

**ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS, SENSE OF COHERENCE  
AND WORK WELLNESS OF PROTECTION SERVICES  
MEMBERS**

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## REMARKS

The reader is reminded of the following:

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

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## SUMMARY

**Topic:** Organisational politics, sense of coherence and work wellness of protection services members

**Key terms:** Organisational politics, sense of coherence, burnout, work engagement, work wellness.

Continuous changes in the security systems around the world, along with the increased pressure to perform may result in feelings of distrust, strain in interpersonal relations, psychological strain, fatigue and tension, all affecting the well-being of employees, especially among protection services members. Work wellness becomes an important aspect when focusing on the safety of people to whom the protection services delivers a service, as well as when the focus is on the safety of these members. Burnout and work engagement are specific focus areas in this regard. To measure burnout and work engagement, it is important to use reliable and valid instruments. Along with burnout and work engagement there are other focus areas that can have a direct influence on these dimensions, namely the perception of organisational politics. The impact of perceptions of organisational politics on burnout and work engagement can be moderated or mediated by sense of coherence.

The objective of this study was to determine the relationship between work wellness, organisational politics and sense of coherence through the development of a model of work wellness for protection services members comprising of burnout, work engagement, organisational politics and sense of coherence.

The research method consists of a literature review and an empirical study. A cross-sectional survey design was used to collect the data. An availability sample ( $N = 341$ ) from protection services members was taken. The Maslach Burnout Inventory – General Survey (MBI-GS), Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), Perceptions of Organisational Politics (POPS), Orientation to Life Questionnaire (OTLQ) and a biographical questionnaire were administered. The statistical analysis was carried out with the help of the SPSS-programme and AMOS. The statistical methods utilised in the article consisted of descriptive statistics, Cronbach alpha coefficients, exploratory factor analysis, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients and structural equation modelling methods.

Exploratory factor analysis confirmed a two factor model of burnout, consisting of burnout (exhaustion and cynicism) and professional efficacy which represented the data quite well after certain items were left out. In previous research among protection services members two factors in the UWES could also be extracted namely vigour/dedication and absorption. The MBI-GS and UWES both showed acceptable internal consistencies.

The analysis of Pearson correlations in this study showed that burnout is negatively related to vigour/dedication and sense of coherence. Professional efficacy is positively related to vigour/dedication and absorption. Vigour/Dedication is positively related to absorption and sense of coherence.

Prolonged exposure to things like criminal aspects, life-and-death decision making and general political behaviour at organisational level, can result in feelings of burnout. Negative perceptions of organisational politics resulted in higher levels of burnout experienced by protection services members. Sense of coherence mediated the effect of organisational politics on work wellness.

Recommendations for future research were made.

## OPSOMMING

**Onderwerp:** Organisasie politiek, koherensiesin en werkswelstand van beskermingsdienste lede.

**Sleuteltermes:** Organisasie politiek, koherensiesin, uitbranding, werksbegeestering, werkswelstand.

Voortdurende veranderinge in die sekuriteits-sisteme regoor die wêreld, tesame met die toenemende druk om te presteer mag lei tot gevoelens van wantroue, druk in interpersoonlike verhoudinge, psigologiese druk, uitputting en spanning, wat weer die gesondheid van werknemers affekteer, veral by beskermingsdienste personeel. Werk welstand word 'n baie belangrike aspek as daar na die veiligheid van die mense aan wie die beskermingsdienste 'n diens lewer, asook na die veiligheid van hierdie lede gekyk word. Uitbranding en werksbegeestering is twee spesifieke areas hier ter sprake. Om uitbranding en werksbegeestering te meet, is dit belangrik dat daar van geldige en betroubare instrumente gebruik gemaak word. Tesame met uitbranding en werksbegeestering is daar ander fokus areas wat weer 'n direkte invloed kan hê op hierdie dimensies, dit is persepsies van organisasie politiek. Die effek wat persepsies van organisasie politiek het op uitbranding en werksbegeestering kan weer gemodereer of gemedieer word deur koherensiesin.

Die doelstelling van hierdie studie was om die verhouding tussen werkswelstand, organisasie politiek en koherensiesin te bepaal, deur die ontwikkeling van 'n oorsaaklike model van werkswelstand vir lede van beskermingsdienste bestaande uit uitbranding, werksbegeestering, organisasie politiek en koherensiesin.

Die navorsingsmetode bestaan uit 'n kort literatuuroorsig en 'n empiriese studie. 'n Dwarsnee-ontwerp is gebruik om data in te samel. 'n Beskikbaarheid steekproef ( $N = 341$ ) is van lede van beskermingsdienste geneem. Die Maslach-Uitbrandingsvraelys – Algemene Opname (MBI-GS), Utrecht-Werkbegeesteringskaal (UWES), Persepsie van Organisasie Politiek (POPS), Oriëntasie-tot-die-lewe Vraelys (OTLQ) en 'n biografiese vraelys is afgeneem. Die statistiese analise is uitgevoer met behulp van die SPSS-program en AMOS. Die statistiese metodes wat gebruik is in die artikel het bestaan uit beskrywende statistiek, Cronbach alfa

koeffisiënte, eksploratiewe faktor analise, Pearson produk-moment korrelasie koeffisiënte en strukturele vergelykingsmodellering metodes.

Eksplorerende faktor analise het 'n 2-faktormodel van uitbranding bestaande uit uitbranding (uitputting en sinisme) en professionele doeltreffendheid bevestig, nadat sekere items uitgelaat is. In vorige navorsing tussen beskermingsdienste lede is twee faktore van die UWES onttrek naamlik energie/toewyding en absorpsie. Die MBI-GS en die UWES toon beide aanvaarbare interne konsekwentheid.

Pearson korrelasies in die studie het gewys dat daar 'n negatiewe verband tussen uitbranding en energie/toewyding en koherensiesin is. Professionele doeltreffendheid het 'n positiewe verband met energie/toewyding en absorpsie. Energie/toewyding het 'n positiewe verband met absorpsie en koherensiesin getoon.

Voortdurende blootstelling aan dinge soos kriminele aspekte, lewe-en-dood besluitneming en algemene politieke gedrag op 'n organisasie vlak kan lei tot gevoelens van uitbranding. Negatiewe persepsies van organisasie politiek lei daartoe dat beskermingsdienste lede hoër vlakke van uitbranding ervaar. Koherensiesin medieer die effek van organisasie politiek op werkswelstand.

Aanbevelings vir toekomstige navorsing is aan die hand gedoen.

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This mini-dissertation focus on organisational politics, sense of coherence and work wellness of protection services members.

Chapter 1 contains the problem statement, research objectives and research methodology employed. The chapter starts out with a problem statement, giving an overview of previous related research conducted on work wellness and its relation with organisational politics and sense of coherence among protection services members, linking it with this research project and its research objectives. A discussion of the research method follows, with details regarding the empirical study, research design, study population, measuring instruments and statistical analysis. It concludes with a chapter summary giving an overview of the chapters that comprise this mini-dissertation.

### **1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Following the terrorist events of September 2001 in the United States of America, security has become an intense focus of public debate and concern (Lippert & O'Connor, 2003). Not only do people expect from protection services members to keep them save and protect them but they are also routinely placed in harm's way, sometimes in situations that is life threatening. As a result it is required from them to be able to make instantaneous decisions (June, 2000).

The role and functions of the protection services member is inclusive of violence (accidental, intentional, man-made, or a force of nature) as a sudden physical force causing injury, death or destruction, and the security of those who they hold dear and those who cannot protect themselves and their possessions (June, 2000). As security and protection experts they are continuously on the thin line between the possible victim and violence. It is required from them to be vigilant, but also to strive for excellence through innovation and education. (June, 2000).

The key to effective operation of any security system is an efficient, well-trained, equipped, supervised, and properly placed security force to react and respond to and neutralise the immediate, actual or perceived hazard (June, 2000). All of this requires that the protection services within any country and specifically within South Africa should undergo major changes to be able to adhere to the expectations and requirements of the public and the environment.

These high demands lead to feelings among protection services members that they should always be 'in control' (Collins, 2000). As a result they have been accused of having supermen or superwomen self-images, despite them also being 'only human'. They sometimes experience the same and, in some cases, even more severe forms of depression, anxiety, and other symptoms experienced by all employees (Collins, 2000). It is assumed that protection services members perform under more stress than members of almost any other profession (June, 2000). Silva, Leong and Weinstock (1993) also found that people protecting society from criminal behaviours of others, such as police officers, experience significant stress and even psychiatric disorders.

A factor found to be associated to lower levels of organisational commitment (Maslyn & Fedor, 1998), job satisfaction (Kacmar, Bozeman, Carlson & Anthony, 1999), and job performance (Anderson, 1994) and higher levels of job anxiety (Kacmar et al., 1999) and intention to leave the organisation (Kacmar et al., 1999), ultimately contributing to a stressful work environment, is the perception of organisational politics. Ferris, Frink, Galang, Zhou, Kacmar & Howard (1996) have found a relationship between organisational politics and strain.

Organisational politics is defined by Kacmar and Ferris (1991) as the degree to which respondents view their work environment as political, therefore unjust and unfair. Pfeffer (1992) supports this viewpoint by defining organisational politics as activities carried out to acquire, enhance, and use power and other resources to achieve specific outcomes where a situation exists in terms of uncertainty and/or disagreement. According to Mintzberg (1983) 'politics' refer to individual or group behaviour that is informal, ostensibly parochial, typically divisive, and above all, technically illegitimate. It is sanctioned neither by formal authority, accepted ideology, nor certified expertise. Most definitions of organisational politics correlate with personal struggles, conflicts, influential activities, and inequity and unfairness, which

result from the strong ambitions or aspirations of those who hold power in the workplace (Vigoda, 2000).

Organisational politics is both helpful and harmful for members of the organisation (Kumar & Ghadially, 1989). The positive outcomes of organisational politics are career advancement, recognition and status, enhanced power and position, accomplishment of personal goals, getting the job done, feelings of achievement, enhanced sense of control, and success. The negative outcomes are loss of strategic power and position credibility, negative feelings toward others, internal feelings of guilt, and hampered job performance of various kinds (Kumar & Ghadially, 1989).

The negative perception of organisational politics can result in some people quitting their jobs because they feel that they can't cope with a politically unfair and unjust environment (Folger, Konovsky & Cropanzano, 1992). Others who choose to stay must decide whether to 'fight' the system or to adjust and comply with its norms (Selye, 1975). Many of those who stay in the organisation are exposed to a higher risk of stress and burnout due to their inability or unwillingness to play the political game as directed by others and still be happy about it (Vigoda, 2002). Their perception of the organisation is typically one of an unfair or non-reciprocating environment where people do not receive honest returns and benefits for their admirable personal investments and efforts. It appears that organisational politics refers to the complex mixture of power, influence, and interest-seeking behaviours that dominate individuals' activity in the workplace (Ferris, Fedor, Chachere & Pondy, 1989).

