emotional labour and to emphasize the antecedents and consequences of each strategy to give the service employees the opportunity to make an informed decision.

Managers should be equipped with the knowledge to get a better understanding of emotional labour-related behaviour in in-service employees. This will enable the managers to anticipate challenges more effectively and to develop interventions to support service employees better.

The organisation should focus more intensely on appropriate job design that takes the inclusion of emotional labour into account. The service job description could include mechanisms to enhance employees' ability to effectively deal with emotional labour. For example, the service job can be designed in such a way to allow for more frequent rotation between tasks to limit daily direct client interaction.

The organisation could promote positive client behaviour by placing a notice board at the office entrance to encourage friendly, positive behaviour towards service employees, for example, "your smile makes my day".

Each employee is unique, and everyone experiences client interactions differently. It is recommended that the organisation should consider an individualised approach when exposing service employees to soft skills training. Concepts such as emotional intelligence, critical thinking, communication skills, listening skills, empathy, professional body language, and conflict resolution should form part of the soft skills training as participants in this study mentioned these aspects as important emotional labour antecedents.

Awareness campaigns should be introduced in the service environment of the organisation to make employees aware that they are not the only ones faced with emotional labour. In this way, colleagues can share their experiences and ideas on how to deal with specific clients. An open dialogue should be encouraged between colleagues and managers where the service employee is willing to honestly share, and managers are willing to listen and learn from the experiences.

Limitations and recommendations for future research

One of the most prominent limitations of qualitative research is that the findings cannot be extended to a broader population with the same degree of certainty as in quantitative research. This is mainly because the qualitative findings cannot be tested for statistical significance and can be due to chance. Emotional labour presents different challenges to different individuals due to

the way that they choose to react to the display rules of the organisation. As a result, it may be challenging to integrate the different experiences of employees. Therefore, it is recommended that future research should include a greater variety of government organisations in South Africa.

Many personal perspectives, opinions, and experiences were gathered from multiple participants during the qualitative research process, which resulted in a time-consuming endeavour. The researcher had to sift through each descriptive response to gain a better understanding of the emotional labour concept.

Due to the magnitude of reactions, emotions, and responses received from the participants it will be challenging to replicate the qualitative data in this study. Interview participants, in some instances, had a completely different answer to a question than others, which made broad categorisation extremely difficult. Future research should expand on the results by replicating the study using a longitudinal design to allow the researcher to explore experiences of emotional labour on more than one occasion.

The quality of qualitative research is often heavily dependent on the interviewer's skills, and the researcher's presence during data gathering, which is mostly unavoidable during qualitative studies, can affect the participants' responses. Therefore, it is recommended that future research should employ, fully qualified, independent interviewers.

References

Adams, G. A., & Webster, J. R. (2013). Emotional regulation as a mediator between interpersonal mistreatment and distress. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, *22*(6), 697-710. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1359432X.2012.698057

Akın, U., Aydın, İ., Erdoğan, Ç., & Demirkasımoğlu, N. (2014). Emotional labor and burnout among Turkish primary school teachers. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, *41*(2), 155-169.

Allen, J. A., Pugh, S. D., Grandey, A. A., & Groth, M. (2010). Following display rules in good or bad faith?: Customer orientation as a moderator of the display rule-emotional labor relationship. *Human Performance*, *23*(2), 101-115.

American Psychological Association. (2022). First impression. APA Dictionary of Psychology. https://dictionary.apa.org/first-impression

Berry, K. E., & Cassidy, S. F. (2013). Emotional labour in university lecturers: Considerations for higher education institutions. *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching*, *2*(2), 22-36.

Bodenheimer, G., & Shuster, S. M. (2020). Emotional labour, teaching and burnout: Investigating complex relationships. *Educational Research*, *62*(1), 63-76. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00131881.2019.1705868

Boucher, C. (2016). A Qualitative Study of the Impact of Emotional Labour on Health Managers. *Qualitative Report*, *21*(1), 2148-2160.

Braun, V., Clark, L., & Weate, P. (2016). Using thematic analysis in sport and exercise research. *Journal of Business Research*, *56*(12), 971-978.

Brotheridge, C. M., & Grandey, A. A. (2002). Emotional labour and burnout: Comparing two perspectives of “people work”. *Journal of vocational behaviour, 60*(1), 17-39. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0001879101918159

Brotheridge, C., & Lee, R. (2002). Testing a conservation of resources model of the dynamics of emotional labor. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 7*, 57-67.

Brotheridge, C., & Lee, R. (2003). Development and validation of the emotional labour scale. *Journal of Occupational and Organisational Psychology, 76*(3), 365-379. https://bpspsychub.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1348/096317903769647229

Cheung, F., Tang, C. S., & Tang, S. (2011). Psychological capital as a moderator between emotional labor, burnout, and job satisfaction among school teachers in China. *International Journal of Stress Management, 18*, 348-371.

