

Job insecurity: Emotional- and behavioural consequences

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Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree *Magister Artium* in
Industrial Psychology at the Vaal Triangle Campus of the North-West University.

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May 2009



REMARKS

The reader is reminded of the following:

- The references as well as the editorial style, as prescribed by the Publication Manual (5th edition) of the American Psychological Association (APA) were followed in this dissertation. The practice is in line with the policy of the Programme in Industrial Psychology of the North-West University (Vaal Triangle Campus) to use APA style in all scientific documents as from January 1999.
- This dissertation is submitted in the form of two research articles.
- This material is based upon work supported by the National Research Foundation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to the following people and institutions:

- Prof C van Eeden for her excellent guidance and contributions
- Mr Frik van Eeden for the statistical data processing and for his patience
- Emil van Zyl who supported me from the beginning, for his understanding and love although he had to make many sacrifices, especially regarding family time
- Rika Strydom for love, encouragement, understanding and practical assistance
- My parents, Paul and Ann Visser for their encouragement and support
- My friends, especially Karen van der Merwe, for believing in me and listening
- Elsabe de Wet for the language editing
- The participants, without them this study would not have been possible
- The management of the participating organisations for their kind co-operation
- Dawn Boyle and Lulu Jacobs for their assistance with the distribution of the research booklets
- The library personnel of the North-West University, for their friendly assistance
- The National Research Fund for the financial assistance that made this study possible

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SUMMARY

Topic: Job insecurity: Emotional- and behavioural consequences

Key terms: Job insecurity, affective organisational commitment, job-related stress, coping, emotional intelligence, private health care organisations

Current day organisations must revert to many measures to survive in the very competing business environment. One of these measures is to reduce the number of employees. This leads to perceptions of job insecurity, not only in the employees who are not made redundant but also in employees in so-called stable organisations who are aware of these measures being implemented in other organisations. Researchers found conflicting results of job insecurity regarding performance of employees experiencing job insecurity. On the one hand it was reported that job insecurity leads to higher job performance and on the other that it leads to lower job performance.

To reconcile these conflicting findings Jordan, Ashkanasy and Hartel (2002) developed a model. In their two stage model in which they postulate that perceptions of job insecurity could lead to lower affective organisational commitment and higher job-related stress and this in turn could lead to negative coping behaviour (stage one). They then include emotional intelligence (EI) as moderator of all the links between the above mentioned constructs (stage two). They are of the opinion that employees with high EI will experience higher affective organisational commitment and lower job-related stress than employees with low EI when perceptions of job insecurity are experienced. They also postulate that employees with high EI will be less inclined to revert to negative coping behaviour.

The main objective of this study was to investigate whether this model would be applicable to employees of private health care organisations in Gauteng.

In the first article a literature review was conducted to determine how job insecurity, affective organisational commitment, job-related stress and coping were conceptualised as well as the relationships between these constructs. This was done to investigate the first stage of the model of Jordan et al. (2002).

In the second article a literature review was conducted to determine how job insecurity, affective organisational commitment, job-related stress, coping and EI were conceptualised. The relationships between these constructs and the role of EI as moderator of these relationships were also determined. This was done to investigate the second stage of the model of Jordan et al. (2002).

A non-experimental correlation research design was used. Employees of private health care organisations were the participants. The Job Insecurity Inventory, the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire, the Experience of Work Life and Circumstances Questionnaire, the Cope Questionnaire and the Emotional Intelligence Scale were used, as well as a biographical questionnaire. The SPSS program and partly STATISTIKA were used to perform the statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data. Cronbach alpha coefficients and factor analyses were used to assess the reliability and validity of the measuring instruments. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to specify the relationships between the variables. Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the moderating influence of emotional intelligence.

It was determined that, in this specific research group, job insecurity has a negative correlation with affective organisational commitment. Job insecurity has a positive correlation with job-related stress levels. A positive correlation was found between job-related stress levels and certain negative coping behaviours, such as denial, behavioural disengagement and mental disengagement. A negative correlation was found between affective organisational commitment and negative coping behaviour, specifically the use of drugs or alcohol. All of these correlations were statistically and practically significant.

It was found that job insecurity as independent variable explains 12.1% of the total variance in affective organisational commitment. It was also found that job insecurity as independent variable explains 21.1% of the total variance in the job-related stress levels. These findings indicated that the first stage of the model of Jordan et al. (2002) could be supported.

Multiple regression analyses were performed to determine the moderating effect of EI as discussed above. The results indicated that EI had only a slight but significant moderating effect on the job insecurity – affective organisational commitment relationship and no effect on the job insecurity – job-related stress relationship.

The results also indicate that EI moderates the strength of the relationship between affective organisational commitment and coping behaviour to such an extent that affective organisational commitment's predictive value is reduced to closely insignificant whilst EI emerges as the primary predictor of coping behaviour (both positive and negative). This may imply that emotionally intelligent employees will tend to use more problem-focused coping behaviour irrespective of the affective organisational commitment that they experience. Although to a lesser extent in this study, it was found that emotionally intelligent employees also make use of emotion-focused coping behaviour appropriate for managing affective states associated with experienced stress. Concerning avoidant coping strategies EI significantly negatively moderates alcohol-drug disengagement as a coping strategy, meaning employees with high EI will tend not to revert to the use of drugs or alcohol as coping strategy.

It was concluded that EI does not buffer employees against the emotional consequences of job insecurity in this research group, as proposed by the model of Jordan et al. (2002), but rather enables them to cope with these emotional effects using problem-focused- and emotion-focused coping strategies, but not avoidant strategies. The latter finding is in line with the proposed model of Jordan et al. (2002).

Conclusions, the limitations of this research and recommendations for private health care organisations and for future research were made.

OPSOMMING

Onderwerp: Werksonsekerheid: Emosionele- en gedragsgevolge

Sleuteltermes: Werksonsekerheid, affektiewe organisasieverbondenheid, werksverwante stres, coping, emosionele intelligensie, private gesondheidsorganisasies

Hedendaagse organisasies moet baie maatreëls tref om te oorleef in die erg kompeterende besigheidsomgewing. Een van hierdie maatreëls is om die aantal werknemers te verminder. Dit lei tot persepsies van werksonsekerheid, nie slegs in die werknemers wat nie hul werk verloor het nie maar ook in werknemers van sogenaamde stabiele organisasies wat bewus is van hierdie maatreëls wat geïmplementeer word in ander organisasies. Navorsers het teenstrydige resultate gevind betreffende die prestasie van werknemers wat werksonsekerheid ervaar. Enersyds is bevind dat werksonsekerheid lei tot hoër werksprestasie en andersyds dat dit lei tot laer werksprestasie.

Om hierdie konflikterende bevindinge te verklaar het Jordan, Ashkanasy en Hartel (2002) 'n model ontwikkel. In hulle twee-stadium model stel hulle voor dat persepsies van werksonsekerheid kan lei tot laer affektiewe organisasieverbondenheid en hoër werksverwante spanning (stadium een). Hulle sluit dan ook emosionele intelligensie (EI) as moderator in van al die verbande tussen die genoemde konstrakte (stadium twee). Hulle is van mening dat werknemers met hoër EI hoër affektiewe organisasieverbondenheid en laer werksverwante spanning sal ervaar as werknemers met lae EI wanneer hulle persepsies van werksonsekerheid ervaar. Hulle stel ook voor dat werknemers met hoër EI minder geneig sal wees om negatiewe "coping" gedrag te openbaar.

Die hoofdoelwit van hierdie studie is om ondersoek in te stel na die toepaslikheid van hierdie model op werknemers van private gesondheidsorgorganisasies in Gauteng.

In die eerste artikel is 'n literatuurstudie gedoen om te bepaal hoe werksonsekerheid, affektiewe organisasieverbondenheid, werksverwante spanning en coping gekonseptualiseer word in die literatuur asook die verbande tussen hierdie konstrakte.

In die tweede artikel is 'n literatuurstudie gedoen om te bepaal hoe werksonsekerheid, affektiewe organisasieverbondenheid, werksverwante spanning, coping en EI gekonseptualiseer word in die literatuur sowel as die verbande tussen hierdie konstrunkte en die rol van EI as moderator van hierdie verbande.

'n Nie-eksperimentele korrelasie navorsingsontwerp is gebruik. Werknemers van private gesondheidsorganisasies in Gauteng was die respondente. Die Job Insecurity Inventory, die Organisational Commitment Questionnaire, die Experience of Work Life and Circumstances Questionnaire, die Cope Questionnaire en die Emotional Intelligence Scale asook 'n biografiese vraelys is gebruik. Die SPSS program en ook gedeeltelik die STATISTIKA program is gebruik om die statistiese ontleding te doen. Beskrywende statistiek is gebruik om die data te ontleed. Cronbach alpha koëffisiënte en faktorontledings is gedoen om die betroubaarheid en geldigheid van die meetinstrumente te bepaal. Pearson produk-moment korrelasie koëffisiënte is gebruik om die verbande tussen die veranderlikes te bepaal. Meervoudige regressie ontleding is gebruik om die modererende invloed van EI te bepaal.

Daar is bevind dat, in die spesifieke navorsingsgroep, werksonsekerheid 'n negatiewe korrelasie het met affektiewe organisasieverbondenheid. Werksonsekerheid het 'n positiewe korrelasie met werksverwante spanningsvlakke. 'n Positiewe korrelasie is gevind tussen werksverwante spanningsvlakke en sekere negatiewe coping gedrag soos ontkenning en gedrags- en verstandelike losmaking van die situasie. 'n Negatiewe korrelasie is gevind tussen affektiewe organisasieverbondenheid en "coping" gedrag, veral die gebruik van dwelms en/of alkohol.

Daar is bevind dat werksonsekerheid as onafhanklike veranderlike 12.1% van die totale variansie in affektiewe organisasieverbondenheid verklaar. Daar is ook bevind dat werksonsekerheid as onafhanklike veranderlike 21.1% van die totale variansie in werksverwante spanningsvlakke verklaar.

Meervoudige regressie ontleding is gedoen om die modererende effek van EI te bepaal soos hierbo bespreek. Die resultate het aangedui dat EI slegs 'n klein, maar betekenisvolle modererende invloed op die werksonsekerheid – affektiewe organisasieverbondenheidverband en geen invloed op die werksonsekerheid – werksverwante spanningverband het nie.

Die resultate het ook aangedui dat EI die sterkte van die verband tussen affektiewe organisasieverbondenheid en coping gedrag modereer tot so 'n mate dat affektiewe organisasieverbondenheid se voorspellingswaarde so te sê onbenullig word en EI die hoofvoorspeller van coping gedrag word (positief en negatief). Dit kan beteken dat emosionele intelligente werknemers sal neig om meer probleem-gefokusde coping gedrag te gebruik ongeag van die affektiewe organisasieverbondenheid wat hulle ervaar. Alhoewel tot 'n mindere mate, is bevind dat emosioneel intelligente werknemers ook gebruik maak van emosioneel-gefokusde coping gedrag om die affektiewe toestande geassosieer met spanning te beheer. Met betrekking tot vermydings coping strategieë is bevind dat EI alkohol-drink losmaking beduidend negatief modereer. Dit beteken dat werknemers met hoë EI sal neig om nie dwelms of alkohol as coping strategie te gebruik nie.

Daar is tot die gevolgtrekking gekom dat EI nie werknemers in hierdie navorsingsgroep beskerm teen die emosionele gevolge van werksonsekerheid nie maar hulle eerder in staat stel om te cope met hierdie emosionele gevolge deur die gebruik van probleem-gefokusde en emosie-gefokusde coping strategieë, maar nie vermydingstrategieë nie.

Gevolgtrekkings, die beperkinge van hierdie navorsing en aanbevelings vir private gesondheidsorganisasies en toekomstige navorsing is gemaak.

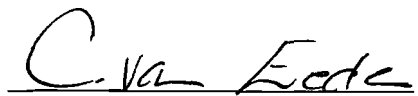
**SCHOOL FOR BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES
INDUSTRIAL PSYCHOLOGY**

LETTER OF PERMISSION

Permission is hereby granted that the following manuscripts:

1. Job insecurity and the emotional- and behavioural consequences thereof; and
2. Job insecurity – The emotional and behavioural consequences thereof and the role of emotional intelligence as moderator

may be submitted by L van Zyl for the purpose of obtaining a M degree in Industrial Psychology.



Prof C van Eeden: Supervisor

Date: 2009/10/08.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This research is based on the model of Jordan, Ashkanasy and Hartel (2002) and investigates perceptions of job insecurity, affective organisational commitment, job-related stress and coping and the relationships between these constructs. The role of emotional intelligence as moderator of these relationships will also be investigated.

The problem statement will include literature which has been studied on the above mentioned constructs. The constructs will be conceptualised as well as the relationships between them as found in the literature. The research objectives will be stated based on the literature study, the paradigm perspectives will be discussed as well as the research design and the research method. The chapter will end with a chapter division and chapter summary.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.1.1 Overview of the problem

The proposed research is about job insecurity and its impact on affective organisational commitment and job-related stress (emotional reactions) and coping behaviour (behavioural reaction). Furthermore, it will be established whether emotional intelligence moderates these emotional- and behavioural reactions to job insecurity.

1.1.2 Literature review

The organisation of the 21st century is challenged by social, cultural, technological and global forces to redefine its business strategies. The latest technology plays a huge role in the success of an organisation, but it is not a guarantee for success. The modern organisation depends on people and requires them to be self-starters, to be self-confident, creative and innovative and to engage in continuous learning. Thus, a competitive advantage is mostly achieved through the behaviour of employees. They are the most valuable asset in an organisation (Schultz, 2003).

Over the last decade, however, employees in many countries have been subject to far-reaching changes, such as industrial restructuring (Kinnunen, Feldt, & Mauno, 2003). The traditional way of increasing competitiveness is to reduce costs, and this is often achieved by reducing

overheads. This normally translates into reducing the number of employees involved in delivering the product or service with disregard of the impact on the environment, employees and wider community (Newell, 2002).

Job insecurity is currently a huge threat and it is expected that between now (2009) and 2010 about 25 million employees will lose their jobs worldwide (Gurria, 2008).

According to Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984, p. 438), job insecurity is a "...sense of powerlessness to maintain desired continuity in a threatened job situation". Job insecurity has also been defined as the expectations an individual has about continuity in a job situation (Davey, Kinicki, & Scheck, 1997); and as the perception an individual has about a potential threat to continuity in his/her current job (Heany, Israel, & House, 1994). These definitions reflect a global viewpoint of job insecurity, because they centre on concern about job loss or job discontinuity (De Witte, 1999). A multidimensional definition of job insecurity would include references to not only uncertainty about the continuity of a job, but also uncertainty about other job dimensions such as the opportunity for promotion (Ashford, Lee & Bobko, 1989). Borg and Elizur (1992) also differentiate between cognitive job insecurity and affective job insecurity. Cognitive job insecurity refers to the likelihood of job loss, while affective job insecurity refers to the fear of job loss. This research will focus on the global view of job insecurity, namely fear of job loss.

From the above definitions it can be concluded that job insecurity is a subjective phenomenon, meaning it is based on the individual's perceptions and interpretations of the immediate work environment (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984). This implies that the feelings of job insecurity may differ between individuals when they are exposed to the same objective situation and that individuals may differ in their reactions to these perceptions of a job at risk (Sverke & Hellgren, 2002). Even individuals working in a stable work environment might perceive certain changes and happenings around them as threatening the continuity of their jobs (such as the current worldwide recession). Therefore, job insecurity may also be studied in employees of stable organisations (Borg & Elizur, 1992).

It can be expected that a sense of job insecurity will have a strong psychological impact on those affected, because there is a risk of losing economic and other highly valued aspects of life (Ashford et al., 1989). It is also indicated, consistent with the central proposition of stress

research, that the anticipation of a stressful event represents an equally important, or perhaps greater, source of anxiety than the actual event (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Therefore, job insecurity could be expected to have an impact on the work attitudes and behaviour of employees, and in the long run, on the wellness of the organisation (Hellgren, Sverke, & Isakson, 1999).

Since job insecurity is described as a subjective assessment of a person's chances of losing his/her job, the rôle of personality factors has a special relevance in this regard (Kinnunen et al., 2003). Klandermans and Van Vuuren (1999) reported that employees facing identical situations often differ in their feelings of job insecurity. In turn, feelings of job insecurity, rather than the situation of the company, impacted on employees' attitudes, health and behaviour. Differences in behaviour and attitudes of employees subjected to job insecurity can be found in research. Galup, Saunders, Nelson, and Cervany (1997) reported that job insecurity leads to increased work effort and work involvement, while Bolt (1983), Mooney (1984) and Rosow and Zager (1985) reported that job insecurity produces decreased performance.

The model of Jordan et al. (2002) is based on the idea that emotional variables can explain, in part, the above mentioned discrepant findings about employees' performance. They propose that emotional intelligence moderates employees' emotional reactions to job insecurity, and their ability to cope with associated stress.

Jordan et al. (2002) propose a model of the effect of employee perceptions of job insecurity on negative coping behaviour. They are of the opinion that emotional intelligence, as individual difference variable, moderates the links between perceptions of job insecurity and the affective reactions and behaviour (stimulus-behaviour linkages).

According to Jordan et al. (2002) employees high in emotional intelligence are more likely to be able to break the sequence of effects linking perceived job insecurity and negative behaviours. It should, however, be noted that the precise location in the model at which the moderating effects will occur, is likely to vary among individuals. Some individuals may control their initial emotional reaction better, while others may be better in dealing with their emotions as they occur.

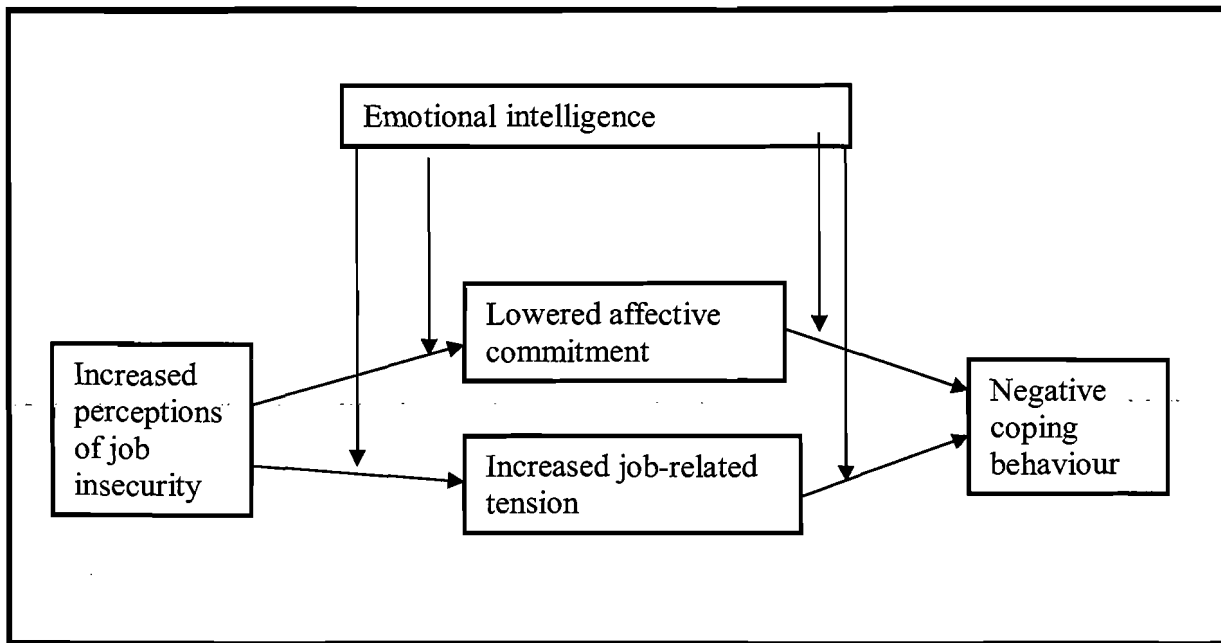


Figure 1. The adapted theoretical model of Jordan, Ashkanasy and Hartel (2002, p362) that will be tested in this study. (Exit behaviour as a result of job insecurity has been omitted.)

The two-stage model of Jordan et al. (2002) illustrates the link between job insecurity and workplace behaviour. According to Jordan et al. (2002) it is in line with Ortony, Clore and Collins' (1988) theory of cognitive processes involved in the generation of emotions. The model is based on an emotional trigger that stems from an employee's perception of job insecurity. Jordan et al. (2002) is of the opinion that the cognitive evaluation of this perception (Ortony et al., 1988) results in two interrelated emotional reactions, namely lowered affective organisational commitment and increased job-related stress and they use the research of Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal (1964) to substantiate their opinion. According to Jordan et al. (2002); these two emotional reactions then lead to negative behaviours. In the model these behaviours are conceptualised as negative coping behaviour. They define negative coping behaviours as coping behaviours that are either unsuccessful or only assisting in temporarily reducing perceptions of job insecurity or avoiding it. They propose that the relationships illustrated in Figure 1, are moderated by emotional intelligence.

In the first stage of the model, two possible emotional reactions are likely to occur as result of perceptions of job insecurity, namely lowered affective organisational commitment and increased job-related stress (Jordan et al., 2002).

Organisational commitment is the psychological bond between employees and their employing organisation (Bagraim, 2003), and deals with the attitudes of people towards their organisation (Malhotra & Mukherjee, 2003). Security of employment is a forerunner of organisational commitment (Dekker & Schaufeli, 1995).

Organisational commitment is a multidimensional construct (Meyer & Allen, 1997). It has affective, normative and continuance dimensions. Affective commitment refers to an employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in, the organisation. Continuance commitment is the employee's commitment based on the cost he/she associates with leaving the organisation. Normative commitment is the employee's feelings of obligation to stay with the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991). In this study, in line with the model being investigated, only affective organisational commitment will be studied. Employees with strong affective organisational commitment remain with the organisation, because they want to (Schappe & Doran, 1997). Meyer and Allen (1991) thus argue that an affectively committed employee would be more likely to exert effort on behalf of the organisation, because he/she has a genuine desire to maintain employment compared to employees with normative or continuance commitment.

Jordan et al. (2002) propose that emotional intelligence will moderate the effect of perceptions of job insecurity on affective commitment. They are of the opinion that compared with employees high in emotional intelligence, employees with low emotional intelligence will manifest lower affective commitment in response to job insecurity. It has indeed been found by McFarlane, Shore and Tetrick (1991), that job insecurity leads to reduced organisational commitment. Nikolaou and Tsaousis (2002) found a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and organisational commitment.

The second emotional reaction to job insecurity in the model of Jordan et al. (2002), is job-related stress. Stress is a mental and physical condition which affects the employee's productivity, effectiveness, personal health and quality of work (Savery & Luks, 2001). Job-related stress has the same typical characteristics as stress, the exception being that it appears specifically in the work environment, is caused by work-related factors and also has consequences for the work situation (Kyriacau, 2001). Victims of job-related stress experience lowered quality of work life and job satisfaction. Symptoms of these stressed employees

include drops in productivity, changes in work attitudes, low morale and increased absenteeism (Savery & Luks, 2001).

Näswall, Sverke and Hellgren (2005) linked job insecurity to job-related stress. Since job insecurity involves the experiencing of a threat and implies a great deal of uncertainty regarding whether the individual gets to keep his/her job in the future, it has been described as a stressor (Barling & Kelloway, 1996; De Witte, 1999). The term stressor refers to the demands made on a person (Jones & Bright, 2001).

Jordan et al. (2002) propose that emotional intelligence will moderate the effect of perceptions of job insecurity on job-related stress. Compared with employees with high emotional intelligence, employees with low emotional intelligence will experience higher dysfunctional job-related stress in response to job insecurity. This proposition is supported by Nikolaou and Tsaoussis (2002) who found a negative correlation between emotional intelligence and stress at work.

The negative behaviour stemming from the above mentioned emotional reactions to job insecurity, namely job-related stress and lowered affective organisational commitment, is conceptualised by Jordan et al. (2002) as negative coping behaviour.

Coping is a stabilising factor, which can help individuals maintain psychosocial adaptation during stressful periods. It encompasses cognitive and behavioural efforts to reduce or eliminate stressful conditions and associated emotional distress (Zeidner & Endler, 1996). Kleinke (1998) words it differently by stating that coping can be defined as continuously changing cognitive- and behavioural efforts aimed at managing specific external- and internal demands, perceived as threatening or exceeding the individual's resources.

During stress, two types of appraisal take place. Primary appraisal takes place first when the individual evaluates the situation (stressor) as positive, negative, threatening or challenging. Then, during secondary appraisal, the individual evaluates his/her own capabilities and resources to deal with the stressor. This could be by using problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, or both (Bala, Rohlof, & Van Waning, 2005).

According to Zeidner and Endler (1996), problem-focused coping involves strategies to solve, reconceptualise, or minimise the effects of a stressful situation. Emotion-focused coping, on the other hand, includes strategies that involve self-preoccupation, fantasy, or other conscious activities of affect regulation.

According to Jordan et al. (2002), employees with low emotional intelligence are not well equipped to deal with the affective consequences of either job-related stress or low affective organisational commitment. As an example, employees with high emotional intelligence may decide to reframe their perceptions of job insecurity as a challenge (Jordan et al., 2002). They may also control and redirect their anxiety into productive behaviour that will help them make their jobs more secure. They may use emotional assimilation, which could help them adopt multiple perspectives and select from a range of coping strategies those that result in amelioration of the emotional reactions to job insecurity in the long term. However, according to Jordan et al. (2002), employees with low emotional intelligence may avoid the issue of job insecurity, failing to understand the consequences of their actions. They may also withdraw from active participation and complete the minimum work required to maintain their jobs. These are short-term strategies, which minimise immediate anxiety; but do not lead to actions that enhance job security (Jordan et al., 2002).

Emotional intelligence's (EI) roots are considered to go back a number of years to the analysis of social intelligence. However, psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer, are usually given credit for providing the first definition of EI (Luthans & Church, 2002). Initially, they defined EI as "...the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 189).

