

Occupational stress, burnout and work engagement of social workers in the Limpopo Province

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Thesis submitted for the degree Doctor Philosophiae in
Social Work at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-
West University

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It all starts here [™]

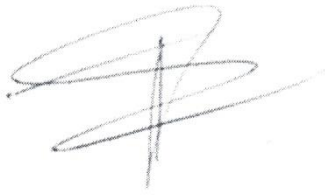


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DECLARATION BY RESEARCHER

Hereby I, D R Ntsoane, declare that:

Occupational stress, burnout and work engagement of social workers in the Limpopo Province: Potchefstroom Campus, is my own work, and has been language edited. All the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



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DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING

I, Ina-Lize Venter*, hereby declare that I edited the thesis entitled:

Occupational stress, burnout and work engagement of social workers in the Limpopo Province

for **DR Ntsoane** for the purpose of submission for the degree Doctor Philosophiae in Social Work at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University. The language editor suggested changes/corrections/improvements in track changes; implementation was left to the discretion of the author.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Ina-Lize Venter', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized with a large, looped initial 'I'.

**Ina-Lize Venter is employed as full-time language practitioner at the North-West University.*

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I would like to express my greatest gratitude to the following:

- God my heavenly Father who was able to keep me from falling (Jude verse 24-25).
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- My entire family for always being there for me.

PREFACE

This is to state that this manuscript is submitted in article format as prescribed by the Manual for Master's and Doctoral Studies of the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University (2013). The author intends to submit the articles for publication to the professional journal, *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*.

GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS: JOURNAL FOR SOCIAL WORK/MAATSKAPLIKE WERK

MANUSCRIPT FORMAT AND LAYOUT

1. Contributions may be written in English or Afrikaans.
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7. Manuscripts should be typed in 12 pt Times Roman double-spaced on A4 paper size.
8. Use the Harvard system for references.
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10. More details about sources referred to in the text should appear at the end of the manuscript under the caption "References".
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ABSTRACT

The rationale for the study was signs of occupational stress that had become noticeable amongst social workers in the Limpopo Province. Social workers were unhappy about time spent on complaints over lack of support from their supervisors, who they said were conscious of personal problems they were experiencing and its possible impact on service delivery. The lack of supportive supervision led to the impression that supervisors did not seem to care about problems experienced by their subordinates. Other complaints levelled against supervisors were that supervision was based on fault-finding instead of following a person-centred approach, with due consideration of the uniqueness of each social worker. Supervisors appeared to be judgmental of their supervisees instead of focusing on their individual needs. Apart from dissatisfaction with supervisors, social workers also complained about high caseloads and meetings that failed to address improvements that could be made to make their tasks easier. They have contemplated leaving the profession and felt that, in spite of their work-related complaints, there were no stress-relief programmes available to them. There were those with positive coping skills that could be surviving, but it was not always possible to notice symptomatic behaviour if colleagues are not alert enough. A lack of upward mobility, incentives and low income further contributed to morale problems amongst social workers with no proper avenues to vent their dissatisfaction and stress.

From the complaints of the social workers, a profile of possible burnout emerged with several of its dimensions presenting themselves in their work situations. Their complaints seemed to be responses to stressful work situations. Consequently, the researcher decided to embark on this project to establish the nature and extent of possible burnout amongst social workers in the Limpopo Province.

It was originally thought that burnout only occurred amongst professionals doing “people work”; however, research has more recently indicated that it is also a problem amongst other occupational groups. Internationally, several studies have been conducted on burnout amongst social workers, but not much work has been done that focuses on South African social workers working under a very challenging welfare dispensation.

The research on burnout amongst social workers in the Limpopo Province included the following aspects:

- burnout and work engagement as it relates to the socio-demographic characteristics of the social workers in the sample;
- burnout in relation to the job characteristics of the social workers in the sample; and
- burnout and the physical and psychological health of the social workers in the sample.

This represented a multi-dimensional approach to burnout, providing understanding on various important facets of burnout amongst social workers.

Five data-collection instruments were used to collect the data necessary to complete the research. A demographic questionnaire was used to draw up a profile of the social workers in the sample, and the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory was applied to measure exhaustion and disengagement as the two dimensions of burnout. The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale was used to measure the work engagement of social workers in the sample, and the Job Characteristics Scale to establish how respondents experienced the job characteristics of their work. Lastly, a health questionnaire determined the health status of the social workers in the sample. All the instruments were tested for reliability and validity by calculating the Cronbach Alpha values and doing a confirmatory factor analysis on all the scales. All the measuring instruments could thus be used as a basis for similar studies, provided that they are tested and certain adjustments are made.

Effect sizes were calculated for the differences between the various socio-demographic characteristics of the social workers: exhaustion and disengagement as the two dimensions of burnout, and vigour, dedication and absorption as dimensions of work engagement. The literature overview confirmed that no consistent relationship between burnout and work engagement, and socio-demographic characteristics could be established through research. Continued research in this regard is thus recommended.

Correlation coefficients were used to determine the strengths of the linear relationships between burnout, work engagement and job characteristics and burnout and the health status of social workers in the sample. Positive and negative strengths were identified that could be useful, especially for supervisors of social workers and their superiors. Further research into some issues of burnout amongst social workers is recommended, particularly into the prevention of burnout amongst social workers. Research on burnout interventions lag far behind studies on the problem of burnout, which is one of the reasons why it is so difficult to make recommendations regarding interventions for

burnout amongst social workers from a social work perspective.

Key terms: Burnout, work engagement, job characteristics, social workers, health status, Limpopo Province, socio-demographic characteristics.

OPSOMMING

Die rasionaal vir die studie was tekens van werkstres wat onder maatskaplike werkers in die Limpopo-provinsie waargeneem kon word. Maatskaplike werkers was ontevrede oor die hoeveelheid tyd wat aan klagtes oor hul supervisors spandeer is: hoewel supervisors bewus is van persoonlike probleme wat ervaar word en die moontlike effek wat dit op dienslewering kan hê, bied hulle geen ondersteuning nie. Die gebrek aan ondersteunende supervisie skep die indruk dat supervisors oënskynlik nie besorg is oor probleme wat deur hulle ondergeskiktes ervaar word nie. Ander klagtes oor supervisors was dat supervisie op foutvinding gebaseer word en nie op 'n persoon-gesentreerde benadering wat die uniekheid van elke maatskaplike werker in ag neem nie. Daar word gevoel dat supervisie op 'n veroordelende wyse geskied in plaas daarvan dat daar op die individuele behoeftes van die maatskaplike werkers gefokus word. Afgesien van ontevredenheid met supervisors, kla maatskaplike werkers ook oor hoë gevalleladings en vergaderings waar geen aandag aan moontlike verbeteringe geskenk word wat hulle werk kan vergemaklik nie. Hulle het al oorweeg om die professie te verlaat en voel dat daar, ten spyte van hulle werksverwante klagtes, geen stresverligtingsprogramme beskikbaar is nie. Daar is diegene wat wel oor positiewe "coping"-vaardighede beskik, maar simptomatiese gedrag is nie noodwendig waarneembaar as kollegas nie oplettend genoeg is nie. 'n Gebrek aan opwaartse mobiliteit en aansporings, sowel as lae inkomste dra verder by tot 'n gebrek aan veggees onder maatskaplike werkers en daar is geen kanale waarvan hulle gebruik kan maak om van spanning en frustrasie ontslae te raak nie.

Die klagtes van hierdie maatskaplike werkers het 'n beeld van moontlike uitbranding laat ontstaan met verskeie van die dimensies daarvan reeds merkbaar in hul werksituasie. Hulle klagtes blyk die reaksie op 'n spanningsvolle werksituasie te wees. Op grond hiervan het die navorser besluit om ondersoek in te stel na die aard en omvang van uitbranding onder maatskaplike werkers in die Limpopo-provinsie.

Die aanvanklike persepsie van uitbranding was dat dit slegs onder professionele persone voorkom wat met mense werk, maar meer onlangse navorsingsbevindings het getoon dat dit ook in ander beroepe voorkom. Daar is verskeie internasionale studies oor uitbranding onder maatskaplike werkers gedoen, maar min daarvan spesifiek onder maatskaplike werkers in Suid-Afrika wat in 'n baie uitdagende welsynsbedeling moet werk.

Die navorsing oor uitbranding onder maatskaplike werkers in die Limpopo-provinsie het die volgende aspekte ingesluit:

- uitbranding en werksbegeestering in verhouding tot sosio-demografiese eienskappe van die maatskaplike werkers in die steekproef;
- uitbranding en werksbegeestering in verhouding tot werkseienskappe van die maatskaplike werkers in die steekproef; en
- die fisieke en psigologiese gesondheid van die maatskaplike werkers in die steekproef in verhouding tot uitbranding.

Dit het 'n multi-dimensionele benadering tot uitbranding verteenwoordig en begrip oor verskeie belangrike aspekte van uitbranding onder maatskaplike werkers verskaf.

Vyf dataversamelingsinstrumente is gebruik om die projekdata mee in te samel. 'n Demografiese vraelys is gebruik om 'n profiel van die maatskaplike werkers in die steekproef te ontwikkel en die Oldenburg Burnout Inventory is aangewend om uitbranding en werksonttrekking as die twee dimensies van uitbranding te meet. Die Utrecht Work Engagement Scale is gebruik om die werksbegeestering van die maatskaplike werkers in die steekproef te meet. Die Job Characteristics Scale is gebruik om die maatskaplike werkers se belewenis van die eienskappe van hulle werk te meet. Laastens is 'n gesondheidsvraelys gebruik om die gesondheidstatus van die maatskaplike werkers in die steekproef vas te stel. Alle instrumente is vir geldigheid en betroubaarheid getoets deur die Cronbach Alpha-waardes te bepaal en bevestigende faktoranalises te doen. Al die instrumente kan dus as basis in soortgelyke studies gebruik word op voorwaarde dat hulle weer getoets word en sekere aanpassings gemaak word.

Effekgroottes is bereken vir die verskille tussen die onderskeie sosio-demografiese eienskappe van die maatskaplike werkers en uitputting (exhaustion) en werksonttrekking (disengagement) as die twee dimensies van uitbranding, en lewenskragtigheid (vigour), toewyding (dedication) en absorpsie (absorption) as die dimensies van werksbetrokkenheid (work engagement). Die literatuuroorsig het bevestig dat daar geen konsekwente verhoudings tussen uitbranding, werksbetrokkenheid en sosio-demografiese eienskappe met navorsing vasgestel kon word nie. Voortgesette navorsing word dus in die verband voorgestel.

Korrelasiekoëffisiënte is bereken om die sterkte van die liniêre verhoudings tussen uitbranding, werkbegeestering en werkseienskappe en uitbranding en die gesondheidsstatus van maatskaplike werkers in die steekproef te bepaal. Positiewe en

negatiewe sterktes is gevind wat waardevol vir supervisors en meerderes behoort te wees. Verdere navorsing ten opsigte van sekere geselekteerde aspekte van uitbranding onder maatskaplike werkers word aanbeveel, veral oor die voorkoming van uitbranding onder maatskaplike werkers. Daar is nie naastenby soveel navorsing oor uitbrandingsintervensies as wat daar oor die probleem van uitbranding bestaan nie. Dit is een van die redes waarom dit so moeilik is om aanbevelings oor moontlike intervensies vanuit 'n maatskaplikewerk-oogpunt te maak.

Trefwoorde: Uitbranding, werksbegeestering, werkseienskappe, maatskaplike werkers, gesondheidstatus, Limopo-provinsie, sosiodemografiese eienskappe.

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SECTION A

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The researcher became aware of considerable occupational stress with high levels of dissatisfaction amongst the social workers where she worked as a senior social worker at the start of this research project. Social workers were unhappy about time spent on complaints about a lack of support from their supervisors, whom they said were careless about personal problems they were experiencing that could impact on service delivery. The lack of supportive supervision led to the impression that supervisors did not seem to care about problems experienced by their subordinates. Other complaints levelled against supervisors were that supervision was based on fault-finding and not on a person-centred approach, considering the uniqueness of each social worker. Supervision appeared to be judgmental instead of focused on the individual needs of the supervisees.

Apart from the dissatisfaction with supervisors, social workers also complained about high caseloads and meetings that did not address improvements that could be made in order to make their tasks easier. Some contemplated leaving the profession and felt that, in spite of their work-related complaints, there were no stress-relief programmes available to them. Those with positive coping skills appeared to be surviving, but it was not always possible to notice symptomatic behaviour if colleagues were not alert enough. A lack of upward mobility, incentives and low income further contributed to morale problems amongst these social workers, with no proper avenues for venting their dissatisfaction and stress.

The complaints of the social workers sketched a profile of possible burnout, with several of its dimensions presenting themselves in their work situations. Their complaints seemed to be responses to stressful work situations.

Job stress and burnout amongst social workers in South Africa must be considered against the backdrop of changes that have taken place on both macro and micro levels of the welfare scene over the last couple of decades, especially since 1994. A watershed development in this regard was the acceptance of the White paper for Social Welfare (Department of Welfare, 1997), according to which South Africa accepted a developmental social welfare policy. Concurring with that, Rankin and Engelbrecht (2014:13) also observe that social service organisations have been going through

turbulent times especially since the acceptance of the new welfare policy, now under revision. It was a transformation of welfare policy in South Africa, and a development to which welfare organisations and the social workers employed by them had to adjust to. The change of role players in the social welfare field was not something they were prepared for because it represented a radical departure from the traditional model of welfare in South Africa, and a new paradigm in welfare.

Social work is a profession known for the exposure of its practitioners to circumstances leading to burnout; it is a demanding profession mainly because it is “people work”. A considerable number of research papers have been published on burnout amongst social workers (Smith & Clark, 2011; Lizano & Barak, 2012; Tartakovsky & Kovardinsky, 2013; Adamson, 2012). Several authors (Kim, Ji & Kao, 2010; Yurur & Sarikaya, 2012) refer to the exposure of social workers to situations causing high levels of stress, making them vulnerable to burnout. Some of the contributing factors are high caseloads, shortage of time, staff shortages and demands of clients, bad work relations with colleagues and clients, and lack of social support. Others are role conflict, role ambiguity, lack of recognition and opportunity for advancement, and organizational culture. Kim, Ji, and Kao (2011:260) report that, over the past decade, clear empirical evidence has emerged regarding the prevalence of burnout in the social work profession. For example, on the basis of a sample of 751 social workers, Siebert (2005) found that about three quarters reported having had trouble with burnout during their careers. Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998: 72-73) calculated that the most frequently studied occupational groups are teachers (17%), nurses (17%) and social workers (7%), respectively. While the sources of stress may vary among these professions, they share a high vulnerability to burnout given the demands made on them by individuals and a shortage of time to fulfil the demands that are a part of their profession. Um and Harrison (1998) point out that the antecedents of burnout amongst human services staff are, amongst others, workload size, time spent with clients, role conflict/role ambiguity and work support. The outcomes of burnout usually include job dissatisfaction and intention to quit the job. Kadushin (2002:225) observes that symptoms of burnout in social workers are physical, emotional and behavioural. Emotionally it is manifested in disenchantment with the work and alienation from it; they feel depressed, emotionally depleted, angry and resentful as a consequence of a sense of work failure, and futility. There is a loss of enthusiasm, excitement, sense of mission, and a gradual erosion of commitment and interest in the job.

In a study done by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW:2006), social workers reported what may be called barriers to effective practice as increases in paperwork, severity of client problems, caseload size, waiting lists for services, assignment of non-social work tasks, level of oversight, coordination with community agencies, and availability of professional training. Both social workers and supervisors reported that they experienced decreases in job security.

Kadushin (2002:225) states that supervisees and supervisors 'face a variety of job-related stresses' listing the following job-related sources of stress for social workers: administrative supervision, educational supervision, the relationship with the supervisor, the client, the nature and context of the social work task, the organisation, and the attitude of the community towards social work. According to Collings and Murray (1996:376-377), human service professionals are reported to be particularly prone to burnout, and its manifestations include emotional exhaustion, feelings of depersonalisation, a dehumanising perception of clients, absenteeism, minor physical ailments, and reduced personal accomplishment. Rothmann (2003:18) cites Maslach *et al.* who explains that burnout in the helping professions comprises the three dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and low personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion refers to feelings of being overextended and exhausted by the demands of one's work. Depersonalisation is characterised by a detached and cynical response to the recipients of one's services or care, while reduced personal accomplishment refers to the self-evaluation that one is no longer effective in working with recipients and in fulfilling one's job responsibilities (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2001:499). Maslach (2003:190) points out that the three dimensions of burnout are related to workplace variables in different ways. In general, exhaustion and cynicism tend to emerge from the presence of work overload and social conflict, whereas the sense of inefficacy arises more clearly from a lack of resources for getting the work done.

In a reflection on research on burnout, Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter (2001:397) conceptualise job burnout as a psychological syndrome in response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job, while Schaufeli and Bakker (2004:294) refer to burnout as a metaphor that is commonly used to describe a state of mental weariness. Maslach (2003:190) explains that burnout involves a prolonged response to stressors in the workplace and the chronic strain that results from an incongruence or misfit between the person and his job. Burnout develops over time and stems from the relationship between the person and his job. Maslach and Leiter (1997:34) explain that 'energy, involvement, and efficacy are the direct opposites of the three dimensions of

burnout'. In their view, burnout is an erosion of engagement, whereby energy turns into exhaustion, involvement turns into cynicism, and efficacy turns into ineffectiveness'. Burnout, therefore, is a syndrome developing over time with a wide variety of antecedents, much of them job-related.

Wright and Cropanzano (1998:486) note that defining burnout as emotional exhaustion helps to distinguish it from other social science concepts. They maintain that the core meaning of burnout can best be found in the physical and psychological depletion that characterises emotional exhaustion.

It is against this background that the researcher wishes to ascertain the factors contributing to the burnout and strain and dissatisfactions experienced by these social workers in the Limpopo Province. In view of the above, the following research questions emanated from the problem formulation:

- Which job and personal characteristics can be related to burnout and engagement experienced by social workers in the Limpopo Province?
- What is the strength of the relationship between burnout and work engagement?
- What is the relationship of the physical and psychological health of social workers experiencing burnout?

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The overall aim of the project was to determine the variables that have an effect on burnout as experienced by social workers in the Limpopo Province.

The aim was achieved by pursuing the following objectives:

- To establish the relationship between the socio-demographic characteristics of social workers in the Limpopo Province and job burnout and work engagement amongst them.
- To establish the relationship between the job characteristics of social workers in the Limpopo Province and job burnout and work engagement amongst them.
- To establish the physical and psychological outcomes of burnout amongst social workers in the Limpopo Province.

3. THEORETICAL ASSUMPTION

Prolonged, unabated stress in the workplace leads to burnout; this affects the employee's functioning on the job and may lead to an intention to leave the job. If variables affecting burnout can be identified, measures could be implemented to take remedial action.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Literature analysis

The following themes are covered in the literature review: employee characteristics, job burnout and engagement, job characteristics, job burnout and engagement, and physical and psychological health and burnout. The following databases from the Ferdinand Postma Library were consulted: Ebscohost and Ferdikat, which gave the student access to a variety of sources.

4.2 Empirical investigation

4.2.1 The research approach

A quantitative research approach was used in the research. According to Babbie (2011), quantitative analysis involves converting data to a numerical form, which is what the data-gathering tools used in the research provided for.

The advantage of quantitative research is that precise and generalisable statistical findings can be produced and that there is a chance that findings can be generalised beyond the confines of the particular context in which the research was conducted (Bryman, 2008:176; Rubin & Babbie, 2013: 40). Therefore, the findings of this research could be generalised to social work populations in other parts of South Africa, which would add to the value of the study. Grinnell, Williams & Unrau (2010:28) explain that a "...quantitative portion of a research study relies on quantification in collecting and analyzing data and uses descriptive and inferential statistical analysis". In the present study, mainly descriptive statistical analysis was used and the research tools described below were chosen for this reason. No inferential analysis was done because it was not part of the goals of the study.

4.2.2 Research design

Neuman (1994:18) and De Vos (1998:77) state that a research design is a blueprint, and a detailed plan of how a research study is to be conducted. Bickman and Rog (2009:11) elaborate by explaining that the research design is the architectural blueprint of a research project that links the design, data collection and analyses to the research questions and ensures that the complete research agenda will be addressed.

A cross-sectional survey design was regarded as suitable for the empirical research in order to achieve the objectives of the study (Grinnell & Unrau, 2014: 324.). Hall (2008) describes a cross-sectional survey design as a survey that collects data to make inferences about a population of interest (universe) at one point in time. Babbie (2011:82) explains that a cross-sectional study ‘... involves observations of a sample, or cross section, of a population or phenomenon that are made at one point in time. In terms of time distinction is made between cross-sectional studies and longitudinal studies’. Bailey (1994:36) explains that a cross-sectional study is one that studies a cross-section of a population at a single point in time. In this research, the researcher wanted to study the phenomenon of burnout amongst social workers in the Limpopo Province at a given time, thus making it a cross-sectional design.

4.2.3 Measuring instruments

On advice from WorkWell, the research unit of the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences on the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University, the following measuring instruments from the Organisation Stress Screening Tool (ASSET) (Johnson & Cooper, 2003) were used to collect the data necessary to achieve the aims of the project: a biographical questionnaire, the Oldenburg Inventory for measuring burnout, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale for measuring work engagement, a scale determining job characteristics, and a health questionnaire. None of these scales had ever been validated for South-African social workers before.

The biographical questionnaires were used to develop a biographical profile of the respondents, which is contained in the first of the three articles of the manuscript.

The Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (Demerouti & Bakker, 2007) (Appendix 1) was used to measure burnout in this study. This scale was designed to measure the two core dimensions of burnout – exhaustion and disengagement from work. It consists of 16 items to be rated on a four-point scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. High scores on this scale indicate high levels of burnout.

