

Social well-being in a utility organisation: The role of trust and job security

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of Philosophy in Labour Relations Management* at the North-West
University

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PREFACE

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- This thesis consists of a Chapter 1 (introduction and background to the study), Chapters 2, 3 and 4 (research articles), and Chapter 5 (conclusions, limitations, recommendations, and contributions of the research).
- Each chapter contains its own reference list.

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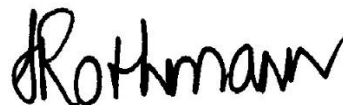
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Ethics Committee (EMS-REC)

19 June 2020

Prof M Heyns and Prof S Rothmann

Per e-mail

Dear Profs Heyns and Rothmann,

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Your ethics application on, *Social well-being in a utility organisation: The role of trust and job security*, which served on the EMS-REC meeting of 19 June 2020, refers.

Outcome:

Approved as a minimal risk study. A number NWU-00745-20-A4 is given for one year of ethics clearance.

Due to the Covid-19 lock down ethics clearance for applications that involve data collection or any form of contact with participants are subject to the restrictions imposed by the South African government.

Kind regards,

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To whom it may concern

I hereby declare that I language-edited Eugény Hennicks's thesis for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Labour Relations Management with the title "Social well-being in a utility organisation: The role of trust and job security". I am an accredited editor with the South African Translators' Institute (SATI Member No.: 1000193).

Yours sincerely



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to stand on the shoulders of a giant, my hero, my dad. Mom, your loving, kind nature has taught me to have empathy and humility, to never look down on others, to always be kind to others less fortunate, and to treat everyone with respect, regardless of colour or creed. These teachings have broadened my outlook and led me to see that life is indeed my oyster. As parents, whenever I lost my will to try, you would wish me wings to fly. You have constantly reminded me that understanding and logic are best leveraged when we allow ourselves to step back, breathe, and appreciate the beauty of life. Even when faced with adversity, I have overcome obstacles never thought possible. You have nurtured my curiosity by always encouraging me to further my studies, as you have always emphasised that **“education is something no one can ever take away from you”**. The clarity of your guidance still sometimes surprises me, and for this, I am forever grateful.

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As I conclude and close this chapter, I would like to remind anyone reading this that you can achieve anything you set your mind to, a sentiment echoed in the words of our late Great President:

“It always seems impossible until it’s done.” (Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Preface	i
Declaration	ii
Ethics Clearance	iii
Acknowledgements	v
List of figures	ix
List of tables	x
Summary	xi
 CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Problem Statement	1
1.2 Research Objectives	15
1.2.1 General Aim	15
1.2.2 Specific Objectives	15
1.3 Research Method	16
1.3.1 Literature Review	16
1.3.2 Empirical Study	16
1.3.2.1 Research Design	16
1.3.2.2 Participants	17
1.3.2.3 Measuring Instruments	17
1.3.2.4 Research Procedure	19
1.3.2.5 Data Analysis	20
1.4 Ethical Considerations	21
1.5 Chapter Layout	24
References	25

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH ARTICLE 1	35
Abstract	36
Introduction	37
Social Well-Being, Trust, and Precariousness	39
Current Study	45

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

	Page
Method	47
Research Design	47
Participants	47
Measuring Instruments	48
Research Procedure	49
Statistical Analysis	49
Results	50
Testing the Measurement Model	50
Testing Structural Models	52
Mediating Effects	53
Discussion	54
Recommendations	56
Limitations	57
Conclusions	57
References	59
 CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH ARTICLE 2	 67
Abstract	
Introduction	69
Social Well-Being	71
Job Satisfaction, Organisational Citizenship Behaviour, and Intention to Leave	72

Method	75
Research Design	76
Participants and Setting	76
Measuring Instruments	77
Research Procedure	78
Statistical Analysis	78

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

	Page
Results	79
Testing the Measurement Model	79
Testing the Structural Model	82
Discussion	83
Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research	88
Conclusion	88
References	90
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH ARTICLE 3	96
Abstract	97
Introduction	98
Social Well-Being in the Workplace	99
Dimensions of Social Well-Being	99
Latent Profiles of Social Well-Being	100
Trust, Job Satisfaction, Intention to Leave, and Social Well-Being Profiles	101
Effects of Demographic Variables	104
Study Aim	105
Method	105
Research Design	106
Participants	107
Measuring Instruments	107
Research Procedure	107
Statistical Analysis	108
Results	109
Latent Profile Analysis	110

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

	Page
Associations between Latent Profiles and Individual and Organisational Outcomes	112
Testing the Measurement Models of Distal Variables	112
Descriptive Statistics, Reliabilities and Correlations	112
Latent Profiles and Distal Outcomes	113
Differences between Demographic Groups	115
Discussion	116
Limitations of the study	118
Recommendations	119
Conclusions	121
References	122
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS	130
5.1 Conclusions	130
5.2 Study Limitations	136
5.3 Recommendations	137
5.3.1 Recommendations to solve the Research Problems	137
5.3.2 Recommendations for Future Research	137
5.4 Theoretical and Practical Contributions	138
References	144

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Description	Page
Research article 1		
1	The structural model	53
Research article 2		
1	Standardised path coefficients for the best-fitting model	82
Research article 3		
1	Latent profiles of social well-being	111
2	Social well-being profiles and scores on distal variables	115

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Description	Page
Research article 1		
1	Fit Statistics for the Competing Measurement Models	51
2	Descriptive statistics, Reliabilities and Correlations of the Scales	52
3	Standardised Regression Coefficients of Trust in the Organisation, Trust in Colleagues and Perceived Job Insecurity in Predicting Social Well-being	53
Research article 2		
1	Fit Statistics of the Competing Measurement Models	79
2	Descriptive Statistics, Reliabilities and Correlations of the Scales	80
3	Regression Coefficients	81
Research article 3		
1	Comparison of Different Latent Profile Analysis Models	110
2	Descriptive Statistics, Reliabilities and Pearson Correlations of Distal Variables	113
3	Equality Tests of Means across Profiles	114

SUMMARY

Title: Social well-being in a utility organisation: The role of trust and job security

Keywords: social well-being, trust, job security, flourishing, job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, turnover intention, latent profile analysis

The term “well-being” is often misconstrued and is mainly associated with physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. However, humans are fundamentally social beings and have a deep need to form strong social bonds. Social well-being is a means of seeking positive social life and mimics relations developed with others in community, family, or workplace settings. However, it is the least considered as an element of importance despite including a significant part of overall well-being. As a result, individual and organisational outcomes might be affected.

Social connectedness and well-being are known to benefit health and employee performance factors. However, in today’s uncertain times, numerous challenges have eroded social well-being. Despite living in a technologically advanced world that allows more convenient and immediate connections, it is associated with more social withdrawal. These symptoms stem from retrenchment, corruption, and poor leadership, all of which have harmful effects on a utility industry that forms the backbone of the South African economy and threaten the longevity of the organisation, employee relations, and performance. Organisations should, thus, have a vested interest in creating socially sound workspaces, as such workplaces have a significant impact on organisational longevity and promote greater employee satisfaction. Social well-being affects worker well-being relating to job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and intention to leave. The absence of social relations hinders the development of trust, an aspect that underpins collaborative initiative. For trust to be durable, social well-being needs to be ensured.

This study aimed to investigate the under-researched topic of social well-being and how it related to subjective job insecurity and trust as well as the outcomes in terms of job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and intention to leave of employees in the utility industry. A cross-sectional survey design was used in the three manuscripts. The sample ($n = 403$)

included all permanently employed employees across various designations in the utility industry. The following measures were used: a biographical questionnaire, the Social Well-being Scale, the Multidimensional Qualitative Job Insecurity Scale, the Workplace Trust Survey, the Job Satisfaction Scale, the Organisational Citizenship Behaviour Scale, and the Turnover Intention Scale. Latent variable modelling was utilised to conduct variable- and person-centred analyses. Variable-centred analyses were used to test measurement and structural models of social well-being, trust, and intention to leave. Latent profile analysis was used to explore social well-being profiles, and their associations with job satisfaction, and intention to leave were investigated.

Article 1 investigated the associations between social well-being, organisational and colleague trust, and precarity. Both forms of trust – both in the organisation and in colleagues – predicted higher levels of social well-being among the participants, with trust in the organisation having the most noticeable impact. Results further showed that higher levels of subjectively perceived job insecurity led to decreased social well-being levels. Trust in the organisation and colleagues served as an underlying mechanism that influenced the inverse relationship between perceived job insecurity and social well-being. Organisations could, therefore, promote social well-being by being trustworthy and transparent. This study concluded that the centrality of trust was needed to develop quality social relations, as it was firmly anchored in one of the five social well-being constructs. Therefore, organisations should seek to enhance social connections, which would ultimately increase trust levels that would benefit both employer and employee.