Organisational politics is not a passing event but a continuous activity that encompasses the organisational sphere – its impact on individuals accumulates over time. It encourages and preserves a situation of inequity, unfairness, and disharmony among members of the organisation (Kacmar & Ferris, 1991). Van Dierendonck, Schaufeli and Buunk (1998) showed that reduced perceptions on inequity in the relationship with the organisation and with other individuals cause burnout, absenteeism, and deprived feelings to diminish among the experimental group, with significant differences from the control groups. These findings support the central role of equity and fairness, as highly reflected by organisational politics, in relating with job stressors and job burnout as well as other work outcomes. As indicated above, organisational politics may cause stress-related aftermaths that are beyond

conventional work-related results (Valle & Perrewe, 2000). Organisational politics may therefore function as a potential work stressor, leading to job distress and burnout.

The concept of burnout was first used by Freudenberger (1974), a psychiatrist who noticed that his once idealistic and highly motivated clinical staff suffered from a gradual loss of energy, motivation, and commitment, mental and physical exhaustion, and a wide range of other physical and emotional symptoms (Matheny, Gfroerer & Harris, 2000). Etzion (1987) defined burnout as a slow developmental process that begins without warning and lead to emotional exhaustion. Pines and Aronson (1988) define burnout as a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion, caused by long-term involvement in emotionally demanding situations. Burnout is a process which develops over time (Cherniss, 1980). It results from an imbalance between perceived demands and resources. People do not burn out because of flaws in their character, behaviour, or productivity; rather it is a problem of the social environment in which people work. The structure and functioning of the workplace shape how people interact with one another and how they carry out their jobs (Maslach & Leiter, 1997).

The multi-dimensional theory of burnout conceptualises burnout in terms of its three core components: emotional exhaustion, cynicism and professional efficacy (Maslach, 1993; Maslach & Jackson, 1986). According to this theory, burnout is an individual stress experience embedded in a context of complex social relationships, and it involves the person's conception of both self and others. Exhaustion refers to the fact that the employee is incapable of performing because all energy has been drained, whereas cynicism reflects indifference or a distant attitude towards one's work in general. Professional efficacy refers to a feeling of competence, productivity and achievement at work (Leiter, 1988).

According to Maslach (2000), job burnout is a prolonged response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job. The experience individuals go through can impair both personal and social functioning. While some people may quit their job as a result of burnout, others will stay on, but will only do the bare minimum rather than their very best. This decline in the quality of work, decline in both physical and psychological health, can be costly – not just for the individual worker, but for everyone affected by that person (Matheny et al. 2000). Burnout can be prevented by creating a better fit between the person and the environment,

thereby increasing work engagement and reducing the risk associated with incongruence of particularly personality features and job characteristics (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998).

Work engagement was introduced as the hypothesised opposite of burnout (Leiter & Maslach, 1998; Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001) and is characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption. Vigour refers to an employee's level of energy and mental resilience while working, where as dedication refers to an employee's sense of significance from his/her work, the feeling of being inspired by his/her work and being proud thereof. Absorption on the other hand is characterised by being fully concentrated and deeply engrossed in one's work, whereby the time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work. Work engagement is defined as an energetic state in which the employee is dedicated to excellent performance at work and is confident of his or her effectiveness (Schutte, Toppinen, Kalimo & Schaufeli, 2000).

Burnout and work engagement are indicators of the wellness of employees within organisations. Therefore, they could be combined in a model of well-being at work (Schaufeli, 2003; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) that distinguishes between two dimensions, namely identification with work (varying from cynicism to dedication) and mobilisation of energy (varying from exhaustion to vigour). This model makes it possible to distinguish between work engagement and burnout.

The burnout-engagement continuum recognises the variety of reactions that employees can have to the organisational environment, ranging from the intense involvement and satisfaction of engagement, through indifference to the exhausted, distant, and discouraged state of burnout (Maslach, 2000). It enhances the understanding of how the organisational context of work can affect the work wellness of employees. One important implication of the burnout-engagement continuum is that strategies to promote engagement may be just as important for burnout prevention as strategies to reduce the risk of burnout (Maslach, 2000). Jackson and Schuler (1983) hypothesised four organisational conditions that are particularly likely to increase the risk of employee burnout, namely lack of reward (absence of positive feedback), lack of control, lack of clarity, and lack of support.

Work wellness can be conceptualised within two dimensions: exhaustion versus vigour and cynicism versus dedication (Coetzer, 2004). The hallmarks of burnout that are assessed by

the MBI-GS are exhaustion (low energy) and cynicism (poor identification). Burnout and work engagement are considered each other's opposites, particularly as far as exhaustion and vigour, and cynicism and dedication are concerned (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Burnout and work engagement also show strong negative correlations (Coetzer, 2004; Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Absorption and professional efficacy seem to be less related than the other dimensions. Thus, these dimensions were excluded in a possible model of work wellness within the protection services industry. Rothmann (2003) also recommended that burnout and work engagement (being aspects of work related well-being) be integrated into one model. Within South African studies this model was confirmed by Coetzer (2004) and Van der Linde (2004).

In light of the above, it seems vital that a holistic and integrated model of work wellness be determined within the South African protection services environment, integrating burnout and work engagement and the impact of perceptions of organisational politics on this relationship. A first research problem is that there is a lack of a causal model of work wellness consisting out of positive and negative factors of employees working in the protection services industry in South Africa.

Within this structural model it is expected that certain factors will either moderate or mediate the work wellness of protection services members. Cooper, Dewe and O'Driscoll (2001, p. 117) define a moderator as "a variable that affects the direction and/or strength of the relation between an independent or predictor variable and a dependent or criterion variable". The influence of a moderator is the relationship between the moderator variable and the independent variable, which significantly affects the main relationship between the independent and dependent variables (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

Sense of coherence has been found to have a moderating affect between adverse characteristics of emotional exhaustion and psychosomatic symptoms (Feldt, 1997); emotional job strain and burnout (Söderfeldt, Söderfeldt, Ohlson, Theorell & Jones, 2000); conflicts at work and stress symptoms (Albertsen, Nielsen & Borg, 2001); and job autonomy and competence (Toppinen-Tanner & Kalimo, 2003). In a study among ministers, it was found that a high sense of coherence resulted in lower levels of burnout and higher levels of work engagement (Redelinghuys & Rothmann, 2004). Still, relatively little research has been

done on the relation between sense of coherence and work wellness – extending beyond physical health (Strümpher, 1995).

Sense of coherence is established primarily during the first decade of adulthood (Antonovsky, 1987). Individuals that develop a strong sense of coherence will, if they make use of internal and external resources, perceive stressors as manageable and will not show helpless behaviours (Basson & Rothmann, 2002). Sense of coherence is an isolated entity. Sense of coherence and hardiness attributes subjectively to perceptions of events, as well as to the knowledge of the availability and accessibility of one's resources to deal with the event (Antonovsky, 1987).

Sense of coherence consists of three components, namely comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness (Antonovsky, 1987). Comprehensibility refers to the degree to which one regards the stimuli from both internal and the external environment as structured, predictable, and explicable. Manageability refers to a belief that the resources are available to one to meet the demands posed by these stimuli. Meaningfulness refers to the degree to which these demands are seen as challenges, worthy of investment and engagement. Meaning is also about the cognisance of order, coherence, and purpose in one's existence (Antonovsky, 1979) and includes the pursuit and attainment of worthwhile goals with an accompanying sense of fulfillment, and a sense of optimism about the future despite the chaos that exists at times in life (Reker & Wong, 1988). Empirical studies on the construct of meaning in life have consistently shown significant correlations between meaning and psychological wellness (Pearson & Sheffield, 1974; Reker, 1994; Reker, Peacock & Wong, 1987; Zika & Chamberlain, 1992). In contrast, lack of meaning has been found to be associated with a lack of well-being and with psychopathology in a roughly linear sense: the less the sense of meaning, the greater the severity of psychopathology (Crumbaugh, 1968; Debats, 1999; Debats, Drost & Hansen, 1995; Harlow, Newcomb & Bentler, 1986; Pearson & Sheffield, 1974; Reker 1994; Yalom, 1980).

Based on the above discussion, it is clear that sense of coherence might have a moderating or mediating effect on the work wellness of protection services members. A second research problem is that little information exists regarding the possible moderating or mediating effects of sense of coherence on the relationship between perceptions of organisational politics on the one hand and work wellness on the other hand.

The research will make the following contributions to the subject of Industrial Psychology and the practice thereof in organisations:

- It will result in measuring instruments for burnout, work engagement, organisational politics and sense of coherence, which have been proven to be reliable and valid for protection services members.
- It will help to determine the relationship between burnout, work engagement, organisational politics and sense of coherence.
- A casual model of work wellness comprising burnout and work engagement will exist, which could be used to enhance wellness of protection services members.
- It will assist in determining the possible moderating or mediating effect of sense of coherence on the effects of organisational politics on work-wellness.

## **1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

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

### **1.2.1 General objective**

The general aim of this research is to develop and test a causal model of work wellness for protection services consisting of organisational politics, sense of coherence, burnout and work engagement.

### **1.2.2 Specific objectives**

The specific objectives are as follows:

- To determine the construct validity and internal consistency of the Maslach Burnout Inventory – General Survey (MBI-GS), Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), Perceptions of Organisational Politics Scale (POPS), and Orientation to Life Questionnaire (OTLQ) for protection services members.
- To conceptualise work wellness, sense of coherence and organisational politics according to the literature.

- To determine the relationship between work wellness, organisational politics and sense of coherence.
- To develop and test a causal model of work wellness comprising burnout, work engagement, organisational politics and sense of coherence for protection services members.
- To determine whether sense of coherence moderates or mediates the effect of organisational politics on work-wellness.

### **1.3 RESEARCH METHOD**

The research method consists of a literature review and an empirical study. The results obtained will be presented in the form of a research article. Because separate chapters were not targeted for the literature review, this paragraph focuses on aspects relevant to the empirical study that is conducted.

#### **1.3.1 Literature review**

The literature review focuses on previous research on burnout, work engagement, organisational politics and sense of coherence and the relationship between these constructs among protection services members. An overview is given of the conceptualisation of these constructs in the literature, and on the findings in terms of measuring burnout, work engagement, organisational politics and sense of coherence.