Chi, N. W., Yang, J., & Lin, C. Y. (2018). Service workers' chain reactions to daily customer mistreatment: Behavioral linkages, mechanisms, and boundary conditions. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, *23*(1), 1-42. https://psycnet.apa.org/journals/ocp/23/1/58/

Chiwawa, N., & Wissink, H. (2021). Determinants of Employee Engagement in the South African Hospitality Industry During Covid-19 Lockdown Epoch: Employee Perception. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, *10*(2), 487-499.

Choi, Y. G., & Kim, K. S. (2015). A literature review of emotional labor and emotional labor strategies. *Universal Journal of Management*, *3*(7), 283-290.

Chou, H. Y. (2009). *The effects of job demands and resources on emotional labour and employees' psychological well-being* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Tasmania).

Coté, S. (2005). A social interaction model of the effects of emotion regulation on work strain. *Academy of management review*, *30*(3), 509-530. https://journals.aom.org/doi/abs/10.5465/amr.2005.17293692

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research.* Sage publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2017). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research.* Sage publications.

Dasu, S., & Chase, R. B. (2010). Designing the soft side of customer service. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, *52*(1), 33-39.

Demerouti, E., Mostert, K., & Bakker, A. B. (2010). Burnout and work engagement: a thorough investigation of the independency of both constructs. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 15*(3), 209-222.

DeNisi, A., & Griffin, R. (2015). *HR3.* Cengage Learning.

Diefendorff, J. M., & Gosserand, R. H. (2003). Understanding the emotional labor process: A control theory perspective. *Journal of Organizational Behavior: The International Journal of Industrial, Occupational and Organizational Psychology and Behavior*, *24*(8), 945-959. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/job.230

Diefendorff, J. M., Richard, E. M., & Yang, J. (2008). Linking emotion regulation strategies to affective events and negative emotions at work. *Journal of Vocational behavior*, *73*(3), 498-508.

Duke, A. B., Goodman, J. M., Treadway, D. C., & Breland, J. W. (2009). Perceived organizational support as a moderator of emotional labor/outcomes relationships. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *39*(5), 1013-1034. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2009.00470.x

Du Plessis, Y., & Barkhuizen, E. (2011, May). Strategic role of human resource professionals in a South African context. In *15th European Association of Work and Organisational Psychology Conference*, Maastricht, *The Netherlands*, 25-28.

Erickson, R. J., & Grove, W. J. (2008). Emotional labor and health care. *Sociology Compass*, *2*(2), 704-733.

Ericson-Lidman, E., & Strandberg, G. (2007). Meanings of being a supervisor for care providers suffering from burnout: From initial signs to recuperation. *Journal of Nursing Management*, *17*(3), 366-375. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1365-2834.2008.00933.x

Estes, B., & Wang, J. (2008). Integrative literature review: Workplace incivility: Impacts on individual and organizational performance. *Human Resource Development Review*, *7*(2), 218-240.

Eisenberger, R., Huntington, R., Hutchison, S., & Sowa, D. (1986). Perceived organizational support. *Journal of Applied psychology*, *71*(3), 500-507.

Erickson, K. (2004). To invest or detach? Coping strategies and workplace culture in service work. *Symbolic Interaction*, *27*(4), 549-572.

Gabriel, A. S., Cheshin, A., Moran, C. M., & Van Kleef, G. A. (2016). Enhancing emotional performance and customer service through human resources practices: A systems perspective. *Human Resource Management Review*, *26*(1), 14-24. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1053482215000510

Gabriel, A. S., & Diefendorff, J. M. (2015). Emotional labor dynamics: A momentary approach. *Academy of management Journal*, *58*(6), 1804-1825.

Gardner, W. L., Fischer, D., & Hunt, J. G. J. (2009). Emotional labor and leadership: A threat to authenticity?. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *20*(3), 466-482.

Grandey, A. A. (2000). Emotional regulation in the workplace: A new way to conceptualize emotional labor. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 5*, 95-110. https://psycnet.apa.org/buy/1999-15533-009

Grandey, A. A. (2003). When "the show must go on": Surface acting and deep acting as determinants of emotional exhaustion and peer-rated service delivery. *Academy of Management Journal, 46*, 86-96.

Grandey, A. A., & Gabriel, A. S. (2015). Emotional labor at a crossroads: Where do we go from here? *Annual Review Organisational Psychology and Organisational Behaviour*, *2*(1), 323-349.