The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003) (Appendix1) was used to determine the levels of work engagement of the respondents. This scale consists of 17 questions to be rated on a seven-point scale ranging from “never” to “always”. The assumption is that high scores on the Utrecht scale will be related to low scores on burnout. This scale measures vigour, dedication and absorption. High scores on this scale indicate high engagement.

The Job Characteristics Scale (JCS) (Appendix 1) was developed by Hackman and Oldham (1975) to measure job demands and job resources for employees. The JCS consists of 48 items. The questions are rated on a 4-point scale ranging from “never” to “always”. The dimensions of the JCS include pace and amount of work, mental load, emotional load, work variety, opportunities to learn, work independence, relationships with colleagues, relationship with immediate supervisor, ambiguities of work, information, communications, participation, contact possibilities, uncertainty about the future, remuneration, and career possibilities. .

The ASSET (An Organisational Stress Screening Evaluation Tool) health questionnaire was developed by Cartwright and Cooper (2002) to assess respondents' levels of health. The health subscales consist of 19 items arranged on two subscales for physical health and psychological wellbeing with questions on a 4-point scale ranging from “never” to “often”. All items on the physical health subscale relate to physical symptoms of stress. The role of this subscale is to give an insight into physical health, not provide an in-depth health assessment. The items listed on the psychological wellbeing subscale are symptoms of stress-induced mental health problems. This subscale gives insight into psychological health; it does not provide an in-depth clinical diagnosis. Johnson and Cooper (2003) found that the psychological wellbeing subscale has good convergent validity with an existing measure of psychiatric disorders. For the purposes of this research, 5 questions were added to measure work-life balance.

A scale measuring respondents' attitudes towards their organisation was also used, but adjustments had to be made over the course of the research and the data collected by this scale was never used. The scales that were used in the research provided a valuable perspective on burnout and its various contributing factors experienced by social workers in the Limpopo Province.

Questionnaires were delivered to the total population of social workers in the Limpopo Province. Although not equally distributed, social workers from all districts in the Limpopo Province were represented in the research group. Due to the fact that the majority of social workers in the Limpopo Province are employed by the Department of

Health and Social Development, these respondents were over-represented in the sample. Not all districts in the province are of equal size, which meant that the smaller districts represented a smaller percentage of social workers. Geographically, the whole province was represented in research participants, but no distinctions were made in terms of districts.

For ethical reasons and for the sake of confidentiality, the names of the NGOs employing social workers in the sample were not revealed. Logically, since the Department of Health and Social development at the time of the study employed the bulk of the social workers in the sample, it is only to be expected that most of the questionnaires were completed by social workers from this department.

4.2.4 Data collection and analysis

The measuring instruments used in the research were explained under the previous heading. Respondents were recruited through the methods described above with the assistance of coordinators appointed for each district in the Limpopo Province. They had to be social workers employed by NGOs and the Department of Health and Social Development in the Limpopo Province. This served as the only exclusion criteria. No length of experience, age, or any other criteria were used.

Statistical Consultation Services at the North-West University did the data-analysis by means of the SAS statistical package.

4.2.5 Sampling procedures

The research participants were chosen from the population of registered social workers employed by the Department of Health and Social Development and NGOs in the Limpopo Province. A population is described by Gravetter and Forzano (2012:134) as the entire set of individuals of interest to the researcher. Social workers employed by the Department of Health and Social Development as well as those employed by NGOs were identified from a list provided by the department of Health and Social Development, and was the target population (Gravetter and Forzano, 2012:134).

Gravetter and Forzano (2012:134) view sampling as the set of individuals selected from a population and is usually intended to represent the population in a research study.

No sampling procedures were used in this study because of statistical requirements that applied to the particular data-gathering tools used in the research. The researcher attempted to contact all social workers on the lists provided by the department of Health

and Social Development. However, it was impossible to determine whether these lists were up to date.

The researcher phoned every social worker employed by NGOs and the Department of Health and Social Development whose names appeared on the list, explained the purpose and nature of the research and asked them whether they would be willing to participate in the research. If they were, a questionnaire was sent to them with a request to complete the questionnaire and return it to the researcher in a self-addressed envelope. A consent form was thus not regarded as necessary because the completion of the questionnaires was regarded as consent by implication. As the result of the nature of the research, respondents completed the questionnaires as individuals.

A coordinator was appointed for each district in the Limpopo province to facilitate the distribution of questionnaires to the offices of the Department of Health and Social Development and to NGO's, and the return of the questionnaires. The role of the coordinator was to ensure that all social workers stationed at the office of the department of Health and Social Development and NGO's received and returned a questionnaire. The coordinators forwarded the returned questionnaires to the researcher. A total of 227 questionnaires were returned; only 200 questionnaires were required to execute a confirmatory factor analysis for the existing data-collection instruments used in the study. This was the reason why as many as possible social workers had to be reached for participation in the research.

4.2.6 Procedures

1. The research proposal was developed, submitted and approved.
2. Ethical approval for the research was gained from the Ethics Committee of the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University (Ethics approval number 04K18).
3. WorkWell, the research unit of the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences of the North-West University were consulted regarding measurement instruments to be used for purposes of the study.
4. ASSET (An Organisation Stress Screening Tool) was regarded as suitable instrument to measure the various dimensions of burnout.
5. A list was compiled of all registered social workers in the Limpopo Province employed by the Department of Health and Social Development and NGOs and copies of the ASSET scale were sent out to all social workers on the list.

6. Three hundred questionnaires with explanatory covering letters were originally mailed to social workers on the list including a self-addressed envelope in which the questionnaires were to be returned. Only 44 questionnaires were returned, which was inadequate for a confirmatory factor analysis of the variables contained in the various scales. Another set of questionnaires were sent out to coordinators who were appointed by the researcher in all the districts of the Limpopo Province to assist with the distribution and collection of the questionnaires. With this second effort, 227 questionnaires were returned; only 200 were required for a factor analysis. The instructions for the completion of the questionnaires appeared on the front page of the questionnaire as well as an indication of the purposes and nature of the research. No covering letter was thus deemed necessary.
7. Statistical Consultation Services on the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University processed the statistical data by means of SAS statistical software.

4.2.7 Ethical aspects and how they were managed

The manner in which the ethical aspects relevant to the research was managed is explained below.

- Confidentiality: Strydom (2011:119) explains that confidentiality indicates the handling of information in a confidential manner. This was explained on the questionnaires given out. Respondents were ensured that information would not be distributed for any other reason than the purposes of the study. Nowhere did the questionnaire ask for the respondent's name or place of employment.
- Voluntary participation: Rubin and Babbie (2005:71) remind their readers that respondents in research should not be forced to participate in research. Respondents were not forced and the coordinators appointed to distribute and collect questionnaires the second time explained that the completion of the questionnaires was voluntary.
- Informed consent: Strydom (2011:117) refers to the importance of informed consent. The purposes of the research were outlined on the questionnaire by explaining that the survey was designed to help organisations assess the wellbeing of their employees.
- Competence of the researcher: the researcher is registered with the SA Council for Social Service Professions and is a senior social worker with substantial experience.

- Avoidance of harm: Strydom (2011:115) warns that respondents can be harmed in a physical and/or emotional manner. The research was only a survey, which limited the chances of either physical or emotional harm.

5. DEFINITION OF CORE TERMS

Pines and Aronson (1983:263) describe burnout as a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion caused by long-term involvement in situations that are emotionally demanding.

Kahn (1990:694) and Schaufeli *et al.* (2002:74) define work engagement as a person's very strong commitment to and experience of his work on physical, cognitive and emotional level.

Bakker *et al.* (2001:501) define job demands as those physical, social or organisational aspects of the job that require sustained physical or mental effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and psychological costs.

Demerouti and Bakker (2011:5) explain that job resources refer to those physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects of the job that:

- are functional in achieving work goals
- reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs, and
- stimulate personal growth, learning, and development, and thus possesses health protecting factors.

The definition of health, according to Alexander (1981:583), is a state of optimal physical, mental and social being and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity.

Physical pertains to the body, to material things or physics (Alexander, 1981: 583).

Psychology, according to Alexander (1981: 583), is that which deals with the mind and mental processes especially in relation to humans and animals.

6. CHOICE AND STUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

The manuscript is divided into the following sections:

Section A

Introduction and overview.

Section B

Article 1: Employee characteristics of social workers in the Limpopo Province related to burnout and work engagement.

Article 2: Work characteristics related to burnout and work engagement of social workers in the Limpopo Province.

Article 3: Health outcomes of burnout experienced by social workers in the Limpopo Province.

Section C

Summary, conclusions and recommendations.

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SECTION B

ARTICLES

ARTICLE 1: EMPLOYEE CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE RELATED TO BURNOUT AND ENGAGEMENT

D R Ntsoane

P Rankin

W Breytenbach

ABSTRACT

This article reports on research done amongst the social workers in the Limpopo Province to establish the relationship between the socio-demographic characteristics of the group, burnout, and work engagement. There is a scarcity of research on burnout and work engagement and how it relates to the socio-demographic variables of social workers in South Africa. This is regarded as an important shortcoming in view of the effect it has on the job performance of social workers. With this in mind, the purpose of this article was to investigate the socio-demographic variables of social workers in the Limpopo Province as it relates to burnout and work engagement.

The total population of social workers in the Limpopo Province has been included in the research and thus no sampling was done. They were the target population. For purposes of reliability of the results of the study, it was regarded as desirable to include all social workers in the said province. Another reason for this was that more than 200 respondents were required for a confirmatory factor analysis for the measuring instruments used in the research.

A socio-demographic questionnaire was used to establish the socio-demographic characteristics of the social workers who participated in the study while the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (Demerouti & Bakker, 2007) (Appendix 1) was used to establish the burnout levels of the respondents. The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003) (Appendix1) was used to measure the work engagement of the social workers in the target population in the Limpopo Province.

The processing and analysis of the results were done by Statistical Consultation Services on the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University.

No differences in burnout levels were found in relation to the different age groups in the research group. Judging from the results, age did not seem to make any difference in relation to burnout levels.

When viewing both exhaustion and disengagement dimensions of burnout, it became clear that there were noticeable differences between the various groups in terms of burnout. The number of hours worked per week made medium to large differences in both the exhaustion and disengagement levels of burnout amongst the different groups.

With work engagement, the pattern found in the case of burnout was repeated to some extent. Considering work engagement as a whole, the number of hours worked in one week seemed to determine differences in work engagement levels between the different groups, which is to be expected.

Key terms: Employee characteristics, burnout, engagement, social workers, Limpopo Province

1. INTRODUCTION

This article forms part of a bigger investigation on burnout as experienced by social workers in the Limpopo Province. Considering burnout as a complex phenomenon, it reports on employee characteristics as they relate to job burnout and work engagement and on the health outcomes of burnout which is regarded as a metaphor for job stress. Job stress was observed amongst social workers employed by the Department of Health and Social Development. Their complaints over the causes of their job stress allowed the researcher to draw a profile of burnout. Although signs of job stress were initially only observed amongst social workers employed by the provincial state department, social workers from NGOs in the Limpopo Province were also included in the study to make it more representative of all social workers in that province.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

This research project focuses on burnout amongst social workers in the Limpopo Province. Burnout amongst social workers in South Africa is a topic that has been under-researched with the result that relatively little is known about the variables impacting upon work stress and its related problem of burnout. This will be confirmed by a literature search on the topic.

The effect of socio-demographic characteristics of employees on burnout is one of the topics found on the research agenda for burnout. Marrinaccio, *et al.* (2013) observe that "...increasing importance is being attached to socio-demographic and occupational

variables in the assessment and management of work-related stress risk.” The possible link between burnout and the different socio-demographic variables have been established by a number of researchers, although not with consistent results. Rashedi *et al.* (2014:233) concur by pointing out that although several demographic variables have been studied in relation to burnout, they are relatively few and the findings are not consistent. Sadeghia and Khezrlou (2014) did a study on the relevance of socio-demographic variables on burnout amongst teachers in Iran. Alparslan and Doganer (2009) did a survey on burnout and socio-demographic characteristics under midwives in Turkey. The pattern seems to be of surveys done under different cultural and professional groups. No studies on burnout, work engagement and socio-demographic variables amongst social workers in South Africa have been done and it was considered necessary to include it as part of this study.

The research question thus is as follows: What is the relationship between the employee characteristics and burnout and work engagement of social workers in the Limpopo Province?

3. THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ARTICLE.

The general aim of the article is to describe the employee characteristics of the social workers in the Limpopo Province in relation to burnout and work engagement.

The article had the following objectives:

- to explore the employee characteristics of social workers in the Limpopo Province
- to validate the ASSET scales measuring job burnout and work engagement for the social workers in the Limpopo Province
- To establish the levels of burnout and work engagement of social workers in the Limpopo Province, and to determine the relationship between socio-demographic characteristics of social workers and burnout and work engagement of the social workers in the Limpopo Province.

4. LITERATURE OVERVIEW

4.1 Burnout as a workplace phenomenon

Burnout is a metaphor that is commonly used to describe a state of mental weariness, a psychological condition related to work stress. Schaufeli, *et al.* (2009:206) point out that, when burnout began to be described and discussed in the 1970s, it was primarily with reference to work in the human services, such as health care, social work,

psychotherapy, legal services, and police work. It was thought to occur especially in professionals in the “people” occupations. However, Schaufeli and Bakker (2004:294) cite Maslach and Leiter, who point out that it was eventually realised that it also occurred outside “people work” in occupations not characterised by intense involvement with people. This broadened the scope of burnout research considerably, making it more inclusive.

In a comprehensive review of the development of the concept, Maslach *et al.* (2001:397) describe burnout as “... a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job, and is defined by the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy”. From research done, Maslach *et al.* (2001:402) conclude that job burnout is a psychological syndrome in response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job. Maslach *et al.* (2001:402) view exhaustion as the central quality of burnout and the most obvious manifestation of this complex syndrome (2001:402). Bakker *et al.* (2004:83) point out that “....job burnout is known to negatively affect job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and creates such undesired behaviors as personnel turnover and absenteeism...”. Schaufeli *et al.* (2009:205) compare burnout with the smothering of a fire or the extinguishing of a candle. This describes the exhaustion of employees’ capacity to maintain an intense involvement, which has a meaningful impact at work.

According to Hakanen *et al.* (2008:225), emotional exhaustion refers to feelings of depleted physical and emotional resources and prompts actions in the individual to distance himself/herself emotionally and cognitively from his/her work, presumably as a way to cope with overload. Employees or individuals experiencing emotional exhaustion in their jobs report overwhelming feelings of emotional strain as well as feelings of being drained and used up, irritability and frustration.

Burnout, according to Poulin and Walter (1993:5-7), is referred to as a condition in which workers become worn out or exhausted because excessive demands have been placed on their energy, strength, and resources. Maslach (2003:189) describes burnout as a psychological syndrome that involves a prolonged response to stressors in the workplace, involving the chronic strain that results from an incongruence or misfit between the worker and the job.

Abu-Bader (2002:191-201) and Leason (2002:18-20) relate higher turnover to lower salary, lower satisfaction and the social worker’s relative youth. Thompson *et al.* (1996: 7) state that those who do not have the mechanisms of relieving stress may display aggressive irritability, mood swings, unusual weepiness and impatience at work.

According to Haj-Yahia, *et al.* (2000:201-203), there is a strong correlation between job satisfaction, a challenging job, quality of supervision, intervention methods, promotional opportunities, and good relationships with colleagues.

Um and Harrison (1998:100) explain that antecedents of burnout include, among others, workload size, time spent with clients, role conflict/role ambiguity, and work support. Outcomes of burnout usually include job dissatisfaction or intention to quit the job. Maslach *et al.* (2001:406) state that the significance of burnout for both the individual and organisation lies in its links to important outcomes. They elaborate by explaining that most of the outcomes that have been studied have been ones related to job performance. There has also been some attention paid to health outcomes, given that burnout is considered a stress phenomenon. Maslach *et al.* (2001:407) also highlight the fact that the work situation has a clear impact on burnout, and list job characteristics, occupational characteristics, and organisational characteristics as variables in this regard. Individual characteristics listed by them (Maslach, *et al.*, 2001:409) includes demographic characteristics, personality characteristics and job attitude.

Maslach *et al.* (2001:416) explain that the concept of burnout is supplemented and enlarged by its positive antithesis of work engagement, which is characterised by energy, involvement, and efficacy – the direct opposites of the three burnout dimensions. The implication of this construct for the research is that the emphasis should not only be on the antecedents and outcomes of burnout, but also on conditions that keep social workers engaged with their job. This would also ensure a more balanced approach to the problem. This concept is discussed under the next heading.

In summary, burnout may therefore be conceptualized as an uncomfortable psychological state related to the interaction between the employee and his work. It is stress-related and influenced by various factors related to the nature of the work the person is doing and certain personality factors. It has to do with job characteristics and individual responses to work and the different ways in which job characteristics have an effect on how individuals respond in dealing with the work situation.

4.2 Work engagement

Work engagement is regarded as the positive opposite or antipode of job burnout.

Various views on engagement can be found in the literature on the topic, approaching the construct from different angles. Kahn (1990:694) explains personal engagement as the “... harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles” and in

engagement, “people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances.” Schaufeli *et al.* (2002:74) define engagement as “... a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption.” They explain that engagement is not a momentary and specific state, but rather, it is “a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behavior.”

Bakker *et al.* (2008) explain that vigour is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one’s work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties. Dedication refers to being strongly involved in one’s work, and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge. Absorption is characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one’s work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work. Dedication refers to being strongly involved in one’s work, and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge.

Schaufeli, *et al.* (2002:73) explain that engaged employees have a sense of energetic and effective connection with their work activities and they see themselves as able to deal completely with the demands of their job. Bakker *et al.* (2008:188) observe that “... contrary to those who suffer from burnout, engaged employees have a sense of energetic and effective connection with their work, and instead of stressful and demanding they look upon their work as challenging.” Rothman and Jordaan (2006:87) explain that individuals who are highly engaged in their jobs identify personally with the job and are motivated by the work itself. They tend to work harder and more productive than others and are more likely to produce the results their customers and organisations want. They further observed that engaged employees report that their jobs make good use of their skills and abilities, are challenging and stimulating, and provide them with a sense of personal accomplishment.

Schuck (2010:41) observes that the antecedents of work engagement have not been researched properly but he identifies job fit, affective commitment and psychological climate as antecedents of work engagement. Referring to the overall model of work engagement, Bakker (2011:267) explains that according to this model, job resources such as social support from colleagues and supervisors, performance feedback, skill variety, and autonomy set in motion a motivational process that leads to more work engagement and consequently to higher performance. He adds that the model postulates that job resources become more salient and gain their motivational potential when employees are confronted with high job demands (e.g., workload, emotional

demands, and mental demands). In a study by Rothmann and Rothmann (2010), results showed that psychological meaningfulness and psychological availability were positively associated with employee engagement. Results further indicated that psychological meaningfulness and psychological availability were positively associated with work-role fit, co-worker and supervisor relations, facilitative norms, and low self-consciousness. The results showed that job resources (including growth opportunities, organisational support, social support, and advancement) were positively associated with employee engagement (vigour, dedication, and absorption). Growth opportunities (such as learning opportunities, autonomy, and variety) had the strongest effect on employee engagement.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 Research approach and design

The quantitative research approach was used in the research. According to Babbie (2011), quantitative analysis involves converting data to a numerical form which is what the data gathering tools used in the research provided for. Bryman (2008:176), and Rubin & Babbie (2013: 40) point out that the advantage of quantitative research is that precise and generalizable statistical findings can be produced and that there is a chance that findings can be generalized beyond the confines of the particular context in which the research was conducted. Although the research was conducted in the Limpopo Province, it is thus possible that the research findings may also have relevance for social workers in other parts of South Africa. It could thus form a basis for the duplication of the research in other parts of the country.

A cross-sectional survey design was regarded as suitable for the empirical research in order to achieve the objectives of the study (Grinnell & Unrau, 2014: 324.). Hall (2008) describes a cross-sectional survey design as a survey that collects data to make inferences about a population of interest (universe) at one point in time. Babbie (2011:82) explains that a cross-sectional study ‘... involves observations of a sample, or cross section, of a population or phenomenon that are made at one point in time’. In this research, the researcher wanted to study the phenomenon of burnout amongst social workers in the Limpopo Province, which made it a cross-sectional survey

5.2 Research participants

The research participants were all the registered social workers in the Limpopo Province (target population) employed by the department of Health and Social

Development, and NGOs. No sampling was done because it was the intention of the researcher to involve the entire population of registered social workers in the Limpopo Province to meet the requirements of a confirmatory factor analysis necessary in view of the quantitative nature of the study.

Social workers employed by the Department of Health and Social Development as well as those employed by NGOs were identified from a list provided by the Department of Health and Social Development. It could not be ascertained whether this list was up to date and the researcher had to use the list as it was received.

5.3 Measuring instruments

To achieve the aims and objectives of the section of the research reported on in this article, a biographical questionnaire, the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory for measuring burnout, and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale for measuring work engagement, were used. The biographical questionnaires were used to develop a biographical profile of the respondents. The Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (Demerouti & Bakker, 2007) (Appendix 1) was used to measure burnout in this study. This scale is designed to measure the two core dimensions of burnout – exhaustion and disengagement from work. It consists of 16 items to be rated on a four-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. High scores on this scale indicate high levels of burnout.

The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003) (Appendix1) was used to determine the levels of work engagement of the respondents. This scale consists of 17 questions to be rated on a seven-point scale from never to always. The assumption is that high scores on the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale will be related to low scores on burnout. This scale measures vigour, dedication and absorption. High scores on this scale indicate high engagement.

Cronbach Alpha values were determined to establish the reliability of the subscales of each of the questionnaires and confirmatory factor analyses were done to determine the validity of every subscale in the questionnaires, while T-tests and ANOVA calculations were done to establish the burnout and engagement outcomes of the socio-demographic characteristics of the social workers who participated in the research.

None of these scales had been validated for South African social workers before.

