

**STRENGTHS-BASED DEVELOPMENT AND INTENTION TO
LEAVE: THE ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT AND
WORK ENGAGEMENT AMONG TEACHERS**

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REMARKS

The reader is reminded of the following:

- The formatting guidelines specified by the postgraduate programme in Human Resource Management of the North-West University, Vaal Triangle Campus were followed in this mini-dissertation. The references as well as the style of this mini-dissertation are in line with the prescribed Publication Manual (6th edition) of the American Psychological Association (APA).
- The mini-dissertation is submitted in the form of four chapters which include an introductory chapter, two research articles and a concluding chapter.

DECLARATION

I, Leigh Edwina Beukes, hereby declare that **Strengths-based development and intention to leave: The role of psychological empowerment and work engagement among teachers** is my own work and that the views and opinions expressed in this study are my own and those of relevant literature references as shown in the reference lists. All sources have been correctly cited, to the best of my knowledge.

I also declare that the contents of this research study will not be submitted for any other qualification at any other tertiary institution.

LEIGH BEUKES

May 2015

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SUMMARY

Title: Strengths-based development and intention to leave: The role of psychological empowerment and work engagement among teachers

Key terms: Positive psychology, strengths, deficits, strengths use and deficit improvement, educator, work engagement, psychological empowerment, intention to leave

The management of human capital is becoming of great importance. Research on this topic is largely based on talent shortages. In South Africa, considerable attention has been given to the issue of skills shortages, which are also evident in the education environment. The government has exerted many efforts; however, despite these efforts, skills shortages are still prevalent. A definite need for reform and change is necessary, with emphasis on a more positive and combined approach, focusing on strengths use and deficit improvement, psychological empowerment, work engagement and intention to leave. Therefore, the retention of talented employees has been identified as the most important outcome of a positive organisation.

The general objective of this study was to determine if the Strengths Use and Deficit Improvement Questionnaire (SUDIQ) and Measuring Empowerment Questionnaire (MEQ) were reliable and valid to administer to educators in South Africa; and whether (a) psychological empowerment mediated the relationship between perceived organisational support for strengths use (POSSU) and work engagement, and between perceived organisational support for deficit improvement (POSDI) and work engagement; and (b) whether work engagement mediated the relationship between psychological empowerment and turnover intention.

The study furthermore contributed to positive psychology research, using a combined focus on strengths use and deficit improvement in relation to psychological empowerment in the education sector. A need existed to test the reliability and validity (construct and convergent) of the SUDIQ and the MEQ among educators in the Southern Cape region. A cross-sectional survey was used to reach the objectives of this study. Convenience samples were drawn from educators in the Southern Cape region ($N = 271$).

The results revealed that the SUDIQ scale comprised four factors, namely perceived organisational support for strengths use (POSSU), perceived organisational support for deficit improvement (POSDI), proactive behaviour towards strengths use (PBSU) and proactive behaviour towards deficit improvement (PBDI). In the same way, meaning, self-determination, competence and impact were revealed as the four distinct factors of the MEQ.

In testing the relationships between the constructs, POSSU correlated practically significantly (medium effect) with all the MEQ constructs. PBSU correlated practically significantly (large effect) with meaning and competence, and practically significantly (medium effect) with self-determination and impact. POSDI, as a construct of the SUDIQ, showed to correlate practically significantly (medium effect) with meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. In the case of PBDI, practically significant correlations (medium effect) were aligned between PBDI and all the constructs of the MEQ.

Through this study, it was revealed that POSSU significantly predicted psychological empowerment, but not work engagement. Significant and positive paths were found between POSDI and both psychological empowerment and work engagement. POSDI played a significant role in the prediction of psychological empowerment and work engagement. Furthermore, psychological empowerment played a significant predicting role in work engagement, but not with turnover intention. In the last instance, a significant and negative path was found between work engagement and turnover intention.

In terms of the mediation analysis, POSSU indirectly impacted work engagement and intention to leave of educators in the Southern Cape region via psychological empowerment; and POSDI indirectly impacted work engagement and intention to leave of educators in the Southern Cape region via psychological empowerment. Lastly, work engagement was not revealed as a mediator in the relationship between psychological empowerment and intention to leave.

A combined focus, incorporating both strengths use and deficit improvement, is a relative new concept and research field. Through this study educators could learn about the benefits of strengths use and deficit improvement and how those could be used to their advantage, especially in becoming more empowered in an education context. Also, this would indeed alert the schools and principals to the benefits of moving away from traditional approaches of focusing on only weaknesses or what was wrong with people, compared to a combined

strengths and deficit focus. The results obtained would offer a valuable contribution to research and the limited literature available on this topic. In the South African context, it would be the first study in which the SUDIQ scale had been used in the education sector in the Southern Cape region, examining the extent to which strengths were used and deficits were developed by both employees and the organisation, and how it related to the well-being of educators.

Recommendations were made for application and for future research.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation investigated the reliability and validity of the Strengths Use and Deficit Improvement Questionnaire (SUDIQ) and Measuring Empowerment Questionnaire (MEQ); and whether (a) psychological empowerment mediated the relationship between perceived organisational support for strengths use (POSSU) and work engagement, and between perceived organisational support for deficit improvement (POSDI) and work engagement; and (b) whether engagement mediated the relationship between psychological empowerment and turnover intention among educators in the Southern Cape region.

In this chapter the problem statement will be presented, together with the rich and valuable research done on strengths-based development, psychological empowerment, engagement and turnover intention; an overview of the education environment will also be provided. This chapter will introduce the research questions, research objectives and research hypotheses, followed by a discussion of the research methodology. In the last instance, the layout of the chapters and a summary of this chapter will be given.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

A need to manage workforces in a global context is seen as high priority in recent times (Briscoe, Schuler, & Claus, 2009; Bryan, 2010; Collings, Scullion, & Dowling, 2009), due to the fact that more and more organisations are realising that the management of human capital is of great importance (Wang, Hwang, & Lin, 2011). Within a global economy, businesses and schools have been exposed to more complex and dynamic environments in terms of growth, becoming more diverse, better educated as well as more mobile (Briscoe et al., 2009). With emphasis on workforce management in a global context, the focus is directed at the concept of talent management. Research on this topic is largely based on talent shortages as well as the reflection of tough economic conditions (Collings & Mellahi, 2009).

As a result of the growing shortages for skilled employees, more pressure is placed upon organisations to exert efforts in retaining staff members (Blackman & Kennedy, 2006). Talent management is therefore focused on attracting, developing and retaining talented employees

(Becker, Huselid, & Beatty, 2009; Coy & Ewing, 2007). It is imperative to align these processes with the strategic direction of the business which will contribute towards improving performance, establishing strategies in dealing with change, and achieving sustainable success (McCauley & Wakefield, 2006). The importance and necessity behind talent management (Becker et al., 2009; Coy & Ewing, 2007) are especially emphasised in the education sector in South Africa with teacher shortages still prevalent in this country (Kraak, 2003; Monama, 2012; News24, 2010).

According to Monama (2012, para. 5) and News24 (2010, para. 6), “Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga had said that her department was aware of the dire shortage of trained teachers, and that South Africa had reached a crisis” (News24, 2010). “Earlier this year, Motshekga stated that 6 641 schools across the country had fewer than six teachers, and more than 20 000 teachers were forced to practise multi-grade teaching; in some instances teaching as many as four grades in one class” (Monama, 2012).

A trend in teacher shortages is also linked with the number of teachers leaving the profession exceeding the number of teachers available to replace those who had left (Arends, 2011). In a 2005 study in the Western Cape, almost 75% of teachers indicated that they considered leaving the profession due to low morale, heavy workloads, low job satisfaction as well as career opportunities lurking elsewhere (Hall, Altman, Nkomo, Peltzer, & Zuma, 2005). Teacher shortages are aligned with obstacles to economic growth and job creation (Bhorat, Meyer, & Mlatsheni, 2002; Kraak, 2008). Growth and development in the provision of quality education have also been hindered by teacher attrition and recruitment (Hammet, 2008).

The importance of teacher turnover is evident in its consequences for the school environment (Xaba, 2003). Teacher turnover is problematic for many schools as it may result in various problems, including staffing and replacing of educators (Ingersoll, 2002); affecting the academic performance of children (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003) and the school (Firth, Mellor, Moore, & Loquet, 2004; Ingersoll, 2002).

Talent management and retention strategies are therefore regarded as the drive behind retaining organisational assets, and in turn preventing any shortages (Van Dijk, 2008). High levels of potential and performance are associated with talented employees (Becker et al., 2009; Coy & Ewing, 2007; Heckman & Lewis, 2006). An asset to any organisation is a talented workforce

which is associated with various benefits, varying from profits, success and revenue (O'Boyle & Aguinis, 2012).

As the education profession is put under a magnifying glass, it is necessary to ask the following questions: Why would any educator consider staying in this profession? Is the education environment sufficient for the educator's well-being? What can be done by the education sector in order to keep and sustain the qualified educators of this country? These questions draw the focus towards a definite need for reform and change with the emphasis on a more positive approach. Talent retention, embedded in development practices, has been identified as the most important outcome of a positive organisation (Davenport & Harris, 2007; Ulrich, Brockbank, Johnson, Sandholtz, & Younger, 2008).

The theoretical framework guiding this study is grounded in positive psychology. Positive psychology forms the drive behind creating positive organisations in which human strengths, vitality, resilience and every element towards creating optimal functioning individuals/employees are fostered (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003). Several approaches guided by positive psychology have been identified in literature, including positive organisational behaviour (POB; Cameron & Caza, 2004); positive organisational scholarship (POS; Luthans, 2002); and a combined approach focusing on strengths use and deficit improvement which have been associated with positive outcomes such as engagement, commitment, and improved performance; eventually ensuring that the organisation's risk of losing talented employees is reduced (McHugh, 2001). In this way, talent retention embedded in development practices is regarded as a crucial element in creating a positive organisation (Davenport & Harris, 2007; Ulrich et al., 2008).

Traditional psychology practices were mostly influenced by a deficiency-based approach (damage, disease, disorder, and dysfunction), where the focus was predominantly shaped on deficiencies or improvement areas of individuals, i.e. a deficit-based approach (DBA; Buckingham & Clifton, 2001; Keenan & Mostert, 2013). This line of thought fosters a belief that in order for individuals and organisations to reach their full potential, effort from the organisation is required towards developing employees' weaknesses or development areas (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001). Through research, the DBA - embedded in development practices - has been associated with increased employee effectiveness (Carroll, 2007),

improved job performance (Cheah, 2012), higher commitment levels (Caishun & Zongjie, 2004), and lower turnover rates (Carroll, 2007).

However, more recently, through means of positive psychology, hope is restored in that good and fully functioning individuals and psychologically healthy institutions are a possibility in spite of the negativity inherent to human existence (Wong, 2011). A crucial shift was needed towards a more positive approach, focusing on strengths utilisation as part of the strengths-based approach (SBA) (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008).

Researchers share a common view of what they believe strengths to be; reflected through behaviours at which individuals excel (Biswas-Diener, Kashdan, & Minhas, 2011). Furthermore, strengths are viewed as “a pre-existing capacity for a particular way of behaving, thinking, or feeling that is authentic and energising to the user, and enables optimal functioning, development and performance” (Linley, 2008, p. 9). It is also proposed that strengths are formed by combining a person’s talents, knowledge and skills (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001), which will enable an individual to perform better. Various benefits have been aligned with strengths use in that individuals feel good about themselves; they engage in more effort towards improving themselves which contributes towards the fulfilment of potential (Linley & Harrington, 2006b). In addition, individuals are characterised by being happier, fulfilled and energised as a result of engaging in strengths-use behaviour (Govindji & Linley, 2007). Higher engagement levels (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002), effective goal achievement (Linley, 2008) and better performance (Smedley, 2007; Stefanyszyn, 2007; Woolston & Linley, 2008) have also resulted when individuals utilise their strengths at the workplace.

As much emphasis and importance have been placed on strengths as part of the positive psychology movement, many researchers emphasised the need for focusing on both strengths and weaknesses, embedded in a combined approach (Bowers, 2009; Linley & Page, 2007; Lopez, Snyder, & Rasmussen, 2003; Rust, Diessner, & Reade, 2009). In a combined approach, neither the positive nor negative can be studied in isolation from each other as it reduces the benefits that can be produced by a full spectrum study (Wood & Tarrier, 2010).

The movement towards a combined approach necessitated a theory that would address strengths use as well as deficit improvement. In a recent study done by Els (in process), the Strengths use and deficit improvement questionnaire (SUDIQ) was developed for this specific

purpose. This instrument comprises four constructs measuring strengths use and deficit improvement at an organisational as well as individual level and is characterised by the following:

- Perceived organisational support for strengths use (POSSU; the extent to which employees perceive the organisation to be supportive of their using their strengths in the workplace);
- Perceived organisational support for deficit improvement (POSDI; the extent to which employees perceive the organisation to be supportive of their developing their deficits in the workplace);
- Pro-active behaviour towards strengths use (PBSU; self-starting behaviour directed towards using strengths in the workplace); and
- Pro-active behaviour towards deficit improvement (PBDI; self-starting behaviour directed towards improving deficiencies in the workplace).

The SUDIQ has been validated among a South African sample consisting of a heterogeneous group of employees from different industries, more specifically employees from the general working population (Els, in process; Tabiri, 2012). In addition, other research studies also engaged in the process of using this instrument with the aim of assessing reliability and validity within the banking sector, education sector and among sport coaches (Botha, 2012; Keenan & Mostert, 2013; Stander, 2013). In this way, research pertaining to the reliability and validity of the SUDIQ is limited in the education sector, especially in the Southern Cape region.

The SUDIQ includes two dimensions that focus on individual proactive behaviour towards strengths use and deficit improvement, directing the self-starting behaviour towards using strengths (PBSU) and improving deficits in the workplace (PBDI; Els, in process). Proactive behaviour is reflected by individuals who display initiative in improving their current circumstances or otherwise by creating new favourable circumstances for themselves (Crant, 2000), instead of waiting and adapting to their current circumstances. Furthermore, proactive behaviour is formed based on the self-starting behaviour individuals take on to improve their working conditions; develop their personal prerequisites to meet work demands; and seek learning opportunities (Frese, Kring, Soose, & Zempel, 1996; Parker, 2000). Employees, who actively reflect initiative in the form of searching for opportunities to use their strengths and improve their deficits at work, display proactive behaviour (Els, in process). In that way, proactive behaviour towards strengths use is regarded as the self-starting behaviour an

individual engages in when utilising his/her strengths; while proactive behaviour towards deficit improvement, on the other hand, involves self-starting behaviour aimed at improving the deficits of an individual.

Based on proactive behaviour educators reflect in the school environment in terms of engaging in self-starting behaviour towards strengths use and deficit improvement, it is expected that PBSU and PBDI will correlate with positive psychological outcomes. Some of these relationships have been highlighted through previous research studies (Els, in process, Stander, 2013). In this sense, the development of educators' strengths and development areas could be seen as a valuable resource.

The job demands and job resources model (JD-R) was used in classifying the organisational dimensions of the SUDIQ as job resources, and to show the motivational potential of this construct. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001) is built upon a theoretical framework which incorporates two broad categories, namely job demands and job resources, in order to divide the work environment and to show the link with well-being practices (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004). Job demands are reflected in an individual's work in terms of the physical, social, or organisational aspects which are usually linked to sustained physical and/or psychological effort. Job demands are therefore associated with physiological and/or psychological costs (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2007). In contrast to job demands, job resources are reflected in an individual's work in terms of physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects that play a certain role in the work environment, based on reducing job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs; and assisting with the process of achieving work goals and encouraging personal growth, learning as well as development (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007).

When employees perceive the organisation to be supportive of their using their strengths in the workplace, the support will usually be expected in the form of opportunities towards utilising their strengths in the workplace. This can include assigning work tasks at which employees can excel, because they are doing what comes naturally to them. In the same way, support for deficit improvement is interpreted by employees when they receive opportunities from the organisation towards improving their deficits, usually in the form of training and feedback. When support is given to employees, in the form of a resource, they will be more motivated to exert all efforts towards organisational goal attainment (Meijman & Mulder, 1998).

Furthermore, organisations enable a motivated workforce that is dedicated to work procedures when they focus on employees' strengths (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011).

The same applies to employee development through training initiatives as a form of support in improving areas of weakness, with a better equipped workforce as the end result; where employees are assisted to perform their work with the necessary confidence, resulting in being more efficient and productive (Gillham & Seligman, 1999). Employees that perceive their organisation to be supportive of their using their strengths and improving their deficits through means of initiatives will be more likely to achieve their goals and in that way contribute to the goals of the organisation (Linley, Nielsen, Gillett, & Biswas-Diener, 2010). In that way, POSSU and POSDI are conceptualised as job resources which are functional in the achievement of work-related goals, while also contributing to employees' development and growth.

Research has shown that job resources have motivational potential - the availability of resources may lead to job-related learning, work engagement and organisational commitment (Salanova, Agut, & Peiro, 2005; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002). Engaged employees describe tiredness as a pleasant feeling due to the positive accomplishments and the enjoyment associated with what they do (Schaufeli, 2012). In this study perceived organisational support for strengths use and deficit improvement can be regarded as job resources with the motivational potential to increase the work engagement of educators. The motivational potential of POSSU and POSDI contributes to the research gap addressed in this study, reflected by POSSU and POSDI as job resources which impact on work engagement; however, through the indirect impact of psychological empowerment. It is expected that development practices by the school, in the form of initiatives focusing on strengths use and deficit improvement, will lead to more engaged employees. This relationship, however, will also be magnified by the indirect impact of psychological empowerment. On the other hand, this study will also contribute to the limited literature which views work engagement as a mediator in the relationship between psychological empowerment and intention to leave. Therefore in the school environment it is hypothesised that if educators feel psychologically empowered, it will impact their work engagement levels which, in turn, will curb their intentions to leave.

Work engagement is reflected by a work-related state of mind that is embedded in positive feelings such as vigour, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Vigour is described as the willingness to exert effort in one's work, together with aligning oneself with the necessary perseverance during times of challenge. This process is also characterised by high energy levels and mental resilience (Schaufeli, 2012). Dedication indicates that an employee reaps significance from the execution of work and fosters feelings of enthusiasm, inspiration and being proud (Schaufeli, 2012). Absorption is associated with the feeling an employee gets when being happily immersed in work, to the point where it is difficult to leave his or her work (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Work engagement is seen as a positive experience (Schaufeli et al., 2002) that may be associated with several positive outcomes such as organisational commitment and employee performance (Harter et al., 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

In a study done on educators in Indonesia, the results reflected that work engagement is related to turnover (Karlowski & Ternus, 2007), and schools can use work engagement as a mechanism in reducing intentions to leave (Baskin, 2007). Engaged employees are usually characterised as showing trust towards the organisation and management, while also exerting positive attitudes and intentions and, based on this conceptualisation, work engagement may be seen as a significant predictor of an employee's intention to quit (Saks, 2006). A number of studies have linked low work engagement levels with an intention to leave (Albrecht & Andreetta, 2010; De Villiers & Stander, 2011; Du Plooy & Roodt, 2010), showing the impact or influential power of work engagement.

A study conducted by Bakker Demerouti and Schaufeli (2003), showed employee turnover to be the result of the imbalance between job demands and job resources as part of the JD-R model. Employee turnover is formed by incorporating two ideas reflected by an employee leaving or quitting the job and the employee who may have the **intention to leave** the job (Sjoberg & Sverke, 2000). The importance of employee turnover lies in the consequences resulting from turnover which have an impact on lack of continuity, high costs as well as productivity (Firth et al., 2004). Turnover is usually the end result of dissatisfaction. This dissatisfaction may originate from some environmental aspects, for example co-workers, the job itself or the organisation. In addition, turnover may also occur due to an opposite effect in which the organisation may be dissatisfied with some aspects of the employee, including poor performance and attendance. Turnover is therefore seen as a consequence for both the organisation and the employee (Bigliardi, Petroni, & Ivo Dormino, 2005). Many research

results indicate that an employee who is thinking about quitting can be viewed in the same light as an employee who is actually quitting; an important concept for organisations (Kahumuza & Schlechter, 2008; McCarthy, Tyrrell, & Lehane, 2007; Park & Kim, 2009; Weisberg, 1994). The importance of identifying employees' intention to leave is therefore emphasised as it can help organisations in predicting turnover behaviour, yet at the same time coordinating retention initiatives (Hwang & Kuo, 2006).

In a recent study done by Bhatnagar (2012), the results conveyed the following:

Individuals who feel psychologically empowered are more engaged and they are more likely to relate to innovation processes that their firms follow for institutionalising innovation at the work place. These individuals would reflect a lower turnover intention and are likely to be loyal to the organisation (p. 941).

The links between psychological empowerment, work engagement and lower turnover intention levels are therefore evident. A relationship between work engagement and psychological empowerment has also been established through research; employees known for being psychologically empowered will more likely show higher levels of work engagement (De Villiers & Stander, 2011; Greco, Laschinger, & Wong, 2006; Stander & Rothmann, 2010).

Meaningfulness, competence, self-determination and impact are four sub-constructs of **psychological empowerment** (Spreitzer, 1995). Individuals align meaningfulness with receiving respect and dignity in the work environment, experiencing added value for the contributions they made to the workplace. Employees characterised as being empowered, enjoy their job in that they derive meaning from it (Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Bhatia, 2004). Competence can be regarded as the employee's confidence to perform his/her work with the necessary skill/ability. Furthermore, self-determination is associated with an employee when freedom/choice is linked to the individual's execution of tasks. The fourth cognition, impact, is perceived when an employee believes that his/her ideas are acknowledged and considered, which in turn can influence the organisation and the outcomes at work (Appelbaum, Hebert, & Leroux, 1999; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Spreitzer, 1995). When employees perceive that they exercise some control over their work lives, psychological empowerment comes into play. If employees are empowered with greater meaning; competence; self-determination; and impact through their work, the organisation is more likely to benefit by the outcomes embedded in these cognitions (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Studies have indicated that the experience of

psychological empowerment at work will render more engaged employees as a result (Reynders, 2005; Stander & Rothmann, 2010), impacting the turnover levels of employees.

The measurement of psychological empowerment is administered with the Measuring Empowerment Questionnaire (MEQ) (Spreitzer, 1995). The reliability of this instrument has been proven in previous research (De Villiers & Stander, 2011; Spreitzer, 1995; Stander, 2007). In relation to the construct validity of the MEQ, Stander and Rothmann (2009) tested the construct validity of the MEQ in a South African context. A four-factor model was identified, consisting of meaning, competence, self-determination and impact; therefore showing support for the construct validity of the original measuring instrument (Spreitzer, 1995). These results are in line with various studies (De Villiers & Stander, 2011; Mendes & Stander, 2011; Stander, 2007; Stander & Rothmann, 2009). A two-factor structure (Standar, 2010), however, has also been revealed in a South African context, but is not as evident as a four-factor structure.

Furthermore, convergent validity has been aligned with this instrument in that correlations between psychological empowerment and constructs such as role clarity, vigour, dedication, absorption, and intention to leave were revealed (Mendes & Stander, 2011). In addition, Stander and Rothmann (2010) in their study found correlations between some of the cognitions of psychological empowerment and cognitive job insecurity, affected job insecurity as well as employee engagement. With this study, one aim is also reflected by determining convergent validity between the dimensions of the SUDIQ and the MEQ; determining the reliability, construct and convergent validity of both instruments.

Valid and reliable measures should be used in all research studies in order to draw valid conclusions from the results obtained with those instruments pertaining to the specific context. In this way, this research study fills the gap in literature by investigating the reliability and validity (construct and convergent) of the SUDIQ and MEQ to be used in the education environment in the Southern Cape region.