Grandey, A. A., Rupp, D., & Brice, W. N. (2015). Emotional labor threatens decent work: A proposal to eradicate emotional display rules. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *36*(6), 770-785.

Grandey, A. A., & Sayre, G. M. (2019). Emotional labor: Regulating emotions for a wage. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *28*(2), 131-137. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0963721418812771

Groth, M., Henning-Thurau, T., & Walsh, G. (2009). Customer reactions to emotional labor: The roles of employee acting strategies and customer detection accuracy. *Academy of Management Journal, 52*, 958-974.

Guy, M. E., & Azhar, A. (2018). Emotional labor meanings, gender, and culture: A comparative assessment. *Administrative Theory & Praxis*, *40*(4), 289-303. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10841806.2018.1485452

Guy, M. E., & Lee, H. J. (2015). How emotional intelligence mediates emotional labour in public service jobs. *Review of Public Personnel Administration, 35*(3), 261-277.

Hackman, J. R., & Oldham, G. R. (1975). Development of the job diagnostic survey. *Journal of Applied psychology*, *60*(2), 159-170.

Han, S. J., Bonn, M. A., & Cho, M. (2016). The relationship between customer incivility, restaurant frontline employee burnout, and turnover intention. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 52, 97-106. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0278431915001565

Han, S. S., Han, J. W., & Kim, Y. H. (2018). Effect of nurses' emotional labor on customer orientation and service delivery: the mediating effects of work engagement and burnout. *Safety and health at work*, *9*(4), 441-446.

Hochschild, A. R. (1983). *The managed heart: A commercialization of human feelings.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Hochschild, A. R. (2012). *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Hoopes, B. (2006). Key burnout warning signs. *Landscape Management, 45*(8), 16.

Hülsheger, U. R., Lang, J. W. B., & Maier, G. W. (2010). Emotional labour, strain, and performance: Testing reciprocal relationships in a longitudinal panel study. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 15*, 505-521. https://psycnet.apa.org/getdoi.cfm?doi=10.1037/a0021003

Hülsheger, U. R., & Schewe, A. F. (2011). On the costs and benefits of emotional labor: A meta-analysis of three decades of research. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 16*, 361-389.

Humphrey, R. H., Ashforth, B. E., & Diefendorff, J. M. (2015). The bright side of emotional labor. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *36*(6), 749-769.

Hur, W. M., Moon, T. W., & Han, S. J. (2015). The effect of customer incivility on service employees' customer orientation through double-mediation of surface acting and

emotional exhaustion. *Journal of Service Theory and Practice*, *25,* 394-413. https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/JSTP-02-2014-0034/full/html

Jett, Q. R., & George, J. M. (2003). Work interrupted: A closer look at the role of interruptions in organizational life. *Academy of management Review*, *28*(3), 494-507.

Jonker, C. (2012). Measures of emotion work: factor structure and group differences in a care giving population in South Africa. *Journal of WEI business and economics, 1*(1), 39-58.

Karl, K. A., & Peluchette, J. V. (2006). Does workplace fun buffer the impact of emotional exhaustion on job dissatisfaction: a study of healthcare workers. J*ournal of Behavioural and Applied Management*. *7*(2), 128-141. https://jbam.scholasticahq.com/article/16553.pdf

Kim, H. J., Hur, W. M., Moon, T. W., & Jun, J. K. (2017). Is all support equal? The moderating effects of supervisor, coworker, and organizational support on the link between emotional labor and job performance. *BRQ Business Research Quarterly*, *20*(2), 124-136.

Kruml, S. M., & Geddes, D. (2000). Exploring the dimensions of emotional labor: The heart of Hochschild's work. *Management communication quarterly*, *14*(1), 8-49.

Lam, W., & Chen, Z. (2012). When I put on my service mask: Determinants and outcomes of emotional labor among hotel service providers according to affective event theory. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *31*(1), 3-11. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0278431911000661

Lavee, E., & Strier, R. (2019). Transferring emotional capital as coerced discretion: Street-level bureaucrats reconciling structural deficiencies. *Public Administration*, *97*(4), 910-925.

Lee, H. J. (2016). Effects of public-service employee age and performance of emotional labour on job pride. *Social Behaviour and Personality: An International Journal*, *44*, 1339-1348.

Lee, Y. H. (2019). Emotional labor, teacher burnout, and turnover intention in high-school physical education teaching. *European Physical Education Review*, *25*(1), 236-253. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1356336X17719559

Lee, M. S., & Kim, H. S. (2020). The Effects of Service Employee Resilience on Emotional Labor: Double-Mediation of Person–Job Fit and Work Engagement. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *17*(19), 1-15.

Liu, X. Y., Chi, N. W., & Gremler, D. D. (2019). Emotion cycles in services: emotional contagion and emotional labor effects. *Journal of Service Research*, *22*(3), 285-300.