Mayer, Caruso and Salovey (2000) identified the major components of EI as the ability to perceive and express emotion (perception), assimilate emotion in thought (assimilation), understand and reason with emotion (understanding), and regulate emotion in self and others (management).

This first component of EI (perception) refers to the ability to be self-aware of emotions and to express emotions accurately to others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Emotional self-awareness is a starting point for dealing with perceptions emerging from job insecurity since employees'

feelings about job insecurity drive their emotional- and behavioural reactions. The ability to recognise other people's emotional expressions and the sincerity thereof is also important in dealing with perceptions of job insecurity (Jordan et al., 2002).

Emotional assimilation refers to the ability of the employee to distinguish among the different emotions they may be feeling and to prioritise those influencing their thoughts (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Job insecurity causes a range of emotions in the employee. Emotional assimilation enables the employee to determine whether these emotions are reasonable in the situation. It also assists the employee in adopting multiple perspectives to assess the problem from different angles. In this manner, the employee can determine the appropriate emotional state to solve the problem or to resolve conflicting emotions (Jordan et al., 2002).

Emotional understanding is the ability to understand complex emotions, such as simultaneous feelings of loyalty and betrayal (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Emotional understanding can contribute to reconciliation of these opposing feelings arising from perceptions of job insecurity. It also helps the employee to understand what feelings other employees may experience, thus providing the employee with insight in others' emotional expressions and behaviours (Jordan et al., 2002).

Emotion management refers to the regulation of emotions. It is the ability to connect with or disconnect from an emotion, depending on the usefulness in the situation. This dimension of EI separates it from the personality domain, because emotional regulation can vary to suit specific personality traits (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). As an example, Fitness (2000) states that open expressions of anger in the workplace could negatively affect relationships in the workplace, and lead to unresolved conflict. However, if a person connects with feelings of anger, it may be useful if it provides motivation.

The aim of this study is to establish whether negative emotional reactions (lowered affective organisational commitment and higher job-related stress), and behavioural reactions to job insecurity (coping behaviour) exist in employees of private health care organisations in Gauteng; and to determine whether emotional intelligence moderates the links between these constructs.

The private health care market in South Africa is an increasingly competitive environment (Boshoff & Gray, 2004). This is particularly true if one considers that only about 15% of the population are covered by private health care. This includes almost all high-income South Africans, regardless of race. The rest of the population makes use of the public health sector, according to Adler (2005).

In such a competitive environment, regardless the type of industry, if business declines, downsizing and restructuring are bound to take place if the organisation does not generate enough profit to ensure its survival. Job insecurity is likely to persist in organisations coping with competitive pressures (Ashford et al., 1989). Therefore, it could generate potentially valuable information for private health care organisations if the model of Jordan et al. (2002) is supported by empirical evidence gathered in a group of employees of such organisations.

It is stated by Boshoff and Gray (2004), that to become and remain competitive, private hospitals (and other private health care organisations) must differentiate themselves from the competition in the eyes of their patients. This can be done through the quality of customer care they provide. High levels of emotional intelligence in employees can make a contribution in delivering quality customer care. Salovey and Mayer (1990) define emotional intelligence as the subset of social intelligence that enables the individual to monitor not just his/her own feelings and those of others, but to discriminate among them and then to use this information as a guide to his/her thinking and actions.

Emotional intelligence is of specific importance when one considers the findings of Boshoff and Gray (2004) regarding factors impacting on service dimensions in a private hospital. They found that empathetic behaviour is a service quality dimension that impacts positively on cumulative (customer) satisfaction. They are of the opinion that if a hospital (or other health care organisation) wants to enhance loyalty of its patients, it will have to focus on the empathetic behaviour of the nursing staff. Also, amongst other things, they recommend that during the whole hospital experience and at each contact point all employees should demonstrate that they care about the patients and ensure that patients feel safe during hospitalisation. The role emotional intelligence plays in this regard is evident. The employees being aware of the emotional state of patients and acting appropriately to ensure as pleasant as possible hospital stay for patients, will ensure quality service and win customer loyalty.

Therefore, the model of Jordan et al. (2002) could be applied to private health care organisations. If it is found that the job insecurity and emotional- and behavioural reactions to job insecurity, as proposed, exist, and that emotional intelligence moderates it, interventions could be proposed to enable the employees to handle their perceptions of job insecurity more effectively. According to Luthans and Church (2002), there is enough supporting evidence that EI can be measured, developed, and managed for performance improvement in the workplace. In implementing these interventions, the private health care organisations could also better their service and so attract more customers (patients), because most of the employees working in a hospital, even if they have administrative or cleaning functions, at some point have contact with the patients. The employees will also benefit because the positive use of emotional intelligence can be carried over to their family life and other relationships.

The following research questions can be formulated based on the above-mentioned description of the research problem:

- How are job insecurity, affective organisational commitment, job-related stress, coping and emotional intelligence and the relationship between these constructs conceptualised in the literature?
- What are the relationships between perceived job insecurity, affective organisational commitment, job-related stress, emotional intelligence and coping strategies of employees of private health care organisations in Gauteng?
- Can perceptions of job insecurity be used to predict lowered affective organisational commitment among employees of private health care organisations in Gauteng?
- Can perceptions of job insecurity be used to predict job-related stress among employees of private health care organisations in Gauteng?
- Does emotional intelligence moderate the links between perceptions of job insecurity and emotional reactions (affective organisational commitment and job-related stress) and the links between emotional reactions and behavioural reactions (coping) to perceived job insecurity of employees of private health care organisations in Gauteng?

In order to answer the above research questions, the following research objectives are set.

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives are divided into general and specific objectives.

1.2.1 General objective

The general objective of this research is to determine the relationships between (perceived) job insecurity, affective organisational commitment, job-related stress and coping and to determine whether emotional intelligence moderates these relationships.

1.2.2 Specific objectives

The specific objectives of this research are:

- To conceptualise job insecurity, affective organisational commitment, job-related stress, coping and emotional intelligence and the relationship between these constructs from the literature.
- To determine the relationships between perceived job insecurity, affective organisational commitment, job-related stress and coping of employees of private health care organisations in Gauteng.
- To determine if perceptions of job insecurity can predict affective organisational commitment of employees of private health care organisations in Gauteng.
- To determine if perceptions of job insecurity can be used to predict job-related stress of employees of private health care organisations in Gauteng?
- To determine whether emotional intelligence moderates the link between job insecurity and the emotional reactions (affective organisational commitment and job-related stress) and the link between emotional reactions and behavioural reactions (coping) of employees of private health care organisations in Gauteng.

1.3 PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH

According to Kuhn (1970), a paradigm is a model for conducting normal research and can be defined as a set of rules and regulations that clarify boundaries for the researcher regarding what should be researched and how the research should be conducted. Paradigms also determine parameters for success in terms of what would be regarded as valid research solutions.

A variety of schools of thought is to be found in any of the social science disciplines, and within each of these, different interpretations of the domain phenomena are propagated (Mouton & Marais, 1988). A certain paradigm perspective, that includes the intellectual climate and the market of intellectual resources, directs the research (Mouton & Marais, 1992).

1.3.1 Intellectual climate

The term “intellectual climate” refers to the variety of meta-theoretical values or beliefs which are held by those practising within a discipline at any given stage (Mouton & Marais, 1988). They are convictions, values and assumptions that are not directly connected to the epistemological aims (theoretical goals) of the specific research practice. These convictions are often not directly testable or are not meant to be testable (Mouton & Marais, 1992).

In order to determine the intellectual climate of the research, the disciplinary relevance and meta-theoretical assumptions will be discussed.

1.3.2 Discipline

This research falls within the boundaries of the behavioural sciences and more specifically industrial psychology.

Industrial psychology is an applied field of psychology (Theron, 2002). Different terms are used in different countries for this field of study. In South Africa it is called industrial psychology, in Britain occupational psychology, in the United States industrial- and organizational psychology and in European countries work- and organisational psychology.

Industrial psychology is concerned with behaviour in work situations and has two sides, namely science and practice. As a field of scientific inquiry, it is concerned with advancing knowledge about people at work. The practice of industrial psychology is concerned with applying knowledge to solve problems in the world of work (Muchinsky, 1997).

The applied fields of industrial psychology are, according to Theron (2002): research methodology, psychological assessment, personnel psychology, organisational psychology, career psychology, ergonomics, consumer psychology, employee relations and employee and organisational well-being. Applicable to this research are: research methodology,

psychological assessment, personnel psychology, organisational psychology and organisational well-being.

Research methodology is the field which requires students to become skilled in applying scientific methods, including testing and statistical evaluation of data (Theron, 2002). The hypothesis in this research will be tested through the use of scientific methods and the statistical evaluation of data. The sub-field of industrial psychology dealing with measurable factors, is called psychometrics (Anastasi & Urbina, 1997). According to Theron (2002) the focus is on studying the principles and techniques for the assessment of individual differences and similarities within and between people. In this research, psychological measures will be used to measure the differences and similarities between employees concerning the different constructs.

Personnel psychology, also called human resource management, is concerned with recruitment, selection, placement and training of employees, as well as the factors that affect the utilization of personnel. The focus is on individual differences and predicting a fit between the employee and the organisation (Theron, 2002). Personnel psychology is concerned with all aspects of applied individual differences and employees' psychological characteristics and their relationship with their job and other employees (Muchinsky, 1997). This study will focus on individual differences regarding the different constructs, and more specifically how they equip employees to handle perceptions of job insecurity.

Organisational psychology is concerned with the organisation as a system involving individuals and groups, and the structure and dynamics of the organisation. The aims in this field are to foster worker adjustment, satisfaction, productivity and organisational efficiency (Theron, 2002). In studying individual differences, the focus will not only be on ways to equip the individual to benefit from utilising emotional intelligence, but also on the ways in which it will aid the organisation through having employees who are maximally effective and better adjusted to perceived and real changes in the organisation.

According to Theron (2002) the employee and organisational well-being discipline is concerned with the psychological well-being of the employee and involves adjustment and maladjustment. The main focus is on psychological conditions and behaviours that help or

hinder optimal functioning in work roles and methods of evaluating, managing and promoting occupational health.

Similar to this, Luthans and Church (2002) speak about positive organisational behaviour (POB) which follows the lead of positive psychology, which in turn, focuses on people's strengths and psychological capabilities. POB is defined as the study and application of positively orientated human resource strengths and psychological capacities. These can be measured, developed and managed for performance improvement in the workplace. POB has certain criteria for inclusion regarding concepts. A concept must be associated with positivity, relatively unique to organisational behaviour, have valid measures, be adaptable to management and human resource training and development, and capable of contributing to performance improvement in the workplace. Emotional intelligence meets these criteria. Importantly, the developmental criterion requires POB constructs to be potentially state-like. This rules out the more fixed, trait-like personality, attitudinal and motivational variables normally associated with organisational behaviour.

The main aim of this research is to establish if high levels of emotional intelligence contribute to the better adjustment of employees to perceptions of job insecurity. If it is found to be true, the natural result will be to promote the development of emotional intelligence in employees and so contribute to individual and organisational well-being. If it was not possible to develop emotional intelligence, the research would imply only people with existing emotional intelligence must be chosen to work for an organisation, whereas the development of emotional intelligence might raise hopes of bettering the performance of existing employees.

1.3.3 Meta-theoretical assumptions

Several paradigms are relevant to this research. Firstly, the literature review is done within the humanistic- and positive psychology paradigm. Secondly the empirical study is done within the structuralism-, functionalism- and behaviourism paradigms.

1.3.3.1 Literature review

The literature review is done within the humanistic- and positive psychology paradigms.

The main assumptions of humanism are, according to Bergh (2004):

- Subjective or phenomenological experiences

People do not only react to physical realities, which are perceived (see, hear, feel and smell), but also to how they subjectively interpret events and phenomena. This offers an explanation of why employees often react differently to work stressors, poor employee relationships, supervision and management styles or traumatic work experiences such as work loss or decline in business (Bergh, 2004).

- Uniqueness of each individual

People's experiences are also unique, therefore, according to the humanist approach, measurement and other applications are often ideographic, focusing on the experience of the individual rather than on comparing numerical scores and norms with those of other people (Bergh, 2004).

- Personality as a gestalt or holistic phenomenon

Humanists see the person and his behaviour as an integrated whole or "Gestalt". The integration of physical, mental, psychological and social characteristics, and all their attributes and relationships, is what makes a person function as a coherent whole person. However, it can make sense to use only certain factors to understand some types of behaviour in context, but it has to be recognised that other factors may have an influence. In the workplace this is done, for instance, through assessing employees, selecting them in terms of certain critical traits, and doing performance appraisals according to certain criteria. It is often time-consuming and impractical to do a holistic assessment. However, it must be recognised how a single intervention, for instance losing a job, can change or influence a workplace or an individual (Bergh, 2004).

- Intrinsic goodness (potential) of people and self-actualization

People have the intrinsic ability to grow toward healthy adjustment, maturity and the achievement of potential and goals. Self-actualization refers to a person's ability to choose and achieve what he or she wants to be (Bergh, 2004).

- Free will or self-determination

People also have the ability and freedom of choice to be in control of what happens to them (Bergh, 2004).

Amongst the above assumptions it is especially the first three that will be clearly seen in the literature study. Employees' subjective experience, their perception of job insecurity, and their uniqueness lead to certain emotional and behavioural reactions. Although it is recognised that the integration of the physical, mental, psychological and social characteristics make up the whole person, in this case, it is only practical to assess certain chosen constructs and one possible factor that could aid the employee in better functioning as a whole person.

Thus, the essence of the humanistic theory is to recognise and cultivate the natural, positive potential of humankind and to encourage people to find commitment and meaning in what they do. The emphasis on health, rather than pathology, is also a positive aspect in people's striving for optimal physical and psychological health (Bergh, 2004), as can be seen by studying the assumptions of the positive psychology paradigm, which are also relevant to this research.

Positive psychology is the study of human strengths and optimal functioning. One of its main aims is to promote research on the positive personal traits and dispositions that are thought to contribute to well-being and psychological health (Pejares, 2001). The positive psychology paradigm uses the following assumptions, according to Strümpfer, (2002):

- Stressors, adversity and other excessive demands are inherent to the human condition.
- There are sources of strength through which this condition can be endured and even excelled.
- Physical, emotional and social trials and tribulations can stimulate continuous growth and strengthening, as individuals discover their own capacities, insights, and even virtues.

Job insecurity is a stressor with potential detrimental effects for the employee, but through emotional intelligence, there is the possibility to endure it and even to enhance performance, while gaining more insight into one's own and others' emotions.

1.3.3.2 Empirical study

The empirical study will be done from the structuralism-, functionalism- and behaviourism paradigms. The first school of thought is structuralism. According to Theron (2002) the basic assumptions of structuralism are:

- The subject matter of structuralism is consciousness.
- Structuralists attempt to understand psychological processes such as sensation, attention, perception, reaction, feeling and emotion, by studying the structural elements of conscious experience.
- The method used in structuralism is called introspection, and refers to self-observation of one's immediate experience of a stimulus; ascertaining the feelings and thoughts that the stimulus evokes.

Despite criticism about the subjective nature of structuralism, it was and is significant in the study of psychology, because of its focus on conscious experience (Theron, 2002). In industrial psychology (and in this research), the notion, although not the original method, of introspection is implied in employees' reports on their personal experience of the work situation. Introspection is also implied in self-reports assessing personality or determining attitudes (Schultz & Schultz, 1996).

Functionalism developed in reaction to structuralism and its main assumptions are (Babbie, 1995):

- Psychology is seen as a practical science with its subject matter the functions of the mind, rather than the structure, or content of the mind.
- The focus is on the mind's function in helping the individual adapt to the environment.
- The focus is on human conscious experience, for example methods people use to adapt to their environments, satisfy their needs and increase their inborn abilities.

Functionalism no longer exists as a school of thought, but has a lasting legacy in the focus on pragmatism in industrial psychology. The application of tests, questionnaires and statistics is of major importance in industrial psychology (Theron, 2002), and in this research.

Behaviourism is totally opposed to the structuralist focus on consciousness and the functionalist focus on heredity. Behaviourism, in all its forms, is highly influential in industrial psychology. The emphasis on learning has become the basis of personnel and management training (Theron, 2002). The main assumptions of behaviouristic theories are:

- Observable behaviour

The personality can best be studied through objective observation of external and observable behaviours. The best methods are observational, such as controlled experiments and observations in natural settings, physical measurements of behavioural responses, and checking behaviour on checklists and questionnaires. It can thus be seen that behaviourists believe in empirical science, characterised by careful research designs, objectivity, accurate measurements and the testing and verifying of hypotheses (Bergh, 2004). This research will make use of a specific research design, objectivity, accurate measurements and the testing and verifying of hypotheses.

- Environments and situations shape behaviour

Human behaviour is directed, controlled and formed by environmental and situational influences (Bergh, 2004).

- Personality is learned responses

All human behaviour and personality development are no more than learned responses and habits. This means that behaviour in a given situation has been acquired through a person's development history, as a result of either positive rewards or punishment. Certain behaviour can also be unlearned under certain conditions. This principle is used in training and therapy to teach people not to react in a certain way (Bergh, 2004).

- Self-control

In the social learning and social cognitive theories people are seen as co-shapers of their personality, because they have powers and standards of control and self-control. This is illustrated by concepts like the forming of cognitive schemata, learned resourcefulness and self-efficacy, among others (Bandura, 1977; Pervin 1996).

- Learning and unconscious factors

Learning approaches, in general, do not recognise unconscious factors in personality functioning. However, in later developments there is reference to unconscious cognition, indicating much of people's thinking happens at a level of unawareness and also learning takes place even though stimuli might be below the level of awareness (Greenwald, 1992).

Thus, behaviourism is based on observable human behaviour which is studied scientifically through accurate controls and observation. In the workplace, practitioners use behaviouristic principles when doing behaviour-anchored rating scales, behaviour-based interviewing and observation of behaviour dimensions in real or simulated work activities. In training and behaviour-modification practices, learning principles can change human behaviour (Bergh, 2004). This is especially relevant in this research, because the aim is to aid employees to handle job insecurity perceptions more effectively.

1.3.4 Market of intellectual resources

The market of intellectual resources refers to the collection of beliefs which has a direct bearing upon the epistemic status of scientific statements. Two major types are: theoretical beliefs about the nature and structure of domain phenomena on the one hand, and methodological beliefs concerning the nature and structure of the research process on the other (Mouton & Marais, 1988).

The market of intellectual resources refers to the assumptions with epistemological status as scientific hypothesis, in other words, with their status as knowledge-claims (Mouton & Marais, 1992). It is divided into theoretical and methodological beliefs.

1.3.4.1 Theoretical beliefs

Theoretical beliefs can be described as all beliefs that yield testable results regarding social phenomena (Mouton & Marais, 1992). The following theoretical hypotheses serve as starting point for this research and are divided into conceptual definitions and models and theories.

A. Conceptual definitions

The relevant conceptual definitions are given below:

Job insecurity is defined by Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984, p. 438) as a "...sense of powerlessness to maintain desired continuity in a threatened job situation". It has also been defined as the expectations an individual has about continuity in a job situation (Davey et al., 1997) and as the perception an individual has about a potential threat to continuity in his/her current job (Heany et al., 1994). Borg and Elizur (1992) also differentiate between cognitive job insecurity and affective job insecurity. Cognitive job insecurity refers to the likelihood of job loss, while affective job insecurity refers to the fear of job loss.

Organisational commitment is a multidimensional construct and has affective, normative and continuance dimensions. Affective organisational commitment refers to an employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991). In this research the focus will be on the affective dimension.

Job-related stress is an energy-demanding, negative emotional experience which usually follows after a stimulus, which consciously or unconsciously is interpreted as a threat and which leads to a response, aimed at ending this experience (Van Graan, 1981). Job-related stress has the same characteristics as stress, except that it appears specifically in the work environment, is caused by work-related factors and also has consequences for the work situation (Kyriacau, 2001).

Coping refers to continuously changing cognitive- and behavioural efforts aimed at managing specific external- and internal demands, perceived as threatening or exceeding the individual's resources (Kleinke, 1998). Problem-focused coping involves strategies to solve, reconceptualise, or minimise the effects of a stressful situation. Emotion-focused coping, on the other hand, includes strategies that involve self-preoccupation, fantasy, or other conscious activities of affect regulation (Zeidner & Endler, 1996).

Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined emotional intelligence as the subset of social intelligence that enables the individual to monitor not just his/her own feelings and those of others, but to discriminate among them and then to use this information as a guide to his/her thinking and

actions. The major components of emotional intelligence are perception (the ability to perceive and express emotion), assimilation (to assimilate emotion in thought), understanding (to understand and reason with emotion) and management (to regulate one's own and others' emotions).

B. Models

A model is aimed at the simplified expression of relationships between main components of a process. "It does not only classify phenomena, but also tries to systematise the relationships among them" (Mouton & Marais, 1992, p. 143).

In this research, the following models will be used:

- The model of Jordan, Ashkanasy and Härtel (2002), that depicts emotional intelligence as a moderator of emotional (job-related stress and affective commitment) and behavioural reactions of job insecurity.
- The three dimensional model of Meyer and Allen (1991) of organisational commitment.
- The Transactional model of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) of coping/stress (problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping), which incorporates an individual's cognitive appraisal of stressful events into the stress response.

Theory is not references, data, lists of variables or constructs, diagrams and hypotheses. Theory is the answer to the question "why". It is about the connections among phenomena, a story about why acts, events, structure and thoughts occur. Theory emphasizes the nature of causal relationships and it identifies what comes first as well as the timing of these events. A strong theory delves into the underlying processes to understand the reasons for a particular occurrence or non-occurrence (Sutton & Staw, 1995).

Salovey and Mayer's (1990) theory on emotional intelligence will be used in this research.

1.3.4.2 Methodological beliefs

Methodological beliefs can be defined as beliefs that make judgements as to the disposition and structure of science and scientific research (Mouton & Marais, 1992). This includes

scientific-philosophical traditions and the most important methodological models (qualitative and quantitative).

The empirical study is presented within the structuralism, functionalistic and behaviouristic frameworks. The root assumptions of these frameworks have been discussed in 1.3.3.2.

1.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is a set of plans and procedures, used by researchers, to obtain empirical evidence (data) about isolated variables of interest (Heppner, Kivlighan, & Wampold, 1999). The aim of research designs is to enable researchers to answer research questions as validly, objectively, accurately and economically as possible (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). This research can be classified as descriptive, explanatory and predictive, which can be explained as follows.

One of the most important considerations in descriptive studies is to collect accurate information or data on the domain phenomena which are researched (Mouton & Marais, 1988). Accurate information and data will be collected in both the literature- and empirical study.

The major aim of explanatory studies is to indicate causality between variables or events; to attempt to explain a given phenomena in term of specific causes. Therefore, a valid explanation must meet three requirements. These are; that a demonstrable relationship exists between the phenomena; in other words, that the causal (independent) variable covaries with the dependent variable; that there is a specific sequence of cause and effect (temporal sequence); and that a specific phenomenon, x, is the real cause of y (Mouton & Marais, 1988). These are the requirements the empirical study aims to meet. Although causality cannot be inferred based on cross-sectional data, the relationship between variables can be adequately described.

There is a direct relationship between explanatory- and predictive research. If the above criteria could be met, it ought to be possible to make generally valid predictions about the phenomena (Mouton & Marais, 1988). In other words, after completion of the empirical study, it should be possible to predict whether the relationships between the constructs and the sequence of the events lead to the conclusion that the level of emotional intelligence moderates employees' emotional and behavioural reactions to perceived job insecurity.

1.5 RESEARCH METHOD

This research, pertaining to the specific objectives, consists of two phases, namely a literature review and an empirical study.

1.5.1 Literature review

In the literature review, the focus will be on previous research that has been done on all of the constructs used in this research, namely job insecurity, affective commitment job-related stress, , coping and emotional intelligence.

The following databases will be consulted:

- EBSCO
- Internet
- Repertorium of Psychological Journals
- Library Catalogues

1.5.2 Empirical study

The empirical study will be divided into the following steps:

1.5.2.1 Research design

This will be a quantitative study. A survey design will be used; more specifically a non-experimental correlation research design. Each individual will be measured concerning all five the constructs by completing the measuring instruments and thereafter the relationship between the different measurements will be determined. This design will determine the relationship between the various constructs without any planned intervention. It can also be used to assess relationships among variables within a population and is ideally suited for descriptive and predictive functions associated with correlation research (Shaugnessy & Zechmeister, 1997).

1.5.2.2 Study population

The study population will consist of employees of private health care organisations in Gauteng, who will be asked to make themselves available to complete the questionnaires.

1.5.2.3 Measuring instruments

Five research instruments will be used, namely the *Job Insecurity Inventory (JII)* (De Witte, 2000); the *Organisational Commitment Questionnaire* (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993); the *Experience of Work and Life Circumstances Questionnaire (WLQ)* (Van Zyl & Van der Walt, 1991); the *Cope Questionnaire (COPE)* (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989) and the *Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS)* (Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden & Dornheim, 1998).

The *Job Insecurity Inventory (JII)* (De Witte, 2000) will be used to measure the perceived job insecurity of participants. It is an 11-item questionnaire. The items measure both cognitive (the possibility of becoming unemployed) and affective dimensions (emotional reaction to it) of job insecurity and are arranged along a 5-point Likert-type scale with 1=strongly agree, 3=unsure, and 5=strongly disagree. The items of the JII measuring global job insecurity are reported to have a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.92 in total and 0.85 for the affective scale and 0.90 for the cognitive scale, using the same instrument (De Witte, 2000). Elbert (2002) obtained an Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.84.

The *Organisational Commitment Questionnaire* (Meyer et al., 1993) will be used to measure the affective organisational commitment of participants. The questionnaire is based on the premise that organisational commitment is a multi-dimensional construct which includes affective, continuance and normative commitment. It comprises of 18 items which include affective, continuance and normative commitment. A 5-point Likert-type scale is used with 1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree. Cronbach alpha coefficients were consistently above 0.80 for every sub-scale. Inter correlations between populations were often above 0.90, which indicate the combined factor is congruent. The results from South African studies support the reliability and validity of the questionnaire (Bagraim & Hayes, 1999). In this research only the affective sub-scale will be used.