In terms of the JD-R model, job resources - in this case POSSU and POSDI - translate into positive outcomes, such as work engagement (Clifton & Harter, 2003; Harter et al., 2002) and decreased levels of retention (Harter et al., 2002). To this end, psychological empowerment was assessed as a mediator of the relationship between POSSU, POSDI and work engagement.

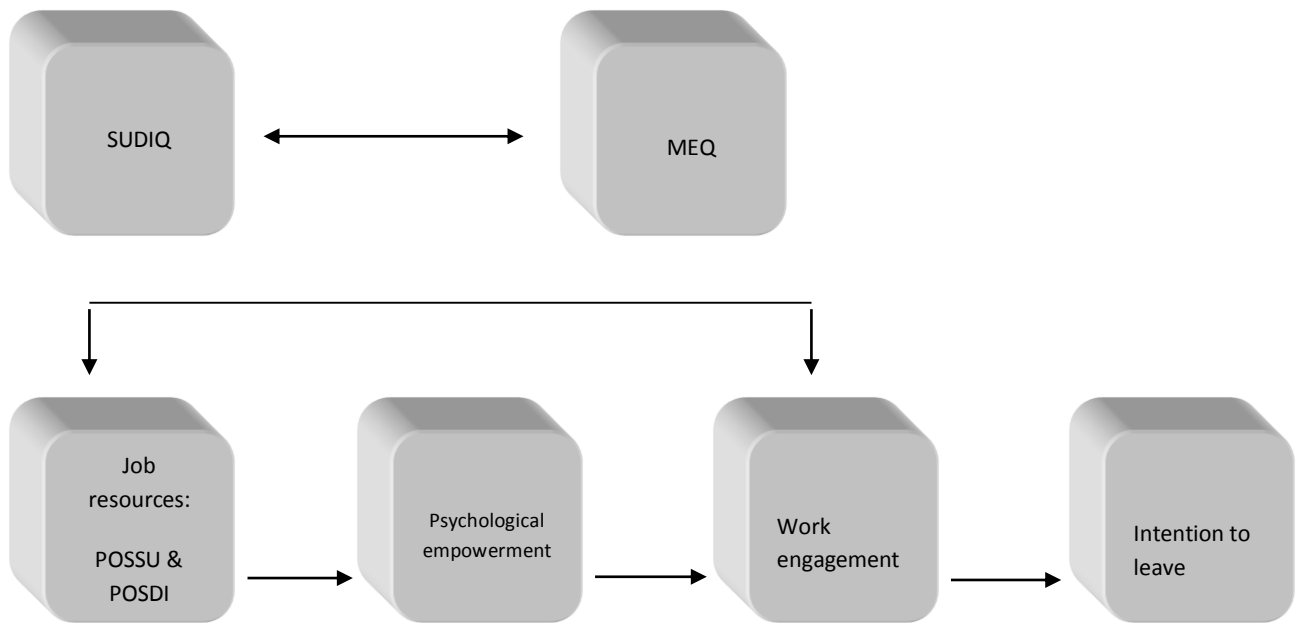


Figure 1. The relationship between strengths-based development, psychological empowerment, work engagement and the influence on intention to leave.

The following research questions are based on the above mentioned research problem and literature review.

- How are the dimensions of the SUDIQ, psychological empowerment, work engagement and intention to leave conceptualised in literature?
- Is the SUDIQ a reliable instrument for the measurement of POSSU, POSDI, PBSU and PBDI in the education sector in the Southern Cape region?
- Is the MEQ a reliable instrument for the measurement of psychological empowerment (meaning, competence, self-determination and impact) in the education sector in the Southern Cape region?
- Does the SUDIQ consist of four distinct factors, namely POSSU, POSDI, PBSU and PBDI?
- Does the MEQ consist of four distinct factors, namely meaning, competence, self-determination and impact?
- Do positive significant relationships exist between the dimensions of the SUDIQ and the MEQ?
- Do positive significant relationships exist between POSSU, POSDI, work engagement and psychological empowerment of educators in the Southern Cape region?

- Do negative significant relationships exist between positive variables including POSSU, POSDI, work engagement, psychological empowerment and intention to leave of educators in the Southern Cape region?
- Does POSSU predict psychological empowerment and work engagement of educators in the Southern Cape region?
- Does POSDI predict psychological empowerment and work engagement of educators in the Southern Cape region?
- Does psychological empowerment predict work engagement and intention to leave of educators in the Southern Cape region?
- Does work engagement predict intention to leave of educators in the Southern Cape region?
- Does POSSU indirectly impact work engagement and intention to leave of educators in the Southern Cape region via psychological empowerment?
- Does POSDI indirectly impact work engagement and intention to leave of educators in the Southern Cape region via psychological empowerment?
- Does psychological empowerment indirectly impact intention to leave via work engagement of educators in the Southern Cape region?

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives are divided into a general objective and specific objectives.

1.2.1 General Objective

The general objective of this study was to determine if the SUDIQ and MEQ were reliable and valid to administer among educators in South Africa, and whether (a) psychological empowerment mediated the relationship between POSSU and work engagement, and between POSDI and work engagement; and (b) whether engagement mediated the relationship between psychological empowerment and turnover intention.

1.2.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this research are to:

- Conceptualise the dimensions of the SUDIQ, psychological empowerment, work engagement and intention to leave through literature;
- Assess whether the SUDIQ is a reliable instrument for the measurement of POSSU, POSDI, PBSU and PBDI in the education sector in the Southern Cape region;
- Assess whether the MEQ is a reliable instrument for the measurement of psychological empowerment (meaning, competence, self-determination and impact) in the education sector in the Southern Cape region;
- Establish if the SUDIQ consists of four distinct factors, namely POSSU, POSDI, PBSU and PBDI;
- Establish if the MEQ consists of four distinct factors, namely meaning, competence, self-determination and impact;
- Determine if positive significant relationships exist between the dimensions of the SUDIQ and the MEQ;
- Determine if positive significant relationships exist between POSSU, POSDI, work engagement, and psychological empowerment of educators in the Southern Cape region;
- Determine if negative significant relationships exist between POSSU, POSDI, work engagement, psychological empowerment and intention to leave of educators in the Southern Cape region;
- Establish if POSSU predicts psychological empowerment and work engagement of educators in the Southern Cape region;
- Establish if POSDI predicts psychological empowerment and work engagement of educators in the Southern Cape region;
- Establish if psychological empowerment predicts work engagement and intention to leave of educators in the Southern Cape region;
- Establish if work engagement predicts intention to leave of educators in the Southern Cape region;
- Investigate whether POSSU indirectly impacts work engagement and intention to leave of educators in the Southern Cape region via psychological empowerment;
- Investigate whether POSDI indirectly impacts work engagement and intention to leave of educators in the Southern Cape region via psychological empowerment; and
- Investigate whether psychological empowerment indirectly impacts intention to leave of educators in the Southern Cape region via work engagement.

1.3 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

1.3.1 Research Article 1

Hypothesis 1: The SUDIQ is a reliable instrument for the measurement of POSSU, POSDI, PBSU and PBDI in the education sector in the Southern Cape region.

Hypothesis 2: The MEQ is a reliable instrument for the measurement of psychological empowerment in the education sector in the Southern Cape region.

Hypothesis 3: The SUDIQ comprises four distinct factors, namely POSSU, POSDI, PBSU and PBDI.

Hypothesis 4: The MEQ comprises four distinct factors, namely meaning, competence, self-determination and impact.

Hypothesis 5: Positive significant relationships exist between POSSU and meaning.

Hypothesis 6: Positive significant relationships exist between PBSU and meaning.

Hypothesis 7: Positive significant relationships exist between POSSU and competence.

Hypothesis 8: Positive significant relationships exist between PBSU and competence.

Hypothesis 9: Positive significant relationships exist between POSSU and self-determination.

Hypothesis 10: Positive significant relationships exist between PBSU and self-determination.

Hypothesis 11: Positive significant relationships exist between POSSU and impact.

Hypothesis 12: Positive significant relationships exist between PBSU and impact.

Hypothesis 13: Positive significant relationships exist between POSDI and meaning.

Hypothesis 14: Positive significant relationships exist between PBDI and meaning.

Hypothesis 15: Positive significant relationships exist between POSDI and competence.

Hypothesis 16: Positive significant relationships exist between PBDI and competence.

Hypothesis 17: Positive significant relationships exist between POSDI and self-determination.

Hypothesis 18: Positive significant relationships exist between PBDI and self-determination.

Hypothesis 19: Positive significant relationships exist between POSDI and impact.

Hypothesis 20: Positive significant relationships exist between PBDI and impact.

1.3.2 Research Article 2

Hypothesis 1: Positive significant relationships exist between POSSU, POSDI, work engagement and psychological empowerment of educators in the Southern Cape region.

Hypothesis 2: Negative significant relationships exist between POSSU, POSDI, work engagement, psychological empowerment and intention to leave of educators in the Southern Cape region.

Hypothesis 3: POSSU predicts psychological empowerment and work engagement of educators in the Southern Cape region.

Hypothesis 4: POSDI predicts psychological empowerment and work engagement of educators in the Southern Cape region.

Hypothesis 5: Psychological empowerment predicts work engagement and intention to leave of educators in the Southern Cape region.

Hypothesis 6: Work engagement predicts intention to leave of educators in the Southern Cape region.

Hypothesis 7: POSSU indirectly impacts work engagement and intention to leave of educators in the Southern Cape region via psychological empowerment.

Hypothesis 8: POSDI indirectly impacts work engagement and intention to leave of educators in the Southern Cape region via psychological empowerment.

Hypothesis 9: Psychological empowerment indirectly impacts intention to leave of educators in the Southern Cape region via work engagement.

1.4 RESEARCH METHOD

1.4.1 Research Approach

A cross-sectional survey design was used to reach the objectives of this study. In choosing this design, the researcher can examine several groups of people at one particular point in time. Advantages associated with such a design are the cost benefit and the minimisation of non-respondents (Salkind, 2009). Quantitative research involves large representative samples together with fairly structured data collection procedures in order to test the hypotheses (Creswell, 2009; Struwig & Stead, 2001).

1.4.2 Literature Review

The literature review focused on previous research that had been done on strengths-based development and its direct impact on wellness (more specifically, work engagement, psychological empowerment and intention to leave). The focus was these constructs'

association with the education sector. The results from this research were helpful in drawing conclusions pertaining to the relationships between these constructs and their influence on one another as well as their significance in the education sector. Literature pertaining to the research topic was obtained from books, internet websites (News24), and databases such as EbscoHost, Science Direct, and JSTOR. The following journals were consulted: *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, *Journal of Positive Psychology*, *International Journal of Educational Development*, *South African Journal of Education*, *Positive Practice in Psychology*, *People and Organisations at Work*, *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *Psychological Bulletin*, *Journal of International Management*, *Education Week*, *Positive Organizational Scholarship*, *Human Resource Management Review*, *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology*, *Review of General Psychology*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Human Resource Management Review*, *International Coaching Psychology Review*, *Organizational Dynamics*, *The Journal of Psychology*, *Journal of Happiness Studies*.

1.4.3 Research Participants

The study population consisted of primary and high school educators from schools in the Southern Cape region. Convenience samples were drawn from the teachers in that region. Convenience sampling entails selecting participants for a research study on the basis of their availability (Struwig & Stead, 2001). This type of sampling was therefore used to identify schools and educators from the Southern Cape region. Educators teaching grades 1-7 and grades 8-12 were utilised for the purpose of this study.

1.4.4 Measuring Instruments

The following measuring instruments were utilised in order to reach the objectives of this study:

Biographical Questionnaire. A biographical questionnaire was used in this study to obtain information regarding the biographical characteristics of participants in the education sector from the Southern Cape region. Through the questionnaire, the researcher focused on information pertaining to participants' age, gender, home language, race ethnicity, educational level and organisational tenure.

Strengths Use and Deficit Improvement Questionnaire (SUDIQ; Els, in process). This scale was utilised in this study to indicate the extent to which strengths are used and deficits are developed by both the employees and the organisation. This SUDIQ items are answered on a 7-point frequency scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*almost always*). This instrument consists of four factors or subscales, namely: Perceived organisational support for strengths use (POSSU), perceived organisational support for deficit improvement (POSDI), proactive behaviour towards strengths use (PBSU) and proactive behaviour towards deficit improvement (PBDI). Typical questions that were encountered in this questionnaire included the following: (POSSU; 5 items): ‘The organisation provides employees with the opportunity to do what they are good at’; (PBSU; 5 items): ‘I capitalise on my strengths at work’; (POSDI; 5 items): ‘This organisation emphasises the development of employees’ weak points’; and (PBDI; 5 items): ‘In my job, I make an effort to improve my limitations’. The alpha coefficients for this scale were identified as: POSSU = 0.93; PBSU = 0.91; POSDI = 0.93 and PBDI = 0.95 (Els, in process).

Measuring Empowerment Questionnaire (MEQ; Spreitzer, 1995). This scale was chosen to measure the level of psychological empowerment experienced by employees. The MEQ consists of 12 items which are scored on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The instrument consists of four factors or subscales, namely meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. Typical questions included in this questionnaire are meaning: ‘The work I do is very important to me’ ($\alpha = 0.92$); competence: ‘I am confident about my ability to do my job’ ($\alpha = 0.90$); self-determination: ‘I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work’ ($\alpha = 0.85$); and impact: ‘My impact on what happens in my department is large’ ($\alpha = 0.84$).

The *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale* (UWES; Schaufeli et al., 2002) was administered to measure work engagement. This questionnaire is scored on a 7-point frequency scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 6 (*every day*). Only the two core dimensions of work engagement, namely vigour and dedication, were used in this study (Brand-Labuschagne, Mostert, Rothmann Jnr, & Rothmann, 2012; Demerouti, Mostert, & Bakker, 2010). Vigour was measured with four items (i.e. ‘When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work’; and dedication with four items (i.e. ‘I am enthusiastic about my job’). The Cronbach alpha coefficients for the two subscales were shown to be satisfactory with alpha values of above 0.70, as reported in previous studies (Coetzee & De Villiers, 2010; Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006).

Turnover Intention Scale (TIS; Sjöberg & Sverke, 2000). The TIS is made up of three items which are answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). A typical question this questionnaire may include is: 'If I was completely free to choose, I would leave this job'. The Cronbach alpha coefficient reported for the TIS is 0.79, as found in previous studies (Berntson, Näswall, & Sverke, 2010; Sjöberg & Sverke, 2000).

1.4.5 Research Procedure

For the purpose of requesting permission to conduct this study among educators in the Southern Cape, a letter was mailed to the Director of Research Services at the Western Cape education department. The letter included information regarding the aim and background pertaining to this study. Ethical aspects and the questionnaires to be included in this study were also communicated in the letter. Permission was granted to conduct this research study among educators in the Southern Cape region, where after principals from the different schools in the Southern Cape region were approached to request their participation in this study. Arrangements were made with each principal and the date for data collection was conveyed. On the corresponded date, schools were visited and surveys were disseminated to teachers for completion. Dates for completion of the survey were corresponded to the principals, where after surveys were personally collected on the agreed upon date. Participants were given four weeks to complete the survey.

1.4.6 Statistical Analysis

Statistical analyses were carried out with the SPSS (IBM SPSS, 2013), as well as Mplus 7.2 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2014) software programs. Confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were used to determine the factorial and convergent validity of the SUDIQ and MEQ. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were used as an indicator of instrument reliability where $\alpha \geq 0.70$ is deemed satisfactory (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Structural equation modelling (SEM) methods were applied to address the research questions. The primary benefit associated with SEM is the fact that it can be used in the study of relationships among latent constructs in which the latter is known for being specified by multiple measures (Lei & Wu, 2007).

More recently, in contrast to the traditional approach (the Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimator - treating data as continuous), and due to advances in statistical software, the social sciences have been able to analyse categorical data with more ease. In this regard, other statistical tools are at a researcher's disposal (Dewilde & De Keulenaer, 2003); with specific reference to this study, Mplus was used for the analyses as it has the ability to specify the data type being analysed as categorical. Polychoric, tetrachoric or polyserial correlations and combining them with weighted least squares (cf. Jöreskog, 1990) were some of the alternative approaches proposed in this regard. Mplus generates a polychoric correlation matrix between the categorical indicators; a Pearson correlation matrix is used for the estimated latent variables. The input into the analysis will be the covariance matrix. The observed variables are the items themselves.

When using a weighted least squares approach, it is not possible to compete non-nested models using the chi-square values as when using maximum likelihood analysis (Liu, Hancock, & Harring, 2011). Subsequently, as it is good practice to compete measurement models to ascertain the best fitting model, it was decided to use Bayesian analysis to generate Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) values to compete different measurement models. The BIC values are therefore used in this process as an indicator of model selection (Wu, Zumbo, & Siegel, 2011). The improvement based on the trade-off between fit as well as complexity is possible through producing a lower BIC value (Van De Schoot, Lugtig, & Hox, 2012). After the model with the lowest BIC value has been identified (Van De Schoot et al., 2012), the process will continue with the weighted least squares analysis (WLSMV estimator) to investigate the research questions.

The following fit indices were considered: Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and the Root-Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). When determining goodness of fit with regard to CFI and TLI, a value of 0.95 and larger represents good fit, whilst a value of 0.90 represents acceptable fit (Schermele-Engel, Moosbrugger, & Mueller, 2003). The CFI performs well even with small sample sizes and assumes that all latent variables are uncorrelated, comparing the sample covariance matrix to the null model (Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2008). RMSEA was also used for goodness of fit purposes with values smaller than 0.06 which indicate good model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). On the other hand, acceptable fit with regard to RMSEA is represented by values smaller than 0.08 (Schermele-Engel et al.,

2003). This index is usually considered as an indicator in the process of closeness of fit (Van De Schoot et al., 2012).

The next step was to test the proposed mediating effects. The bootstrap data-resampling method was used with 5000 draws for the purpose of establishing confidence intervals of 95%, testing for the statistical significance of indirect effects (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). The bootstrapping approach is regarded as more beneficial due to greater statistical power (MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004) when compared to the more traditional Baron and Kenny (1986) and the Sobel test. Through this approach, standard errors (SE) and 95% confidence intervals (CIs) are also assessed (Deng, Allison, Fang, Ash, & Ware Jr, 2013).

1.4.7 Ethical Considerations

According to Neuman (2006), "... ethics define what is or is not legitimate to do or what moral research procedure involves" (p. 129). In this study, each educator received a cover letter enclosed with the questionnaire, explaining the aim of the study, but also indicating that participation was voluntary. Educators were informed to sign the consent form. In signing the consent form, educators committed themselves to participate in the study, and were also assured that they could withdraw at any stage of the research, without penalty. Confidentiality pertaining to answering the questionnaires and the handling of data was ensured. As agreed upon in the timeframe, the researcher collected the questionnaires and signed consent forms. The focus of this study with regard to ethical consideration was therefore on confidentiality, anonymity and voluntary participation.

1.5 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

In Chapter 2 the findings of the first set of research objectives were discussed in the form of a research article. In Chapter 3 the findings of the remaining research objectives were discussed in the form of a second research article. Chapter 4 comprised the conclusions, limitations and recommendations of this research study.

1.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter introduced the reader to the discussion of the problem statement and research objectives. Also, in this chapter the reader was presented with an explanation of the research method and the measuring instruments. The chapter was concluded by providing a brief overview of the chapters that follow.

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CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH ARTICLE 1

**Validating the Strengths Use and Deficit Improvement Questionnaire and the
Measuring Empowerment Questionnaire for educators in the Southern Cape region**

ABSTRACT

Orientation: Strengths use, deficit improvement and empowerment are increasingly important positive psychological constructs and measures that are reliable and valid for the South African context.

Research purpose: The aim of this study was to determine the reliability and construct validity of the Strengths Use and Deficit Improvement Questionnaire (SUDIQ) and the Measuring Empowerment Questionnaire (MEQ).

Motivation for the study: Reliable and valid instruments for measuring strengths use, deficit improvement and psychological empowerment among educators will allow future research to draw accurate conclusions regarding these constructs when measured in a South African context.

Research design, approach and method: A cross-sectional survey design was used and the sample comprised educators in the Southern Cape region ($N = 271$).

Main findings: Both the SUDIQ and MEQ have proven to be reliable and valid. An eight-factor model was the best fitting model, and consisted of four factors each for both the SUDIQ and MEQ. Positive significant relationships were revealed between the constructs of the SUDIQ and MEQ.

Practical/Managerial implications: This study will assist schools and principals to gain a better understanding of the organisational dimensions pertaining to strengths use and deficit improvement, and how they can be utilised to empower educators in the school environment.

Contribution/Value-add: This study contributes to the limited literature in the HR field by producing support for valid and reliable measures that can be used in the education sector, while also conveying the outcomes when the SUDIQ and the MEQ are applied in the education environment.

Key terms: Positive psychology, strengths, deficits, strengths use and deficit improvement, psychological empowerment

INTRODUCTION

The provision of quality education is one of the cornerstones of the National Development Plan (Business day Live, 2013). The empowerment and optimisation of educators will largely contribute to the success of our educators (Ramango, 2014). The role that educators play in achieving quality education necessitates research to explore the factors that contribute to the optimal functioning of educators.

Based on a more positive focus, the positive psychology movement shifted an interest from a traditional disease model (concerned with damage, disease, disorder and dysfunction) to a more positive approach that is embedded in strengths and virtues, enabling individuals and communities to thrive (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). In this regard, effective human resource management practices depend on an understanding that is focused on the way in which people behave in organisations, together with identifying the key variables (Schwartz, 2010) that make them work towards attaining organisational objectives (Bitmiş & Ergeneli, 2011).

A positive psychology approach gives a refreshing outlook and orientation to people sciences, focusing on flourishing and a worthwhile life in contrast to the traditional paradigm that focused mainly on a diagnostic and solution-driven focus to problems (Donaldson & Ko, 2010; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The aim of the positive paradigm is to convey an understanding of the full human experience (Donaldson & Ko, 2010).

Research on the topic of positive psychology has made great strides, especially with the emphasis on the implications it can have for the workplace (Luthans & Youssef, 2007; Schueller, 2012). There are a few paradigms linked to positive psychology which can be highlighted in this regard, namely positive organisational behaviour (POB; Luthans, 2002a, 2002b, 2003; Nelson & Cooper, 2007; Wright, 2003), and positive organisational scholarship (POS; Cameron & Caza, 2004; Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003). POB is generally concerned with performance improvement in the workplace, which depends on researched and applied positive constructs, such as positively-oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities (Luthans, 2002b). These latter constructs need to be measured, developed, and managed effectively in order to create better performance in the workplace (Luthans, 2002a, 2002b).

Contradictory to POB, POS focuses on exceptional individual and organisational performance which is achieved through investigating the dynamics, including developing human strengths, producing resilience and restoration, and fostering vitality leading to exceptional performance (Cameron & Caza, 2004). Emphasis is placed on understanding important positive phenomena present in the organisational setting that will lead to great performance (Cameron & Caza, 2004). As part of the POS paradigm, there are two variables that have received significant attention in the literature as part of the positive psychology movement. These variables are known as strengths use and deficit improvement; and psychological empowerment (Els, in process; Stander, 2013; Van Zyl & Stander, 2013).

Regarding strengths use and deficit improvement, positive psychology is concerned with both understanding and building from one's strengths, as well as managing one's weaknesses (Bowers, 2009; Peterson & Seligman, 2003), instead of just focusing on or repairing them (Seligman, 2002). To elaborate, the development of human capital takes place through developing and creating human expertise by means of initiatives, such as personnel training and organisational development which all result in better performance (Swanson & Holton, 2001). The focus of human capital development is therefore on deficiencies or improvement areas of individuals, for which most human resource practices are known, called the deficiency-based approach (DBA; Buckingham & Clifton, 2001; Keenan & Mostert, 2013). In any organisation, there is a need for the identification of weaknesses (Linley, Govindji, & West, 2007); however, it is also important to focus on the natural talents of employees that are embedded in strengths (Keenan & Mostert, 2013).