Lopes, P. N. (2016). Emotional intelligence in organizations: Bridging research and practice. *Emotion Review*, *8*(4), 316-321. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1754073916650496

Maneotis, S. M., Grandey, A. A., & Krauss, A. D. (2014). Understanding the "why" as well as the "how": Service performance is a function of prosocial motives and emotional labor. *Human Performance*, *27*(1), 80-97.

Masiya, T., Davids, Y. D. & Mangai, M.S. (2019). Assessing service delivery: Public perception of municipal service delivery in South Africa. *Theoretical and Empirical Researches in Urban Management*, *14*(2), 20-40.

Masten, A. S. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American psychologist*, *56*(3), 227-238.

Mauno, S., Ruokolainen, M., Kinnunen, U., & De Bloom, J. (2016). Emotional labour and work engagement among nurses: examining perceived compassion, leadership and work ethic as stress buffers. *Journal of advanced nursing*, *72*, 1169-1181. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/jan.12906

Moreo, A., Woods, R., Sammons, G., & Bergman, C. (2018). Connection or competence: Emotional labor and service quality's impact on satisfaction and loyalty. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *31*(1), 330-348.

Morris, J. A., & Feldman, D. C. (1996). The dimensions, antecedents, and consequences of emotional labor. *Academy of management review*, *21*(4), 986-1010.

Morse, J. M., Barret, M., Mayan, M., Olson, K., & Spiers, J. (2002). Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *1*(2), 13-22. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/160940690200100202

Mroz, J., & Kaleta, K. (2016). Relationships between personality, emotional labor, work engagement and job satisfaction in service professions. *International journal of occupational medicine and environmental health*, *29*(5), 767-782.

Oldham, G. R. (1976). Job characteristics and internal motivation: The moderating effect of interpersonal and individual variables. *Human Relations*, *29*(6), 559-569.

Petrides, K. V., & Mavroveli, S. (2018). Theory and applications of trait emotional intelligence. *Psychology: The Journal of the Hellenic Psychological Society*, *23*(1), 24-36. https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/345014398.pdf

Pugh, S. D. (2001). Service with a smile: Emotional contagion in the service encounter. *Academy of management journal*, *44*(5), 1018-1027. https://journals.aom.org/doi/abs/10.5465/3069445

Ramachandran, Y., Jordan, P. J., Troth, A. C., & Lawrence, S. A. (2011). Emotional intelligence, emotional labour and organisational citizenship behaviour in service environments. *International Journal of Work Organisation and Emotion*, *4*(2), 136-157.

Resnik, D. (2018). *The ethics of research with human subjects: Protecting people, advancing science, promoting trust.* (Vol. 74) Springer.

Sabino, W. T. R., & Bianchi, L. C. D. (2019). How quality of service can affect an organisation: A study on the importance of good customer service. *Research, Society and Development*, 8(1), 1-10.

Scott, B. A., & Barnes, C. M. (2011). A multilevel field investigation of emotional labour, affect work withdrawal, and gender. *Academy of Management Journal*, *54*, 116-136. https://journals.aom.org/doi/abs/10.5465/amj.2011.59215086

Shenton, A. K., (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for information, 22*(2), 63-75.

Shuler, S., & Morgan, N. (2013). Emotional labor in the academic library: When being friendly feels like work. *The Reference Librarian*, *54*(2), 118-133. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02763877.2013.756684

Strack, F., & Deutsch, R. (2004). Reflective and impulsive determinants of social behavior. *Personality and social psychology review*, *8*(3), 220-247.

Taris, T. (2006). Is there a relationship between burnout and objective performance? A critical review of 16 studies. *Work & Stress, 20*(4), 316-334. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02678370601065893

Tidmarsh, M. (2020). 'The right kind of person for the job'? Emotional labour and organizational professionalism in probation. *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice*, *61,* 1-23.

Thompson, M. J., Carlson, D. S., Kacmar, K. M., & Vogel, R. M. (2020). The cost of being ignored: Emotional exhaustion in the work and family domains. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *105*(2), 186-195. https://psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2Fapl0000433

Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2008). Why "service"?. *Journal of the Academy of marketing Science*, *36*(1), 25-38.

Wagner, D. T., Barnes, C. M., & Scott, B. A. (2014). Driving it home: How workplace emotional labor harms employee home life. *Personnel Psychology*, *67*(2), 487-516. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/peps.12044

Wang, H., Hall, N. C., & Taxer, J. L. (2019). Antecedents and consequences of teachers' emotional labor: A systematic review and meta-analytic investigation. *Educational Psychology Review*, *31*(3), 663-698.