Article 2 aimed to investigate the associations between social well-being, job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and intention to leave in a South African utility organisation. The results showed that social well-being was positively associated with job satisfaction and organisational citizenship behaviour and negatively associated with intention to leave. Social well-being indirectly affected organisational citizenship behaviour through job satisfaction and intention to leave through job (dis)satisfaction. This study illuminated social well-being associations with job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and intention to leave in a developing African country workplace context.

Article 3 used a person-centred approach to distinguish between subpopulations of employees using indicators of social well-being. Three distinct profiles were identified, namely socially well, socially withdrawn, and superficially socially well. The Social Well-being Scale,

Workplace Trust Survey, Job Satisfaction Scale and Turnover Intention Scale were administered. Three types of social well-being were found: socially well, socially withdrawn, and superficially socially well. The first two profiles demonstrated either high or low scores on five dimensions of social well-being (contribution, integration, acceptance, actualisation, and coherence). The superficially socially well profile showed above-average social contribution and integration, but below-average social acceptance, actualisation, and coherence were evident. The socially well profile was associated with trust in managers and colleagues, job satisfaction and low intention to leave. The opposite patterns were found for the socially withdrawn profile. The study showed that young employees and those with more service years were more evident in the socially withdrawn profile than the superficially social well profile. Younger employees in the socially withdrawn profile (compared to the superficially socially well profile) were also more inclined to experience lower job satisfaction and had higher intentions to leave. This research is the first to record which social well-being profiles are the most prominent and how diverse profiles relate to trust, job satisfaction, intention to leave and demographic differences.

Recommendations for future research are made.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about social well-being, trust, and job security and the outcomes thereof in a utility organisation.

In Chapter 1, the problem statement, research questions, and research objectives are described. Furthermore, the methodology of the study is explained. This includes the literature reviews and the empirical study. Next, the ethical aspects are reported, followed by the division of chapters.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The heart and soul of every company lie in its people and their connections to others. Consequently, employees' behavioural patterns are reinforced by social relationships embedded in their social well-being. Companies focusing only on competitive and financial considerations to retain human capital tend to overlook the importance of investing in employees' social needs and well-being. The results of such a focus are underutilised human capital, increased conflict, low-quality employee contributions, and strained social ties (Boreham et al., 2016). Research increasingly demonstrates that social-cultural factors are instrumental in economic development and growth, enabled mainly by human actors whose behaviours propel organisational growth and flourishing in companies. The success of businesses is rooted in their human capital to realise outcomes not otherwise attainable, and failure to consider these could have detrimental effects on organisations (Freeman et al., 2020).

Unfortunately, the impact of social well-being in workplace contexts is still largely under-researched. Only limited research exists that has studied social well-being in workplace contexts (Redelinghuys et al., 2019b). The literature is also largely silent on the basis of social well-being in an organisational context. This study aimed to contribute to the existing literature on flourishing at work by focusing on social well-being as a subcomponent of flourishing in a South African public sector workplace context.

Conceptualisation of social well-being

Keyes (1998) developed a mental health continuum model. The model depicts subjective well-being, comprising three main categories: emotional, psychological, and social well-being (Keyes, 2007). Extensive research has been conducted on emotional and psychological well-being. However, little is known about social well-being and the effects of neglect. According to Wissing et al. (2019), the social aspect of well-being is a public experience that is focused on social tasks individuals encounter in social structures (such as in organisations). Social well-being, in an organisational context, can be described further as the subjective evaluation of one's circumstances and functioning in the organisation (Keyes, 1998). Keyes's (1998) model considers social well-being as being integrated with one's health and encompassing five dimensions: social integration, social acceptance, social contribution, social actualisation, and social coherence (Keyes, 1998).

Social integration relates to the quality of people's existence in a community. More specifically, social integration refers to individuals' need to belong to their community. Social integration is deeply embedded in social cohesion (Durkheim, 1951), cultural estrangement, and social isolation (Seeman, 1991). Social co-ordination and well-being reflect individuals' connections to others through norms and their behaviour displayed, demonstrating the level of fondness they exhibit towards their society (Durkheim, 1951). Seeman (1991) regards estrangement as no longer being on friendly terms with a social group. This translates into individuals feeling rejected by society. Social isolation refers to a complete lack of contact between individuals and their society, leading to a collapse of personal relationships meant to provide meaning and support. *Social acceptance* entails that individuals are accepting and trusting of others; their perception is that people are capable of kindness and hard-working. Individuals who are socially accepting hold positive outlooks towards human nature. *Social contribution* refers to value added by an individual to the community. This gives people meaning and a belief that they are vital to the community and have something of value to contribute to the community in which they reside. *Social actualisation* refers to communities' constant metamorphosis, and these changes can only be brought about by individuals who reside within a specific community. *Social coherence* refers to the perception of social and organisational quality in a typical social world; the harmonious alignment of relationships allows for an efficient flow and energy utilisation to achieve common goals.

Rautenbach and Rothmann (2017a) confirm that social well-being is a component of flourishing at work. Keyes (1998, p. 122) explains that social well-being refers to “the appraisal of one’s circumstance and functioning in society”. According to Keyes (2013), social well-being is the degree to which people experience good relations in and among the social circles in which they find themselves (e.g., organisations). The basis for including social well-being in a flourishing model is that individuals are embedded in social structures, where various social tasks and challenges are experienced (Keyes, 1998, pp. 122-123). Since mental health and connectedness are associated, social well-being is considered important. The concept of social well-being was inspired by Durkheim’s (1951) findings that mental illnesses could be attributed to isolation (egoism) and anomie (lack of regulation) (Son & Wilson, 2012). Anomie is harmful to people, as it makes them believe that they are not important in any social or organisational setting. Therefore, employees might perceive that they cannot rely on others for support (Piliavin & Siegl, 2007).

In work contexts, the five social well-being dimensions can be conceptualised as follows (Rothmann, 2013): accepting diversity within the organisation and fostering a positive attitude is termed *social acceptance*. The extent to which individuals are accepted by their peers is considered to be an important indicator of social well-being (Crick & Dodge, 1994). Social relations in groups give employees a sense of social identity (Tajfel, 1979). Individuals’ sense of *social contribution* has to do with whether their daily activities are valued by the organization and others. Individuals who show high levels of social contribution engage responsibly in life activities, adding value to others’ lives (Khumalo, 2014). According to Marx’s theory (Marx, 1844/1969), the economic counterpart of social contribution and adding value to others’ lives is alienation, where individuals become estranged from themselves and others. Social contribution encourages a culture of giving and *Ubuntu*, which connects diverse people (Maposa, 2017).

People’s *social actualisation* indicates whether they believe in the ability of other people, groups, and organizations. Social actualisation represents an effort to attain goals in pursuing personal and societal success (Conley, 2013). The degree of *social coherence* reveals whether employees feel their work and social lives are meaningful and understandable. *Social integration* indicates whether employees experience a sense of relatedness, comfort, and support from the organisation, resulting in feeling part of a society (Khumalo, 2014). Social

failure results from the absence of mutually beneficial interactions that people seek, but cannot accomplish.

Currently, research that focuses on the social well-being of employees in the South African workplace is sparse. This void needs attention, since the world of work is plagued with numerous questions relating to the impact of social well-being on organisations, and it is essential to understand how it transpires in a South African workplace context (Sieberhagen et al., 2011). This also means that research is needed to understand the structure, antecedents and outcomes of social well-being (Fredrickson & Cohen, 2008; Rothmann, 2013).

Keyes's (1998) model essentially provides a general life perspective of how people function socially and how they view societal functioning in general (Khumalo, 2014). Rothmann (2013) expanded the previous work of Keyes (2002) by considering social well-being in work and organisational contexts. Rautenbach and Rothmann (2017a) developed and validated the Flourishing at Work Scale (FAWS), which could be used to record levels of employee well-being in workplace contexts. Studies focusing on well-being in diverse South African organisational settings by Diedericks and Rothmann (2014), Rautenbach and Rothmann (2017b), and Redelinghuys et al. (2019a, 2019b) consistently indicated that most employees were not flourishing at work. However, none of these studies focused on social well-being per se; nor did they attempt to identify underlying patterns of social well-being perceptions as these might transpire from demographically diverse respondents. Therefore, this study focused on a 15-item social well-being scale (Keyes, 1998).

Rautenbach and Rothmann (2017a) found that two components of social well-being, namely social actualisation (growth) and social coherence were experienced less by employees. Social growth refers to the belief of the individual in the potential of the organisation. Social coherence refers to the sense of significance and understanding employees have for their workplace. This meant that previous research could be used to substantiate the reason for further investigating social well-being in South African organisations. Due to the stronger emphasis on the community than on the individual in collectivistic cultures, it was not clear how individuals from more collectivistic cultures would respond to the dimensions of social well-being (Mangaliso, 2001). Given the scarcity of studies on flourishing conducted in African work contexts and poor workforce productivity, there was a need to verify how social well-being related differentially to work outcomes.