6. EMPIRICAL DATA

6.1 Socio-demographic profile of the respondents

There is a tendency in the literature on burnout to often use the terms “employee characteristics”, job factors and job characteristics interchangeably. This causes a confusing picture, leading to frustration and uncertainty. In this article, “employee characteristics” will refer the socio-demographic characteristics of social workers e.g. age, marital status, gender and length of employment and not to the personality characteristics of social workers. In this study, socio-demographic factors were linked to job burnout and work engagement.

The literature consulted sketched the same incoherent picture of work engagement and socio-demographic variables as was the case for burnout and socio-demographic variables. Not much research has been done on social workers in terms of employee characteristics and work engagement.

Compared with research on burnout and employee characteristics, there is a paucity of research on employee characteristics and engagement. The main reason for this is that the spotlight swung to engagement much later than research on burnout started. This situation is also reflected in this document.

Table 1.1: Age

Age	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-60	60+	Total
Frequency	11	50	60	46	23	18	10	7	2	227
Percentage	4,83	22,03	26,43	20,26	10,13	7,93	4,41	3,08	0,88	100

Hundred and fifty-six social workers (68,72%) are still relatively young and fall in the 25-44 age bracket.

Table 1.2: Basis of employment

Basis of employment	Number of social workers	Percentage
Permanent	223	98,24
Temporary	0	0
Fixed Term	4	1,76
Paid per hour	0	0
Total	227	100

The greatest majority of social workers are permanently employed, which should be a source of job security. None of the social workers are temporary, with a small percentage appointed on a fixed-term basis.

Table 1.3: Working hours in one week

Working Hours	Frequency	Percentage
1-10	18	8,14
11-20	2	0,90
21-30	3	1,36
31-40	86	38,91
41-50	95	42,99
50+	17	7,69
Total	227	100

If a forty-hour week is the norm, the figures in the above table indicate that 50,68 % of social workers in the sample are working overtime. It is not clear, however, whether the time worked after hours at home is also regarded as overtime.

Table 1.4: Chances of job promotion

Chances of job promotion	Frequency	Percentage
0	107	62,75
1	50	29,24
2	11	6,43
3	3	1,75
Total	171	100

* Not all respondents answered this question

The largest group of social workers (62.75%) stated that they had not had a chance of job promotion. It must be assumed however, that the shorter the duration of service was at the time of the survey, the less chances there would have been for job promotion.

Table 1.5: Probation

Probation 1 On probation 2 Not on probation	Frequency	Percentage
1	30	14.49
2	177	85.51
Total	207	100

* Not all respondents answered this question

The majority of social workers (85.51%) indicated that they were no longer on probation. This differs from the number of social workers (98,24%) who indicated that they were permanently employed. No research evidence could be found about the effect of this variable on burnout.

Table 1.6: Travelling time to and from place of work

Travelling time	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1 hour	192	85.33
1 – 2 hours	28	12.44
2 hours +	5	2.22
Total	225	100

* Not all respondents answered this question

Social workers do have to travel certain distances to and from work every day and, depending on the time they have to spend on the road, it may become exhausting. This however, may differ from person to person, depending on the general fitness of the person. No research could be found measuring the effect of travelling time on job satisfaction apart from mention that travelling time would have an effect on tiredness

Table 1.7: Use of annual leave

	Frequency	Percentage
Never	25	11.16
Sometimes	102	45.54
Always	97	43.30
Total	224	100

* Not all respondents answered this question

Annual leave is normally regarded as an opportunity to relax and recover from work stress, a time leading to positive outcomes

Table 1.8: Qualifications

Qualifications	Three-year BA(SW) degree	Four-year BA(SW) degree	Honours SW degree	Total
Frequency	19	187	19	225
Percentage	8,44	83	8,44	100

* Not all respondents answered this question

6.2. Mean scores for burnout and work engagement

Table 1.9: Mean scores for burnout

	n	Mean	Standard deviation
Exhaustion	227	2.48	0.53
Disengagement	227	2.58	0.50

Within the context of the four-point scale of the Oldenburg Inventory, the mean scores of social workers in the Limpopo Province were average, with 2.5 in the midpoint of the scale. Exceptions were found, but were not relevant to the research.

Table 1.10: Mean scores for work engagement

	n	Mean	Std Dev
Vigour	225	3,84	1,25
Dedication	225	4,32	1,41
Absorption	225	3,81	1,26

From the frequency table above, only one of the mean scores lies above the midpoint of 4 on the seven-point scale of the Utrecht Work Engagement scale, which indicates higher than average work engagement for social workers in the Limpopo Province. Exceptions were found, but were not relevant to the research.

6.3. Reliability and validity of the measuring instruments

Cronbach Alpha scores and confirmatory factor analyses were established to determine the reliability and the validity of the measuring instruments. Below are the tables reflecting the Cronbach Alpha values and the results of the confirmatory factor analysis done for both the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale. The items for each subscale in the questionnaire used are also listed in the tables.

Table 1.11: Cronbach Alpha values: the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory

Factor: Oldenburg Burnout Inventory	Item	Cronbach's Alpha values
Exhaustion	2,4,8,12,5,10,14,16	0,77
There are days that I feel tired before I arrive at work After work, I tend to need more time than in the past in order to relax and feel better During my work, I often feel emotionally drained After my work, I normally feel worn out and weary I can tolerate the pressure of my work very well After working, I have enough energy for my leisure activities. Usually I can manage the amount of my work well When I work, I usually feel energized.		
Disengagement	3,6,9,11,1,7,13,15	0,68
It happens more and more often that I talk about my work in a negative way Lately, I think less at work and do my job almost mechanically. Over time, one can become disconnected from this type of work Sometimes I feel sickened by my work tasks I always find new and interesting aspects in my work I find my work to be a positive challenge This is the only type of work that I can imagine myself doing. I feel more and more engaged in my work		

The Cronbach Alpha scores for each of the subscales of the Oldenburg Inventory indicated an adequate reliability.

6.3.1 Confirmatory factor analysis: the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory

Exhaustion: Two factors were retained which explained 52% of the variation in the data. The MSA was 0,89. Communalities varied between 0,43 and 0,65.

Disengagement: Two factors were retained which explained 47% of the variations in the data. The MSA was 0,78. Communalities varied between 0,27 and 0,57.

Table 1.12: Cronbach Alpha values: The Utrecht Work Engagement scale

Factor: Utrecht Work Engagement	Item	Cronbach's Alpha values
Vigour	1,4,8,15,17	0,80
I am bursting with energy in my work I feel strong and vigorous in my job When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work I am very resilient, mentally, in my job I always persevere at work, even if things do not go well		
Dedication	2,5,7,10,13	0,90
I find my work full of meaning and purpose I am enthusiastic about my work My job inspires me I am proud of the work I do To me, my work is challenging		
Absorption	3,6,9,11,12,14,16	0,87
Time flies when I am working When I am working, I forget everything else around me. I feel happy when I am engrossed in my work I am immersed in my work In my job I can continue working for a very long time		

The Cronbach Alpha scores for each of the subscales of the Utrecht Work Engagement scale indicated an adequate reliability.

6.3.2 Confirmatory factor analysis: The Utrecht Work Engagement scale

Vigour

One factor was retained for the vigour subscale which explained 56% of the variation in the data. The MSA was 0,79. Communalities varied between 0,50 and 0,66.

Dedication

One factor was retained for the dedication subscale which explained 71% of the variation in the data. The MSA was 0,87. Communalities varied between 0,58 and 0,79.

Absorption

One factor was retained for the absorption subscale which explained 56% of the variation in the data. The MSA was 0,87. Communalities varied between 0,40 and 0,65.

6.4 Socio-demographic outcomes for burnout and work engagement of social workers in the Limpopo Province

As a result of the fact that the study population turned out to be an availability sample, no statistical inference was used. Cohen's effect sizes d (Cohen, 1988) were used to interpret differences between groups.

Guidelines for Cohen's effect size d are as follows:

$d = 0,2$ small effect

$d = 0,5$ medium effect and noticeable with the naked eye.

$d = 0,8$ large effect, noticeable with the naked eye and also practical significant.

Table 1.13: Burnout effect sizes for different age categories.

Construct	Groups: 1: 20-29 2: 30 - 44 3: 45 - 65	n	Mean	Std dev	d-value
Exhaustion	1	61	2.46	0.51	0.00 between groups 1 and 2
	2	129	2.46	0.55	0.30 between groups 1 and 3
	3	37	2.61	0.46	0.30 between groups 2 and 3
Disengagement	1	61	2.64	0.43	0.20 between 1 and 2
	2	129	2.54	0.49	0.10 between 1 and 3
	3	37	2.60	0.51	0.12 between 2 and 3

The table above indicates that there were small differences in effect sizes (d-values) between all the groups for both the exhaustion and disengagement dimensions of burnout. This means that age does make a small, insignificant difference in the levels of burnout in the different age groups.

Contradictory findings on burnout, engagement and age were found in the literature, causing a rather confusing picture with no clear patterns emerging. Haque and Aslam (2011:60) report contradictory findings on the association between age and burnout in various professional groups. This is confirmed by Magennis and Smith (2005:5), who observe that literature is conflicting as to how a worker's age, gender or job tenure is related to burnout. They point out that some studies have associated older age with higher levels of burnout, while others have found older workers to have higher morale scores. According to Allen *et al.* (2004:182), age has a significant impact on job satisfaction. Matin *et al.* (2012:48-49) report that reports in terms of age indicated that the rate of burnout in younger employees is greater than that of employees in their thirties and forties. In a study on burnout amongst Israeli social workers working with children, Hamama (2012:114) related burnout to age, gender, professional seniority, family status, and education level. She came to the following conclusions:

- Most research showed that young employees, particularly those under the age of 30, were more prone to burnout than older employees
- Research showed that burnout was more prevalent among Israeli female social workers than male social workers

- Israeli workers with high seniority in the profession tended to experience burnout less because they were exposed to more challenging roles and rewards than workers with low seniority
- In a series of studies conducted in Israel, single female social workers reported higher rates of burnout than married ones.

Storey and Billingham, (2001) found that the older the social worker, the lower their stress level at work. They all deduced that, due to the complex nature of stress, it may not be justifiable to conclude that there is a direct link between age and stress levels. They did, however, suggest that social workers become more experienced as they grow older; they have more chances of being promoted, and gain more control and influence over decisions affecting their stress levels.

In a study on engagement in the workplace done in Canada by Psychometrics Canada, the levels of engagement did not seem to vary significantly with variations in age (s.a.:16).

Table 1.14: Work engagement effect sizes for different age categories

Construct	Groups: 1: 20 -29 2: 30 -44 3: 45 -65	n	Mean	Std dev	d-value
Vigour	1	61	4.04	1.13	0.30 between groups 1 and 2
	2	129	3.67	1.29	0.02 between groups 1 and 3
	3	37	4.07	1.22	0.31 between groups 2 and 3
Dedication	1	61	4.64	1.24	0.33 between 1 and 2
	2	129	4.16	1.48	0.20 between 1 and 3
	3	37	4.37	1.36	0.14 between 2 and 3
Absorption	1	60	3.84	1.20	0.15 between groups 1 and 2
	2	128	3.65	1.28	0.40 between groups 1 and 3
	3	37	4.32	1.19	0.50 between groups 2 and 3

From the above table it can be seen that there are differences of medium effect size (visible to the naked eye) between groups 2 and 3 in terms of work absorption. That means that the absorption level of group 3 ($m = 4.32$) was higher than that of group 2

($m = 3.65$). Therefore, the absorption level of respondents in the age group 45 - 65 is higher than those in the age group 30 - 44, which means that they are prepared to work harder.

In a study done on employees in a financial institution, Coetzee & De Villiers (2010:42) found that the various age groups differed statistically significantly only with regard to the absorption dimension of work engagement. In their study, Chaudhary, Rangnekar and Barua (2013:102) found that age and tenure were found not to be significant in explaining work engagement. Swaminathan & Ananth (2009: 11) came to a much similar conclusion in their study, finding that, among the demographic characteristics, factors like gender, age and education had no significant influence on engagement

Table 1.15: Burnout effect sizes for different probation categories

Construct	Groups: Probation 1 Not probation 2	n	mean	Std dev	d-value
Exhaustion	1	30	2.47	0.53	0.20
	2	177	0.11	0.52	
Disengagement	1	30	2.55	1.17	0.40
	2	175	2.75	1.19	

The table above clearly shows that there are differences of small effect sizes for burnout between respondents still on probation and those not on probation. This means that whether respondents are still on probation or not does not make much of a difference in terms of burnout levels. Probation status does not seem to have any effect on burnout.

Table 1.16: Work engagement effect sizes for different probation categories

Construct	Groups: 1: Probation 2: Not probation	n	Mean	Std deviation	d-value
Vigour	1	30	4.0	1.17	0.16
	2	175	3.8	1.19	
Dedication	1	30	4.57	1.25	0.21
	2	175	4.29	1.37	
Absorption	1	30	4.0	1.15	0.18
	2	175	3.78	1.22	
	2	175	3.12	0.73	

The table above reflects the small effect sizes between groups 1 and 2 for the vigour, dedication and absorption dimensions of work engagement. This means that there were insignificant differences in the levels of work engagement between the groups of social workers in the sample still on probation and those no longer on probation. These findings are similar to those for burnout.

Table 1.17: Effect sizes for number of hours of travel to and from work on an average day for burnout

Construct	Groups:1:Less than 1 hour 2:1– 2 hours	n	Mean	Std dev	d-value
Exhaustion	1	192	2.47	0.55	0.03
	2	33	2.50	0.40	
Disengagement	1	192	2.60	0.50	0.21
	2	33	2.67	0.33	

From the data contained in table above it can be seen that there were differences of small effect sizes for exhaustion and disengagement between groups 1 and 2. This means that time spent on travel did not make a noticeable difference on the burnout levels of the various groups

Table 1.18: Effect sizes for number of hours of travel to and from work on an average day for work engagement

Construct	Groups:1: Less than 1 hour 2:1 – 2 hours	n	Mean	Std dev	d-value
Vigour	1	191	3.83	1.22	0.10
	2	32	3.93	1.22	
Dedication	1	191	4.29	1.38	0.20
	2	32	4.54	1.53	
Absorption	1	191	3.80	1.25	0.10
	2	32	3.91	1.25	

The table above indicates differences of small effect size between group 1 and group 2 for the dimensions of vigour, dedication and absorption. This means that travelling for 1 - 2 hours to and from work did not make a difference in the engagement levels of social workers in the sample compared with those spending less than 1 hour on travel. Although no research could be traced on the topic, it is to be expected that extended

periods on the road every day might affect a person's energy and thus his engagement levels. This, however, was not the case in this research group.

Table 1.19: Effect sizes for burnout for different leave entitlements

Construct	Groups: 1: Never full entitlement 2: Sometimes full entitlement 3: Always full entitlement	n	Mean	Std dev	d-value
Exhaustion	1	25	2.58	0.53	0.30 between groups 1 and 2
	2	102	2.43	0.53	0.15 between groups 1 and 3
	3	97	2.51	0.51	0.15 between groups 2 and 3
Disengagement	1	55	2.55	0.55	0.10 between 1 and 2
	2	102	2.51	0.45	0.20 between 1 and 3
	3	97	2.65	0.49	0.25 between 2 and 3

As can be seen from the table above, the small effect sizes differed between all the groups for both dimensions of exhaustion and disengagement of burnout. This means that differences in the use of the various leave entitlements did not reflect in differences in burnout levels.

In a study by Etzion (2003:148) it was found that a vacation influenced stress and burnout. The respondents in his study showed a significant drop in stress compared to the initial pre-vacation level. The level of burnout also fell significantly after the vacation, and remained low 3 weeks after respondents had returned to work. These findings were confirmed by Westman and Etzion (2002:583) in their study of a group of 57 employees working for a hi-tech company.

Table 1.20: Work engagement effect sizes for different leave entitlements

Construct	Groups: 1: Never full entitlement 2: Sometimes full entitlement 3: Always full entitlement	n	Mean	Std dev	d-value
Vigour	1	25	3.66	1.37	0.00 between groups 1 and 2
	2	101	3.66	1.17	0.13 between groups 1 and 3
	3	96	4.06	1.19	0.33 between groups 2 and 3
Dedication	1	25	4.29	1.58	0.10 between groups 1 and 2
	2	101	4.13	1.38	0.16 between groups 1 and 3
	3	96	4.54	1.36	0.30 between groups 2 and 3
Absorption	1	25	3.77	1.49	0.10 between groups 1 and 2
	2	101	3.64	1.20	0.20 between groups 2 and 3
	3	96	4.00	1.20	0.30 between groups 1 and 3

As can be seen from the d-values in the table above, the use of different leave entitlements is not reflected in differences in any of the dimensions of work engagement between the various groups.

Table 1.21: Burnout effect sizes for different levels of education

Construct	Groups: 1 Three-year BA(SW) 2 Four-year BA or Honours(SW) 3 Honours(SW)	n	mean	Std dev	d-value
Exhaustion	1	19	2.7	0.48	0.50 Δ between groups 1 and 2
	2	187	2.46	0.53	0.40 between groups 1 and 3
	3	19	2.47	0.53	0.03 between groups 2 and 3
Disengagement	1	19	2.63	0.43	0.10 between groups 1 and 2
	2	187	2.59	0.48	0.40 between groups 1 and 3
	3	19	2.41	0.53	0.35 between groups 2 and 3

Diifference of medium effect size, which is visible to the naked eye, between groups 1 and 2 in terms of exhaustion can be seen from the above table. This means that the exhaustion level of group 1 (mean = 2.7) was higher than that of group 2 (mean = 2.46). Therefore, social workers in the sample with a three-year degree in social work suffered higher levels of exhaustion than their colleagues who hold a four-year or honours degree in social work. The explanation for this could be that social workers with a four-year qualification in social work were coping better with work demands than those with a three-year degree.

According to the d-values, the differences between the rest of the groups in terms of both exhaustion and disengagement with reference to level of education were insignificant.

Matin *et al.* (2012:50) declare that people with higher levels of education more often suffer from job burnout. Perhaps they are more exposed to burnout due to their heavier responsibilities or because of their higher expectations. Wilson (2009:14) states that, if students who graduate with a master's degree are overworked, underpaid and overloaded with work, they end up feeling dissatisfied and later become disengaged from their work, while Ahola *et al.* (2006: 13-16) classified education levels and argued that low basic education is a special risk to employees than vocational education . The

reason for this might be that vocational education prepares a person for a particular vocation.

Table 1.22: Work engagement effect sizes for different levels of education

Construct	Groups: 1 Three year BA(SW) 2 Four year BA 3 Honours(SW)	n	mean	Std dev	d-value
Vigour	1	19	4.06	1.15	0.19 between groups 1 and 2
	2	185	3.82	1.17	0.29 between groups 1 and 3
	3	19	2.73	1.12	0.07 between groups 2 and 3
Dedication	1	19	4.42	1.13	0.05 between groups 1 and 2
	2	185	4.35	1.37	0.30 between groups 1 and 3
	3	19	3.88	1.81	0.30 between groups 2 and 3
Absorption	1	19	4.07	1.04	0.25 between groups 1 and 2
	2	185	3.76	1.27	0.10 between groups 1 and 3
	3	19	3.90	1.38	0.20 between groups 2 and 3
	3	19	3.18	0.84	0.10 between groups 2 and 3

From the table above it can be seen that there were differences of small effect sizes between the various groups in terms of the dimensions of vigour, dedication and absorption as they relate to different levels of education. This means that different levels of education did not make much of a difference in the work engagement levels of the social workers in the research group. No evidence could be found to refute or support this trend amongst social workers. In research Denton, Newton and Bower (2008:383) did on dentists, they found that dentists with postgraduate qualifications and those who worked in larger teams suffered lower burnout and more positive work engagement. However, these findings cannot be compared with social workers because of the important differences in occupational groups.

Table 1.23: Effect sizes for total number of working hours in one week for burnout

Construct	Groups 1: 1 -10 hrs 2 :11 – 20 hrs 3 :21 – 30 hrs 4 :31 – 40 hrs 5 :41 – 50 hrs 6 :50 + hrs	n	mean	Std dev	d-value
Exhaustion	1	18	2.40	0.54	0.30 between groups 1 and 2
	2	2	2.19	0.80	1.25 between groups 1 and 3.
	3	3	3.08	0.47	0.21 between groups 1 and 4.
	4	86	2.52	0.49	0.12 between groups 1 and 5.
	5	95	2.47	0.56	0.02 between groups 1 and 6
	6	17	2.39	0.52	1.13 Δ between groups 2 and 3
					0.41 between groups 2 and 4
					0.35 between groups 2 and 5
					0.25 between groups 2 and 6
					1.20 Δ between groups 3 and 4
					1.10 Δ between groups 3 and 5
					1.13 Δ between groups 3 and 6
					0.10 between groups 3 and 5
					0.24 between groups 4 and 6
					0.14 between groups 5 and 6

Disengagement	1	18	2.57	0.51	0.90 Δ between groups 1 and 2
	2	2	2.13	0.35	1.50 Δ between groups 1 and 3
	3	3	3.33	0.47	0.04 between groups 1 and 4
	4	86	2.59	0.47	0.04 between 1 and 5
	5	95	2.55	0.50	0.02 between 1 and 6
	6	17	2.59	0.37	2.55 Δ between groups 2 and 3
					1.01 Δ between groups 3 and 4
					0.90 Δ between groups 3 and 5
					1.23 Δ between groups 2 and 6
					1.56 Δ between groups 2 and 4
					1.60 Δ between groups 3 and 5
					1.60 Δ between groups 3 and 6
					0.08 between groups 4 and 5
					0.02 between groups 4 and 6
					0.06 between groups 5 and 6

An interesting pattern emerged in effect sizes of the influence total number of weekly working hours has on burnout. As can be seen from the above table, there was a medium difference of effect size between groups 1 and 2 in terms of exhaustion. This means that the exhaustion level of group 1 ($m = 2.40$) was higher than that of group 2. There was a large difference of effect size between groups 1 and 3 in terms of exhaustion. This means that the exhaustion level of group 3 ($m = 3.08$) was higher than that of group 1 ($m = 2.40$). This difference in exhaustion was noticeable with the naked eye and statistically significant. There was a difference of large effect size between groups 2 and 3, which means that the exhaustion level of group 3 ($m = 3.08$) was higher than that of group 2 ($m = 2.19$). This difference in exhaustion was noticeable with the

naked eye and statistically significant. There was a difference of large effect size, also noticeable with the naked eye and statistically significant, between groups 3 and 4, which means that the exhaustion level of group 3 ($m = 3.08$) was higher than that of group 4 ($m = 2.52$). There was a difference of large effect size between groups 3 and 5. This means that the exhaustion level of group 3 ($m = 3.08$) was larger than group 5 ($m = 2.47$). The difference in exhaustion levels was noticeable with the naked eye and statistically significant. There was a difference of large effect size between groups 3 and 6. This means that the exhaustion level of group 3 ($m = 3.08$) was higher than that of group 6 ($m = 2.39$). This difference in exhaustion was noticeable with the naked eye and statistically significant.