#### **1.3.2 Research design**

A cross-sectional design with a survey as the data collection technique is used to achieve the research objectives. Cross-sectional designs are used to examine groups of subjects in various stages of development simultaneously, while the survey describe a technique of data collection in which questionnaires are used to gather data about an identified population (Burns & Grove, 1993). Information collected is used to describe the population at that time. This design can also be used to assess interrelationships among variables within a population. According to Shaughnessy and Zechmeister (1997) this design is best suited to addressing the

descriptive and predictive functions associated with correlational research, whereby relationships between variables are examined.

Structural equation modelling (SEM) is used to address the problems associated with this design (Byrne, 2001). Structural equation modelling is also used to test casual models of work wellness. Structural equation modelling is a statistical methodology that takes a confirmatory (i.e. hypothesis-testing) approach to the analysis of a structural theory bearing on some phenomenon (Byrne, 2001). Structural equation modelling conveys two important aspects of the procedure:

- That the causal processes under study are represented by a series of structural (i.e. regression) equations, and
- That these structural relations can be modelled pictorially to enable a clear conceptualisation of the theory under study.

### **1.3.3 Study population**

The study population consists of an availability sample of protection services members ( $N = 341$ ). The sample consisted mainly of Afrikaans-speaking (41,90%), married men (91,50%) with a Grade 12 education (71,00%). The mean age of the participants was between 30 and 35 years while the average length of service in the same position was more than five years.

### **1.3.4 Measuring battery**

Four questionnaires are used in the empirical study, namely the Perceptions of Organisational Politics Scale (Ferris, Russ & Fandt, 1989), the Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996), Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá & Bakker, 2002) and Orientation to Life Questionnaire (OTLQ) (Antonovsky, 1983).

The *Perceptions of Organisational Politics Scale* (Ferris et al., 1989) is used to measure organisational politics. The original 31-item scale was reduced to a 12-item scale. The 12-item scale focuses on the following factors; General political behaviour, Go along to get ahead and Pay and Promotion. Respondents are asked to report how much they agree with an

item on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The internal-consistency estimate of reliability for the final scale was 0,87 (Kacmar & Ferris, 1991).

The *Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey* (Maslach et al., 1996) is used to measure burnout. The MBI-GS consists of 16 items that produces three scores: Exhaustion (Ex) (five items; e.g. "I feel used up at the end of the workday"), Cynicism (Cy) (five items; e.g. "I have become less enthusiastic about my work") and Professional Efficacy (PE) (six items; e.g. "In my opinion, I am good at my job"). These three components of the burnout construct are conceptualised in broader terms relating to the job and not just to the personal relationships that may be part of the job (Maslach et al., 2001). Maslach et al. (1996) reported that internal consistencies (Cronbach coefficient alphas) varied from 0,87 to 0,89 for exhaustion, 0,73 to 0,84 for cynicism and 0,76 to 0,84 for professional efficacy. Test-retest reliabilities after one year were 0,65 (exhaustion), 0,60 (cynicism) and 0,67 (professional efficacy). All items are scored on a 7-point frequency-rating scale ranging from 0 ("never"), to 6 ("daily"). High scores on Exhaustion and Cynicism, and low scores on Professional Efficacy are indicative of burnout. Storm (2002) confirmed the 3-factor structure of the MBI-GS in a sample of 2 396 members of the South African Police Service (SAPS), but recommended that Item 13 should be dropped from the questionnaire. She confirmed the structural equivalence of the MBI-GS for different race groups in the SAPS. The following Cronbach alpha coefficients were obtained for the MBI-GS in South African samples: Exhaustion: 0,86 to 0,88; Cynicism: 0,79 to 0,80; Professional Efficacy: 0,76 to 0,78 (Coetzer, 2004; Storm, 2002).

The *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale* (UWES) (Schaufeli et al., 2002) is used to measure the levels of engagement of the participants. The UWES includes three dimensions, namely vigour, dedication and absorption, which is conceptually seen as the opposite of burnout and is scored on a seven-point frequency-rating scale, varying from 0 ("never") to 6 ("everyday"). The questionnaire consists of 17 questions and includes questions like "I am bursting with energy every day in my work"; "Time flies when I am at work" and "My job inspires me". The alpha coefficients for the three subscales varied between 0,80 and 0,91. The alpha coefficient could be improved ( $\alpha$  varies between 0,78 and 0,89 for the three sub-scales) by eliminating a few items without substantially decreasing the scales internal consistency. Storm and Rothmann (2003) obtained the following alpha coefficients for the UWES in a sample of 2 396 members of the South African Police Service: Vigour: 0,78; Dedication:

0,89; Absorption: 0,78. Coetzer (2004) obtained among a sample of employees in an insurance company, the following alpha coefficients: Vigour (0,80); Dedication (0,87), and Absorption (0,69).

*Orientation to Life Questionnaire* (OTLQ) (Antonovsky, 1983) is used to measure the construct of sense of coherence of protection services members. The questionnaire consists of 29 items. It contains items measuring the three components of sense of coherence, namely manageability, comprehensibility and meaningfulness. The scale assesses an individual's global orientation towards coping. The Cronbach alphas ranged from 0,83 to 0,88 (Antonovsky, 1983). Rothmann (2000) reported an alpha coefficient of 0,89 for the OTLQ, which is regarded as acceptable.

### **1.3.5 Statistical analysis**

The statistical analysis is carried out with the help of the SPSS-programme (SPSS, 2003) and the Amos-programme (Arbuckle, 2003). Descriptive statistics (e.g. means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis) are used to analyse the data. Cronbach alpha coefficients are used to determine the internal consistency, homogeneity and unidimensionality of the measuring instruments (Clark & Watson, 1995). Coefficient alphas contain important information regarding the proportion of variance of the items of a scale in terms of the total variance explained by that particular scale.

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients are used to specify the relationship between the variables. In terms of statistical significance, it is decided to set the value at a 95% confidence interval level ( $p \leq 0,05$ ). Effect sizes (Steyn, 1999) are used to decide on the practical significance of the findings. A cut-off point of 0,30 (medium effect, Cohen, 1988) is set for the practical significance of correlation coefficients.

In this research construct equivalence of the MBI-GS and the UWES was also performed. Several techniques can be used to investigate construct equivalence such as factor analysis, cluster analysis, and multidimensional scaling or other dimensionality-reducing techniques (Van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). The idea behind this application of these techniques is to obtain a structure in each language, which can then be compared across all languages

involved. Factor analysis is the most frequently used technique for studying construct equivalence. In this study both exploratory and confirmatory models could have been used. On the basis of previous studies about the composition of the instrument available, the choice for confirmatory factor analysis may seem obvious. The current author used exploratory factor analysis for a pragmatic reason. The MBI-GS and the UWES are recently developed measurement instruments, and only a few studies regarding its validity in South Africa were found. There were also negative experiences with the use of confirmatory models in studying the construct validity of the MBI-GS and the UWES. The problem that the author found with the confirmatory models was their fit to the data, which is almost always not desirable. The reasons for the poor fit is usually not clear to whether or not it is serious enough to lead to the reformulation of the model, or is the reasons for the poor fit trivial and do not challenge the underlying model.

Exploratory factor analysis was therefore used to examine construct equivalence and to enhance the reliability results of the MBI-GS and the UWES. The number of factors in the total sample of the MBI-GS and the UWES were determined by a principle components analysis. Subsequently, a direct oblimin rotation was used to determine the solution for each language cluster group. After target rotation, factors obtained in each group were compared. The agreement was evaluated by a factor congruence coefficient, Tucker's phi (Van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). Values above 0,98 are taken to point to an essential agreement between the language groups, while values above 0,95 point to a very good agreement. This agreement implies that the factor loading of the lower and higher levels are equal up to a multiplying constant. This multiplying constant is needed to accommodate possible differences in eigen values of factors for the language groups.

Covariance analysis or structural equation modelling (SEM) methods, as implemented by AMOS (Arbuckle, 1997), were used to construct and test the model of work wellness. Hypothesised relationships are tested empirically for goodness-of-fit with the sample data. The  $\chi^2$  statistic and several other goodness-of-fit indices summarise the degree of correspondence between the implied and observed covariance matrices. However, because the  $\chi^2$  statistic equals  $(N-1)F_{min}$  this value tends to be substantial when the model does not hold and the sample size is large (Byrne, 2001). Researchers addressed the  $\chi^2$  limitation by

developing goodness-of-fit indices that take a more pragmatic approach to the evaluation process.

A value  $<2$  for  $\chi^2/\text{degrees of freedom}$  ratio (CMIN/df) (Wheaton, Muthén, Alwin & Summers, 1977) indicates acceptable fit (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). The hypothesised relationships with the data are also tested using the following goodness-of-fit statistics: Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI), Parsimony Goodness-of-Fit Index (PGFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA).

#### **1.4 DIVISIONS OF CHAPTERS**

The chapters are presented as follows in this mini-dissertation:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Research Article

Chapter 3: Conclusions, limitations and recommendations

#### **1.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Chapter 1 focused on the problem statement, research objectives and research method in this study. This was followed by a division of the chapters that follow.

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**ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS, SENSE OF COHERENCE AND WORK  
WELLNESS OF PROTECTION SERVICES MEMBERS**

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**ABSTRACT**

The objective of this study was to develop and test a causal model of work wellness of employees in the protection services in South Africa. A cross-sectional survey design was used. An availability sample of ( $N = 341$ ) was taken from protection services members. The POPS, MBI-GS, UWES and OTLQ were administered. The result showed that work wellness comprises of burnout (exhaustion and cynicism) and work engagement (vigour and dedication). Negative perceptions of organisational politics increase the levels of burnout experienced, ultimately impacting work wellness. Sense of coherence mediated the effects of organisational politics on work wellness.

**OPSOMMING**

Die doelstelling van hierdie studie was om 'n oorsaaklike model van werkswelstand vir werknemers in beskermingsdienste in Suid-Afrika te ontwikkel en te toets. 'n Dwarsnedeopname-ontwerp met 'n beskikbaarheidsteekproef ( $N = 341$ ) is gebruik. Die POPS, MBI-GS, UWES en OTLQ is afgeneem. Die resultate het getoon dat werkswelstand uit uitbranding (uitputting en sinisme) en werksbegeestering (energie en toewyding), bestaan. Negatiewe persepsies van organisasie politiek dra by tot die vlakke van uitbranding wat beleef word en gevolglik werkswelstand beïnvloed. Koherensiesin medierer die effek van organisasie politiek op werkswelstand.