Winkler, I. (2018). Identity work and emotions: a review. *International journal of management reviews, 20*(1), 120-133. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/ijmr.12119

Wu, C., Chen, Y. C., & Umstattd Meyer, M. R. (2020). A moderated mediation model of emotional labor and service performance: Examining the role of work-family interface and physically active leisure. *Human Performance*, *33*(1), 34-51.

Wu, T. J., Wang, L. Y., Gao, J. Y., & Wei, A. P. (2020). Social support and well-being of Chinese special education teachers—An emotional labor perspective. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *17*(18), 2-16. https://www.mdpi.com/833152

Yang, F. X., & Lau, V. M. C. (2019). Evil customers, an angel boss and competitive co-workers: Burnout of frontline employees. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 83*, 1-10.

Yazdanshenas, M., & Khorsandi, H. (2020). Using Emotional Labor to Increase Sales Performance; the Role of Perceived Organizational Support. *Journal of Business Management*, *12*(1), 94-115.

Yilmaz, K., Altinkurt, Y., & Güner, M. (2015). The relationship between teachers' emotional labor and burnout level. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, *15*(59), 75-90. https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/ejer/issue/42376/510220

Yin, H. (2015). The effect of teachers' emotional labour on teaching satisfaction: Moderation of emotional intelligence. *Teachers and Teaching*, *21*(7), 789-810.

Yoo, J., & Arnold, T. J. (2016). Frontline employee customer-oriented attitude in the presence of job demands and resources: The influence upon deep and surface acting. *Journal of Service Research*, *19*(1), 102-117.

Zhang, Q., & Zhu, W. (2008). Exploring emotion in teaching: Emotional labor, burnout, and satisfaction in Chinese higher education. *Communication Education*, *57*(1), 105-122. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03634520701586310

CHAPTER 6:

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the conclusions of this study in accordance with the specific and general objectives formulated in this thesis. The limitations of the study are also discussed and recommendations for future research and practice are shared at the end of this chapter.

6.1 Conclusions

The general objectives of the study were to explore the relationship between burnout, recovery experiences, work engagement, and emotional labour; to investigate the relationship between the subdimensions of psychological capital on the subdimensions of emotional labour, and through qualitative interviews, to contribute to the literature by exploring antecedents and consequences of emotional labour explicitly linked to a government organisation in South Africa.

The first objective was to empirically investigate the relationship between emotional labour, burnout, and work engagement in a government service centre. According to the literature, emotional labour and specifically surface acting are extremely stressful job demands that contribute to high burnout levels in service environments (Rogers et al., 2014). Results obtained from this study confirmed a positive relationship between surface acting and burnout, which means that if surface acting increased, burnout also increased. Surface acting levels measured in the government organisation were extremely high, and should therefore be a definite cause for concern. An explanation for this phenomenon can be the continuous demand on service employees to maintain positive emotional and bodily displays in line with the organisation's display rules. The relationship between deep acting and burnout was also investigated, and contradictory to research done by Scott and Barnes (2011), a positive relationship was found between the two constructs. Grandey (2000) suggested that although deep acting generates lower levels of inconsistency between inner and outer feelings, a small degree of effort is still needed to alter authentic feelings, expressions, and thoughts during client interaction, which could lead to an increase in burnout levels.

Nevertheless, despite the positive relationship with burnout, Rogers et al. (2014) also confirmed positive relationships between deep acting, increased job satisfaction, and work engagement, making it the better emotional labour strategy to choose when necessary. Although no significant relationship was found between EL – Deep acting and work engagement, a strong negative correlation was found between EL – Surface acting and work engagement. This is in line with Pugliesi's (1999) finding that surface acting constantly leads to disengaged employees. Work

engagement measured relatively low in the organisation, which implies that the most critical resource in the organisation is detached and may have a higher propensity to leave.

The second objective explored the effect of the subdimension of psychological capital (PC) on the subdimensions of emotional labour (EL). Pugh et al. (2011) believe that emotional labour – particularly the surface acting strategy – is associated with various adverse workplace outcomes due to the significant effect on service employees' psychological well-being. This statement should be a cause for concern to the government organisation under research as extremely high levels of surface acting amongst service employees were found during data analysis. This implies that service employees' psychological well-being could be in jeopardy. PC – Hope and PC – optimism proved to have a significant negative correlation with EL – Surface acting. This could benefit the organisation and act as a moderator between EL – Surface acting and psychological well-being. Tamer (2015) believes that the positive state created by hope and optimism may provide a more effective psychological base for individuals to overcome communicational and relational stress factors in the work environment, enabling the employees to show their genuine emotions felt during client interaction. In addition, a significant positive correlation was found between PC – Resilience and EL – Deep acting, implying that resilient service employees possess the necessary positive resource to navigate turbulent and stressful work environments.