Factors Affecting Social Well-being

The work environment can be described as a place where people execute their daily tasks and responsibilities as per their employment contract. Employees will feel at ease when the environment is in line with their expectations; the quality of the environment also sets the tone for their motivation to perform effectively and ultimately dictates whether the organisation will prosper (Farh et al., 2012).

Positive relationships among colleagues nurture social well-being in the form of trust and feelings of fondness being displayed, which ultimately improve work outputs (Cameron et al., 2011). Trust is fundamental to effective relationship building and is also vital for producing social capital as an economic resource: when mutual trust exists, business transactions prosper due to improved co-operation between individuals and reduced transaction costs (Fukuyama, 1995). Several meta-analytic reviews of the benefits of trust have convincingly demonstrated that interpersonal workplace trust is positively associated with a wide range of desirable work attitudes and performance outcomes. Such findings hold true, regardless of whether the focal other is a supervisor or co-worker. Specific examples of outcomes influenced by this trust include a decline in conflict and grievances, lower turnover, and an increase in supportive behaviours towards colleagues, such as willingness to share knowledge, co-operate, provide support, and go the extra mile (Choi & Resick, 2017; Colquitt et al., 2007; De Jong et al., 2016; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002).

Low levels of trust have profound ramifications for knowledge creation, since employees will be less willing to converse and share knowledge for the benefit of others (Sharkie, 2005), and can also have an impact on social well-being. Factors most strongly associated with low trust include “(i) a recent history of traumatic experiences; (ii) belonging to a group that historically felt discriminated against;(iii) being economically unsuccessful in terms of income and education; (iv) living in a racially mixed community and in one with a high degree of income disparity” (Alesina & La Ferrara, 2002, p. 207). Sharkie (2005) adds that the level of trust experienced by employees is related to their view of the psychological contract and warns that if the latter is associated with high levels of precariousness, this will adversely affect trust.

Social capital theory is useful to understand how alternative considerations related to a demographically diverse African workplace context might inform trust formation processes

and social well-being (Bhandari & Yasunobo, 2009). Social capital is a complex, multidimensional phenomenon that theorists often operationalise and measure. Most definitions agree that social relations can generate benefits and encompass vital elements such as social networks, norms of reciprocity, shared values, attitudes, and behaviours, and trust in people and institutions that can contribute to economic development and growth (Bhandari & Yasunobu, 2009). Social capital can be measured in terms of trust. In order to be sustained, loyalty, trust, and reciprocity must be reinforced continually. Putnam (2002) identifies five principles that enhance interpersonal relations and collective reciprocal trust and loyalty: sharing, mutual obligations, trustworthiness, reciprocity, and recognition. According to Fukuyama (1995), the single most direct way to measure social capital is to determine the proportion of people who believe that others are trustworthy.

Individuals who come to see themselves as part of a group may experience social integration and, thereby, a degree of social well-being. If one is not socially integrated, one will be ostracised and isolated; thus, being rejected by society is discord between one's values and lifestyle and those of society. This can apply especially to cultural estrangement, where meaningful and supportive relationships suffer and class consciousness is prevalent (Keyes, 1998). With its history of class-consciousness and discrimination, South Africa can attest to Marx's conception of class consciousness (Marx, 1844/1969).

Alesina and La Ferrara (2002), furthermore, point out that personal experiences and community characteristics influence trust levels. On the one hand, for example, individuals are inclined to trust those perceived as more similar to themselves (for instance, in terms of demographic variables or shared values) more easily than they are to trust those perceived to be dissimilar to themselves (Alesina & La Ferrara, 2002). On the other hand, You (2005) argues that perceptions of fairness affect trust levels more than perceived homogeneity. He argues that establishing a firm basis of fairness helps to develop norms of trustworthiness and provides an active incentive for trustworthy behaviour, whereby trusting and positive relationships are enhanced.

The notion of a *precarious work environment* – which can be defined as the uncertainty of employment conditions based on the changes that have taken place in the world of work – has become a major concern globally in recent years (Brondino et al., 2020). In the opinion of Sharkie (2005, p. 38), the traditional employment relationship, which was characterised by

long-term commitment, reciprocity, investment in individual development, and internal promotions, has been “adversely affected by the competitive pressures of the marketplace and management practices such as restructuring, downsizing and benchmarking”, resulting in a new type of employment relationship that imposes an alarmingly high level of job insecurity. According to Platt and Sobotka (2010), social elements play an essential role in developing the network and relationships at work. In today’s highly competitive world of work, competitiveness may cause a rift and increasing dependence on technology through the use of electronic mail and smartphones, further limiting time for meaningful face-to-face social interaction and relationship building. In addition, economic considerations leading to downsizing initiatives have fuelled demotivation and fear. Social well-being is eroded as a result, for such conditions cultivate a sense of powerlessness and feelings of insecurity and uncertainty not only limited to the work environment; they also have spillover effects on health, family, and social relations, thus harming employees in totality (Huang et al., 2017). Employees who face such realities are prone to experience an increased sense of vulnerability due to what some researchers describe as “qualitative job insecurity” (Brondino et al., 2020, p. 3), which may harm well-being and job performance (Brondino et al., 2020).

Social unwell-being is introduced by experiencing the following negative predictors: a) job insecurity or having no certainty regarding the longevity of service within the organisation creates an emotional and cognitive burden on employees; it is a stressor that leads to the perception of job loss and is negatively associated with employee well-being (Rothmann, 2013); b) unfair remuneration: compensation affects work positively if distributed fairly, which fuels employee well-being, but the reverse is true if compensated unfairly (Gill et al., 2014); c) lack of career advancement opportunities: not having sufficient developmental opportunities can stifle employee growth, which is a critical part of progression, and an absence of training will cause employees to regress and languish (Rothmann, 2014); and d) leadership: this contributes to the climate of the organisation and dictates the social well-being of subordinates (Rautenbach & Rothmann, 2017b).

From what has been said thus far, it can be concluded, on the one hand, that positive feelings between colleagues promote close-knit relationships, and as a result, employees are more likely to remain with an organisation and go the extra mile due to high levels of relatedness, belonging, and social well-being experienced (Redelinghuys et al., 2019a). On the other hand, the absence of social well-being factors translates into decreased job satisfaction and leads to

higher turnover, coupled with less organisational citizenship behaviour. According to Janik and Rothmann (2015), this mixture could serve companies with aggravated challenges that could lead to financial ruin.

Although extensive research has been done on the concept of flourishing (including all three dimensions of mental health) in general, no previous studies could be found on social well-being per se in work and organisational contexts (Daniels et al., 2017). A preliminary literature search did not reveal any studies focused on how trust and perceived precariousness interacted concerning social well-being, much less to say how this would transpire in a public sector company in an African workplace context. Understanding the intricacies of the relationship between these variables would enable human resource practitioners to provide clearer guidelines to management regarding how to promote employee social well-being and the associated individual and organisational outcomes. Failure to take these aspects into cognisance would more likely increase turnover rates should organisations choose to ignore the importance of fostering trusting interpersonal relations among workers.

Social Well-being, Work-related Attitudes, and Work Outcomes

How employees evaluate their work may be reflected in how they experience job satisfaction, willingness to express citizenship behaviour, and intent to leave the organisation.

Job satisfaction refers to how employees relate to their work roles and is an active component for a positive emotional state, which stems from employee work experiences relative to their expectations (Kianto et al., 2016). Employees who experience high levels of job satisfaction have a more positive outlook on their daily work tasks and responsibilities, which likely increases their flourishing (Oerlemans & Bakker, 2018). Job satisfaction shapes how employees perform and react to social relationships in a work context (Belias & Koustelios, 2014; Diestel et al., 2014). Factors that greatly contribute to job satisfaction include a positive work environment, meaningful work, fairness in terms of remuneration, equal treatment, receiving the same benefits as other people who are in the same line of work, and effective leadership. This emphasises the importance of employees feeling related to other workers in terms of being treated fairly, which ultimately affects their job satisfaction (Belias & Koustelios, 2014; Diestel et al., 2014; Redelinguys et al., 2019b).

Job satisfaction should not only be considered as an external component (referring to job conditions), as “internally focused satisfaction” (referring to the work unit) also needs to be considered (Bakotić, 2016). Employees identify absenteeism as an organisational event elevated by members of a work unit (Diestel et al., 2014). Studies have confirmed that absenteeism is influenced by social contextual features of work units that are most likely to determine how job satisfaction is related to employee absenteeism behaviour (Rentsch & Steel, 2003).