Security has become an intense focus of public debate and concern (Lippert & O'Connor, 2003). In providing a service in terms of the safeguarding of businesses and buildings against theft, vandalism, illegal entry or against fire, screening people for weapons, explosives or contraband and working as bodyguards to protect others (Silva, Leong & Weinstock, 1993), security officers or protection services members are routinely placed in harm's way. They are continuously on the threshold between the possible victim and violence, facing sometimes life threatening situations (June, 2000). This requires from them to be vigilant, but also to strive for excellence through innovation and education.

The roles and functions of protection services members are inclusive of all kinds of violence (June, 2000). The main responsibility of security guards or protection services members is the protection of individuals or the protection of property (Silva et al., 1993). The traditional uniformed security guard is usually a person who is recruited from the lowest socio-economic level with basic formal education and limited basic skills (Ackerman, 1999). Security guards are primarily involved with physical security that is produced by the actual or potential use of force but they also provide security through symbolic means and through the use of information technology (Lippert & O'Connor, 2003).

The key to effective operation of any security system is an efficient, well-trained, equipped, supervised, and properly placed security force to react and respond to and neutralise the immediate, actual or perceived hazard (June, 2000). All of this requires that the protection services within any country should undergo major changes to be able to adhere to the expectations and requirements of the public and the environment. These changes are particularly relevant for South African circumstances, where high levels of crime and violence are prevalent (Gulle, Tredoux & Foster, 1998; Marks, 1995; Nel & Burgers, 1996).

The impact of change on organisations and the transforming role of the protection services member, security and law enforcement officers, private or public, imply that protection services members perform under more stress than members of almost any other profession (June, 2000). Silva et al. (1993) indicated that the people responsible for protecting society from criminal behaviour of others, such as police officers, experience significant stress and even psychiatric disorders. As a result, protection services members sometimes experience the same and in some cases even more severe forms of depression, anxiety, and other symptoms experienced by all employees (Collins, 2000).

A factor found to be associated to lower levels of organisational commitment (Maslyn & Fedor, 1998), job satisfaction (Kacmar, Bozeman, Carlson & Anthony, 1999), job performance (Anderson, 1994) and higher levels of job anxiety (Kacmar et al., 1999) and intention to leave the organisation (Kacmar et al., 1999), ultimately contributing to a stressful work environment, is the perception of organisational politics. Ferris, Frink, Galang, Zhou, Kacmar & Howard (1996) have found a relationship between organisational politics and strain.

Organisational politics is defined by Kacmar and Ferris (1991) as the degree to which respondents view their work environment as political, therefore unjust and unfair. Ferris and King (1991) and Pfeffer (1992) support this viewpoint by defining organisational politics as activities carried out to acquire, enhance, and use power and other resources to achieve specific outcomes where a situation exists in terms of uncertainty and/or disagreement. Organisational politics refer to behaviours that occur on an informal basis within an organisation and involve intentional acts of influence that are designed to protect or enhance individuals' professional careers when conflicting courses of action are possible (Drory, 1993). According to Mintzberg (1983) 'politics' refer to individual or group behaviour that is informal, ostensibly parochial, typically divisive, and above all, technically illegitimate. It is sanctioned neither by formal authority, accepted ideology, nor certified expertise. Most definitions of organisational politics correlate with personal struggles, conflicts, influential activities, and inequity and unfairness, which result from the strong ambitions or aspirations of those who hold power in the workplace (Vigoda, 2000).

Organisational politics is both helpful and harmful for members of the organisation (Kumar & Ghadially, 1989). The positive outcomes of organisational politics are career advancement, recognition and status, enhanced power and position, accomplishment of personal goals, getting the job done, feelings of achievement, enhanced sense of control, and success. The negative outcomes are loss of strategic power and position credibility, negative feelings toward others, internal feelings of guilt, and hampered job performance of various kinds (Kumar & Ghadially, 1989). According to studies done by Folger, Konovsky and Cropanzano (1992) some people quit their job because they feel that they can't cope with a politically unfair and unjust environment. Many of those who stay in the organisation are exposed to a

higher risk of stress and burnout due to their inability or unwillingness to play the political game as directed by others and still be happy about it (Vigoda, 2002).

Behaviour in organisations is often political in nature (DuBrin, 1991). Organisational politics warrants empirical investigation because it may further the understanding of dysfunctional work environments (Parker, Dipboye & Jackson, 1995). Studies proposed organisational politics as one source of stress and conflict in the work environment with the potential for dysfunctional outcomes at both the individual and the organisational level (Gillmore, Ferris, Dulebohn & Harrell-Cook, 1996).

Even though it is important to assist individual members whose psychological well-being is affected by their work, an organisational rather than an individual approach is more likely to be effective, as most stressors were found to be at an organisational level (Storm & Rothmann, in press). Ferris et al. (1996) found strong relationships between employees' perceptions of a negative political climate within their organisation and experience of psychological strain. According to Violanti (1996) police members' experiences of organisational practices and the inherent nature of police work seem to be related to stress. Cropanza, Howes, Grandley and Toth (1997) also found a significant relationship between organisational politics and employees' levels of strain.

Studies showed three groups of influences when they examined the antecedents of perceptions of organisational politics (Vigoda, 2000). The first group consisted of general personal influences like age and gender. The second group was termed organisational influences and included variables like centralisation, formalisation, hierarchical level, and span of control. The third group of antecedents named job/work environment influences was based on variables such as job autonomy, job variety, feedback, advancements, opportunity, and interaction with others. Organisational politics encourages and preserves a situation of inequity, unfairness, and disharmony among members of the organisation (Kacmar & Ferris, 1991). Van Dierendonck, Schaufeli and Buunk (1998) showed that reduced perceptions of inequity in the relationship with the organisation and with other individuals cause burnout, absenteeism, and deprived feelings to diminish among the experimental group, with significant differences from the control groups. These findings support the central role of equity and fairness, as highly reflected by organisational politics, in relating with job stressors and job burnout as well as other work outcomes. As indicated above, organisational politics

may cause stress-related aftermaths that are beyond conventional work-related results (Valle & Perrewe, 2000), impacting the overall work wellness of an organisation. A research question is, therefore, that there are certain occupational stressors within the protection services occupations and that these stressors can impact the overall work wellness of protection services members, leading to job distress and burnout. It is therefore important to identify the role and impact of organisational politics as a potential occupational stressor on the work wellness of protection services members.

## **Work Wellness**

Burnout and work engagement are indicators of the wellness of employees within organisations. Therefore, they could be combined in a model of well-being at work (Schaufeli, 2003; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) that distinguishes between two dimensions, namely identification with work (varying from cynicism to dedication) and mobilisation of energy (varying from exhaustion to vigour). This model makes it possible to distinguish between burnout and work engagement. Within South African studies, this model was confirmed in a sample of employees in an insurance company (Coetzer, 2004) and in a sample of protection services members (Van der Linde, 2004). It appears that work wellness can therefore be conceptualised within the mentioned constructs, namely burnout and work engagement.

Burnout is described as a syndrome consisting of three dimensions, namely feelings of emotional exhaustion, cynicism and professional efficacy (Maslach, 1982; 1993; Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996; Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). *Exhaustion* represents the basic individual stress dimension of burnout. It refers to feelings of being overextended and depleted of one's emotional and physical resources. The *cynicism* component represents the interpersonal context dimension of burnout. It refers to a negative, callous, or excessively detached responses to various aspects of the job. The component of reduced *professional efficacy* or accomplishment represents the self-evaluation dimension of burnout. It refers to feelings of incompetence and a lack of achievement and productivity at work (Maslach et al., 2001). The experience of burnout can be prevented by creating a better fit between the person and the environment, thereby increasing work engagement and reducing the risk associated with incongruence of particularly personality features and job characteristics (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998)

Work engagement was introduced as the hypothesised opposite of burnout (Leiter & Maslach, 1998; Maslach et al., 2001) and is characterised by vigour (high energy), dedication (strong identification) and absorption. Work engagement is defined as an energetic state in which the employee is dedicated to excellent performance at work and is confident in his or her effectiveness (Schutte, Toppinen, Kalimo & Schaufeli, 2000). It consists of the positive poles of the burnout dimensions, namely vigour, dedication and absorption. According to Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá and Bakker (2002) *vigour* refers to high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, as well as a willingness to exert effort and to persist even through difficult times. *Dedication* is described as a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge. *Absorption* refers to a tendency to be fully concentrating on and being deeply engrossed in work, as a result of which time passes quickly and one has difficulty to detach oneself from one's work. It also includes focused attention, a clear mind, mind and body unison, effortless concentration, complete control, loss of self-consciousness, distortion of time and intrinsic enjoyment (Cshikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Exhaustion (low energy) and cynicism (poor identification) are the hallmarks of burnout. Burnout and work engagement are considered each other's opposites, particularly as far as exhaustion and vigour, and cynicism and dedication are concerned (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), and it is suggested that burnout and work engagement will show strong correlations (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Absorption and professional efficacy seem to be less related than the other dimensions. Thus, these dimensions were excluded in a possible model of work wellness within protection services members.

The burnout-engagement continuum recognises that employees can have a variety of reactions to the organisational environment, ranging from the intense involvement and satisfaction of engagement, through indifference to the exhausted, distant, and discouraged state of burnout (Maslach, 2000). An important implication of the burnout-engagement continuum is that strategies to promote engagement may be just as important for burnout prevention as strategies to reduce the risk of burnout (Maslach, 2000). Jackson and Schuler (1983) hypothesised four organisational conditions that are particularly likely to increase the risk of employee burnout, namely lack of reward (absence of positive feedback), lack of control, lack of clarity, and lack of support. According to Maslach (2000) the burnout-engagement continuum enhances the understanding of how the organisational context of work can affect the work wellness of employees. The state of an individual's wellness will have both

individual and organisational consequences (Porter, Kraft & Claycomb, 2004). Greenglass et al. (1998) state that an individual's burnout levels depend not only on stressful events in the work environment, but also on the availability of coping resources.

Except for Van der Linde (2004), no research could be found on the work wellness of protection services members within South Africa. A second research question is, therefore, that work wellness can be conceptualised within two constructs, namely burnout and work engagement. In light of the above-mentioned, it seems vital that a holistic and integrated model of work wellness be determined within the protection services environment with the integration of burnout and work engagement and the impact of perceptions of organisational politics on this relationship. However, it is expected that within this causal model, that certain factors will either moderate or mediate the effects of work wellness on ill health of protection services' members.