The third objective aimed to investigate the moderating effect of psychological capital (PsyCap) on the relationship between emotional labour and burnout. Although data confirmed a significant negative relationship between PsyCap and burnout, only the PC – Resilience dimension moderated the relationship between emotional labour and burnout, which means that the moods, feelings and attitudes of service employees performing emotional labour will be altered by the presence or absence of PC – Resilience. Unfortunately, emotional labour is unavoidable in any service environment. Therefore, the aim of the government organisation should be to adequately equip service centre employees, through targeted training interventions, with the four PsyCap characteristics to cope with the daily demands in the service environment.

The fourth objective aimed to determine whether recovery experiences (psychological capital and relaxation) are an antecedent to emotional labour. Emotional labour, which is regarded as a job demand increases, amongst other things, fatigue levels during working hours. Hence, the importance of investigating possible ways to counteract the adverse outcomes of emotional labour after work. This study revealed a significant negative relationship between EL – Surface acting and relaxation, reiterating the importance of service employees actively engaging in recovery activities during their leisure time. According to Sonnentag et al. (2010), relaxation after work results in better sleep patterns because detachment from workplace stressors enables the service employee to be more prepared and effective for work the following day.

The fifth objective of the study was to investigate the mediating effect of recovery experiences on the relationship between emotional labour and work engagement in the South African government service centres. Surprisingly, a small significant negative relationship was found between relaxation and work engagement. A positive correlation was hypothesised because the assumption was that resources that were depleted after a hard day at work would be replenished once the employee had had the opportunity to recover. A possible reason for the negative relationship can be found in research done by Bakker et al. (2011), which suggested that "over engaged" employees find it difficult to detach and relax because they tend to invest long hours in their jobs, which limits time available to recover mentally and physically from stressful work activities. This study further confirmed that only the relaxation dimension of recovery experiences seems to mediate the relationship between EL – Surface acting and work engagement.

The sixth objective was to explore possible reasons or factors that influence high and low emotional labour levels in the 16 Gauteng branch offices of the government service centre under research. The qualitative study findings indicated several antecedents to emotional labour within the government service centre. These included the importance of first impression/greetings, reciprocal relationship: being friendly/approachable is beneficial to the client, and the importance of a support network alleviate/diffuse the situation. The first antecedent identified was the importance of the first few seconds of client interaction. It is of utmost importance that employees and clients approach the interaction with a friendly demeanour because such an attitude will diffuse a difficult situation, influence the service employees' emotional labour strategy, and determine how the rest of the interaction unfolds. An employees' years of experience in the organisation and level of emotional intelligence were shown to be a very influential factor during the first few moments of an interaction as it can be used to empathise with the frustrated client, have better emotional control over the situation, and influence the interaction avoiding an escalation of negative emotions.

The second antecedent relates to the reciprocal relationship between the service employee and the client. Client interaction is a two-way street where a positive experience could lead to productive encounters leaving both parties satisfied and content. Client behaviour was one of the critical factors influencing service employees' experiences of emotional labour. Clients that attacked the service employee personally and did not focus on the problem forced the service employee to rely heavily on the surface acting strategy of emotional labour to remain friendly and professional according to the organisation's display rules. Clients' ignorance and unwillingness to familiarise themselves with new organisational processes and procedures caused unnecessary frustration and necessitated the suppression of authentic feelings during the interaction.

The third antecedent identified was the importance of a support network to alleviate/diffuse situations. Managerial support took various forms, for example, including service employees during decision-making and facilitating effective communication, and decreasing negative emotions during client interactions, which leads to lower levels of emotional labour. Colleague camaraderie and support were highlighted as a very prominent antecedent of emotional labour because colleagues face similar challenges during client interaction and are therefore able to offer support through various acts of kindness. The thematic analysis of data revealed that service employees experienced negative support from the organisation in terms of system changes done without prior consultation with the service employees, process and procedure changes related to the Covid-19 pandemic, and insufficient opportunity to recover after a negative client interaction.

The last objective aimed to explore other consequences of emotional labour for service agents in the government service centre under research. The qualitative study identified several consequences of emotional labour in the government service centre. These included difficult clients and the emotional toll that they have on service employees and the constructive influences of positive client interaction on the individual. The first negative consequence was the emotional and psychological effect of suppressing true feelings when dealing with unpleasant clients. Severe exhaustion, disappointment, and feeling worthless and belittled were just some of the experiences that they shared. Even after the service employees strictly adhered to the organisation's display rules, they experienced episodes of feeling anxious, unappreciated and degraded. During the thematic data analysis, it became evident that the psychological effect of emotional labour experienced in the government service centre often severely influences employees' behaviour at home.