Regarding the number of hours worked in one week, the differences of large effect in terms of exhaustion were noticeable between groups 1 and 3, groups 2 and 3, groups 3 and 4, groups 3 and 5, and groups 3 and 6.

For disengagement there was a difference of large effect size between groups 1 and 2. This means that the disengagement level for group 1 ($m = 2.57$) was higher than that of group 2 ($m = 2.13$). This difference in disengagement was visible with the naked eye and statistically significant. There was a difference of large effect size between groups 1 and 3, which means that the disengagement level of group 3 ($m = 3.33$) was larger than that of group 1 ($m = 2.13$). This difference in engagement was visible with the naked eye and statistically significant. There was a difference of large effect size between groups 2 and 3, which means that the disengagement level of group 3 ($m = 3.33$) was larger than that of group 2 ($m = 2.13$). The difference was visible with the naked eye and statistically significant. There was a difference of large effect size between groups 3 and 4. This means that the disengagement level of group 4 ($m = 2.59$) was larger than that of group 3 ($m = 2.13$). The difference was visible with the naked eye and statistically significant. There was a difference of large effect size between groups 3 and 5. This means that the disengagement level of group 3 ($m = 3.33$) was higher than that of group 5 ($m = 2.55$). The difference was visible with the naked eye and statistically significant. There was a difference of large effect size between groups 2 and 6. This means that the disengagement level of group 6 ($m = 2.59$) was higher than that of group 2 ($m = 2.13$). The difference was thus already visible with the naked eye and statistically significant. There was a difference of large effect size between groups 3 and 4. This means that the disengagement level of group 3 ($m = 3.33$) was higher than that of group 4 ($m = 2.59$). There was a difference in large effect size between groups 3 and 5. This means that the disengagement level of group

3 ($m = 3.33$) was higher than that of group 5 ($m = 2.55$). This difference was noticeable with the naked eye and statistically significant. There was a difference of large effect size between groups 2 and 6. This means that the disengagement level of group 6 ($m = 2.59$) was larger than that of group 2 ($m = 2.13$). Therefore, the disengagement level for group 3 was the highest compared to the other groups; the same trend applied for exhaustion. The above effect sizes indicate that the number of hours worked in one week does make a difference in terms of burnout (in both dimensions of exhaustion and disengagement). The burnout level of people working 20 - 30 hours per week was the highest.

The data in the table above seems to show that the total number of hours per week does make a noticeable difference between the various groups in relation to both dimensions of burnout and, therefore, to burnout as a whole. The possible explanation for this is the amount of work social workers have to finish in the total number of hours they work in one week. They experience pressure to finish their tasks in the time they have available. They may have too much work to do or they lack the necessary work planning abilities. It will, however, require the use of more sophisticated statistical techniques to isolate the reasons for this.

In a study by Stimpfel, Sloane, and Aiken (2012: 2504) on the effects of work hours on burnout and job satisfaction amongst nurses, it was found that “the odds of burnout and job dissatisfaction were up to two and a half times higher for nurses who worked longer shifts than for nurses who worked shifts of 8–9 hours”. In a different study, also on nurses, it was found that “as the number of work hours increased, nurses were more likely to experience emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation” (2006:45). Another study done on social workers indicated that there were no significant relationships between performance variables like direct client contact, overtime, years in the field, and the number of years in the current position (Le Croy and Rank, 1987:37).

There seems to be a shortage of research on working hours and work engagement. Generally, this seems to be the same for work engagement and socio-demographic characteristics.

Table 1.24: Effect sizes for the influence of total number of weekly working hours on work engagement

Construct	Groups 1: 1 -10 hrs 2 :11 – 20 hrs 3 :21 – 30 hrs 4 :31 – 40 hrs 5 :41 – 50 hrs 6 :50 + hrs	n	mean	Std dev	d-value
Vigour	1	18	3.48	1.16	0.34 between groups 1 and 2
	2	2	3.00	1.41	0.28 between groups 1 and 3.
	3	3	3.80	0.35	0.29 between groups 1 and 4.
	4	4	3.81	1.17	0.40 between groups 1 and 5.
	5	5	3.97	1.23	0.18 between groups 1 and 6
	6	17	3.18	1.67	0.60 Δ between groups 2 and 3
					0.60 Δ between groups 2 and 4
					0.70 Δ between groups 2 and 5
					0.50 Δ between groups 2 and 6
					0.01 between groups 3 and 4
					0.14 between groups 3 and 5
					0.01 between groups 3 and 6
					0.13 between groups 4 and 5
					0.02 between groups 4 and 6
					0.12 between groups 5 and 6
Dedication	1	18	3.96	1.60	0.18 between groups 1 and 2
	2	2	3.60	1.98	0.50 Δ between groups 1 and 3

	3	3	4.73	0.64	0.25 between groups 1 and 4
	4	84	4.36	1.42	0.25 between 1 and 5
	5	95	4.36	1.34	0.25 between 1 and 6
	6	17	4.35	1.65	0.57 Δ between groups 2 and 3
					0.38 between groups 2 and 4
					0.38 between groups 2 and 5
					0.26 between groups 3 and 4
					0.22 between groups 3 and 6
					0.00 between groups 3 and 5
					0.01 between groups 4 and 6
					0.01 between groups 5 and 6
Absorption	1	18	3.67	1.24	0.30 between groups 1 and 2
	2	2	3.29	1.41	0.70 Δ between groups 1 and 3
	3	3	4.57	0.49	0.01 between groups 1 and 4
	4	84	3.66	1.21	0.22 between groups 1 and 5
	5	95	3.95	1.21	0.14 between groups 1 and 6
	6	17	3.90	1.68	0.90 Δ between groups 2 and 3
					0.26 between groups 2 and 4
					0.50 Δ between groups 2 and 5
					0.40 between groups 2 and 6
					0.76 Δ between groups 3 and 4
					0.50 Δ between groups 3 and 5

					0.40 between groups 3 and 6
					0.24 between groups 4 and 5
					0.14 between groups 4 and 6
					0.03 between groups 5 and 6

The effect sizes (d-values) in the table above clearly show the significant differences regarding the dimensions of vigour, dedication and absorption. For vigour there was a difference of medium effect size, visible to the naked eye, between groups 2 and 3. This means that the vigour level of group 3 ($m = 3.80$) was higher than that of group 2 ($m = 3.00$). There was a difference of medium effect size also visible to the naked eye, between groups 2 and 4. This means that the vigour level of group 4 ($m = 3.81$) was higher than that of group 2 ($m = 3.00$). There was a difference of medium effect size also visible to the naked eye, between groups 2 and 5. This means that the vigour level of group 5 ($m = 3.97$) was higher than that of group 2 ($m = 3.00$). There was a difference of medium effect size also visible to the naked eye between groups 2 and 6. This means that the vigour level of group 6 ($m = 3.78$) was higher than that of group 2 ($m = 3.00$).

The table above shows a difference in medium effect size, also visible with the naked eye, between groups 1 and 3 in terms of dedication. This means that the dedication levels of group 3 ($m = 4.73$) was higher than group 1 ($m = 3.96$). In terms of absorption, there was a difference in medium effect size between groups 1 and 3 also visible to the naked eye, which means that the absorption level of group 3 ($m = 4.57$) was higher than that of group 1 ($m = 3.67$). There was a difference of large effect size, visible to the naked eye and statistically significant, between groups 2 and 3. This means that the absorption level of group 3 ($m = 4.57$) is higher than that of group 2 ($m = 3.29$). There was a difference of medium effect size, also visible to the naked eye, between groups 2 and 5. This means that the absorption level of group 5 ($m = 3.95$) was larger than that of group 2 ($m = 3.29$). There was a difference of medium effect size also visible to the naked eye between groups 3 and 4. This means that the absorption level of group 3 ($m = 4.57$) is larger than that of group 4 ($m = 3.66$). There is a difference of medium effect size between groups 3 and 5 also visible to the naked eye, which means that the absorption levels of group 3 ($m = 4.57$) was larger than that of group 5 ($m = 3.95$).

There were differences in effect sizes between the various groups working different numbers of hours for work engagement as a whole. The possible reason for this is that limitations placed on some people in terms of number of hours they have to do their work, makes them more engaged as opposed to the opposite effect this may have on others. This would explain why some social workers suffer more burnout and others show more engagement.

7. DISCUSSION OF THE OVERALL RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

The questionnaires used to measure burnout and work engagement were found to be adequately valid and reliable to be used with the research population. It can thus be used as a basis in research with similar populations.

In this population, age did not seem to have any significant effect on burnout and work engagement levels. It was not the purpose of the research to look for the reasons for this. The work conditions at the various organisations in the population involved in the research could have an effect on this.

The probation status of the social workers in the population did not seem to have a significant effect on burnout. It is to be expected that social workers still on probation will get more support from their colleagues and supervisors than those not on probation anymore. This may explain the insignificant difference in effect sizes. The results for number of hours spent on travel to and from work were the same for burnout and work engagement. Note should be taken that a minority of social workers spend 1 – 2 hours on travel to and from work.

The different uses of leave entitlement did not indicate any significant differences in effect on burnout or on work engagement. This is an interesting finding because it is to be expected that social workers using less leave will be more exhausted than social workers taking more leave. It is also to be expected that social workers taking less leave will be less engaged in their work, but this does not seem to be the case.

The medium effect size between levels of education for the exhaustion dimension of burnout can possibly be explained by differences in knowledge and skills provided by a longer training in social work with a resulting improvement in coping with job demands. As far as work engagement is concerned, no significant differences in effect sizes were found in relation to different levels of education. There are thus other factors that will have an effect on work engagement.

The total number of weekly working hours showed a noticeable difference in effect sizes between the different groups in relation to both the exhaustion and disengagement dimensions of burnout. The different rates at which a person works to get through the work allocated to him, in the time he has during the week, will determine the burnout outcomes it will have for him. The distribution of the workload of the organisation amongst the available social workers will also be an important variable as well as the nature of the tasks associated with his work. Although differences between the various groups regarding the different dimensions of work engagement were found, it was not as remarkable as in the case of burnout. It thus appears as if the numbers of working hours in one week do not have the same effect on work engagement as in the case of burnout.

This section of the research provides a broad and interesting overview of the effect of the selected socio-demographic variables on burnout and work engagement. What is clear is that certain socio-demographic variables have a greater effect on exhaustion and disengagement as the two dimensions of burnout, as well as on work engagement. It is advisable that directors/supervisors of each welfare organisation make an assessment of the socio-demographic characteristics of their social work workforce. It will help in understanding and appreciating the work experiences of their social work workforce and the individual social workers. This could be useful in both individual and group supervision as well as in in-service-training of social workers.

8. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Selected socio-demographic variables were linked with the exhaustion and disengagement dimensions of burnout and the absorption, dedication and vigour dimensions of work engagement.

The biographical questionnaire used in the research established a functional tool to collect the necessary data with its different aspects serving as essential independent variables to achieve the aims of the research. Both the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory, which was used to measure the burnout of social workers in the research group, and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale turned out to be valid and reliable instruments for measuring burnout and work engagement in the social workers from the Limpopo Province. It should, therefore, be equally useful in the rest of South Africa, provided that it is tested and adjusted for validity and reliability for the particular group of social workers under scrutiny. The experience of the researcher in this study was that the response to mailed questionnaires was dissatisfactory, compared with a more direct

and personal distribution of questionnaires. The latter system used by the researcher worked well.

This section of the research yielded valuable and useful information on the effect of social-demographic characteristics of the social workers in the population on both burnout and work engagement. There does not seem to be consistent patterns between the findings of different research studies done on the outcomes of socio-demographic variables and burnout and work engagement. Research findings seem to be occupation specific which is a reasonable conclusion in view of job challenges faced in the various occupational and professional groups.

The data collected in this research can be put to good use by supervisors of NGO's and those of the Department of Social Development. The socio-demographic variables or characteristics of the social workforce of any organisation will change over time. It is however a given that the socio-demographic characteristics do have an effect on burnout and work engagement, some more than others.

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ARTICLE 2: WORK CHARACTERISTICS RELATED TO BURNOUT AND WORK ENGAGEMENT OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE

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ABSTRACT

Research on job characteristics, job burnout and work engagement amongst social workers is non-existent in South Africa; this problem becomes clear as soon as a literature search on the topic is done. In view of this, the purpose of this section of the research, as reported on in this article, was to establish the linear relationship between work characteristics on the one hand and burnout and engagement on the other hand by means of Cohen's correlation coefficient.

The total population of social workers in the Limpopo Province was included in the research, and thus no sampling was done. The reason for this was that, for the purposes of reliability and validity of the results of the study, it was regarded as important to include all the social workers in said province. Another reason for this was that more than 200 respondents were needed to do a confirmatory analysis for the measuring instruments used in the research

The Job Characteristics Scale (JCS) (Appendix 1) was developed by Hackman and Oldham (1975) to measure job demands and job resources for employees. The JCS consists of 48 items. The Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (Demerouti & Bakker, 2007) (Appendix 1) was used to measure burnout levels of the social workers in the study. The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003) (Appendix1) was used to determine the levels of work engagement of the respondents in the study.

The processing and analysis of the results were done by Statistical Consultation Services on the Potchefstroom Campus of The North-West University.

As background, an exposition of the Work Engagement approach to burnout was provided with reference to the Job-Demands Resources model, the Conservation of Resources theory, and the Job-Demands Control model for job strain. The latter three

models/approaches were developed as models to explain the various ways in which employees cope with job demands.

The Job Characteristics Scale was used to determine the social worker's experience of the characteristics of their jobs. These were then related to the exhaustion and disengagement dimensions of burnout as well as the vigour, dedication and absorption dimensions of work engagement. This was done to establish the strengths of the linear relationships between work characteristics on the one hand and burnout and work engagement on the other hand. This shed some light on which characteristics of the job the social workers in the sample regarded as job resources and job demands respectively.

Different strengths were found in the relationships between job characteristics, burnout and work engagement. This data assisted in determining which aspects of the job caused work stress for workers in the study and should be attended to.

Key terms: Work engagement, job demands, job resources, work characteristics, burnout.

1. INTRODUCTION

The focus of this article falls on the relationship between job characteristics, job burnout and work engagement which was statistically determined by means of correlations.

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) approach to burnout is presented as a framework incorporating job characteristics as well as related adaptations to the basic JD-R model, dealing with different dimensions of burnout.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

There is a paucity of detailed research studies on burnout amongst South African social workers. This leaves a gap in the understanding of work wellness of social workers in the various welfare organisations (governmental or NGOs). It makes it difficult to plan care for the carer because so little is known about work stress and burnout amongst social workers in the country. Welfare organisations, in particular NGOs, do not have the funds to purchase services to deal with work stress of their employees. Burnout is a complicated problem with several approaches designed to deal with it, but welfare organisations are not known for using the knowledge and research results available to deal with the job demands faced by their social workers; they very often have no such inclination because of high workloads.

This article discusses social workers' experiences of the job characteristics of their occupation. Job characteristics refer to the features of a job which gives it a unique character, providing a particular environment in which employees are expected to function. Job characteristics are described by Rothmann and Essenko (2007:137) as specific tasks that make up an individual's job and may also be referred to as working conditions. Bakker and Demerouti (2008: 309) refer to studies pointing out the profound impact that job characteristics, like job strain, burnout and work engagement, can have on employee wellbeing. They elaborate by drawing attention to research evidence that has revealed that "job demands such as a high work pressure, emotional demands, and role ambiguity may lead to sleeping problems, exhaustion, and impaired health", while "job resources such as social support, performance feedback, and autonomy may instigate a motivational process leading to job-related learning, work engagement, and organizational commitment". Therefore, the distinction is between job demands and job resources as two sides of the same coin.

The related aspect of work engagement is generally regarded as the opposite of burnout. Kahn (1990:694) and Schaufeli *et al.* (2002:74) frame it as a person's very strong commitment to and experience of his work on physical, cognitive, and emotional level. In short, an engaged employee thoroughly enjoys his work and is prepared to put a lot into his work. Both job resources and work engagement contribute to a positive work experience providing input which counters the experience of burnout. In this regard, Van den Broeck *et al.* (2008:278) state that job resources are considered to enhance employees' wellbeing; they are assumed to stimulate employees' work engagement and prevent burnout. Job resources, according to these authors, are positively related to work engagement.

For the purpose of this study, it was important to investigate the relationship between job characteristics and burnout of the social workers in the population in order to arrive at a better understanding of the interaction between burnout and work characteristics in their context.

The research question flowing from the above is: What is the relationship between burnout, work engagement and job characteristics of social workers in the Limpopo Province.

3. THE PURPOSE OF THE ARTICLE

- To validate the questionnaire on job characteristics for the research group.
- To describe the relationship between job characteristics, burnout and engagement.

- To establish the relationship between burnout, work engagement and job characteristics and work engagement of social workers in the Limpopo Province.

4. LITERATURE OVERVIEW.

4.1 The job characteristics approach to burnout

Bakker and Demerouti (2008: 209) define work engagement as "... a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption."

Vigour is characterised by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working.

Dedication refers to being strongly involved in one's work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, and challenge. **Absorption** is characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work, bringing about a sense of time passing quickly and difficulty detaching from work.

In this article an overview of the Job Demands-Resources model is provided as approach to burnout because it was one of the models used in determining the relationship of job characteristics to burnout amongst social workers in the Limpopo Province. The Job Characteristics Scale is based on this model. It is a model representing important aspects of the person-organisation or the person-job interaction and accepts that burnout develops from this interaction. Bakker *et al.* (2007: 275) explain that the JD-R model is a model that specifies how the wellbeing of employees may be engendered by two specific sets of working conditions. The first set concerns **job demands** that represent characteristics of the job that potentially evoke strain, in case they exceed the employees' adaptive capability. The second set of working conditions concerns the extent to which the job offers **resources** to individual employees. Resources are not only necessary to deal with job demands but they are also important in their own right (Bakker and Demerouti 2008: 211). In an editorial, Demerouti and Bakker explain that, according to the JD-R model, job demands are initiators of a health impairment process and job resources are initiators of a motivational process. In addition, the model specifies how demands and resources interact, and predict important organisational outcomes (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011:1)

Apart from explaining the JD-R model, other models that theorise about the various ways in which individuals attempt to maintain their balance in their interaction with the work environment consisting of human relationships and various technologies, are also explored. These are the COR theory, the Job Demands-Control Model (JD-C) and the Job Demands-Control-Support model. Together, these models shed some light on the

dynamics of the person-job environment interaction. The person-environment concept is known to social work because it is an accepted perspective used in social work practice. The purpose of this section of the research is to determine how job characteristics relate to burnout and the engagement of social workers.

4.1.1 The Job Demands-Resources model of burnout

Stressful working conditions can be improved if a better balance can be secured between job demands and job resources and it is important to identify the job resources available. Bakker *et al.* (2001:501) describe job demands as those physical, social or organisational aspects of the job that require sustained physical or mental effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and psychological costs. Job resources, in turn, are those physical, psychological, social or organisational aspects of the job that have the following effects: (a) allows the employee to be functional in achieving work goals; (b) reduce job demands at the associated physiological and psychological costs; (c) stimulate personal growth and development. Examples of job resources, according to Ducharmel and Martin (2000:226), are affective, informational and instrumental support as well as social companionship available to employees. Himle and Jayarantne (1991:22-26) hold a similar view, which is that the use of informational and instrumental support assists in moderating burnout, and support programmes ease the effects of work stress.

According to the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model of burnout, the characteristics of all jobs can be divided into job demands and job resources. The JD-R model is a comprehensive attempt at explaining simultaneously the wellbeing and ill-health of employees, and the related antecedents and consequences (Hakanen *et al.* (2008:224). Van den Broeck, *et al.* (2008:279) explain that the presence of job demands and the absence of job resources are expected to associate negatively with employees' burnout through an energetic process, while job resources are expected to relate positively to employees' engagement through a motivational process.

The JD-R model assumes that job stress or burnout develops irrespective of the type of job or occupation when certain job demands are high and certain job resources are limited or lacking. It is thus not a job-specific phenomenon, and each job situation will have its unique job demands and job supports. It should be noted that job stress and burnout are used as synonyms. This is important in view of later explanations of the dynamics of burnout. Demerouti and Bakker (2011:2), citing Meijman & Mulder (1998:?), tie it together by explaining that job demands are not necessarily negative, but they may turn into job stressors when meeting those demands require high effort

from which the employee fails to recover adequately. This is an important distinction because it implies that if the employee deals constructively with the job demands facing him, it will not necessarily lead to unmanageable stress. Xanthopoulou *et al.* (2007:121) observe that previous studies have supported the underlying predictions of the model, namely that job demands are the main predictors of negative job strain while job resources are the most important predictors of work engagement.