The *Experience of Work and Life Circumstances Questionnaire (WLQ)* (Van Zyl & Van der Walt, 1991) will be used to measure work-related stress. This questionnaire was standardised for use in South Africa. The questionnaire can be used to measure stress levels experienced as well as the nature and important causes of stress of employees with a minimum level of education equal to grade 10. The results can be utilised to identify employees that are functioning under high levels of stress and to determine the main stressors in their environments.

The first dimension of the questionnaire indicates the level of stress of the employee; normal, high or very high. Measurement is conducted through the assessment of 40 questions on a 5-point Likert-type scale which indicates how often certain stress emotions (for example depression or frustration) occur. A high score indicates a high level of stress (Van Zyl & Van der Walt, 1991).

The second dimension of the questionnaire measures the circumstances and expectations of the job. Questions are answered on a five point scale to indicate how often specific emotions occur. There is a total of 76 questions pertaining to employees' circumstances and unfulfilled expectations (Van Zyl & Van der Walt, 1991). Reliability coefficients, measured by the Kuder-Richardson formula 8, range from 0.83 to 0.92, and test-retest reliability varies from 0.62 to 0.80, which compares favourably with other similar questionnaires (Van Zyl & Van der Walt, 1991).

Only the stress levels of employees are relevant in this study, thus only the first dimension of the questionnaire will be used. Oosthuizen (2004) found a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.92.

The *COPE Questionnaire (COPE)* (Carver et al., 1989) will be used to measure the different ways in which people cope. This 53-item questionnaire measures 14 different coping strategies. Five subscales measure different aspects of problem-focused coping, five subscales measure different aspects of emotion-focused coping and four subscales measure avoidance behaviour. The COPE has a self-report format and participants have to describe what they mostly do or think in stressful situations. A 4-point Likert-type scale ranges from 1=I don't usually do this at all; to 4=I usually do this. Carver et al. (1989) reported Cronbach alpha coefficients varying from 0.45 to 0.92. They reported sufficient levels of reliability for all the subscales with the exclusion of mental disengagement which measured lower than 0.60. Test-retest reliability

ranged between 0.46 and 0.86 and when applied after two weeks, it ranged between 0.42 and 0.89. Higher scores indicate that the particular coping strategy is more likely to be used in a stressful situation. Joubert (2003) reported Cronbach alpha coefficients ranging from 0.80 to 0.90.

The *Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS)* (Schutte et al., 1998) will be used to measure emotional intelligence. The scale consists of 33 items that are based on the conceptual model of emotional intelligence of Salovey and Mayer (1990). It assesses the extent to which respondents characteristically identify, understand, harness and regulate emotions in themselves and others. Thirteen items measure appraisal and expression of emotion, ten measure regulation of emotion and another ten measure utilization of emotion. The items are arranged along a 5-point Likert-type scale and respondents rate themselves on each item with 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3= not sure, 4 agree and 5= strongly agree. Schutte et al. (1998) reported internal consistency of 0.87 to 0.90 and two week test-retest reliability of 0,78. Evidence of validity includes significant correlations with the theoretically related constructs of attention, clarity, mood repair, optimism and low impulsivity.

Schutte et al. (1998) recommended using total scores on the 33-item scale and not using subscale scores. However, a factor-analytic study by Petrides and Furnham (2000) indicated a four factor solution for the 33 items. The four factors are: perception of emotions, managing emotions in the self, social skills or managing emotions in others, and utilising emotions.

1.5.2.4 Statistical analysis

The Statistical Consulting Services of the North-West University, Vaal Triangle Campus, will do the statistical analysis using partly the SPSS program (2003) and partly the STATISTIKA program (2007).

Cronbach alpha coefficients, inter-item correlation coefficients and factor analysis will be used to assess the reliability and validity of the measuring instruments (Clark & Watson, 1995). Descriptive statistics (e.g. means, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis) will be used to analyse the data. Pearson product correlation coefficients will be used to specify the relationships between the variables. A cut-off point of 0.30 (medium effect) will be set for the practical significance of correlation coefficients (Cohen, 1988). To investigate the relative

impact of predictors on outcomes, linear regression analysis will be used (Cohen, Cohen, West & Aiken, 2003). Moderating effects will be determined with multiple regression.

1.6 CHAPTER DIVISION

The chapters in this thesis will be presented as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction, problem statement and objectives.

Chapter 2: Research article: Job insecurity and the emotional- and behavioural consequences thereof.

Chapter 3: Research article: Job insecurity: The emotional- and behavioural consequences thereof and the role of emotional intelligence as moderator.

Chapter 4: Conclusions, limitations and recommendations.

1.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter 1 included the problem statement, the research objectives, paradigm perspectives of the research, the research design, the research method and the chapter division.

Chapter 2 is the first research article.

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JOB INSECURITY AND THE EMOTIONAL- AND BEHAVIOURAL CONSEQUENCES THEREOF

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ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this research was to investigate the proposed model of Jordan, Ashkanasy and Hartel (2002) regarding perceptions of job insecurity and the emotional- and behavioural consequences thereof. According to the model of Jordan et al. (2002) the emotional outcomes of perceptions of job insecurity are lower affective organisational commitment and higher job-related stress while the behavioural outcomes are negative coping behaviour. A non-experimental correlation research design was used and the study population consisted of a convenience sample of employees working for private health care organisations in Gauteng, South Africa (N=242). The measuring instruments were the *Job Insecurity Inventory (JII)*, the *Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ)*, the *Experience of Work and Life Circumstances Questionnaire (WLQ)* and the *Cope Questionnaire (COPE)*. The results indicated a practically significant negative correlation between job insecurity and affective organisational commitment. Also, a practically significant positive correlation was found between job insecurity and job-related stress. Both the above findings supported the proposed model of Jordan et al. (2002) regarding the emotional outcomes of job insecurity. A practically significant negative correlation was found between affective organisational commitment and negative coping behaviour and a practically significant positive correlation was found between job stress levels and negative coping behaviour. These findings support the proposed model of Jordan et al. (2002) regarding the behavioural outcomes of job insecurity. Regression analyses indicated that job insecurity is a powerful predictor of the emotional outcomes of job insecurity, in this case, a decrease in affective organisational commitment and an increase in job-related stress.

The financial assistance of the National Research Foundation (NRF) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at are that of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the National Research Foundation.

OPSOMMING

Die primêre doel van hierdie navorsing was om die voorgestelde model van Jordan, Ashkanasy en Hartel (2002) rakende persepsies van werksonsekerheid en die emosionele- en gedragsgevolge daarvan te ondersoek. Volgens die model van Jordan et al. (2002) is die emosionele gevolge van werksonsekerheid, laer affektiewe organisasieverbondenheid en hoër werksverwante spanning terwyl die gedragsgevolge negatiewe coping gedrag behels. 'n Nie-eksperimentele korrelasienavorsingsontwerp is gebruik en die studiepopulasie het bestaan uit 'n beskikbaarheidsteekproef van werknemers van private gesondheidsorgorganisasies in Gauteng, Suid-Afrika (N=242). Die meetinstrumente wat gebruik is sluit die *Job Insecurity Inventory (JII)*, die *Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ)*, die *Experience of Work and Life Circumstances Questionnaire (WLQ)* en die *Cope Questionnaire (COPE)* in. Die resultate dui op 'n praktiese beduidende negatiewe korrelasie tussen werksonsekerheid en affektiewe organisasieverbondenheid. Daar is ook 'n praktiese beduidende korrelasie gevind tussen werksonsekerheid en werksverwante spanning. Beide die bogenoemde bevindinge ondersteun die voorgestelde model van Jordan et al. (2002) betreffende die emosionele gevolge van werksonsekerheid. 'n Prakties beduidende negatiewe korrelasie is gevind tussen affektiewe organisasieverbondenheid en negatiewe coping gedrag en 'n praktiese beduidende positiewe korrelasie is gevind tussen werksverwante spanning en negatiewe "coping" gedrag. Hierdie bevindinge ondersteun die voorgestelde model van Jordan et al. (2002) rakende die gedragsgevolge van werksonsekerheid. Regressie ontledings het aangedui dat werksonsekerheid 'n baie sterk voorspeller is van die emosionele gevolge van werksonsekerheid, in hierdie geval 'n afname in affektiewe organisasieverbondenheid en 'n toename in werksverwante spanning.

JOB INSECURITY AND THE EMOTIONAL- AND BEHAVIOURAL CONSEQUENCES THEREOF

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND LITERATURE STUDY

The organisation of the 21st century is challenged by social, cultural, technological and global forces to redefine its business strategies (Schultz, 2003). Globally, economic survival, commercial rivalry, government deregulation of industry and the fast pace of technological change have led to organisations taking measures such as downsizing, plant closures and workforce reorganisations to remain competitive (Probst & Lawler, 2006). Many organisations have resorted to large scale workforce reductions to cut costs and improve organisational effectiveness and competitiveness (Gowing, Kraft & Campbell Quick, 1998). There is also a tendency to make the hierarchical structure of organisations more flat, to restructure, to introduce innovative technology, and mergers and acquisitions happen regularly (Borg & Elizur, 1992).

Jobs are influenced by the product market (Green, 2003) and outsourcing and globalisation of markets have caused huge job losses. Thus, job security is vanishing (Gélinas, 2005) and job insecurity has become the reality.

Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt, (1984, p. 438) describe job insecurity as a "...sense of powerlessness to maintain desired continuity in a threatened job situation". Job insecurity has also been defined as the expectations an individual has about continuity in a job situation (Davey, Kinicki & Scheck, 1997) and as the personal concern of an individual about the continuity of the job (Klein Hesselink & Van Vuuren, 1999). These definitions reflect a global viewpoint of job insecurity because they focus on concern about job loss or job discontinuity (De Witte, 1999). A multidimensional definition of job insecurity would include references to not just uncertainty about the continuity of a job as such, but also uncertainty about other job related dimensions such as the opportunity for promotion (Ashford, Lee & Bobko, 1989). Borg and Elizur (1992) further differentiate between cognitive job insecurity and affective job insecurity. Cognitive job insecurity refers to the likelihood of job loss, while affective job insecurity refers to the fear of job loss. In this article the focus will be on the affective view of job insecurity, namely the fear of job loss.

From the above definitions it can be concluded that job insecurity is a subjective phenomenon as indicated by De Witte (1999), meaning that it is based on the individual's perceptions and interpretations of the immediate work environment (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984). This implies that feelings of job insecurity may differ between individuals exposed to the same objective situation and that individuals may differ in their reactions to these perceptions of a job at risk (Sverke & Hellgren, 2002). Klandermans, Van Vuuren and Jacobsen (1991) discuss the effect of such perceptions by stating that two dimensions may lead to a sense of job insecurity, namely the perceived probability of job loss and the perceived severity of the consequences of job loss. Therefore every factor, condition or circumstance that influences the perceived probability, the perceived severity of the consequences or both of these, may lead to increased feelings of job insecurity.

Since job insecurity is described as a subjective assessment of a person's chances of losing his/her job, the role of personality factors has a special relevance in this regard (Kinnunen, Feldt & Mauno, 2003). Klandermans and Van Vuuren (1999) reported that employees facing identical situations often differ in their feelings of job insecurity. In turn, feelings of job insecurity rather than the situation of the company, impacted on employees' attitudes, health and behaviour. Research has found differences in attitudes and behaviour of employees experiencing job insecurity. Galup, Saunders, Nelson and Cervany (1997) reported increased work involvement and effort due to perceived job insecurity, while Rosow and Zager (1985) found decreased work performance resulting from perceived job insecurity.

The model of Jordan et al.(2002) portrayed in figure 1, is based on the idea that emotional variables can partially explain the discrepant findings about the performance of employees experiencing job insecurity. They propose that emotional intelligence could moderate employees' emotional reactions to job insecurity and their ability to cope with associated stress.

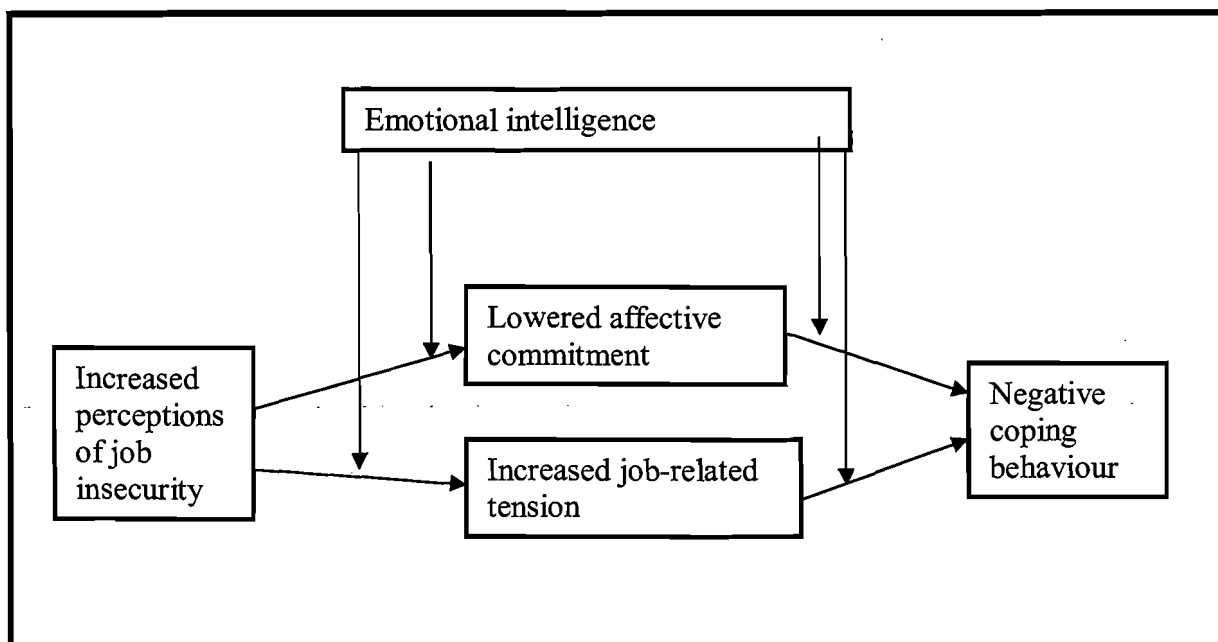


Figure 1. The adapted theoretical model of Jordan, Ashkanasy and Hartel (2002).

The model as portrayed in Figure 1 has been adapted by omitting “exit behaviour” as indicated in the original model as an emotional reaction that could follow increased perceptions of job insecurity (Jordan et al., 2002).

The two-stage model of Jordan et al. (2002) illustrates the link between job insecurity and workplace behaviour. Jordan et al. (2002) base their model on an emotional trigger that stems from an employee’s perception of job insecurity and state that is in line with Ortony, Clore and Collins’ (1988) theory of cognitive processes involved in the generation of emotions. The cognitive evaluation of this perception results in two interrelated emotional reactions, namely lowered affective commitment to the job and increased job-related tension (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek & Rosenthal). According to Jordan et al. (2002) these two emotional reactions then lead to negative behaviours. In the model these behaviours are conceptualised as negative coping behaviour and defined as coping behaviours that are either unsuccessful or only assisting in temporarily reducing perceptions of job insecurity or avoiding it.

Jordan et al. (2002) are further of the opinion that emotional intelligence as an individual difference variable, moderates the links between perceptions of job insecurity, the resulting affective reactions and coping behaviour (stimulus-behaviour linkages). Employees high in emotional intelligence are more likely to be able to break the sequence of effects linking perceived job insecurity and the mentioned consequences. The authors emphasize that the precise location in the model at which the moderating effects will occur, is likely to vary

among individuals. Some individuals may control their initial emotional reaction better, while others may be better in dealing with their emotions as they occur. Although the possible moderating effect of emotional intelligence is part of the proposed model of Jordan et al. (2002) it will not be focused on in this article, but rather in a following article.

De Ruyter and Burgess (2000) have found that job insecurity could have mixed consequences for a firm. Higher levels of job insecurity can lead to a more compliant workforce and increased managerial prerogatives. It could aid management in initiating workplace change, offering moderate wage increases and improve labour productivity. However, it could also reduce employee morale and commitment. Security of employment is a forerunner of organisational commitment (Dekker & Schaufeli, 1995).

Organisational commitment is the identification an employee has with his employer and it includes the willingness to work hard on behalf of the organisation, as well as the intention to remain with the organisation for an extended period of time (Wagner & Hollenbeck, 1995). Bishop and Scott (2000) define organisational commitment as the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organisation. Organisational commitment is, according to Bagraim (2003), the psychological bond between employees and their employing organisation and deals with the attitudes of people towards their organisation (Malhotra & Mukherjee, 2003). It has also been defined as the psychological link between an individual and his occupation based on an affective reaction to that occupation (Lee, Carswell & Allen, 2000). Organisational commitment may therefore be used to predict employees' absenteeism, performance, turnover and other behaviours (Camilleri, 2002).

Meyer and Allen (1991; 1997) see organisational commitment as a multidimensional construct, with affective, normative and continuance dimensions. Affective commitment refers to an employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organisation. Continuance commitment is the employee's commitment based on the cost he/she associates with leaving the organisation. Normative commitment is the employee's feelings of obligation to stay with the organisation. McDonald and Makin (2000) state that people stay with an organisation, because they want to (affective), because they need to (continuance) or because they feel they ought to (normative).

Relevant to this study, Schappe and Doran (1997) and McDonald and Makin (2000) have found that employees with strong affective commitment remain with the organisation because they want to. Affective commitment originates from job conditions and expectations that are met, meaning the job provided what the employee expected (Spector, 2006). Meyer and Allen (1991) thus argue that an affectively committed employee would be more likely to exert effort on behalf of the organisation, because he/she has a genuine desire to maintain employment compared to employees with normative or continuance commitment. An organisation may benefit from this emotional link through reduced turnover, increased productivity, higher job satisfaction, higher self actualisation and reduced overload (Camilleri, 2002). This is in line with the findings of Meyer, Paunonen, Gellatly, Goffin and Jackson (1989) who found a positive correlation between affective commitment and job performance. Dekker and Schaufeli (1995) found that perceived job insecurity, like any stressor, causes employees to be less inclined to stay with an organisation. Ashford, Lee and Bobko (1989), Rosenblatt and Ruvio (1996) and Mc Farlane, Shore and Tetrick (1991) have all found that job insecurity leads to reduced commitment.

The second emotional reaction to job insecurity in the model of Jordan et al. (2002) is job-related stress. Stress results from a perceived threat of danger, which could be physical or emotional, and the subsequent pressure to remove it. When an environmental situation causes a demand threatening to exceed a person's capabilities and resources for meeting it, the potential for stress will exist (Byars & Rue, 2000). Job-related stress has the same typical characteristics as stress in general, the exception being that it appears specifically in the work environment, is caused by work-related factors and also has consequences for the work situation (Kyriacau, 2001). Job-related stress victims experience lowered quality of work life and job satisfaction. Symptoms of these stressed employees include a decrease in productivity, changes in work attitudes, low morale and increased absenteeism (Savery & Luks, 2001).

According to Cassidy (1999), researchers agree that common to most stressors are elements of controllability, predictability, threat and loss. The distinction between the presence and absence of stress often rests on the perception of a threat. Employees experience job insecurity as a threat because there is a great deal of uncertainty whether employees will keep their job; and therefore job insecurity has been described as a stressor (Barling & Kelloway, 1996). Barling and Kelloway also found that perceived job insecurity is an important source of stress and De

Witte (1999); Gillespie, Walsh, Winefield, Dua and Stough (2001); and Cheng, Chen, Chen and Chiang (2005) came to similar conclusions.

This (job insecurity as a stressor) is not surprising if the functions of work in an individual's life are considered. Jahoda (1988) already indicated that work provides financial security, it structures time, defines an individual's social status and provides social contact; thus the possibility of losing these meaningful aspects of life is likely to create severe stress.

Coping is the most common psychological mechanism for attempting to manage the experienced stress. Coping is a stabilising factor, which can help individuals maintain psychosocial adaptation during stressful periods. It encompasses cognitive and behavioural efforts to reduce or eliminate stressful conditions and associated emotional distress (Zeidner & Endler, 1996). Kleinke (1998) prefers to define coping as continuously changing cognitive- and behavioural efforts aimed at managing specific external- and internal demands, perceived as threatening or exceeding the individual's resources. Folkman, Lazarus, Gruen and DeLongis (1986, p572) describe coping as "a person's cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage (reduce, minimise, master, or tolerate) the internal and external demands of the person-environment transaction that is appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person". The appraisal process will have, as an outcome, a coping response. Coping skills are thus the means used to combat or prevent stress (Rice, 1992), and could manifest in the use of problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, or both (Bala, Rohlof & Van Waning, 2005). According to Zeidner and Endler (1996), problem-focused coping involves strategies to solve, reconceptualise, or minimise the effects of a stressful situation. Emotion-focused coping, on the other hand, includes strategies that involve self-preoccupation, fantasy, or other conscious activities of affect regulation. "Whatever their nature, coping efforts have just one function: to prevent, eliminate or reduce stress" (Rice, 1992, p274).

In the above exposition of the model of Jordan et al. (2002), job insecurity and the consequences thereof namely reduced organisational commitment, increased job stress and negative coping behaviour were discussed. In this study the assumptions of Jordan et al. (2002) for the first stage of the model, namely that perceived job insecurity will lead to the emotional reactions of lowered affective commitment and increased job-related stress; and that these emotional reactions will negatively influence coping strategies and behaviours, will be investigated. (See figure 2).

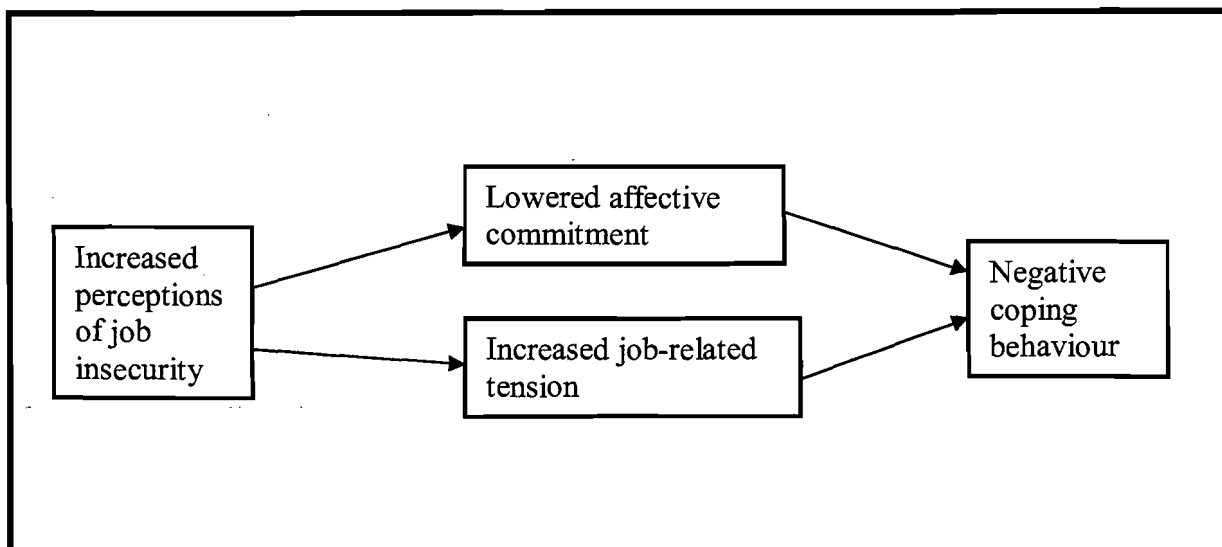


Figure 2. The first stage of the adapted theoretical model of Jordan, Ashkanasy and Hartel (2002, p362).

The aim of this study as indicated above will be operationalised by determining:

- The descriptive statistics of the four constructs (job insecurity, affective organisational commitment, job-related stress and coping);
- The psychometric properties of the measuring instruments used;
- The correlations between the constructs; and
- Whether job insecurity can predict affective organisational commitment and job-related stress.

METHOD

Research design

This was a quantitative study. A survey design was used, more specifically a non-experimental correlation research design. By completing the questionnaire each individual was measured concerning all four the constructs; and thereafter the relationship between the different measurements was determined. This design determined the relationship between the various constructs without any planned intervention. It can also be used to assess relationships among variables within a population and is ideally suited for descriptive and predictive functions associated with correlation research (Shaugnessy & Zechmeister, 1997).

Participants

The study population can be described as a convenience sample of employees at private health care organisations in Gauteng, South Africa (N = 242). The participants were employees from all levels, ranging from semi-skilled to professional. All the employees have a level of literacy in English adequate for reliable completion of the questionnaires. Out of 400 potential respondents, 242 returned questionnaires, resulting in a response rate of 60.5%. The biographical characteristics of the study population are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1

Biographical characteristics of the participants (N = 242)

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	17	7
	Female	223	92.1
	Missing	2	0.8
	Total	242	100
Age	25 years and younger	64	26.4
	26 – 35 years	79	32.6
	36 – 45 years	55	22.7
	46 years and older	41	16.9
	Missing	3	1.2
	Total	242	100
Qualifications	Grade 12 and lower	104	43
	Diplomas/ Certificates	107	44.2
	Higher degrees	24	9.9
	Missing	7	2.9
	Total	242	100
Home language	Afrikaans	110	45.5
	English	37	15.3
	Sotho	72	29.8
	Tswana	14	5.8
	Zulu	5	2.1
	Other	2	0.8
	Missing	2	0.8
	Total	242	100
Years of service	Less than 1 year	69	28.5
	1-2 years	76	31.4
	2-4 years	53	21.9
	5 years and longer	37	15.3
	Missing	7	2.9
	Total	242	100

The majority of the participants were female. The age group most represented was 26 – 35 years of age. Forty three percent of the participants had a grade 12 or lower qualification and 44 percent had diplomas or occupational certificates. The home language of most participants was Afrikaans. The majority of employees worked for 1-2 years in their specific organisation.