Ignoring the importance of job satisfaction may translate into negative consequences such as disobedience, absenteeism, a decreased sense of responsibility, and ultimately skills loss, which is a costly exercise for all stakeholders in the employment relationship (Mirzabeigi et al., 2010). In contrast, deriving a sense of purpose and positive meaning from one’s work encourages individuals to go above and beyond the call of duty (Rosso et al., 2010).

Organisational citizenship behaviour can be defined as voluntary employee behaviour that improves/promotes organisational effectiveness and functioning and is unrelated to any formal reward type (Dalal & Carpenter, 2018). Organisational citizenship behaviour relates to the effort an employee exerts to do extra things in the best interests of the organisation. Active employee participation in organisational development encourages social interaction beneficial to the organisation (Veličkovska, 2017). Employees who have established good working relations with colleagues will often offer assistance in getting the job done, as this will not only be for the greater good of the team in achieving a common goal, but will also ensure the reinforcement and maintenance of high-quality work, which will have a direct impact on organisational efficiency (Coyle-Shapiro, 2002). Social well-being has been shown to be significantly related to organisational citizenship (Redelinguys et al., 2019b).

The two-dimensional framework of organisational citizenship behaviour was considered most effective for the purposes of this study, as it specifically focuses on the individual and organisational aspects of the measurement tool. The organisational citizenship behaviour of individuals contributes to the well-being of organisations, as this affects the work relationships among colleagues, superiors, peers, and co-workers. In addition, individual behaviours directly affect others in the workspace; examples of this are courtesy, making additional copies of the meeting agenda for co-workers, or taking on extra responsibility for the benefit of the organisation.

A South African study of managers by Moller and Rothmann (2019) showed that social well-being was problematic in terms of social actualisation and social coherence. It seemed that society was not improving as a place for managers to work in, and they found it hard to understand how society worked. Low social well-being negatively impacts employee performance at work (Harari, 2018). In order to improve mental health, organisations need to create a work environment that encourages people to cohere (Keyes, 1998). The benefit of this study in the labour relations field is that it unpacked the impact of social relations on employment conditions, which largely influence employees' quality of work life.

Intention to leave signals an attitudinal readiness to withdraw and is considered a reliable indicator of actual turnover (Costigan et al., 2012). Previous research has confirmed that the lack of job satisfaction serves as an effective driver for employees leaving their organisations, as employees respond and react more quickly to negative stimuli as opposed to positive stimuli, and a failure to address social well-being will result in employee intention to leave (Redelinghuys et al., 2019b).

Positive organisational practices include aspects such as mutual respect, upkeep, stimulus, and forgiveness. These feed positive organisational fit needed for the flourishing of employees. Management in organisations can create positive work environments by connecting employees to their purpose, nurturing social relations and connectedness, building belief in the reality of possibility, and encouraging the natural pursuit of self-interest (Geue, 2018). This reinforces the importance of social relations among workers, as such relations have a solid link to positive work practices (Janse van Rensburg & Rothmann, 2020).

Specific Problems

New work stressors brought on by global change and by increased workplace complexities have contributed to the erosion of unity and connectedness in organisations, which detrimentally affects areas in the social, emotional, physical, and psychological realm. For instance, the downside of beneficial developments such as widespread digitalisation, the gig economy, and increasingly flexible working patterns is that these developments have also contributed to anxiety about social connectedness and increasing social isolation; clearly, the

constant metamorphosis of the business world has a direct impact on employee health and well-being, including employees' social well-being (Ghislieri et al., 2018).

Furthermore, poor economic prospects leave many individuals vulnerable and present a particularly opportune time for employers to invest in the social wellness of their employees; however, this is not necessarily the case (Coile & Levine, 2011). For example, one study reported that only 53% of organisations measured the outcomes of employee health promotion and social well-being outcomes at all (Kirsten, 2014). Other researchers have also stated that employer decisions often ignore work issues and the needs of workers. As a result, much less thought is given to the importance of social cohesion, which seldom receives attention during decision-making (Boreham et al., 2016), and employees often conclude that their respective organisations take limited interest in their social well-being (Sharma et al., 2009).

Companies rarely realise that social well-being promotes growth beyond its economic understanding (Munzel et al., 2018). It should be made a part of business priorities, as higher employee involvement translates into more engagement, better decision-making, less turnover, less absenteeism, increased job satisfaction, more organisational commitment, organisational justice, increased social identity, improved levels of customer satisfaction, and improved company image (Miller, 2016).

Research also seems to lack comprehensive attention to all dimensions of well-being. Moreover, little is known about the levels of social well-being in developing countries. A study by Janse van Rensburg et al. (2017) only included one dimension of social well-being. Furthermore, no previous studies have been conducted on how positive workplace practices affect employee well-being (flourishing) (Redelinghuys et al., 2019a).

Research in organisations on subjective well-being, which may range from flourishing to languishing on a continuum, is needed because both employees and employers can benefit from promoting well-being as a potential source of good performance (Warr & Nielsen, 2018). However, many individuals are not flourishing (Rautenbach & Rothmann, 2017b; Redelinghuys et al., 2019b), and to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how flourishing can be promoted, we need to understand social well-being and its antecedents and outcomes (Rautenbach & Rothmann, 2017b; Redelinghuys et al., 2019b; Rothmann, 2013).

In today's uncertain climate regarding South African state-owned enterprises (SOEs), clouded by corruption and high turnover rates, it is easy to see why the importance of social well-being should be considered a matter of priority. This is also applicable to the utility industry, which struggles to function optimally and whose crippling effects are reflected in the country's ailing economy. A lack of social wellness studies marks this industry, and this aspect will likely contribute to its poor performance. Given the unfavourable conditions currently surrounding SOEs, it can be said that now would be an opportune time to focus on employee social well-being (Daily Maverick, 2019).

The organisation of interest to this study is situated in the utility industry, which has been plagued with various internal and external changes and is currently in turmoil. The organisation has been facing many challenges, including financial unsustainability, poor operational performance, customer dissatisfaction, skills loss, social and political conflict, and downfalls. Its deteriorating reputation has led to calls for drastic changes in South Africa (Songcaka, 2015). Furthermore, the economic suffering experienced in this industry has reduced social wellness and chances of employee survival due to daily work stressors being experienced in the work environment (Vavi, 2015).

Harsh economic conditions, accompanied by rigorous changes and current financial difficulties experienced by the parastatal, have forced the utility industry to have fewer people do more work. According to the organisation's Senior Advisor: Performance Reporting, Ms Venter, the social well-being of employees is not high on the priority list, resulting in cost cuts through the elimination of team building sessions, sports days, and breakaways (I. Venter, personal communication, June 7, 2016).

Based on previous research linking qualitative job insecurity (Brondino et al., 2020) to lower levels of well-being and performance (Cheng & Chan, 2008), it seemed logical to suspect that the employees of the utility organisation were likely to report relatively higher levels of qualitative job insecurity, which would most likely relate to lowered levels of social well-being. It was, thus, important to consider to what extent employees experienced subjective levels of job insecurity and whether this sense of precarity influenced their social well-being at work. Failure to cultivate a positive, supportive, and healthy organisational culture results in antisocial behaviour (Aquino & Douglas, 2003), organisational misbehaviour (Belias & Koustelios, 2014), non-compliant behaviour (Treviño et al., 2014), dysfunctional work

behaviour, and counterproductive work behaviour – all of which refer to intentional harmful behaviours of employees towards the organisation and other employees (Gruys & Sackett, 2003). The highly fragmented utility industry currently rooted in corruption and mismanagement is particularly prone to this, leading to employee uncertainty accompanied by constant change. Such adverse and hostile conditions provide a breeding ground for precarious work and, as such, may negatively affect employees' sense of social well-being (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2018).

In South Africa, with its rich diversity, self-categorisation and social comparison can have a detrimental effect on the employment relationship, resulting in miscommunication, the creation of barriers, unwillingness to participate, increased tension, and decreased levels of trust. Social connections between individuals in organisations are imperative for them to perform their work, creating a sense of belonging and a stronger sense of social identity. Should a loss of identity be experienced, a sense of meaninglessness can be experienced in the workplace (Rothmann, 2014). In support of this statement, Hermann (2007) found that the lack of integrating social well-being into the workplace made way for aggravating factors in terms of thriving. In his PhD, Hermann (2007), CEO of the trade union Solidarity, found that, in terms of a survey done at a utility organisation, the vast majority of employees showed understanding of the need for affirmative action at that stage, but felt that it was not being implemented correctly and that promotions were not decided based on hard work or merit. They believed that they did not have much say in policy formulation, that there was a lack of support for achievement of their goals, and that they did not form part of the future plans of the utility industry. The same survey revealed that most employees felt that their relationship with colleagues had deteriorated, and they were thinking of leaving the company.