Bakker *et al.* (2003:345) elaborate and explain that a proposition of the JD-R model is that work characteristics may thus evoke two different processes. First, high job demands (i.e., work overload) may exhaust employees' mental and physical resources and may therefore lead to health problems or burnout. Secondly, poor or insufficient job resources preclude actual goal accomplishment, which is likely to cause failure and frustration. This, in turn, may lead to withdrawal from work and reduced motivation or commitment. In such a situation, reducing commitment can be an important self-protection mechanism that may prevent the future frustration of not obtaining work-related goals. Demerouti *et al.* (2001:502) agree and suggest that the JD-R model proposes that the development of burnout follows two processes. In the first process, job demands lead to constant overtaxing and in the end to exhaustion (which is one of the components of burnout). In the second process, a lack of resources complicates the meeting of job demands, which further leads to withdrawal behaviour, with the long-term consequence of disengagement from work. In short, it means that a lack of adequate resources to meet the consequences of constant overtaxing due to job demands will eventually lead to job disengagement.

Fernet *et al.* (2013:127-130) posit that job characteristics which cause stress are conceptualised to consist of five dimensions: *role conflict*, which indicates the level at which the individual experiences incongruent role demands and commitment; *role overload*, the level at which work demands exceed personal and workplace resources, and also the extent to which expected work assignments are completed; *role ambiguity*, which indicates the conditions where the priorities, expectations, and evaluation criteria are not clear to the employee; *role insufficiency*, which indicates the condition where employees' education, training skills, and experiences are incompatible with job requirements (Buunk *et al.*, 1998); and role clarity which refers to how clearly a set of activities expected from individual employees are explained. Tang and Chang (2010:870-872) contend that role ambiguity and role conflict are negatively related to job satisfaction. They also reduce creativity among employees. In commenting on the job characteristics model, Ozbag and Ceyhun (2014:292) explain that the model

suggests that the five core job dimensions (characteristics) – skill variety, task significance, task identity, autonomy, and feedback – influence three critical psychological states: experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility and knowledge of results. According to this influential model, employees experience meaningfulness if jobs include skill variety, task significance and task identity. *Skill variety* is the degree to which a job requires a variety of different activities that utilise the use of different skills and talents. Secondly, *task identity* refers to the degree to which a task requires performing the whole process from beginning to the end with a visible outcome. Thirdly, *task significance* is the degree to which the job has a considerable impact on the lives or work of other people, whether in the organisation or on the outside. *Autonomy* encompasses the responsibility and is defined as the degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and wisdom to the individual in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out. Finally, *feedback from the job* canalises an employee by clarifying how well or badly she is performing. These features are likely to influence the employee's behaviour and motivation. The Job Characteristics Model proposes that the presence of skill variety, task significance, task identity, autonomy, and feedback imbues employees' with favourable feelings and experiences which, in turn, boosts beneficial work outcomes, such as intrinsic work motivation (Hackman and Oldham; 1980), job satisfaction (Tiegs, *et al.*, 1992; and organisational commitment (Hunt *et al.*; 1985, Ramaswami, *et al.*; 1993). To the contrary, the absence of these characteristics can lead to experiencing undesirable work outcomes, such as increased work absenteeism (Hackman & Oldham, 1975; Fried and Ferris, 1987) and increased intentions to quit (Michaels & Spector, 1982).

4.1.1.1 Job demands

For the purposes of this article and for an understanding of the distinction between job demands and job resources, a more detailed explanation of these concepts must be provided. Job demands refer to the requirements of the job that the employee has to comply with. These are described by Demerouti, *et al.* (2001:501) as those physical, organisational, and social aspects of the job that require sustained physical or mental effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and psychological costs. Citing Jones and Fletcher, Demerouti and Bakker define demands as 'the degree to which the environment contains stimuli that peremptorily require attention and response'. Demands are the "things that have to be done". It may also be referred to as the tasks the employee has to carry out in response to the demands of the job.

Examples of job demands include pace and amount of work (i.e. working under time pressure and having too much work to do), mental load (i.e. having to attend to many things at once and paying continuous attention to work), and emotional load (i.e. attending to difficult children at work and experiencing emotionally upsetting situations). Other examples are a high work pressure, an unfavourable physical environment, and emotionally demanding interactions with clients (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011:1).

Schaufeli and Bakker (2004:296) refer to a descriptive model of Maslach, *et al.* (1986) which hypothesises that the presence of specific demands (i.e. work overload and personal conflicts) and the absence of specific resources (i.e. control coping, social support, autonomy, and decision involvement) predicts burnout, which in its turn is expected to lead to various negative outcomes such as physical illness, turnover, absenteeism, and diminished organisational commitment.

Bakker *et al.* (2005:170), assert that badly designed jobs or high job demands exhaust employees' mental and physical resources and therefore lead to the depletion of energy (i.e., a state of exhaustion) and health problems (health impairment process), whereas the absence of job resources undermines motivation and leads to cynicism and reduced extra role performance (motivational process). If the necessary supports are not present, the demands faced by the employee may exceed his ability to cope with it. Job demands are those aspects of the job that have an effect on the person's job functioning and job performance. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004:299) elaborate that burnout is caused by high job demands that drain the employee's energy and causes the employee to withdraw mentally in an attempt to cope with the resulting exhaustion. Rothmann and Jordaan (2006:88) assert that, when the external environment lacks resources, individuals cannot reduce the potentially negative influence of high job demands and they cannot achieve their work goals. According to Bakker *et al.* (2004:87), people become exhausted under the influence of environmental demands, and are unable to perform well because their energy resources are diminished. Bakker and Schaufeli (2007:150) add that job demands require effort and are related to physiological and psychological costs like fatigue.

The central hypothesis of Bakker *et al.* (2003:352) was that job demands would be unique predictors of absence duration through their impact on burnout, and that job resources would be unique predictors of absence frequency (positive relationships) through their impact on organisational commitment. Job demands (i.e. workload and problems with reorganisation) were indeed unique predictors of production workers'

levels of exhaustion and cynicism (i.e. the core dimensions of burnout) and indirectly of absence duration (Bakker *et al.*, 2007:275).

4.1.1.2 Job resources

The JD-R model embraces the two sides of the coin with job demands and job resources closely linked, in continuous interaction and related to burnout in different ways. Demerouti and Bakker (2011:5) explain that job resources refer to those physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects of the job that:

- are functional in achieving work goals,
- reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs, and
- stimulate personal growth, learning, and development, and thus health protecting factors.

The authors elaborate that job resources may be located at the macro organisational level (e.g. salary or wages, career opportunities, job security), the interpersonal level (e.g. supervisor and co-worker support, team climate), the specific job position (e.g. role clarity, participation in decision-making) or at task level (e.g. skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and performance feedback). Demerouti *et al.* (2001:501) cite Richter and Hacker (1998) in their classification of job resources in external categories (organisational and social) and internal categories (cognitive features and action patterns). Organisational resources include job control, potential for qualification, participation in decision-making, and task variety. Social resources refer to support from colleagues, family and peer groups. When the external environment lacks resources, individuals cannot cope with the negative influences of environmental demands. It can be added that employees will struggle with job demands if they lack internal or personal resources. The availability of job resources is thus determined by a complicated interplay of organisational, job and personal factors. Nahrang *et al.* (2011:73) explain that job resources not only help employees deal with job demands but also have the potential to motivate employees. Hakanen, *et al.* (2008:225) concur, and state that the basic psychological needs of autonomy, belonging, competence and job resources are also intrinsically motivational for employees. Job resources can thus be interpreted as supporting the employee's efforts to survive in the workplace. Although general job resources can be identified, job resources are unique to a particular work situation and are related to the nature of the work and the organization.

Job resources can be viewed as the support needed by the employee (in this case, the social worker) to cope with job demands. One assumption of the JD-R model (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2004:88; De Braine and Roodt, 2011:2077) is that job resources may buffer the impact of job demands on stress reactions, including burnout. Burnout is related to health problems as well as turnover intentions, and mediates the relationship between job demands and health problems, while work engagement mediates the relationship between job resources and turnover intentions. Demerouti *et al.* (2001) state that when job control is high and job demands are low, low strain should be expected. When job resources are high, motivation is expected in the form of engagement, irrespective of job demands. Job resources represents a broader category of “positive” features of the work environment than job control in the demand-control model. Social workers’ level of engagement (Guerin *et al.*, 2007:63) is affected by loss of autonomy, participation and agreement in decision-making processes, as well as feelings of being disregarded and misunderstood. Bakker and Schaufeli (2007:150) found that job demands such as work overload, emotional demands, physical demands and work-home interference did not result in burnout if employees experienced job resources such as autonomy, performance feedback, social support or coaching from their supervisors. Demerouti *et al.* (2001:281) posit that job control is important as it is the degree to which employees have freedom to make decisions regarding work assignment and work methods. In a document analysis of various studies on burnout, Fernet, *et al.* (2013:125) tabulated results regarding job resources and job demands from different occupational groups. Similarities between the different occupational groups were found, but also differences related to the unique job characteristics of each group. Workload was the most common job demand experienced by the different groups, with work-family problems a close second. On the job resources side, support from colleagues was the job resource most often cited by the different groups, with job control in second place.

5 RELATED THEORIES

The following three theories are included to provide a broader perspective on possible ways in which employees cope with job demands. Respondents were not surveyed according to these theories, and they were not included in the scale used to record social workers’ experiences of their job characteristics.

5.1 The Conservation of Resources Theory of Job Strain

The creator of the Conservation of Resources theory (COR) (Hobfoll, 1989) presents it as a stress model with an underlying assumption that people strive to **attain and protect** the resources needed to cope at all times. It fits into the framework of the JD-R model in the sense that it explains part of the dynamics of the employee-job environment interaction. This perspective can easily be understood by social workers and is very similar to the person-situation practice perspective in social work. In the case of burnout, the individual is the employee and the environment is the job or organisational environment. A simplified explanation of COR theory puts it that stress is experienced when the resources the employee requires are perceived to be threatened or used, spent, or otherwise lost. The COR theory highlights the emphasis on the quantity and availability of resources, but another critical tenet of this theory is that the **value of available resources** should also be considered in the stress equation. Indeed, Hobfoll (2001:343) implicitly indicates this by stating that “individuals strive to obtain, retain, protect, and foster those things they value”. Thus, according to the COR theory, an individual experiencing stress will subconsciously prioritise various resources based on how personally valuable those resources are perceived to be. If resources regarded as valuable are perceived to be unavailable, burnout may be the outcome. Flowing from this, burnout occurs when certain valued resources are lost and are inadequate to meet the demands, or do not yield the anticipated level of return.

Wright and Cropanzano (1998:486) suggest that the COR theory provides valuable insight for the study of prolonged emotional exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion is most likely to occur particularly when there is an actual loss, perceived threat of resource loss, or a situation in which one's resources are inadequate to meet work demands or when the anticipated return on the investment of resources is not obtained. Prolonged strain or emotional exhaustion occurs when employees feel that they no longer have sufficient emotional resources to handle the stressors confronting them.

Wright and Cropanzano (1998:486) and Buunk *et al.* (1998) agree that the Conservation of Resources (COR) model is similar to the popular management concept of person-environment fit (P-E) because both tenets believe that an incongruent relationship between the organisational demands and an individual's resources to meet those demands may lead to job stress, and, if left unattended over time, will lead to emotional exhaustion. Simmons and Nelson (2001:7) state that certain stressors can elicit responses in individual employees, which in time can have adverse effects on their

mood – for example, a short temper that leaves colleagues and supervisors feeling upset.

The fact that job performance mediates the relationship between emotional exhaustion and turnover is inconsistent with COR theory. Wright and Cropanzano (1998:491) observed that often, although not always, poor performers are likely to add to turnover rate. When the external environment lacks resources, individuals cannot reduce the potentially negative influence of high job demands and they cannot achieve their work goals (Rothmann and Jordaan, 2006:88).

Examples of this was observed in a study by Schenck (2003:61-63), which showed that sometimes there are not enough resources for government employees. Findings in Schenck's study revealed that resources like fax machines, access to faxing facilities, computers or access to any typing facilities was problematic. In some areas there was no electricity in offices despite the fact that some of these offices are in towns where electricity is available. Only 72% of participants working for the government had computers, and these had to be shared with four or five others. According to these social workers, sharing computers creates problems like compromising the confidentiality of reports and information about clients. Telephones were also not operational, and the social worker mentioned to the researcher that, when the manager was informed of it, he denied it and said that he had seen the telephones, not realising that they were no longer working. Rothmann and Jordaan (2006:88) add that, according to COR theory, personal resources affect each other and exist as a resource pool; the expansion of one is often associated with the augmentation of another.

5.2 The Job Demands Control Model of Job Strain

The Job Demands Control Model of job strain focuses on a particular aspect of the interaction between the individual and the work environment. It explains one coping mechanism used by the individual to control the effect the job demands have on the individual. The assumption is that the more control the individual has over the demands of the job, the better he is able to counter the stresses emanating from the job.

Karasek (1979:287) is regarded as the father of this model, and he argued that job strain results from the joint effects of the demands of a work situation and the range of decision-making freedom (discretion) available to the worker facing those demands (the strain hypothesis). De Lange, *et al.* (2003:282) confirm that Karasek's (1979) Demand-Control (DC) model has been a leading work-stress model in occupational health psychology since the 1980s. Janssen *et al.* (2001:316) identify the two central

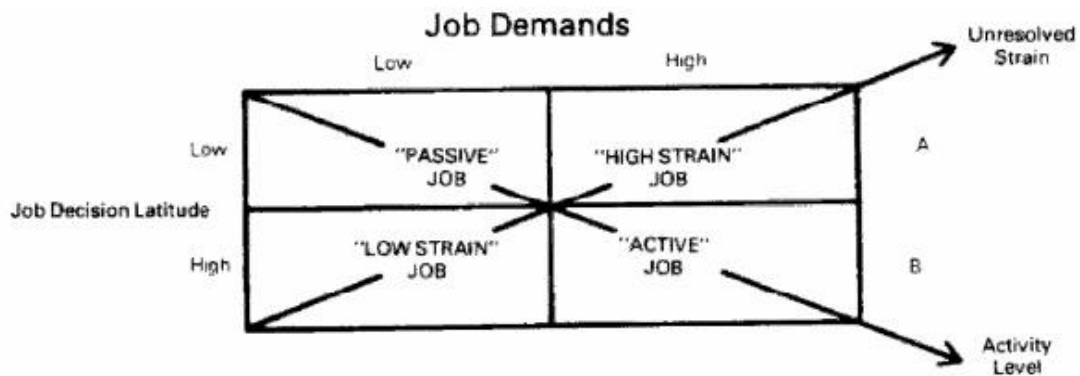
predictions of the Demand-Control model. The model firstly predicts that jobs characterised by high demands and little control evoke the strongest reactions of stress or strain. On the other end of the scale are jobs characterised by low demands and high control. The second central prediction in the JD-C model states that, in jobs characterised by high demands and high control, motivation, learning, and personal growth will be highest. On the other side of this active diagonal, one can find passive jobs, characterized by low demands and low control. The JD-C model therefore proposes four different job categories: (1) high-strain jobs (high demands, low control); (2) low-strain jobs (low demands, high control); (3) active jobs (high demands, high control); and (4) passive jobs (low demands, low control). Rodrigues *et al.* (2001:97) concur and explain that the basic tenets of the JD-C model is that job control or decision latitude is a crucial resource that moderates the potential negative effect of job stress. The individual who has some control in response to job demands can use it as a source to counter the effects of job demands and thus job stress (the buffer hypothesis). Hence it follows that increasing employee control prevents the occurrence of job strain, which allows the employee's physical and mental health to remain unaffected. It is assumed that high job demands and low job control will result in psychological stress reactions such as high blood pressure and low job satisfaction. Low strain and high control, on the other hand, will lead to fewer health complaints. Henry and Cassell (1969:179) point out that this model is a stress-management strain model which is environmentally based. If no action can be taken, or if the individual must forego other desires because of low decision latitude, the unreleased energy may manifest itself internally as mental strain.

Kuper and Marnot (2003:147) explain that the theory argues that workers who have concurrent low decision latitude and high job demands cannot moderate the stress caused by the high demands through managing their time or learning new skills; the high levels of stress they experience at work increase their risk of disease. The constraints on decision making together with high job demands produces the unhealthy condition of stress at work, or "job strain". The theory thus refers to the leeway an individual has when reacting to or dealing with job demands, or the amount of freedom the individual has to cope with job demands.

De Lange *et al.* (2003:282) distinguish between high strain jobs (high job demands - low job control) and low strain jobs (low job demands - high job control). The jobs of social workers often fall in the former (high strain) category. Emotionally burned-out social workers feel a sense of disenchantment with and alienation from the work, because

they often work with people who are emotionally laden with problems that spill over into their lives.

Figure 2.1: Job demands



Source: The Job Demands-Control model (Karasek, 1979)

The figure above (Karasek, 1979) is used by Ibrahim and Ohtsuka (2012:11) to illustrate that the dichotomy of job demands and job control produces: a) for the high strain job type – high job demands and low job control; b) for the active job type – high job demands and high job control; c) for the low strain job type – low job demands and high job control; and d) for the passive job type – low job demands and low job control. Karasek's Job Demands-Control model (1979) hypothesised that a combination of high job demands and low job control produced job strain. The most negative impact of psychological strain was found to be among employees working with high job demands and low job control (high strain job).

5.3 The Job Demand-Control-Support model of job strain

The Job Demand-Control-Support model is an extension of the Demands-Control model. It developed from and is an extension of the Job Demands-Control model, and partly in reaction to criticism that it is too simplistic. Johnson (1986) argued that the JD-C model mainly focused on job control as a potential psychosocial resource without considering social support – as important as job control – as a moderator. Thus, in 1988 it was proposed that Karasek's model be extended by the addition of social support as a third dimension. In the Job Demand-Control-Support model developed by Johnson and Hall (1988:1341) the highest risk of poor health and wellbeing is expected when employees experience a high isolation-strain (iso-strain) job; that is a job characterised by high job demands, low job control and low social support. Ibrahim and Ohtsuka (2012:13) observe that support helps the individual to deal with the negative effects of

high job strain. The authors list several sources of support from co-workers, supervisors and senior staff, e.g. advice, assistance and feedback. Other forms of support includes emotional and instrumental supports. Researchers have found that emotional support consists of providing care, empathy and love, demonstrated in ways such listening to others' personal problems. Instrumental support refers to tangible help that co-workers may provide, for example, by performing assigned tasks for others. In this sense, co-workers constitute an important source of support, especially when task accomplishment allows employees to interact with their co-workers (Parris, 2003). This was further confirmed in a study by Park *et al*, (2004:444) which found that social support in organisational settings in the form of organisational, supervisor and co-worker support is essential to wellbeing.

Rodrigues *et al*. (2001:98) conclude that literature suggests that social support at work may either have a direct effect on the levels of strain independent of the levels of job stressors, or have a buffering effect by moderating the stressor-strain relationship.

6. JOB CHARACTERISTICS, BURNOUT AND ENGAGEMENT

6.1 Job characteristics and burnout

By nature of the structure of the research report, of which this article is one, the explanation of certain concepts are repeated to establish continuity and link selective content and constructs. This is enhanced by the summary of contents at the end of each article.

In an authoritative article, Maslach, *et al*. (2001:407) list several job characteristics related to burnout. These are experienced workload and time pressure, role conflict and role ambiguity, severity of clients' problems, and the absence of job resources like social support from co-workers and especially that of supervisors. Other characteristics are lack of feedback and limited participation in decision-making. Scott (2014) lists the following factors that cause burnout: unclear requirements, impossible requirements, high-stress times with no "down" times, big consequences for failure, lack of personal control, lack of recognition, poor communication, insufficient compensation, and poor leadership. In a survey done amongst nurses by Koekemoer and Mostert (2006:94), results suggested that high job demands and specifically high pressure (e.g. working very fast, working very hard, intense concentration for long periods of time, the amount of work exceeding the capacity of employees) contribute to higher exhaustion levels in nurses. Wiese *et al*. (2003:80) confirm the relationship between burnout, job demands and resources.

According to Font (2012:640), employment factors related to burnout amongst child welfare workers in the United States are higher documentation requirements and regulations that may decrease autonomy and achievement opportunities. Other factors are low pay, benefits and advancement opportunities. Lezano and Mor Barak (2012:1769) report that child welfare workforce studies have identified low wages, high caseloads, inadequate training, and poor supervision as key contributors to job burnout and high turnover within this employee population.

6.2 Job characteristics and work engagement

Work engagement is assumed to be the positive antipode of burnout or, in the view of Maslach and Leiter (1997:34), burnout is the erosion of engagement. Various views on engagement can be found in literature on the topic, which focuses on the construct from different angles. Kahn (1990:694) explains personal engagement as the "... harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles and in engagement" while "people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances." Schaufeli, *et al.* (2002:74) define engagement as "... a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption". They explain that engagement is not a momentary and specific state, but rather "a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behavior". Schaufeli *et al.* (2002:73) explains that engaged employees have a sense of energetic and effective connection with their work activities and they see themselves as able to deal completely with the demands of their job. Bakker *et al.* (2008:188) observe that "... contrary to those who suffer from burnout, engaged employees have a sense of energetic and effective connection with their work, and instead of stressful and demanding they look upon their work as challenging." Rothman and Jordaan (2006: 87) explain that individuals who are highly engaged in their jobs identify personally with the job and are motivated by the work itself. They tend to work harder and more productively than others and are more likely to produce the results their customers and organisations want. They further observed that engaged employees report that their jobs make good use of their skills and abilities, are challenging and stimulating, and provide them with a sense of personal accomplishment.