It is argued that the greatest potential for improving individuals lies in their strengths and talents in relation to their weaknesses (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001). Such a strengths-based development (SBD) approach is concerned with conditions in which happier, engaged, productive, and creative employees are gained through building on strengths (Brook, 2013; Morris & Garrett, 2010; Rath & Conchie, 2009).

With the upswing of the positive psychology movement, an equal focus should be dedicated to positive and negative aspects, as studying these aspects in isolation will reduce the benefits that can be produced with a full spectrum study (Wong, 2011; Wood & Tarrier, 2010). In reaction to the emphasis placed on an equal focus on positive and negative aspects, a combined approach is promoted that focuses on both strengths use and deficit improvement of employees. Els (in

process) addressed this limitation of limited research pertaining to a combined approach by developing a four dimensional theory for this specific purpose. This theory focuses on strengths and deficit use by the organisation and by the individual. In this regard, Els (in process) conceptualised the following four constructs:

1. Perceived organisational support for strengths use (POSSU i.e. the extent to which employees perceive their organisation to be supportive of their using their strengths in the workplace).
2. Perceived organisational support for deficit improvement (POSDI i.e. the extent to which employees perceive their organisation to be supportive of their developing their deficits in the workplace).
3. Pro-active behaviour towards strengths use (PBSU i.e. self-starting behaviour directed towards using strengths in the workplace).
4. Pro-active behaviour towards deficit improvement (PBDI i.e. self-starting behaviour directed towards improving deficiencies in the workplace).

POSSU and POSDI are conceptualised as job resources (Els, in process), which can be used in the attainment of organisational outcomes and goals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), such as work engagement (Stander, 2013). The support employees can expect may include practices from the organisation in changing how tasks are handed out to fit individual employee strengths (Els, in process). Another way can be to team up members of the organisation by making use of complementary partnering which could put less focus on individuals' weaknesses and more focus on their performance (Linley & Harrington, 2006b). The same applies to deficits; organisations can provide support for employees by improving their deficits which may include paying attention to employee developmental areas with performance appraisals, and focusing on employee growth through means of performance feedback and training (Els, in process). Furthermore, perceived organisational support through initiatives that support the use of strengths and improve deficits of employees in the workplace is associated with improved performance, while also contributing to goal attainment (Abdullah, Ahsan, & Alam, 2009; Clifton & Harter, 2003; Linley, 2008; Linley, Nielsen, Wood, Gillett, & Biswas-Diener, 2010) which impacts an individual's growth through learning (Harrison, 1992).

The Job-demands Resources (JD-R) Model classifies POSSU and POSDI as job resources, mostly because of the purpose POSSU and POSDI fulfil when used in the organisation (Els, in process). Job demands and job resources are identified as two broad categories within this

model which is used to divide the characteristics of a work environment (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001; Schaufeli, Bakker, & Van Rhenen, 2009). Job demands are viewed as the negative side of one's work environment, based on its association with physiological and/or psychological costs (Demerouti et al., 2001). In contrast to the negative side, job resources are seen as physical, social or organisational aspects pertaining to one's work which serve the following three purposes: (a) are functional in achieving work-related goals; (b) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs; and (c) stimulate personal growth and development (Demerouti et al., 2001). Due to the prospect of better performance and the contribution to goal attainment, this study regards POSSU and POSDI as job resources.

In line with the theory by Els (in process), the individual can also engage in proactive behaviour towards strengths use and deficit improvement. Proactive behaviour is contrary to individuals taking on measures to adapt to current situations; instead, it is known for characteristics where employees take initiative which is aimed at improving or developing new favourable circumstances for themselves (Crant, 2000). Proactive behaviour is where an employee engages in self-starting behaviour with the aim of improving work conditions; developing personal prerequisites to assist with meeting work demands; and searching for opportunities to learn (Frese, Kring, Soose, & Zempel, 1996; Parker, 2000). Based on the conceptualisation of proactive behaviour, employees who are actively looking for opportunities to use their strengths and improve their deficits at work, display proactive behaviour (Els, in process). Individual strengths use is regarded as the self-starting behaviour an individual engages in to use his/her strengths; while individual deficit improvement, on the other hand, involves self-starting behaviour towards improving an individual's deficits.

In measuring these four dimensions, Els (in process) developed the Strengths Use and Deficit Improvement Questionnaire (SUDIQ), which is used in indicating the extent to which participants' strengths are used and deficits are developed by both the individual and the organisation. This is a fairly new instrument that has not been used extensively in research (i.e. Botha, 2012; Els, in process; Keenan & Mostert, 2013; Stander, 2013; Tabiri, 2012).

The SUDIQ has been developed by Els (in process) and validated with a South African sample. This sample has been made up of a heterogeneous group of employees from different industries, and thus employees from the general working population (Keenan & Mostert, 2013;

Tabiri, 2012). Furthermore, other research studies, such as Botha (2012) and Stander (2013), had a similar approach, namely assessing the reliability and validity of the SUDIQ in the banking and education sectors, and among sport coaches in the study by Stander (2013). However, research pertaining to the reliability and validity of the SUDIQ is limited in the education sector. In this regard, it is important to produce reliable and valid instruments that can be used to provide empirical results which can be applied to the education sector. In this way, it will be possible to see the impact of strengths use and deficit improvement in educators in order to provide guidelines for future research through the application of human resource principles in education. For this reason, the objective of this study is to test the reliability and validity (construct and convergent) of the SUDIQ for use among teachers in the Southern Cape region.

As mentioned previously, another important concept in the positive psychology literature is psychological empowerment. Empowerment comprises three areas, namely structural, motivational (psychological empowerment) and leadership empowerment (Menon, 2001). Empowerment as a construct assists employees in attaining goals (Brancato, 2006). In addition, it goes hand in hand with terms such as power, control, ability, competence, self-efficacy, autonomy, knowledge, development and self-determination (Uner & Turan, 2010). Psychological empowerment is reflected by an active intrinsic motivational state, where employees are enabled to have a sense of control over their work (Frazier & Fainshmidt, 2012). This motivational state is characterised by an experience of meaning, competence, self-determination and impact (Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

Meaning refers to the value an employee attaches to work goals and results when employees experience their jobs as having value or importance, based on personal beliefs and standards (Randolph & Kemery, 2011; Spreitzer, 1995). This concept has its roots in meaningful work in which employees are known to find a purpose in work that goes beyond the extrinsic outcomes of work (Arnold, Arad, Rhoades, & Drasgow, 2000). *Competence* (self-efficacy) stems from an individual's beliefs that he/she has certain capabilities to perform activities with skill and mastery (Bandura, 1986; Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Confidence stems from high levels of competence and increased effectiveness which help individuals when it comes to showing effort and diligence in times of difficulties (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

Having a sense of freedom or choice is particularly important to individuals, especially when it comes to the application and execution of work activities which are embedded in *self-determination* (Randolph & Kemery, 2011; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). External factors, such as tangible rewards and deadlines, are more likely to weaken feelings of intrinsic motivation by removing an individual's choice or autonomy in that regard (Van Dierendonck & Dijkstra, 2012). Having an *impact* in the organisation is reflected by the degree to which employees foster feelings of making a difference or believing that work executed by them can make a difference and impact the organisational goals (Randolph & Kemery, 2011; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Psychological empowerment endows employees with the feeling that they have a voice in the decision making of the organisation (Spreitzer, 1995).

One of the most widely used instruments in the measurement of the four cognitions of psychological empowerment is the MEQ (Spreitzer, 1995). The MEQ was first validated among mid-level employees from a Fortune 50 industrial organisation and lower level employees from an insurance company in Southern California, United States of America. Through this study, a reliable and valid four-factor structure model was produced (Spreitzer, 1995). Research done on the reliability and validity of the MEQ in a South African context consisted of samples encompassing employees from different sectors, including manufacturing, mining, chemical, service and government organisations (Stander & Rothmann, 2009), in which a reliable and valid four-factor structure was revealed. Furthermore, other studies in which the MEQ were utilised include De Villiers and Stander (2011) and Mendes and Stander (2011), which found support for the four-factor structure in the petrochemical industry. Stander (2010) based her research on the education environment in which the results conveyed that two factors, namely self-determination and impact, loaded as one factor named influence. Also, items relating to meaning and competence loaded as a single factor called attitude. Although several studies have been done in testing the reliability and validity of the MEQ, it is unclear whether a reliable and valid structure exists in the education environment that corresponds with the original four-factor structure proposed by Spreitzer (1995). In this study, the aim is to determine the reliability and validity (construct and convergent) of the MEQ amongst educators in the Southern Cape region.

To conclude, the primary objectives of this study were to assess the reliability and validity of both the SUDIQ and MEQ for suitable use in the education sector in South Africa.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Strengths Use and Deficit Improvement

Traditionally, organisations were mainly concerned with a deficiency-based approach (DBA) (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001) which is known for investigating what is wrong or not working, after which the organisation corrects it by means of training, workshops and coaching (Clifton & Harter, 2003). In this way, a deficit/weakness is viewed as a shortage or misapplication of talent, a skill or knowledge which is associated with various problems for the individual, and/or for others (Mvulane, 2007); therefore affecting an individual's performance. The importance of following a DBA is embedded in development practices which have been shown to increase employee effectiveness (Carroll, 2007); enhance job performance (Cheah, 2012); improve commitment levels (Caishun & Zongjie, 2004); and result in lower turnover rates (Carroll, 2007).

Despite the positive outcomes of developing employees' deficits, all individuals also have strengths which they can apply in the workplace. Strengths enable people with an ability to provide consistent, near perfect performances in specified circumstances (Clifton & Anderson, 2002). Furthermore, when one possesses certain strengths, one is known for portraying a pre-existing capacity for behaving, thinking, or feeling in a certain way (Linley, 2008). Forest et al (2012) are of the opinion that strengths should be viewed as a construct aimed at energising and motivating people towards becoming fully optimal and developed human beings.

The benefits of adopting a combined approach are indeed evident in previous research; studying and utilising strengths for employees may result in positive emotions (Govindji & Linley, 2007); feelings of self-worth and value (Compton, 2005); feeling happier (Seligman, Steen, Parks, & Peterson, 2005); and being driven to take action (Elston & Boniwell, 2011). Strengths use is embedded in a philosophy that greater rates of development (Minhas, 2010), vitality (Govindji & Linley, 2007; Linley et al., 2010), and productive levels are possible (Smedley, 2007; Stefanyszyn, 2007). For the organisation, strengths use has been shown to increase the levels of work engagement (Biswas-Diener, Kashdan, & Minhas, 2011) which are ultimately linked to concepts such as turnover and improved satisfaction levels (Cameron, Mora, Leutscher, & Calarco, 2011; Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002). Furthermore, higher levels of loyalty and a decrease in turnover are possible when employees receive an opportunity

to use their strengths in the organisation (Clifton & Harter, 2003). Fostering both strengths development and deficit improvement can assist in the process of achieving goals; thus creating well-being (Kaiser & White, 2009).

As demonstrated above, both strengths use and deficit improvement are beneficial to the organisation. Following this argument, Els (in process) developed a theory on measuring a combined focus. This theory is made up of the following four dimensions (Els, in process), namely:

1. Perceived organisational support for strengths use (the extent to which employees perceive their organisation to be supportive of their using their strengths in the workplace).
2. Perceived organisational support for deficit improvement (the extent to which employees perceive their organisation to be supportive of their developing their deficits in the workplace).
3. Pro-active behaviour towards strengths use (self-starting behaviour directed towards using strengths in the workplace).
4. Pro-active behaviour towards deficit improvement (self-starting behaviour directed towards improving deficiencies in the workplace).

SUDIQ

The Strengths use and deficit improvement questionnaire (SUDIQ) has been developed by Els (in process) to fulfil the purpose of accurately measuring perceived organisational support for strengths use (POSSU), perceived organisational support for deficit improvement (POSDI), proactive behaviour towards strengths use (PBSU), and proactive behaviour towards deficit improvement (PBDI). The SUDIQ was developed and has been validated in a South African sample comprising a heterogeneous group of employees from different industries, and thus employees from the general working population. The SUDIQ comprises 33 items; more specifically, POSSU (eight items), POSDI (eight items), PBSU (nine items), and PBDI (eight items).

Previous studies in which the SUDIQ was used as a measuring instrument included Botha (2012), Els (in process), Tabiri (2012), Keenan and Mostert (2013), and Stander (2013). These studies focused on testing the factor structure of the SUDIQ within specific contexts in South Africa, also determining how this instrument correlated with other constructs in order to determine its reliability and validity.

Psychological Empowerment

Literature pertaining to empowerment reveals three core areas that encompass empowerment. These three areas are known as structural, motivational (psychological) as well as leadership empowerment (Menon, 2001). Structural empowerment is concerned with delegating power to employees through decision-making privileges; providing opportunities based on responsibility and initiatives (Mills & Ungson, 2003). The delegation of authority and responsibility is an important aspect of structural empowerment as it is given from top management to employees in a hierarchical form (Wall, Cordery, & Clegg, 2002). Psychological empowerment, as a motivational construct, reflects an employee's perception of empowerment (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Menon, 2001; Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990), and comprises four cognitions which are shaped by the work environment (Spreitzer, 1995). Leadership empowerment is based on an energising factor by which followers are empowered. This energising process is characterised by providing followers with an exciting vision for the future and, hence, empowerment as an end result (Menon, 2001). In this way leaders enable followers to exhibit greater energy and empowerment. Followers can use this inspiring process as motivation to become actively involved in the transformation of the organisation (Yukl, 1989). For the focus of this study, emphasis is placed on psychological empowerment. The development of psychological empowerment started with researchers such as Conger and Kanungo (1988), Thomas and Velthouse (1990), and more recently Spreitzer (1995) and Menon (2001). Spreitzer (1995) refined the concept of psychological empowerment and exposed this field of research to meaning, competence, self-determination and impact as workplace related cognitions.

Psychological empowerment is regarded as a motivational state characterised by an experience of meaning, competence, self-determination and impact (Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). In addition, it is embedded in an individual's ability to effectively influence the course of activities at work which impact the quantity and quality of work accomplished (Logan & Ganster, 2007). A feeling of empowerment can be linked to the four cognitive dimensions as proposed by Spreitzer (1995). *Meaning* is associated with importance and a sense of care. In this way, the work executed by employees is important to them because they care about it (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001). Similarity exists between the beliefs, values, behaviours and job requirements of an employee - if meaning is experienced (Laschinger, Finegan, & Wilk, 2009). An end result of greater empowerment is therefore possible when

employees experience a greater sense of meaning in their work, linked to their personal standards (Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Bhatia, 2004).

Competence is characterised by employees who feel empowered by the good execution of their work, doing it well and with the necessary level of confidence (Laschinger et al., 2009; Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001). A sense of personal superiority is linked with empowered employees; also upholding a certain belief that new challenges can be met by having the necessary level of confidence (Spreitzer & Doneson, 2005).

With *self-determination* the key is freedom. Employees prefer a degree of independence when executing tasks and in that way have a sense of control (Laschinger et al., 2009; Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001). Consequently, through a sense of control, the potential for risk taking is instilled in people (Spreitzer & Doneson, 2005). Self-determination is the cognition which sets the scene for selecting goals that are well-internalised and autonomous (Ryan, Huta, & Deci, 2008). Autonomy plays an important role when it comes to the exposure of one's true self (Ryan et al., 2008).

The last dimension of psychological empowerment is *impact*. Employees want to exert an influence and make an impact on the organisation (Logan & Ganster, 2007; Stander & Rothmann, 2010). This dimension relates to a sense of appreciation in which an employee impacts the organisation through his/her ideas; therefore making a meaningful contribution (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001). Motivation to take risks is instilled in people when a belief, associated with the potential to have a real impact, is fostered (Spreitzer & Doneson, 2005).

Research on psychological empowerment revealed that organisations that exert effort in getting employees psychologically empowered, show an increase in productivity levels together with being responsive and able to adapt to changing circumstances (Greasley et al., 2008); higher job satisfaction (Najafi, Noruzy, Azar, Nazari-Shirkouhi, & Dalvand, 2011), high organisational commitment (Bhatnagar, 2005; Najafi et al., 2011); and a reduction in an employee's turnover intent (Bhatnagar, 2012; De Villiers & Stander, 2011). Through psychological empowerment initiatives in the organisation, the possibility exists that employees are able to shape their working environment due to the cognitions they possess in that regard (Gregory, Albritton, & Osmonbekov, 2010). Other results on empowerment convey that psychologically empowered employees are more likely to experience increased levels of

engagement with simultaneous decreased levels of burnout (Bhatnagar, 2012; Cavus & Demir, 2010; De Villiers & Stander, 2011).

The Measuring empowerment questionnaire (MEQ) has been exposed to scientific investigation in the South African context (Standar, 2007; Standar & Rothmann, 2009), with the main focus on reliability and testing its factor structure. Besides being used for reliable and validating determination, the MEQ has been used in other studies as a measuring instrument (De Villiers & Standar, 2011; Mendes & Standar, 2011; Standar, 2010). These studies focused on using the MEQ in specific contexts in South Africa; determining how this instrument correlated with other constructs.

In the literature review above, it is clearly illustrated that the reliability and validity of the SUDIQ and the MEQ be respectively assessed in an education environment, especially pertaining to their factor structures in order to find proof for a four-factor structure which will correspond with the original structure proposed by Spreitzer (1995). This will allow the researcher to draw valid conclusions pertaining to that specific context. The following section will provide information on the measuring instruments to be used in this study in terms of their reliability and validity and what this study can add in that regard.

Validity and Reliability of the SUDIQ and the MEQ

The validity of a measuring instrument reflects the extent to which an instrument measures what it purports to measure (Kimberlin & Winterstein, 2008). Different methods exist in determining validity, including construct-, convergent-, content-, and criterion-related validity. For the purpose of this study, the focus will be on construct and convergent validity, serving as a basic investigation into the most common types of validity.

Reliability

The usefulness of measurement instruments is largely associated with measures of validity and reliability (Van Roy, Veenstra, & Clench-Aas, 2008). In determining the reliability of measures, the focus is on the stability of measures, internal consistency of measurement instruments, and interrater reliability of instrument scores (Kimberlin & Winterstein, 2008). It is therefore important to note that reliability estimates can be the results of three forms,

including test-retest reliability, internal consistency and interrater reliability (Kimberlin & Winterstein, 2008). However, for the purpose of this study the focus will be on internal consistency of the measuring instruments through utilising the most common method in that regard, namely Cronbach's coefficient (α) (Raykov, 2011; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The concept of Alpha was developed by Lee Cronbach in 1951; his aim was to provide a measure which could be used to calculate the reliability of a test or scale. Cronbach's alphas, as part of the internal consistency measure, are used to determine if the items in a test measure the same concept or construct, whilst also being connected to the inter-relatedness of the items within the test (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

The reliability of the SUDIQ and MEQ has been proven by various studies in a South African context, aligning sufficient Cronbach's alpha coefficients ($\alpha \geq 0.70$) with the dimensions of the SUDIQ (Botha, 2012; Els, in process; Keenan & Mostert, 2013; Stander, 2013). Els (in process) reported the following Cronbach's alpha measures in her study on a heterogeneous group of employees from different industries, more specifically, employees from the general working population, namely perceived organisational support for strengths use, $\alpha = 0.96$; perceived organisational support for deficit improvement, $\alpha = 0.93$; pro-active behaviour towards strengths use, $\alpha = 0.92$; and proactive behaviour towards deficit improvement, $\alpha = 0.92$. Another study done on sport coaches reflected reliability with the following measures: Perceived organisational support for strengths use $\alpha = 0.96$; perceived organisational support for deficit improvement $\alpha = 0.94$; proactive behaviour towards strengths use $\alpha = 0.93$; and proactive behaviour towards deficit improvement $\alpha = 0.94$ (Standar, 2013). Furthermore, studies done on employees from different levels in the banking sector produced acceptable reliability in that the POSSU scale was associated with a reliability measure of $\alpha = 0.97$ (Keenan & Mostert, 2013). Lastly, reliability measures have also been aligned in a study involving employees from various occupational groups, namely $\alpha = 0.96$ for POSSU and $\alpha = 0.92$ for PBSU (Botha, 2012).

The same applies to the reliability of the MEQ. This instrument was first developed by Spreitzer (1995) among mid-level employees from a Fortune 50 industrial organisation and lower level employees from an insurance company in Southern California, United States of America. The following reliabilities were reported, incorporating both samples: Meaning $\alpha = 0.85$ and 0.83 ;

competence $\alpha = 0.84$ and 0.79 ; self-determination $\alpha = 0.80$ and 0.84 ; and impact $\alpha = 0.85$ and 0.73 .

Other studies in a South African context included employees from a chemical company, regional managers, branch managers and sales consultants from a financial institution, and employees from all levels working in different sectors including manufacturing, mining, chemical, service and a government organisation - all providing similar findings. De Klerk and Stander (2014) provided results that reflected meaning $\alpha = 0.95$, competence $\alpha = 0.90$, self-determination $\alpha = 0.88$, and impact $\alpha = 0.92$; a study by De Villiers and Stander (2011) reflected meaning $\alpha = 0.89$, competence $\alpha = 0.86$, self-determination $\alpha = 0.78$ and impact $\alpha = 0.81$; Stander (2007), meaning $\alpha = 0.89$, competence $\alpha = 0.81$, self-determination $\alpha = 0.85$ and impact $\alpha = 0.86$. Thus, indicating the MEQ to be a reliable measure. These studies have been conducted in various settings incorporating different population groups. Different reliability measures are produced with each scientific investigation among different populations; in that way it is necessary to assess the reliability of all measures for each specific context, utilising different populations.

In view of the literature support, the following hypotheses are proposed.

Hypothesis 1: The SUDIQ is a reliable instrument for the measurement of POSSU, POSDI, PBSU and PBDI in the education sector in the Southern Cape region.

Hypothesis 2: The MEQ is a reliable instrument for the measurement of psychological empowerment in the education sector in the Southern Cape region.

Construct Validity

The validity of instruments is aligned with an outcome of unidimensionality in that items measure what they are supposed to measure (the latent trait) (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). Factorial or construct validity refers to the degree to which the questionnaire items are valid measures of a certain construct/s (Van Roy et al., 2008). All previous studies linked with the SUDIQ found a four-factor structure, consisting of POSSU, POSDI, PBSU and PBDI (Els, in process; Stander, 2013). Only research pertaining to the studies of Els (in process) and Stander (2013) which tested the factor structure of the full SUDIQ, focusing on the organisational as well as individual levels, exist.

The MEQ has undergone both confirmatory (Kraimer, Siebert, & Liden, 1999; Spreitzer, 1995) and exploratory factor analyses (Griggspall & Albrecht, 2003; Henken & Marchiori, 2003; Hochwälder & Brucefors, 2005; Hu & Leung, 2003; Moye & Henkin, 2006; Vardi, 2000). Focusing on the construct validity of the MEQ, Stander and Rothmann (2009) engaged in the process of testing the construct validity of the MEQ in a South African context. The results obtained in the study showed that a four-factor model was identified, consisting of meaning, competence, self-determination and impact which correspond with the construct validity of the original measuring instrument (Spreitzer, 1995). Similar results were obtained in other research studies (De Villiers & Stander, 2011; Mendes & Stander, 2011; Stander, 2007; Stander & Rothmann, 2009).

Standar (2010) also found a two-factor structure to be prevalent in the education sector, which does not correspond with the original factor structure as proposed by Spreitzer (1995). As most studies in the South African context revealed a four-factor structure, it is expected that similar results will be obtained for this study in the education sector in the Southern Cape region.