Of equal concern is the fact that the grim outlook described above does not seem to have improved over time: even years after Hermann's (2007) study, 62% of employees still stated that they did not visualise having any long-term future at the parastatal at all (I. Venter, personal communication, June 7, 2016). According to a more recent survey, the utility organisation had experienced an exodus of 1 852 skilled employees from April 2018 to 31 March 2019 (I. Venter, personal communication, November 7, 2019).

The research problems can be summarised as follows: various studies have been conducted on the flourishing construct in general life; yet limited research was available in terms of social well-being in work and organisational contexts, much less to say in workplace contexts on the

African continent. South Africa is popularly known as the “Rainbow Nation”; this title encapsulates the country’s cultural and ethnic diversity. It was not clear how the interaction of positive (trust) and negative (perceived precariousness) predictors would affect the social well-being experienced. It was also uncertain how employee social well-being in this organisation might relate to selected individual and organisational outcomes (job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and intention to leave). It was important to establish whether different types of people could be identified based on analyses of their responses to questions about social well-being, as such insights would enable more tailor-made recommendations to management.

This study set out to add to the social science literature by embarking on a study of the social well-being construct in work and organisational contexts. Firstly, the social well-being construct was elucidated by means of a literature review. Secondly, the impact of subjective perceptions of job insecurity and interpersonal trust (in the organisation and colleagues) on social well-being was determined. It was uncertain what the social well-being levels of employees in the utility industry were and whether different social well-being profiles could be identified among different types of people based on their responses to questions about social well-being. Such knowledge could enable management to allocate resources more wisely to address specific target groups with lower levels of social well-being more effectively. Finally, scientific information was needed regarding the impact of social well-being on outcomes such as job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and turnover intention. In this way, the study was aimed at promoting more stable and productive performance in an organisation that is of strategic importance to the country.

The *main research question* in this study was as follows: how does social well-being manifest in a South African utility organisation in terms of its prevalence and relation to selected predictors and outcomes?

The following *specific research questions* were posed given the foregoing discussion:

- How does social well-being manifest in relation to selected predictors (subjective job insecurity and trust) and outcomes (job satisfaction, turnover intention, and organisational citizenship behaviour) of employees in a South African utility organisation?

- What are the associations among subjective job insecurity, trust (in the organisation and in colleagues) on social well-being at work?
- What are the effects of higher versus lower levels of social well-being on job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and turnover intention?
- What kinds of social well-being profiles can be identified among employees of the utility organisation and how do such profiles relate to trust in manager and colleagues, job satisfaction and intention to leave?

This study could make the following contributions to labour relations management: firstly, it could add to scientific information about social well-being and its outcomes in South African organisations. Secondly, the study could provide scientific information regarding the relationship between social well-being, organisational commitment, and turnover intention. Furthermore, the study could contribute to the literature by exposing and isolating factors that could influence the social well-being of employees in a utility organisation in South Africa.

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1.2.1 General Aim

The general aim of this study was to investigate the associations between social well-being, precariousness, and trust in an organisation and to determine the impact of social well-being on job satisfaction, intention to leave, and organisational citizenship behaviour of employees.

1.2.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this research were to:

- conceptualise social well-being in a work context;
- determine the associations between employees' experiences of precariousness and trust in the organisation and colleagues and social well-being at work;
- establish the impact of social well-being on job satisfaction, intention to leave, and organisational citizenship behaviour in the utility industry;
- establish underlying patterns of social well-being within subgroups of employees in the utility industry; and

- determine whether social well-being profiles can be identified among employees of the utility organisation and to investigate how such profiles relate to trust in manager and colleagues, job satisfaction and intention to leave.

1.3 RESEARCH METHOD

This study consisted of two phases to achieve the objectives set out above: a literature review and an empirical study.

1.3.1 Literature Review

Search engines and databases, including EBSCOhost, ScienceDirect, SAePublications, Sabinet, Scopus, and Google Scholar, unpublished theses, and Web of Science were consulted to identify textbooks or scholarly articles published in accredited academic journals. The search filter was set to detect studies that focused on the impact of trust and precarity on social well-being in the workplace in the title, abstract, and keywords to retrieve all eligible research. Search terms were used in different combinations to maximise the possibility of retrieval.

1.3.2 Empirical Study

1.3.2.1 Research Design

A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was used in this study. Empirical data was collected and analysed (Muijs, 2011). A cross-sectional method permits examining various groups of individuals at a single point in time and is particularly valuable when little is known about potential relationships among variables; these types of studies can support evidence for relationships among variables and can help to rule out many potential alternative explanations for those relationships (Spector, 2019). A simple random survey sampling strategy was used: 17 000 permanently employed staff members were invited to participate after the initial target of 6 500 invitations from Human Resources. This allowed every member of the study population an equal chance to participate (Creswell, 2014).

1.3.2.2 Participants

Permanently employed employees across all designations (senior management, middle management, junior management, and all skilled employees) of a South African public sector organisation in the utility industry were targeted to complete questionnaires in the quantitative part of the study. A notice of the opportunity to voluntarily participate in this research was electronically distributed by the senior human resources manager (mediator) of the organisation across the nine provinces in South Africa, namely, the Western Cape, the Eastern Cape, the Northern Cape, Mpumalanga, Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, the Free State, and the North West. The opportunity for participation was afforded to all eligible employees, although the questionnaire included one question to determine whether the participants had a pending disciplinary case against them. If the answer was “Yes”, that response set was excluded from data analyses to eliminate responses potentially biased against the employer.

1.3.2.3 Measuring Instruments

A *biographical questionnaire* was developed to measure control variables pertaining to participant demographics, but did not include items that could be seen as discriminatory and/or unethical. Demographic terms were used and defined following the Basic Conditions of Employment Act.

The *Social Well-being Scale* of Keyes (1998), as validated by Rautenbach (2015) and further extended by Redelinghuys (2016), was used. It comprises five subdimensions of social well-being: social integration (e.g., “During the past month, how often did you feel that people in your organisation are basically good?”); social acceptance (e.g., “During the past month at work, how often did you feel that you really belong to your organisation?”); social contribution (e.g., “During the past month, how often did you feel that you had something important to contribute towards your organisation?”); social growth (e.g., “During the past month at work, how often did you feel that your organisation is becoming a better place for people like you?”); and social comprehension/coherence (e.g., “During the past month, how often did you feel that the way your organisation works, makes sense to you?”). The items are scored on a six-point scale, ranging from 1 (*never*) to 6 (*every day*). Respondents must answer questions regarding the frequency with which they have experienced specific symptoms of social well-being during the past month. This response option allows for the categorisation of levels of well-being,

similar to the three classes used to assess positive mental health (Keyes, 2002). Individuals who are neither flourishing nor languishing fall into the category of moderate well-being. In a South African study, the reliability coefficient of this scale was .90 (Redelinghuys & Botha, 2016).

The *Multidimensional Qualitative Job Insecurity Scale* (MQJIS; Brondino et al., 2020) consists of eight items tapping into four job insecurity dimensions: social relationships (e.g., “I am not sure which colleagues I will be soon cooperating with”); employment conditions (e.g., “I am insecure about my chances of promotion”); working conditions (e.g., “I am afraid I might soon have to work in a different location or in a different department”); and work content (e.g., “I think my work will become less interesting in the future”). Responses are given on a seven-point Likert scale, from 1 (*not at all true to me*) to 7 (*completely true to me*).

The *Workplace Trust Survey* (WTS; Ferres, 2003), which measures trust beliefs in organisations, was used to measure trust in leaders, among colleagues, and in the organisation. The subscales consist of 32 items and use a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Example items include “I act on the basis that my manager displays integrity in his/her actions”, “I believe that my manager follows promises through with actions”, and “I think that my co-workers act reliably from one moment to the next”. Previous studies yielded Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficients at between 0.90 and 0.97 in both a South African and an Australian context (Ferres, 2003).

The *Job Satisfaction Scale* (JSS; Saks, 2006) was used to measure job satisfaction. Five items assess individuals’ satisfaction with their jobs (e.g., “Most days I am enthusiastic about my work” and “I consider my job rather unpleasant”). Response options range from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 5 (*totally agree*). According to Saks (2006), a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.84 was found for the JSS.

The *Organisational Citizenship Behaviour Questionnaire* (OCBQ; Konovsky & Organ, 1996) measures organisational citizenship behaviour in terms of two dimensions (three items each): altruism (“I assist others with their duties”) and generalised compliance (“I defend the organisation when other employees criticise it”). The six items in total are recorded on a seven-point scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The Cronbach’s alpha

coefficients of the scales as reported in a South African study for OCBQ was higher than 0.70 (Redelinghuys et al., 2019b).