A variable such as sense of coherence has been identified as having a moderating effect between the adverse characteristics of emotional exhaustion and psychosomatic symptoms (Feldt, 1997); emotional job strain and burnout (Söderfeldt, Söderfeldt, Ohlson, Theorell & Jones, 2000); conflicts at work and stress symptoms (Albertsen, Nielsen & Borg, 2001); and job autonomy and competence (Toppinen-Tanner & Kalimo, 2003). Sense of coherence has also been found to be associated with positive adaptation to illness and that this is associated with well-being (Hooven, 1983; Wyller, 1998).

### **Sense of coherence**

Cooper, Dewe and O'Driscoll (2001, p. 117) define a moderator as "a variable that affects the direction and/or strength of the relation between an independent or predictor variable and a dependent or criterion variable". The influence of a moderator is the relationship between the moderator variable and the independent variable, which significantly affects the main relationship between the independent and dependent variables (Baron & Kenny, 1986). This study focuses on the moderating or mediating effect of sense of coherence on the work wellness-organisational politics relationship.

Sense of coherence is a global cognitive style used when handling stressors (Antonovsky, 1987). It is seen as providing an answer to what the origins of health are (Antonovsky &

Sourini, 1988). Sense of coherence can be described as the extent to which one has a pervasive, enduring though dynamic feeling of confidence that one's internal and external environments are predictable and that there is a high probability that things will work out as can be reasonably expected (Antonovsky, 1991).

The definition of sense of coherence includes three dimensions that represent the concept, namely comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness (Antonovsky, 1987). Comprehensibility refers to the degree to which one regards the stimuli from both internal and the external environment as structured, predictable, and explicable. Manageability refers to a belief that the resources are available to one to meet the demands posed by these stimuli. Meaningfulness refers to the degree to which these demands are seen as challenges, worthy of investment and engagement. Meaning is also about the cognisance of order, coherence, and purpose in one's existence (Antonovsky, 1979) and includes the pursuit and attainment of worthwhile goals with an accompanying sense of fulfillment, and a sense of optimism about the future despite the chaos that exists at times in life (Reker & Wong, 1988).

According to Antonovsky (1993), sense of coherence has a stress buffering effect due to the influence it might have on the choice of coping strategies. Sense of coherence was found to have a strong link with organisational commitment (Field, Kinnunen & Mauno, 2000). When the perception exists that the organisational climate has worsened, sense of coherence will also deteriorate. Research has shown significant correlations between meaning and psychological wellness (Pearson & Sheffield, 1974; Reker, 1994; Reker et al., 1987; Zika & Chamberlain, 1992). In contrast, lack of meaning has been found to be associated with a lack of well-being and with psychopathology in a roughly linear sense: the less the sense of meaning, the greater the severity of psychopathology (Crumbaugh, 1968; Debats, 1999; Debats, Drost & Hansen, 1995; Harlow, Newcomb & Bentler, 1986; Pearson & Sheffield, 1974; Reker, 1994; Yalom, 1980).

Although evidence of the moderating or mediating effect of sense of coherence was found in numerous studies, no research could be found on its moderating or mediating effect on the work wellness – perceptions of organisational politics relationship. A third research question is that little information exists on the possible moderating or mediating effects of sense of coherence on the relationship between perceptions of organisational politics on the one hand and work wellness on the other hand.

Based on the above discussion, perceptions of protection services members of organisational politics may result in job distress and burnout, ultimately impacting the overall work wellness of protection services members. The objective of this study, therefore, is to develop and test a causal model of work wellness for protection services members, inclusive of perceptions of organisational politics, burnout, work engagement and sense of coherence.

Based on the above discussion, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H1: Work wellness comprises of work engagement and burnout.

H2: Negative perceptions of organisational politics will result in higher levels of burnout.

H3: Sense of coherence moderates or mediates the effects of negative perceptions of organisational politics on work wellness.

## **METHOD**

### **Research design**

A cross-sectional design with a survey as technique of data collection was used to achieve the objectives of this research. Cross-sectional designs are used to examine groups of subjects in various stages of development simultaneously, while the survey describes a technique of data collection in which questionnaires are used to gather data about an identified population (Burns & Grove, 1993). This design is well suited to the descriptive and predictive functions associated with correlational research, whereby relationships between variables are examined (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1997). Furthermore, structural equation modelling was used to address the problems associated with this design (Byrne, 2001).

### **Study population**

The study population could be defined as an accidental sample of employees in protection services. The total population of 1 079 employees in a protection services organisation was targeted. A response rate of 35% was achieved, of which 341 responses (91%) could be utilised.

Descriptive information of the sample is given in Table 1.

Table 1  
*Characteristics of the Participants*

Item	Category	Frequency (Percentage)
Age	Younger than 20 years	8 (2,30%)
	20 – 25 years	56 (16,40%)
	26 – 30 years	78 (22,90%)
	31 – 35 years	146 (42,80%)
	36 – 40 years	47 (13,80%)
	Older than 40 years	6 (1,80%)
Gender	Male	312 (91,50%)
	Female	26 (7,60%)
Race	African	189 (55,40%)
	Coloured	103 (30,20%)
	Asian	6 (1,80%)
	White	43 (12,60%)
Home Language	Afrikaans	143 (41,90%)
	English	21 (6,20%)
	Sotho	91 (26,70%)
	Swazi	5 (1,50%)
	Ndebele	9 (2,60%)
	Xhosa	26 (7,60%)
	Zulu	12 (3,50%)
Education	Grade 10	28 (8,20%)
	Grade 11	19 (5,60%)
	Grade 12	242 (71,00%)
	Post-matric	49 (14,40%)
Marital Status	Married / Living Together	188 (55,10%)
	Unmarried / Single	143 (41,90%)
	Widowed	2 (0,60%)
	Separated / Divorced	7 (2,10%)
Years employed in current position	Less than three years	92 (27,30%)
	Three to five years	79 (23,20%)
	More than five years	167 (49,00%)

The sample consisted mainly of Afrikaans-speaking (41,90%), married men (91,50%) with a Grade 12 education (71,00%). The mean age of the participants was between 30 and 35 years while the average length of service was more than five years.

## Measuring Battery

The following measuring instruments were used in the empirical study:

A *biographical questionnaire* was developed to gather information about the demographical characteristics of the participants. Information gathered included age, gender, race, home language, education, marital status and years employed in current position.

The *Perceptions of Organisational Politics Scale* (Ferris, Russ & Fandt, 1989) was used to measure organisational politics. The original 31-item scale was reduced to a 12-item scale. Five factors that were tested with the original 31-item scale were (1) Go along to get ahead, (2) self-serving, (3) co-workers, (4) cliques, and (5) pay and promotion. The 12-item scale focuses on the following factors; General political behaviour, Go along to get ahead and Pay and Promotion. Respondents were asked to report how much they agreed with an item on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The internal-consistency estimate of reliability for the final scale was 0,87 (Kacmar & Ferris, 1991).

The *Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey* (Maslach et al., 1996) was used to measure burnout. The MBI-GS consists of 16 items that produces three scores: Exhaustion (Ex) (five items; e.g. "I feel used up at the end of the workday"), Cynicism (Cy) (five items; e.g. "I have become less enthusiastic about my work") and Professional Efficacy (PE) (six items; e.g. "In my opinion, I am good at my job"). These three components of the burnout construct are conceptualised in broader terms relating to the job and not just to the personal relationships that may be part of the job (Maslach et al., 2001). Maslach et al. (1996) reported that internal consistencies (Cronbach coefficient alphas) varied from 0,87 to 0,89 for exhaustion, 0,73 to 0,84 for cynicism and 0,76 to 0,84 for professional efficacy. Test-retest reliabilities after one year were 0,65 (exhaustion), 0,60 (cynicism) and 0,67 (professional efficacy). All items are scored on a 7-point frequency-rating scale ranging from 0 ("never"), to 6 ("daily"). High scores on Exhaustion and Cynicism, and low scores on Professional Efficacy are indicative of burnout. Storm (2002) confirmed the 3-factor structure of the MBI-GS in a sample of 2 396 members of the South African Police Service (SAPS), but recommended that Item 13 should be dropped from the questionnaire. She confirmed the structural equivalence of the MBI-GS for different race groups in the SAPS. The construct validity of the MBI-GS was confirmed in various studies (Coetzer & Rothmann, 2004; Storm, 2002). The following Cronbach alpha

coefficients were obtained for the MBI-GS in South African studies: Exhaustion: 0,86 to 0,88; Cynicism: 0,79 to 0,80; Professional Efficacy: 0,76 to 0,78 (Coetzer, 2004; Storm, 2002).

The *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale* (UWES) (Schaufeli et al., 2002) was used to measure the levels of work engagement of the participants. The UWES includes three dimensions, namely vigour, dedication and absorption, which is conceptually seen as the opposite of burnout and is scored on a seven-point frequency-rating scale, varying from 0 ("never") to 6 ("every day"). The questionnaire consists of 17 questions and includes questions like "I am bursting with energy every day in my work"; "Time flies when I am at work" and "My job inspires me". The alpha coefficients for the three subscales varied between 0,80 and 0,91. The alpha coefficient could be improved ( $\alpha$  varies between 0,78 and 0,89 for the three sub-scales) by eliminating a few items without substantially decreasing the scales' internal consistency. Storm and Rothmann (2003) obtained the following alpha coefficients for the UWES in a sample of 2 396 members of the South African Police Service: Vigour: 0,78; Dedication: 0,89; Absorption: 0,78. Coetzer (2004) obtained, among a sample of employees in an insurance company, the following alpha coefficients: Vigour (0,80); Dedication (0,87), and Absorption (0,69).

*Orientation to Life Questionnaire* (OTLQ) (Antonovsky, 1983) was used to measure sense of coherence of employees in protection services. The questionnaire consists of 29 items. It contains items measuring the three components of sense of coherence, namely manageability, comprehensibility and meaningfulness. The scale assesses an individual's global orientation towards coping. The Cronbach alphas ranged from 0,83 to 0,88 (Antonovsky, 1983). Rothmann (2000) reported an alpha coefficient of 0,89 for the OTLQ, which is regarded as acceptable.

### **Statistical analysis**

The statistical analysis was carried out with the help of the SPSS-programme (SPSS, 2003) and the Amos-programme (Arbuckle, 2003). Descriptive statistics (e.g. means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis) were used to analyse the data. Cronbach alpha coefficients were used to determine the internal consistency, homogeneity and unidimensionality of the measuring instruments (Clark & Watson, 1995). Coefficient alphas contain important

information regarding the proportion of variance of the items of a scale in terms of the total variance explained by that particular scale.