Following the above discussion regarding the construct validity of the SUDIQ and the MEQ, the following hypotheses can be formulated:

Hypothesis 3: The SUDIQ comprises four distinct factors, namely POSSU, POSDI, PBSU and PBDI.

Hypothesis 4: The MEQ comprises four distinct factors, namely meaning, competence, self-determination and impact.

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity represents the correlations between measures of the same trait which can be obtained by using different measurement methods (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). Convergent validity therefore focuses on (linear) relationships between indicators of the same trait (Raykov, 2011). Convergent validity is tested by focusing on correlations between different instruments in which you would expect a relationship (Van Roy et al., 2008). Thus, the importance is conveyed by focusing on relationships between different constructs which will provide a practical relevance as to how these constructs impact one another in various contexts.

The SUDIQ has been exposed to convergent validity testing in various studies. For example, in the study by Els (in process), positive correlations were found between POSSU, POSDI, autonomy and participation in decision making. Also, PBSU and PBDI were positively related to self-efficacy. Lastly, positive correlations were found between the four dimensions of the SUDIQ and vigour and dedication (work engagement), while negative correlations were revealed between the four dimensions of the SUDIQ and exhaustion and cynicism (burnout). These results provide support for the convergent validity of the SUDIQ.

Other studies focused only on strengths from an individual and/or organisational perspective (Botha, 2012; Keenan & Mostert, 2013). The results of the respective studies reflected positive relationships between job resources (autonomy, relationship with colleagues, relationship with supervisors, information and participation) and organisational support for strengths use (i.e. POSSU), individual behaviour towards strengths use (i.e. PBSU), and work engagement (Botha, 2012). In addition, Keenan and Mostert (2013) found that POSSU had positive relationships with four other job resources, including supervisor support, autonomy, information and participation. In the same study, positive correlations were found between POSSU and engagement, and negative correlations between POSSU and burnout. Furthermore, Stander (2013) also used the SUDIQ in testing its convergent validity based on the relationships between all job resources, including those of organisational strengths use (POSSU), organisational deficit improvement (POSDI), opportunities to learn, and independence at work. Also, correlations between individual strengths use (PBSU), individual deficit improvement (PBDI), self-efficacy and self-esteem were tested and confirmed.

Studies in which the MEQ was utilised showed positive correlations between the four dimensions of the MEQ and other constructs. In a study by Mendes and Stander (2011), positive correlations were revealed between meaning, competence, self-determination, impact and role clarity, while meaning and impact were positively related with vigour, dedication, absorption and intention to leave. Positive correlations were also revealed between self-determination, vigour and dedication (Mendes & Stander, 2011). Stander and Rothmann (2010) found that negative correlations existed between meaning, self-determination, impact and cognitive job insecurity, while impact was negatively correlated with affective job insecurity. Furthermore, positive correlations with employee engagement were also revealed for meaning, competence, and impact.

One aim of this study is to find evidence for expected positive relationships between the four SUDIQ dimensions (i.e. POSSU, PBSU, POSDI and PBDI) and the four MEQ dimensions (i.e. meaning, competence, self-determination and impact). The purpose of the above is to confirm the convergent validity of both the SUDIQ and the MEQ in an educational context in South Africa. These expected relationships are explored and argued below.

POSSU, PBSU, and Meaning

Support from the organisation may be interpreted in a positive way; employees may perceive the organisation as having a positive orientation towards them (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), making them feel valued and important. Leaders' charisma also has an influence on the empowerment of employees; the leader can have an impact on how employees view themselves and their work (Shamir et al., 1993). If organisations provide support to employees to use their strengths, they can view their work as more valuable and important (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993).

When strengths-use behaviour is evoked, a feeling of meaning is derived in this regard. Employees who are seen to be empowered derive meaning from work in which a sense of importance and caring is associated with the execution of tasks and work in general (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997). Furthermore, when employees engage in initiatives to use their strengths, it may engender positive emotions and feelings of value and importance which will motivate employees even more (Elston & Boniwell, 2011).

Hypothesis 5: Positive significant relationships exist between POSSU and meaning.

Hypothesis 6: Positive significant relationships exist between PBSU and meaning.

POSSU, PBSU, and Competence

The development of an employee's strengths has various benefits for the organisation in that it can help in the process of reaching his or her full potential (Linley & Harrington, 2006b). A clear idea of one's strengths can aid in the process of positive change. This process is magnified by empowerment in which cognitions of efficacy and competence enable people to have a clear idea of their strengths (Spreitzer & Doneson, 2005). It is therefore expected that when

employees engage in proactive behaviour towards using their strengths, it will lead to higher competency levels.

Hypothesis 7: Positive significant relationships exist between POSSU and competence.

Hypothesis 8: Positive significant relationships exist between PBSU and competence.

POSSU, PBSU, and Self-determination

In a recent study done by Els (in process), a positive relationship was found between POSSU and POSDI, with both autonomy and participation in decision making. In view of autonomy and participation being regarded as job resources, Els (in process) also conceptualised POSDI as a job resource. Since all these variables are conceptualised as job resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), evidence of possible relationships will be provided. Furthermore, these job resources all serve the same purpose, which is to (a) be functional in achieving work goals; (b) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs; and (c) stimulate personal growth, learning, and development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Self-determination is reflected by employees' freedom or choice when it comes to the application and execution of work activities (Randolph & Kemery, 2011). It is therefore expected that POSSU will correlate with self-determination, due to the link with job resources; when employees perceive the organisation to be supportive of their using their strengths, it will result in greater autonomy which will empower employees in the organisation.

Proactive behaviour is displayed by employees who actively look for opportunities to use their strengths in the work environment (Els, in process). Furthermore, proactivity is characterised by employees taking personal initiative, - reflecting a self-starting nature - whereby individuals are seen as being persistent in overcoming difficulties in the pursuit of a goal (Frese & Fay, 2001). It can therefore be argued that PBSU, as previously defined, is linked with self-determination due to the fact that it involves an employee's perception of autonomy and choice in the initiation and regulation of his/her own actions (Deci et al., 1989).

Hypothesis 9: Positive significant relationships exist between POSSU and self-determination.

Hypothesis 10: Positive significant relationships exist between PBSU and self-determination.

POSSU, PBSU and Impact

Since the classification of POSSU and POSDI as job resources, it can be expected that they assist in achieving work goals, due to their association with increased performance levels (Bakker, 2011; Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2003). With this classification, it is expected that POSSU and POSDI will correlate with impact which is reflected by the degree to which employees foster feelings of making a difference or believing that their work can make a difference and impact the organisational goals (Randolph & Kemery, 2011).

Furthermore, when employees portray proactive behaviour, they engage in personal initiative and in that way are seen as being persistent when facing tough times in their pursuit of a goal (Frese & Fay, 2001). It may be argued that employees who engage in proactive behaviour towards using their strengths will do anything to reach a certain goal. This drive towards goal attainment may impact their work positively. It is therefore expected that PBSU will positively correlate with impact.

Hypothesis 11: Positive significant relationships exist between POSSU and impact.

Hypothesis 12: Positive significant relationships exist between PBSU and impact.

POSDI, PBDI, and Meaning

When opportunities are presented to employees with regard to improving their skills, they will present in the form of positive moods (Bakker & Geurts, 2004) which will result in positive feelings and an increase in self-worth (Mostert, 2006; Van Aarde & Mostert, 2008). This can be ascribed to a feeling of competence and satisfaction with work. It is therefore expected that when employees perceive the organisation to be supportive of their using their strengths in the workplace, they will derive a sense of meaning from it.

Employees who are actively seeking to improve their deficits, engage in a process of displaying proactive behaviour in which they take the initiative to better their current situation or create new favourable conditions, instead of passively waiting for things to improve (Crant, 2000). It may be argued that PBDI will correlate with meaning since meaning is understood as the value of the goal or purpose associated with an employee's work, linked to that individual's ideals and standards (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Employees will only engage in self-starting

behaviour towards improving their deficits when the ultimate goal or purpose is of value to them, based on their ideals and standards.

Hypothesis 13: Positive significant relationships exist between POSDI and meaning.

Hypothesis 14: Positive significant relationships exist between PBDI and meaning.

POSDI, PBDI, and Competence

POSDI is based on the extent to which employees perceive the organisation as being supportive of their improving their deficits. A way in which an organisation can show support is by providing opportunities for training as a means to improve areas of weakness (Glen, 1990; Santos & Stuart, 2003). Training and development have been linked with increased performance levels (Abdullah et al., 2009), showing that employees who take on these opportunities, improve. Competent individuals have a belief that they possess certain capabilities to perform activities, with a certain level of skill and mastery (Bandura, 1986; Conger & Kanungo, 1988). One would therefore expect that when employees perceive the organisation to be supportive of their using their deficits, it will result in higher competency levels due to the capabilities employees possess.

A positive relationship between PBDI and competence is attributed to the fact that when employees actively pursue improving their weaknesses, it may foster positive feelings in them, as they are becoming more skilled in a specific work-related area (Els, in process). In addition, this increased sense of competence is viewed as self-efficacy, which is portrayed through the confidence shown in an individual's ability when dealing with difficult tasks or problems (Bandura, 1977).

Hypothesis 15: Positive significant relationships exist between POSDI and competence.

Hypothesis 16: Positive significant relationships exist between PBDI and competence.

POSDI, PBDI, and Self-determination

Based on the fact that autonomy and participation in decision making are seen as job resources, Els (in process) also conceptualised POSDI as a job resource which will provide evidence of possible relationships between POSDI, since all these variables are conceptualised as job resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Furthermore, POSDI has also proven to be functional in achieving work goals and stimulating personal growth, learning, and development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), which form part of the purpose of a job resource. Due to the overlap between POSDI and autonomy, when employees perceive the organisation to be supportive of their improving their deficits, it will result in greater self-determination since employees have more autonomy and choice.

Similar to strengths use, when employees are actively looking for initiatives to improve their weaknesses, it may be seen as a display of proactive behaviour. Proactive behaviour is characterised by employees taking personal initiative and being persistent in overcoming difficulties in the pursuit of a goal (Frese & Fay, 2001). It can therefore be argued that PBDI will correlate with self-determination since it involves an employee's perception of autonomy and choice in the initiation and regulation of his or her own actions (Deci, Cornell, & Ryan, 1989).

Hypothesis 17: Positive significant relationships exist between POSDI and self-determination.

Hypothesis 18: Positive significant relationships exist between PBDI and self-determination.

POSDI, PBDI, and Impact

Based on the classification of POSDI as a job resource, it can be expected that POSDI helps with achieving work goals due to its association with increased performance levels (Bakker, 2011; Bakker et al., 2003). With this classification, it is expected that POSDI will correlate with impact which is reflected by the degree to which employees foster feelings of making a difference or believing that their work can make a difference and impact organisational goals (Randolph & Kemery, 2011). When employees perceive the organisation to be supportive of their improving their deficits, this support will enable an employee to make an impact in the organisation.

The improvement of one's deficits can lead to feelings of mastery which can lead to the satisfaction of an accomplishment need (Els, in process). Employees experience a sense of impact when they influence the outcomes in the organisation and make a difference or contribution (Carless, 2004). It is expected that when employees show proactive behaviour towards improving their deficits, it will enable them to make an impact in the workplace due to the accomplishment associated with deficit improvement.

Hypothesis 19: Positive significant relationships exist between POSDI and impact.

Hypothesis 20: Positive significant relationships exist between PBDI and impact.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research Approach

All the measurements utilised in this study were achieved with a cross-sectional survey design. In choosing this design, the researcher can examine several groups of people at one particular point in time (Mann, 2003). In addition, a quantitative research approach was followed in which large representative samples and fairly structured data collection procedures were used in testing the hypotheses (Creswell, 2009; Struwig & Stead, 2001).

Research Method

Research Participants

The participants in this study included 271 educators employed in the Southern Cape. The participants were chosen by means of convenience sampling which entails selecting participants for a research study on the basis of their availability (Struwig & Stead, 2001). The characteristics of participants that were covered in this study include age, gender, home language, ethnicity, educational level and organisational tenure. The characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Characteristics of the Participants (N = 271)

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	16-20	2	0.80
	21-30	30	11.30
	31-40	19	7.10
	41-50	81	30.50
	51-60	99	37.20
	60-69	24	9.00
Gender	Female	175	64.6
	Male	87	32.1
Language	English	10	3.7
	Afrikaans	256	94.5
Ethnicity (Race)	Asian	5	1.8
	Black	5	1.8
	Coloured	165	60.9
	White	96	35.4
	Other	0	0
Educational level	Grade 10	5	1.8
	Grade 11	0	0
	Grade 12	23	8.5
	Technical College Diploma	58	21.4
	Technicon Diploma	29	10.7
	University degree	94	34.7
	Postgraduate degree	37	13.7
Organisational tenure	0-5 years	91	34.20
	6-10 years	35	13.20
	11-20 years	51	19.20
	21-30 years	52	19.50
	31-40 years	24	9.00
	41-50 years	3	1.10

The majority of the sample were aged between 51 and 60 (37.20%), with more females (64.6%). Afrikaans-speaking educators made up 94.5% of the population, while Coloured participants comprised 60.9%, and white participants 35.4% of the sample. The education levels of the participants differed, with the majority having a university degree (34.7%), technical college diploma (21.4%) and grade 10 (1.8%) as the highest educational level. Lastly, with regard to organisational tenure, most participants occupied their positions within the school context for 0-5 years (34.20%). The sample is representative of the total population in terms of age, gender, home language, ethnicity, educational level and organisational tenure.

Measuring Instruments

The following measuring instruments were utilised in order to reach the objectives of this study:

Biographical Questionnaire. A biographical questionnaire was used in this study to obtain information regarding the biographical characteristics of participants in the education sector in the Southern Cape region. With the questionnaire, the researcher focused on information pertaining to participants' age, gender, home language, race ethnicity, educational level and organisational tenure.

Strengths Use and Deficit Improvement Questionnaire (SUDIQ; Els, in process). This scale was utilised in this study to indicate the extent to which strengths are used and deficits are developed by both the employees and the organisation. The SUDIQ items are answered on a 7-point frequency scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*almost always*). This instrument consists of four factors or subscales, namely perceived organisational support for strengths use (POSSU), perceived organisational support for deficit improvement (POSDI), proactive behaviour towards strengths use (PBSU), and proactive behaviour towards deficit improvement (PBDI). Typical questions that may be found in this questionnaire include the following: (POSSU; 5 items): 'The organisation provides employees with the opportunity to do what they are good at'; (PBSU; 5 items): 'I capitalise on my strengths at work'; (POSDI; 5 items): 'This organisation emphasises the development of employees' weak points'; and (PBDI; 5 items): 'In my job, I make an effort to improve my limitations'. The alpha coefficients for this scale are identified as: POSSU = 0.93; PBSU = 0.91; POSDI = 0.93 and PBDI = 0.95 (Els, in process).

Measuring Empowerment Questionnaire (MEQ; Spreitzer, 1995). This scale was chosen to measure the level of psychological empowerment experienced by employees. The MEQ consists of 12 items which are scored on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The instrument consists of four factors or subscales, namely meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. Typical questions included in this questionnaire are meaning: 'The work I do is very important to me' ($\alpha = 0.92$); competence: 'I am confident about my ability to do my job' ($\alpha = 0.90$); self-determination: 'I can decide on

my own how to go about doing my work' ($\alpha = 0.85$); and impact: 'My impact on what happens in my department is large' ($\alpha = 0.84$) (Spreitzer, 1995).

Research Procedure

For the purpose of requesting consent to conduct this study among educators in the Southern Cape, a letter was mailed to the Director of Research Services at the Western Cape education department. The letter included information regarding the aim and background of this study. Ethical aspects and questionnaires to be included in this study were also communicated in the letter. Permission to conduct this research was granted.

Principals from the different schools in the Southern Cape region were then approached to request the participation of the educators at their school. Arrangements were made with each principal and the date for data collection was conveyed. Schools were visited on the agreed upon date and surveys were disseminated to educators who had signed the consent form to participate. Surveys were personally collected by the researcher on the agreed upon date. Participants were given four weeks to complete the survey.

Statistical Analysis

Statistical analyses were carried out with the SPSS (IBM SPSS, 2013) and Mplus 7.2 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2014) software programs. Confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were used to determine the factorial/construct validity of the SUDIQ and MEQ. Cronbach alpha coefficients were used as an indicator of instrument reliability and $\alpha \geq 0.70$ was deemed satisfactory (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Structural equation modelling (SEM) methods were applied to address the research questions. The primary benefit associated with SEM is the fact that it can be used in the study of relationships among latent constructs which are known for being specified by multiple measures (Lei & Wu, 2007).

More recently, in contrast to the traditional approach (the Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimator - treating data as continuous) and due to advances in statistical software, the social sciences have been able to analyse categorical data with more ease. In this regard, other statistical tools are at a researcher's disposal (Dewilde & De Keulenaer, 2003); with specific reference to this study, Mplus was used for the analyses as it has the ability to specify the data type being

analysed as categorical. Polychoric, tetrachoric or polyserial correlations and combining them with weighted least squares (cf. Jöreskog, 1990) were some of the alternative approaches proposed in this regard. Mplus generates a polychoric correlation matrix between the categorical indicators; a Pearson correlation matrix is used for the estimated latent variables. The input into the analysis will be the covariance matrix. The observed variables are the items themselves.

When using a weighted least squares approach, it is not possible to compete non-nested models using the chi-square values as when using maximum likelihood analysis (Liu, Hancock, & Harring, 2011). Subsequently, as it is good practice to compete measurement models to ascertain the best fitting model, it was decided to use Bayesian analysis to generate Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) values to compete different measurement models. The BIC values are therefore used in this process as an indicator for model selection (Wu, Zumbo, & Siegel, 2011). The improvement based on the trade-off between fit as well as complexity is possible through producing a lower BIC value (Van De Schoot, Lugtig, & Hox, 2012). After the model with the lowest BIC value has been identified (Van De Schoot et al., 2012), the process will continue with the weighted least squares analysis (WLSMV estimator) to investigate the research questions.

The following fit indices were considered: Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and the Root-Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). When determining goodness of fit with regard to CFI and TLI, a value of 0.95 and larger represents good fit, whilst a value of 0.90 represents acceptable fit (Schermelele-Engel, Moosbrugger, & Mueller, 2003). The CFI performs well even with small sample sizes and assumes that all latent variables are uncorrelated and compares the sample covariance matrix to the null model (Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2008). RMSEA was also used for goodness of fit purposes with values smaller than 0.06 which indicate good model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). On the other hand, acceptable fit with regard to RMSEA is represented through values smaller than 0.08 (Schermelele-Engel et al., 2003). This index is usually considered as an indicator in the process of closeness of fit (Van De Schoot et al., 2012).

Ethical Considerations

According to Neuman (2006), "... ethics define what is or is not legitimate to do or what moral research procedure involves" (p. 129). In this study, each educator received a cover letter enclosed with the questionnaire, explaining the aim of the study, but also indicating that participation was voluntary. Educators were informed to sign the consent form. In signing the consent form, educators committed themselves to participate in the study, and were also assured that they could withdraw at any stage of the research, without penalty. Confidentiality was ensured pertaining to answering the questionnaires and the handling of data. As agreed upon in the timeframe, the researcher collected the questionnaires and signed consent forms. The focus of this study with regard to ethical consideration was therefore on confidentiality, anonymity and voluntary participation.

RESULTS

Reliability and Factorial Validity of the SUDIQ and MEQ

The following Cronbach's alpha coefficients were obtained in this study: POSSU $\alpha = 0.93$; PBSU $\alpha = 0.91$; POSDI $\alpha = 0.93$; and PBDI $\alpha = 0.95$. The values are an indication of the reliability of the four factors of the SUDIQ. In focusing on the four constructs of MEQ, alpha coefficients of above 0.70 were revealed. More specifically, meaning $\alpha = 0.89$; competence $\alpha = 0.82$; self-determination $\alpha = 0.84$; and impact $\alpha = 0.92$ were identified, indicating good reliability for each dimension of the MEQ. Thus, the results suggest that both the SUDIQ and the MEQ can be deemed reliable measures to be used in a South African context. This provides support for accepting Hypotheses 1 and 2.

Confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were used to determine the factorial validity of both the SUDIQ and MEQ.

In investigating Hypotheses 3 and 4, competing measurement models were specified and competed with Bayesian analysis in order to ascertain the best fitting model with regard to the SUDIQ and MEQ. For the purpose of the BIC analysis, the following models were specified:

1. Model 1: A five-factor model, where the SUDIQ comprised four components ("loose") and psychological empowerment as a single factor (fixed).

2. Model 2: A five-factor model where the SUDIQ variables were fixed (one factor), with the empowerment variables independent (four components).
3. Model 3: A two-factor model characterised by one factor for the SUDIQ, as well as one factor for the MEQ.
4. Model 4: An eight-factor model where all the factors were independently specified.

The results from the BIC analysis revealed the following values: Model 1 (21438.645); Model 2 (20604.034); Model 3 (22323.348); and Model 4 (19719.382). The results reflected the following values for the fit indices of the best fitting model (i.e. Model 4): CFI (0.98); TLI (0.98); and RMSEA (0.07). These statistics are within the guidelines when considering the cut-off points for these fit indices (Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Hoyle, 1995; Van De Schoot et al., 2012). The conclusion can therefore be drawn that, as a result of the lowest BIC values, the hypothesised eight-factor model fits the data acceptably in comparison with a two-factor model and two five-factor models.

The eight-factor model was therefore the best fitting model and comprised the four factors for the SUDIQ, namely POSSU, POSDI, PBSU, and PBDI; and the four factors for psychological empowerment (MEQ), namely meaning (MEAN), self-determination (SELF), competency (COMP) and impact (IMP). This then provides support for Hypotheses 3 and 4 in that it confirms that the SUDIQ comprises four distinct factors, namely POSSU, POSDI, PBSU, and PBDI. The factor structure of the MEQ is also confirmed as comprising four distinct factors, namely meaning, competence, self-determination and impact.

Continuing the process, the factor structure of the best fitting model (the eight-factor model) was then further analysed with the weighted least squares approach (WLSMV estimator) to assess the construct validity of both the SUDIQ and the MEQ. One item of the competency dimension of the MEQ (COMP item 1; 'I am confident about my ability to do my job') resulted in a non-positive definite matrix and had to be disregarded for the purpose of the analysis, while all items for the SUDIQ loaded sufficiently on the corresponding component.

The results of the factor loadings are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Standardised Factor Loadings and Communalities for the Measurement Model

Factor	Items	Loading	S.E.	P	R ²	S.E
POSSU	POSSU1	0.83	0.02	0.00	0.68	0.04
	POSSU2	0.91	0.02	0.00	0.83	0.03
	POSSU3	0.87	0.02	0.00	0.77	0.03
	POSSU4	0.93	0.01	0.00	0.87	0.02
	POSSU5	0.95	0.01	0.00	0.89	0.02
PBSU	ESUB1	0.88	0.02	0.00	0.77	0.04
	ESUB2	0.88	0.02	0.00	0.78	0.04
	ESUB3	0.90	0.02	0.00	0.80	0.03
	ESUB4	0.84	0.03	0.00	0.70	0.04
	ESUB5	0.89	0.02	0.00	0.80	0.04
POSDI	POSDI1	0.81	0.02	0.00	0.66	0.04
	POSDI2	0.92	0.01	0.00	0.85	0.03
	POSDI3	0.92	0.02	0.00	0.84	0.03
	POSDI4	0.88	0.02	0.00	0.78	0.04
	POSDI5	0.87	0.02	0.00	0.75	0.03
PBDI	EDIB1	0.91	0.01	0.00	0.83	0.02
	EDIB2	0.92	0.01	0.00	0.84	0.02
	EDIB3	0.93	0.01	0.00	0.86	0.02
	EDIB4	0.96	0.01	0.00	0.92	0.01
	EDIB5	0.89	0.01	0.00	0.79	0.03
MEAN	MEAN1	0.92	0.02	0.00	0.85	0.04
	MEAN2	0.95	0.02	0.00	0.91	0.03
	MEAN3	0.95	0.03	0.00	0.89	0.05
COMP	COMP2	0.86	0.04	0.00	0.73	0.06
	COMP3	0.80	0.03	0.00	0.63	0.05
SELF	SELF1	0.84	0.03	0.00	0.70	0.05
	SELF2	0.87	0.02	0.00	0.76	0.04
	SELF3	0.93	0.02	0.00	0.86	0.04
IMP	IMP1	0.86	0.02	0.00	0.73	0.04
	IMP2	0.96	0.01	0.00	0.92	0.02
	IMP3	0.96	0.01	0.00	0.93	0.02

Notes: $p < 0.001$ for all values.