Procedure

Permission was obtained from various private health care organisations in Gauteng to hand out questionnaires to their employees. The questionnaires were printed in booklet form and on the front page was an explanatory letter to participants. This letter informed them of the nature of the research and stated that permission was granted by their employer for their participation in the study. Instructions were given on how to complete the questionnaires. Assurance of anonymity was given. Participants were asked to put the completed questionnaires in a sealed box, provided by the researcher. Participants were also encouraged to contact the researcher or the research leader via telephone or e-mail, should they have any questions. Participation was voluntary at all times and no employee was forced to take part in the research. Where possible groups of employees were assembled and given an explanatory talk by the researcher before handing out the booklets. The researcher collected the sealed boxes containing the completed questionnaires after two weeks and personally processed the data obtained.

Measuring instruments

Four research instruments were used, namely the *Job Insecurity Inventory (JII)* of De Witte (2000); the *Organisational Commitment Questionnaire(OCQ)* of Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993); the *Experience of Work and Life Circumstances Questionnaire (WLQ)* of Van Zyl and Van der Walt (1991); and the *Cope Questionnaire (COPE)* of Carver, Scheier and Weintraub (1989).

The *Job Insecurity Inventory (JII)* (De Witte, 2000), was used to measure the perceived job insecurity of participants. It is an 11-item questionnaire. The items measure both cognitive- (the possibility of becoming unemployed) and affective (emotional reaction to it) dimensions of job insecurity and are arranged along a 5-point Likert-type scale with 1=strongly agree, 3=unsure, and 5=strongly disagree. The JII measuring global job insecurity is reported to be highly reliable with a Cronbach alpha of 0.92 found by De Witte (2000), with the six items

measuring cognitive job insecurity obtaining 0.90; and the five items measuring affective job insecurity obtaining 0.85. In South African studies Elbert (2002), Heymans (2002), Sauer (2003) and Tjeku (2006) reported acceptable reliability indices for the JII.

The *Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ)* (Meyer et al., 1993) was used to measure the affective organisational commitment of participants. The total questionnaire is based on the premise that organisational commitment is a multi-dimensional construct which includes affective, continuance and normative commitment. It comprises of 18 items which include affective, continuance and normative commitment. A five point Likert-type scale is used with 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree. Cronbach alpha coefficients reported by Meyer et al. (1993) were consistently above 0.80 for every sub-scale and inter correlations between populations were often above 0.90, which indicate that the combined factor is congruent. South African studies by Bagraim and Hayes (1999); Dwyer (2001); and Stander and Rugg (2001) found acceptable Cronbach alpha coefficients for the total OCQ. In this study only the affective sub-scale of the OCQ will be used. Laba, Bosman and Buitendach (2005) and Selepe (2004) reported acceptable Cronbach alpha coefficients for the affective organisational commitment subscale.

The *Experience of Work and Life Circumstances Questionnaire (WLQ)* (Van Zyl & Van der Walt, 1991) was used to measure work-related stress. This questionnaire was standardised for use in South Africa. The questionnaire has two subscales that respectively measure stress levels experienced and the nature and important causes of stress of employees, with a minimum level of education equal to grade 10. The results can be utilised to identify employees that are functioning under high levels of stress and to determine the main stressors in their environments. Reliability coefficients, measured by the Kuder-Richardson formula 8 range from 0.83 to 0.92, and test-retest reliability varies from 0.62 to 0.80, which compares favourably with other similar questionnaires (Van Zyl & Van der Walt, 1991).

The first dimension of the questionnaire (used in this study), indicates the level of stress of the employee as normal, high or very high. Measurement is conducted through the assessment of 40 questions on a five-point Likert-type scale which indicates how often certain stress emotions (for example; anxiety, depression and frustration) occur. A high score indicates a high level of stress (Van Zyl & Van der Walt, 1991). Oosthuizen (2004) found acceptable alpha coefficients for the scale in a South African research group.

The *COPE Questionnaire (COPE)* (Carver et al., 1989) was used to measure the different ways in which people cope with stress. This 53-item questionnaire measures 14 different coping strategies: active coping; planning; suppression of competing activities; restraint coping; seeking social support for instrumental reasons; seeking social support for emotional reasons; positive reinterpretation and growth; acceptance; turning to religion; focus on and venting of emotions; denial; behavioural disengagement; mental disengagement and alcohol-drug use. The first five subscales measure different aspects of problem-focused coping, the next five subscales measure different aspects of emotion-focused coping and the last four subscales measure avoidance behaviour. The COPE has a self-report format and participants have to describe what they mostly do or think in stressful situations. A four point Likert-type scale ranges from 1=I don't usually do this at all; to 4=I usually do this. Carver et al. (1989) reported Cronbach alpha coefficients varying from 0.45 to 0.92. They reported sufficient levels of reliability for all the subscales with the exclusion of mental disengagement which measured lower than 0.60. Test-retest reliability ranged between 0.46 and 0.86 and when applied after two weeks, it ranged between 0.42 and 0.89. Higher scores indicate that the particular coping strategy is more likely to be used in a stressful situation. In South African studies, Joubert (2003) and Law (2004) reported acceptable Cronbach alpha coefficients.

Statistical analysis

The Statistical Consulting Services of the North-West University, Vaal Triangle Campus, did the statistical analysis using partly the SPSS program (2003) and partly STATISTIKA (2007).

Descriptive statistics (e.g. means, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis) were used to analyse the data. Cronbach alpha coefficients, inter-item correlation coefficients and factor analyses were used to assess the reliability and validity of the measuring instruments (Clark & Watson, 1995). Pearson product correlation coefficients were used to specify the relationships between the variables and the practical significance of correlation coefficients were indicated (Cohen, 1988). To investigate the relative impact of predictors on outcomes, multiple regression analysis was used (Cohen, Cohen, West & Aiken, 2003).

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics, Cronbach alpha coefficients and the inter-item correlation coefficients of the Job Insecurity Inventory; the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire; the Experience of Work and Life Circumstances Questionnaire; and the COPE Questionnaire for employees working in private health care organisations ($N = 242$) are reported in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics, reliability coefficients and inter-item correlations of the measuring instruments used with respondents in this study

Test and subscales	N	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Inter-item R	Cronbach's alpha
Job Insecurity	242	2.39	0.61	-0.01	0.15	0.35	0.86
Affective Org Commitment	242	4.52	0.95	0.12	1.54	0.39	0.70
Stress level	242	2.19	0.65	0.47	0.11	0.47	0.92
<u>COPE:</u>							
Active coping	242	2.89	0.62	-0.36	0.51	0.53	0.82
Planning	242	2.98	0.62	-0.41	0.16	0.54	0.82
Suppression	242	2.66	0.61	-0.21	0.27	0.44	0.76
Restraint	242	2.49	0.64	-0.94	0.12	0.46	0.77
Social Instrumental	242	2.83	0.74	-0.42	-0.16	0.62	0.87
Social Emotional	242	2.85	0.77	-0.37	-0.47	0.61	0.86
Growth	242	2.82	0.61	-0.29	0.16	0.48	0.79
Acceptance	242	2.51	0.67	-0.14	-0.22	0.48	0.78
Religion	242	3.16	0.66	-0.71	-0.05	0.52	0.82
Venting	242	2.50	0.66	-0.00	-0.34	0.39	0.73
Denial	242	1.95	0.73	0.55	-0.20	0.51	0.81
Beh. Disengage	242	1.95	0.66	0.27	-0.62	0.41	0.74
Ment. Disengage	242	2.32	0.71	0.07	-0.59	0.39	0.71
Drug use	242	1.40	0.73	1.81	2.52		

Mean scores

Mean scores are used to summarise normal distributions of interval or ratio scores and standard deviation is a measure of variability that indicates how much the scores are spread out around the mean (Heimans, 2006). The mean score (2.39) and standard deviation (0.61) for job insecurity in this study are in line with those found by Stander (2007) who obtained a mean of 2.90 and a standard deviation of 0.63 in a group of government and manufacturing employees.

The mean score (4.52) and standard deviation (0.95) for affective organisational commitment in this study are slightly higher than those reported by Ramakau (2006), namely 3.77 and 0.70 respectively in a group of employees working in an agricultural co-operation. Cooks (2007) reported a mean of 3.33 for affective organisational commitment and a standard deviation of 0.68 in a group of employees working in a petrochemical organisation.

Oosthuizen (2004) reports a mean of 2.08 and a standard deviation of 0.53 for the job-related stress level in a group of fire fighters, which is very similar to those found in this study.

As shown in table 2 the mean scores of the COPE subscales vary between 3.16 and 1.40 and compare well with those found by Law (2004) in a group of students ranging between 3.21 and 1.42. Standard deviations also compare well with those found in literature. It would appear as if the research group in this study mostly used turning to religion as a coping mechanism and least used drug taking as a coping mechanism.

Skewness and kurtosis

Skewness and kurtosis are used to indicate whether the distribution of scores of a research sample is normal or showed tendencies of bias (either positive- or negative skewness and peaked- or flat kurtosis) (Howell, 1995).

Skewness for the measuring instruments used in this study is acceptable (smaller than one) which means that the distribution is normal. The kurtosis for most of the measuring instruments is acceptable (between -1 and 1) which indicates a normal distribution.

However, the skewness and kurtosis of drug use as a coping mechanism are higher than the set norms. This is probably due to this coping mechanism being measured by only one item on the COPE questionnaire. Kurtosis for affective organisational commitment is also higher than the set norm indicating a peaked distribution toward higher scores. Howell (1995) is of the opinion that kurtosis is less useful to a mere user of statistics in the social sciences than to a statistician; and that the attention should rather fall on other more important results of the study. Thus, although one could speculate on the reasons for the tendency of this research group toward higher scores on affective organisational commitment, it seems more important to concentrate on issues such as reliability and validity of instruments, correlations between the constructs and inferential statistical findings of this study.

Reliability of the measuring instruments

Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all the measuring instruments are above the norm of alpha < 0.70 as set by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). All of the inter-item correlations were acceptable according to the desirable range set by Clark and Watson (1995), namely 0.15 to 0.50. These findings indicate the internal consistency of the measuring instruments used in this study, based on the scores of this specific research group.

The reliability coefficients found in this investigation correspond well with those found in literature. The Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.86 of the JII measuring job insecurity, is in line with those found by other South African studies. Elbert (2002) reported a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.84 for the JII, Heymans (2002) a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.81 and Sauer (2003) a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.80 for the cognitive scale and 0.85 for the affective scale. A Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.81 for the cognitive scale and 0.70 for the affective scale were reported by Tjeku (2006).

In this study only the affective sub-scale of the OCQ was used for which a reliability score of 0.70 was obtained. Laba, Bosman and Buitendach (2005) obtained a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.87 for affective organisational commitment and Selepe (2004) reported an alpha coefficient of 0.75 for the affective subscale. Thus, the alpha coefficient of 0.70 found here compare well with that of other studies conducted in South Africa.

The Cronbach alpha coefficient of the WLQ measuring job-related stress level in this study is 0.92 which is the same as that reported by Oosthuizen (2004).

In South African research, Joubert (2003) reported Cronbach alpha coefficients ranging from 0.80 to 0.90 and Law (2004) ranging from 0.42 – 0.72 for the COPE measuring coping behaviour. The Cronbach alpha coefficients found for the COPE in this study range from 0.71 to 0.87 and are higher than those found by law (2004) but compares well with those reported by Joubert (2003).

Validity of the measuring instruments

The validity of the scales used was indicated by their factor structures (which establishes the inter-item correlations) obtained after a factor analysis was performed on the scores of each instrument.

The Job Insecurity Inventory (JII)

A confirmatory principal component factor analysis extracted only one factor with eigenvalue of 4.78 and explaining 43.50% of the total variance. All the items of the scale loaded significantly on this factor indicating the unitary nature of this inventory.

This was followed by an exploratory principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation which extracted two factors with eigenvalues of 1.75 and 1.11 and explaining 24.05 of the total variance. On the first factor loaded most of the items indicating the cognitive aspects of job insecurity; and on the second factor loaded most of the items indicating the affective aspects of job insecurity, this is in line with the original hypothesis for the JII according to De Witte (2000). Jordaan (2007) in a South African study with a group of employees in a petrochemical laboratory reported that a principal component analysis with oblimen rotation resulted in two factors, namely affective job insecurity and cognitive job insecurity.

Based on the guidelines of Zwick and Velicer (1986) the factor solutions found with the JII can be assumed to indicate the validity of the scale for use in this research group.

The Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ)

A confirmatory principal component factor analysis extracted only one factor with eigenvalue of 2.75 and explaining 45.86% of the total variance. All the items of the affective subscale used in this research loaded significantly on this factor.

This was followed by an exploratory principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation which extracted two factors with eigenvalues of 2.75 and 1.62 and explaining 72.95% of the total variance. On the first factor loaded all the items indicating negative aspects of affective commitment and on the second factor loaded all the items indicating positive aspects of affective commitment. This finding concurs with the two factor solution of Laba (2004) for the affective subscale of the OCQ. Based on the factor solutions of the OCQ-affective subscale as indicated above, the validity for use in this research group was assumed.

The Experience of Work and Life Circumstances Questionnaire (WLQ)

A confirmatory principal component factor analysis extracted only one factor with eigenvalue of 20.04 and explaining 50.11% of the total variance. All the items of the stress level sub-scale used in this research loaded significantly on this factor indicating the unitary nature of this sub-scale.

This was followed by an exploratory principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation which extracted six factors with eigenvalues from 20.04 – 1.05 and explaining 69.57% of the total variance. Factor one represented the stressful emotions of guilt, downheartedness and fearfulness. Factor two indicated feelings of not being in control and factor three was a strong factor indicating anxiety. Factor four represented feelings of being overwhelmed, factor five indicated overdependence and a lack of self-efficacy, and factor six had items of frustration loading significantly on it. Although this is not an ideal factor solution, the factors significantly identified the stressful emotions measured by the WLQ. The scale consistently obtained good reliability indices in this and other studies and based on that the WLQ will with caution, be assumed valid for use with this research group.

The Cope Questionnaire (COPE)

Because the COPE is a multi-dimensional scale consisting of 14 sub-scales in three main dimensions of coping, namely problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping and avoidance coping, exploratory factor analysis using the varimax rotation method with principal components was done. Ten factors were revealed explaining 66.49% of the total variance and with eigenvalues ranging from 16.68-1.05.

Factor 1 was a strong factor representing problem-focused coping with 15 out of the 20 items measuring the five subscales in this dimension, loading significantly on factor 1. Factor 2 represented avoidance coping with 12 of the 14 items measuring the denial and disengagement sub-scales, loading significantly on factor 2. Factor 3 represented social support with all the items measuring the seeking of social support sub-scales loading significantly on this factor. Factor 4 indicated turning to religion with all four items loading significantly on it and factor 5 represented emotion-focused coping with 8 of the 16 items measuring the five sub scales in this dimension loading on this factor. Factor 6 indicated the venting of emotions, factor 7 represented positive reinterpretation, factor 8 indicated restraint coping, factor 9 was insignificant and factor 10 had the single drug use item loading on it. This factor solution is similar to that of Carver et al. (1989) and also to the findings of Du Toit (2000) and Law (2004) using the COPE in South African research.

Evaluating the factorial structure of the COPE according to the criteria of Zwick and Velicer (1986) the validity for use in this research group can be assumed for most of the sub scales and especially for the three main dimensions namely, problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping and avoidance coping.

Correlations between the constructs

In Table 3 the correlations between the job insecurity, affective organisational commitment, job-related stress level and coping behaviour scores for this research group are displayed. Only correlations higher than 0.2 are indicated with a significance level of $p < 0.05$. Practical significance was indicated according to the criteria of Cohen (1988) who sets the cut-off points for practical significance of the correlation coefficients between variables as $r \geq 0.10$ (small effect), $r \geq 0.30$ (medium effect) and $r \geq 0.50$ (large effect).

Table 3

Correlations between measurements of Job Insecurity, Affective Organisational Commitment, Job-related Stress level and Coping Behaviour (N=242)

	Coping: Venting	Coping: Denial	Coping: B- Disengage	Coping: M- Disengage	Coping: Drug	Job Stress Level	Job Insecurity	Affective Org Commitment
Job Insecurity		0.34**	0.32**	0.28*		0.46**		
Affective Org commitment					-0.26*	-0.36**	-0.35**	
Job Stress Level	0.27*	0.44**	0.42**	0.40**	0.27*			

Correlation variables indicated are statistical significant at $p < 0.05$.

* = Small effect (practical significance)

** = Medium effect (practical significance)

Table 3 shows that job insecurity has a statistically significant negative correlation (practically significant with medium effect) with affective organisational commitment (-0.35). This indicates that increased perceptions of job insecurity could result in decreased affective organisational commitment. The relationship obtained between job insecurity and affective organisational commitment is in line with the findings of Cooks (2007) who reported a negative correlation between job insecurity and affective organisational commitment.

Job insecurity has a statistically significant positive correlation (practically significant with medium effect) with job-related stress levels (0.46). This implies that increased perceptions of job insecurity could lead to increased job-related stress levels. Hartley, Jacobsen, Klandermans and Van Vuuren (1991) also linked job insecurity to job-related stress and Näswall, Sverke and Hellgren (2005) found that employees experiencing more job insecurity experienced more job-induced tension.

A statistically significant positive correlation (practically significant with medium effect) is indicated in Table 3 between job-related stress levels and certain negative coping behaviour, such as denial (0.44), behavioural disengagement (0.42) and mental disengagement (0.40). This implies that rising job-related stress levels could lead to increased negative coping behaviour such as denial, behavioural- and mental disengagement. Quick, Quick, Nelson and Hurrell (1997) to indicate that occupational stress has many negative effects. These effects include,

among others, impaired performance, health problems, absenteeism, turnover, purposefully destructive behaviours and alcohol and drug use.

A statistically significant negative correlation (practically significant with small effect) was found between affective organisational commitment and negative coping behaviour, specifically the use of drugs. This could be interpreted as that when affective organisational commitment decreases, drug use (including alcohol) as a coping mechanism, could increase.

Although not indicated as aims in this study, it is interesting to note that a statistically significant negative correlation (practically significant with medium effect) is indicated in Table 3 between job-related stress levels and affective organisational commitment (-0.36). This indicates that as job-related stress levels rise, affective organisational commitment would be expected to decrease. Furthermore, job insecurity has a statistically significant positive correlation (practically significant with medium effect) with negative coping behaviour such as denial (0.34), behavioural disengagement (0.32) and mental disengagement (0.28). This indicates that as perceptions of job insecurity increases, negative coping behaviour such as denial and disengagement may result. This finding corresponds with the conclusion of Jordan et al. (2002) that a natural first reaction to job insecurity is a defensive reaction such as negative coping behaviour, in an attempt to escape from or deal with the stressful reality.

Regression analyses

The direct effect (predictor value) of job insecurity on affective organisational commitment and job-related stress was determined by regression analyses. Table 4 shows the results based on 3 linear regression analyses.

Table 4

Linear regression analyses of job insecurity on affective organisational commitment and job-related stress level in this research group

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	t	p	F	R ²
		B	SE	Beta				
Affective Org Commitment	Job insecurity	-0.54	0.09	-0.35	-5.8	0.00	33.1	0.12
Job Stress Level	Job insecurity	19.5	2.44	0.46	8.0	0.00	64.1	0.21
Affective Org Commitment	Job Stress Level	-0.013	0.002	-0.36	-6.0	0.00	36.2	0.13

As can be seen in Table 4 increased perceptions of job insecurity lead to decreased affective organisational commitment. Job insecurity as independent variable explains 12.1% of the total variance in affective organisational commitment. The prediction accuracy in this case is very good ($F=33.14$ with $p<0.05$). A highly significant contribution is made by job insecurity in predicting affective organisational commitment ($Beta=-0.35$ with $p<0.05$).

Secondly, it can be seen that increased perceptions of job insecurity lead to increased job-related stress levels. Job insecurity as independent variable explains 21.1% of the total variance in the job-related stress levels. The prediction accuracy in this case is very good ($F=64.1$ with $p<0.05$). A highly significant contribution is made by job insecurity in predicting the job-related stress levels ($Beta=0.46$ with $p<0.05$).

Although not part of the propositions in the model of Jordan et al. (2002), interestingly enough, Table 4 also indicates that increased job-related stress levels lead to decreased affective organisational commitment. Job-related stress level as independent variable explains 13.1% of the total variance in affective organisational commitment. The prediction accuracy in this case is very good ($F=36.25$ with $p<0.05$). A highly significant contribution is made by the job-related stress level in predicting affective organisational commitment ($Beta=-0.36$ with $p<0.05$).

DISCUSSION

The main aim of this research was to investigate the proposed model of Jordan et al. (2002) regarding perceptions of job insecurity and the emotional- and behavioural consequences thereof (Figure 2). This aim was operationalised with the help of four secondary aims. By using the Job Insecurity Inventory, the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire, the Experience of Work and Life Circumstances Questionnaire and the COPE Questionnaire as measuring instruments, descriptive statistics, reliability and validity of scales, correlations between the constructs and prediction values were determined.

The mean scores and standard deviations of the measuring instruments used in this research compare well with those of the same measuring instruments used in other research in the South African context.

Skewness and kurtosis of the measuring instruments are mostly acceptable. However, the skewness and kurtosis of drugs as coping mechanism and affective organisational commitment are higher than the set norms. Howell's opinion (1995) regarding the usefulness of kurtosis in the social sciences was applied.

Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all the measuring instruments are above the norm of alpha > 0.70 as set by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) and all of the inter-item correlations were acceptable according to the desirable range set by Clark and Watson (1995), namely 0.15 to 0.50. This indicated that the scales used in this study were reliable and showed internal consistency. Furthermore the reliability indices found for the measuring instruments used in this study compared well with those of other studies (also in the South African context) using the same scales.

Confirmatory and exploratory factor analyses, done on the scores of all scales, revealed factor solutions indicating that the validity of the JII, the OCQ-affective subscale, the WLQ-stress level subscale and the COPE could be assumed for use in this research group, albeit with caution in some instances.

Having confirmed the validity and reliability of the measuring instruments for this study, the original aim of investigating the model of Jordan et al. (2002) was attended to. In their model

Jordan et al. (2002) propose that perceptions of job insecurity will lead to lower affective organisational commitment. A correlation coefficient of -0.35 (practically significant with medium effect) found in this study supports this assumption of Jordan et al. (2002). Thus, if perceptions of job insecurity increase, affective organisational commitment will most likely decrease.

Jordan et al. (2002) furthermore propose that perceptions of job insecurity will lead to increased job-related stress levels. A correlation coefficient of 0.46 (practically significant with medium effect), found in this study, supports this assumption of Jordan et al. (2002). This could mean that as perceptions of job insecurity increase, so, most likely, will levels of job-related stress.

Jordan et al. (2002) thirdly propose that lowered levels of affective organisational commitment and higher levels of job-related stress will lead to negative coping behaviour. A correlation coefficient of -0.26 (practically significant with small effect) was found between affective organisational commitment and negative coping behaviour, specifically the use of drugs. This means that when affective organisational commitment decreases the use of drugs (or alcohol) as coping mechanism may increase. Also, a statistically significant positive correlation (practically significant with medium effect) was found between job-related stress levels and negative coping behaviour, such as denial (0.44), behavioural disengagement (0.42) and mental disengagement (0.40). This implies that rising job-related stress levels could lead to increased manifestations of negative coping behaviour. This finding supports the assumptions of Jordan et al. (2002) that lowered levels of affective organisational commitment and higher levels of job-related stress could bring about negative coping behaviour in employees.

Regression analyses indicate that job insecurity as independent variable explains 12.1% of the total variance in affective organisational commitment and 21.1% of the total variance in the job-related stress level. Job insecurity is thus indicated by these findings as a powerful predictor of emotional consequences such as a decrease in affective organisational commitment and increased levels of job-related stress experienced by employees, as result of their perceptions of job insecurity.

Based on the above discussion of the findings of this study, it is concluded that the assumptions of Jordan et al. (2002) for the first stage of the model, namely that perceived job insecurity will

lead to the emotional reactions of lowered affective organisational commitment and increased job-related stress levels and that these emotional reactions will negatively influence coping behaviour, can be supported.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Job insecurity is currently a huge threat and it is expected that between now (2009) and 2010 about 25 million employees will lose their jobs worldwide (Gurria, 2008). Therefore, the findings of this study are of potential importance to private health care organisations.

From the above it can be concluded that job insecurity, or perceptions of job insecurity is prevalent in the world of work. Job insecurity is a subjective phenomenon, meaning it is based on the individual's perceptions and interpretations of the immediate work environment (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984). This implies that the feelings of job insecurity may differ between individuals when they are exposed to the same objective situation and that individuals may differ in their reactions to these perceptions of a job at risk (Sverke & Hellgren, 2002). Even individuals working in a relatively stable work environment (such as private health care institutions) might perceive certain changes and happenings around them as threatening the continuity of their jobs. (This makes sense, as a much discussed topic currently in workplaces is the worldwide recession, causing employees to be more sensitive to any change occurring in their organisation). Therefore, job insecurity may also be studied in employees at seemingly stable organisations (Borg & Elizur, 1992).

It has been shown in this study that job insecurity has a negative correlation with affective organisational commitment. Randall, Fedor and Longenecker (1990) found that affective commitment significantly predicts concern for quality, sacrifice orientation and the willingness to share knowledge. Therefore it can be concluded that committed employees will be better service quality performers (in health care organisations) because of their willingness to exert some extra effort beyond their normal duties (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry, 1990).

To prevent the deterioration of organisational commitment during times of crises and uncertainty, Camilleri (2002) recommends that the employer must provide high quality information about the organisation's plans and activities to reduce uncertainty and maintain organisational commitment. Meyer and Allen (1991) also mention two-way communication

and participatory style of management, among others, to specifically enhance affective commitment. It seems that employees high in commitment are better able to cope with changes and ambiguity and less likely to want to leave the organisation (Judge, Thoreson, Pucik & Welbourne, 1999). The above recommendations could be applied by employers in private health care organisations during times of organisational change to minimise perceptions of job insecurity leading to lower affective organisational commitment which in turn leads to deterioration of service quality.