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to specify the relationship between the variables. In terms of statistical significance, it was decided to set the value at a 95% confidence interval level ( $p \leq 0,05$ ). Effect sizes (Steyn, 1999) were used to decide on the practical significance of the findings. A cut-off point of 0,30 (medium effect, Cohen, 1988) was set for the practical significance of correlation coefficients.

In this research construct equivalence of the MBI-GS and the UWES was also performed. Several techniques can be used to investigate construct equivalence such as factor analysis, cluster analysis, and multidimensional scaling or other dimensionality-reducing techniques (Van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). The idea behind this application of these techniques was to obtain a structure in each language, which can then be compared across all languages involved. Factor analysis is the most frequently used technique for studying construct equivalence. In this study both exploratory and confirmatory models could have been used. On the basis of previous studies about the composition of the instrument being available, the choice for confirmatory factor analysis may seem obvious. The current author used exploratory factor analysis for a pragmatic reason. The MBI-GS and the UWES are recently developed measurement instruments, and only a few studies regarding its validity in South Africa were found. There were also negative experiences with the use of confirmatory models in studying the construct validity of the MBI-GS and the UWES. The problem that the author found with the confirmatory models was their fit to the data, which is almost always not desirable. The reasons for the poor fit are usually not clear as to whether or not they are serious enough to lead to the reformulation of the model, or whether the reasons for the poor fit are trivial and do not challenge the underlying model.

Exploratory factor analysis was therefore used to examine construct equivalence and to enhance the reliability results of the MBI-GS and the UWES. The number of factors in the total sample of the MBI-GS and the UWES were determined by a principle components analysis. Subsequently, a direct oblimin rotation was used to determine the solution for each language cluster group. After target rotation, factors obtained in each group were compared. The agreement was evaluated by a factor congruence coefficient, Tucker's phi (Van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). Values above 0,98 are taken to point to an essential agreement between the

language groups, while values above 0,95 point to a very good agreement. This agreement implies that the factor loading of the lower and higher levels are equal up to a multiplying constant. This multiplying constant is needed to accommodate possible differences in eigen values of factors for the language groups.

Covariance analysis or structural equation modelling (SEM) methods, as implemented by AMOS (Arbuckle, 1997), were used to construct and test the causal model of work wellness. Hypothesised relationships are tested empirically for goodness-of-fit with the sample data. The  $\chi^2$  statistic and several other goodness-of-fit indices summarise the degree of correspondence between the implied and observed covariance matrices. However, because the  $\chi^2$  statistic equals  $(N-1)F_{min}$  this value tends to be substantial when the model does not hold and the sample size is large (Byrne, 2001). Researchers addressed the  $\chi^2$  limitation by developing goodness-of-fit indices that take a more pragmatic approach to the evaluation process.

A value  $<2$  for  $\chi^2/\text{degrees of freedom}$  ratio (CMIN/df) (Wheaton, Muthén, Alwin & Summers, 1977) indicates acceptable fit (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). The hypothesised relationships with the data are also tested using the following goodness-of-fit statistics: Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI), Parsimony Goodness-of-Fit Index (PGFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA).

## RESULTS

A simple principle components analysis was conducted on the 15 items of the MBI-GS on the total sample of protection services members (excluding item 13 as indicated by Storm(2002)). Analysis of the eigen values (larger than 1) and scree plot indicated that three factors could be extracted. Next, principal component analysis with direct oblimin rotation was used in carrying out factor analysis per language group (Language group 1 consisted of Afrikaans and English speaking respondents and language group 2 consisted of all the African languages combined). The pattern matrices for the two language groups are reported in table 2.

Table 2

*Pattern matrix of the 15-item MBI-GS for the Afrikaans and English language groups and the African language group*

AFRIKAANS & ENGLISH				AFRICAN LANGUAGES			
Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
MBI 1	0,79	0,01	0,07	MBI 1	0,57	-0,28	-0,36
MBI 2	0,71	0,18	0,09	MBI 2	0,38	-0,24	-0,55
MBI 3	0,83	0,03	-0,08	MBI 3	0,73	-0,05	-0,15
MBI 4	0,75	-0,05	-0,15	MBI 4	0,52	-0,15	-0,06
MBI 5	0,08	0,76	-0,13	MBI 5	0,18	0,78	-0,02
MBI 6	0,75	-0,02	0,00	MBI 6	0,80	0,18	0,12
MBI 7	-0,09	0,79	0,03	MBI 7	-0,06	0,73	0,18
MBI 8	0,52	-0,20	0,15	MBI 8	0,72	-0,05	0,23
MBI 9	0,47	-0,11	0,49	MBI 9	0,87	0,07	0,14
MBI 10	0,19	0,68	-0,01	MBI 10	0,08	0,72	-0,10
MBI 11	-0,03	0,78	0,16	MBI 11	-0,06	0,45	-0,38
MBI 12	-0,13	0,77	0,03	MBI 12	-0,12	0,43	-0,54
MBI 14	-0,13	0,17	0,88	MBI 14	-0,08	0,12	-0,71
MBI 15	0,15	-0,18	0,72	MBI 15	0,59	0,15	-0,29
MBI 16	-0,06	0,76	-0,04	MBI 16	-0,15	0,74	-0,09

The pattern matrices of the three-factor solutions for the Afrikaans and English language group (group 1) and the African language group (group 2) were then used as input for an exploratory factor analysis with target rotations. The three factor structure was compared across groups by rotating one solution to the other. After target rotation, the following Tucker's phi coefficients were obtained: a) Factor 1 = 0,97; b) Factor 2 = 0,80; and c) Factor 3 = 0,71. Although the Tucker's phi coefficient for Factor 1 compared favourably with the guideline of 0,90, it is clear that Factor 2 and 3 showed unacceptably low equivalence for the two language groups.

Inspection of Table 2 revealed that three items were complex and problematic. These items are a) Item 2 – "I feel used up at the end of the workday", b) Item 9 – "I have become less enthusiastic about my work", and c) Item 15 – "I doubt the significance of my work". These items loaded on different factors for the Afrikaans and English language group and the African language group.

After removal of these items, a simple factor analysis was conducted again. The scree plot and eigen values showed three factors which explained 57,49 percent of the total variance. However, it was found that Factor 2 and Factor 3 still showed unacceptably low equivalence for the two language groups. A two-factor structure was tested to determine whether better results could be obtained. A two-factor structure explained 54,16% percent of the total variance. The pattern matrices are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

*Pattern matrix of the 15-item MBI-GS for the Afrikaans and English language groups and the African language group*

AFRIKAANS & ENGLISH			AFRICAN		
Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Item	Factor 1	Factor 2
MBI 1	0,80	-0,01	MBI 1	0,74	-0,08
MBI 2	0,72	0,16	MBI 2	0,63	0,08
MBI 3	0,76	0,00	MBI 3	0,77	0,01
MBI 4	0,65	-0,08	MBI 4	0,55	-0,12
MBI 5	-0,04	0,74	MBI 5	0,05	0,72
MBI 6	0,73	-0,04	MBI 6	0,71	0,06
MBI 7	-0,12	0,79	MBI 7	-0,24	0,57
MBI 8	0,59	-0,20	MBI 8	0,62	-0,20
MBI 9	0,72	-0,09	MBI 9	0,78	-0,05
MBI 10	0,14	0,67	MBI 10	0,00	0,71
MBI 11	0,01	0,78	MBI 11	0,02	0,63
MBI 12	-0,16	0,77	MBI 12	0,02	0,71
MBI 14	0,32	0,23	MBI 14	0,18	0,52
MBI 15	0,53	-0,13	MBI 15	0,66	0,28
MBI 16	-0,12	0,75	MBI 16	-0,23	0,74

The pattern matrices of the two factor solutions for the two language groups were then used as input for an exploratory factor analysis with target rotations. The two-factor structure was compared across groups by rotating one solution to the other. After target rotation, the following Tucker's phi coefficients were obtained: a) Factor 1 = 0,98 and b) Factor 2 = 0,95. The Tucker's phi coefficient for both factors showed an acceptable equivalence for the two language groups. The two factors were labelled as follows: a) Factor 1: Burnout, and b) Factor 2: Professional Efficacy. Although the construct equivalence of the MBI-GS is acceptable for

the two language groups, the following item was complex: a) Item 14 – "I have become more cynical about whether my work contributes anything". This item showed equal loadings on both factors in the two language groups. Furthermore, the loading could at best be described as moderate.

Van der Linde (2004) found in her study among protection services members that two factors in the UWES could be extracted. Tucker's phi coefficients of 0,98 for Factor 1 (Vigour/Dedication) and 0,94 for Factor 2 (Absorption) were obtained. These coefficients were found to be acceptable.

The descriptive statistics, alpha coefficients and inter-item correlations of the two factors of MBI-GS, UWES, POPS and the OTLQ are given in table 4.

Table 4

*Descriptive Statistics and Alpha Coefficients of the MBI-GS, UWES, POPS and OTLQ.*

<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Skewness</b>	<b>Kurtosis</b>	<b>α</b>
<b>MBI-GS</b>					
Burnout	19,26	10,93	0,28	-0,30	0,85
Professional Efficacy	26,09	8,18	-0,96	0,54	0,80
<b>UWES</b>					
Vigour/ Dedication	42,02	15,87	-0,56	-0,26	0,91
Absorption	12,94	5,36	-0,34	-0,21	0,51
<b>POPS</b>					
General Political Behaviour	20,64	4,82	-0,36	0,35	0,73
Going along to get ahead	12,34	3,44	0,12	-0,12	0,57
<b>OTLQ</b>					
Sense of Coherence	129,27	22,95	0,04	1,06	0,83

Table 4 shows that acceptable Cronbach alpha coefficients were obtained, which compare reasonably well with the guideline of 0,70 (0,55 in basic research), demonstrating that a large portion of the variance is explained by the dimensions (internal consistency of the dimensions) (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), except for Absorption and Going along to get ahead. It is evident from Table 4 that most of the scales of the measuring instruments have relatively normal distributions, with low skewness and kurtosis.

The product moment correlation coefficients between burnout, work engagement, perceptions of organisational politics and sense of coherence are given in Table 5.