Schuck (2010:41) observes that the antecedents of work engagement have not been researched properly but he identifies job fit, affective commitment and psychological climate as antecedents of work engagement. Referring to the overall model of work engagement, Bakker (2011:267) explains that, according to this model, job resources

such as social support from colleagues and supervisors, performance feedback, skill variety and autonomy set in motion a motivational process that leads to more work engagement and, consequently, to higher performance. He adds that the model postulates that job resources become more salient and gain their motivational potential when employees are confronted with high job demands (e.g., workload, emotional demands, and mental demands). In a study by Rothmann and Rothmann (2010:9) results showed that psychological meaningfulness and psychological availability were positively associated with employee engagement. Results further indicated that psychological meaningfulness and psychological availability were positively associated with work-role fit, co-worker and supervisor relations, facilitative norms and low self-consciousness. The results showed that job resources (including growth opportunities, organisational support, social support, and advancement) were positively associated with employee engagement (vigour, dedication, and absorption). Growth opportunities (such as learning opportunities, autonomy, and variety) had the strongest effect on employee engagement.

7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

7.1 Research approach and design

This research employed a quantitative research approach. Sarantakos (2013:122) suggests that in quantitative research, social enquiry follows a well-constructed design that covers in detail all the steps of the investigation. These steps are outlined in this section. Bryman (2008:176) and Rubin & Babbie (2013:40) point out that the advantage of quantitative research is that precise and generalisable statistical findings can be produced and that there is a chance that findings can be generalised beyond the confines of the particular context in which the research was conducted. Although the research was conducted in the Limpopo Province, the research findings may also have relevance for social workers in other parts of South Africa. It could thus form a basis for the duplication of the research in other parts of the country

Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006:34) explain that a research design is a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution and implementation of the research. Blaikie (2010:13) expresses the view that a research design is a technical document that is developed by one or more researchers and is used by them as a guide or plan for carrying out a research project.

A cross-sectional survey design was utilised in the empirical research in order to achieve the objectives of the study (Grinnell & Unrau, 2014: 324.). Cross-sectional

surveys collect data at one point in time (Hall ,2008:15; Ryunae, 2005:87; Babbie, 2011:82).

7.2 Research participants

The research participants were all the registered social workers in the Limpopo Province employed by the Department of Health and Social Development and various NGOs. No sampling was done because it was the intention of the researcher to include the whole population of registered social workers in the Limpopo Province to meet the requirements of a confirmatory factor analysis necessary in view of the quantitative nature of the study.

Social workers employed by the Department of Health and Social Development as well as those employed by NGOs were identified from a list provided by the Department of Health and Social Development. The researcher was unable to determine how recently the list had been compiled, so it was used as it had been received from the department.

7.3 Measuring instruments

To achieve the aims and objectives of the research described in the present article, three questionnaires were used. The Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (Demerouti & Bakker, 2007) (Appendix 1) was used to measure the levels of burnout of social workers who participated in the research. This scale was designed to measure the two core dimensions of burnout – exhaustion and disengagement from work. It consists of 16 items to be rated on a four-point scale from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. High scores on this scale indicate high levels of burnout.

The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003) (Appendix1) was used to measure the levels of work engagement of the social work respondents involved in the research. This scale consists of 17 questions to be rated on a seven-point scale from “never” to “always”. The assumption is that high scores on the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale will be related to low scores on burnout. The scale measures vigour, dedication and absorption. High scores on this scale indicate high levels of engagement.

The ASSET Job Characteristics Scale was used to measure how social workers in the sample experienced their job characteristics. The scale consists of 51 questions subdivided into 16 subscales. A further subscale on work-home interference consisting of 8 questions was added to this scale for the purposes of this study.

In addition, correlation coefficients were calculated to establish the strength of the linear relationships between job characteristics, burnout and work engagement.

8. EMPIRICAL DATA

8.1 Mean scores for burnout and work engagement

Table 2.1: Mean scores for burnout

	n	Mean	Standard deviation
Exhaustion	227	2.48	0.53
Disengagement	227	2.58	0.50

Within the context of the Oldenburg Inventory's four-point scale the mean scores of social workers in the Limpopo Province were average, with 2.5 the midpoint of the scale. Exceptions were found, but were not relevant to the research.

Table 2.2: Mean scores for work engagement

	N	Mean	Std Dev
Vigour	225	3.84	1.25
Dedication	225	4.32	1.41
Absorption	225	3.81	1.26

From the frequency table above, only one of the mean scores is above the midpoint of 4. On the seven-point scale of the Utrecht Work Engagement scale, this indicates a higher-than-average work engagement in social workers in the Limpopo Province. Exceptions were found, but were not relevant to the research.

8.2 Mean scores for job characteristics

Table 2.3: Mean scores for job characteristics

	n	mean	Std dev
Mental load	225	3.20	0.59
Emotional load	225	2.54	0.71
Variety	225	3.23	0.55
Growth opportunities	225	2.84	0.92
Autonomy	225	3.07	0.80
Participation in decision making	227	2.66	0.71
Relationships with colleagues	225	3.25	0.70
Relationships with supervisor	227	3.21	0.80
Role clarity	227	3.22	0.68
Job information	227	2.61	0.81
Communication	227	2.55	0.91
Contact with colleagues	227	2.98	0.67
Job insecurity	226	2.38	0.91
Remuneration	227	1.40	0.65
Advancement opportunities	227	1.93	0.76
Work home interference	227	1.49	0.47
Pace amount work	227	3.11	0.73

The questionnaire used to do the job characteristics survey consisted of a four-point scale with a midpoint of 2.5. The job characteristics represent job demands as well as job resources. The four characteristics representing job demands are mental load (mean score 3.2) above the middle (2.5) of the scale; emotional load with an average mean score of 2.5; job insecurity with a mean score of 2.3, which is below the middle of the scale; remuneration with a mean score of 1.39, which is considerably below the middle of the scale; and advancement opportunities with a mean score of 1.9, which is also considerably lower than the middle of the scale. The pace and amount of work (mean score 3.1) are considerably above the midpoint of the scale. The mean scores of the other characteristics range from 2.5 (an average score) to 3.2 (considerably above the midpoint of the scale). The mean for work-life balance/work-life interference is considerably lower than the midpoint of the scale, which means that the respondents did not consider this a noticeable problem. The scores for the characteristics that represent job demands indicate that it is a contributory factor to job stress and burnout. The scores of the job resources characteristics have a positive value, which may moderate burnout.

8.3 Reliability and validity of the measuring instrument.

Cronbach Alpha calculations and confirmatory factor analyses were used to determine the reliability and the validity of the measuring instruments. Below are the tables that

reflect the Cronbach Alpha values and the results of the confirmatory factor analysis for both the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory and the Job Characteristics Scale. The questions for all subscales in the questionnaires are also listed in the table.

Table 2.4: Cronbach Alpha values: The Oldenburg Burnout Inventory

Factor: Oldenburg Burnout Inventory	Item	Cronbach's Alpha values
Exhaustion	2,4,8,12,5,10,14,16	.77
There are days that I feel tired before I arrive at work After work, I tend to need more time than in the past in order to relax and feel better During my work, I often feel emotionally drained After my work, I normally feel worn out and weary I can tolerate the pressure of my work very well After working, I have enough energy for my leisure activities. Usually I can manage the amount of my work well When I work, I usually feel energized.		
Disengagement	3,6,9,11,1,7,13,15	.68
It happens more and more often that I talk about my work in a negative way Lately, I think less at work and do my job almost mechanically. Over time, one can become disconnected from this type of work Sometimes I feel sickened by my work tasks I always find new and interesting aspects in my work I find my work to be a positive challenge This is the only type of work that I can imagine myself doing. I feel more and more engaged in my work		

The Cronbach Alpha scores for each of the subscales of the Oldenburg Inventory indicated an adequate reliability.

8.2.1 Confirmatory factor analysis: The Oldenburg Burnout Inventory

Exhaustion: Two factors were retained which explained 52% of the variation in the data. The MSA was 0.89. Communalities varied between 0.43 and 0.65

Disengagement: Two factors were retained which explained 47% of the variations in the data. The MSA was 0.78. Communalities varied between 0.27 and 0.57

Table 2.5: Cronbach Alpha values: The Job Characteristics Scale

Factor: Job characteristic	Item	Cronbach Alpha Values
Mental load	4,5,6	.66
Emotional load	7,5,9	.74
Variety	10,11,12	.53
Growth opportunities	13,14	.85
Autonomy	15,16	.69
Participation in decision making	17,18,35,36	.73
Relationships with colleagues	19,20,21	.79
Relationships with supervisor	22,23,24,34	.86
Role clarity	25,26	.52
Job information	27,28,29,30	.84
Communication	31,32,33	.86
Contact with colleagues	37,38,39	.62
Job insecurity	40,41,42	.83
Remuneration	43,44,45,46	.87
Advancement opportunities	47,48	.65
Work home interference	49,50,51,52 53,54,55,56	.78
Pace amount work	1,2,3	.81

8.2.2 Confirmatory factor analysis: The Job Characteristics Scale

Validity for the job characteristics questionnaire was determined by doing a **confirmatory factor analysis**. The results were as follows:

For the mental load subscale one factor was retained which explained 53% of the variation in the data. The MSA was 0.53. Communalities varied between 0.29 and 0.71.

For the emotional load subscale one factor was retained which explained 54% of the variation in the data. The MSA was 0.89. Communalities varied between 0.30 and 0.71.

For the variety subscale one factor was retained which explained 53% of the variation in the data. The MSA was 0.54. Communalities varied between 0.29 and 0.72.

One factor was retained for the subscale for growth opportunities which explained 87% of the variation in the data. The MSA was 0.50. Communalities varied between 0.30 and 0.71.

One factor was retained for the autonomy subscale which explained 76% of the variation in the data. The MSA was 0.50. Communalities did not vary.

For the subscale of participation in decision-making, one factor was retained which explained 56% of the variation in the data. The MSA was 0.67. Communalities varied between 0.46 and 0.67.

Relationships with colleagues

One factor was retained for the subscale of relationships with colleagues, which explained 71% of the variation in the data. The MSA was 0.61. Communalities varied between 0.51 and 0.85.

For the subscale of relationship with the supervisor one factor was retained which explained 71% of the variation in the data. The MSA was 0.82. Communalities varied between 0.65 and 0.75.

For the subscale on role clarity one factor was retained which explained 68% of the variation in the data. The MSA was 0.79. Communalities did not vary.

For the job information subscale one factor was retained, which explained 54% of the variation in the data. The MSA was 0.89. Communalities varied between 0.61 and 0.75.

One factor was retained for the communication subscale, which explained 78% of the variation in the data. The MSA was 0.69. Communalities varied between 0.70 and 0.85.

For the subscale on contact with colleagues one factor was retained which explained 56% of the variation in the data. The MSA was 0.64. Communalities varied between 0.50 and 0.61.

One factor was retained for the job insecurity subscale, which explained 75% of the variation in the data. The MSA was 0.66. Communalities varied between 0.63 and 0.77.

On the remuneration subscale one factor was retained which explained 73% of the variation in the data. The MSA was 0.83. Communalities varied between 0.63 and 0.78.

For the subscale on advancement opportunities one factor was retained which explained 74% of the variation in the data. The MSA was 0.50. Communalities did not vary.

Pace amount of work. One factor was retained for the pace and amount of work subscale which explained 73% of the variation in the data. The MSA was 0.70. Communalities varied between 0.70 and 0.78

For the work-home interference two factors were retained which explained 68% of the variation in the data. The MSA was 0.79. Communalities varied between 0.39 and 0.78.

Most of the subscales had a satisfactory CA with a workable reliability which means that it can serve as a basis for use in similar populations.

Table 2.6: Cronbach Alpha values: The Utrecht Work Engagement scale

Factor: Utrecht work engagement	Item	Cronbach's Alpha values
Vigour	1,4,8,15,17	0.80
I am bursting with energy in my work I feel strong and vigorous in my job When get up in the morning, I feel like going to work I am very resilient, mentally, in my job I always persevere at work, even if things do not go well		
Dedication	2,5,7,10,13	0.90
I find my work full of meaning and purpose I am enthusiastic about my work My job inspires me I am proud of the work I do To me, my work is challenging		
Absorption	3,6,9,11,12,14,16	0.87
Time flies when I am working When I am working, I forget everything else around me. I feel happy when I am engrossed in my work I am immersed in my work In my job I can continue working for a very long time		
Pace amount work	1,2,3	0.81

The Cronbach Alpha scores for each of the subscales of the Utrecht Work Engagement scale indicated an adequate reliability.

8.2.3 Confirmatory factor analysis The Utrecht Work Engagement scale

Vigour

One factor was retained for the vigour subscale which explained 56% of the variation in the data. The MSA was 0.79. Communalities varied between 0, 50 and 0, 66.

Dedication

One factor was retained for the dedication subscale which explained 71% of the variation in the data. The MSA was 0.87. Communalities varied between 0, 58 and 0, 79.

Absorption

One factor was retained for the absorption subscale which explained 56% of the variation in the data. The MSA was 0.87. Communalities varied between 0, 40 and 0, 65.

9. THE STRENGTH OF THE LINEAR RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BURNOUT, WORK ENGAGEMENT AND JOB CHARACTERISTICS FOR SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE

This relationship was established by making use of Pearson's correlations with the following values, which are presented in the following table.

$r = 0.1$ small

$r = 0.3$ medium

$r = 0.5$ large and statistically significant.

Table 2.7: Correlation coefficients between burnout, engagement and job characteristics

	Mental load	Emotional load	Variety	Growth opportunities	Autonomy	Participation in decision-making	Relationship with colleagues	Relationship with supervisor	Role clarity	Job information
Exhaustion	-0.2	0.4	0.0	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.25
Disengagement	0.1	-0.3	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.3
Vigour	-0.1	-0.2	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.4
Dedication	-0.0	-0.3	0.3	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.4
Absorption	0.0	-0.1	0.2	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.4

Table 2.7: Continued

	Job insecurity	Remuneration	Advancement opportunities	Work-home interference	Pace amount work
Exhaustion	0.1	0.2	0.3	-0.4	-0.4
Disengagement	0.2	0.3	0.3	-0.3	-0.2
Vigour	0.2	0.2	0.3	-0.3	-0.1
Dedication	0.2	0.2	0.3	-0.3	-0.1
Absorption	0.3	0.2	0.3	-0.2	-0.1

Exhaustion with mental load $r = -0.2$; emotional load $r = 0.4$; variety $r = 0.0$; growth opportunities $r = 0.3$; autonomy $r = 0.3$; participation in decision-making $r = 0.4$; relationship with colleagues $r = 0.2$; relationship with supervisor $r = 0.2$; role clarity $r = 0.3$; job information $r = 0.2$; job insecurity $r = 0.1$; with remuneration $r = 0.2$; advancement opportunities $r = 0.3$; pace-amount-work $r = -0.4$; and with work-home-interference $r = -0.4$.

Positive relationships of medium strength were found between exhaustion and emotional load, growth opportunities, autonomy, participation in decision-making, relationship with colleagues, role clarity and with advancement opportunities. Negative relationships of medium strength were found with exhaustion and pace and amount of work and with work-home-interference. This is difficult to explain because one would expect negative relationships between disengagement and the job characteristics mentioned. These correlation coefficients could perhaps be explained by the fact that the experience of job characteristics is subjective and what could be regarded as a job resource is experienced by the employee as a job demand.

Disengagement with mental load $r = 0.1$; with emotional load $r = -0.3$; with variety $r = 0.3$; with growth opportunities $r = 0.5$; with autonomy $r = 0.5$; with participation in decision-making $r = 0.5$; with relationship with colleagues $r = 0.2$ and with supervisor $r = 0.4$; with role clarity $r = 0.3$; with job information $r = 0.3$; with job insecurity $r = 0.2$; with remuneration $r = 0.3$; with advancement opportunities $r = 0.3$; with work-home-interference $r = -0.3$; and with pace and amount of work $r = -0.2$.

Positive relationships of medium strength were found between disengagement and variety, relationship with supervisor, role clarity, job information, remuneration and with advancement opportunities. Positive relationships of large strength with statistical significance were found between disengagement and growth opportunities, autonomy and participation in decision-making. This is difficult to explain because one would expect negative relationships between disengagement and the job characteristics mentioned. The same patterns were found with the exhaustion component of burnout. These correlation coefficients could perhaps be explained by the fact that the experience of job characteristics is subjective and what could be regarded as a job resource is experienced by the employee as a job demand.

Vigour with mental load $r = 0.1$; emotional load $r = 0.3$; variety $r = 0.3$; growth opportunities $r = 0.5$ large; autonomy $r = 0.5$; participation in decision-making $r = 0.5$; relationship with colleagues $r = 0.2$; relationship with supervisor $r = 0.3$; role clarity $r = 0.2$; job information $r = 0.4$; job insecurity $r = 0.2$; remuneration $r = 0.2$; advancement

opportunities $r = 0.3$; work-home-interference $r = -0.3$; and with pace amount work $r = -0.1$.

Positive relationships of medium strength were found between vigour and variety, and relationship with supervisor and job information and advancement opportunities. Positive relationships of large strength and of statistical significance were found between growth opportunities, autonomy and participation in decision-making. Negative relationships of medium strength were found between vigour and work-home-interference.

Dedication with mental load $r = 0.0$; emotional load $r = -0.2$; variety $r = .03$; growth opportunities $r = 0.5$; autonomy $r = 0.5$; participation in decision-making $r = 0.5$; relationship with colleagues $r = 0.2$; relationship with supervisor $r = 0.3$; role clarity $r = 0.2$; job information $r = 0.4$; job insecurity $r = 0.2$; with remuneration $r = 0.2$; advancement opportunities $r = 0.3$; work-home-interference $r = -0.3$; pace amount work $r = -0.1$.

Research evidence on specifically the relationship between burnout and any of the single dimensions on work engagement is rare. Research studies on burnout and engagement normally deal with engagement as a whole. In a study by Scaufeli and Bakker (2004:295) it was found that the engagement and burnout scales were moderately negatively correlated. A study by de Beer, Pienaar and Rothmann (Jr) (2014) report similar findings in confirming that burnout and work engagement were negatively correlated, with large effect.

Positive relationships of medium strength were found between dedication and variety, relationship with supervisor, job information and advancement opportunities. Positive relationships of large strength and also statistically significant were found with growth opportunities, autonomy and participation in decision-making. Negative relationships of medium strength were found with work-home-interference.

Absorption with mental load $r = 0.0$; emotional load $r = -0.1$; variety $r = 0.2$; growth opportunities $r = 0.5$; autonomy $r = 0.4$; decision-making $r = 0.5$; relationship with colleagues $r = 0.2$; relationship with supervisor $r = 0.3$; role clarity $r = 0.2$; job information $r = 0.4$; job insecurity $r = 0.2$; remuneration $r = 0.2$; advancement opportunities $r = 0.3$; work-home-interference $r = -0.3$; and with pace amount work $r = -0.1$.

Positive relationships of medium strength were found between absorption and autonomy and relationship with supervisor, and job information and advancement

opportunities. Positive relationships of large strength and also statistically significant were found with growth opportunities and participation in decision-making. Negative relationships of medium strength were found with work-home-interference.

It is clear from the above that remarkable differences between burnout (exhaustion and disengagement) and engagement (vigour, dedication and absorption) exists and its relationship with work characteristics. This is to be expected because engagement is regarded as the opposite of burnout and the outcomes of job characteristics on burnout and engagement respectively will differ. From the correlation coefficients it appears that the exposure some of the social workers in the sample had to certain job characteristics has a negative effect on exhaustion.

The section of the research reported on in this article pointed out that there are relationships of different strengths between burnout, job characteristics and work engagement. Job characteristics are divided in job resources and job demands with the former acting as supports and the latter as factors placing stress on the worker he has to cope with. In each work situation it is to be expected that there will be a unique relationship between the dimensions of burnout, work engagement and job characteristics. Not all jobs will necessarily provide the job resources needed to counter the job demands, and this might lead to an increase in burnout levels. It was not the purposes of the research to identify and assess the job characteristics of the job situation of each respondent, but only to determine the strengths of the relationship between certain variables.

Maslach, *et al.* (2001:407) list experienced workload and time pressure, role conflict and role ambiguity, severity of clients' problems, and the absence of job resources like social support from co-workers and especially that of supervisors as job characteristics contributing to burnout. The same authors add characteristics like lack of feedback and limited participation in decision-making. Scott (2014) adds the following factors that cause burnout: unclear requirements, impossible requirements, high-stress times with no "down" times, big consequences for failure, lack of personal control, lack of recognition, poor communication, insufficient compensation, and poor leadership. These are all examples of job characteristics. Results of a study by Rothmann and Rothmann (2010:9) that psychological meaningfulness and psychological availability were positively associated with work-role fit, co-worker and supervisor relations, facilitative norms and low self-consciousness. Findings in the same study showed that job resources (including growth opportunities, organisational support, social support,

and advancement) were positively associated with employee engagement (vigour, dedication, and absorption).

10. DISCUSSION OF THE OVERALL RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

The questionnaires used in the research were both found to be adequately valid and reliable and could be used as a basis in similar studies with a similar population. The system of distributing questionnaires used by the researcher yielded a very good return of questionnaires.

Mean scores for burnout indicates average levels of burnout for social workers in the Limpopo Province. This indicates that they should be able to deal with their burnout levels. This may however vary from person to person and from agency to agency, depending on the support available in the organisation. The mean scores for work engagement indicate a higher-than-average work engagement for social workers in the Limpopo Province. This may explain the average levels of burnout amongst the social workers. To the organisations employing the social workers, this is an important asset together with average levels of burnout amongst the social workers. It means that there are proper supports in the agencies, whether it is social or organisational.

The mean scores for job demands indicate that the mental load of the jobs is a potential problem to social workers while no other job demands seem to be creating problems. They seem to be happy with their salaries and job security and do not experience an exceptional emotional load. Pace and amount of work seem to be a problem, which means that they struggle to keep up with the workload and the pace of work, which could be a planning problem. The scores for the job resources characteristics do not seem to be a problem and may have a moderating effect on burnout.