Job insecurity was found to have a positive correlation with job-related stress levels. Job insecurity leading to higher stress levels could affect an employee's health negatively and lead to absenteeism from work (Cheng, Chen, Chen & Chuang, 2005; De Ruyter & Burgess, 2000). Job-related stress results in high costs to organisations and communities due to health care expenses, lost productivity and an increased turnover (Cooper & Cartwright, 1994).

Pertaining to the above, a statistically significant positive correlation has been found in this study between job-related stress levels and certain negative coping behaviour, such as denial, behavioural disengagement and mental disengagement, thus indicating that rising job-related stress levels could lead to increased negative coping behaviour. This is in line with findings of Rice (1992), who mentions procrastination and avoidance of work, lowered performance and productivity and aggression; vandalism and stealing; among others, as behavioural consequences of job-related stress. Organisations pay the price for stress through higher absenteeism rates; low job involvement; accident proneness and a lack of concern for the organisation and colleagues.

Cooper (2006) is of the opinion that much of the stress experienced by employees is due to the way in which change (which may lead to perceptions of job insecurity) is managed. He suggests open and honest communication with employees, understanding employees' fears and encouraging greater ownership by employees in the change process. Gillespie et al. (2001) also suggest employee consultation and more transparency regarding organisational change, to manage job-related stress.

Stress management programs can help to reduce the negative effects of job-related stress and aid in building better coping skills. These programs typically include, according to Stevens and Pfof (1984) stress information, assessment, training in relaxation, exercise planning,

nutritional information, cognitive restructuring, time management and problem solving. More attention should be given to fostering effective coping strategies in employees to enable them to handle job-related stress better during times of organisational change. Stress inoculation training could be used to teach employees appropriate coping skills.

Savery and Luks (2000) are of the opinion that organisations must be careful when they downsize or delayer to not just provide counselling for those who have to leave but also for those who stay who might be worried about losing their jobs and feel sorry for those who had to leave.

The recommendations regarding the findings of this study could be used to enhance employer-employee relations and to improve service quality in aforementioned organisations which in turn has serious consequences for the competitiveness and profit margin of these organisations during the current recession.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The following limitations of this study and recommendations for future research were identified:

- The findings of this study may not be generalised because the results were obtained from a relatively small sample (N = 242) of employees working in private health care organisations in Gauteng, South Africa.
- Job insecurity, affective organisational commitment, job-related stress levels and coping behaviour were subjectively measured (using self-report data) and this could affect the validity of the findings. The nature of the items in especially the COPE could lead participants to give socially acceptable answers.
- A longitudinal study would possibly provide more complete data on the long term effects of job insecurity.
- Qualitative data (narrative) in conjunction with quantitative data could provide a greater understanding of the causes and consequences of job insecurity.

- Validation of the model of Jordan et al. (2002) through further research is recommended.
- Note should be taken of the opinion of Payne (2001), who states that it is important not to label individuals as good or bad “copers”. The effectiveness of a coping strategy may depend on the situation. Many stressors encountered specifically in the context of nursing cannot be changed, therefore Boyle, Grap, Younger and Thornby (1991) are of the opinion that emotion-focussed strategies could be used as coping strategy in such situations. Further studies could be undertaken to investigate the different coping strategies of nursing personnel and the validity of the above statement.
- All the measuring instruments used could be further researched for validation purposes; especially the construct validity of the WLQ and the COPE.

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JOB INSECURITY – THE EMOTIONAL- AND BEHAVIOURAL CONSEQUENCES THEREOF AND THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AS MODERATOR

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ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this research was to investigate the proposed model of Jordan, Ashkanasy and Hartel (2002) regarding perceptions of job insecurity, the emotional- and behavioural consequences thereof and the role of emotional intelligence (EI) as moderator of these reactions. According to the model of Jordan et al. (2002) the emotional outcomes of perceptions of job insecurity are lower affective organisational commitment and higher job-related stress; while the behavioural outcomes are negative coping behaviour. Jordan et al. (2002) propose that EI will moderate the links between perceptions of job insecurity and affective organisational commitment and job-related stress levels. They also propose that EI will moderate the links between affective organisational commitment and coping behaviour and job-related stress and coping behaviour. A non-experimental correlation research design was used and the study population consisted of a convenience sample of employees working for private health care organisations in Gauteng, South Africa (N=242). The measuring instruments were the *Job Insecurity Inventory (JII)*, the *Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ)*, the *Experience of Work and Life Circumstances Questionnaire (WLQ)*, the *Cope Questionnaire (COPE)* and the *Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS)*. The results indicated a practically significant negative correlation between job insecurity and affective organisational commitment. Also, a practically significant positive correlation was found between job insecurity and job-related stress. Both the above findings supported the proposed model of Jordan et al. (2002) regarding the emotional outcomes of job insecurity. A practically significant negative correlation was found between affective organisational commitment and negative coping behaviour and a practically significant positive correlation was found between job-related stress levels and negative coping behaviour. These findings support the proposed model of Jordan et al. (2002) regarding the behavioural outcomes of job insecurity. However, it was found that EI does not moderate the links between perceived job insecurity and affective organisational commitment and job insecurity and job-related stress in this study population. EI does moderate the links between affective organisational commitment and coping behaviour and job-related stress and coping behaviour. Employees with higher EI tend to use problem-focused and emotion-focused coping behaviour and not avoidant coping.

The financial assistance of the National Research Foundation (NRF) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at are that of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the National Research Foundation.

OPSOMMING

Die primêre doel van hierdie navorsing is om die voorgestelde model van Jordan, Ashkanasy and Hartel (2002) rakende persepsies van werksonsekerheid en die emosionele- en gedragsgevolge daarvan te ondersoek. Volgens die model van Jordan et al. (2002) is die emosionele gevolge van werksonsekerheid, laer affektiewe organisasieverbondenheid en hoër werksverwante spanning; terwyl die gedragsgevolge negatiewe coping gedrag behels. Jordan et al. (2002) is ook van opinie dat emosionele intelligensie (EI) die verbande tussen persepsies van werksonsekerheid en affektiewe organisasieverbondenheid en werksverwante spanning sal modereer. Hulle stel ook voor dat EI die verbande tussen affektiewe organisasieverbondenheid en “coping” gedrag en werksverwante spanning en coping gedrag sal modereer. ‘n Nie-eksperimentele korrelasie navorsingsontwerp is gebruik en die studiepopulasie het bestaan uit ‘n beskikbaarheidsteekproef van werknemers van private gesondheidsorganisasies in Gauteng, Suid-Afrika (N=242). Die meetinstrumente wat gebruik is sluit die *Job Insecurity Inventory (JII)*, die *Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ)*, die *Experience of Work and Life Circumstances Questionnaire (WLQ)*, die *Cope Questionnaire (COPE)* en die *Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS)* in. Die resultate dui op ‘n prakties beduidende negatiewe korrelasie tussen werksonsekerheid en affektiewe organisasieverbondenheid. Daar is ook ‘n prakties beduidende positiewe korrelasie gevind tussen werksonsekerheid en werksverwante spanning. Beide die bogenoemde bevindinge ondersteun die voorgestelde model van Jordan et al. (2002) betreffende die emosionele gevolge van werksonsekerheid. ‘n Prakties beduidende negatiewe korrelasie is gevind tussen affektiewe organisasieverbondenheid en negatiewe coping gedrag en ‘n prakties beduidende positiewe korrelasie is gevind tussen werksverwante spanning en negatiewe coping gedrag. Hierdie bevindinge ondersteun die voorgestelde model van Jordan et al. (2002) rakende die gedragsgevolge van werksonsekerheid. Daar is egter bevind dat EI nie die verbande tussen persepsies van werksonsekerheid en affektiewe organisasieverbondenheid en werksonsekerheid en werksverwante spanning in hierdie studiepopulasie modereer nie. EI modereer wel die verbande tussen affektiewe organisasieverbondenheid en coping gedrag en werksverwante spanning en “coping” gedrag. Werknemers met hoër EI is geneig om probleemgefokusde- en emosiegefokusde “coping” te gebruik en nie vermydings coping gedrag nie.

JOB INSECURITY – THE EMOTIONAL- AND BEHAVIOURAL CONSEQUENCES THEREOF AND THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AS MODERATOR

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND LITERATURE STUDY

The current day working environment is full of uncertainty, market changes, changing workforce demographics, social and political pressures and technological advances (Savery & Luks, 2000). During the past decades working life has changed concerning issues such as increased economic dependency between countries, rapidly changing consumer markets and higher demands for flexibility within and between organisations (Sverke, Hellgren & Näswell, 2006). A lower level of differentiation between competing products has developed and customers choose service and support above product performance. Quality of service and effective (after) sales care are very important for building successful organisations. Client centeredness has become the primary focus of the business environment (Nel & De Villiers, 2004).

Furthermore, the smokestack industries disappeared and with them job security which was once the most treasured benefit of the smokestack era. Outsourcing and the globalisation of markets led to huge job losses (Gélinas, 2005). In most industrialised countries organisations attempt to reduce labour cost and improve competitiveness by restructuring and layoffs (Sverke & Hellgren, 2002). South African employees did not escape any of this. According to Potgieter (2003), longer working hours, excessive responsibility and job insecurity seem to be prevalent workplace stressors for the South African employee.

If client centeredness is the primary focus of the (very uncertain and competitive) business environment as explained above, it is important to investigate the effects of job insecurity on the ability of the employee to deliver quality service to clients. Job insecurity is a form of work-related stress with the potential to be detrimental to an individual's job attitudes and behaviours (Lim, 1997) and will in the long run negatively influence corporate climate and the effective functioning of the organisation (Hellgren, Sverke, & Isakson, 1999).

According to Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt, (1984, p. 438) job insecurity is a "...sense of powerlessness to maintain desired continuity in a threatened job situation". Job insecurity has also been defined as the expectations an individual has about continuity in a job situation

(Davey, Kinicki, & Scheck, 1997) and as the perception an individual has about a potential threat to continuity in his/her current job (Heany, Israel, & House, 1994). These definitions reflect a global viewpoint of job insecurity, because they centre on concern about job loss or job discontinuity (De Witte, 1999). A multidimensional definition of job insecurity would include references to not only uncertainty about the continuity of a job, but also uncertainty about other job dimensions such as the opportunity for promotion (Ashford, Lee & Bobko, 1989). Borg and Elizur (1992) differentiate between cognitive job insecurity and affective job insecurity. Cognitive job insecurity refers to the likelihood of job loss, while affective job insecurity refers to the fear of job loss. In this article the research will focus on the global view of job insecurity, namely concern about job loss.

From the above it can be concluded that job insecurity is a subjective phenomenon, meaning it is based on the individual's perceptions and interpretations of the immediate work environment (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984). Perception is a personal experience. People are unlikely to interpret facts in the same way. Each person is unique and each person interprets stimuli differently (Martin, 2001) and personality aspects play an important role in this regard (Kinnunen, Feldt & Mauno, 2003). This implies that feelings of job insecurity may differ between individuals when exposed to the same objective situation and individuals may differ in their reactions to these perceptions of a job at risk (Sverke & Hellgren, 2002). Differences in behaviour and attitudes of employees subjected to job insecurity have been found by researchers. Galup, Saunders, Nelson and Cervany (1997) found that job insecurity leads to increased work effort and work involvement, while Bolt (1983); Mooney (1984); Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984); and Rosow and Zager (1985) reported that job insecurity produces decreased performance.

An explanation of these discrepant findings might be found by examining research on affectivity. According to Levin and Stokes (1989), affectivity is associated with a type of cognitive bias through which people approach and interpret their lives. Affective tendencies and cognitive styles influence how people experience and evaluate their jobs and job-related outcomes. Therefore the model proposed by Jordan et al. (2002), portrayed in Figure 1, linking perceptions of job insecurity to emotional reactions and negative coping behaviours, is worth investigating. The model of Jordan et al. (2002) is based on the idea that emotional variables can explain in part, the discrepant findings about employees' performance. They propose that emotional intelligence moderates employees' emotional reactions to job insecurity and their

ability to cope with associated stress. This possible moderating effect of emotional intelligence in the stressor-strain relationship will be the focus of this research.

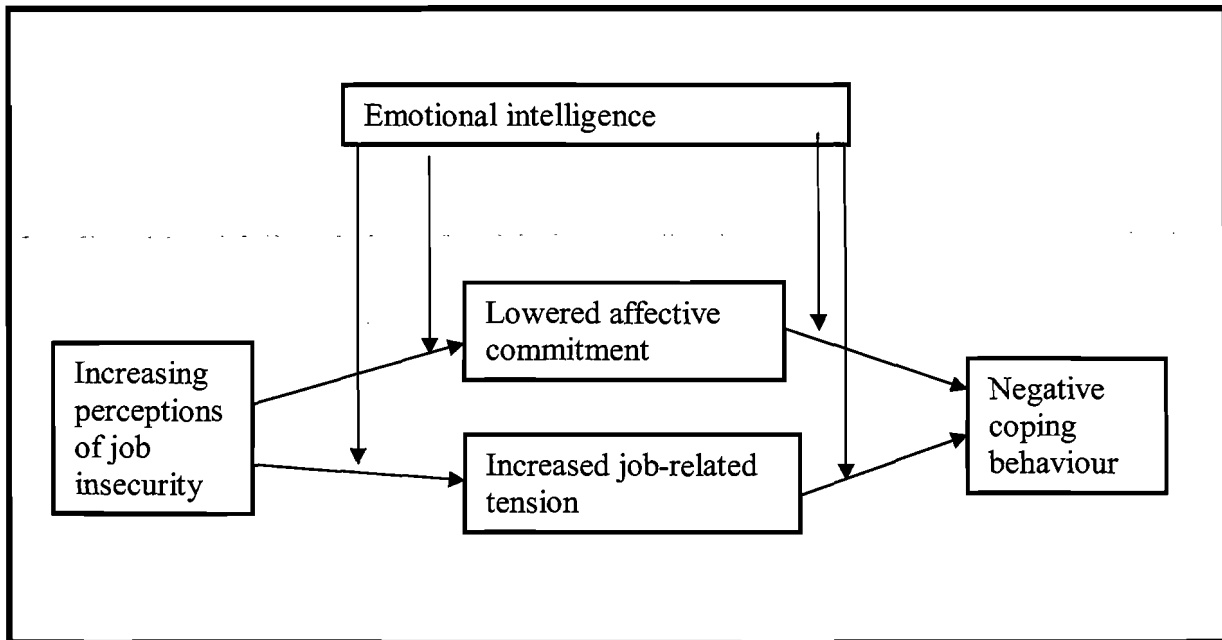


Figure 1. The adapted theoretical model of Jordan, Ashkanasy and Hartel (2002).

The model as portrayed in Figure 1 has been adapted by omitting “exit behaviour,” indicated in the original model as an emotional reaction that could follow increased perceptions of job insecurity.

The two-stage model of Jordan et al. (2002) illustrates the link between job insecurity and workplace behaviour. The model of Jordan et al. (2002) is predicated on an emotional trigger that stems from an employee’s perception of job insecurity. This is in line with Ortony, Clore and Collins’ (1988) theory of cognitive processes involved in the generation of emotions. The cognitive evaluation of this perception results in two interrelated emotional reactions, namely lowered affective organisational commitment and increased job-related tension (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964, cited in Jordan et al., 2002). According to Jordan et al. (2002) these two emotional reactions lead to negative behaviours. In the model these behaviours are conceptualised as negative coping behaviour. They define negative coping behaviours as coping behaviours that are either unsuccessful or only assisting in temporarily reducing perceptions of job insecurity or avoiding it.

Because, as indicated above, job insecurity is primarily a perceived phenomenon, Jordan et al. (2002) are of the opinion that it is reasonable to conclude that individual perceptions of job insecurity will have an impact on the way in which individuals behave in an organisation. Thus, they include a dispositional variable, namely emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence influences the way individuals perceive, understand and cope with job insecurity proposing the possibility that it may make it possible to predict whether individuals will engage in negative or positive coping behaviours. Jordan et al. (2002) are of the opinion that employees high in emotional intelligence are more likely to be able to break the sequence of effects linking perceived job insecurity and negative behaviours. They state that the precise location in the model at which the moderating effects will occur, is likely to vary among individuals. Some individuals may control their initial emotional reaction better, while others may be better in dealing with their emotions as they occur.

In the first stage of the model Jordan et al. (2002) indicate two possible emotional reactions that are likely to occur as result of perceptions of job insecurity, namely lowered affective organisational commitment and increased job-related stress.

Organisational commitment is the psychological bond between employees and their employing organisation (Bagraim, 2003), and deals with the attitudes of people towards their organisation (Malhotra & Mukherjee, 2003). Security of employment is a forerunner of organisational commitment (Dekker & Schaufeli, 1995). According to Borg and Elizur (1992), the problem exists that employees experience high job insecurity, while at the same time there is a need to build a competitive economy. To achieve the latter employers need employees high in motivation and commitment, but according to Ashford et al. (1989), job insecurity has a negative effect on employees' motivation and commitment. Also, organisational commitment is affected by job insecurity in that insecure employees experience less pride in working, show a lack of trust and have stronger intentions to leave (De Witte, 1997).

Organisational commitment is a multidimensional construct (Meyer & Allen, 1997). It has affective, normative and continuance dimensions. Affective commitment refers to an employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in, the organisation. Continuance commitment is the employee's commitment based on the cost he/she associates with leaving the organisation. Normative commitment is the employee's feelings of obligation

to stay with the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991). In this research in line with the model being investigated, only affective commitment will be studied.

Employees with strong affective commitment remain with the organisation because they want to (Schappe & Doran, 1997). Meyer and Allen (1991) thus argue that an affectively committed employee would be more likely to exert effort on behalf of the organisation, because he/she has a genuine desire to maintain employment compared to employees with normative or continuance commitment. According to Zeithamel, Parasuraman and Berry (1990), committed employees are more likely to be better service quality performers because they are willing to expend effort beyond the normal call of duty.

Jordan et al. (2002) propose that emotional intelligence will moderate the effect of perceptions of job insecurity on affective organisational commitment and that compared with employees with high emotional intelligence, employees with low emotional intelligence will manifest lower affective organisational commitment in response to job insecurity. It has indeed been found by McFarlane, Shore and Tetrick (1991), that job insecurity leads to reduced organisational commitment. On the other hand, Nikolaou and Tsaousis (2002) found a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and organisational commitment. Cooper and Sawaf (1997) as cited in Abraham (1999), are of the opinion that emotionally intelligent employees are flexible and optimistic enough to, instead of faultfinding, put difficulties behind them and redirect their attention to conflict resolution. Thus, emotional intelligence prevents an employee from holding the organisation responsible for every frustration and conflict at the workplace and in doing so, prevents the erosion of commitment (Abraham, 1999).

The second emotional reaction to job insecurity in the model of Jordan et al. (2002) is job-related stress. Occupational stress is defined as the physical, mental and emotional wear and tear caused by the incongruence between the requirements of the job and the capabilities, resources and needs of employees to cope with their job demands (Akinboye, Akinboye & Adeyemo, 2002). Jex and Beehr (1991) state that a job stressor is a condition or situation at work that requires of the employee an adaptive response.

Job insecurity involves the experiencing of a threat, and implies a great deal of uncertainty regarding whether the individual gets to keep his/her job in the future (Barling & Kelloway, 1996; De Witte, 1999; Van Vuuren, 1990). Thus, job insecurity threatens an individual's

economic, personal or social resources (Hobfoll & Shirom, 2001) and may result in severe stress. Research has indicated that organisational change such as downsizing, can and often does lead to stress and can result in an increase in injury or illness, low morale and increased absenteeism (Savery & Luks, 2000; Savery & Luks, 2001). Probst (2002) is of the opinion that the strain of job-related uncertainty may become evident at a physiological, behavioural or psychological level – or any combination thereof. Therefore, when stress exists, work attitudes and affective reactions are expected to be negative

Jordan et al. (2002) propose that emotional intelligence will moderate the effect of perceptions of job insecurity on job-related stress. Compared with employees with high emotional intelligence, employees with low emotional intelligence will experience higher dysfunctional job-related stress in response to job insecurity. This is supported by Nikolaou and Tsaoussis (2002) who found a negative correlation between emotional intelligence and stress at work. Slaski and Cartwright (2003) explain the link between emotional intelligence and stress as follows: Negative emotions and stress are the result of some dysfunctional relationship between aspects of the self and the environment. Therefore, emotional intelligence, the ability to read and manage emotions in the self and others, acts as a moderator in the process.

The negative behaviour stemming from the above mentioned emotional reactions to job insecurity, namely job-related stress and lowered affective organisational commitment, is conceptualised by Jordan et al. (2002) as negative coping behaviour.

Coping refers to the process of using thoughts to manage stressful situations and control the effects of these situations. Matheny, Aycock, Pugh, Curlette and Silva-Cannella (1986, p509) defined coping as “any effort, healthy or unhealthy, conscious or unconscious, to prevent, eliminate, or weaken stressors, or to tolerate their effects in the least hurtful manner,” while Zeidner and Endler (1996) view coping as a stabilising factor which can help individuals maintain psychosocial adaptation during stressful periods. It encompasses cognitive and behavioural efforts to reduce or eliminate stressful conditions and associated emotional distress.

Coping could be problem-focused, emotion-focused, or both (Bala, Rohlof & Van Waning, 2005). Problem-focused coping strategies can be directed in two ways; outer-directed or inner-directed. Outer-directed strategies are aimed at altering the situation or behaviours of others.

Inner-directed strategies can include efforts to change attitudes and needs and to develop new skills and responses. Emotion-focused coping aims to manage emotional distress and can include meditation, expressing feelings and seeking support (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Coping strategies can be associated with emotion-management related experiences and therefore, are important components of emotional intelligence (Salovey, Hsee & Mayer, 1993). According to Bar-On (1997), emotional intelligence influences an individual's ability to cope effectively with environmental demands and pressures and Matthews and Zeidner (2000, p.460) explain that: "Adaptive coping might be conceptualized as emotional intelligence in action, supporting mastery emotions, emotional growth, and both cognitive and emotional differentiation, allowing us to evolve in an ever-changing world".

Martinez (1997, p 72) defines emotional intelligence as "an array of non-cognitive skills, capabilities and competencies that influence a person's ability to cope with environmental demands and pressures," and according to Le Roux and De Klerk (2001), emotional intelligence refers to people with an ability to cope with what is happening to them. It can include specific personal- and social competencies related to emotional awareness of the self and others, emotional control, empathy, balanced thoughts, emotions and behaviour, anger control and the ability to delay gratification.

Mayer and Salovey (1997) on the other hand conceptualise emotional intelligence as the cognitive ability that involves the processing of emotion. It involves monitoring emotions and discriminating amongst them as well as the behavioural process of using this information to guide thinking and actions. Elder (1997, p41) also sees emotional intelligence more in line with a cognitive perspective by stating that it is "a measure of the degree to which a person successfully (or unsuccessfully) applies sound judgement and reasoning to situations in the process of determining an emotional or feeling response to those situations".

The roots of emotional intelligence (EI) are considered to go back a number of years to the conceptualisation of social intelligence, formulated by Thorndike (1920, cited in Jordan et al., 2002). Social intelligence is the ability to understand and manage other people. Furthermore Gardner (1983, cited in Jordan et al., 2002) developed the theory of multiple intelligences with two categories thereof being interpersonal- and intrapersonal intelligences. Interpersonal intelligence is the ability to understand other people and what motivates them and how to work cooperatively with them while intrapersonal intelligence is the ability to form a true concept of

one self and to use it to operate effectively in life in general. However, psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer, are usually given credit for providing the first definition of EI. Initially, they defined EI as "...the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p189). Mayer, Caruso and Salovey (2000, p267) refined the definition by stating that EI is "an ability to recognize the meanings of emotions and their relationships, and to reason and problem-solve on the basis of them. Emotional intelligence is involved in the capacity to perceive emotions, assimilate emotion-related feelings, understand the information of those emotions, and manage them". The four major components of EI are stated as the ability to perceive and express emotion (perception), assimilate emotion in thought (assimilation), understand and reason with emotion (understanding), and regulate emotion in self and others (management) (Mayer, Caruso & Salovey, 2000).

- Emotional self-awareness is a starting point for dealing with perceptions emerging from job insecurity since employees' feelings about job insecurity drive their emotional- and behavioural reactions. The ability to recognise other people's emotional expressions and the sincerity thereof is also important in dealing with perceptions of job insecurity;
- Job insecurity causes a range of emotions in the employee. Emotional assimilation enables the employee to determine whether these emotions are reasonable in the situation. It also assists the employee in adopting multiple perspectives to assess the problem from different angles. In this manner, the employee can determine the appropriate emotional state to solve the problem or to resolve conflicting emotions;
- Emotional understanding can contribute to reconciliation of these opposing feelings arising from perceptions of job insecurity. It also helps the employee to understand what feelings other employees may experience, thus providing the employee with insight in others' emotional expressions and behaviours; and
- Emotion management refers to the ability to regulate emotions; to moderate them in one self and others. It is the ability to connect with or disconnect from an emotion, depending on the usefulness in the situation. As an example, in the case of job

insecurity, it seems necessary to be able to disconnect from feelings of anger if such feelings interfere with task completion (Jordan et al., 2002).

Jordan et al. (2002) are of the opinion that employees with low emotional intelligence are not well-equipped to deal with the affective consequences of job insecurity namely job-related tension and low affective organisational commitment. As an example, employees with high emotional intelligence may decide to reframe their perceptions of job insecurity as a challenge. They may also control and redirect their anxiety into productive behaviour that will help them to make their jobs more secure. They use emotional assimilation which helps them to adopt multiple perspectives and to select from a range of coping strategies, those that result in amelioration of the emotional reactions to job insecurity in the long term. However, employees with low emotional intelligence may avoid the issue of job insecurity, failing to understand the consequences of their actions. They may also withdraw from active participation and complete the minimum work required to maintain their jobs. These are short-term strategies, which minimise immediate anxiety but do not lead to actions that enhance job security. Therefore, emotional intelligence is proposed by Jordan et al. (2002) as a moderator of affective organisational commitment, job-related stress and coping.