This analysis forms part of Hypotheses 3 and 4 in which the factor structures of SUDIQ and MEQ are determined.

Table 2 presents the factor loadings and communalities (R^2) of the items for both the SUDIQ and the MEQ. All the items of each dimension for the SUDIQ and MEQ, respectively, provided factor loadings of above 0.70 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007) with sufficient communalities ($R^2 > 0.30$; Pallant, 2011). In both cases low standard errors were evident which indicate the accuracy in estimation. In the first instance, the focus was on the factor loadings associated with the four

dimensions (factors) of the SUDIQ and MEQ. The lowest item loadings revealed for the SUDIQ and MEQ were assigned to POSDI (POSDI1 = 0.81) and COMP (COMP3 = 0.80). However, these items were still above the acceptable value of 0.70 that was set as cut-off point. POSSU (POSSU5 = 0.95), PBSU (PBSU3 = 0.90), POSDI (POSDI2 = 0.92; POSDI3 = 0.92) and PBDI (PBDI 4 = 0.96) as dimensions of the SUDIQ comprised factor loadings which were identified as the highest in each case. Furthermore, the MEQ, similar to the SUDIQ, produced acceptable factor loadings greater than 0.70. The following dimensions of the MEQ, meaning (MEAN2 = 0.95; MEAN3 = 0.95), competence (COMP2 = 0.86), self-determination (SELF3 = 0.93) and impact (IMP2 = 0.96; IMP3 = 0.96) represented the items with the highest factor loading in each regard. Therefore, the analysis revealed that the factor loadings of the items indicate that the items measure each factor adequately.

Sufficient communalities were associated with all the factors indicated for both the SUDIQ and MEQ. This indicates that each latent variable explained sufficient variance in all of the corresponding items. As with the factor loadings, a few communalities are highlighted; the highest communalities for each factor were represented by POSSU5 (89%), PBSU3 and PBSU5 (80%), POSDI2 (85%), PBDI4 (92%), MEAN2 (91%), SELF3 (86%), and IMP3 (93%). In contrast, POSDI1 (POSDI) and COMP3 (COMP) were identified as explaining the lowest variance in each of the SUDIQ and MEQ factors respectively; the factors accounting for 66% and 63% of the variance in each item. Therefore, the communalities were still above the cut-off point that was set at 0.30.

In terms of validity, Hypotheses 3 and 4 are therefore accepted, as both factor loadings and communalities indicate that all the items adequately measured the individual factors of both the SUDIQ and MEQ. Thus, evidence was found for the factorial (construct) validity of both the SUDIQ and MEQ instruments.

Convergent Validity of the SUDIQ and MEQ

The Cronbach's alpha coefficients and correlations between the dimensions of the SUDIQ and MEQ are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Estimated Correlation Matrix for the Latent Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. POSSU	(0.93)								
2. PBSU	0.61**	(0.91)							
3. POSDI	0.59**	0.50**	(0.93)						
4. PBDI	0.48*	0.68**	0.69**	(0.95)					
5. Meaning	0.40*	0.54**	0.33*	0.46*	(0.89)				
6. Competence	0.36*	0.50**	0.30*	0.38*	0.79**	(0.82)			
7. Determination	0.36*	0.42*	0.25	0.40*	0.63**	0.79**	(0.84)		
8. Impact	0.44*	0.48*	0.36*	0.45*	0.52**	0.50**	0.63**	(0.92)	

Notes: All values statistically significant ($p \leq 0.01$); * Correlation is practically significant $r \geq 0.30$ (medium effect); ** Correlation is practically significant $r \geq 0.50$ (large effect); Cronbach's alpha coefficients are presented on the diagonal in brackets.

The correlations between the four SUDIQ dimensions and MEQ variables were analysed to assess the convergent validity of these two scales. Statistically significant correlations were found between all the constructs. More specifically, the results indicated that POSSU correlated practically significantly (medium effect) with all the MEQ constructs. PBSU correlated practically significantly (large effect) with meaning and competence, with a practically significant (medium effect) correlation with self-determination and impact. POSDI was found to correlate practically significantly (medium effect) with meaning, competence, impact, and self-determination. In the case of PBDI, practically significant (medium effect) correlations were aligned between PBDI and all the constructs of MEQ. Hypotheses 5 to 20 therefore support evidence for the convergent validity of both the SUDIQ and MEQ, as hypothesised.

DISCUSSION

The aim of this article was to investigate the reliability and validity (construct and convergent) of both the SUDIQ and MEQ.

The specific objectives were to investigate if the SUDIQ consisted of four distinct factors, namely perceived organisational support for strengths use, perceived organisational support for deficit improvement, proactive behaviour towards strengths use and proactive behaviour towards deficit improvement; and whether each of these factors demonstrated acceptable

reliability. In the second instance, this study aimed at determining whether the MEQ consisted of four distinct factors, namely meaning, competence, self-determination and impact, and whether each of these four factors demonstrated acceptable reliability. Lastly; the focus was on investigating convergent validity by determining if practically and statistically significant positive relationships existed between a combined focus on strengths use and deficit improvement (SUDIQ) and psychological empowerment (MEQ) amongst educators in the Southern Cape region in South Africa.

Reliability of the SUDIQ and MEQ

Acceptable Cronbach's alpha coefficients were found for the SUDIQ which is an indication of acceptable internal consistency for this measure in the education environment. These results, in terms of acceptable internal consistency based on the SUDIQ, are supported by Els (in process), Keenan and Mostert (2013), Tabiri (2012), and Stander (2013). Similar to the results of the SUDIQ, reliable measures were revealed for the MEQ which are in line with the Cronbach's alpha coefficients reflected in previous research in South Africa (De Villiers & Stander, 2011; Nel, 2013; Stander, 2007; Stander & Rothmann, 2009). To conclude, both the SUDIQ and MEQ were proven to be reliable instruments for use within the education environment in South Africa.

Construct Validity of the SUDIQ and MEQ

By using the testing competing models analysis, the eight-factor model was found to fit the data best and confirmed that the SUDIQ scale comprised four factors, namely perceived organisational support for strengths use (POSSU), perceived organisational support for deficit improvement (POSDI), proactive behaviour towards strengths use (PBSU) and proactive behaviour towards deficit improvement (PBDI). Several researchers support this finding in that four distinct factors are associated with the SUDIQ (Els, in process; Stander, 2013).

Similarly, by competing measurement models, the four-factor model was confirmed for the MEQ, namely meaning, self-determination, competence and impact. Researchers such as Stander (2007), Stander and Rothmann (2009), and Mendes and Stander (2011) showed similar results in their respective studies. The results of this study are in line with the original research of Spreitzer (1995) that found four distinct factors with the MEQ.

Based on the above results, the construct validity of both the SUDIQ and the MEQ has been supported.

Convergent Validity of the SUDIQ and MEQ

The third hypothesis investigated if a positive relationship existed between the dimensions of the SUDIQ, and the dimensions of the MEQ. The results portrayed that in all cases the factors of the SUDIQ and MEQ were positively related, with statistical and practical significance.

POSSU showed to be correlated with all the dimensions of psychological empowerment. The correlation between POSSU and meaning implies that educators, who experience their school environment as supportive of their using their strengths, tend to be more motivated because they feel that they are capable of doing a worthwhile job (Govindji & Linley, 2007). When the school is seen to be supportive of educators developing their strengths, it can lead to various benefits for the organisation, as it can help them reach their full potential (Linley & Harrington, 2006b). Supporting employees in developing their strengths can therefore impact their levels of competence in the organisation. The relationship between POSSU, self-determination and impact indicate that if educators experience the school to be supportive of their using their strengths, it will give them a voice in the school. Their initiatives will make a difference, due to the support given by the school in creating certain opportunities for them to use their strengths. In general, it will add to feelings of being in control and empowered. When employees have a sense of control in the workplace, it enables them to make certain decisions in their work environment, giving them a sense of control over the impact they make in the workplace (Najafi et al., 2011). In this way, the support given to educators to use their strengths by providing them with opportunities to do so, contribute to the important role they play in the organisation, i.e. having power or authority and making an impact (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Lee & Koh, 2001).

POSDI correlated practically significantly with meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. When educators experience their school as being supportive of their improving their deficits, it will lead to educators experiencing their work as important, due to the school making opportunities available for employees to improve their areas of weakness. In this way, educators will associate these opportunities given to them with positive feelings (Bakker &

Geurts, 2004) which will impact their self-worth (Mostert, 2006; Van Aarde & Mostert, 2008); thus feeling important. At the same time, educators believe they possess certain competency levels when the school provides them with opportunities to improve their areas of weakness; a belief is fostered that they possess the necessary skills and abilities to execute work well (Bandura, 1986). A constant focus on performing tasks that fall within one's areas of weakness, together with not receiving any opportunity to improve those areas could have a negative impact on goal achievement - to the point of feeling incompetent (Els, in process). In this regard it is expected that if opportunities exist to improve one's weaknesses, it will lead to greater competence and better impact regarding achieving organisational goals. Empowered individuals are the result of self-initiatives; however, organisational characteristics can increase the likelihood of producing more empowered educators in the education environment (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997).

In highlighting the relationship between POSDI and self-determination, educators experience a strong sense of independence or control when executing tasks as a result of support from the school/principal towards improving their deficits. It is important for employees to know the role they play in the organisation. This knowledge might let them feel that they have power or authority (Lee & Koh, 2001; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Research indicated that empowerment can aid in the process of wellness by improving deficits, and engaging professionals as collaborators instead of authoritative experts (Zimmerman, 2000). In this regard, it would be reasonable to expect that when educators perceive the school environment of being supportive of their improving their deficits, it will result in greater self-determination when employees are regarded as collaborators; thus playing an important contributing role in the school environment. When educators perceive the school environment as supporting them in improving their deficits, it will result in greater self-determination when employees are regarded as collaborators; thus having autonomy and feeling in control.

PBSU, which is seen as employees' self-starting behaviour directed towards using their strengths in the workplace, has a strong relationship with meaning and competence. Educators who display proactive behaviour towards using their strengths in the school context feel valued for their contribution. This relationship is made practical in the educational context when employees start engaging in behaviour which enables them to use their strengths in the workplace. When strengths use behaviour is evoked, a feeling of meaning is derived due to the positive emotions and valued feelings associated with it, while the important feeling will

further motivate the educator (Elston & Boniwell, 2011). Educators who proactively engage in using their strengths are able to find a fit between the requirements of a job and their own beliefs (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990), due to the fact that they are engaging in what is natural to them and not contradictory to their beliefs.

Furthermore, educators experience confidence (Linley & Harrington, 2006a) in their ability to do a good job when they utilise their strengths in the workplace; strengths use being linked with higher competency levels (Proctor, Maltby, & Linley, 2011). Strengths that people possess are viewed as the ability to provide consistent, near-perfect performance based on the inclusion of three elements, namely talents, skills and knowledge (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001). When educators engage in proactive behaviour towards using their strengths, it can lead to great performance due to the fact that they possess the skills and abilities (competencies) needed to perform a work task successfully (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

PBSU and its relationship with self-determination and impact indicate that educators who engage in self-starting behaviour directed at using their strengths in the workplace will feel a sense of authority and believe that they can impact organisational results. Educators known for using their strengths reflect proactive behaviour, taking initiative which is aimed at improving or developing new favourable circumstances for themselves. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) believed that the level of psychological empowerment, experienced by employees, depend on how these individuals understand or interpret their work tasks and the cognitions based on their objective reality. When educators engage in self-starting behaviour towards using their strengths in the workplace, they show determination, initiative and an understanding as to what they want to achieve. This drive and knowledge pertaining to strengths use by educators may lead to self-determination and having an impact in the school environment.

PBDI, i.e. employees' deficit improvement-oriented behaviour, correlated practically significantly with all the psychological empowerment dimensions. When educators proactively engage in developing their deficits, they will value their work and in turn feel that their work will contribute to the greater goal of the school. Educators will only engage in self-starting behaviour when they want to achieve important accomplishments. Furthermore, meaning is understood as the value of the goal or purpose associated with an employee's work, linked to the individual's ideals and standards (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Educators therefore portray proactive behaviour towards strengths use due to the importance associated with it, resulting

in greater meaning for educators. Also, when employees actively pursue improving their weaknesses, it may foster feelings associated with becoming more skilled in a specific work-related area (Els, in process). PBDI therefore leads to meaning and competence in the school environment.

PBDI gives people greater control associated with the demands and challenges of their work roles, which in turn will equip that person to achieve his or her work-related objectives (Stander, 2013). When educators take on self-starting actions to improve their weaknesses, they will have more self-determination and will be better equipped to make a contribution and impact in the school context.

POSSU and POSDI are seen as organisational resources which result in higher motivational levels due to the support from the organisation. Employees are motivated to increase their efforts and abilities to portray more in their work situations (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011; Els, in process). Organisations that foster these approaches will enable employees to make a difference in their workplace, as a dimension of MEQ. Educators in the school environment will foster a belief of impact when they feel they can influence systems in which they are rooted; thus experiencing a feeling of accomplishment (Mishra & Spreitzer, 1998; Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997).

From the above discussion it can be deducted that a focus on both the positive (strengths) and negative (deficits) is important to educators. A positive relationship between human capital and success has been noted in literature (Unger, Rauch, Frese, & Rosenbusch, 2011). It is therefore evident to note that human capital refers to all development processes aligned with an employee in which the aim is to train and educate them, engendering an increase in knowledge, skills, abilities and values. These development initiatives are carried out with the hope of improving the satisfaction and performance levels of employees and ultimately the organisation (Marimuthu, Arokiasamy, & Ismail, 2009). Positive outcomes are associated with organisations that invest in the development practices of employees. These positive outcomes are linked to employees showing willingness to walk the extra mile for the organisation and increase their organisational effectiveness (Woods & De Menezes, 1998). This study states the importance of developing human capital (educators). A focus on developing both positive (strengths) and negative (deficits) aspects can therefore increase positive results in the education sector.

Conclusions

Education has been earmarked as playing a vital role in this country's long-term development (News24, 2014), and for that reason a change strategy aimed at the development of educators is needed, focusing on teacher improvement (Mestry, Hendricks, & Bisschoff, 2009), with better equipped educators and educational leaders as the end result (Steyn & Van Niekerk, 2002). The development of educators will therefore help close the gap between challenges and the ability of schools to deal with those challenges (Mestry et al., 2009). In addressing these issues in the education environment, it would be worthwhile to introduce strengths use, deficit improvement and psychological empowerment in the education sector as part of a positive psychological approach due to the benefits associated with it.

Positive psychology research is especially limited within the school context. With this study, the aim is to expand this topic to the school environment. An objective aligned with positive psychology is to identify positive institutions, including schools which will be focused on enhancing individuals by means of promoting positive emotions and character traits (Schueller, 2012). Through these positive initiatives, teachers will have the opportunity to make the necessary choices; simultaneously developing their best aspects. In this way, schools provide teachers with goals and values necessary to develop their best aspects (Schueller, 2012).

With a positive psychological approach, a refreshing outlook pertaining to all that is flourishing and worthwhile in life is observed, in contrast to the traditional paradigm that mainly focuses on a diagnostic and solution-driven focus to problems (Donaldson & Ko, 2010; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). As part of the positive psychology movement, strengths use, deficit improvement and psychological empowerment (Els, in process; Stander, 2013; Van Zyl & Stander, 2013) have gained more attention in recent times.

Positive psychology fulfils the aim of conveying an understanding of the full human experience (Donaldson & Ko, 2010), where the focus is on understanding and building one's strengths and managing one's weaknesses, instead of focusing on or repairing them (Bowers, 2009; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Neither the positive nor the negative can be studied in isolation from each other, as it reduces the benefits that can be produced with a full spectrum study (Wood & Tarrier, 2010).

Such a combined approach necessitates a measurement that will address strengths use and weaknesses development. Els (in process) addressed this limitation by developing a four dimensional theory for this specific purpose, outlined as perceived organisational support for strengths use (POSSU), i.e. the extent to which employees perceive their organisation to be supportive of their using their strengths in the workplace; perceived organisational support for deficit improvement (POS DI), i.e. the extent to which employees perceive their organisation to be supportive of their improving their deficits in the workplace; pro-active behaviour towards strengths use (PBSU), i.e. self-starting behaviour directed towards using strengths in the workplace; and pro-active behaviour towards deficit improvement (PBDI), i.e. self-starting behaviour directed towards improving deficiencies in the workplace. The aim of the SUDI Q is to assess strengths use and deficit improvement by the employee and the organisation.

As mentioned beforehand, positive psychology practices incorporate constructs such as empowerment due to the benefits associated with it (Mills, Fleck, & Kozikowski, 2013). Psychological empowerment is reflected by an active intrinsic motivational state where it enables employees to have a sense of control over their work (Frazier & Fainshmidt, 2012). This motivational state is characterised by an experience of meaning, competence (self-efficacy), self-determination and impact (Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). By utilising a combined approach focusing on strengths use, deficit improvement and psychological empowerment, it is important to look at the benefits associated with these constructs, especially for the education environment.

When the school is seen to be supportive of educators developing their strengths, it can benefit the organisation in many ways, including reaching educators' full potential (Linley & Harrington, 2006b). In addition, if educators experience the school to be supportive of their using their strengths, it will give them a voice in the school, while their initiatives will make a difference. When one is afforded opportunities to improve one's weaknesses, it will lead to greater competence and better impact on achieving organisational goals. Empowered individuals are the result of self-initiatives; however, organisational characteristics can increase the likelihood of producing more empowered educators within the education environment (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997).

Educators who display proactive behaviour towards using their strengths in the school context feel valued for their contribution. Furthermore, confidence in one's ability to do a good job is

aligned with utilising one's strengths in the workplace (Linley & Harrington, 2006a; Proctor, Maltby, & Linley, 2011). When educators engage in self-starting behaviour towards using their strengths in the workplace, they may experience more freedom and self-determination while also contributing and having an impact in the school environment. Also, when educators pro-actively engage in developing their deficits, they will value the work and feel that their work will contribute to the greater goal of the school.

The constructs in this study are necessary, especially since a certain level of change is needed in the education environment; something which can be achieved with the utilisation of a combined approach of strengths use and deficit improvement and psychological empowerment.

Limitations and Recommendations

This study makes a contribution to human resource management research, especially in the educational context; however, there are certain limitations to take into consideration and to build on. Firstly, a cross-sectional research design was used, deeming this study to only consider variables at one stage and not leaving room for change over time. Since these constructs fall within a relatively new field of study, it will be interesting to study these constructs in a longitudinal study in order to determine causal relationships and consequences over certain periods. Also, the instruments used in this study, SUDIQ and MEQ, are limited to English-speaking participants, which may also affect the outcome of this study. Language may be seen as a barrier in this regard and may cause misunderstanding. Another limitation of this study was the utilisation of self-report questionnaires to obtain data. Through utilising these questionnaires, the chances of being exposed to common-method variance (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986) increase, with possible bias as an end result.

Convenience sampling was utilised in this research study, which held the consequence that all the participants included in this study came from one geographic location, namely the Southern Cape region. The research population consisted of 271 participants of whom the majority were Coloured Afrikaans-speaking females. A limitation in this regard would be generalising this study to the entire population, as most participants were from one group. For future research, this can be a starting point, especially expanding this research to include more participants from another race and gender. Also, expanding this study to other provinces in this country within the education environment will provide useful information.

When focusing on the model fit results towards determining construct validity, the following item of competency, namely ‘I am confident about my ability to do my job’ resulted in a non-positive definite matrix and had to be disregarded for the purpose of the analysis.

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CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH ARTICLE 2

Strengths use and deficit improvement and intention to leave: The role of psychological empowerment and work engagement amongst teachers

ABSTRACT

Orientation: Strengths use and deficit improvement are becoming more prevalent in the positive psychology literature. The relationships between these two variables and other variables in the nomological net have largely been unexplored. Through this process, it is expected that perceived organisational support for strengths use and deficit improvement will increase psychological empowerment levels, impact work engagement and lead to fewer educators leaving the education sector.

Research purpose: The aim of this study was to investigate the relationships between perceived organisational support for strengths use (POSSU), perceived organisational support for deficit improvement (POSDI), psychological empowerment, work engagement and intention to leave.

Motivation for the study: Through this study, a better understanding is possible pertaining to a combined approach focusing on both employee strengths use and deficit improvement in the education environment; and the relationships between POSSU and POSDI with psychological empowerment, work engagement and turnover intention.

Research design, approach and method: A cross-sectional survey design was used in this study. The convenience sample consisted of educators in the Southern Cape region ($N = 271$).

Main findings: Statistically significant correlations exist between POSSU, POSDI, psychological empowerment, work engagement and turnover intention. Significant and positive paths were revealed for all the constructs, except for the paths between POSSU and work engagement, and psychological empowerment and turnover intention. Results also revealed that psychological empowerment mediated the relationship between POSSU and work engagement, and the same applies to psychological empowerment being a mediator between POSDI and work engagement. Lastly, work engagement was not revealed as a mediator between psychological empowerment and intention to leave.

Practical/Managerial implications: Evidence suggests that POSSU and POSDI can be used as developmental tools by schools, with the aim of increasing educators' work engagement through increased psychological empowerment. This may consequently lead to lower turnover intentions by educators in the school environment.

Contribution/Value-add: This study adds value to human resource literature in portraying the value of positive organisations, especially by adopting combined practices focusing on strengths use and deficit improvement; and the valuable outcomes associated with such an

approach, such as psychologically empowered, engaged and loyal educators in the Southern Cape region.

Key terms: Positive psychology, strengths, deficits, combined approach, perceived organisational support for strengths use, perceived organisational support for deficit improvement, educator, work engagement, psychological empowerment, intention to leave.

INTRODUCTION

The education system has undergone various changes over the past years (Spaull, 2012). These changes create challenges that impact the motivation of future and existing educators (Betram, Appleton, Muthukrisna, & Wedekind, 2006; Saptoe, 2000). One of the most critical challenges for education, as acknowledged by the Minister of Education and highlighted in the media, is the issue of talent retention of our teachers in South Africa (Monama, 2012; News24, 2010). The twenty-first century stresses the importance of keeping up with this rapidly changing environment for all professionals in organisations, including educators (Retna, 2007; Vemić, 2007). The education sector needs highly skilled educators, as these skilled educators impact the quality of teaching (King & Newman, 2001; Van Eekelen, Vermunt, & Boshuizen, 2006). Emphasis is therefore on attracting, selecting and ultimately retaining high quality teachers (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, Ronfeldt, & Wyckoff, 2011).

Flourishing organisations possess skilled and highly motivated employees (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2002; Unger, Rauch, Frese, & Rosenbusch, 2011). However, the most important asset in any organisation - its employees - is sadly being misused, wasted or their services are being lost in the current business and education environment; contributing to an exhausted and cynical workforce. A need therefore exists to provide an empowered and self-renewing workforce in the education environment (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2002). Retaining talented/skilled employees places the organisation in a position to advance its competitive capabilities (Wright & McMahan, 2011). As the importance of talent management is conveyed, this concept includes a collaborative focus on developing strategies, including identifying talent gaps; succession planning; and recruiting, selecting, educating, motivating and retaining talented employees through a variety of initiatives (Groves, 2007; Guthridge, Komm, & Lawson, 2008; Ringo, Schweyer, DeMarco, Jones, & Lesser, 2010). The optimisation of educators' potential is of the utmost importance in creating and maintaining quality education.