Not all of the linear relationships between burnout, work engagement and job characteristics were of medium to large negative or positive strengths. It varied according to job demand and job resources. It was to be expected that job resources in general would have a positive relationship with the three dimensions of work engagement and a negative relationship with the two dimensions of burnout. It was also expected that job demands would have a negative relationship with work engagement. In this regard, there was not consistent pattern which is hard to explain.

Social work supervisors should make an assessment of the job characteristics of the work environment and should during individual and group supervision sessions observe how it impacts on the on-the-job functioning of the social workers. Individual social

workers may experience and deal with job demands and job resources in unique and subjective ways, depending on the job demands and job resources of their particular job.

11. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The questionnaires surveying job characteristics and measuring burnout and work engagement used in this research had adequate validity and reliability. They can thus be used as a basis for similar research with similar populations, provided that validity and reliability tests are done for the particular social work populations they are used for.

The job characteristics approach to burnout divides any work into job resources and job demands, which provides a useful distinction between the requirements of the job that are supportive and those characteristics that contribute to excessive demands, which may contribute to job stress and burnout.

The Job Demands-Resources model, the Conservation of Resources theory and the Job Demands-Control model of job strain provides some insight into and understanding of the ways in which employees cope with their job demands. It sheds some light on the dynamics of the employee-work environment interaction.

Supervisors of welfare agencies can do an audit of the job characteristics of their agency. This can be followed up by a survey of the job characteristics regarded as job resources and those regarded as job demands. This should give an indication of the possible antecedents of burnout amongst their social workers. In addition to this it will give some clarity on factors contributing to work engagement. The Conservation of Resources Theory makes available a basis from which to make an assessment of the manner in which social workers conserve their personal resources to survive the demands of the job. In addition to this, supervisors could make an assessment of the manner in which social workers control the demands facing them – how do they survive social work. Social work remains a demanding, challenging job and social workers are bound to suffer from burnout which should be prevented if possible.

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ARTICLE 3: HEALTH OUTCOMES OF BURNOUT EXPERIENCED BY SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE

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ABSTRACT

This article describes and explores the health outcomes of burnout for the respondents in this study. It establishes the strength of the linear relationship between burnout on the one hand and physical and psychological ill-health on the other hand. The first part of the article is an exposition of burnout and physical and psychological ill-health. Although not consistent, research evidence indicates a negative relationship between burnout and certain physical and psychological health conditions.

A health questionnaire from the ASSET scales was used to determine the physical and psychological health status of the respondents. The strengths of the linear relationships between burnout and physical and psychological ill-health was calculated by using Cohen's correlation coefficient. A negative relationship was found between burnout and both physical and psychological ill-health amongst the respondents. This is confirmed by other similar studies referred to in the article.

Key words: Burnout, physical health, psychological health, social workers.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is clear from the literature that burnout is a psychological state that produces negative health outcomes in the broader sense of the word. Toppinen-Tanner *et al.* (2011:3) concur by observing that "stress and burnout are considered to be modern epidemics and their importance to physical health and work ability has been acknowledged world-wide". This article describes the health outcomes of burnout and in particular the strength of the relationship between health outcomes and the level of burnout experienced by social workers in the Limpopo Province

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The main reason for this research project was the evidence of work stress, possible indications of burnout, that was observed amongst social workers of the Department of Health and Social Development in the Limpopo Province. Although the signs of stress were originally picked up amongst the social workers of the provincial department concerned, it was decided to make the study more comprehensive and also include social workers from non-governmental agencies.

In view of the importance of the employee's physical and psychological health in the workplace, it was decided to focus on these levels of health of the social workers in the population and its relationship with burnout.

The link between burnout and health has been established by several research studies. In the preface to a document on work organisation and stress issued by the World Health Organisation (2004), it is noted that work stress is "...thought to affect individuals' psychological and physical health, as well as organizations' effectiveness, in an adverse manner". After a study of the contributions of several authors, Kim, *et al.* (2011: 258) conclude that burnout can lead to a broad range of health problems like cardiovascular diseases, sleep disturbances, headaches, flu-like illnesses, common colds, or incidences of gastroenteritis and illness-related absences from work. Peterson (2008) observes that, in the last couple of years, an association between burnout and increased risk of future absence due to sickness has been found. The results of a study by Toppinen-Tanner *et al.* (2009:292), showed that there is an increased burnout-related risk of future hospitalization for mental and cardiovascular disorders. It suggests that tackling and alleviating burnout might prevent severe ill health, as well as the possibly resulting loss of work ability. Ahola, *et al.* (2009:292) show that there is an increased burnout-related risk of future hospitalisation for mental and cardiovascular disorders.

The link between health problems and burnout has not been surveyed amongst social workers in South Africa, in the Limpopo Province. In view of this and the research findings described above, it was decided to include the health survey in this study.

The research question in this article is thus: What are the outcomes of burnout for the health of social workers in the Limpopo Province?

3. PURPOSES OF THE ARTICLE

This article has the following objectives:

- To describe and explore the health outcomes of burnout
- To validate the health questionnaire used in this research for the research group.
- To establish the health outcomes of burnout experience by the social workers in the Limpopo Province

4. LITERATURE OVERVIEW

4.1 Burnout and Physical health

Articles on burnout and physical health are not found in such abundance as articles on other aspects of burnout. This is confirmed by Peterson *et al.* (2007:84), who state that “...knowledge is more extensive regarding predictors (work characteristics) of burnout than possible consequences for health”. This is perhaps as result of the scope of particular definitions of burnout in existing research. An example of a definition of broader scope is one by Pines and Aronson (1983:263), who describe burnout as a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion caused by long-term involvement in situations that are emotionally demanding. Very few definitions include the physical health dimension. They elaborate by explaining that physical exhaustion is characterised by low energy, chronic fatigue, weakness and a wide variety of physical and psychosomatic complaints.

Several studies have established the relationship between burnout and physical health, although there is a paucity of research on the relationship between burnout and physical health amongst social workers. After citing a variety of sources reporting on the relationship between burnout and various physical health conditions, Langland *et al.*, (2007:213) conclude that there is some evidence of a relationship between burnout and physical health. This is confirmed in a literature overview by Melamed, Shirom *et al.* (2006). The researcher could also not trace any South African research on burnout and health, specifically none in social work, and had to rely on international literature. Studies on burnout amongst social workers in South Africa are comparatively scarce.

Tanner *et al.* (2005:21) are of the opinion that the effects of burnout is illustrated by medically-certified sick leaves, while Ahola and Hakanen (2007:104) agree that burnout is associated with physical illness and depressive disorders and predicts medically-certified sickness absences. Stress, according to Storey and Bellingham (2001:662), constitutes a major factor in the development of most of the cardiovascular diseases.

A study by Ahola and Hakanen (2007:66) revealed a significant association between burnout and musculoskeletal disorders among women, and between burnout and cardiovascular diseases among the men in the same sample. In a study by Ahola *et al.*

(2008:188), it was found that burnout co-occurred with mental disorders and physical illnesses among both sexes. The study indicated that of women with severe burnout, 62% had a co-occurring mental disorder and 68% had a co-occurring physical illness with the corresponding figures for men 55% and 69%. High workload, time pressure, low control and lack of support are associated with musculoskeletal disease. Heart attacks were found to occur relatively often after an increase in job-related stress. The combination of low control, high job demands and lack of support in the workplace situation seem to increase cardiovascular risk (Demerouti, *et al.*, 2001:283-284).

A study on burnout and physical health among social workers revealed that burnout can adversely affect the physical health of social workers, with higher levels of burnout leading to more physical health problems, one year after initial assessment. It was also discovered that social workers with higher initial levels of burnout reported more headaches, gastrointestinal problems, and respiratory infections a year later (Kim, *et al.* 2011: 264). According to Brett and Gauteman (1996:3), burnout processes have been found to be strong predictors of job and life dissatisfaction, absenteeism and turnover intentions. Bakker *et al.* (2003:352), are in agreement and add that there are two types of absenteeism attributable to the process of health impairment and lack of motivation.

Tanner *et al.*(2005:21), are of the opinion that the effects of burnout is witnessed by medically-certified sick leaves, while Ahola and Hakanen (2007:104) agree that burnout is associated with physical illness and predicts medically-certified sickness absences. Burnout is also associated with physical illness and depressive disorders and has a tendency to predict medically-certified sickness absences. The emotional exhaustion component of burnout is comparable to the sadness and fatigue symptoms of depression and that depersonalisation implies social withdrawal (Ahola and Hakanen, 2007:104).

Basson and Rothmann (2002:37) explain that burnout occurs in a context of anger rather than guilt and is situation-specific rather than pervasive. Anger may lower the pumping efficiency of the heart and depression is accompanied by a lower activity of natural killer cells that are part of the immune system.

Bakker *et al.* (2000:248-249) conclude that emotional exhaustion is related to psychosomatic complaints and illnesses such as headaches and sleep disturbances. It is manifested by physical fatigue and a sense of feeling psychologically and emotionally drained (Simmons & Nelson 2001:10).

4.2 Burnout and emotional and psychological health

Not much evidence could be found that differentiates between burnout and psychological health or ill-health, or emotional health. The reason for this might be that burnout and psychological conditions are not separated. This statement is echoed by Amati and Scaif (2006:15), who observe that some debate still exists about whether burnout is itself a form of ill-health or whether it causes mental dysfunctions.

Among the factors of burnout, emotional exhaustion is seen as the main factor that results in chronic emotional stress (Kickul & Posig, 2001:331). Falkoski (2011:13-17) adds that emotional stress from experiencing burnout increases dysphoric symptoms, namely emotional exhaustion and development of negative attitudes and behaviour towards work, related demands or stressors. The negative effects occur in individuals who have not previously suffered from any other type of psychopathology.

An overload of clients may induce less stress if the social worker senses that intended positive client outcomes are being achieved. Employees under high strain may behave in a less civil manner towards their colleagues in the absence of supervisor support (Boyd, *et al*, 2011: 120). Social support and a sense of personal accomplishment are two conditions or resources that may act as buffers against the debilitating stress response that burnt-out workers manifest. It is possible that social workers who feel effective in their work efforts are able to endure a more demanding work load without suffering burnout.

Research on burnout suggests that persons in helping professions undergo significant job-related stress and are often left to manage the stress alone. Helping professions tend to have work experiences that are stressful even when support is provided (Boston 2009:3). Social workers are among those heaviest hit by burnout because they manage high caseloads at any given time and are asked to make assessments that affect the wellbeing of children and families. Social workers are also restricted by the limits of their jobs and are often forced to make decisions based upon procedure as opposed to what they feel would be in the client's best interest (Maslach *et al.*, 2001:408).

Buunk *et al.* (1998:158), agree that various studies have shown that stressors play major roles as contributors to different job strain outcomes, high blood pressure, musculoskeletal problems, psychosomatic symptoms, anxiety, exhaustion and depression. Many symptoms that are considered as strain basically reflect the negative affectivity characteristics of neurotic individuals who tend to perceive more stressors in their work environment. Employers should allocate additional precious resources in the

work environment (Hanaken *et al.*, 2008:78-79) to increase productivity, or various forms of withdrawal behaviour will be exhibited. In the event of emotional exhaustion those resources have probably been depleted. Consistent with this reasoning and on the basis of COR theory, it is anticipated that emotionally exhausted employees would lack the necessary additional resources to increase performance (Hanaken, *et al.*, 2008:80). As a consequence, they will more likely decide to leave their present employers and look for work elsewhere.

Mental health is more complex when it is linked to burnout, as espoused by Maslach *et al.* (2001:406). The emotional component of burnout has been linked to the personality dimension of sadness and fatigue symptoms of depression (Bakker *et al.*, 2000:249), while depersonalisation implies social withdrawal. Ahola, *et al.* (2005:60) found that there was a marked overlap between burnout and depressive disorders. The risk of having a depressive disorder was greater when burnout was severe compared to when it was mild.

Burnout (Bakker *et al.*, 2000:248-249) is related to psychosomatic complaints and illness such as headaches, sleep disturbances, gastroenteritis and psychological symptoms such as depressed mood, anxiety and somatisation. There are behavioural stress-reactions such as increased consumption of alcohol and cigarettes. Depression is usually a reaction to a serious event which an individual cannot cope adequately with. Peterson *et al.* (2007:85) add that there is the association between burnout and depression and that memory impairment is more associated with the exhaustion component of burnout. The authors further state that patients with chronic burnout have specific cognitive impairments in non-verbal memory and attention.

Exhaustion as the first dimension of burnout is the most basic element of individual strain in which people feel consistently overextended either in the workplace or in all facets of life responsibilities. Employees in this stage also report feelings of physical and emotional exhaustion on a continual basis. Ray *et al.* (2013:258) add that emotional and physical wellbeing of the care-giving professional can be compromised and lead to burnout. Maslach and Leiter (2008:499) are of opinion that burnout is linked to neuroticism, because neurotic individuals are emotionally unstable and prone to psychological distress.

Mack (2012:10) posits that social workers should be encouraged to protect their own health and wellbeing by accepting that they cannot always operate at hundred percent. The strategy will help to highlight to them that they have limits and understanding those limits are helpful when in the service of clients.

Depersonalisation is also called dehumanisation as it concerns social service occupations. It refers to a set of callous and insensitive behaviours displayed by workers towards their clients. Diminished personal accomplishment is the effect of feeling ineffective and incompetent (Wright & Cropanzano, 1998:487) and the tendency to evaluate oneself negatively, particularly with regard to one's work with clients (Rothmann, 2003:35).

Social workers express feelings of hopelessness and of being overwhelmed by the impact of the economic recession and the impoverished state of the clients they serve. There is the sense of wanting to assist clients but, according to Ross (1996), being unable to contribute because of feelings of worthlessness. There is burnout and high employee turnover among social workers. This is apparent in the workers' poor job performance.

From the rather limited research results available, a complicated picture of the relationship between high work stress and physical and psychological health emerges. Certain areas of burnout should still be researched to expand knowledge about the dynamics and dimensions of burnout.

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1 Research design and approach

Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006:34) explain that a research design is a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution and implementation of the research. Bickman and Rog (2009:11) put the concept of the research design in a nutshell when they explain the design serves as the architectural blueprint of a research project, linking design, data collection, and analysis activities to the research question and ensuring that the complete research agenda is addressed. The quantitative design chosen for the research was appropriate for the achievement of the objectives of the research reported on in this article.

A cross-sectional survey design was utilised in the empirical research in order to achieve the objectives of the study (Grinnell & Unrau, 2014: 324). Hall (2008) describes a cross-sectional survey design as a survey that collects data to make inferences about a population of interest (universe) at one point in time. Babbie (2011:82) explains that a cross-sectional study '...involves observations of a sample, or cross section, of a population or phenomenon that are made at one point in time'. In this research, the researcher wanted to study the phenomenon of burnout amongst social workers in the Limpopo Province.

The quantitative research approach with a cross-sectional survey design was used in the research. According to Babbie (2011), quantitative analysis involves converting data into a numerical form which is what the data gathering tools used in the research, provided for. Bryman (2008:176) and Rubin & Babbie (2013:40) point out that the advantage of quantitative research is that precise and generalisable statistical findings can be produced and that there is a chance that findings can be generalised beyond the confines of the particular context in which the research was conducted. Although the research was conducted in the Limpopo Province, the research findings may also have relevance for social workers in other parts of South Africa. It could thus form a basis for the duplication of the research in other parts of the country

5.2 Research participants

The research participants were all the registered social workers employed by the department of Health and Social Development and NGOs in the Limpopo Province. No sampling was done because it was the intention of the researcher to involve the whole population of registered social workers in the Limpopo Province to meet the requirements of a confirmatory factor analysis necessary in view of the quantitative nature of the study.

Social workers employed by the Department of Health and Social Development as well as those employed by NGOs were identified from a list provided by the Department of Health and Social Development. It could not be ascertained whether this list was up to date and the researcher had to use the list as it was received.

5.3 Measuring instruments

To achieve the aims and objectives of the research described in the present article, two questionnaires were used. The Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (Demerouti & Bakker, 2007) (Appendix 1) was used to measure the levels of burnout in the social workers who participated in the research. This scale is designed to measure the two core dimensions of burnout – exhaustion and disengagement from work. It consists of 16 items to be rated on a four-point scale from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. High scores on this scale indicate high levels of burnout.

The health questionnaire from the ASSET scales was used to determine the health status of the respondents. This questionnaire consists of 19 questions divided into physical and psychological subscales. Spearman’s correlation coefficients were calculated to determine the strengths of the linear relationships between the burnout levels of the respondents and physical and psychological health.

6 EMPIRICAL DATA

6.1 Mean scores for burnout and the health survey

The means values of the job health questionnaire are reported in the table below

Table 3.1: Mean scores for burnout

	n	Mean	Standard deviation
Exhaustion	227	2.48	0.53
Disengagement	227	2.58	0.50

In the context of the of the Oldenburg Inventory's four-point scale, the mean scores of social workers in the Limpopo Province were average, with 2.5 the midpoint of the scale. Exceptions were found however, but fell outside the scope of the research.

Table 3.2: Means scores for the health survey

	n	Means	Std Dev
Physical ill-health	226	2.34	0.77
Psychological ill-health	226	1.20	0.70

The values above should be evaluated within the context of the four-point scale of the health survey questionnaire. High score with the health survey are indicative of either physical or psychological ill-health. The mean score for physical ill-health is slightly below the midpoint (2. 5) of the scale and higher that the mean for psychological ill-health, which is considerably lower than the middle of the scale. This indicates that the psychological health of the social workers in the sample is better than their physical health.

6.2 Reliability and validity of the measuring instrument.

Cronbach Alpha calculations and confirmatory factor analyses were used to determine the reliability and the validity of the measuring instruments. Below are the tables reflecting the Cronbach Alpha values and the results of the confirmatory factor analysis done for the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory. The questions for all subscales in the questionnaires used are also listed in the table

Table 3.3: The Oldenburg Burnout Inventory Cronbach Alpha values

Factor: Oldenburg Burnout Inventory	Item	Cronbach's Alpha values
Exhaustion	2,4,8,12,5,10,14,16	.77
<i>There are days that I feel tired before I arrive at work</i> <i>After work, I tend to need more time than in the past in order to relax and feel better</i> During my work, I often feel emotionally drained After my work, I normally feel worn out and weary I can tolerate the pressure of my work very well After working, I have enough energy for my leisure activities. Usually I can manage the amount of my work well When I work, I usually feel energized.		
Disengagement	3,6,9,11,1,7,13,15	.68
It happens more and more often that I talk about my work in a negative way Lately, I think less at work and do my job almost mechanically. Over time, one can become disconnected from this type of work Sometimes I feel sickened by my work tasks I always find new and interesting aspects in my work I find my work to be a positive challenge This is the only type of work that I can imagine myself doing. I feel more and more engaged in my work		

The Cronbach Alpha scores for each of the subscales of the Oldenburg Inventory indicated an adequate reliability.

6.2.1 Confirmatory factor analysis: The Oldenburg Burnout Inventory

Exhaustion: Two factors were retained which explained 52% of the variation in the data. The MSA was 0.89. Communalities varied between 0.43 and 0.65

Disengagement: Two factors were retained which explained 47% of the variations in the data. The MSA was 0.78. Communalities varied between 0.27 and 0.57

Table 3.4: Cronbach Alpha values of the health questionnaire

Factor: Health	Items	CA
Physical ill-health	1,2,3,4,6,7,14	,85
Lack of appetite or overeating Indigestion or heartburn Insomnia – sleep loss Headaches Muscular tension/ aches and pains Nausea or feeling sick Constant tiredness		
Psychological ill-health	5,10,11,12,13,15,16,17,18,19	,91
Panic or anxiety attacks Constant irritability Difficulty in making decisions Loss of sense of humour Feeling or becoming angry with others too easily Feeling unable to cope Avoiding contact with other people Mood swings Unable to listen to other people Having difficulty concentrating		
Lifestyle	8,9	,21
Tendency to drink more alcohol than usual Tendency to smoke more than usual.		

The reliability levels of the subscales for physical and psychological ill-health were satisfactory, but the lifestyle subscale could not be used due to a low Cronbach Alpha value.

6.2.2 Confirmatory factor analysis: The Health Questionnaire

A confirmatory factor analysis was done to determine validity of the health questionnaire. It indicated that one factor was retained which explained 54% of the variation in the data. The MSA was 0.89. Communalities varied between 0.30 and 0.71. One factor was retained for the psychological health subscale, which explained 57% of the variation in the data. The MSA was 0.92.

6.3 The strength of the linear relationship between burnout and health of the social workers in the Limpopo Province

Table 3.5: Correlation coefficients for the relationship between burnout and health

	Physical ill-health	Psychological ill-health
Exhaustion	-0.5	-0.5
Disengagement	-0.4	-0.5

Exhaustion with physical ill-health $r = -0.5$ and with psychological ill-health $r = -0.5$.

Disengagement with physical ill-health $r = -0.4$ and with psychological ill-health $r = -0.5$.

A negative relationship with a large and statistically significant strength was found between exhaustion and both physical and psychological ill-health. A negative relationship with a large and statistically significant strength was found between disengagement and psychological ill-health and a negative relationship with a medium strength was found between disengagement and physical ill-health. This means that there is a strong negative link between burnout and ill-health of the social workers in the sample.

7 DISCUSSION OF THE OVERALL RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

Both the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory and Health Questionnaire used in the study had adequate reliability and validity according to the calculations done in this regard. They can thus be used as basis for similar research with similar populations provided that its reliability and validity for the particular population is proven.

The negative correlations between burnout and ill-health in the population indicate that exhaustion and disengagement increases with a decrease of physical and psychological health. This means that an increased level of burnout will result in weaker psychological and physical health. Mean scores indicate a higher level of physical ill-health than psychological ill-health. There are thus factors in the workplace impacting

more on physical health of the social workers than on psychological health leading to a change in both the dimensions of burnout. It is important for supervisors to understand and be able to identify signs of physical and psychological ill-health. The problem however is that burnout is a specialized area in mental and specifically work health. Social work training generally does not include burnout as a focus area with the result of a possible underestimation of its significance in the workplace. The relationship between work stress and ill-health has been established beyond any doubt in view of the explanations in the literature overview given in this article. It is important that supervisors understand the nature and meaning of burnout as well as the effects on the health of social workers. This however will require training by experts on burnout and its various theories. This should empower supervisors to maintain a broad-brushed approach to the management and supervision of its social work manpower.

8. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This article demonstrated the close link between burnout and physical and psychological ill-health. Both the latter two dimensions are important aspects of social worker's work experience and their interaction with the work environment and work itself. Certain symptoms of physical and psychological ill-health are indicative of the presence of burnout experienced by the social worker. A distinction should be made between the antecedents of burnout and its outcomes in the areas of physical and psychological ill-health. It should be accepted however that conditions of ill-health can be caused by factors external to the work environment. It seems likely that unmanageable work stress may lead to health problems that will affect the job-related functioning of the social worker.

The items on the tested health questionnaire give some indication of the signs of possible ill-health problems in both the psychological and physiological areas of functioning. These can be used by the supervisor to determine the health conditions of the social workers. This however does not mean that supervision sessions must be a question-and-answer situation. A concern with and a handling of health matters belongs on the agenda for supportive supervision. The same is true for burnout and work engagement.

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SECTION 3

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section will be used to describe the conclusions and recommendations.

1. CONCLUSIONS

1.1 General conclusions

The measuring instruments used in the research are questionnaires that were standardized for measuring the various aspects of burnout and were validated for the social workers of the Limpopo Province. Both the reliability and validity of the questionnaires were established and found to have the necessary reliability and validity.

The overall aim of the project was to determine the variables that have an effect on burnout as experienced by social workers in the Limpopo Province. More specifically the focus was on the relationship between the socio-demographic characteristics of social workers in the Limpopo Province and job burnout and work engagement amongst them, between the job characteristics of social workers in the and job burnout and work engagement amongst them and to establish the physical and psychological outcomes of burnout amongst social workers in the Limpopo Province. It may be assumed that working conditions of social workers will have an effect on burnout amongst social workers but this was not directly tested because it was beyond the purposes of this research. However, if a close look is taken at job characteristics and burnout, it becomes clear that certain job characteristics do contribute to burnout, but that excludes the personal circumstances of social workers. It was determined that certain demographic characteristics do have an effect on burnout and engagement of social workers. The demographic profile of a workforce changes over time however and this will also change the effect these variables will have on burnout and engagement of any workforce.

The way in which social workers cope with what may be regarded as job demands will have negative outcomes for job burnout but could be countered by the presence of job resources. Lastly it became clear that burnout has significant physical and psychological health outcomes.

In the rest of this section, the conclusions will be elaborated upon.

1.2 Burnout and social work

1. Job burnout is a psychological stress condition which develops after a long time of unabated job stress.
2. It has been proven that social work is one of the professional groups prone to burnout because its members are in the “people business.”

3. Internationally, several research studies have been completed on burnout amongst social workers from various populations, but not much amongst social workers in South Africa.
4. Various work characteristics of social work practice contributes to burnout amongst social workers and may be regarded as job demands
5. Certain characteristics of social work practice act as job resources and help social workers cope with job demands.
6. Over the course of time various theories that help to explain the coping styles of employees with their job demands have been developed, and could be used to assist social workers with coping with the job situation.

1.3 Socio-demographic characteristics, burnout and work engagement

1. Socio-demographic characteristics do have outcomes for both burnout and work engagement, but the results are inconsistent and varied between particular socio-demographic characteristics of the social work population involved in the study, and the different studies that have been done.
2. Both the measuring instruments for burnout and work engagement used in this study had acceptable reliability and validity levels and may be used with similar populations provided that they are tested for reliability and validity for that particular population.
3. The effect of age on especially the levels of the exhaustion dimension of burnout differs according to the particular age group. The effect of age on work engagement varies according to the dimensions of vigour, dedication and absorption as well as the age category of the respondents.
4. There does not seem to be much of a difference (small effect sizes) in both the dimensions of exhaustion and disengagement of burnout between social workers still on probation and those no longer on probation. The same is true for the effect of the probation status of the social workers in the study on work engagement.
5. No significant differences in effect were found on burnout or work engagement in terms of the time social workers in the sample had to travel to and from work.
6. The different uses of leave entitlements did not seem to make much of a difference in burnout levels of the research participants.
7. Social workers using their full leave entitlements seemed to have higher levels of work engagement, which is to be expected in view of more time for rest from work.
8. A trend of a decrease in burnout levels (exhaustion and disengagement) with an increase in qualifications was identified amongst the research participants.

9. A decrease in engagement levels with an increase in qualifications were noted amongst the research participants. This could be related to the attitude of this group to their work.
10. People working 20 -30 hours per week suffered from the highest level of burnout compared with the other groups.
11. The largest levels for work engagement were found in the group of respondents working 21 - 30 hours per week.

1.4 Burnout, work engagement and work characteristics

1. The work characteristics approaches to burnout make a distinction between job demands and job resources and explain how each plays a role in the development of and relief from burnout. It highlights the sources of tension and support in the work situation.
2. The Conservation of Resources Theory, the Job Demands Model of Job Strain, and the Job Demands-Control-Support Model of Job Strain explain the various ways in which employees cope with job demands. It was not covered in this research but is a topic for follow-up research.
3. The reliability of all the subscales of the Job Characteristics Scale proved to be acceptable. The validity of one of the subscales of the Job Characteristics Scale needs some improvement because of a low validity value.
4. Positive relationships of medium strength were found between disengagement and variety, relationship with supervisor, role clarity, job information, remuneration and advancement opportunities. Positive relationships of large strength that were also statistically significant were found between disengagement and growth opportunities, autonomy and participation in decision-making.
5. According to the correlation coefficients between work engagement (vigour, dedication and absorption) and job characteristics, certain job characteristics add to work engagement in various strengths.

1.5 Burnout and health

1. The conclusion from the literature on health and burnout is that burnout has both physical and psychological ill-health outcomes for the social workers in the sample.
2. The reliability of the health questionnaire used in the health survey was acceptable in terms of CA values. The validity was also on an acceptable level.
3. The negative relationship found between burnout (exhaustion and disengagement) and both physical and psychological ill-health is cause for concern.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. More research on burnout should be done amongst social workers in South Africa to get a more comprehensive picture on the problem
2. The research on burnout and socio-demographic characteristics of social workers should be replicated in other parts of the country amongst different groups of social workers.
3. Both the measuring instruments for burnout and work engagement had acceptable reliability and validity levels and could be used as basis for similar populations provided that they are tested for reliability and validity for the particular population and the necessary adjustments are made.
4. The effect of number of hours worked per week and occupational stress should be further investigated.
5. The different ways in which social workers cope with excessive work demands should be investigated in more detail within the frameworks of the Conservation of Resources Theory, the Job Demands Model of Job Strain and the Job Demands-Control theory.
6. The way social workers utilise and perceive job characteristics should be investigated.
7. The unique demands of the different jobs of social workers in South Africa should be surveyed and possible resources identified.
8. A tool to assess burnout amongst individual social workers should be developed to help supervisors to assist social workers in supportive supervision.
9. Social work supervisors should be trained to identify job burnout amongst social workers and taught methods to deal with it.
10. More attention should be paid to preventive measures for burnout amongst social workers in South Africa.
11. More research should be done on burnout intervention, especially on organisational and situational level.

SECTION 4

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SECTION 5

ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE1: ASSET SCALES



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

Wellness **WELLNESS** *Survey* **SURVEY**



Social Work
Maatskaplike
Werk

Wellness Survey

WELLNESS SURVEY

The Wellness Survey has been designed to help organisations or institutions like yours to assess the well-being of employees.

The questionnaire is divided in **four sections**. It starts by asking your general biographical information, including information and concerns about your *job, home and social life-related pressures*. The three sections that follow are concerned with your attitude towards your organisation, your health, your wellness and finally job and family characteristics.

How we would like you to complete the questionnaire:

- ⇒ Please read through all questions or statements and please do answer all the questions.
- ⇒ In cases where you have to print the information, please print text clearly.
- ⇒ Please use a **black pen**.
- ⇒ Please give your first and natural answer try not to dwell too long on each question.
- ⇒ Please base your answers on how you most recently felt (± the last 3 months), unless the question asked you to do otherwise.

Furthermore, all information will be treated confidentially and will for no other reason other than the purpose of this study be distributed or used. We function under a code of ethics that forbids us to distribute or use information otherwise. So please be honest with your responses, as it will help to ensure the success of this project. When you have completed the questionnaire, please return it in the addressed envelope to:

Prof P Rankin
School for Psychosocial Behavioural Sciences: Social Work Division
North West University (Potchefstroom Campus)
Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom, 2520

Biographical Questionnaire **BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONNAIRE**

Please state the District and the organisation where you are working:

1. District _____

2. Employing Organisation _____

3. Gender: Male ☐ Female ☐

4. Marital status:

☐ Single (1) ☐ Engaged/
in a relationship ☐ Married (3)

(2)

☐ Divorced (4) ☐ Separated (5) ☐ Remarried (6)

5. Please indicate your home language:

☐ Afrikaans 1	☐ English 2	☐ Sepedi 3
☐ Sesotho 4	☐ Setswana 5	☐ IsiSwati 6
☐ Tshivenda 7	☐ IsiZulu 8	☐ IsiNdebele 9
☐ IsiXhosa 10	☐ IsiTsonga 11	

6. Please state your age: (in years) _____

7. Please indicate your highest level of education/qualifications:

Gr: ☐ Highest grade/standard ☐ 5 to 7 year degree
(e.g. medicine)

Std: ☐

☐ 3 year degree ☐ Master's degree

☐ 4 year degree or honours ☐ Doctoral degree

8. For staff who manage/supervise other people (e.g., Head of department, supervisor)

How many staff are you responsible for?

Are you a budget/cost centre manager?

9. Please indicate your job title:

Social worker 1	Senior social worker 2
Chief social worker 3	Deputy manager 4
Manager 5	

10. How many years have you been working at your current organisation?

11. How many years have you been working in your current job?

12. How many chances of job promotions have you had in the past five years in your current organisation?

13. On what basis are you employed?

Permanent 1	Temporary 2
Fixed-term 3	Hourly paid 4

14. Are your working hours:

Full-time 1	Part-time 2
----------------------------------	----------------------------------

15. Are you still on probation? Yes 1 No 2

16. Please give a rough estimate of the total number of hours you work in a typical week:

Up to 10	11 - 20	21 - 30
31 - 40	41 - 50	51 or more

17. Please give a rough estimate of the number of hours you work in a typical workweek outside your normal 'office'/contracted hours

Up to 10	11 - 20	21 - 30
31 - 40	41 - 50	51 or more

18. Please give a rough estimate of how long it takes you to travel to and from your place of work (in hours) on an average day:

☐ Less than 1 ☐ 1 - 2 ☐ 3 or more

19. Do you use your full entitlement of annual leave?

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Always

Attitudes Towards Your Organisation

ATTITUDES TOWARDS YOUR ORGANISATION

Rate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements.

1 = Strongly disagree
4 = Agree

2 = Disagree
5 = Strongly agree

3 = Uncertain

1	I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
2	It would be very hard for me to leave my organisation right now, even if I wanted to.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I do not feel any obligation to remain with my current employer.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I really feel as if this organisation's problems are my own.	1	2	3	4	5
5	Too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organisation right now.	1	2	3	4	5
6	Even if it were to my advantage, I do not feel it would be right to leave my organisation now.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I do not feel like "part of the family" at my organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
8	Right now, staying with my organisation is a matter of necessity as much as desire.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I would feel guilty if I leave my organisation now.	1	2	3	4	5
10	I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
11	One of the few negative consequences of leaving this organisation would be the scarcity of available alternatives.	1	2	3	4	5
12	My organisation deserves my loyalty.	1	2	3	4	5

1 = Strongly disagree
4 = Agree

2 = Disagree
5 = Strongly agree

3 = Uncertain

13	This organisation has a great deal of personal meaning for me.	1	2	3	4	5
14	I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
15	I would not leave my organisation right now because I have a sense of obligation to the people in it.	1	2	3	4	5
16	I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
17	If I had not already put so much of myself into this organisation, I might consider working elsewhere.	1	2	3	4	5
18	I owe a great deal to my organization.	1	2	3	4	5

Health Survey
HEALTH SURVEY

Over the last 3 months, have you experienced any of the following symptoms or changes in behaviour?					
	Symptoms or changes:	Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4
1.	Lack of appetite or over-eating.	1	2	3	4
2.	Indigestion or heartburn.	1	2	3	4
3.	Insomnia – sleep loss.	1	2	3	4
4.	Headaches.	1	2	3	4
5.	Panic or anxiety attacks.	1	2	3	4
6.	Muscular tension / aches and pains.	1	2	3	4
7.	Feeling nauseous or being sick.	1	2	3	4
8.	Tendency to drink more alcohol than usual.	1	2	3	4
9.	Tendency to smoke more than usual.	1	2	3	4
10.	Constant irritability.	1	2	3	4
11.	Difficulty in making decisions.	1	2	3	4
12.	Loss of sense of humour.	1	2	3	4

Over the last 3 months, have you experienced any of the following symptoms or changes in behaviour?					
	Symptoms or changes:	Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4
13.	Feeling or becoming angry with others too easily.	1	2	3	4
14.	Constant tiredness.	1	2	3	4
15.	Feeling unable to cope.	1	2	3	4
16.	Avoiding contact with other people.	1	2	3	4
17.	Mood swings.	1	2	3	4
18.	Unable to listen to other people.	1	2	3	4
19.	Having difficulty concentrating.	1	2	3	4

20. Have you had any serious illnesses the last 6 months?

☐ Yes ☐ No

21. Over the last 3 months, how would you rate your overall health?

☐ Good ☐ Alright ☐ Poor

22. Over the last 3 months, roughly how productive have you felt in your job?

☐ 100% ☐ 90-99%
☐ 80-89% ☐ 70-79%
☐ Less than 70% productive

23. Have you encountered any major stressful events over the last 6 months that have had an important effect on you?
☐ Yes ☐ No
24. Over the last 3 months, how many working days in total have you been off duty because of illness or injury?
☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2-5 ☐ 6 or more
25. How many times have you been to the doctor over the last 3 months?
☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2-5 ☐ 6 or more
26. During the last 3 months, have you not taken sick leave whilst ill and/or returned before you were well due to the pressure of work?
☐ Yes ☐ No
27. During the last 3 months, have you had any chronic illnesses that have been stress-related (e.g. chest complaints, depression, arthritis, digestive problems)?
☐ Yes ☐ No

INSTRUCTIONS: Below are statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the scale, please indicate the degree of your agreement by selecting the number that corresponds with the statement.

1 = Strongly Agree
3 = Disagree

2 = Agree
4 = Strongly Disagree

I always find new and interesting aspects in my work	1	2	3	4
There are days when I feel tired before I arrive at work	1	2	3	4
It happens more and more often that I talk about my work in a negative way	1	2	3	4
After work, I tend to need more time than in the past in order to relax and feel better	1	2	3	4
I can tolerate the pressure of my work very well	1	2	3	4
Lately, I tend to think less at work and do my job almost mechanically	1	2	3	4
I find my work to be a positive challenge	1	2	3	4
During my work, I often feel emotionally drained	1	2	3	4
Over time, one can become disconnected from this type of work	1	2	3	4
After working, I have enough energy for my leisure activities	1	2	3	4
Sometimes I feel sickened by my work tasks	1	2	3	4
After my work, I usually feel worn out and weary	1	2	3	4

1 = Strongly Agree
3 = Disagree

2 = Agree
4 = Strongly Disagree

This is the only type of work that I can imagine myself doing.	1	2	3	4
Usually, I can manage the amount of my work well	1	2	3	4
I feel more and more engaged in my work	1	2	3	4
When I work, I usually feel energized	1	2	3	4

UTRECHT WORK ENGAGEMENT SCALE

The following 17 statements are about how you feel at work. Please read each statement carefully and decide if you ever feel this way about your job. If you have never had this feeling, cross the "0" (zero) in the space after the statement. If you have had this feeling, indicate how often you feel it by crossing the number (from 1 to 6) that best describes how frequently you feel that way.

Never	Almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Never	A few times a year or less	Once a month or less	A few times a month	Once a week	A few times a week	Every day

1	I am bursting with energy in my work.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	I find my work full of meaning and purpose.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	Time flies when I'm working.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	I feel strong and vigorous in my job.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	I am enthusiastic about my job.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	When I am working, I forget everything else around me.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	My job inspires me.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
8	When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
9	I feel happy when I am engrossed in my work.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
10	I am proud of the work that I do.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
11	I am immersed in my work.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Never	Almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Never	A few times a year or less	Once a month or less	A few times a month	Once a week	A few times a week	Every day

12	In my job, I can continue working for very long periods at a time.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
13	To me, my work is challenging.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
14	I get carried away by my work.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
15	I am very resilient, mentally, in my job.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
16	It is difficult to detach myself from my job.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
17	I always persevere at work, even when things do not go well.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Job Characteristics Scale

JOB CHARACTERISTICS SCALE

The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain a picture of how you personally evaluate specific aspects of your work. Please read each statement carefully and cross the number (from 1-4) that best describes how frequently you feel that way. Do not skip any questions.

SCALE:

1 = Never	2 = Sometimes	3 = Often	4 = Always
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STATEMENTS		SCALE			
1	Do you have too much work to do?	1	2	3	4
2	Do you work under time pressure?	1	2	3	4
3	Do you have to work extra hard in order to complete something?	1	2	3	4
4	Do you have to be attentive to many things at the same time?	1	2	3	4
5	Do you have to give continuous attention to your work?	1	2	3	4
6	Do you have to remember many things in your work?	1	2	3	4
7	Are you confronted in your work with things that affect you personally?	1	2	3	4
8	Do you have contact with difficult people in your work?	1	2	3	4
9	Does your work put you in emotionally upsetting situations?	1	2	3	4
10	Does your work require creativity?	1	2	3	4
11	Does your work make sufficient demands on all your skills and capacities?	1	2	3	4

SCALE:

1 = Never	2 = Sometimes	3 = Often	4 = Always
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STATEMENTS		SCALE			
12	Do you have enough variety in your work?	1	2	3	4
13	Does your job offer you opportunities for personal growth and development?	1	2	3	4
14	Does your work give you the feeling that you can achieve something?	1	2	3	4
15	Does your job offer you the possibility of independent thought and action?	1	2	3	4
16	Do you have freedom in carrying out your work activities?	1	2	3	4
17	Do you have influence in the planning of your work activities?	1	2	3	4
18	Can you participate in the decision about when a piece of work must be completed?	1	2	3	4
19	Can you count on your colleagues when you come across difficulties in your work?	1	2	3	4
20	If necessary, can you ask your colleagues for help?	1	2	3	4
21	Do you get on well with your colleagues?	1	2	3	4
22	Can you count on your supervisor when you come across difficulties in your work?	1	2	3	4
23	Do you get on well with your supervisor?	1	2	3	4
24	In your work, do you feel appreciated by your supervisor?	1	2	3	4
25	Do you know exactly what other people expect of you in your work?	1	2	3	4

SCALE:

1 = Never	2 = Sometimes	3 = Often	4 = Always
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STATEMENTS	SCALE			
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26	Do you know exactly for what you are responsible and which areas are not your responsibility?	1	2	3	4
27	Do you know exactly what your direct supervisor thinks of your performance?	1	2	3	4
28	Do you receive sufficient information on the purpose of your work?	1	2	3	4
29	Do you receive sufficient information on the results of your work?	1	2	3	4
30	Does your direct supervisor inform you about how well you are doing your work?	1	2	3	4
31	Are you kept adequately up-to-date about important issues within your department/organisation?	1	2	3	4
32	Is the decision-making process of your department/organisation clear to you?	1	2	3	4
33	Is it clear to you whom you should address within the department/organisation for specific problems?	1	2	3	4
34	Can you discuss work problems with your direct supervisor?	1	2	3	4
35	Can you participate in decisions about the nature of your work?	1	2	3	4
36	Do you have a direct influence on your department/organisation's decisions?	1	2	3	4
37	Do you have contact with colleagues as part of your work?	1	2	3	4
38	Can you have a chat with colleagues during working hours?	1	2	3	4

SCALE:

1 = Never	2 = Sometimes	3 = Often	4 = Always
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STATEMENTS		SCALE			
38	Can you have a chat with colleagues during working hours?	1	2	3	4
39	Do you find that you have enough contact with colleagues during working hours?	1	2	3	4
40	Do you need to be more secure that you will still be working in one year's time?	1	2	3	4
41	Do you need to be more secure that you will keep your current job in the next year?	1	2	3	4
42	Do you need to be more secure that next year you will keep the same function level as currently?	1	2	3	4
43	Do you think that your organisation pays good salaries?	1	2	3	4
44	Can you live comfortably on your pay?	1	2	3	4
45	Do you think you are paid enough for the work that you do?	1	2	3	4
46	Does your job offer you the possibility to progress financially?	1	2	3	4
47	Does your organisation give you opportunities to follow training courses?	1	2	3	4
48	Does your job give you the opportunity to be promoted?	1	2	3	4
49	Do your family duties prevent you from spending more time at work?	1	2	3	4
50	Does your work suffer because you need to take care of your family?	1	2	3	4
51	Do your family duties keep you from spending as much time at work as you would like?	1	2	3	4

SCALE:

1 = Never	2 = Sometimes	3 = Often	4 = Always
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STATEMENTS		SCALE			
52	Do your family duties prevent you from doing a better job at work.	1	2	3	4
53	Does your job keep you from spending as much time with your family as you would like?	1	2	3	4
54	Does your work keep you from doing your best for your family?	1	2	3	4
55	Does your family suffer because of your work?	1	2	3	4
56	Do you miss out on important family events because of your work?	1	2	3	4