In this research the negative emotional reactions (lowered affective organisational commitment and higher job-related stress) and behavioural reactions to job insecurity (coping behaviour), as well as whether these are moderated by emotional intelligence; all assumptions of the model proposed by Jordan et al. (2002), will be investigated.

The research was done in private health care organisations in Gauteng, South Africa. The South African health care sector consists of two industries; private hospitals and public hospitals. Public hospitals are the largest industry while private hospitals, of which the majority are members of the Hospital Association of South Africa (HASA), make up approximately one third of South Africa's hospitals. The private health care market in South Africa is an increasingly competitive environment (Boshoff & Gray, 2004) and in such a competitive environment, regardless the type of industry, if business declines, downsizing and restructuring are bound to take place if the organisation does not generate enough profit to ensure its survival. Job insecurity is likely to persist in organisations coping with competitive pressures (Ashford, Lee & Bobko, 1989).

Emotional intelligence in human services or direct person-related jobs such as health care organisations, has further advantages. According to Cadman and Brewer (2001), “portable” skills of nursing staff are very important to health care organisations under pressure to compete. These skills (indicating emotional intelligence) include the ability to work effectively in teams, the ability to recognise and respond in an appropriate way to one’s own emotions as well as others’ emotions and the ability to motivate oneself and other people. The effective management of emotions at work further contributes to a harmonious workplace, superior productivity and increased profitability (Acton, 2002).

Mann (1999) explains that the emotional front experienced by clients is associated with a specific organisation and this could influence their decision to use the services offered by the organisation. Boshoff and Gray (2004) researched the factors impacting on service dimensions in a private hospital and they found that empathetic behaviour is a service quality dimension that positively influences cumulative (customer) satisfaction. They recommend enhancing the empathetic behaviour of the nursing staff and that all employees should at all times demonstrate that they care about the patients and ensure that patients feel safe during hospitalisation. The role EI plays in this regard is evident. The employees being aware of the emotional state of patients and acting appropriately to ensure as pleasant as possible hospital stay for patients, will ensure quality service and win customer loyalty.

Based on the above exposition, the aim of this investigation into the moderating effect of EI on job insecurity and its consequences of reduced affective organisational commitment and increased job-related stress manifested in negative coping behaviour of employees in private health care organisations, seems justified. If it is found that employees experience job insecurity and also the proposed emotional- and behavioural reactions to job insecurity, and that EI moderates these links, interventions could be proposed to enable the employees to handle their perceptions of job insecurity more effectively. EI is important to organisations, because it has a practical effect on performance and it is changeable, meaning all aspects of EI can be improved (Farthing, 2001). Thus, by implementing interventions, the private health care organisations could offer better service, and so attract more customers (patients), thus gaining a competitive edge.

METHOD

Research design

This is a quantitative study. A survey design was used, more specifically a non-experimental correlation research design. By completing the questionnaires, each individual was measured concerning all five the constructs and thereafter the relationship between the different measurements was determined. This design determines the relationship between the various constructs without any planned intervention. It can also be used to assess relationships among variables within a population and is ideally suited for descriptive and predictive functions associated with correlation research (Shaugnessy & Zechmeister, 1997).

Participants

The study population can be described as a convenience sample of employees at private health care organisations in Gauteng, South Africa (N = 242). The participants were workers from all levels, ranging from semi-skilled to professional. All the employees have a level of literacy in English adequate for reliable completion of the questionnaires. Out of 400 potential respondents, 242 returned questionnaires, resulting in a response rate of 60.5%. The biographical characteristics of the study population are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1

Biographical characteristics of the participants (N = 242)

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	17	7
	Female	223	92.1
	Missing	2	0.8
	Total	242	100
Age	25 years and younger	64	26.4
	26 – 35 years	79	32.6
	36 – 45 years	55	22.7
	46 years and older	41	16.9
	Missing	3	1.2
	Total	242	100
Qualifications	Grade 12 and lower	104	43
	Diplomas	107	44.2
	Higher degrees	24	9.9
	Missing	7	2.9
	Total	242	100
Home language	Afrikaans	110	45.5
	English	37	15.3
	Sotho	72	29.8
	Tswana	14	5.8
	Zulu	5	2.1
	Other	2	0.8
	Missing	2	0.8
	Total	242	100
Years of service	Less than 1 year	69	28.5
	1-2 years	76	31.4
	2-4 years	53	21.9
	5 years and longer	37	15.3
	Missing	7	2.9
	Total	242	100

The majority of the participants were female. The age group most represented was 26 – 35 years of age. Forty three percent of the participants had a grade 12 and lower qualification and forty four percent had diplomas or occupational certificates. The home language of most people was Afrikaans. The majority of employees worked for 1-2 years in their specific organisation.

Procedure

Permission was obtained from various private health care organisations in Gauteng to hand out questionnaires to their employees. The questionnaires were printed in booklet form and on the front page was an explanatory letter to participants. This letter informed them of the nature of the research and stated that permission had been granted by their employer for their participation in the study. Instructions were given on how to complete the questionnaires. Assurance of anonymity was given. Participants were asked to put the completed questionnaires in a sealed box, provided by the researcher. Participants were also encouraged to contact the researcher or the research leader via telephone or e-mail, should they have any questions. Participation was voluntary at all times and no employee was forced to take part in the research. Where possible groups of employees were assembled and given an explanatory talk by the researcher before handing out the booklets. The researcher collected the sealed boxes containing the completed questionnaires after two weeks and personally processed the data obtained.

Measuring instruments

Five research instruments were used, namely the *Job Insecurity Inventory (JII)* of De Witte (2000); the *Organisational Commitment Questionnaire(OCQ)* of Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993); the *Experience of Work and Life Circumstances Questionnaire (WLQ)* of Van Zyl and Van der Walt (1991); the *Cope Questionnaire (COPE)* of Carver, Scheier and Weintraub (1989); and the *Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS)* of Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden and Dornheim (1998).

The *Job Insecurity Inventory (JII)* (De Witte, 2000) was used to measure the perceived job insecurity of participants. It is an 11-item questionnaire. The items measure both cognitive- (the possibility of becoming unemployed) and affective (emotional reaction to it) dimensions

of job insecurity and are arranged along a 5-point Likert-type scale with 1=strongly agree, 3=unsure, and 5=strongly disagree. The JII measuring global job insecurity is reported to be highly reliable with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.92 found by De Witte (2000), with the six items measuring cognitive job insecurity obtaining 0.90, and the five items measuring affective job insecurity obtaining 0.85. Elbert (2002) reported a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.84 for the JII; Heymans (2002) a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.81; and Sauer (2003) a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.80 for the cognitive scale and 0.85 for the affective scale. Cronbach alpha coefficients of 0.81 for the cognitive scale and 0.70 for the affective scale was reported by Tjeku (2006). These were all South African studies.

The *Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ)* (Meyer et al., 1993) was used to measure the affective organisational commitment of participants. The total questionnaire is based on the premise that organisational commitment is a multi-dimensional construct which include affective, continuance and normative commitment. It comprises of 18 items which includes affective, continuance and normative commitment. A 5-point Likert-type scale is used with 1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree. Cronbach alpha coefficients reported by Meyer et al. (1993) were consistently above 0.80 for every sub-scale and inter correlations between populations were often above 0.90, which indicate that the combined factor is congruent. The results from South African studies support the reliability and validity of the questionnaire (Bagraim & Hayes, 1999). Dwyer (2001) and Stander and Rugg (2001) found a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.79 and 0.86 for reliability respectively. In this study only the affective sub-scale of the OCQ was used. Laba, Bosman and Buitendach (2005) obtained a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.87 and Selepe (2004) reported a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.75 for the affective organisational commitment subscale.

The *Experience of Work and Life Circumstances Questionnaire (WLQ)* (Van Zyl & Van der Walt, 1991) was used to measure work-related stress. This questionnaire was standardised for use in South Africa. The questionnaire has two subscales that respectively measure stress levels experienced and the nature and important causes of stress of employees, with a minimum level of education equal to grade 10. The results can be utilised to identify employees that are functioning under high levels of stress and to determine the main stressors in their environments.

The first dimension of the questionnaire (used in this study) indicates the level of stress of the employee as normal, high or very high. Measurement is conducted through the assessment of 40 questions on a 5-point Likert-type scale which indicate how often certain stress emotions (for example anxiety, depression or frustration) occur. A high score indicates a high level of stress (Van Zyl & Van der Walt, 1991). Reliability coefficients, measured by the Kuder-Richardson formula 8, range from 0.83 to 0.92, and test-retest validity varies from 0.62 to 0.80, which compares favourably with other similar questionnaires (Van Zyl & Van der Walt, 1991). Oosthuizen (2004) found a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.92.

The *COPE Questionnaire (COPE)* (Carver et al., 1989) was used to measure the different ways in which people cope with stress. This 53-item questionnaire measures 14 different coping strategies: active coping, planning, suppression of competing activities, restraint coping, seeking social support for instrumental reasons, seeking social support for emotional reasons, positive reinterpretation and growth, acceptance, turning to religion, focus on and venting of emotions, denial, behavioural disengagement, mental disengagement and alcohol-drug disengagement. Five subscales measure different aspects of problem-focused coping, five subscales measure different aspects of emotion-focused coping and four subscales measure avoidance behaviour. The COPE has a self-report format and participants have to describe what they mostly do or think in stressful situations. A 4-point Likert-type scale ranges from 1=I don't usually do this at all; to 4=I usually do this. Carver et al. (1989) reported Cronbach alpha coefficients varying from 0.45 to 0.92. They reported sufficient levels of reliability for all the subscales with the exclusion of mental disengagement which measured lower than 0.60. Test-retest reliability ranged between 0.46 and 0.86 and when applied after two weeks, it ranged between 0.42 and 0.89. Higher scores indicate that the particular coping strategy is more likely to be used in a stressful situation. In a South African study Joubert (2003) reported Cronbach alpha coefficients ranging from 0.80 to 0.90.

The *Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS)* (Schutte et al., 1998) was used to measure emotional intelligence. The scale consists of 33 items that are based on the conceptual model of emotional intelligence of Salovey and Mayer (1990). It assesses the extent to which respondents characteristically identify, understand, harness and regulate emotions in themselves and others. Thirteen items measure appraisal and expression of emotion, ten measure regulation of emotion and another ten measure utilization of emotion. The items are arranged along a 5-point Likert-type scale and respondents rate themselves on each item with

1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=not sure, 4=agree and 5=strongly agree. Schutte et al. (1998) reported internal consistency of 0.87 to 0.90 and two week test-retest reliability of 0.78. Evidence of validity includes significant correlations with the theoretically related constructs of attention, clarity, mood repair, optimism and low impulsivity. In South African research Law (2004) found reliability coefficients of 0.79, 0.72 and 0.73 for the subscales and 0.95 for the total EIS.

Statistical analysis

The Statistical Consulting Services of the North-West University, Vaal Triangle Campus, did the statistical analysis using partly the SPSS program (2003) and partly STATISTIKA (2007).

Descriptive statistics (e.g. means and standard deviations) were used to analyse the data. Cronbach alpha coefficients and factor analyses were used to assess the reliability and validity of the measuring instruments (Clark & Watson, 1995). Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to specify the relationships between the variables (Cohen, 1988). According to Frazier, Tix and Barron (2004), a moderator is a variable that amends the direction or strength of the relationship between a predictor and an outcome. Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the moderating influence of emotional intelligence in this study.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics, Cronbach alpha coefficients and product-moment correlation coefficients of the Job Insecurity Inventory, the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire, the Experience of Work and Life Circumstances Questionnaire, the COPE Questionnaire and the Emotional Intelligence Scale for employees working in private health care organisations ($N = 242$) are reported in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics, Chronbach Alpha Coefficients and Product Moment Correlation Coefficients of the measuring instruments for employees working in private health care organisations

Test subscales	Basic Statistics				Correlations														
	N	Mean	SD	Chron	Cop: Active	Cop: Plan.	Cop: Suppr.	Cop: Soc. Ins.	Cop: Soc Em.	Cop: Growth	Cop: Religion	Cop: Venting	Cop: Denial	Cop: B-Diseng.	Cop: M-Diseng.	Cop: Drug	Job Stress Level	Job Insecur.	Affec. Org. Committ.
Job Insecurity	242	2.39	0.61	0.86	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.34**	0.32**	0.28*	-	0.46**	-	-
Aff Commitment	242	4.52	0.95	0.70	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.26*	-0.36**	-0.35**	-
Stress Level	242	2.19	0.65	0.97	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.27*	0.44**	0.42**	0.40**	0.27*	-	-	-
Em Intelligence	242	3.63	0.53	0.92	0.48**	0.52**	0.36**	0.47**	0.44**	0.40**	0.33**	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.36**	-
COPE:																			
Active coping	242	2.89	0.62	0.82	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Planning	242	2.98	0.62	0.82	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Suppression	242	2.66	0.61	0.76	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Restraint	242	2.49	0.64	0.77	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Social Instrumental	242	2.83	0.74	0.87	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Social Emotion	242	2.85	0.77	0.86	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reint./Growth	242	2.82	0.61	0.79	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Acceptance	242	2.51	0.67	0.78	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Religion	242	3.16	0.66	0.82	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Venting	242	2.50	0.66	0.73	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Denial	242	1.95	0.73	0.81	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Beh. Disengage	242	1.95	0.66	0.74	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ment. Disengage	242	2.32	0.71	0.71	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Drug use	242	1.40	0.73	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

COPE inter-scale correlations not given

Correlation variables indicated are significant at $p < 0.05$.

*= small effect (practical significance)

**= medium effect (practical significance)

Meanscores

Mean scores are used to summarize normal distributions of interval or ratio scores and standard deviation is a measure of variability that indicates how much the scores are spread out around the mean. (Heimans, 2006). The mean score (2.39) and standard deviation (0.61) for job insecurity in this study are in line with those found by Stander (2007) who obtained a mean of 2.90 and a standard deviation of 0.63 in a group of government and manufacturing employees. The mean score (4.52) and standard deviation (0.95) for affective organisational commitment in this study are slightly higher than those reported by Ramakau (2006), namely 3.77 and 0.70 respectively in a group of employees working in an agricultural co-operation. Cooks (2007) reported a mean of 3.33 for affective organisational commitment and a standard deviation of 0.68 in a group of employees working in a petrochemical organisation. Oosthuizen (2004) found a mean of 2.08 and a standard deviation of 0.53 for the job-related stress level in a group of fire fighters which compare well with the 2.19 and 0.65 found in this study respectively. As shown in table 2, the mean scores of the COPE subscales vary between 3.16 and 1.40 and compare well with those found by Law (2004) ranging between 3.21 and 1.42 in a group of students. Standard deviations also compare well with those found in literature. It would appear as if the research group in this study mostly used turning to religion as a coping mechanism and least used alcohol-drug disengagement as a coping mechanism. The mean score (3.63) and standard deviation (0.53) found for the EIS compare well with those reported by Law (2004) of 3.89 and of 0.41 respectively but are slightly higher than the mean (2.08) reported by Oosthuizen and Koortzen (2007).

Reliability of the measuring instruments

Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all the measuring instruments are above the norm of alpha < 0.70 as set by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). The reliability coefficients found in this study correspond well with those found in literature and specifically with research done in South Africa using the same scales.

The Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.86 of the JII is in line with Elbert (2002) and Heymans (2002) as mentioned before. The affective sub-scale of the OCQ was used, for which a reliability score of 0.70 was obtained, corresponding with findings by Laba, Bosman and Buitendach (2005) and Selepe (2004). The Cronbach alpha coefficient of the WLQ in this

study is 0.92 which is similar to that found by Oosthuizen (2004). The Cronbach alpha coefficients found for the COPE in this study range from 0.71 to 0.87 and compare well with those reported by Joubert (2003). The alpha coefficient for EI found in this study (0.92) is in line with that reported by Law (2004).

Validity of the measuring instruments

The validity of the scales used was indicated by their factor structures obtained after a factor analysis had been performed on the scores of each instrument.

The Job Insecurity Inventory (JII)

A confirmatory principal component factor analysis extracted only one factor with eigenvalue of 4.78 and explaining 43.50% of the total variance. All the items of the scale loaded significantly on this factor indicating the unitary nature of this inventory.

This was followed by an exploratory principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation which extracted two factors with eigenvalues of 1.75 and 1.11 and explaining 24.05 of the total variance. On the first factor loaded most of the items indicating the cognitive aspects of job insecurity and on the second factor loaded most of the items indicating the affective aspects of job insecurity, which is in line with the original hypothesis for the JII according to De Witte (2000). Jordaan (2007), in a South African study with a group of employees in a petrochemical laboratory, reported that a principal analysis with an oblimen rotation resulted in two factors, namely affective job insecurity and cognitive job insecurity. Based on the guidelines of Zwick and Velicer (1986), the factor solutions found with the JII can be assumed to indicate the validity of the scale for use in this research group.

The Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ)

A confirmatory principal component factor analysis extracted only one factor with eigenvalue of 2.75 and explaining 45.86% of the total variance. All the items of the affective subscale used in this research loaded significantly on this factor.

This was followed by an exploratory principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation which extracted two factors with eigenvalues of 2.75 and 1.62 and explaining 72.95% of the

total variance. On the first factor loaded all the items indicating negative aspects of affective commitment and on the second factor loaded all the items indicating positive aspects of affective commitment. This finding concurs with the two factor solution of Laba (2004) for the affective subscale of the OCQ. Based on the factor solutions of the OCQ-affective subscale, indicated above, the validity for use in this research group was assumed.

The Experience of Work and Life Circumstances Questionnaire (WLQ)

A confirmatory principal component factor analysis extracted only one factor with eigenvalue of 20.04 and explaining 50.11% of the total variance. All the items of the stress level sub-scale used in this research loaded significantly on this factor indicating the unitary nature of this sub-scale.

This was followed by an exploratory principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation which extracted six factors with eigenvalues from 20.04 – 1.05 and explaining 69.57% of the total variance. Factor one represented the stressful emotions of guilt, downheartedness and fearfulness. Factor two indicated feelings of not being in control and factor three was a strong factor indicating anxiety. Factor four represented feelings of being overwhelmed, factor five indicated overdependence and a lack of self-efficacy, and factor six had items of frustration loading significantly on it. This is not an ideal factor solution for the indication of validity since the factors show instability even though they significantly identified the stressful emotions measured by the scale. The fact that the scale consistently obtained good reliability indices in this study and other studies and that it yielded a primary factor indicating the stress level subscale as a uni-dimensional scale for measuring levels of experienced job-related stress (as preferred by its authors), allows one to assume with caution that the scale is valid for use with this research group. Interpretation of results will be done with this in mind.

The Cope Questionnaire (COPE)

Because the COPE is a multi-dimensional scale consisting of 14 sub-scales in three main dimensions of coping, namely problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping and avoidance coping, exploratory factor analysis using the varimax rotation method with principal components was done. Ten factors were revealed explaining 66.49% of the total variance and with eigenvalues ranging from 16.68-1.05.

Factor 1 was a strong factor representing problem-focused coping with 15 out of the 20 items measuring the five subscales in this dimension, loading significantly on factor 1. Factor 2 represented avoidance coping with 12 of the 14 items measuring the denial and disengagement sub-scales, loading significantly on factor 2. Factor 3 represented seeking social support with all the items measuring the seeking of social support sub-scales loading significantly on this factor. Factor 4 indicated turning to religion with all four items loading significantly on it and factor 5 represented emotion-focused coping with 8 of the 16 items measuring the five sub scales in this dimension loading on this factor. Factor 6 indicated the venting of emotions, factor 7 represented positive reinterpretation, factor 8 indicated restraint coping, factor 9 was insignificant and factor 10 had the single alcohol-drug disengagement item loading on it. This factor solution is similar to that of Carver et al. (1989) and also to the findings of Du Toit (1999) and Law (2004) using the COPE in South African research projects.

Evaluating the factorial structure of the COPE according to the criteria of Zwick and Velicer (1986) the validity for use in this research group can be assumed for most of the sub scales and especially for the three main dimensions namely, problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping and avoidance coping.

The Emotional Intelligence Scale

A confirmatory principal component factor analysis extracted one factor with eigenvalue of 12.2 and explaining 37% of the total variance. Of the 33 items of the scale, 30 loaded significantly (> 0.50) on this factor.

This was followed by an exploratory principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation which yielded a fairly unstable factor solution of seven factors, with eigenvalues ranging from 12.2 to 1.06 and explaining 66.61% of the total variance. Factor 1 seems to represent the general EI factor suggested by Schutte et al. (1998), containing 18 items from all three the subscales and with high loadings (> 0.50) of all these items. All the other factors were unstable factors representing mostly the regulation of emotion and utilization of emotion of the EIS. Schutte et al.'s (1998) indication of their factor solution on which the EIS was based, has been criticised by Petrides and Furnham (2000) and their concern was subsequently supported by Austin, Saklofske, Huang and McKenney (2004); Gignac, Palmer, Manocha and Stough (2005); and Keele and Bell (2008). In a South African investigation of Law (2004) a factor solution of 8 factors were found also indicating a not-ideal factor analysis of the EIS.

Surprisingly however, the reliability indices of the EIS in the current study as well as those mentioned above range from 0.78 – 0.94 for sub-scales and for the total scale. All the researchers agree on the internal consistency of the scale indicated by consistently good test-retest and internal reliabilities and group differences in scores, and correlations with other measures that are in accordance with theoretical expectations. Austin et al. (2004) and Gignac et al. (2005) came to the conclusion that the EIS, although not without its problems, is a reliable and valid measuring instrument of EI traits. Therefore, the validity of the EIS for use in this research group is assumed, keeping in mind that due to its questionable construct validity, findings could be different in other groups. Interpretation of results will also be done with this in mind.

Correlations between the constructs

In Table 2 the correlations between the job insecurity, affective organisational commitment, job-related stress level, coping behaviour and emotional intelligence scores for this research group are displayed. Only correlations higher than 0.2 are indicated, (with a significance level of $p < 0.05$). Practical significance was indicated according to the criteria of Cohen (1988) who sets the cut-off points for practical significance of the correlation coefficients between variables as $r = 0.10$ (small effect), $r = 0.30$ (medium effect) and $r = 0.50$ (large effect). All the correlations found in this study correspond well with those found in literature and especially in South African studies using the same measuring instruments.

Table 2 shows that job insecurity has a statistically significant negative correlation (practically significant with medium effect) with affective organisational commitment (-0.35). This indicates that increased perceptions of job insecurity could result in decreased affective organisational commitment. Job insecurity has a statistically significant positive correlation (practically significant with medium effect) with job-related stress levels (0.46). This implies that increased perceptions of job insecurity could lead to increased stress levels. In Table 2 a statistically significant positive correlation (practically significant with medium effect) between job-related stress levels and certain negative coping behaviour, such as denial (0.44), behavioural disengagement (0.42) and mental disengagement (0.40) is indicated. This implies that rising job-related stress levels could lead to increased negative coping behaviour such as denial, behavioural- and mental disengagement. A statistically significant negative correlation (practically significant with small effect) was found between affective organisational

commitment and negative coping behaviour, specifically alcohol-drug disengagement. This could be interpreted as that when affective organisational commitment decreases, drug use (including alcohol) as a coping mechanism, could increase. Furthermore, job insecurity has a statistically significant positive correlation (practically significant with medium effect) with negative coping behaviour such as denial (0.34), behavioural disengagement (0.32) and mental disengagement (0.28). This indicates that as perceptions of job insecurity increase negative coping behaviour such as denial and disengagement may result. This finding corresponds with the conclusion of Jordan et al. (2002) that a natural first reaction to job insecurity is a defensive reaction such as negative coping behaviour, in an attempt to escape from or deal with the stressful reality.

EI has a statistically significant positive correlation (practical significance, medium effect) with active coping (0.48); statistically significant positive correlation (practical significance, medium effect) with planning (0.52); statistically significant positive correlation (practical significance, medium effect) with suppression of competing activities (0.36); and a statistically significant positive correlation (practical significance, medium effect) with seeking social support for social instrumental reasons (0.47); all problem-focused coping strategies. This could mean that high EI will increase the use of the above mentioned coping strategies. EI also has a statistically significant positive correlation (practical significance, medium effect) with seeking social support for social emotional reasons (0.44); reinterpretation and growth (0.40) and turning to religion (0.33); all aspects of emotion-focused coping. This could imply that high EI could also lead to aspects of emotion-focused coping being used.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) as moderator variable

Findings for EI as moderator of the relationship between job insecurity and affective organisational commitment and job-related stress as well as between affective organisational commitment, job-related stress and coping behaviour, are presented in Tables 3A, 3B and 3C.

Table 3A

Moderating effect of EI on the relationship between job insecurity as a predictor of job-related stress and affective organisational commitment

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Beta	t	p	F	p	R ²
Affective Organisational Commitment	Job insecurity	-0.35	-5.76	<0.01	33.1	<0.01	0.12
	Emotional intelligence	0.12	1.92	0.05	18.6	<0.01	0.13
	Job insecurity	-0.30	-4.73	<0.01			
Job-related Stress Level	Job insecurity	0.46	8.01	<0.01	64.1	<0.01	0.21
	Emotional intelligence	-0.06	-0.99	0.32	32.6	<0.01	0.21
	Job insecurity	0.44	7.13	<0.01			

Significant values are in **bold**.

Table 3A shows that 11.8% of the variance observed in affective organisational commitment is explained by job insecurity. Incorporating emotional intelligence as a moderator, 12.7% of the variance in affective organisational commitment is explained. The t-value of 1.92 at $p=0.05$ is borderline, but still significant.

Job insecurity explains 20.8% of the variance observed in job-related stress levels ($p<0.05$). Incorporating EI as a moderator ($p<0.05$), there is no effect on the percentage variance explained in job-related stress levels. Thus, the logical conclusion is that EI has no moderating effect on the job-related stress level.