The second set of positive consequences was reported to influence higher job satisfaction, positive emotions and better service delivery. During positive, friendly client interactions service employees do not have to suppress their true feelings, which leads to higher levels of work satisfaction and lower levels of emotional labour, leaving everyone involved in the interaction more content. Positive and friendly client interactions compensate for the negative experiences, allowing the service employees to restore their lost regulatory resources, bounce back, and be more resilient after a problematic interaction. During the thematic analysis of data, it was interesting to note that the ability to display authentic behaviour during client interaction directly influenced the quality of service delivery by the employees.

In conclusion, some subtle differences in the antecedents and consequences of emotional labour were found between the literature and the data collected. This can be attributed to how client dynamics differ between the public and private domains. These differences are not contradictory to existing literature but rather an expansion and refinement of knowledge.

6.2 Limitations

Certain limitations in this study should be mentioned and should be taken into account when results are interpreted. The first limitation is that the study was conducted in only one government organisation in South Africa. This could raise concerns since the results cannot be generalised across all South African government organisations. The second set of limitations is associated with data collection. Data collection was done using a cross-sectional survey design, therefore, although it is expected that emotional labour leads to burnout, a casual inference cannot be made. In addition, all data was collected using a self-report questionnaire. This may lead to a problem commonly referred to as “common method variance” or “nuisance”.

The third set of limitations pertains to the Covid-19 pandemic. The national Covid-19 pandemic lockdown limited access to employees and had a negative effect due to unplanned absences, which limited the investigation period to pre-lockdown. The pandemic also influenced the sample size as the response of service employees was poor due to alternative working arrangements necessitated by the strict pandemic rules. Only 201 of the 348 surveys were retrieved.

The fourth set of limitations can be linked to the qualitative study. In qualitative research, findings cannot be extended to a broader population with the same degree of certainty as in quantitative research. This is because qualitative findings cannot be tested for statistical significance and can be due to chance. Another limitation is that emotional labour presents different challenges to different individuals because of how they react to the organisation’s display rules. As a result, it may be challenging to integrate employees’ different experiences. In qualitative research, a vast number of personal perspectives, opinions, and experiences are gathered from multiple participants, which results in a very time-consuming exercise. The researcher had to sift through each descriptive response to eventually obtain a more thorough understanding of the emotional labour concept. Due to the magnitude of reactions, emotions, and responses received from the participants it will be challenging to replicate the qualitative data in this study. Interview participants, in some instances, had a completely different answer to a question to others, which made broad categorisation extremely difficult.

Lastly, questionnaires were only available in English, therefore the possibility exists that participants’ level of English language skills could have influenced the results.

6.3 Recommendations

Even though the study presented some limitations, valuable recommendations pertaining specifically to the government organisation under research, and recommendations for future research are made in this section.

6.3.1 Recommendations for practice

Results of high burnout levels positively linked to EL – Surface acting pose a massive risk to the organisation and should be addressed as a matter of urgency. Diestel and Schmidt (2011) found that person-job fit is crucial when establishing the degrees of emotional labour levels amongst service employees. This means that the organisation should pay special attention to the personality traits of new job applicants and person-environment fit in the service environment. A better alignment between personality traits and the service job will ensure less emotional dissonance and subsequently less burnout due to authentic emotional behaviour during client interactions.

Besides aligning the personality traits of new incumbents, another recommendation will be to roll out classroom training interventions for the current employees in order to improve their deep acting skills, and on-the-job interventions to magnify job responsibilities and increase task significance (Pugh et al., 2011). Another recommendation to the government organisation under research could be to allow service centre employees to attend webinars where the concept of emotional labour is explained and conceptualised to help employees to manage and cope with emotional arousal during client interactions more effectively.

It is recommended that service centre managers should be trained to take a positive, proactive leadership role and to become strengths-based training facilitators. This will enable them to support service employees when they have to identify their strengths and weaknesses during client interactions. Interactive training interventions, accessible on computers or cell phones, could be introduced to ensure a quick and hands-on training aid for managers when they have to support service employees. Managers in the government service environment should also try to increase on-the-job autonomy support by providing a clear rationale for why specific display rules are enforced and emphasizing the choice of emotional labour strategies.

The government organisation under research should consider implementing psychological capital interventions (PCI) as a positive correlation was found between psychological capital dimensions and emotional labour and between psychological capital and burnout. PsyCap is defined as a state-like variable that employees can draw from when performing emotional labour in the

workplace, and although, as seen in the study results, some employees might have naturally higher PsyCap levels, it is possible to develop these states within the individual (Aziz et al., 2018).