Most professions including education, will have a bright future when they value a high-quality work environment which is able to retain both experienced and newly introduced employees (Laschinger, Wilk, Cho, & Greco, 2009). A way of achieving this can be by fostering a work environment where employees can use their strengths and are afforded the opportunities to improve their deficits, by increasing their psychological empowerment, higher work engagement and lower turnover intentions. Researchers are starting to realise the potential benefits associated with using positive psychological principles to improve the corporate experience (Mills, Fleck, & Kozikowski, 2013). In the past, the focus was predominantly shaped by practices focusing on the bottom line; with employees being neglected as a result. However, with the introduction of positive psychology, the focus is now on employee experience (Peterson & Seligman, 2003).

Positive psychology amplifies the good life, especially with the inclusion of strengths and the contribution thereof towards the thriving of individuals and communities (Cooperrider & Fry, 2012). Two approaches have been aligned with the positive psychology movement, namely a strengths-based development approach, characterised by strengths associated with quality identification and implementation which are used in achieving sustainable well-being (SBA; Peterson & Seligman, 2004); and a deficit-based approach, focusing on pathology or weaknesses (deficits) possessed by human beings (DBA; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Thus, the focus is on the negative as well as positive in that the worst in life is not ignored, but with an increasing emphasis on studying the positive in life (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987).

Although the predominant focus is on the positive side, the negative cannot be ignored. An all-inclusive focus on positive as well as negative factors is needed in order to produce a holistic perspective on employee and organisational functioning (Mills et al., 2013). Therefore, strengths use and developing employees' deficits is a current workplace need. When organisations commit to development practices focusing on their employees, it is expected that employees will exhibit increased willingness to extend themselves in the work environment, leading to increased organisational effectiveness (Woods & De Menezes, 1998). Research pertaining to development practices in which organisations use their employees' strengths (Wood, Linley, Maltby, Kashdan, & Hurling, 2011) and improve their deficits is limited (Els, in process), especially in the education environment.

These development practices are linked to a combined approach as part of the positive psychology movement. Els (in process) developed a theory which could be used to assess a combined approach that focuses on both strengths and deficits. This theory purports that employees are dependent and expect the organisation to provide support by creating an environment where they can use their strengths and where they are afforded opportunities to improve their deficits. Such a supportive work environment will lead to employees engaging in proactive behaviour towards using their strengths and improving their deficits at work. Following this conceptualisation, Els (in process) defines the following four constructs:

1. Perceived organisational support for strengths use (POSSU; the extent to which employees perceive their organisation to be supportive of their using their strengths in the workplace);
2. Perceived organisational support for deficit improvement (POSDI; the extent to which employees perceive their organisation to be supportive of their developing their deficits in the workplace);
3. Proactive behaviour towards strengths use (PBSU; employees' self-starting behaviour directed towards using their strengths in the workplace); and
4. Proactive behaviour towards deficit improvement (PBDI; employees' self-starting behaviour directed towards improving their deficits in the workplace).

For the purpose of the current study, the focus will be on the organisational dimensions (POSSU and POSDI) in developing educators in the school environment. POSSU and POSDI are conceptualised job resources, forming part of the Job-Demands Resources Model (JD-R; Els, in process). Job resources refer to the physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects of the job which not only assist in potentially reducing the negative effects of job demands, but are also functional in the achievement of work-related goals, whilst stimulating personal growth, learning and development (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001).

The JD-R model consists of two underlying psychological processes including the health impairment and the motivation, which create job-related strain and motivation in the workplace (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). The focus of this study is the motivational process in which job resources play an active role. It is therefore assumed that job resources comprise motivational potential which can assist in forming work engagement, as well as great performance (Bakker, 2011). This motivational potential can take on two roles - an intrinsic motivational role by

developing employee growth, learning and development as well as an extrinsic motivational role by being instrumental in achieving work goals (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Organisational support towards allowing employees to use their strengths in the workplace (i.e. POSSU) is reflected by providing employees with opportunities to use their strengths, for instance providing work tasks at which employees can excel, because they are doing what comes naturally to them. The same extent of support is evident when employees perceive the organisation to be supportive of their improving their deficits (i.e. POSDI), which can usually be in the form of training and feedback. When support is given to employees - as a resource - employees will be more motivated and exert their efforts towards achieving organisational goals (Meijman & Mulder, 1998). Furthermore, when organisations focus on supporting employee strengths, they will reap the benefit of a motivated and dedicated workforce (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). The focus of training initiatives towards improving areas of weakness is to create an educated and therefore better equipped workforce that can benefit employees, especially when they perform their work with the necessary confidence which in turn generates better efficiency and productivity (Gillham & Seligman, 1999). Perceived organisational support for strengths use and deficit improvement, embedded in a variety of initiatives, will contribute to employees achieving their goals and, in so doing, contribute to the goals of the organisation (Linley, Nielsen, Gillett, & Biswas-Diener, 2010). Through this conceptualisation, POSSU and POSDI are referred to as job resources which play a functional role in achieving work-related goals, whilst also leading to an experience of development and growth.

As these two job resources take on an extrinsic motivational role by being instrumental in achieving work roles, higher engagement levels are expected from POSSU and POSDI (Clifton & Harter, 2003; Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002; Stander, 2013). In turn, work engagement is regarded as a significant predictor of employee turnover (De Klerk & Stander, 2014). Furthermore, strengths use by employees has been shown to lead to a decrease in employee turnover (Clifton & Harter, 2003; Stefanyszyn, 2007). This clearly illustrates the possibility that, to retain employees, it may be important to increase POSSU and POSDI, which in turn may lead to increased work engagement levels.

However, in addition to the above mentioned positive outcomes of POSSU and POSDI, it is also expected that strengths use and deficit improvement play an important role in the

empowerment process to increase meaning (Bakker & Geurts, 2004; Govindji & Linley, 2007; Mostert, 2006; Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997; Van Aarde & Mostert, 2008); competence (Els, in process; Linley & Harrington, 2006b); self-determination (Els, in process); and impact (Bakker, 2011; Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2003; Randolph & Kemery, 2011) as part of the development process. Expected relationships between POSSU, POSDI and psychological empowerment can be achieved, based on organisations creating platforms in which employees are supported to use their strengths and providing opportunities in which employees can improve their deficits. However, the relationships between POSSU and POSDI, and psychological empowerment have not been explored in previous empirical studies. Also, the dynamic relationships between all the variables in this study warrant further investigation, especially in an attempt to contextualise them in the nomological net. The overall objective of this study is therefore to examine how educators' intentions to leave can be decreased as a result of increased POSSU, POSDI, psychological empowerment and work engagement. The hypothesised relationships are explained in the literature review below.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Perceived Organisational Support for Strengths Use and Deficit Improvement

A positive psychology movement focuses on both the negative and the positive in that the worst in life is not ignored and increased emphasis is placed on studying the positive (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Seligman, 2002). Two approaches have been formed in addressing the positive and negative, namely a strengths-based approach (SBA) and a deficiency-based approach (DBA).

Within an SBA perspective, a belief is fostered that each human being has specific qualities which will enable him or her to achieve desirable outcomes in various spheres of life (Anderson, 2000; Saleebey, 2001). Organisations can attain an optimal functioning workforce when they focus their efforts on providing opportunities for employees to capitalise on their strengths (Gable & Haidt, 2005); in that way benefiting the workplace by providing loyal, positive, productive and hardworking employees to achieve the goals of the organisation (Henry & Henry, 2007; Linley & Harrington, 2006a).

Weaknesses/deficiencies form part of a deficiency-based approach (DBA), which has been the traditional framework of developing employees (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In the same way that a need exists for a strengths-based focus, a need also exists to focus on employees' areas of weakness (Linley, Govindji, & West, 2007); however, the difference comes in where the organisation tries to bring the best (excellence) out of their employees by focusing on areas in which these employees struggle (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999).

Organisations can gain more when they develop employees by incorporating SBA and DBA to achieve a full human experience. Els (in process) developed a questionnaire, the Strengths Use and Deficit Improvement Questionnaire (SUDIQ), which has been validated in the South African context in various sectors to assess the extent to which employees perceive the organisation to be supportive of their using their strengths and improving their deficits. Literature in this regard is limited in the education environment.

The SUDIQ consists of four dimensions (Els, in process). This study, however, will only be focusing on the extent to which the organisation uses and improves educators' strengths and deficits, namely POSSU - perceived organisational support for strengths use (the extent to which employees perceive their organisation to be supportive of their using their strengths in the workplace) - and POSDI - perceived organisational support for deficit improvement (the extent to which employees perceive their organisation to be supportive of their developing their deficits in the workplace).

The Job-Demands Resources (JD-R) Model will be used to classify POSSU and POSDI as job resources. Job resources can be seen as physical, social or organisational aspects pertaining to one's work, which serve the following three purposes: (a) are functional in achieving work-related goals; (b) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs; and (c) stimulate personal growth and development (Demerouti et al., 2001). Consequently, through these resources a motivational process is activated which may result in positive outcomes such as work engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010).

Opportunities provided to employees to utilise their strengths have been shown to increase performance (Cameron, Mora, Leutscher, & Calarco, 2011). The reason for this may be attributed to the fact that it facilitates motivation amongst employees, thereby fostering willingness with employees to invest their full effort and available capacity to ensure the work

task is accomplished (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011; Els, in process). Support is usually perceived in a positive way; it is believed that the organisation has a positive orientation towards its employees (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), making them feel valued and important. In this way POSSU can be viewed as a job resource, especially since it has been helping to achieve work-related goals, reducing job demands and leading to growth and development (Demerouti et al., 2001).

Support given to employees to improve their deficits is usually presented by performance appraisals in which development programs are used to address training needs (Glen, 1990; Santos & Stuart, 2003) and increased performance levels (Abdullah, Ahsan, & Alam, 2009), due to an improvement in capability (Els, in process). This makes goal attainment easier, and by focusing on improving the weaknesses of employees, enables them to grow and learn (Harrison, 1992). POSDI is thus perceived as a job resource.

Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment gained special interest as a tool with which to enrich employees' working lives (Liden, Wayne, & Sparrowe, 2000). The concept of empowerment reflects psychological aspects, comprising a set of conditions which forms the prerequisites for intrinsic motivation (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Thomas and Velthouse (1990) took this as a building element in describing empowerment as intrinsic task motivation which consists of the following four dimensions, namely meaningfulness, impact, competence and choice. Spreitzer (1995) further developed this concept in using the foundation of Thomas and Velthouse, renaming two dimensions, however, namely meaning, impact, competence and self-determination. Spreitzer's work also included developing a four-dimensional scale, namely the measuring empowerment questionnaire (MEQ), with the purpose of measuring the four constructs.

In expanding on these cognitions, *meaning* can be seen as the fit between the needs presented by an employee in the work roles and the values portrayed (Randolph & Kemery, 2012). When individuals experience meaning in their working lives, it is usually accompanied by an energised feeling which is seen as having an effect on their empowerment (Spreitzer, Kizilos, & Nason, 1997). A belief embedded in possessing the necessary skills and abilities to execute work is comprehensive of the term *competence* (Bandura, 1986). A sense of confidence should

accompany the necessary skill set to avoid a feeling of inadequacy (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). The extent to which autonomy or freedom is granted within the working situation, influences a feeling of empowerment with regard to *self-determination* (Randolph & Kemery, 2012). This dimension is reflected in the decision-making process based on the autonomy granted with regard to how and when a certain task will be executed (Carless, 2004). *Impact*, as the last dimension, is known as a characteristic whereby individuals believe that their actions can have an impact on the system or organisational outcomes (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Employees believe that they execute a certain extent of control over the outcomes in the organisation, or in other words, make a difference or contribution in that way (Carless, 2004).

These four constructs represent the unique facets portrayed by empowerment, rather than being viewed as consequences or antecedents of one another (Spreitzer et al., 1997). Through empowerment, employees tend to believe much more in themselves and in their work and, as a result, are more engaged (Stander & Rothmann, 2010). To be effective, the current work system requires employees who are psychologically invested in their work, who pose the willingness to invest in work roles, and are proactive and committed to high performance levels. It is therefore evident that there is a need for engaged employees (Bakker & Leiter, 2010).

Work Engagement

Work engagement is characterised by enthusiasm, involvement, commitment, and passion (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Kahn (1990) first conceptualised this concept whereby employees attach themselves to their working roles. The more recent and familiar definition attached to work engagement is seen as one in which a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind is the end result of being engaged (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Roma, & Bakker, 2002). Work engagement consists of three components, known respectively as vigour, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Vigour is viewed as the component which is expressed through high energy and mental resilience levels experienced in the working situation, whilst also investing effort and persistence at work - even when faced with challenging times (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). Dedication is known for its linkage with an experience of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride as well as challenge during the execution of work (Schaufeli et al., 2006). The last component, absorption, is introduced when an employee is so

enmeshed and occupied in work to the point where he or she finds it difficult to detach him/herself from work (Schaufeli et al., 2006).

In the light of new developments, research has shown that vigour and dedication constitute the core dimensions of engagement, whilst absorption has been excluded (Schaufeli & Bakker 2001). To this end, absorption is viewed as playing a different role compared to the other two components of engagement (Salanova, Llorens, Cifre, Martínez, & Schaufeli, 2003), with it being viewed more as a result or consequence thereof (Montgomery, Peeters, Schaufeli, & Den Ouden, 2003). In this way, the preferred choice is using vigour and dedication as part of a two-factor structure aligned with work engagement (Demerouti, Mostert, & Bakker, 2010; Montgomery et al., 2003; Mostert, Cronje, & Pienaar, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2001).

Engaged employees are known for portraying characteristics such as driving themselves hard, while becoming absorbed in their work (Schaufeli et al., 2006). These employees are known for having a positive attitude and activity level, creating their own positive feedback in terms of appreciation and recognition, which contribute to their level of success (Bakker, Albrecht, & Leiter, 2011). The benefits of having engaged employees in any organisation are contributed to the fact that they describe their tiredness as a pleasant feeling due to the positive accomplishments attached in that regard (Bakker et al., 2011). In this regard, the importance associated with engaged employees is portrayed especially since an engaged workforce is less likely to leave the organisation (De Klerk & Stander, 2014).

Turnover

Employee turnover has received widespread interest from management, scholars and practitioners for decades and remains an issue of great relevance (Allen, Bryant, & Vardaman, 2010; Simón, de Sivatte, & Olmos, 2012). The importance behind workforce turnover is thoroughly conveyed, especially concerning the risks associated with it (Hausknecht & Trevor, 2011; Siong, Mellor, Moore, & Firth, 2006). Literature uses “retention” and “turnover” as alternative terms in the process of referring to employee turnover behaviour (Msweli-Mbanga, 2004). The concept of turnover encompasses two processes which are reflected by the entrance of new employees into the organisation, as well as the departure of existing employees from the organisation (Price, 1989).

Two categories encompass turnover, namely voluntary and involuntary turnover (Thomas, 2014; Wanous, 1979). Voluntary turnover involves the end of the employer-employee relationship through voluntary actions which are embedded in a process of resigning, due to factors such as salary, benefits and work environment (Iverson & Pullman, 2000). Involuntary turnover involves the end of the employer-employee relationship known for a process in which staff does not leave voluntarily, for example when an employee is retrenched or given severance pay (Iverson & Pullman, 2000). Voluntary turnover is associated with various consequences, including the loss of human capital linked to a huge disadvantage in terms of employee expertise (Yang, Wan, & Fu, 2012). Employee turnover depends on two factors, namely actual quitting behaviour and the intention an employee has to quit (Firth, Mellor, Moore, & Loquet, 2004). Previous research has indicated that intentions are regarded as the most effective determinants of actual behaviour (Gregory, Way, LeFort, Barrett, & Parfrey, 2007). Firth et al. (2004) agree with the notion of investigating factors that lead to employees' intention to leave, as it is regarded as a forerunner for behaviour relating to actual turnover. Retention strategies can be used to improve the education sector, especially with a focus on creating a positive organisational climate (Brewster, Sparrow, & Harris, 2005; Youssef & Luthans, 2008).

The Relationships between POSSU, POSDI, Psychological Empowerment, Work Engagement and Turnover Intention

Strengths use and deficit improvement as well as psychological empowerment have vastly contributed to the positive psychology literature (Els, in process; Stander, 2013; Van Zyl & Stander, 2013). These constructs can be used as building blocks for an optimal functioning individual who enjoys work.

One aim dedicated to this study is to find support for a mediating relationship in which psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between perceived organisational support for strengths use and deficit improvement, and work engagement. Similarly, it is of interest in this study to investigate whether work engagement mediates the relationship between psychological empowerment and intention to leave. A mediator can be regarded as a factor/construct used to bring about an effect, i.e. the effect that independent variables have on dependent variables (Rucker, Preacher, Tormala, & Petty, 2011). Previous research has

indicated the possibility of relationships between POSSU, POSDI and psychological empowerment (Bakker, 2011; Bakker et al., 2003; Bakker & Geurts, 2004; Els, in process; Govindji & Linley, 2007; Linley & Harrington, 2006b; Mostert, 2006; Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997; Randolph & Kemery, 2011; Van Aarde & Mostert, 2008).

Psychological empowerment has been tested in previous studies as a mediator (Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Bhatia, 2004; Carless, 2004; De Klerk & Stander, 2014), also shown to be a strong predictor of work engagement (Bhatnagar, 2012; Stander & Rothmann, 2010). With literature it becomes apparent that empowerment is regarded as an antecedent of work engagement (Macey & Schneider, 2008). The perceptions employees form of whether or not their work environment is supportive, influence individuals' perception of empowerment (Bhatnagar, 2007) which in turn influences their work engagement (Bhatnagar, 2012).

It is believed that when organisations provide opportunities for employees to use their strengths, they may reap the benefits in terms of feeling more valued (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993); adequate and competent (Linley & Harrington, 2006b); and self-determined (Els, in process). These benefits may all assist in attaining the goals of the organisation (Cameron et al., 2011; Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2009). When employees perceive their organisation to be supportive of their developing their deficits, they would experience more meaning (Bakker & Geurts, 2004; Mostert, 2006; Van Aarde & Mostert, 2008); exhibit an increase in competence and confidence (Abdullah et al., 2009; Els in process), and autonomy levels (Els in process); and have an impact on the organisation (Bakker, 2011; Bakker et al., 2003). Feelings of meaning, competence, self-determination and impact are associated with psychologically empowered employees (Spreitzer, 1995). These psychological empowerment cognitions in turn result in higher work engagement levels (Bhatnagar, 2012). A balanced approach in which credit is given to both strengths use and deficit improvement is linked to individuals being holistically developed; thus assisting them in attaining work-related outcomes such as work engagement (Standar, 2013).

Organisations that foster practices to empower individuals will reap benefits from an engaged workforce - a workforce that would ultimately not leave the organisation (Bhatnagar, 2012; De Klerk & Stander, 2014). Furthermore, when meaning and greater competence (self-efficacy) are linked to employees' work and environment, they experience work engagement (Luthans & Peterson, 2002; May & Harter, 2004; Schaufeli et al., 2002). Work engagement is usually

instilled in employees by means of dedication, enthusiasm and having positive emotions towards work, resulting in lower intentions to leave the organisation (Stander & Rothmann, 2010). High engagement levels are associated with lower intention to leave cognitions.

The following hypotheses are formulated in this regard:

Hypothesis 1: Positive significant relationships exist between POSSU, POSDI, work engagement and psychological empowerment of educators in the Southern Cape region.

Hypothesis 2: Negative significant relationships exist between POSSU, POSDI, work engagement, psychological empowerment and intention to leave of educators in the Southern Cape region.

Hypothesis 3: POSSU predicts psychological empowerment and work engagement of educators in the Southern Cape region.

Hypothesis 4: POSDI predicts psychological empowerment and work engagement of educators in the Southern Cape region.

Hypothesis 5: Psychological empowerment predicts work engagement and intention to leave of educators in the Southern Cape region.

Hypothesis 6: Work engagement predicts intention to leave of educators in the Southern Cape region.

Hypothesis 7: POSSU indirectly impacts work engagement and intention to leave of educators in the Southern Cape region via psychological empowerment.

Hypothesis 8: POSDI indirectly impacts work engagement and intention to leave of educators in the Southern Cape region via psychological empowerment.

Hypothesis 9: Psychological empowerment indirectly impacts intention to leave of educators in the Southern Cape region via work engagement.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research Approach

This study followed a quantitative research approach known for its clear rules and procedures pertaining to research. In quantitative research the primary investigation is done to develop knowledge through various methods, including hypotheses and questions, in which experiments and surveys are employed to collect data via predetermined instruments that

produce statistical data (Creswell, 2009). Furthermore, a cross-sectional survey design was utilised in examining several groups of participants at one particular point in time.

Research Method

Research Participants

The participants in this study included 271 educators employed in the Southern Cape. The participants were chosen by means of convenience sampling which entails selecting participants on the basis of their availability (Struwig & Stead, 2001). The characteristics of participants that were covered in this study include: age, gender, home language, ethnicity, educational level and organisational tenure. The characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Characteristics of the Participants (N = 271)

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	16-20	2	0.80
	21-30	30	11.30
	31-40	19	7.10
	41-50	81	30.50
	51-60	99	37.20
	60-69	24	9.00
Gender	Female	175	64.6
	Male	87	32.1
Home Language	English	10	3.7
	Afrikaans	256	94.5
Ethnicity (Race)	Asian	5	1.8
	Black	5	1.8
	Coloured	165	60.9
	White	96	35.4
	Other	0	0
Educational level	Grade 10	5	1.8
	Grade 11	0	0
	Grade 12	23	8.5
	Technical College Diploma	58	21.4
	Technicon Diploma	29	10.7
	University degree	94	34.7
	Postgraduate degree	37	13.7
Organisational tenure	0-5 years	91	34.20
	6-10 years	35	13.20
	11-20 years	51	19.20
	21-30 years	52	19.50
	31-40 years	24	9.00
	41-50 years	3	1.10

The majority of the population were aged between 51 and 60 (37.20%), with more females (64.6%). Afrikaans-speaking educators made up 94.5%, while Coloured participants comprised 60.9% and white participants 35.4% of the sample. The education levels of the participants differed with the majority having a university degree (34.7%), technical college diploma (21.4%) and grade 10 (1.8%) as their highest educational level. Lastly, with regard to organisational tenure, most participants have been occupying their positions in the school context for 0-5 years (34.20%). The sample is representative of the total population in terms of age, gender, home language, ethnicity, educational level and organisational tenure.

Measuring Instruments

The following measuring instruments were utilised in order to reach the objectives of this study:

Biographical Questionnaire. A biographical questionnaire was used in this study to obtain information regarding the biographical characteristics of participants in the education sector in the Southern Cape region. With the questionnaire, the researcher focused on information pertaining to participants' age, gender, home language, race ethnicity, educational level and organisational tenure.

Strengths Use and Deficit Improvement Questionnaire (SUDIQ; Els, in process). This scale was utilised in this study to indicate the extent to which strengths are used and deficits are developed by the organisation. The SUDIQ items are answered on a 7-point frequency scale ranging from 1 (*almost never*) to 7 (*almost always*). This instrument consists of four factors or subscales; however, only two were used for reaching the objectives of this study, namely perceived organisational support for strengths use (POSSU) and perceived organisational support for deficit improvement (POSDI). Typical questions that may be encountered in this questionnaire include the following: (POSSU; 5 items): 'The organisation provides employees with the opportunity to do what they are good at'; and (POSDI; 5 items): 'This organisation emphasises the development of employees' weak points'. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for this scale are identified as POSSU $\alpha = 0.93$; and POSDI $\alpha = 0.93$ (Els, in process).