Next, the moderating effect of EI on affective organisational commitment as predictor of coping behaviour is indicated in Table 3B.

Table 3 B

Moderating effect of EI on the relationship between affective org commitment as a predictor and coping behaviour

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Beta	t	p	F	p	R ²
Active coping	Organisational commitment	0.23	3.70	<0.01	13.7	<0.01	0.05
	Emotional intelligence	0.45	7.75	<0.01	38.6	<0.01	0.24
Planning	Organisational commitment	0.13	2.22	0.027			
	Organisational commitment	0.18	2.86	<0.01	8.2	<0.01	0.03
	Emotional intelligence	0.51	9.02	<0.01	46.1	<0.01	0.27
Suppression	Organisational commitment	0.06	1.12	0.27			
	Organisational commitment	0.04	0.63	0.53	0.40	0.53	0.00
	Emotional intelligence	0.37	5.94	<0.01	17.9	<0.01	0.12
Restraint	Organisational commitment	-0.05	-0.72	0.47			
	Organisational commitment	0.08	1.17	0.24	1.39	0.24	0.00
	Emotional intelligence	0.22	3.43	<0.01	6.62	<0.01	0.05
Social Instrumental	Organisational commitment	0.02	0.38	0.71			
	Organisational commitment	0.11	1.65	0.10	2.71	0.10	0.01
	Emotional intelligence	0.47	8.00	<0.01	33.6	<0.01	0.21
Social Emotion	Organisational commitment	-0.003	-0.05	0.96			
	Organisational commitment	0.095	1.48	0.14	2.18	0.14	0.01
	Emotional intelligence	0.44	7.41	<0.01	28.9	<0.01	0.19
Reint./ Growth	Organisational commitment	-0.008	-0.13	0.90			
	Organisational commitment	0.17	2.59	0.01	6.72	0.01	0.02
	Emotional intelligence	0.39	6.38	<0.01	24.2	<0.01	0.16
Acceptance	Organisational commitment	0.08	1.24	0.22			
	Organisational commitment	0.07	1.04	0.30	1.07	0.30	0.00
	Emotional intelligence	0.19	2.92	<0.01	4.81	0.01	0.03
Religion	Organisational commitment	0.02	0.35	0.73			
	Organisational commitment	0.22	3.42	<0.01	11.7	<0.01	0.04
	Emotional intelligence	0.30	4.79	<0.01	17.9	<0.01	0.12
Venting	Organisational commitment	0.15	2.37	0.018			
	Organisational commitment	0.04	0.61	0.54	0.37	0.54	0.00
	Emotional intelligence	0.24	3.77	<0.01	7.3	<0.01	0.05
Denial	Organisational commitment	-0.02	-0.26	0.79			
	Organisational commitment	-0.04	-0.63	0.53	0.40	0.53	0.00
	Emotional intelligence	-0.09	-1.40	0.16	1.18	0.31	0.00
Behavioural Disengage	Organisational commitment	-0.02	-0.29	0.77			
	Organisational commitment	-0.07	-1.16	0.25	1.35	0.25	0.00
	Emotional intelligence	-0.07	-1.1	0.27	1.28	0.28	0.00
Mental Disengage	Organisational commitment	-0.06	-0.88	0.38			
	Organisational commitment	-0.03	-0.51	0.61	0.27	0.61	0.00
	Emotional intelligence	0.14	2.20	0.029	2.54	0.081	0.01
Drug use	Organisational commitment	-0.07	-1.02	0.31			
	Organisational commitment	-0.26	-4.11	<0.01	16.9	<0.01	0.06
	Emotional intelligence	-0.18	-2.83	<0.01	12.7	<0.01	0.09
	Organisational commitment	-0.22	-3.40	<0.01			

Significant values are in bold.

In Table 3B it can be seen that EI consistently explains more of the variance in problem-focused coping strategies (active coping, planning, suppression of competing activities, restraint-coping and seeking social support for instrumental reasons) than affective organisational commitment; and thus moderates the strength of the relationship between affective organisational commitment and aspects of problem-focused coping behaviour. This finding corresponds with what is theoretically expected.

What is interesting to note, is that EI also explains more of the variance in emotion-focused coping strategies such as seeking social support for emotional reasons; positive reinterpretation and growth; acceptance, turning to religion and focus on and venting of emotions than affective organisational commitment and thus moderates the strength of the relationship between affective organisational commitment and aspects of emotion-focused coping. In the case of acceptance, EI emerged as the only significant predictor of acceptance as coping strategy with affective organisational commitment not having any significant effect. The percentage variance explained by EI for problem-focused coping strategies is however higher than those of emotion focused coping ranging from 4.5% to 27.2% and 2.3% to 18.8% respectively.

In the case of avoidant coping strategies, namely denial; behavioural disengagement; mental disengagement and alcohol-drug disengagement, EI as moderator variable once again supported the theoretical expectations concerning this construct and the only significant moderating effect found for these strategies was the negative moderating effect of EI on alcohol-drug disengagement.

Table 3C

Moderating effect of EI on the relationship between job-related stress as a predictor and coping behaviour

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Beta	t	p	F	p	R ²
Active coping	Job related stress	-0.03	-0.49	0.62	0.24	0.62	0.00
	Emotional intelligence	0.49	8.52	<0.01	36.5	<0.01	0.23
Planning	Job related stress	0.08	1.30	0.20			
	Job related stress	-0.07	-1.03	0.30	1.07	0.30	0.00
	Emotional intelligence	0.54	9.49	<0.01	45.8	<0.01	0.27
Suppression	Job related stress	0.05	0.87	0.38			
	Job related stress	0.14	2.24	0.026	5.00	0.026	0.02
	Emotional intelligence	0.41	8.80	<0.01	26.1	<0.01	0.17
Restraint	Job related stress	0.23	3.85	<0.01			
	Job related stress	0.20	3.18	<0.01	10.1	<0.01	0.04
	Emotional intelligence	0.29	4.58	<0.01	16.0	<0.01	0.11
Social Instrumental	Job related stress	0.26	4.22	<0.01			
	Job related stress	0.10	1.48	0.14	2.20	0.14	0.01
	Emotional intelligence	0.51	9.00	<0.01	42.0	<0.01	0.25
Social Emotion	Job related stress	0.21	3.61	<0.01			
	Job related stress	0.02	0.31	0.76	0.09	0.76	0.00
	Emotional intelligence	0.47	7.92	<0.01	31.4	<0.01	0.20
Reint./Growth	Job related stress	0.12	2.05	0.041			
	Job related stress	0.07	1.02	0.31	1.04	0.31	0.00
	Emotional intelligence	0.44	7.35	<0.01	27.6	<0.01	0.18
Acceptance	Job related stress	0.16	2.69	0.01			
	Job related stress	0.21	3.35	<0.01	11.2	<0.01	0.04
	Emotional intelligence	0.252	4.04	<0.01	14.1	<0.01	0.09
Religion	Job related stress	0.27	4.25	<0.01			
	Job related stress	-0.04	-0.55	0.58	0.31	0.58	0.00
	Emotional intelligence	0.34	5.43	<0.01	14.9	<0.01	0.10
Venting	Job related stress	0.04	0.60	0.55			
	Job related stress	0.27	4.39	<0.01	19.3	<0.01	0.07
	Emotional intelligence	0.31	5.18	<0.01	24.1	<0.01	0.16
Denial	Job related stress	0.34	5.64	<0.01			
	Job related stress	0.44	7.49	<0.01	56.2	<0.01	0.19
	Emotional intelligence	-0.002	-0.048	0.96	28.0	<0.01	0.18
Behavioural Disengage	Job related stress	0.44	7.30	<0.01			
	Job related stress	0.42	7.20	<0.01	51.8	<0.01	0.17
	Emotional intelligence	0.01	0.09	0.93	25.8	<0.01	0.17
Mental Disengage	Job related stress	0.42	7.03	<0.01			
	Job related stress	0.40	6.76	<0.01	45.7	<0.01	0.15
	Emotional intelligence	0.23	3.83	<0.01	31.5	<0.01	.20
Drug use	Job related stress	0.45	7.62	<0.01			
	Job related stress	0.27	4.41	<0.01	19.5	<0.01	0.07
	Emotional intelligence	-0.18	-2.84	<0.01	14.1	<0.01	0.09
	Job related stress	0.24	3.75	<0.01			

Significant values are in **bold**.

Table 3C indicates that EI together with job-related stress explains between 11% and 27.1% of the variance in problem-focused coping strategies, such as active coping, planning, suppression of competing activities, restraint coping and seeking social support for instrumental reasons. Job-related stress made no significant contribution to the variance explained of active coping and planning, while it explains only 1.6% and 3.6% of the variance in suppression of competing activities and restraint coping respectively. In the case of seeking social support for instrumental reasons, the moderating effect of EI strengthened the predictive value of job-related stress significantly.

Concerning emotion-focused coping strategies, EI together with job-related stress explains between 9.8% and 20.2% of the variance. Job-related stress made no significant contribution to the variance explained in seeking social support for emotional reasons, positive reinterpretation and growth and turning to religion and only between 4.1% and 7.1% respectively in the case of acceptance and focus on and venting of emotions.

EI's moderating influence on avoidant coping strategies is as follows: EI does not significantly explain any of the variance in denial or behavioural disengagement. EI together with job-related stress explains between 15.7% and 20.2% of the variance in mental disengagement. Job-related stress explains 7.1% of the variance in alcohol-drug disengagement as coping mechanism while together with EI it explains 9.8%.

DISCUSSION

The main aim of this research was to investigate the applicability of the proposed model of Jordan et al. (2002) regarding perceptions of job insecurity and the emotional- and behavioural consequences thereof (Figure 2); and the possible moderating effect of EI on the links between the above mentioned constructs. This aim was operationalised with the help of four secondary aims. By using the Job Insecurity Inventory, the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire, the Experience of Work and Life Circumstances Questionnaire, the COPE Questionnaire and the Emotional Intelligence Scale as measuring instruments, descriptive statistics, reliability and validity of scales, correlations between the constructs, and moderating effects were determined. The overall finding of this investigation was that the model of Jordan et al. (2002) could be supported and that EI as dispositional variable moderated mainly the relationship between the emotional consequences of perceived job insecurity and coping behaviour of employees.

The mean scores and standard deviations of the measuring instruments used in this research compare well with those using the same measuring instruments in other research in the South African context.

Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all the measuring instruments are above the norm of $\alpha > 0.70$ as set by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). This indicated that the scales used in this study were reliable. Furthermore, the reliability indices found for the measuring instruments used in this study compared well with those of other studies (also in the South African context) using the same scales.

Confirmatory and exploratory factor analyses, done on the scores of all scales, revealed factor solutions indicating that the validity of the JII, the OCQ-affective subscale, the WLQ-stress level subscale, the COPE and EIS could be assumed for use in this research group, albeit with caution in the case of the WLQ and the EIS.

Having confirmed the validity and reliability of the measuring instruments for this study, the original aim of investigating the proposed model of Jordan et al. (2002) was attended to. In their model, Jordan et al. (2002) propose that perceptions of job insecurity will lead to lower affective organisational commitment and to increased job-related stress levels. Correlation coefficients of -0.35 and 0.46 respectively (both practically significant with medium effect) seem to support these assumptions.

Jordan et al. (2002) also propose that lowered levels of affective organisational commitment and higher levels of job-related stress will lead to negative coping behaviour. A correlation coefficient of -0.26 found between affective organisational commitment and negative coping behaviour, specifically the alcohol-drug disengagement and significantly positive correlation coefficients found between job-related stress levels and negative coping behaviour such as denial (0.44), behavioural disengagement (0.42) and mental disengagement (0.40), seem to support the assumptions of Jordan et al. (2002).

EI has a significantly positive correlation with job insecurity which implies that even emotionally intelligent employees will experience job insecurity and are not safeguarded against these perceptions. On the contrary, emotionally intelligent employees may even experience higher levels of perceived job insecurity. This finding seems to support a basic assumption of Jordan et al. (2002) on which their proposal that EI moderates between job

insecurity and its negative affective consequences is based, namely that job insecurity is a given in both emotionally intelligent and less emotionally intelligent employees during difficult organisational circumstances. EI does not interfere with the perception of job insecurity but it does moderate the negative effects thereof.

EI does not correlate with either affective organisational commitment or job-related stress in this study. This is a theoretically unexpected finding and also not in line with the assumptions of the model of Jordan et al. (2002). An explanation for the lack of a significant correlation between EI and job-related stress levels may be found in the problems experienced with the construct validity of both the EIS and the WLQ –level of stress subscale, identified by factor analysis of these scales with scores of the respondents in this investigation. The validity of a measuring instrument expresses the underlying theoretical construct that the scale operationalises, in other words a valid scale measures what it is supposed to measure. This does not seem to be the case with the EIS and the level of stress subscale of the WLQ, used in this study. As discussed before, both these scales yielded unstable factors in the exploratory factor analyses, characterised by cross loadings of items and a mixed picture of sub-scale themes on single factors. The lack of a significant correlation between EI and affective organisational commitment however, is more difficult to understand since EI correlates significantly with job insecurity and the coping subscales.

As indicated before, EI obtained significant positive correlations with aspects of problem-focused coping behaviour and with aspects of emotion-focused behaviour, as would be theoretically expected. EI, by means of the four adaptive abilities which it engenders, namely perception, integration, understanding and the management of emotions enable individuals to make use of a wide range of adaptive coping strategies (Carr, 2004; Jordan et al., 2002).

To determine the possible moderating effect of EI as proposed by Jordan et al. (2002) on the relationship between job insecurity and affective organisational commitment and job-related stress levels, multiple regression analyses were performed. The results indicated that EI had only a slight but significant moderating effect on the job insecurity – affective organisational commitment relationship and no effect on the job insecurity – job-related stress relationship. The tendency that employees with high EI could experience more affective organisational commitment when experiencing job insecurity than those employees with low EI seems to emerge. The first proposition of Jordan et al. (2002) stating that EI will moderate the effect of job insecurity on affective organisational commitment is supported to some extent for this

research group. Jordan et al. (2002) did not clarify the relationship between EI and affective organisational commitment; but merely stated emotional processes play a role in commitment. A possible explanation for the finding in this study is that employees with high EI will, in reaction to perceptions of job insecurity, be able to use their ability of understanding emotions better than employees with lower EI. According to Jordan et al. (2002), emotional understanding allows an individual to understand complex emotions such as simultaneous feelings of, for example, in this case loyalty (affectively committed employees *want* to work for their organisation) and betrayal (“this organisation cannot guarantee me a job”). Emotions can change cognitions, thus when an individual’s emotions shift between, in this case loyalty and betrayal, he/she can appreciate multiple vantage points and think about a problem more clearly and creatively, according to Mayer and Hanson (1995).

Also, Abraham (1999) states that EI incorporates emotional resilience or flexible optimism. Thus, instead of faultfinding, an employee with high EI will be flexibly optimistic enough to put difficulties behind them and redirect their attention to ways in which to resolve the conflict. EI prevents an employee from holding the organisation responsible for every frustration and thus prevents the erosion of organisational commitment that is the result of indiscriminate faultfinding. In this study the affective subscale of the OCQ was used. One could thus speculate that employees with high emotional intelligence will be able to manage this emotional response to perceived job insecurity in order to decide on actions in their own interest under the circumstances, eg. improving their chances to retain their jobs or to leave the organisation. They could thus suppress their feelings of insecurity or lowered affective organisational commitment and move toward active problem solving behaviour.

It was also found in this research group that EI does not moderate the strength of the relationship between job insecurity and job-related stress levels and thus that employees with high EI do not experience less job-related stress than employees with low EI when faced with perceptions of job insecurity. This means that the second proposition of Jordan et al. (2002), namely that employees with high EI will be able to regulate their emotions and to control their reactions to perceptions of job insecurity and thus experience lower job-related stress levels than those with low EI, is not supported. This finding regarding job-related stress for this specific research group may imply that not only the regulation of emotional reactions, as proposed by Jordan et al. (2002) plays a role, but the accurate perception and assimilation (why do I feel this way) of the emotion, eg. “I feel tense because there is the possibility that I may lose my job” and then using the second branch of EI namely emotional facilitation of cognitive

activities. In this case the experiencing of job-related stress could be harnessed for more effective problem solving, reasoning and decision making (Simon, 1982) as can be seen in the problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies used by employees with high EI (discussion to follow). This would be in line with the essence of the EI theory regarding stress, namely that EI does not prevent the experience of stress, but that it regulates stress from becoming dysfunctional (Jordan et al., 2002; Salovey, Caruso & Mayer, 2002).

The results shown in Table 3B indicate that EI moderates the strength of the relationship between affective organisational commitment and coping behaviour to such an extent that affective organisational commitment's predictive value is reduced to closely insignificant, whilst EI emerges as the primary predictor of coping behaviour (both positive and negative). This may imply that emotionally intelligent employees will tend to use more problem-focused coping behaviour irrespective of the affective organisational commitment that they experience. This finding seems to correspond with the opinion of Mikolajczak, Nelis, Hansenne and Quoidbach (2008) that high trait EI individuals in negative situations tend to look for the silver lining, think about what steps to take to handle their problem and put it into perspective. Also, they are less likely to catastrophise or to blame themselves for the problem or their inability to solve it. They also found that individuals with high EI has a strong capacity to choose adaptive coping strategies to down-regulate negative emotions and maintain positive emotions as well as the ability to implement these strategies.

Although to a lesser extent in this study, emotionally intelligent employees may even make use of emotion-focused coping behaviour appropriate for managing affective states associated with experienced stress, in order to be able to return their focus to active- or problem-focused strategies (Zeidner & Endler, 1996). Stanton, Parsa and Austenfeld (2002) report research that indicates that emotional regulation and expression (both features of EI) may result from emotion-focused coping and so enable the individual to re-appraise and/or reinterpret the situation and to direct energy back to active coping (Compton, 2005).

Concerning avoidant coping strategies, EI significantly negatively moderates alcohol-drug disengagement as a coping strategy, meaning employees with high EI will tend not to revert to the use of drugs or alcohol to cope.

The above findings about the moderating effect of EI on coping behaviour in relation to affective organisational commitment seem to support the proposition of Jordan et al. (2002) regarding the coping behaviour of employees with high EI who experience job insecurity.

From the results shown in Table 3C it is clear that EI moderates the link between job-related stress and coping. In the case of problem-focused coping strategies such as active coping and planning, EI emerged as the main predictor of the preferred problem-focused coping strategy while job-related stress had no or little effect on the choice. In moderating between job-related stress and coping behaviour such as suppression of competing activities, restraint and seeking social support for instrumental reasons, EI strengthened the relationship and the predictive value of job-related stress. This means that EI employees experiencing job-related stress will more likely make use of problem-focused coping strategies such as these.

This finding supports the proposition of Jordan et al. (2002) regarding employees with high EI using more positive coping strategies. Support for this finding is found in literature by Salovey, Bedell, Detweiler and Mayer (1999) who claim that emotionally intelligent individuals cope with stress more effectively, because they have greater emotional knowledge and effective emotional regulation. They state that individuals with high EI tend to use coping strategies such as eliciting social support and disclosure of feelings. Important for effective emotional regulation is the ability to reflect upon and manage emotions. Emotional disclosure provides a means of doing so (Salovey et al. 2002).

As far as emotion-focused coping is concerned, EI as moderator strengthened the predictive value of job-related stress in five of these coping strategies and only in religious coping is EI the only significant predictor. This implies that employees with EI may at times turn to emotion-focused coping in order to express and regulate the emotions related to their experience of job-related stress; and to direct their energy and attention to problem solving coping behaviour. This may be particularly true of health care workers or nursing staff, as Boyle, Grap, Younger and Thornby (1991) are of the opinion that many stressors experienced by nurses in their work context cannot be changed. Therefore, emotion-focused coping behaviour could serve a functional purpose under such working conditions. Both Lazarus and Folkman (1984) and Payne (2000) indicate that the effectiveness of any coping strategy may be adaptive or maladaptive, depending on the context within which it is used.

EI also moderates the relationship between job related stress and avoidant coping strategies in the following way: It strengthened the predictive value of job-related stress in mental disengagement and weakened the effect of alcohol-drug disengagement as coping strategy.

EI can facilitate thought and as such can be harnessed to solve problems more effectively and reason and make decisions more effectively. Emotions can help the cognitive system to prioritise and attend to what is more important (Simon, 1982); and also to focus on what it does best when in a certain mood (Schwarz, 1990). If EI, as explained by Schwarz (1990), can help the cognitive system to focus what it does best when in a certain mood, this could explain the moderating effect of EI on mental disengagement when employees experience job-related stress. Under certain circumstances, such as when the experience of job-related stress is very high, it could be best to mentally disengage for some time, and allow one self time to calm down and then in the calmer state try to cope with the stressor again (“Until I have my emotions under control/ am calmer/ I won’t attempt to handle this stressor”). In a similar vein, EI can influence the choice of an employee experiencing job-related stress not to seek relief in alcohol-drug disengagement as coping behaviour.

The findings about the moderating effect of EI on the relationship between job-related stress and coping behaviour seem to support the proposition of Jordan et al. (2002) that employees with high EI experiencing perceived job insecurity, will cope with their job-related stress by making use of adaptive coping strategies and not revert to negative coping behaviour. Matthews and Zeidner (2000) see adaptive coping as EI in action, supporting mastering emotions, emotional growth and cognitive and emotional differentiation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In this research it was found that high EI does not buffer employees against the effect of job insecurity on affective organisational commitment and job-related stress. The benefit of EI though, can be seen in the way employees cope with the threat to their affective organisational commitment and their experience of job-related stress. EI plays an important moderating role between affective organisational commitment and coping behaviour and between job-related stress and coping behaviour of employees in private health care organisations in Gauteng, South Africa. In both cases employees with high EI use predominantly problem-focused- and emotion-focused coping strategies and no or little avoidant coping strategies.

Based on these findings, private health care organisations can see the benefits of employing staff with high EI and/or training existing staff to develop greater EI. Farthing (2001) and Bar-On (1997) state that all aspects of EI can be improved. It is not fixed for life but continues to develop with age and may be improved with training.

Leadership will influence the extent to which efforts to increase EI in employees will be effective. Leaders who lack EI are poor role models for the development in others and are unlikely to provide support and encouragement for effective EI promotion efforts (Cherniss, 2001). Therefore, EI training for management should be a priority in health care, because it is important for practitioners to understand patients' perspectives and for nursing leaders to engage in relationships that will aid in successful management (McQueen, 2004). Ensuring that managers develop their EI could result in leaders who are effective, empathetic and supportive. In research of Cummings, Hayduk and Estabrooks (2005), employees with such managers reported less emotional exhaustion and psychosomatic symptoms, better emotional health, better collaboration and teamwork with physicians, more satisfaction with supervision and their jobs and a better capability to meet patient needs.

Health care professionals are supposed to be able to form helping relationships with patients. EI includes self-control, enthusiasm, persistence, ability to motivate and altruism. At the root of altruism lies empathy. This is the ability to read emotions in others and this forms the basis of the therapeutic relationship. If there is no empathy, there is no sense of another person's need and there will be no care or compassion (Reynolds & Scott, 2000). Cumulative research evidence indicates a direct relationship between levels of empathy as demonstrated by nurses and beneficial outcomes for clients (Reynolds & Scott, 2000). It is very important to develop EI to facilitate a therapeutic alliance and good working relationships (Freshwater, 2004). While it is important for nursing personnel to empathize with patients (Staden, 1998), they must clearly also be able to manage their emotions; be able to differentiate between their own and the patients' feelings in a responsible way (Freshwater & Stickley, 2004). When integrating EI into nursing education. Freshwater and Stickley (2004) recommend using a realistic and appropriate way by means of a transformatory learning model which focuses on both emotional- and rational development processes.

When people are in the process of shaping decisions and actions, feelings count every bit as much, and often more than thought. Therefore, the importance of EI as criterion for the selection of students and in achieving improved quality nursing must be recognised (Cadman

& Brewer, 2001). According to Jacobs (2001), the fastest way to increase EI in members of an organisation is to select employees who already demonstrate EI competencies and behaviours.

Handley (2001) suggests that organisations develop an EI audit to profile and better understand a skill set associated with high performance. This could assist the organisation in two ways. During recruitment an EI skill set associated with high performance in various positions will help to recruit and place new employees more effectively. Thereafter, the skill set can be used to enhance EI to leverage the positive effect thereof.

The potential impact, positive and negative, of EI training programs needs to be addressed more fully in future. The same problems that face any application of basic science to real-world settings also apply to EI. Curricula of EI programs aimed at increasing EI should be empirically based. Developing EI might not be beneficial unless the contextual and motivational factors affecting the use of EI are also addressed (Salovey & Grewel, 2005).

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The following limitations of this study and recommendations for future research were identified:

- The findings of this study may not be generalised, because the results were obtained from a relatively small sample (N = 242) and most of the respondents were females, working in private health care organisations in Gauteng, South Africa.
- Job insecurity, affective organisational commitment, job-related stress levels, coping behaviour and emotional intelligence were subjectively measured (using self-report data) and this could affect the validity of the findings. The nature of the items in especially the COPE and EIS could lead participants to give socially desirable answers.
- Not all possible factors that could impact on the main constructs and the relations among them, namely: job insecurity, affective organisational commitment, job-related stress, coping behaviour and emotional intelligence as moderator, were investigated.
- No other study could be found in the literature that could guide the theoretical framework of this study. The specific relationships as set out in the model of Jordan et

al. (2002) could not be found except for pair wise relations of constructs , which where applicable, were used (Güleryüz, Güney, Aydın & Asan, 2008).

- Emotions are difficult to study. They are transitory and difficult to research through self-report questionnaires. They have a rapidly changing nature, therefore they can be dependent variables as they are the result of some event at work and then immediately they can become independent variables, because they cause some behaviour by the person experiencing the emotion (Briner, 1999).
- Validation of the model of Jordan et al. (2002), through further research, is recommended.
- All the measuring instruments used could be further researched for validation purposes, especially the construct validity of the WLQ, the COPE and the EIS.