The *Turnover Intention Scale* (TIS; Sjöberg & Sverke, 2000), used to measure intention to leave, comprises three items (e.g., “I am actively looking for other jobs”), with response options ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of the scale as reported in a South African study was 0.79 (Diedericks, 2012).

1.3.2.4 Research Procedure

The management of the utility organisation provided permission, in principle, to conduct this study. After the acceptance of the research proposal and the granting of ethics clearance, the senior human resources business partner served as a mediator to inform employees of the study. The invitation contained a brief introduction and description of the purpose of the study, a description of measures taken to ensure confidentiality, and assurance that participation was voluntary. Participants could withdraw at any stage without prejudice. Participants were given an opportunity to raise concerns and ask the mediator questions before considering taking part in the survey. If they decided to participate, they were able to return their details to an independent service provider.

Informed consent and data collection were obtained through an independent, external service provider who guided the process to ensure that all ethics standards were adhered to, such as promoting impartiality and preventing the risk of a potential conflict of interest and undue influence. This was achieved by means of an online survey of approximately 20 minutes that each participant was able to complete at a place that the person deemed private and secure and at a time that suited him or her. Prior to opening the consent form, prospective candidates were reminded that participation was voluntary, that withdrawal at any time was optional, and that their right to privacy would be observed throughout all stages of the study.

The data was collected in the form of online, structured questionnaires, prior to which participants were provided with an informed consent form that had to be considered and accepted by ticking a box before they could commence completion of the survey. The electronic sampling method automatically anonymised the data as obtained from the online questionnaires to ensure that the anonymity of individual participants was upheld and that the

researcher did not work with identifiable protocols. This disabled any attempt made to trace back responses to an individual participant.

A period of approximately two weeks was allowed for completion of the online surveys, after which responses to items were captured on an Excel spreadsheet. Data was then prepared for analyses with the SPSS and Mplus software programmes.

1.3.2.5 Data Analysis

All three manuscripts were based on a data set collected using a cross-sectional survey design. In Chapters 2 and 3, variable-centred analyses that were done are discussed: firstly, the psychometric properties of the social well-being questionnaire based on Keyes (1998), as modified for a work context by Rautenbach (2015) and extended by Redelinghuys (2016), were verified, followed by the testing of potential direct, indirect, and interaction effects (De Vos et al., 2011) involving v and the predictor and outcome variables of interest as these manifested in the utility organisation.

Latent profile analyses (LPA; Wang & Wang, 2020) were performed to see whether different types of people could be identified based on analyses of their responses to questions about social well-being (Geiser, 2010; Wang & Wang, 2020). Several steps were followed to estimate the latent profiles by determining the optimal number of latent profiles and then examining the latent profile classification. Next, the latent profiles were labelled. Finally, latent profile membership was predicted. A series of models with an increasing number of latent profiles was then tested. A model was retained when there was a significant improvement from the reference model to this model with more profiles (Ekblom-Bak et al., 2020). In addition to the model evaluation criteria mentioned already, entropy as a measure used for classification quality in latent profile analysis was considered. Values range from 0 to 1, with 1 indicating good classification (smaller than 0.60 is not acceptable) (Geiser, 2010). In addition, the Lo-Mendell-Rubin (LMR LR) test (Lo et al., 2001), the adjusted LMR LR (ALMR) test, and the bootstrapped likelihood ratio test (BLRT) (Wang & Wang, 2020) in Mplus were used to test the number of classes in mixture analysis. Finally, the automatic Bolck, Croon, and Hagenaars (BCH) method was utilised to determine the mean of a distal continuous outcome across latent profiles (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2014; Bakk & Vermunt, 2016).

Descriptive statistics were computed by means of the SPSS 27.0 program (IBM Corp., 2020). These statistics were calculated to describe the data and the sample characteristics. Either Pearson or Spearman correlation coefficients were used to identify relationships between the variables, depending on whether the sample was normally distributed or not. As Cronbach's alpha does not provide a reliable estimation of scale reliability when factor loadings differ (Raykov, 2009; Wang & Wang, 2020), omega reliability coefficients (rather than alpha coefficients) were computed. A cut-off value for scale reliability of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994) was used.

Measurement and structural models were tested through latent variable modelling with Mplus 8.6 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2021). The maximum likelihood estimation with robust standard errors (MLR) and the weighted least square mean and variance (WLSMV) estimators were used where applicable. Model fit was assessed by means of the following indices: the chi-square statistic (the test of absolute model fit), standardised root mean residual (SRMR), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and comparative fit index (CFI) (West et al., 2012). TLI and CFI values higher than 0.90 are acceptable, while RMSEA and SRMR values lower than 0.08 indicate a close fit between model and data. The Akaike information criterion (AIC; a comparative measure of fit) and Bayesian information criterion (BIC) were used in addition to other fit indices to assess the fit of competing models. The AIC is meaningful when estimating different models, with the lowest AIC indicating the best-fitting model. The BIC indicates model parsimony (Kline, 2010). To establish whether dependent variables were indirectly affected by independent variables via mediating variables, bootstrapping was used to construct two-sided bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals (CIs) (Hayes, 2017). An upper CI, as well as a lower CI, was reported.

1.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical practices were adhered to throughout all stages of the research. An ethics application form was submitted to the Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC) of the North-West University for approval prior to data collection. Protection of all research participants was, thus, established and maintained through guarding against misconduct and impropriety that might reflect on the organisation (Creswell, 2014). The section addressing research procedures earlier in this document provides further detail on steps taken to obtain informed consent and ensure respect, fairness, and confidentiality.

The integrity of the research was always upheld. The transparency of this research is visible in the obtainment of permission in the form of a signed approval letter sought from senior management, indicating approval to conduct this study in the utility industry, prior to the commencement of the research. Advertisement of the study was sought from the senior human resources business partner. On implementation, an outsourced and independent service provider was employed to conduct the survey.

The following risks related to the study were foreseen for the participants:

- Participants might have felt susceptible to discomfort once they had perceived that they could be identified to participate in a study because of the invitation letter sent to all eligible candidates. The letter addressed this by indicating that an independent survey provider would perform the actual survey and that they would not be required to provide their personal details at any stage. In addition, data was electronically and automatically anonymised, so that the researcher only had access to anonymised data. Finally, results were only reported in aggregated format that could not be traced to an individual in any way.
- Participants might not have wanted to participate in this research, but might have felt obliged to because of the person who had nominated them or the person who had asked them whether they would like to participate (such as their supervisor). This could have left them feeling caught between two options and not knowing what to do. The research facilitator addressed this by communicating that participants had a choice in this matter and that participation in the study was voluntary. This was also stated in the consent form. They were, furthermore, assured that participation was strictly voluntary and that they could withdraw from the process at any stage without penalty.
- Participants spent approximately 20 to 30 minutes completing the questionnaire. Therefore, some individuals might have found it tiring to complete the questionnaire in one sitting. As a solution, the survey questionnaire had been set up in such a way that it could be completed in a few shorter sessions instead of one long sitting. Input could, thus, be saved electronically at any time and resumed later when it was more convenient for participants to minimise disruptions to their daily lives.
- Participants might have felt that the questionnaire had evoked new uncertainties or questions arising from their participation. This was managed by making it clear to the participants that they were welcome to contact the researcher to clear up any uncertainties

or concerns that might arise; contact details were included in the consent form for this purpose.

- The research questionnaire contained questions about participants' social well-being, and this could potentially have made them feel uncomfortable. However, the researcher mitigated the potential impact of this, and the external service provider handled all the information with the highest level of confidentiality. Therefore, the individual questionnaire results were not made available to the employer or any other employee.

Privacy and confidentiality

The ethics documentation was accessible to all participants. These documents included proof of ethics clearance, study information and consent forms that participants received and completed, and any other relevant documentation that might have been required. Privacy and confidentiality were ensured by making use of an external service provider to collect data through sending survey links to the consenting participants' email addresses as supplied by them. Completion took place in a setting and at a time of their own choice. They were not asked to provide any personal details such as their names or employee identification numbers that might have compromised anonymous completion of the study at any stage. Once they had proceeded to the survey, data was automatically anonymised electronically by removing any email address and ability to relay information to an individual before being shared with the researcher who, in turn, only reported aggregated results.

All related data and information sourced for this study will be retained securely for a minimum period of five years. Management of the organisation and participants (if requested) will be provided with feedback on the aggregated results produced by the study conducted.