Measuring Empowerment Questionnaire (MEQ; Spreitzer, 1995). This scale was chosen to measure the level of psychological empowerment experienced by employees. The MEQ

consists of 12 items which are scored on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The instrument consists of four factors or subscales namely meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. Typical questions included in this questionnaire are meaning: 'The work I do is very important to me' ($\alpha = 0.92$); competence: 'I am confident about my ability to do my job' ($\alpha = 0.90$); self-determination: 'I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work' ($\alpha = 0.85$); and impact: 'My impact on what happens in my department is large' ($\alpha = 0.84$).

The *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale* (UWES; Schaufeli, Salanova, Gozáles-Romá, & Bakker, 2002) was administered to measure work engagement. This questionnaire is scored on a 7-point frequency scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 6 (*every day*). Only the two core dimensions of work engagement, vigour and dedication, were used in this study (Brand-Labuschagne, Mostert, Rothmann Jnr, & Rothmann, 2012; Demerouti, Mostert, & Bakker, 2010). Vigour was measured with four items (i.e. 'When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work'), and dedication with four items (i.e. 'I am enthusiastic about my job'). The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the two subscales are shown to be satisfactory with alpha values of above 0.70 as reported in previous studies (Coetzee & De Villiers, 2010; Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006).

Turnover Intention Scale (TIS; Sjöberg & Sverke, 2000). The TIS is made up of three items which are answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). A typical question this questionnaire may include is 'If I was completely free to choose, I would leave this job'. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient reported for the TIS is 0.79 as found in previous studies (Berntson, Näswall, & Sverke, 2010; Sjöberg & Sverke, 2000).

Research Procedure

A letter requesting consent for conducting this study among educators in the Southern Cape was mailed to the Director of Research Services at the Western Cape education department. The letter included information regarding the aim and background of this study. Ethical aspects and questionnaires to be included in this study were also communicated in the letter. Permission was granted to conduct this research study among educators in the Southern Cape region.

Principals from the different schools in the Southern Cape region were then approached and requested to participate in this study. Arrangements were made with each principal and the date for data collection was conveyed. On the corresponded date, schools were visited and surveys were disseminated to educators. Surveys were collected on the agreed upon date. Educators were given four weeks to complete the survey.

Statistical Analysis

The statistical analyses were carried out with the SPSS (IBM SPSS, 2013), and Mplus 7.2 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2014) software. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were used as an indicator of instrument reliability and $\alpha \geq 0.70$ was deemed satisfactory (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Structural equation modelling (SEM) methods were applied to address the research questions. The primary benefit associated with SEM is that it can be used in the study of relationships among latent constructs; the latter known for being specified by multiple measures (Lei & Wu, 2007).

More recently, in contrast to the traditional approach (i.e. the Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimator that treats data as continuous), and due to advances in statistical software, the social sciences have been able to analyse categorical data with more ease. Mplus was used for the analyses in this study as it has the ability to specify the data type as categorical. Combining polychoric, tetrachoric or polyserial correlations with weighted least squares (cf. Jöreskog 1990) are some of the alternative approaches proposed in this regard. Mplus generates a polychoric correlation matrix between the categorical indicators, but a Pearson correlation matrix for the estimated latent variables. The input into the analysis will be the covariance matrix. The observed variables were the items themselves.

When using a weighted least squares approach, it is not possible to compete non-nested models using the chi-square values as when using the maximum likelihood analysis (Liu, Hancock, & Harring, 2011). Subsequently, as it is good practice to compete measurement models to ascertain the best fitting model, it was decided to use Bayesian analysis to generate Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) values to compete different measurement models. The BIC values are therefore used as an indicator for model selection (Wu, Zumbo, & Siegel, 2011). The improvement based on the trade-off between fit and complexity is possible by producing a lower BIC value (Van De Schoot, Lugtig, & Hox, 2012). After the model with the lowest BIC

value has been identified (Van De Schoot et al., 2012), the process will continue with the weighted least squares analysis (WLSMV estimator) to investigate the research questions.

The following fit indices were considered in this study: Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and the Root-Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). When determining goodness of fit with regard to CFI and TLI, a value of 0.95 and larger represents good fit, whilst simultaneously, a value of 0.90 represents acceptable fit (Schermelleh-Engel, Moosbrugger, & Mueller, 2003). The CFI performs well even with small sample sizes and assumes that all latent variables are uncorrelated and compare the sample covariance matrix to the null model (Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2008). RMSEA was also used for goodness of fit purposes with values smaller than 0.06, indicating good model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). On the other hand, acceptable fit with regard to RMSEA is represented by values smaller than 0.08 (Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003). This index is usually considered an indicator in the process of closeness of fit (Van De Schoot et al., 2012).

The next step was to test the proposed mediating effects. The bootstrap data-resampling method was used with 5 000 draws to establish confidence intervals of 95% when testing for statistical significance of indirect effects (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). In comparison with the traditional Baron and Kenny (1986) and the Sobel test, the bootstrapping approach is regarded as more beneficial due to greater statistical power (MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004). With this approach, standard errors (SE) and 95% confidence intervals (CIs) are also assessed (Deng, Allison, Fang, Ash, & Ware Jr, 2013).

Ethical Considerations

According to Neuman (2006), "... ethics define what is or is not legitimate to do or what moral research procedure involves" (p. 129). In this study, each educator received a cover letter enclosed with the questionnaire, explaining the aim of the study, but also indicating that participation was on a voluntary basis. Educators were informed to sign the consent form. In signing the consent form, educators committed themselves to participate in the study, and were also assured that they could withdraw at any stage of the research, without penalty. Confidentiality was ensured pertaining to answering the questionnaires and the handling of data. As agreed upon in the timeframe, the researcher collected the questionnaires and signed

consent forms. The focus of this study with regard to ethical consideration was therefore on confidentiality, anonymity and voluntary participation.

RESULTS

Focusing on the measurement model with this analysis, the aim was to determine whether the model as a whole was consistent with the empirical data; whereas the structural model's purpose was to establish whether or not the data supported the theoretical relationships (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000). In portraying these results with regard to the measurement model, the fit indices were indicated as follows: CFI = 0.98; TLI = 0.98; and RMSEA = 0.05. Psychological empowerment was estimated as a second-order factor in the structural model, i.e. the common variance between the first-order factors constituted the variable. This captured psychological empowerment more accurately and simplified the further analyses in the structural model specifically.

Correlation Analysis

Table 2 shows the correlations for the latent variables in the total sample.

Table 2

Estimated Correlation Matrix for the Latent Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. POSSU	(0.93)				
2. POSDI	0.48*	(0.91)			
3. Empowerment	0.57**	0.47*	(n/a)		
4. Engagement	0.52**	0.54**	0.83**	(0.93)	
5. Turnover	-0.28	-0.29	-0.45*	-0.53**	(0.84)

Notes: All values statistically significant ($p \leq 0.01$); * Correlation is practically significant $r \geq 0.30$ (medium effect); ** Correlation is practically significant $r \geq 0.50$ (large effect); Cronbach's alpha coefficients on the diagonal in brackets; n/a = not applicable as second order factor.

The results reveal that all the scales used in this study demonstrated sufficient internal consistencies, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients above the guideline of 0.70. The results further conveyed that POSSU, POSDI, work engagement and psychological empowerment were statistically and practically significantly positively related. Furthermore, all these

constructs were negatively related with turnover intention. More specifically, POSSU correlated practically significantly with psychological empowerment ($r = 0.57$; large effect) and work engagement ($r = 0.52$; large effect). The correlation between POSSU and turnover intention was also statistically significant ($r = -0.28$) (small effect).

POSDI revealed practically significant correlations with work engagement ($r = 0.54$; large effect) and psychological empowerment ($r = 0.47$; medium effect), and a statistically significant correlation with turnover intention ($r = -0.29$) (small effect). A practically significant negative correlation was revealed between work engagement and turnover intention ($r = -0.53$; large effect).

Given the strong correlation between total work engagement and psychological empowerment ($r = 0.83$), it was decided to calculate a variance inflation factor (VIF) in order to investigate the potential effect of multicollinearity within the model. The VIF value was calculated to be 3.55 which is below the maximum suggested threshold of 5.0 (Rogerson, 2001) and even 4.0 (Pan & Jackson, 2008), which indicates that the level of multicollinearity was still acceptable.

Based on the above analyses, Hypothesis 1 - suggesting positive significant relationships between POSSU, POSDI, work engagement and psychological empowerment - can be accepted. Also Hypothesis 2 - negative significant relationships exist between POSSU, POSDI, work engagement, psychological empowerment and intention to leave - can be accepted.

Regression Analysis

Structural equation modelling (SEM) was performed to test the hypothesised structural model (i.e. POSSU and POSDI predicting work engagement, psychological empowerment and turnover intention, and indirectly influencing the relationship between POSSU, POSDI and work engagement). The model fit associated with the structural model reflects the following fit indices: CFI = 0.98; TLI = 0.96; RMSEA = 0.06. It can therefore be deduced that the hypothesised model fitted the data well.

The structural paths between POSSU, POSDI, psychological empowerment, work engagement and turnover intention are indicated in the following model (Figure 1).

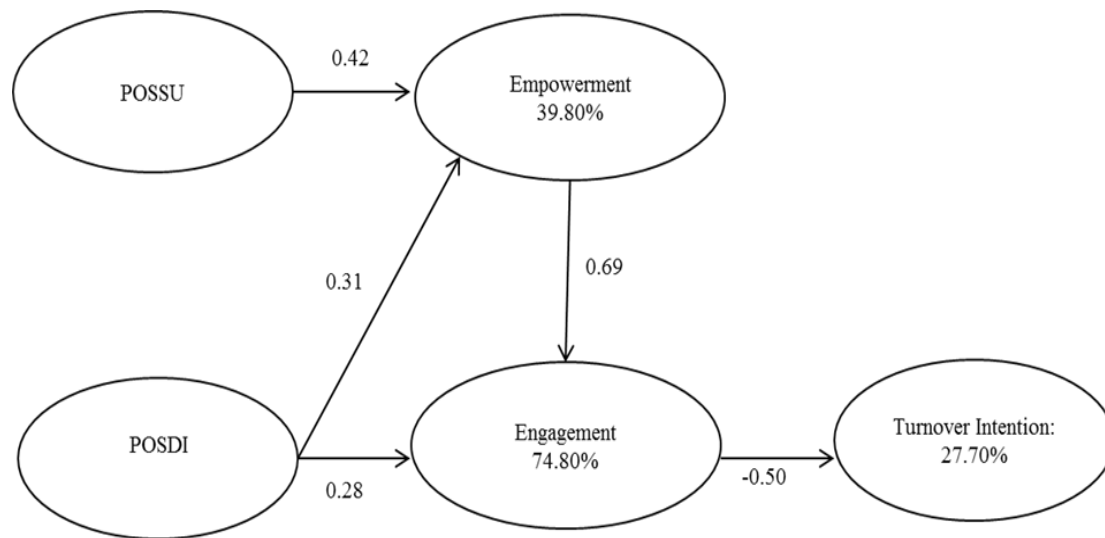


Figure 1. Structural model

The results obtained from the specified structural model and reflecting the significant structural paths are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Parameter Estimates for the Structural Regressions

Path	B	Unstandardised β	S.E.	P	Result
POSSU → Empowerment	0.42	0.43	0.17	0.01	Significant
POSSU → Engagement	-0.01	-0.01	0.08	0.89	Not significant
POSDI → Empowerment	0.31	0.34	0.17	0.04	Significant
POSDI → Engagement	0.28	0.26	0.07	0.01	Significant
Empowerment → Engagement	0.69	0.60	0.07	0.01	Significant
Empowerment → Turnover	-0.03	-0.03	0.26	0.91	Not significant
Engagement → Turnover	-0.50	-0.65	0.28	0.02	Significant

Notes: β = Beta coefficient; S.E. = Standard error; p = Two-tailed statistical significance; $p \leq 0.05$

The results in Table 3 suggest that POSSU significantly predicted psychological empowerment ($\beta = 0.42$; $p = 0.01$), but not work engagement ($p = 0.89$). Significant and positive paths were found between POSDI and both psychological empowerment ($\beta = 0.31$; $p = 0.04$) and work engagement ($\beta = 0.28$; $p = 0.01$). The regression table also conveyed that psychological

empowerment significantly predicted work engagement ($\beta = 0.69$; $p = 0.01$), but shows a non-significant path to turnover intention ($p < 0.001$). Finally, a significant and negative path was found between work engagement and turnover intention ($\beta = -0.50$; $p = 0.02$).

Based on the above analyses, Hypothesis 3 - expecting POSSU to predict psychological empowerment and work engagement - is partially accepted. Hypothesis 4 stating that POSDI predicts psychological empowerment and work engagement can be accepted. Also, Hypothesis 5 - psychological empowerment predicts work engagement and intention to leave - can be partially accepted. Finally, Hypothesis 6, suggesting that work engagement predicts intention to leave, can be accepted.

Mediation Analysis

From the above structural model, it is clear that possible mediating effects may be evident. More specifically, the following mediation paths were examined:

- (a) Psychological empowerment as a possible mediator in the relationship between POSSU and work engagement;
- (b) Psychological empowerment as a possible mediator between POSDI and work engagement; and
- (c) Work engagement as a possible mediator in the relationship between psychological empowerment and turnover intention.

In determining mediation, the bootstrap data-resampling method was used with 5 000 draws for the purpose of establishing confidence intervals of 95% to test for the statistical significance of indirect effects (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). The bootstrapping approach is regarded as more beneficial due to greater statistical power (MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004) when compared to the traditional Baron and Kenny (1986) and the Sobel test. Through this approach, standard errors (SE) and 95% confidence intervals (CIs) are also assessed (Deng, Allison, Fang, Ash, & Ware Jr, 2013).

Results revealed that psychological empowerment mediated the relationship between POSSU and work engagement with a significant indirect effect of 0.29 ($p = 0.02$; 95% CI [0.05, 0.53]). The significance of the mediation effect can be based on the fact that the 95% confidence interval values for the indirect effect include zero. The results show proof for complementary

mediation (Zhao, Lynch, & Chen, 2010) in which a direct effect was significant from the predictor to outcome as well as an indirect path through the mediator. However, in the case of psychological empowerment being a mediator between POSDI and work engagement, it was revealed that the result was borderline as the indirect effect included zero and was shown to be 0.21 ($p = 0.05$; 95% CI [-0.004; 0.43]). This mediation constitutes only indirect mediation (Zhao et al., 2010) as there is only a path from the predictor to the mediator and a path from the mediator to the outcome with a significant indirect effect. Finally, work engagement was not revealed as a mediator between psychological empowerment and intention to leave due to a non-significant indirect effect of -0.202 ($p = 0.352$; 95%CI [-0.628; 0.224]), where the indirect effect did include zero.

Based on the above analyses, Hypothesis 7 - POSSU indirectly impacts work engagement and intention to leave via psychological empowerment - can be accepted. Also, Hypothesis 8 - expecting POSDI to indirectly impact work engagement and intention to leave via psychological empowerment - can be partially supported. Finally, Hypothesis 9 - psychological empowerment indirectly impacts intention to leave via work engagement - is therefore not supported.

DISCUSSION

The general objective of this article was to determine whether a combined approach focusing on strengths use and deficit improvement had an influence on educators' well-being (work engagement and psychological empowerment) which in turn could decrease their intention to leave. The investigation was also focused on determining if POSSU and POSDI indirectly impacted work engagement via psychological empowerment; and finally, whether psychological empowerment indirectly impacted intention to leave via work engagement of educators in the Southern Cape region.

Results revealed that POSSU strongly correlated with psychological empowerment. Previous research indicated that two types of perceived organisational support, namely POSSU and POSDI (Els, in process), have been shown to contribute to a meaningful and interesting work environment when employees perceive to have organisational support (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). This implies that when educators perceive support from their employer (i.e. the school) to use their strengths, they will feel more important which

will lead to a meaningful work environment (Eisenberger et al., 1986). In addition, previous literature indicates that educators perceiving support from the school towards using their strengths may experience self-efficacy which equips them with the necessary confidence to complete their tasks (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). This implies that a supportive school environment in which educators can use their strengths will lead to their experiencing self-efficacy, due to the confidence they have in their abilities to complete work tasks.

Previous research also supports this relationship in that strengths-based initiatives have been shown to assist with the actualisation of goals (Cameron et al., 2011). In the education environment it would be reasonable to expect that when educators perceive the school to be supportive of their using their strengths, the support provided will assist educators to make an impact and contribution to the school through the attainment of goals. Educators might experience a sense of self-determination when having a say in the school, while their initiatives will make a difference due to the support given by the school through creating certain opportunities for them to use their strengths. In literature, self-determination is associated with feelings of being in control and thus feeling empowered. Employees known for having control in the workplace are able to make certain decisions and act in their working environment (Najafi, Noruzy, Azar, Nazari-Shirkouhi, & Dalvand, 2011). It would therefore be reasonable to expect that the support given to educators by providing them with opportunities to use their strengths might increase the important role they play in the school environment due to the control they can exercise (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Lee & Koh, 2001). Following the above argument, it was thus not surprising that POSSU was significantly related to psychological empowerment, as found in the current study.

POSSU has a strong relationship with work engagement in this study. This finding is supported in a study by Linley and Harrington (2006a). Furthermore, literature indicates that when the work environment and the job itself do not utilise employees' strengths, they will perceive it to be boring (Kerfoot, 2007). These feelings of boredom are evident in employees being less enthusiastic about the job and even dreading to go to work (lack of vigour), which constitute a lack of work engagement (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gozáles-Romá, & Bakker, 2002). In the education environment, the initiatives schools portray in using educator strengths will lead to educators exhibiting more enthusiasm and energy and being more engaged in the school environment.

The results in this study revealed that POSSU correlated with intention to leave. The negative correlation between POSSU and turnover intention implies that when the school environment is supportive of its educators using their strengths, it will diminish their turnover propensity. Previous research showed that when employees experience organisational support, it may lead to a decrease in turnover (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Liu, 2004). As strengths use has been classified as a form of perceived organisational support (Els, in process), it is reasonable to expect that this may lead to a decrease in turnover (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Liu, 2004). This is significant since educators who perceive support from the school towards using their strengths, experience positive emotions which will lead to fewer inclinations to leave the school context.

In the current study POSDI showed to be correlated with psychological empowerment. This implies that when educators are supported in developing their deficits, they will experience their work as valuable. This is in line with previous research which revealed that when educators get feedback on their deficits as a form of support, they can experience their input as worthwhile and exhibit energy which is crucial in maintaining quality (Brown, 2002). Meaning is associated with importance and a sense of care (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001).

Literature has also revealed that POSDI is linked with greater competence and accomplishment (Behn, 2006) due to the initiatives schools use in developing employees. This relationship implies that when the school focuses on developing educators' deficits, they will experience greater competence and a sense of contributing to the school, due to the expansion of their knowledge, skills and abilities (Behn, 2006). Research has indicated that empowerment can aid in the process of wellness by improving deficits, and engaging professionals as collaborators instead of authoritative experts (Zimmerman, 2000). Previous research has shown that employees want to know the role they play in the organisation, which is associated with feelings of power or authority (Lee & Koh, 2001; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). In this regard, it would be reasonable to expect that when educators perceive the school environment as being supportive of them in improving their deficits, it will result in greater self-determination when employees are regarded as collaborators. Educators will feel more empowered through cognition of self-determination when they experience a supportive and inclusive school environment when improving their deficits.

In the current study a relationship was revealed between POSDI and work engagement. Previous studies have shown that in circumstances where opportunities exist for employees to improve their deficits, these circumstances may result in enhancing professional growth and development; practices which are linked to work engagement (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). This is significant since the development of employees has been linked with greater competence and mastery (Els, in process), which will lead to better performance and making goal attainment easier (Abdullah et al., 2009; Clifton & Harter, 2003; Linley 2008; Linley, Nielsen, Wood, Gillett, & Biswas-Diener, 2010). In that way it fulfils the purpose of being a job resource, with motivational potential to increase work engagement (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). When educators perceive support for improving their deficits in the form of training and development practices, it will improve their skills and competencies, leading to better performance and goal attainment. This will engender positive feelings which might increase their energy and enthusiasm - associated with being engaged (Langelaan, Bakker, Schaufeli, & Van Doornen, 2006; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007).

In this study a negatively significant relationship was found between POSDI and turnover intention which can be practically interpreted by schools that show support for educators towards improving their deficits; thus limiting or decreasing the chances of educators leaving the school system. According to Lee and Bruvold (2003), educators show lower turnover intentions in the school environment, based on an experience of perceived organisational support for deficit improvement (Els, in process). When schools engage in developing educators by means of training initiatives, they will feel more valued (Brown, 2002; Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001) and will not be inclined to leave the school context.

Psychological empowerment showed a positive significant correlation with work engagement, which is in line with previous research (De Klerk & Stander, 2014; Mendes & Stander, 2011). Previous research on psychological empowerment revealed that educators prefer working in an environment where the work assigned to them contributes towards their feelings of meaning (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003), and energy (Steger, Littman-Ovadia, Miller, Menger, & Rothmann, 2013) as part of their work engagement. When educators experience meaning in their work, it will lead to experiencing energy in their work, associated with feeling engaged in the school context. In addition, research showed that employees portraying confidence in executing work tasks naturally feel more responsible and committed to the work being done, increasing their levels of engagement (Stander & Rothmann, 2010). Educators will therefore

feel more engaged in the school environment through feelings of meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. Therefore, the school environment should engender a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind among educators which will result in positive emotions toward their work. These results therefore portray the greatest contributions towards increasing work engagement levels, through psychological empowerment, in the education sector.

Mediation

In determining the mediation effects, regressions were used to assess whether psychological empowerment mediated the relationship between POSSU and work engagement. Results showed that psychological empowerment were revealed as a mediator between POSSU and work engagement.

In this mediation analysis, it was found that POSSU predicted psychological empowerment. This is in line with previous research. Secondly, in the current study psychological empowerment significantly predicted work engagement - which is also in line with other research studies (De Klerk & Stander, 2014; De Villiers & Stander, 2011). In this study, POSSU did not predict work engagement which differs from findings in previous studies by Linley and Harrington (2006a), Cameron et al. (2011), and Stander (2013). The assumption is that support for employees who focus on using their strengths in order to improve their working experience, positive feelings and outcomes may be aligned and, in so doing, enhance their work engagement (Els, in process). Although sound arguments exist in finding support for POSSU predicting work engagement, this was not found in the current sample. One reason for this lacking relationship between POSSU and work engagement may be that there may not be a direct relationship between the variables; this relationship might only work through an intervening (mediating) variable. An example of such a mediating variable might be psychological empowerment. Thus, the current study has found psychological empowerment to be a full mediator of indirect-only mediation in the relationship between POSSU and work engagement.

The second mediation effect in this study investigated whether psychological empowerment is a mediator between POSDI and work engagement. Firstly, the results suggest that POSDI predicted psychological empowerment. This is in line with prior studies, showing that schools engaged in the process of helping educators improving their deficits, assist in creating

employees that foster feelings of mastery and self-actualisation (Linley & Harrington, 2006b). Also, due to the fact that increased performance is linked with POSDI, the latter may be helpful in achieving work goals (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011; Bakker et al., 2003). This implies that educators perceiving the school to be helpful in developing their deficits experience psychological empowerment due greater mastery and competence levels which will help them to make a contribution to the school through achieving the goals in the school context.

Secondly, psychological empowerment predicted work engagement (discussed earlier). Thus, POSDI was found to influence work engagement through psychological empowerment. The results, however, also suggest that POSDI directly predicts work engagement. This suggests that psychological empowerment acts as a complimentary mediator between POSDI and work engagement.