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CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the conclusions regarding the literature review and the empirical research according to the formulated aims/objectives of this research will be discussed and also the limitations of the research. Recommendations for private health care organisations and for future research will also be discussed.

4.2 CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions regarding the formulated theoretical objectives and the empirical study will now be made.

4.2.1 Objective 1: To conceptualise job insecurity, affective organisational commitment, job-related stress, coping and emotional intelligence and the relationships between these constructs from the literature

The model of Jordan, Ashkanasy and Hartel (2002), proposing that job insecurity will lead to lowered affective organisational commitment and higher job-related stress levels (emotional reactions), and that these in turn will lead to negative coping behaviour (behavioural reactions), was investigated. The authors also propose that emotional intelligence (EI) will moderate the links between the above mentioned constructs and this proposition was also researched.

To investigate the above mentioned model, first of all, job insecurity, affective organisational commitment, job-related stress, coping and EI were conceptualised from the literature.

Job insecurity has been defined as a feeling of powerlessness to maintain one's (desired) job in a threatened job situation (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984); and also as the perception an individual has about a potential threat to keeping his/her job (Heany, Israel & House, 1994). A global viewpoint of job insecurity as reflected in the above definitions, was focused on in this research. Job insecurity is a subjective experience because it is based on an individual's perceptions and interpretations regarding his/her work environment (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt,

1984). Each person is unique and will therefore interpret stimuli (the situation) differently (Martin, 2001). Differences in the behaviour and attitudes of employees experiencing job insecurity have been found. Galup, Saunders, Nelson and Cervany (1997, cited in Jordan et al., 2002) reported that job insecurity leads to increased work-effort and involvement. However, Bolt (1983), Mooney (1984) and others found that job insecurity leads to decreased work performance.

To explain these discrepant findings, research on affectivity was consulted. Affectivity can be associated with a type of cognitive bias through which people interpret their lives. Affective tendencies and cognitive styles will therefore influence how employees experience and evaluate their jobs and job-related outcomes (Levin & Stokes, 1989).

Job insecurity could reduce employee morale and commitment. Security of employment is a forerunner of organisational commitment (Dekker & Schaufeli, 1995). Ashford, Lee and Bobko (1989; cited in Jordan et al., 2002); Rosenblatt and Ruvio (1996); and McFarlane, Shore and Tetrick (1991) have all found that job insecurity leads to reduced commitment. Organisational commitment was defined by Bagrami (2003) as the psychological bond between employees and their employing organisation. Organisational commitment is a multidimensional construct (Meyer & Allen, 1997) with affective, normative and continuance dimensions. Affective organisational commitment is an employee's emotional attachment to, identification with and involvement in the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991). In this research affective organisational commitment was studied in the specific research group, in line with the model of Jordan et al. (2002).

Barling and Kelloway (1996) found that perceived job insecurity is an important source of stress and De Witte (1999); Gillespie, Walsh, Winefield, Dua and Stough (2001); and Cheng, Chen, Chen and Chiang (2005) came to similar conclusions. Occupational stress is the physical, mental and emotional wear and tear caused by the incongruence between the requirements of the job and the capabilities, resources and needs of employees to cope with job demands (Akinboye, Akinboye & Adeyemo, 2002). A job stressor is a condition or situation at work that requires of the employee an adaptive response (Jex & Beehr, 1991). Job-related uncertainty (job insecurity) may become evident at a physiological, behavioural or psychological level, or any combination thereof. Thus, if stress exists, work attitudes and affective reactions are expected to be negative (Probst, 2002).

In order to deal with their job-related stress employees will use certain coping behaviour. Coping is “any effort, healthy, or unhealthy, conscious or unconscious, to prevent, eliminate, or weaken stressors, or to tolerate their effects in the least hurtful manner” (Matheny, Ayccock, Pugh, Curlette and Silva-Canella, 1986, p509). Coping skills are thus the means used to combat or prevent stress (Rice, 1992), and could manifest in the use of problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, or both (Bala, Rohlof & Van Waning, 2005). Problem-focused coping involves strategies to solve, reconceptualise, or minimise the effects of a stressful situation. Emotion-focused coping, on the other hand, includes strategies that involve self-preoccupation, fantasy, or other conscious activities of affect regulation (Zeidner and Endler, 1996). Mostert (2006) cites the findings of Quick, Quick, Nelson and Hurrell (1997); and Wright and Smye (1996) to indicate that occupational stress has many negative effects. These effects include, among others, impaired performance, health problems, absenteeism, turnover, purposefully destructive behaviours and alcohol and drug use.

Coping strategies can be associated with emotion-management related experiences and are therefore important components of emotional intelligence (Salovey, Hsee & Mayer, 1993). “Adaptive coping might be conceptualized as emotional intelligence in action, supporting mastery emotions, emotional growth, and both cognitive and emotional differentiation, allowing us to evolve in an ever-changing world”(Matthews and Zeidner, 2000, p.460).

Martinez (1997, p 72) defines emotional intelligence (EI) as “an array of non-cognitive skills, capabilities and competencies that influence a person’s ability to cope with environmental demands and pressures”. Mayer and Salovey (1997) on the other hand, conceptualise emotional intelligence as the cognitive ability that involves the processing of emotion. It involves monitoring emotions and discriminating amongst them as well as the behavioural process of using this information to guide thinking and actions.

Mayer, Caruso and Salovey (2000, p267) refined their own first definition of EI stating that it is “an ability to recognize the meanings of emotions and their relationships, and to reason and problem-solve on the basis of them. Emotional intelligence is involved in the capacity to perceive emotions, assimilate emotion-related feelings, understand the information of those emotions, and manage them”. The four major components of EI are stated as the ability to perceive and express emotion (perception), assimilate emotion in thought (assimilation), understand and reason with emotion (understanding), and regulate emotion in self and others (management) (Mayer, Caruso & Salovey, 2000). By means of the four adaptive abilities

which it engenders namely perception, integration, understanding and the management of emotions, individuals are enabled to make use of a wide range of adaptive coping strategies (Carr, 2004).

Nikolaou and Tsaousis (2002) found a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and organisational commitment and a negative correlation between emotional intelligence and stress at work. Negative emotions and stress are the result of some dysfunctional relationship between aspects of the self and the environment. Therefore, emotional intelligence, the ability to read and manage emotions in the self and others, acts as a moderator in the process (Slaski & Cartwright, 2003). Mikolajczak, Nelis, Hansenne and Quoidbach (2008) found that individuals with high trait EI in negative situations tend to look for the silver lining, think about what steps to take to handle their problem and put it into perspective. Also, they are less likely to catastrophise or to blame themselves for the problem or their inability to solve it. They also found that individuals with high EI has a strong capacity to choose adaptive coping strategies to down-regulate negative emotions and maintain positive emotions as well as the ability to implement these strategies. Emotionally intelligent employees may make use of emotion-focused coping behaviour appropriate for managing affective states associated with experienced stress, in order to be able to return their focus to active- or problem focused strategies (Zeidner & Endler, 1996).

By conceptualising job insecurity, affective organisational commitment, job-related stress, coping and EI and the relationships between these constructs from the literature, the first objective of this research was reached.

4.2.2 Objective 2: To determine the relationships between job insecurity, affective organisational commitment, job-related stress and coping of employees of private health care organisations in Gauteng

It was determined that, in this study group, job insecurity has a statistically significant negative correlation (practically significant with medium effect) with affective organisational commitment (-0.35). This indicates that increased perceptions of job insecurity could result in decreased affective organisational commitment. The relationship obtained between job insecurity and affective organisational commitment is in line with the findings of Cooks (2007) who reported a negative correlation between job insecurity and affective organisational commitment.

Job insecurity has a statistically significant positive correlation (practically significant with medium effect) with job-related stress levels (0.46). This implies that increased perceptions of job insecurity could lead to increased job-related stress levels. Hartley, Jacobsen, Klandermans and Van Vuuren (1991; cited in Jordan et al. 2002) also linked job insecurity to job-related stress; and Näswall, Sverke and Hellgren (2005) found that employees experiencing more job insecurity experienced more job-induced tension.

A statistically significant positive correlation (practically significant with medium effect) was found between job-related stress levels and certain negative coping behaviours, such as denial (0.44), behavioural disengagement (0.42) and mental disengagement (0.40). This implies that rising job-related stress levels could lead to increased negative coping behaviour such as denial, behavioural- and mental disengagement. Mostert (2006) cites the findings of Quick et al. (1997); as well as Wright and Smye (1996) to indicate that occupational stress has many negative effects. These effects include, among others, impaired performance, health problems, absenteeism, turnover, purposefully destructive behaviours and alcohol and drug use.

A statistically significant negative correlation (practically significant with small effect) was found between affective organisational commitment and negative coping behaviour, specifically the use of drugs or alcohol. This could be interpreted as that when affective organisational commitment decreases, drug use (including alcohol) as a coping mechanism, could increase.

By determining the relationships between job insecurity, affective organisational commitment, job-related stress and coping of employees of private health care organisations in Gauteng, the second objective of this research was reached.

The above findings support the first stage of the proposed model of Jordan et al. (2002).

Although not indicated as aims in this study, it is interesting to note a statistically significant negative correlation (practically significant with medium effect) between job-related stress levels and affective organisational commitment (-0.36). This indicates that as job-related stress levels rise, affective organisational commitment would be expected to decrease. Furthermore, job insecurity has a statistically significant positive correlation (practically significant with medium effect) with negative coping behaviour such as denial (0.34), behavioural disengagement (0.32) and mental disengagement (0.28) This indicates that as perceptions of

job insecurity increases, negative coping behaviour such as denial and disengagement may result. This finding corresponds with the conclusion of Jordan et al. (2002) that a natural first reaction to job insecurity is a defensive reaction such as negative coping behaviour, in an attempt to escape from or deal with the stressful reality.

EI has a statistically significant positive correlation (practical significance, medium effect) with active coping (0.48), planning (0.52), suppression of competing activities (0.36) and with seeking social support for social instrumental reasons (0.47); all problem-focused coping strategies. This could mean that as EI increases, the use of the above mentioned coping strategies will increase. EI also has a statistically significant positive correlation (practical significance, medium effect) with seeking social support for social emotional reasons (0.44), reinterpretation and growth (0.40) and turning to religion (0.33); all emotion-focused coping strategies. In the above cases it means that if EI increases, the relevant coping response will also increase.

4.2.3 Objective 3: To determine if perceptions of job insecurity can predict affective organisational commitment of employees of private health care organisations in Gauteng

It was found that increased perceptions of job insecurity lead to decreased affective organisational commitment. Job insecurity as independent variable explains 12.1% of the total variance in affective organisational commitment. The prediction accuracy in this case is very good ($F= 33.14$ with $p < 0.05$). A highly significant contribution is made by job insecurity in predicting affective organisational commitment ($\text{Beta} = -0.35$ with $p < 0.05$).

By determining if perceptions of job insecurity can predict affective organisational commitment of employees of private health care organisations in Gauteng the third objective of this research was reached.

4.2.4 Objective 4: To determine if perceptions of job insecurity can predict job-related stress of employees of private health care organisations in Gauteng

It was also found that increased perceptions of job insecurity lead to increased job-related stress levels. Job insecurity as independent variable explains 21.1% of the total variance in the job-related stress levels. The prediction accuracy in this case is, again, very good ($F=64.1$ with

$p < 0.05$). A highly significant contribution is made by job insecurity in predicting the job-related stress levels (Beta = 0.46 with $p < 0.05$).

Although not part of the propositions in the model of Jordan et al. (2002), another finding was that increased job-related stress levels lead to decreased affective organisational commitment. Job-related stress level as independent variable explains 13.1% of the total variance in affective organisational commitment. A highly significant contribution is made by the job-related stress level in predicting affective organisational commitment (Beta = -0.36 with $p < 0.05$).

By determining if perceptions of job insecurity can predict job-related stress levels of employees of private health care organisations in Gauteng the fourth objective of this research was reached.

4.2.5 Objective 5: To determine whether emotional intelligence moderates the link between job insecurity and the emotional reactions (affective organisational commitment and job-related stress) and the link between emotional reactions and behavioural reactions (coping) of employees of private health care organisations in Gauteng

To determine the possible moderating effect of EI, as proposed by Jordan et al. (2002) on the relationship between job insecurity and affective organisational commitment and job-related stress levels; and between affective organisational commitment and coping behaviour and job-related stress levels and coping behaviour, multiple regression analyses were performed.

The results indicated that EI had only a slight but significant moderating effect on the job insecurity – affective organisational commitment relationship and no effect on the job insecurity – job-related stress relationship. The tendency that employees with high EI experience more affective organisational commitment when experiencing job insecurity than those employees with low EI seems to emerge. Thus, the first proposition of Jordan et al. (2002) stating that EI will moderate the effect of job insecurity on affective organisational commitment is supported to some extent for this research group.

It was also found in this research group that EI does not moderate the strength of the relationship between job insecurity and job-related stress levels and thus that employees with high EI do not experience less job-related stress than employees with low EI when faced with perceptions of job insecurity. This means that the second proposition of Jordan et al. (2002)

namely that employees with high EI will be able to regulate their emotions and to control their reactions to perceptions of job insecurity and thus experience lower job-related stress levels than those with low EI, is not supported.

The results also indicate that EI moderates the strength of the relationship between affective organisational commitment and coping behaviour to such an extent that affective organisational commitment's predictive value is reduced to closely insignificant whilst EI emerges as the primary predictor of coping behaviour (both positive and negative). This may imply that emotionally intelligent employees will tend to use more problem-focused coping behaviour irrespective of the affective organisational commitment that they experience. This finding seems to correspond with the opinion of Mikolajczak et al. (2008).

Although to a lesser extent in this study, it was found that emotionally intelligent employees also make use of emotion-focused coping behaviour appropriate for managing affective states associated with experienced stress, in order to be able to return their focus to active- or problem-focused coping strategies (Zeidner & Endler, 1996). Stanton, Parsa and Austenfeld (2002) report research that indicates that emotional regulation and expression (both features of EI) may result from emotion-focused coping and so enable the individual to re-appraise and/or reinterpret the situation and to direct energy back to active coping (Compton, 2005).

Concerning avoidant coping strategies, EI significantly negatively moderates alcohol-drug disengagement as a coping strategy, meaning employees with high EI will tend not to revert to the use of drugs or alcohol as coping strategy.

By determining whether emotional intelligence moderates the link between job insecurity and the emotional reactions (affective organisational commitment and job-related stress) and the link between emotional reactions and behavioural reactions (coping) of employees of private health care organisations in Gauteng, the fifth objective of this research was reached.

All the set empirical objectives were thus achieved in this research.

The above findings support the second stage of the proposed model of Jordan et al. (2002).

Jordan et al. (2002) set out to develop their model to try and explain the conflicting literature about the effect of job insecurity on personal outcomes, in other words why do some

researchers find that job insecurity leads to employees performing better and other researchers find that job insecurity leads to employees performing weaker? They argued that EI as moderator of the effect of job insecurity on emotional reactions and behavioural outcomes could offer an explanation.

In general it can be concluded that the proposed model of Jordan et al. (2002) is mostly supported by the findings of this study. It has been found that with this specific research group the first stage of the proposed model is supported. The second stage, however, proposing that employees with high EI will experience higher affective organisational commitment in reaction to perceptions of job insecurity than employees with lower EI, is only partly supported by the research. The proposition that employees with high EI will experience less job-related stress than employees with low EI is not supported by the research.

In this specific research group however, the propositions of Jordan et al. (2002) are supported regarding the moderating effect of EI on coping behaviour. Employees with high EI experiencing either low affective organisational commitment or job-related stress were less likely to engage in negative coping behaviour. In fact, in both cases the results strongly pointed to employees using problem-focused and emotion-focused coping behaviour, but not avoidant (negative) coping behaviour.

Thus, it can be seen that EI as moderator does not have a strong effect on the emotional reactions of perceived job insecurity, but rather on the behavioural outcomes. This could be interpreted as an explanation of the discrepant findings regarding performance in reaction to job insecurity. In this study group employees with high EI tended to use problem-focused coping behaviour such as active coping, planning, suppression of competing activities, restraint coping and seeking social support for instrumental reasons. They also used emotion-focused coping behaviour such as seeking social support for emotional reasons, positive reinterpretation and growth, acceptance, turning to religion and focus on and venting of emotions. It could be argued that most of the above mentioned coping behaviour could potentially lead to an increase in overall performance in the face of perceptions of job insecurity. Employees with high EI also tended not to use avoidant coping behaviour such as denial, behavioural disengagement and definitely not alcohol-drug disengagement. A possible explanation why some researchers found a decrease in performance in the face of job insecurity could be that the samples of the researchers reporting lower performance contained mostly participants with low EI. It can be hypothesised that they would tend to disengage from work

(mentally, behaviourally or through alcohol-drug use) and this would lead to lower performance.

The possible applicability of this model in private health care organisations in Gauteng will be discussed under recommendations.

4.3 LIMITATIONS

The following limitations regarding this study were identified:

- The findings of this study may not be generalised, because the results were obtained from a relatively small sample ($N = 242$) of employees working in private health care organisations in Gauteng, South Africa.
-
- Job insecurity, affective organisational commitment, job-related stress levels, coping behaviour and EI were subjectively measured (using self-report data) and this could affect the validity of the findings. The nature of the items in especially the COPE and EIS could lead participants to give socially acceptable answers.
-
- Not all possible factors that could impact on the main constructs and the relations among them, namely: job insecurity, affective organisational commitment, job-related stress, coping behaviour and emotional intelligence as moderator were investigated.
-
- No other study could be found in the literature that could guide the theoretical framework of this study. The specific relationships as set out in the model of Jordan et al. (2002) could not be found. Pair wise relations of constructs, where found and which were applicable, were used (Güteryüz, Güney, Aydın & Asan, 2008).
-
- Emotions are difficult to study. They are transitory and difficult to research through self-report questionnaires. They have a rapidly changing nature, therefore they can be dependent variables as they are the result of some event at work and then immediately they can become independent variables, because they cause some behaviour by the person experiencing the emotion (Briner, 1999).

4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for private health care organisations and recommendations for future research now follow.

4.4.1 Recommendations for private health care organisations

Job insecurity is currently a huge threat and it is expected that between now (2009) and 2010 about 25 million employees will lose their jobs worldwide (Gurria, 2008). Therefore, the findings of this study are of potential importance to private health care organisations.

From the above it can be concluded that job insecurity, or perceptions of job insecurity, is prevalent in the world of work. Job insecurity is a subjective phenomenon, meaning it is based on the individual's perceptions and interpretations of the immediate work environment (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984). This implies that the feelings of job insecurity may differ between individuals when they are exposed to the same objective situation and that individuals may differ in their reactions to these perceptions of a job at risk (Sverke & Hellgren, 2002). Even individuals working in a relatively stable work environment (such as private health care institutions) might perceive certain changes and happenings around them as threatening the continuity of their jobs. (This makes sense, as a hot topic currently in workplaces is the worldwide recession, causing employees to be more sensitive to any change occurring in their organisation). Therefore, job insecurity may also be studied in employees at seemingly stable organisations (Borg & Elizur, 1992) as was done in this research.

The findings regarding the first stage of the model of Jordan et al. (2002) lead to the following recommendations:

- It has been shown in Article 1 that job insecurity has a negative correlation with affective organisational commitment. To prevent the deterioration of organisational commitment during times of crises and uncertainty, the employer must provide high quality information about the organisation's plans and activities to reduce uncertainty and maintain organisational commitment (Camilleri, 2002); and implement two-way communication and a participatory style of management (Meyer & Allen, 1991), because employees high in commitment are better able to cope with changes and ambiguity and less likely to want to leave the organisation (Judge, Thoreson, Pucik &

Welbourne, 1999). Randall, Fedor and Longenecker (1990) found that affective commitment significantly predicts concern for quality, sacrifice orientation and the willingness to share knowledge. Therefore, it can be concluded that committed employees will be better service quality performers (especially important in private health care organisations) because of their willingness to exert some extra effort beyond their normal duties (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry, 1990).

- Organisations must avoid the negative consequences of job-related stress, such as a negative effect on employee's health and absenteeism from work (Cheng et al., 2005; De Ruyter & Burgess, 2000) which result in high costs to organisations and communities due to health care expenses, lost productivity and an increased turnover (Cooper & Cartwright, 1994). High job-related stress also leads to increased negative coping behaviour such as procrastination and avoidance of work, lowered performance and productivity and aggression; vandalism and stealing. Organisations pay the price for stress through higher absenteeism rates; low job involvement; accident proneness and a lack of concern for the organisation and colleagues. Rice (1992). To manage job-related stress, Cooper (2006) suggests open and honest communication with employees, understanding employees' fears and encouraging greater ownership by employees in the change process, also employee consultation and more transparency regarding organisational change, (Gillespie et al., 2001).
- Stress management programs can also help to reduce the negative effects of job-related stress and aid in building better coping skills. These programs typically include, according to Stevens and Pfof (1984;) stress information, assessment, training in relaxation, exercise planning, nutritional information, cognitive restructuring, time management and problem solving. More attention should be given to fostering effective coping strategies in employees to enable them to handle job-related stress better during times of organisational change. Stress inoculation training could be used to teach employees appropriate coping skills.
- Savery and Luks (2000) are of the opinion that organisations must be careful when they downsize or delayer to not just provide counselling for those who have to leave, but also for those who stay; who might be worried about losing their jobs and feel sorry for those who had to leave.

The recommendations regarding the findings of this study could be used to enhance employer-employee relations and improve service quality in aforementioned organisations which in turn has serious consequences for the competitiveness and profit margin of these organisations during the current recession.

In Article 2, EI's role as moderator of the relationships between the above mentioned constructs was investigated and it was found that high EI does not buffer employees against the effect of job insecurity on affective organisational commitment and job-related stress. The benefit of EI, though can be seen in the way employees cope with the threat to their affective organisational commitment and their experience of job-related stress. EI plays an important moderating role between affective organisational commitment and coping behaviour and between job-related stress and coping behaviour of employees in private health care organisations in Gauteng, South Africa. In both cases employees with high EI use predominantly problem-focused- and emotion-focused coping strategies and no or little avoidant coping strategies.

- Based on these findings in article 2, private health care organisations can see the benefits of employing staff with high EI and/or training existing staff to develop greater EI. Farthing (2001) and Bar-On (1997) state that all aspects of EI can be improved, it is not fixed for life but continues to develop with age and may be improved with training.
- Leadership will influence the extent to which efforts to increase EI in employees will be effective. Leaders who lack EI are poor role models for the development in others and are unlikely to provide support and encouragement for effective EI promotion efforts (Cherniss, 2001). Therefore, EI training for management should be a priority in health care organisations, because it is important for practitioners to understand patients' perspectives and for nursing leaders to engage in relationships that will aid in successful management (McQueen, 2004).
- Ensuring that managers develop their EI could result in leaders who are effective, empathetic and supportive. In research of Cummings, Hayduk and Estabrooks (2005), employees with such managers reported less emotional exhaustion and psychosomatic symptoms, better emotional health, better collaboration and teamwork with physicians, more satisfaction with supervision and their jobs and a better capability to meet patient needs.

- Health care professionals are supposed to be able to form helping relationships with patients (Reynolds & Scott, 2000, cited in Cadman & Brewer, 2001). Cumulative research evidence indicates a direct relationship between levels of empathy as demonstrated by nurses and beneficial outcomes for clients (Reynolds & Scott, 2000). It is very important to develop EI to facilitate a therapeutic alliance and good working relationships (Freshwater, 2004). While it is important for nursing personnel to empathize with patients (Staden, 1998, cited in McQueen, 2004), they must clearly also be able to manage their emotions; be able to differentiate between their own and the patients' feelings in a responsible way (Freshwater & Stickley, 2004). Therefore, when integrating EI into nursing education, (Freshwater and Stickley (2004) recommend using a realistic and appropriate way by means of a transformatory learning model which focuses on both emotional- and rational development processes.
- When people are in the process of shaping decisions and actions, feelings count every bit as much, and often more than thought. Therefore, the importance of EI as criterion for the selection of students and in achieving improved quality nursing (health care) must be recognised (Cadman & Brewer, 2001). According to Jacobs (2001), the fastest way to increase EI in members of an organisation is to select employees who already demonstrate EI competencies and behaviours.
- Handley (2001) suggests that organisations develop an EI audit to profile and better understand a skill set associated with high performance. This could assist the organisation in two ways. During recruitment an EI skill set associated with high performance in various positions will help to recruit and place new employees more effectively. Thereafter, the skill set can be used to enhance EI to leverage the positive effect thereof.
- The potential impact, positive and negative, of EI training programs need to be addressed more fully in future. The same problems that face any application of basic science to real-world settings also apply to EI. Curricula of EI programs aimed at increasing EI should be empirically based. Developing EI might not be beneficial unless the contextual and motivational factors affecting the use of EI are also addressed (Salovey & Grewel, 2005).

4.4.2 Recommendations for future research

Some suggestions for future research are:

- Validation of the model of Jordan et al. (2002) through further research is recommended.
- All the measuring instruments used could be further researched for validation purposes; especially the construct validity of the WLQ, the COPE and the EIS.
- A longitudinal study would possibly provide more complete data on the long term effects of job insecurity.
- Qualitative data (narrative) in conjunction with quantitative data could provide a greater understanding of the causes and consequences of job insecurity.
- Note should be taken of the opinion of Payne (2001) who states that it is important not to label individuals as good or bad “copers”. The effectiveness of a coping strategy may depend on the situation. Many stressors encountered specifically in the context of nursing cannot be changed, therefore Boyle, Grap, Younger and Thornby (1991) are of the opinion that emotion-focused strategies could be used as coping strategy in such situations. Further studies could be undertaken to investigate the different coping strategies of nursing personnel and the validity of the above statement.

4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter included conclusions regarding the formulated theoretical objectives, conclusions regarding the formulated empirical objectives, the limitations of this study, recommendations for private health care organisations based on the findings of this study and recommendations for future research. All formulated theoretical and empirical objectives have been achieved.

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