1.5 CHAPTER LAYOUT

The chapters are presented as follows in this thesis:

Chapter 1 Introduction

Chapter 2 Social well-being in the workplace: The impact of trust and precarity

- Chapter 3 Social well-being, job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and turnover intention in a utility organisation
- Chapter 4 Social well-being profiles: Associations with trust in managers and colleagues, job satisfaction, and intention to leave
- Chapter 5 Conclusions, limitations, and recommendations

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CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH ARTICLE 1

Social well-being in the workplace: The impact of trust and job insecurity

Abstract

This study aimed to examine the effect of trust in the organisation, trust in colleagues, and job insecurity on social well-being of employees in a utility organisation in South Africa. A cross-sectional survey design was used. Permanently employed staff members across all designations of a South African public sector organisation in the utility industry ($N = 403$) participated in the study. The Social Well-being Scale, Multidimensional Qualitative Job Insecurity Scale, and Workplace Trust Survey were administered. Both forms of trust – both in the organisation and in colleagues – predicted higher levels of social well-being among the participants, with trust in the organisation having the most noticeable impact of the two forms of trust. Results further showed that higher levels of subjectively perceived job insecurity led to decreased social well-being levels. Trust in the organisation and colleagues served as an underlying mechanism that influenced the inverse relationship between perceived job insecurity and social well-being. New insights are generated by considering the direct and indirect and effects of a vertical- and a horizontal level of trust and subjectively experienced job insecurity as combined within the same study to verify their simultaneous effect on employees' social well-being. Human resources management interventions should, therefore, be implemented in a more tailormade manner to promote social well-being.

Key terms: social, relationships, well-being, trust, insecurity, precarity

Introduction

Positive social relationships in the workplace are advantageous to individuals and the organisations to which they belong. For instance, positive social environments promote employee well-being, individual performance, and relationships with the employer and enable complex organisational processes (Daniels et al., 2017). These findings underline the importance of interventions and policies as essential tools for management practice to promote social well-being. However, research regarding social well-being in organisations is still sparse (Redelinghuys et al., 2019).

Social well-being has become even more important recently. On the one hand, the rise of the recent global pandemic (COVID-19) has had a devastating impact on financial resources, which has put a strain on the means of organisations to provide opportunities for socialisation at work. On the other hand, the pandemic and the resulting social distancing measures and isolation have brought about a broader social consciousness that highlights the need for meaningful personal relationships and social well-being. Therefore, organisations need to consider the effects of social ties and employees' sense of belonging in the workplace in their strategies.

In order for employees to develop more intimate relationships, social acceptance needs to be in place. The way employees are accepted into the workplace will affect the trust among them. Trust can be defined as an expectation that one can rely on another party's words and actions based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action promised, regardless of one's ability to monitor or control the other party (Bligh, 2017). Trust in organisations is an essential relationship-building tool and serves as a shock absorber during times of uncertainty (Lis & Sudolska, 2015). When high levels of trust exist in the workplace, employees become more receptive to coping with change and adversity brought on by the changing world of work (Bligh, 2017).

Zak's (2017) research showed that employees who displayed high trust towards an organisation experienced 74% less stress, 40% less burnout, 50% increased productivity, 76% more work engagement, and a 13% decline in sick leave taken. Furthermore, organisations that displayed high levels of trustworthiness also remunerated their employees by 17% more than companies whose trust levels were low, which explained why employees in high-trusting environments

were more innovative and productive. However, stressors (e.g., discrimination) might break down trust, which will damage employee well-being. The impact of these negatives imposed will not be as damaging for those employees who have high trust levels in place with the organisation (Helliwell et al., 2016). Once trust has faded, it makes employees hesitant to reach out to one another, which will affect their well-being (Rothstein & Uslander, 2005).

The ailing economy, coupled with the impact of load-shedding, serves as a devastating blow to organisations (Jonas, 2019). Insolvencies and possible job cuts may affect the trust employees have in the organisation. Low levels of trust translate into high levels of precariousness (Bhattacharya & Ray, 2021). The World Bank identified unstable job markets and the economic downturn as favourable factors contributing to increased funds looted through corruption, which stifled social development (World Bank, 2009). This might lead to heightened employee vigilance, which can lead to a culture where employees experience constant anxiety.

Distrust disables employees, leaving them feeling isolated, disempowered, and “cut off” from the organisation (Ward & Coates, 2006). Therefore, trust is a fundamental component of effective social relationships, as it lays the foundation for the development and maintenance of social life. In order to maintain social well-being, trust needs to be promoted. However, the focus should be placed not only on employee trust levels, but also on the trustworthiness of the social system within an organisation (Tamilina, 2018). Trust is embedded in social cohesion, which forms an integral part of social empowerment, social inclusion, and employee security. Research has confirmed that job insecurity does indeed adversely affect employee social well-being and performance (Stankeviciute et al., 2021).

Unfortunately, the impact of social well-being on employees in organisational settings is insufficiently researched, and studies focusing on the predictors of social well-being in such settings are particularly sparse. Therefore, it was felt that research needed to explore the link between trust and social well-being. Furthermore, the current unstable economic environment may bear testament to the fact that now would serve as a particularly opportune time to evaluate the social well-being of employees in the utility industry, as they are likely to experience increased levels of job insecurity.

Social Well-being, Trust, and Precariousness

Social well-being

Keyes (1998) developed the mental health continuum, which comprises emotional, psychological, and social well-being components. This study focused only on social well-being as a component of well-being. Social well-being refers to “the appraisal of one’s circumstance and functioning in society” (Keyes, 1998, p. 5). According to Keyes (2013), social well-being is a public experience centered around the social tasks people encounter within the social structures within which they live. Social well-being consists of five dimensions: social acceptance, social actualisation, social integration, social contribution, and social coherence. These dimensions can be defined as follows: a) social acceptance indicates whether employees have positive attitudes towards others and accept diversity in the organisation; b) social actualisation refers to the degree to which people believe that other people, groups, or organisations have potential; c) social integration refers to how connected and comfortable employees feel towards others and whether they receive support from the organisation; d) social contribution indicates whether employees believe that their everyday activities add value to the organisation; and e) social coherence indicates how meaningful and understandable employees feel that their organisation and social life at work are.

Mental health and social connectedness are related. Two of the causes to which Durkheim (1951) attributes mental illness are anomie (a lack of regulation) and isolation (egoism) (Son & Wilson, 2012). According to Piliavin and Siegl (2007), anomie is harmful, since it makes people feel unimportant, as though others do not notice them, as if they have no value, and as if they cannot count on others for support.

Unfavourable conditions can spur employee feelings of low trustworthiness, which provide an active incentive for unruly behaviour and increased precariousness. Precarious economic conditions are not a passing phase, but a new form of regulation (Pulignano et al., 2017). The old-fashioned employment contract that guaranteed job security and longevity has now been replaced by the psychological contract that bears high levels of uncertainty and precariousness (Cappelli, 1999). The current economic pressure brought on by COVID-19, retrenchments, and corruption has led to new work rules increasing job insecurity and precariousness (Matilla-Santander et al., 2021). Organisations increasingly expect employees to develop their skills (Sharkie, 2009). This means that the onus is on employees; they must ensure that they gain

enough skills in making themselves more employable. Employment contracts are based on short periods coupled with a high risk of termination. This will more than likely have a significant impact on the level of trust employees display towards the organisation. Having no certainty regarding the longevity of service in an organisation creates an emotional and cognitive burden to employees, which cripples employees' ability to function optimally; furthermore, it fuels fear and demotivation. Moreover, trust decreases, leading to a disconnect of social relations, resulting in the total breakdown of social well-being. Organisations will lose valuable skilled labour and be unable to utilise knowledge acquired by employees because these are embedded in close-knit social structures.

Employees who experience positive social interactions are more willing to contribute their knowledge for the use and benefit of others in contrast to employees who suffer from poor social networks who will be less likely to converse and share knowledge for the greater good of the team (Stamper & Masterson, 2002). According to the "100 Best Companies to Work For", the success of these organisations is dependent on trusting employees (Fortune Magazine, 2018). In addition, Grimmelikhuijsen and Meijer (2014) found that the level of employee participation affected trust and sharing.

Trust

The initiation of any relationship is built on trust, which nurtures positive relations among colleagues (Yu et al., 2018). According to Mayer et al. (1995), trust is a disposition of an individual to make themselves vulnerable to the actions of another by assuming that the other will carry out what has been promised without prejudice, fear, or favoritism. Trust is, therefore, not only confined to family and communal settings. Fulmer and Gelfand (2012, p. 1174) extend this definition as proposed by Mayer et al. (1995) to describe trust in an organisation as "a psychological state comprising of the intention to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations of an organization". This definition extends beyond the individual level as it concerns an aggregate level of trust which is based on a sufficient consensus regarding the degree of trust that is collectively shared by members within an organisation (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012).