Table 5

*Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients between the MBI-GS, UWES, POPS, and OTLQ*

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Burnout	.	.	.	.	.	.
2. Professional Efficacy	-0,22*	.	.	.	.	.
3. Vigour/Dedication	-0,41**	0,77***	.	.	.	.
4. Absorption	0,09	0,48**	0,48**	.	.	.
5. General Political Behaviour	0,30*	0,03	-0,18*	-0,03	.	.
6. Going along to get ahead	0,13*	-0,11	-0,16*	0,02	-0,05	.
7. Sense of Coherence	-0,41**	0,27*	0,36**	0,08	-0,15*	-0,15*

\*  $p \leq 0,05$  – statistically significant

+  $r > 0,30$  – practically significant (medium effect)

\*\*  $r > 0,50$  – practically significant (large effect)

Inspection of Table 5 indicates that Burnout is significantly negatively related (medium effect) to Vigour/Dedication and Sense of Coherence. Professional efficacy is significantly positively related (large effect) to Vigour/Dedication and significantly positively related (medium effect) to Absorption. Vigour/Dedication significantly positively related (medium effect) to Absorption and Sense of Coherence.

Next, a model based on the results of the product-moment correlations, the work wellness model, as well as consensus of findings based on a review of the literature on work wellness with specific bearing on the protection services was tested with SEM analysis. Results indicated that the model fits the data adequately. No further modification of the model was thus required. The modification indices of the default model indicating a good fit were  $\chi^2 = 6,44$ , GFI = 0,99, RMSEA = 0,13, CFI = 0,96, and IFI = 0,96. The final model is given in Figure 1.

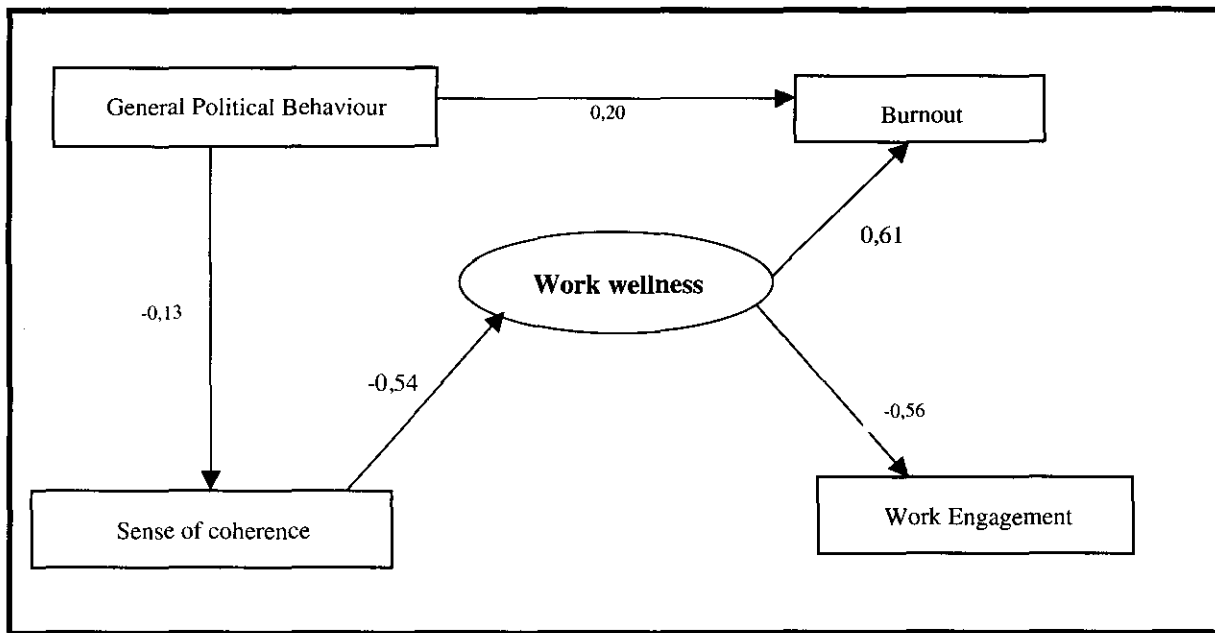


Figure 1. A causal model of work wellness

As can be seen in Figure 1, Work Wellness comprises of Burnout (consisting of Exhaustion and Cynicism) and Work Engagement (consisting of Vigour and Dedication). The path from General Political Behaviour to Burnout is significant. This means that a negative perception of Organisational Politics will result in higher levels of burnout and ultimately impact work wellness. The path coefficient from General Political Behaviour to Sense of Coherence and from Sense of Coherence to Work wellness is significant. This means that Sense of Coherence mediates the effects of negative Perceptions of Organisational Politics on Work Wellness.

Based on the above-mentioned findings, all three hypotheses are accepted.

## DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to develop and test a causal model of work wellness for protection services members comprising organisational politics, sense of coherence, burnout and work engagement. First exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the MBI-GS per language group (Language group 1 consisted of Afrikaans and English speaking respondents and language group 2 consisted of all the African languages combined).

After a simple factor analysis was conducted on the MBI-GS, a three-factor structure was identified. The three-factor structure was compared across groups by rotating one solution to the other. It was found that items were complex and problematic. These items were: Items 2, 9, and 15. Most of the items loaded on different factors for the two language groups. After the removal of these three items, a simple factor analysis was conducted again. A three-factor structure was again identified. However, it was found that Factor 2 and Factor 3 showed unacceptably low equivalence for the two language groups. A two-factor structure was therefore tested to determine whether better results could be obtained. The two factors identified were labelled as a) Factor 1: Burnout, b) Factor 2: Professional efficacy. Tucker's phi coefficient of 0,98 for Burnout and 0,94 for Professional Efficacy were found after a target rotation was done in the two pattern matrices. Factor 1 and Factor 2 compared favourably with the guideline of 0,90 and can be regarded as acceptable.

In a similar study among protection services members, Van der Linde (2004) found that two factors in the UWES could be extracted. Tucker's phi coefficients of 0,98 for Factor 1 (Vigour/Dedication) and 0,94 for Factor 2 (Absorption) were obtained. These coefficients were found to be acceptable.

Secondly, the construct validity and internal consistency of the Burnout and Professional Efficacy subscales of the MBI-GS, the Vigour/Dedication and Absorption subscales of the UWES, the General Political Behaviour and Going along to get ahead subscales of the POPS and the Sense of Coherence subscale of the OTLQ were determined. Cronbach alpha coefficients varying from 0,80 to 0,91 were obtained, except for Absorption (0,51) and Going along to get ahead (0,57). These alpha coefficients compared reasonably well with the guideline of 0,70 (0,55 in basic research), demonstrating that a large portion of the variance is explained by the dimensions (internal consistency of the dimensions) (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Most of the scales of the measuring instruments had relatively normal distributions, with low skewness and kurtosis.

The analysis of Pearson correlations in this study showed that burnout is negatively related to vigour/dedication and sense of coherence. Professional efficacy is positively related to vigour/dedication and absorption. Vigour/dedication is positively related to absorption and sense of coherence.

Lastly a causal model of work wellness for protection services members comprising of perceptions of organisational politics and sense of coherence was developed. Work wellness was found to be conceptualised as consisting out of burnout (exhaustion and cynicism) and work engagement (vigour and dedication). Coetzer (2004) and Van der Linde (2004) supported this finding. High levels of negative perceptions of organisational politics will result in higher levels of burnout, indicating that perceptions of organisational politics are an occupational stressor that indirectly may impact the work wellness within an organisation. The negative impact of perceptions of organisational politics can be mediated by high levels of sense of coherence. Sense of coherence thus mediated the relationship between organisational politics and work wellness.

Semmer (1996) indicated that a reason for sense of coherence becoming a mediator might be that a strong sense of coherence has an earlier influence in the sense that it changes stress appraisal in the first place. Antonovsky (1987) also explains this mediating effect in that a person with a high sense of coherence does not perceive the situation as stressful, not being clear of the outcome, or simply not knowing what is expected of him/her in the specific situation. In this study a protection services member with a high sense of coherence might perceive organisational politics more positively than a member with a low sense of coherence.

All the hypotheses in the study were accepted.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Given the nature of the tasks of protection services members, it is of great importance that organisations should implement planned interventions to manage occupational stressors like organisational politics, prevent burnout and to increase the levels of work wellness of protection services members. Although it is important to assist individual employees whose psychological well-being is affected by their work, an organisational rather than an individual approach is more likely to be effective, as most stressors were found to be at an organisational level. A more desirable strategy is therefore to make the organisation inherently less stressful. Since negative perceptions of organisational politics contribute to higher levels of burnout and ultimately impact work wellness negatively, it is necessary to implement organisationally based strategies to manage the perceptions of organisational politics.

It is recommended that organisations within the protection services industry should provide adequate resources and encourage the use of problem-focused strategies, which in turn would result in the positive evaluation of professional competence and the prevention of the onset of burnout, and increase the levels of experienced work engagement, ultimately impacting on the work wellness of the individual. As organisational politics is defined as the degree to which respondents view their work environment as political, therefore unjust and unfair (Kacmar & Ferris, 1991), organisations should be more sensitive on how the business is managed and organised. They should focus to create and enhance opportunities within the organisation to create more positive perceptions of organisational politics. These positive perceptions may lead to lower levels of burnout experienced and more positive outcomes such as career advancement, recognition and status, enhanced power and position, accomplishment of personal goals, getting the job done, feelings of achievement, enhanced sense of control, and success.

In terms of future research, the development of a causal model of work wellness of protection services members, with the inclusion of perceptions of organisational politics as an occupational stressor and sense of coherence as a moderator, needs not only to be validated in future studies, but also to be expanded to other occupations in order to further refine and expand our understanding of the different occupational contexts.

A limitation of this study is that the design is cross-sectional. As a result, no causal inferences could be drawn, despite the use of advanced structural equation modelling techniques. Therefore, the causal relationships between variables were interpreted rather than established, and more complex forms of non-recursive linkages could not be examined. Furthermore, the results were obtained solely by self-report measures. This may lead to a problem commonly referred to as "method variance" or "nuisance".

Future studies on the work-related attitudes of protection services members should focus on positive, work-related attitudes and behaviours at work in longitudinal and experimental designs. Furthermore, positive constructs such as work engagement and sense of coherence should be further investigated in other occupations in South Africa and included in causal models. Consequently, information could be gleaned with regard to the experience of wellness in a positive paradigm of study, which could significantly expand research with regard to protection services members and other occupations, which was previously predominantly

studied from a pathogenic paradigm. Research should also be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions to promote work wellness.

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## **CHAPTER 3**

### **CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide conclusions regarding the results of the empirical study of the research article. Conclusions are drawn with regard to the research objectives. Furthermore, limitations of the study are discussed. Finally, recommendations for the industry are made and research opportunities that emanate from this research are presented.