In the final mediation analysis of this study, it was examined whether work engagement mediates the relationship between psychological empowerment and turnover intention. In this study, work engagement was not revealed as mediator between psychological empowerment and intention to leave. More specifically, psychological empowerment significantly predicted work engagement which is in line with other research studies (De Klerk & Stander, 2014; De Villiers & Stander, 2011). However, psychological empowerment did not significantly predict turnover intention in this study. This result was somewhat surprising and not in line with previous research (Bhatnagar, 2012; De Klerk & Stander, 2014). It is reasonable to expect that organisations that foster psychological empowerment initiatives will produce employees who are committed to the practices and, as a result, will not leave the organisation (Patrick & Laschinger, 2006). The reason for this may be due to the fact that educators will only experience a decrease in their intention to leave the organisation when they are engaged in their work; however, not indirectly through an experience of being psychologically empowered.

It was, however, found that work engagement significantly predicted turnover intention which has also been proven in previous research (De Klerk & Stander, 2014; De Villiers & Stander, 2011). In the educational context, this significance shows that fewer educators will leave the school system when a positive emotional state is associated with their work. However, educators who are psychologically empowered will not have fewer intentions to leave through initiatives when being engaged.

Conclusions

Flourishing organisations are known to have skilled and highly motivated employees (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2002; Unger, Rauch, Frese, & Rosenbusch, 2011); the same perspective, however, does not apply to the education environment. Unfortunately the most important element in any organisation is being misused, wasted or lost, resulting in an exhausted and cynical rather than an empowered and self-renewing workforce (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2002).

The education system is especially known for its exposure to change and various challenges over the past years (Spaull, 2012), including challenges pertaining to teaching and learning (Betram, Appleton, Muthukrisna, & Wedekind, 2006; Saptoe, 2000). One of the most critical challenges facing the education sector (as acknowledged by the Minister of Education and highlighted by the media) is the issue of retaining talent (Monama, 2012; News24, 2010). Retaining talented employees is possible by introducing strengths use and deficit improvement, psychological empowerment and work engagement in the education sector. There is an increase in the potential benefits associated with using positive psychological principles in the workplace; something which may be adopted in the education sector as well (Mills et al., 2013). Workplace practices of the past were predominantly shaped by focusing on the bottom line and employees were being neglected as a result. Therefore, when organisations commit to development practices that are focused on their employees, it is expected that employees will show signs of increased willingness to extend themselves for the organisation. Increased organisational effectiveness (Woods & De Menezes, 1998) is aligned with the extent to which organisations are supportive towards using their employees' strengths (Wood et al., 2011) and improving their deficits (Els, in process).

When organisations make use of strengths-based initiatives, it will have a positive influence on the bottom line of the organisation, with employees contributing to the actualisation of organisational goals (Cameron et al., 2011). Furthermore, efforts focused on developing the strengths of educators will be visible in high levels of motivation (Cropanzano & Wright, 2001), allowing educators to be happy and more engaged in their work (Govindji & Linley, 2007). Recent literature also revealed that spending more time with leaders can result in being 29% more inspired about their work, 30% more engaged, 16% more innovative, and 15% more intrinsically motivated (Vanderkam, 2014).

Educators receiving support from the school through initiatives, such as feedback or training and development, enable the school environment to reach its objectives, whilst employees gain a sense of accomplishment (Behn, 2006). It is regarded as good practice for principals to spend more time with educators (Vanderkam, 2014). Educators need support from the school, which will result in a meaningful experience when they perceive the school as providing opportunities to improve their deficits.

The results from this study incorporate both positive and negative aspects in getting a more in-depth understanding based on these constructs in the education context. Positive and negative aspects should receive equal attention, and in that way will highlight the benefits portrayed by a full spectrum study (Wood & Tarrier). Emphasis is placed on providing educators with both positive and negative feedback and support which will lead to meaningful work, higher confidence, autonomy and having an impact in the school context. When psychologically empowered educators are produced through support for strengths use and deficit improvement, the school environment can benefit from more engaged educators known for greater skill and mastery, who will perform better and contribute to achieving the goals of the school environment (Abdullah et al., 2009; Clifton & Harter, 2003; Linley 2008; Linley et al., 2010). These initiatives are associated with educators showing higher energy levels and enthusiasm and thus feeling more engaged (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009).

In that way, this study contributes to the literature by creating educators who are positive about their work. These educators will not leave the school environment due to initiatives, from the school, focusing on using their strengths and development practices that are focused on improving their deficits. These development practices are associated with different outcomes, ranging from producing more psychologically empowered employees who are feeling more engaged and showing diminished propensity to leave the school environment.

The benefits of an effective talent management strategy that is embedded in training and development practices include higher engagement levels, improved performance and higher levels of employee loyalty (Hughes & Rog, 2008).

Limitations and Recommendations

The education environment can gain a lot of valuable insight pertaining to the dimensions investigated in this study, especially being linked with the positive psychology movement where the focus is on understanding and building from one's strengths, together with managing weaknesses, instead of focusing on or repairing them (Bowers, 2009; Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Although the latter conclusions provided valuable insights in this study, there are certain limitations to take into consideration with regard to future research.

Firstly, a cross sectional research design was used, deeming this study to only consider variables at one particular point in time, and leaving no room for change over time. As the constructs used in this study contribute to a new field of study, it will be interesting to study these constructs in a longitudinal study. This will enable the determination of causal relationships and consequences of perceived organisational support for strengths use, perceived organisational support for deficit improvement, psychological empowerment, work engagement and turnover intention.

Also, the instruments used in this study, SUDIQ, MEQ, UWES and TIS are limited to English-speaking participants, which may also have affected the outcome of this study. Language plays a crucial role in people's understanding of concepts, especially in their native language. If participants do not grasp the concepts, it may lead to misunderstanding which should be avoided at all cost.

Another limitation of this study was the utilisation of self-report questionnaires to obtain data. By utilising questionnaires, there is a chance of being exposed to common-method variance (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986) which can cause biasness.

A convenience sampling was utilised in this research study, which held the consequence that all the participants included in this study came from one geographic location, namely the Southern Cape region. The research population consisted of 271 participants of which the majority were Coloured Afrikaans-speaking females. When making use of convenience sampling, the problem lies in using participants because of the convenience for the researcher,

without considering the equality of the population. It would therefore be difficult to generalise this study to the entire population as most participants were from one group. For future research, this can be a starting point, especially expanding this research to include more participants from other racial and gender groups in order to make the generalising of this research more accurate. This study could also be expanded to the education environment in other provinces in South Africa.

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CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter will present the conclusions based on the objectives specified in this study. Furthermore, this chapter will encompass limitations found in this study and barriers for future research. Finally, this chapter will provide recommendations for the education environment as well as for future research.

4.1 CONCLUSIONS

The general objective of this study was to determine if the Strengths Use and Deficit Improvement Questionnaire (SUDIQ) and Measuring Empowerment Questionnaire (MEQ) were reliable and valid to administer to educators in South Africa; and whether (a) psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between POSSU and work engagement, and between POSDI and work engagement; and (b) whether work engagement mediates the relationship between psychological empowerment and turnover intention.

The first objective was to conceptualise a combined approach in terms of strengths use and deficit improvement, psychological empowerment, work engagement and intention to leave, according to literature. The future of most professions depends on finding ways to create work environments linked with high quality outcomes by retaining experienced as well as newly introduced employees (Laschinger, Wilk, Cho, & Greco, 2009). The opposite is however prevalent in the recent business era, with substantial focus on human resources being misused, wasted or lost, resulting in an exhausted and cynical rather than empowered and self-renewing workforce (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2002); a situation which is especially noticeable in the education environment. A corrective process may be by introducing psychological principles in the education sector which will contribute to a better corporate experience (Mills, Fleck, & Kozikowski, 2013) - in this case, a combined approach focusing on strengths use and deficit improvement where educators will be more psychologically empowered, engaged and with no intention of leaving the education sector.

Positive psychology concerns itself with the scientific study of the good life, pertaining to practices which investigate what a good life entails, where it is happening and what nurtures it.

These practices pertaining to positive psychology also focus on assessing strengths and systems that enable individuals and communities to thrive (Cooperrider & Fry, 2012). Two approaches have been linked to the movement of positive psychology, namely the traditional psychology movement based on human weaknesses (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001) and the more recent approach where emphasis is on strengths and, eventually, potential (Cornum, Matthews, & Seligman, 2011). Through the adoption of a strengths perspective, emphasis is placed on understanding the determinants as well as consequences of a life well lived (Schueller, 2012). This perspective does not replace the old paradigms, instead it offers a balanced approach dedicated to studying both the positive and the negative (Clifton & Harter, 2003; Schueller, 2012), in terms of strengths and deficits.

Strengths and positive psychology are emphasised in this way; however, the movement of positive psychology conveys a realisation of focusing on both strengths and weaknesses (Rust, Diessner, & Reade, 2009). Organisations that make use of a strengths-based approach (SBD) much rather exert their efforts in managing deficits in efficient ways, instead of going the neglecting route (Bowers, 2009). This line of thought was addressed by a four dimensional theory, developed by Els (in process), in which the focus is on strengths use and deficit improvement by both the organisation and the individual. Els conceptualised the following four constructs:

- Perceived organisational support for strengths use (the extent to which employees perceive their organisation to be supportive of their using their strengths in the workplace);
- Perceived organisational support for deficit improvement (the extent to which employees perceive their organisation to be supportive of their developing their deficits in the workplace);
- Pro-active behaviour towards strengths use (self-starting behaviour directed towards using strengths in the workplace); and
- Pro-active behaviour towards deficit improvement (self-starting behaviour directed towards improving deficiencies in the workplace).

In measuring these four dimensions, Els (in process) developed the Strengths Use and Deficit Improvement Questionnaire (SUDIQ) which is used to indicate the extent to which participants' strengths are used and deficits are developed by both the individual and the organisation.

Strengths are embedded in the capacity for behaving, thinking, or feeling in a specific way which is authentic and energising to an individual, with the ultimate benefit of optimal functioning, development and performance (Linley, 2008). In the same way, developmental areas need to be recognised, nurtured and channelled accordingly for them to contribute to a competency set and better performance (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). There is an upside to utilising developmental practices embedded in using strengths and developing deficits in which increased employee effectiveness (Carroll, 2007), enhanced job performance (Cheah, 2012), improved commitment levels (Caishun & Zongjie, 2004), higher engagement levels (Els, in process; Stander, 2013) and lower turnover rates (Carroll, 2007) have been shown as the outcomes. With a combined focus on strengths use and deficits improvement, the well-being of individuals can be enhanced through its linkage with goal attainment (Kaiser & White, 2009).

When organisations commit to adopting a combined approach focusing on strengths use and deficit improvement, the strategies they engage in to support the use of strengths and development of deficits will result in psychological empowerment which is embedded in meaning, competence, self-determination and impact (Beukes, in process – see Chapter 2 of this dissertation).

Psychological empowerment may be described as intrinsic task motivation which comprises meaning, impact, competence and self-determination (Spreitzer, 1995). Creating work conditions known to increase these cognitions may result in increased commitment, job satisfaction, enhanced performance, and lower turnover intentions (Seibert, Wang, & Courtright, 2011). Research has shown that psychologically empowered employees have proven to be more engaged (Bhatnagar, 2012).

Initiatives focused on psychological empowerment have been associated with an increase in productivity levels (Greasley et al., 2008), higher job satisfaction, high organisational commitment (Najafi, Noruzy, Azar, Nazari-Shirkouhi, & Dalvand, 2011), together with reflecting lower turnover intent (Bhatnagar, 2012; De Villiers & Stander, 2011). In addition, employees characterised by being psychologically empowered, show a tendency towards feeling more engaged in the work environment (Bhatnagar, 2012; De Villiers & Stander, 2011).

Work engagement is reflected by terms such as enthusiasm, involvement, commitment, and being passionate; employees experience these feelings when they are engaged in their work (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Work engagement is embedded in a philosophy known to reflect a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind in which engaged individuals are known for having vigour, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Roma, & Bakker, 2002). Individuals known to reflect engaged dimensions would exhibit lower turnover intention and diminished propensity towards leaving the organisation (Bhatnagar, 2012; Mendes & Stander, 2011).

Through literature, terms known as “retention” and “turnover” usually involve the turnover behaviour of employees (Msweli-Mbanga, 2004). Two factors are usually associated with turnover behaviour; quitting behaviour and the intention an employee has to quit are used to fulfil the purpose of quitting (Firth, Mellor, Moore, & Loquet, 2004). Previous research emphasised determinants of actual behaviour through intentions an employee may have of leaving the organisation (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Igbaria & Greenhaus, 1992).

The second objective of this study was to determine the reliability and validity (construct and convergent) of the SUDIQ and MEQ among educators in the Southern Cape region. Acceptable reliability was associated with the SUDIQ, shown by the Cronbach's alpha coefficients obtained in this study, namely POSSU $\alpha = 0.93$; PBSU $\alpha = 0.91$; POSDI $\alpha = 0.93$; and PBDI $\alpha = 0.95$. These results were supported by the findings of other studies in which similar reliability measures were obtained for the SUDIQ (Els, in process; Keenan & Mostert, 2013; Stander, 2013; Tabiri, 2012). Similar results were revealed for the four constructs of MEQ, namely meaning $\alpha = 0.89$; competence $\alpha = 0.82$; self-determination $\alpha = 0.84$; and impact $\alpha = 0.92$, indicating good reliability for each dimension of the MEQ. Similar studies in South Africa in which reliable measures were aligned with the MEQ (De Villiers & Stander, 2011; Nel, 2013; Stander, 2007; Stander & Rothmann, 2009) support the results. To conclude, both the SUDIQ and MEQ were proven to be reliable instruments for use in the education environment in the Southern Cape region in South Africa.

In investigating the construct validity of the SUDIQ and MEQ, five competing measurement models were specified and competed with Bayesian analysis in order to ascertain the best fitting model.

The results reflected the following values for the fit indices of the best fitting model: CFI (0.98), TLI (0.98) and RMSEA (0.07). These statistics are within the guidelines when considering the cut-off points for these fit indices (Cudeck & Browne, 1993; Hoyle, 1995; Van De Schoot, Lugtig, & Hox, 2012). The conclusion can therefore be drawn that the hypothesised eight-factor model fits the data acceptably in comparison with a two-factor model as well as two five-factor models, due to the lowest BIC values dedicated in this regard.

A further objective of this study investigated if a positive relationship existed between the dimensions of the SUDIQ and the dimensions of the MEQ. The results portrayed that all the factors of the SUDIQ and MEQ were positively related with statistical and practical significance. These results emphasise that psychological empowerment cognitions showed by meaning, competence, self-determination and impact are possible when schools provide a supportive environment in which to use employees' strengths and improve their deficits. The same applies to experiencing meaning, competence, self-determination and impact when educators engage in proactive behaviour directed towards using their strengths and improving their deficits in the school environment. Support for convergent validity was portrayed by the relationships between the dimensions of the SUDIQ and MEQ.

A further objective of this study included assessing the relationship between a combined approach (POSSU and POSDI), psychological empowerment, work engagement and intention to leave of educators in the Southern Cape region. Positive significant relationships were revealed between perceived organisational support for strengths use and deficit improvement (POSSU and POSDI) and psychological empowerment, implying that educators who perceive support from the school in using their strengths and improving their deficits, experience greater meaning, competence, self-determination and impact.

Similar results were revealed between POSSU and POSDI and work engagement, while negative significant relationships were found between all the constructs and turnover intention. Based on the conceptualisation of POSSU and POSDI as being job resources (Els, in process) as part of the Job-Demands Resources (JD-R) model, two psychological processes which create job-related strain and motivation in the workplace are associated with this model (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). Based on the motivational process, it is assumed that job resources consist of motivational potential which will result in high work engagement and lower cynicism levels, as well as better performance (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011).

The negative correlation between POSSU and turnover intention implies that when educators experience the school environment as being supportive of educators using their strengths, educators show less propensity towards leaving the school system (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986; Els, in process; Liu, 2004). A negative significant relationship was revealed between POSDI and turnover intention, reflecting that schools that show support to educators in the form of providing practices for deficit improvement, reduce the chances of educators leaving the school system; thus, educators show lower turnover intentions (Lee & Bruvold, 2003) in the school environment.

Psychological empowerment has been shown through previous studies as being a predictor of work engagement (Bhatnagar, 2012). Work engagement and empowerment play an important role in creating a happy workforce (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005), contributing to an employee's intention to remain with or leave the organisation (Mendes & Stander, 2011). When employees experience meaning in their work roles, execute work tasks with confidence, have an input in their work being assigned/executed, and have the chance to make an impact at work, they have lower intentions of leaving their work (De Klerk & Stander, 2014; De Villiers & Stander, 2011).

By investigating the regressions in this study, the aim was to establish whether POSSU and POSDI predict psychological empowerment and work engagement. Also, whether psychological empowerment predicts work engagement and intention to leave, and work engagement predicts intention to leave of educators in the Southern Cape region.

The results portrayed that POSSU significantly predicted psychological empowerment, but not work engagement. Significant and positive paths were found between POSDI and both psychological empowerment and work engagement. Furthermore, psychological empowerment plays a significant predicting role in work engagement, but not in turnover intention. Lastly, a significant and negative path was found between work engagement and turnover intention.

The fact that POSSU did not predict work engagement is unexpected, since job resources play a motivational role, leading to work engagement (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). This finding is different from findings in previous studies by Els (in process) and Stander (2013). The

assumption exists that when employees experience their organisation to be supportive of their using their strengths at work to improve their work experience, they may be more positive; positive outcomes are linked to being more engaged (Els, in process). One reason for the absence of the relationship between POSSU and work engagement may be that there may not be a direct relationship between the variables; this relationship might only work through an intervening (mediating) variable. An example of such a mediating variable might be psychological empowerment.

Furthermore, psychological empowerment plays a significant predicting role in work engagement, but not in turnover intention. This finding differs from the results produced in a study pertaining to these constructs (De Villiers & Stander, 2011). It is expected that when employees feel psychologically empowered, it will lead to a decrease in turnover intention levels.

The last objectives of this study focused on mediation analysis in finding support for a mediating relationship between POSSU and POSDI and work engagement, with psychological empowerment as the mediator; similarly, to find support for a mediating relationship between psychological empowerment and turnover intention, with work engagement as a mediator. The results conveyed that psychological empowerment mediated the relationship between POSSU and work engagement. However, in the case of psychological empowerment being a mediator between POSDI and engagement, the result was border line.

The results revealed that POSSU and POSDI lead to different results. Although the results differ when focusing on both POSSU and POSDI - a borderline case - it was decided to accept psychological empowerment as mediator between a combined approach to POSSU and POSDI and work engagement. It would therefore be advisable to provide educators with both positive and negative feedback and support pertaining to their talents and weaknesses; thus engendering meaningful work, higher confidence in educators' abilities, freedom, and having an impact in the school. This in turn will create educators who are positive about their work and who will be engaged.

Lastly, work engagement was not revealed as mediator between psychological empowerment and turnover intention. The results state that when educators feel psychologically empowered

in the education sector, it would lead to their being energetic and engaged in their work. Furthermore, engaged educators would have less intention towards leaving the school environment. This relationship does not work with work engagement as mediator.

Therefore, these results are not in line with the relationships revealed in other studies, namely that individuals who feel psychologically empowered are more engaged and in turn would also reflect a lower turnover intention (Bhatnagar, 2012; Mendes & Stander, 2011).

4.2 LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

Although this study will make a contribution to human resource management research, especially in the educational context, there are certain limitations to note and to take into consideration for future research. The first limitation is the use of a cross sectional research design, deeming this study to only consider variables at one stage without considering the change of these variables over time. The constructs used in this study contribute to a relatively new field of study, and in that way it will be interesting to study these constructs in a longitudinal study, resulting in a better understanding of these constructs over a certain period.

Although the sample size was sufficient for statistical purposes, it is small in generalising these results to the population. A convenience sampling method was utilised in this research study, which held the consequence that all the participants included came from one geographic location, namely the Southern Cape region. A limitation in this regard would be generalising this study to the entire population, as most participants were from one group. For future research, this can be a starting point, especially expanding this research to include more participants from another race and gender to make the generalising more accurate. Expanding this study to education environments in other provinces in this country can be useful.

Furthermore, another limitation of this study was the utilisation of self-report questionnaires to gather data. By utilising these questionnaires, the chances of being exposed to common-method variance are increasing with possible bias as a result. Common-method variance is a concern when both the dependent and focal explanatory variables are perceptual measures that the respondent produces (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). The solution can be to use other sources of information for some of the key measures (Chang, Witteloostuijn, & Eden, 2010).

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

It will be valuable to make recommendations for organisations and practitioners in expanding this concept and field for the purpose of contributing to future research.

4.3.1 Recommendations for the Education Sector

A refreshing outlook and orientation concerning all aspects pertaining to flourishing and a worthwhile life are embedded in a positive psychology perspective in which the traditional paradigm, a diagnostic and solution-driven focus to problems, is not the major focus (Donaldson & Ko, 2010).

An objective, in alignment with positive psychology, is to identify positive institutions, including schools which will be focused on enhancing individuals by means of promoting positive emotions and character traits (Schueller, 2012). In this way, schools play the role of providing educators with goals and values necessary in the guiding process, based on developing their best traits (Schueller, 2012). This is in line with a combined focus on strengths use and deficit improvement.

The value of a combined approach embedded in strengths use and deficit improvement has been linked to a variety of outcome measures, including higher productivity and work engagement (Els, in process). This research will definitely contribute to the need that exists for solutions to the negativity that prevails in the educational context and how to redress psychological problems in this regard.

Managing human capital and practices has been shown to lead to success (Unger, Rauch, Frese, & Rosenbusch, 2011). Emphasis is therefore placed on developing human capital in which educators are the focus. The education sector can benefit from focusing on both negative and positive aspects; this is associated with positive results. In focusing on incorporating positive and negative aspects in the education sector, it will be advisable to start concentrating on the development of educators by providing feedback on strengths and areas of development.

A strong focus on leadership is needed in the education sector, especially in identifying and optimising the strengths and areas of development of educators. Leaders who empower

educators are needed; incorporating a combined approach with the focus on strengths use and deficit improvement which can impact educators' psychological empowerment and work engagement, resulting in fewer educators leaving the education sector.

This research shows the benefits of adopting a positive psychological approach with the inclusion of strengths use and deficit improvement, psychological empowerment, work engagement and intention to leave. Lower retention levels will be prevalent in the education sector as educators' strengths are utilised and their deficits are improved. This, in turn, will lead to more psychologically empowered and engaged staff members.

4.3.2 Recommendations for Future Research

By utilising a longitudinal study, the education environment can benefit by an in-depth analysis based on measuring these constructs over a certain period of time. The benefits associated with measuring strengths use and deficit improvement, psychological empowerment, work engagement and turnover intention over a longer period will also be valuable. By doing studies over a longer period, any changes in educators' behaviour and the possible causes thereof will be identified.

Further recommendations may also include applying intervention studies based on the measured constructs. The focus of these interventions may be to increase the results of these constructs in the education sector and measuring the results over a period of time.

The education environment is rich in information; however, people studies (human resource management) are limited in this regard. Studying educators based on human resource aspects would be another way of adding value to both HR literature and the education environment.

A further recommendation includes investigating the effect of a combined approach focusing on strengths use and deficit improvement on constructs such as absenteeism, trust and performance. Future studies should focus on the impact of each subdimension of the SUDIQ, for example perceived organisational support for strengths use, perceived organisational support for deficit improvement, proactive behaviour towards strengths use and proactive behaviour towards deficit improvement. The results in this study show that each individual construct provides different results and in-depth knowledge.

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