In addition, it is recommended that the organisation should offer specific training interventions on different types of recovery experiences to safeguard protect against the harmful effects of emotional labour. Employees and managers should be encouraged to limit after hours work to allow the individuals time to psychologically detach from work stressors. Employee value proposition programmes should be explored, and a reward system should be incorporated for individuals who engage in recovery activities such as healthy physical exercise.

To create a healthy work-life balance for service employees, the organisation should encourage strategies to recover after a hard day at work. Webinars and workshops on time management skills, detachment strategies and relaxation activities, and the implementation of well-being interventions, are recommended. Managers should be encouraged to advocate, create, and support a work climate that keeps overtime work to the minimum.

6.3.2 Recommendations for future research

Collecting data in only one government organisation in South Africa could raise concerns and pose limitations if the researcher wants to generalise the findings across the entire government sector in South Africa. Therefore, it is recommended that future research should include a greater variety of government employers within the South African context. It is also recommended that the study should be replicated in government organisations in other countries. This will allow researchers to compare the results and to benefit from exploring how emotional labour is dealt with in international government service centres.

This study was only conducted in the Gauteng region of a South African government service centre and did not involve all the service centres in the organisation. This could have a significant effect on the demographics of the sample. Future research could be extended to other regions to gain a better, more detailed understanding of how emotional labour influences work engagement in the organisation.

Research data was collected at one point in time, which does not leave any room for possible changes over time (Maree, 2020). To overcome this limitation, future research should expand on the results by replicating the study using a longitudinal design, allowing the researcher to examine the interactions between the various variables on more than one occasion. This will also allow for the degree and direction of change to be assessed over a more extended period (Maree, 2020).

In addition, longitudinal studies will enable researchers to determine whether the results could be attributed to a long-term phenomenon or whether the variables changed over time.

Self-reported questionnaires were used as the only source of information in Study 1. This can be the reason for common method bias contributing to measurement errors (Podsakoff, 2003). Researchers should therefore make use of multiple data-collection methods in the future to address these concerns.

To ensure the quality of qualitative research the interviewer needs the proper skills to conduct the interviews successfully. Interviews in this study were done by the researcher, who could have an affected the participants' responses. It is therefore recommended that future research should employ independent interviewers.

Lastly, future research should focus on identifying mediators and moderators that can weaken the effect of emotional labour on service employees. Potential mediators and moderators can include managerial support, emotional intelligence, and empathy. The study on the relationship between emotional labour and recovery experiences should be replicated but all four dimensions of recovery experiences should be included.

References

Aziz, S., Widis, A., & Wuensch, K. (2018). The association between emotional labor and burnout: the moderating role of psychological capital. *Occupational Health Science*, *2*(4), 365-383. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s41542-018-0029-1

Bakker, A. B., Albrecht, S. L., & Leiter, M. P. (2011). Key questions regarding work engagement. *European journal of work and organizational psychology*, *20*(1), 4-28. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1359432X.2010.485352

Diestel, S., & Schmidt, K. H. (2011). The moderating role of cognitive control deficits in the link from emotional dissonance to burnout symptoms and absenteeism. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, *16*(3), 313-330.

Grandey, A. A. (2000). Emotional regulation in the workplace: A new way to conceptualize emotional labor. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 5*, 95-110. https://psycnet.apa.org/buy/1999-15533-009

Maree, K. (2020). *First steps in research*. Van Schaik Publishers.

Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *885*(879), 897-903. https://psycnet.apa.org/buy/2003-08045-010

Pugliesi, K. (1999). The consequences of emotional labor: Effects on work stress, job satisfaction, and well-being. *Motivation and emotion*, *23*(2), 125-154.

Pugh, S. D., Groth, M., & Hennig-Thurau, T. (2011). Willing and able to fake emotions: A closer examination of the link between emotional dissonance and employee well-being. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *96*(2), 1-16. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2010-23149-001

Rogers, M. E., Creed, P. A., & Searle, J. (2014). Emotional labour, training stress, burnout, and depressive symptoms in junior doctors. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, *66*(2), 232-248.

Scott, B. A., & Barnes, C. M. (2011). A multilevel field investigation of emotional labour, affect work withdrawal, and gender. *Academy of Management Journal*, *54*, 116-136. https://journals.aom.org/doi/abs/10.5465/amj.2011.59215086

Sonnentag, S., Kuttler, I., & Fritz, C. (2010). Job stressors, emotional exhaustion, and need for recovery: A multi-source study on the benefits of psychological detachment. *Journal of vocational Behavior*, *76*(3), 355-365.

Tamer, I. (2015). The effect of positive psychological capital on emotional labour. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science (2147-4478), 4*(2), 20-34. http://ssbfnet.com/ojs/index.php/ijrbs/article/view/138