#### **3.1 CONCLUSIONS**

The general objective of this research was to develop and test a causal model of work wellness, perceptions of organisational politics and sense of coherence for protection services members that will result in a better understanding of the wellness of protection services members in the South African context. Based on the results of the research article, the following conclusions can be made:

The first objective of this study was to determine the construct validity and internal consistency of the Maslach Burnout Inventory – General Survey (MBI-GS), Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), Perceptions of Organisational Politics Scale (POPS), and Orientation to Life Questionnaire (OTLQ) for protection services members. A two-factor structure for the MBI-GS (Burnout and Professional Efficacy) and a two-factor structure for the UWES (Vigour/Dedication and Absorption) were obtained using exploratory factor analysis. The Tucker's phi coefficients obtained were found to be acceptable.

Cronbach alpha coefficients varying from 0,80 to 0,91 were obtained, except for Absorption (0,51) and Going along to get ahead (0,57). These alpha coefficients compared reasonably well with the guideline of 0,70 (0,55 in basic research), demonstrating that a large portion of the variance is explained by the dimensions (internal consistency of the dimensions) (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Most of the scales of the measuring instruments had relatively normal distributions, with low skewness and kurtosis.

The second objective of the study was to conceptualise work wellness, organisational politics and sense of coherence according to the literature. **Organisational Politics** was conceptualised within two subscales, General Political Behaviour and Going along to get ahead. Organisational politics is perceived as an occupational stressor. Organisational politics is defined by Kacmar and Ferris (1991) as the degree to which respondents view their work environment as political, therefore unjust and unfair.

**Sense of coherence** is described as "a global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a pervasive and enduring, though dynamic feeling of confidence that one's internal and external environments are predictable and that there is a high probability that things will work out as well as can reasonably be expected" (Antonovsky, 1987, p.132). Sense of coherence is the extent to which one sees his or her world as comprehensible, manageable and meaningful (Antonovsky & Sourani, 1988).

Work engagement and burnout are indicators of the wellness of people in the work place or the organisation's **work wellness** (Coetzer, 2004; Schaufeli, 2003; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

**Work engagement** comprises two characteristics, vigour/dedication and absorption. Vigour refers to high levels of energy, mental resilience as well as a willingness to exert effort and persist; dedication refers to a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, challenge; and absorption refers to a tendency to be fully concentrated and deeply engrossed in work.

**Burnout** comprises two characteristics, burnout and personal efficacy. Burnout refers to the depletion or draining of emotional and physical resources and to the development of negative, callous or excessively detached responses toward various aspects of the job. The lack of professional efficacy refers to feelings of incompetence as well as a lack of achievement and productivity at work.

The analysis of Pearson correlations in this study showed that burnout is negatively related to vigour/dedication and sense of coherence. Professional efficacy is positively related to

vigour/dedication and absorption. Vigour/Dedication is positively related to absorption and sense of coherence.

The third objective was to determine the relationship between work wellness, organisational politics and sense of coherence, by developing a causal model of work wellness of protection services members in the South African context. The model was developed with the help of the correlation study and SEM analysis and showed that work engagement and burnout are components of Work wellness. The results in this study indicated in the case of protection services members that their wellness is either affected or enhanced if the work wellness model is adapted. Based on the work wellness model it is clear that negative perceptions of organisational politics increase the levels of burnout experienced and ultimately impact work wellness. On the other hand, positive perceptions of organisational politics will decrease the levels of burnout experienced.

The final objective was to determine whether sense of coherence moderates or mediates the effect of organisational politics on work-wellness. The results indicated that there is a path from perceptions of organisational politics to sense of coherence and from sense of coherence to work wellness. This implies that sense of coherence mediates the effect of perceptions of organisational politics on work wellness.

### **3.2 LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH**

The first limitation of this study was the cross-sectional design. Despite the use of advanced structural equation modelling techniques, no causal inferences could be drawn. The causal relationships between variables were interpreted and not established. More complex forms of non-recursive linkages could not be examined. To deal with the limitation of the use of a cross-sectional design, prospective longitudinal and quasi-experimental research designs are needed to further validate the hypothesised causal relationships within this study.

Secondly, as data was collected from the different divisions within the protection services at different points in time, unique organisational characteristics and/or historical events may have

affected the findings. Also, because of the average levels of education of the respondents, as well as the array of language and cultural groups included in the study, the interpretation of questions could have differed vastly among participants.

Thirdly, the size of the sample was a limitation to this study, specifically the distribution of language groups. Within the sample the distinction between cultural groups could not be made due to a low representation of some cultural groups. A distinction was made in terms of the language groups, i.e. an Afrikaans and English language group (48,10% representation) and a combined African language group (41,90% representation).

Even though there was a total population of 1 079, a response rate of only 35% was achieved. Protection services members were reluctant to take part in the study. Most members could have been discouraged because of how they already perceive the organisation and their levels of stress.

Fourthly, the results were obtained solely by self-report measures. This may lead to a problem known as "method variance" or "nuisance". However, several authors argued that this phenomenon is not a major threat if interactions are found (Dollard & Winefield, 1998). Nonetheless, research, including more objective measures of perceptions of organisational politics and work wellness, is needed.

Fifthly, the sampling procedure created problems, and future studies could benefit from using a stratified random-sample design, which would ensure sufficient representation of the different groups in the total population and will enable generalisation of findings to the total study population.

One language, English, being the only language used for questionnaires represents the sixth limitation. The possibility exists that the level of English language skills or respondents speaking English as their second, third, fourth or even lower language could have influenced the results.

Another limitation of this study was that there is a possibility that some employees who participated in this research did not totally trust the confidentiality statement set out in the covering letter accompanying the questionnaires. This could have influenced some of the results. An eighth limitation was that the surveys were given to the managers and they gave the instructions to the rest of the protection services members at each location. They completed the surveys at home or at work. Some individuals working in the same area could have discussed the answers and decided together on how they would answer.

### **3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommendations pertaining to the specific organisation used in this study, as well as recommendations for future research, are made in this section.

#### **3.3.1 Recommendations for the organisation**

It is recommended that implementation of any intervention should focus on the individual, managerial and organisational practices to enhance work wellness. The understanding of work wellness and its dimensions, burnout and work engagement, should be clear to all. Managers and protection services members should become aware of the factors that decrease the levels of burnout, thus understanding their perceptions towards the organisational politics within the organisation, and work towards a motivated and positive perception of the organisation. This could help them to become aware of the symptoms of decreasing wellness within the work environment and enable them to intervene before the effects become too serious. It is important for managers, if necessary, to be made more aware of their own and others' political behaviour.

It is important for the organisation to implement planned interventions. These interventions should be designed for the long term and deal with the root causes, which in this case appear to be political behaviour, rather than just the symptoms (Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Interventions may be focused on three levels: primary, secondary and tertiary levels (Kompier & Kristensen, 2001).

First of all, primary interventions are directed at either the work situation or the coping capacity of the member. Secondly, interventions on a secondary level may be implemented to prevent

members who are already showing signs of stress or decreased work wellness from getting sick and to increase their optimism levels and coping capacity. Lastly, tertiary interventions are concerned with the rehabilitation of individuals who have suffered ill health or reduced well-being as a result of ill health in the workplace. Since this study showed increased levels of burnout because of negative perceptions of organisational politics, it is advised that interventions start on a secondary level.

It is also advised that the organisation focus and take note of the impact that stressors such as the perceptions of organisational politics have on work wellness in order to protect the member and the organisation.

Lastly it is essential not only to focus on preventative intervention but also to focus on the enhancement of work wellness within the organisation. One possible area to focus on is the members' sense of coherence. The goal is not to eliminate the stress response, but to facilitate the attainment of optimal stress levels or higher levels of sense of coherence (Ross, 1997).

### **3.3.2 Recommendations for future research**

Despite the limitations of this study, the present findings have important implications for future research and practice. Very little research has been done on protection services which may have an effect on how these members perform generally. The fact that burnout can be found in a vast variety of professions, as indicated in research done by Naudé (2003) and Storm (2002), may stimulate future burnout and ultimately work wellness research in a wide range of occupations (Schutte, Toppinen, Kalimo & Schaufeli, 2000). Research in this regard must also focus on the reliability and validity of the MBI-GS and the UWES for other occupational settings in South Africa. Due to South Africa being a multicultural nation, with 11 possible languages, it is recommended that the MBI-GS and the UWES be translated into other languages. This will assist in the establishment of culture-fair unbiased measurements of burnout and work engagement.

Burnout and work engagement are negatively related (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). It is expected that work engagement will have a positive impact on the work wellness of employees because burnout is a result of decreased psychological well-being and work engagement is proven to be the opposite of burnout. Future studies should focus on the development of a causal model of

work wellness comprising not only the negative aspects of burnout but the difference work engagement can make in the organisational environment.

The causal model of work wellness of protection services members, developed in this study, with the inclusion of burnout, work engagement, perceptions of organisational politics and sense of coherence, need to be validated in future studies as well as be expanded to other occupational groups. Within this context, the use of adequate statistical methods, such as structural equation modelling and bias analysis, is recommended.

It is furthermore necessary to include research on the evaluation of interventions to increase work wellness. Future studies should focus more on the positive aspects that are work related, such as personality in the workplace, and behaviours at work. This leads to the future studying of organisational politics. The main difficulty is that within organisations, politics relies on informal behaviours and an oral tradition. It is rare for political activity or deals to be documented. Political behaviour is highly unstructured and difficult to access (McCalman, 2003). Future studies should focus on the influence of the organisational climate on work wellness, as well as the role that power plays within work wellness. It is also recommended that the Perceptions of Organisational Politics Questionnaire (POPS) is refined and testing of the POPS in more occupational groups is needed.

Furthermore it is necessary to include sense of coherence in more studies related to work wellness, as it seems to always have a moderating or mediating effect between the variables used within the study and the dimensions of work wellness. Despite implications in the literature that sense of coherence has a moderating effect on burnout – research studies in which the possibility that the sense of coherence is having a more direct effect, are needed (Kravetz, Drory & Florian, 1993).

With regard to intervention research in South Africa, the following aspects need to be considered in future research:

- The effects of individual and organisational interventions should be investigated.

- Appropriate designs and acceptable sample sizes should be used when conducting research.
- Using international statistics can be relevant when recommendations and interventions are formulated.
- Practical significance of findings should be computed in addition to statistical significance.
- Methods for defining and determining the clinical significance of treatment effects should be employed (Jacobson, Roberts, Berns & McGlinchey, 1999).
- Intervention mapping (Bartholomew, Parcel & Kok, 1998) should be used in planning, implementing and researching the effects of interventions.
- Different types of change (alpha, beta and gamma) should be considered when researching the effect of interventions (Vandenberg & Self, 1993).
- Both etiological and prevention effectiveness studies should be conducted (Skov & Kristensen, 1996).

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