Employees display trust through exhibiting positive behaviour; this manifests in gestures such as reduced levels of conflict, a lower absenteeism rate, willingness to share information and help colleagues, increased job satisfaction, and less thought about finding alternative

employment (Choi & Resick, 2017). Conversely, low trust levels have devastating effects on organisations that can also affect employee social well-being. Factors that contribute to employee distrust include aspects such as unfair labour practice (skew remuneration and promotion opportunities) and discrimination (particularly against women and blacks) (Alesina & La Ferrara, 2002, p. 207). In addition, high levels of uncertainty are brought on by precarious work environments that have a negative impact on trust and social well-being (Klug, 2017).

When employees are treated fairly and respectfully by their managers and superiors, their trust levels increase, making them more likely to engage in a social exchange (Downey et al., 2015; Eisenbeiss & Giessber, 2012). Thus, social exchange relationships are highly dependent on trust at this stage. There are three different types of trust: horizontal trust (between co-workers), vertical trust (between managers and employees), and institutional trust (between employees and the organisation) (Krot & Lewicka, 2012). The social exchange theory confirms that support from management (vertical trust) builds employee trust, while the leader-member exchange theory links the quality of relationships built to trust (Bligh, 2017).

Research suggests that both effective leadership and performance depend on employees' levels of trust in management. Findings have shown that only 48% of staff trust their organisation. Management achieves trust by including employees in the decision-making process and communicating the organisational vision, mission, and goals (Bligh, 2017; Kalshoven et al., 2012). Employee perceptions about their managers regarding integrity, transparency, and trust shape employee attitudes and performance. If employees view a manager as implementing remuneration, bonuses, and promotions unfairly, they will be less likely to trust that the manager applies them fairly. This will not only erode trust in leadership, but diminish trust in co-workers as well (Bligh, 2017). Previous studies placed more emphasis on vertical trust than on horizontal trust (Wells & Kipnis, 2001). Wasti and Önder (2021, p. 334) state: "Trust in organisations is argued to be of greater importance than interpersonal trust because of the realities of contemporary workplaces, such as the increased complexity of the operational environments facing many industries where decreased opportunities for face-to-face interactions and increased use of temporary and virtual teams affect trust."

In contrast, Zhang et al. (2008) argue that in volatile or weak political-economic contexts, such as those typically found in developing countries, employees are unlikely to expect a stable relationship with their employers and rely on personal relationships. This renders trust in

managers the main currency in the employment relationship and results in a generalised distrust of organisations. Furthermore, Searle and Al-Sharif (2021) point to the need for research studies that a) include multilevels of trust analysis – such as studying trust on an impersonal level and an interpersonal level within the same study and b) research that more clearly recognises the role of trust in the development of human resources management policies, particularly in identifying the level on which such policies should concentrate in order to have the most significant impact on the cultivation of trust. Wasti and Önder (2021) add that research which focuses on employee trust in organisations – in comparison to trust in managers - is still limited, and emphasise that it is crucial to gain a better understanding of how organisational trust supports effective employee functioning.

Trust between co-workers (horizontal trust) or lower-level employees is of utmost importance, as they tend to emphasise the quality of workplace relationships (Bligh, 2017) because work teams require more interaction and skills transfer between fellow workers. Studies have revealed that co-workers' trust boosts organisational support and reduces turnover intention (Ferres et al., 2004). Furthermore, trust is a proximal indicator of the quality of relationships among workers, as it affects willingness to share resources (Dirks & Skarlicli, 2009). Increased sharing, leading to increased benevolence (the extent to which the trustee is believed to want to do good for the trustor without any profitable motives), will become evident among workers and represents a significant factor of trustworthiness (Colquitt et al., 2007).

The breakdown of trust has detrimental effects on an organisation. Mistrust and broken promises fuel insecurity and social inequality. The collapse of trust between employees and the organisation in South Africa can largely be attributed to historical injustice suffered by the country, rooted in the post-apartheid regime (Belle, 2014). Trust is cultivated by opening communication channels through regular departmental meetings, listening to employee input, and monitoring social interactions. However, trust tends to disintegrate and decompose when organisations fail to take these into cognisance, and result-driven obsession surpasses the importance of social interaction and engagement (Vermeeren et al., 2013). The trust formed by the organisation will, thus, facilitate the development of social interaction associated with social well-being (Chami & Fullenkamp, 2002; Hassan & Hatmaker, 2015).

As in any relationship, inherently, colleagues also have unspoken expectations. At the first stage of forming relations among employees, workers go through an acquaintance phase, and

this is where workers get to know one another, and a trust relationship starts to take shape on a cumulative basis; here, employees try to decipher the nature of their dependence on one another, and cognition-based trust starts to develop, of which competence is key (Klijn et al., 2010). Once colleagues have begun to trust one another, employees will automatically reveal more private and confidential information, increasing social bonds between employees. Common principles, values, and norms provide ideal grounds for strong social relations among workers, which may reduce attrition and improve organisational commitment, as such relations will be displayed through increased productivity and empathy towards organisational relationships (Martins & Martins, 2003; Schein, 2010).

Precariousness

Globally, a heightened sense of precariousness has become endemic to the modern world of work, and the business environment is currently being held hostage by highly volatile circumstances. For example, the United States and the United Kingdom have been engulfed in turbulent and uncertain economic times, rapid change, automation, and high levels of job insecurity in workplaces (Sibindi & Samuel, 2019). As a result, organisations have been thrown in at the deep end, as they must develop more adaptive strategies to combat new challenges and remain relevant in an unpredictable environment.

The traditional employment relationship rooted in longevity and employee development programmes has become a thing of the past. Psychological contracts that value meaningful relationships and closeness are gradually being eroded and replaced by more superficial relationships where solidarity is demonstrated when perceived to serve own interests. As a result, employees are experiencing a heightened sense of precariousness (Johannessen, 2019). Currently, the trust in South African organisations is in great disrepute, especially after the World Economic Forum ranked South Africa as one of the worst-performing countries concerning employer/employee relationships out of 137 countries (Schwab, 2017). This potentially explains why state-owned enterprises are failing dismally at generating income and constantly suckle on the government to provide them with bailouts. This has led to a collapse in trust displayed towards organisations, as South Africa's workplace environments are volatile, unpredictable, insecure, and harmful, and industries have introduced pay cuts, reductions of work hours, and reduced training interventions (Hafeez et al., 2019).

Employees attach value to their work; work is not only a source of income, as an employee's occupation also functions as a source of meaningful relationships (Van der Klink et al., 2016). The workplace serves as an extension of a wider community. Therefore, involuntary job loss brought about in the form of retrenchment, downsizing, or restructuring is seen to inflict extreme levels of stress on the employee, which is also mentally draining, as the employee now experiences powerlessness (Wang & Heyes, 2017). South Africa's work environment is not only plagued with extreme levels of corruption but is also notoriously ranked high among countries with the highest unemployment rates in the world (StatsSA, 2019a). This exacerbates job precarity, negatively affecting employees' ability to trust organisations and having an impact on overall employee health and social well-being (Frone & Blais, 2020). These outcomes of increased employee-perceived precarity are evident in increased levels of absenteeism, lower levels of job satisfaction, lower levels of organisational commitment, and lower levels of mental, physical, and social health (Frone & Blais, 2020).

Based on these outcomes, it is almost definitive that trust dictates the level of job insecurity employees experience, which ultimately predicts their level of social well-being. The current ongoing crisis (COVID-19) has led to a flare-up in levels of employee job insecurity; this is due to paradigm shifts brought about by technological evolution (creating new ways of getting the job done, while destroying old methods of work across the skills spectrum), trimming of staff complements, and the reduction of overtime pay, wages, training, and other fringe benefits (Wang & Heyes, 2017). During such trying times, trust is an essential element, especially when employees face adversity and uncertainty. How work is done shapes social relations that are defined by patterns of trust among workers, which automatically decrease feelings of insecurity and subjectively increase feelings of social well-being (Gould-Williams & Davies, 2005). However, little research has focused on how the breakdown in trust affects job insecurity related to social well-being (Hamidi, 2017).

In South Africa, organisations are confronted with restructuring, downsizing, and benchmarking, especially South African state-owned enterprises (SOEs). Harsh economic conditions have caused pandemonium, and there are calls for the implementation of change (Jonas, 2019). Economic instability, fuelled by corruption and retrenchment initiatives, brings with it numerous challenges that present heightened uncertainty levels (Budhram & Geldenhuys, 2018). These exacerbate low levels of trust. Moreover, deteriorating relationships negatively affect employers and employee social well-being. Poor work relationships and low

levels of trust towards leaders bring on job insecurity. Furthermore, insecurity and the lack of employment certainty may cause competitiveness to develop among workers to keep their jobs (survival of the fittest). This competitiveness may erode relationships, increase precarity, and decrease trust. It also contributes to employees experiencing extreme powerlessness and loss of control, which negatively affects employee social well-being.

Companies fail to realise that the importance of SWB extends well beyond economic understanding (Munzel et al., 2018). Research has shown that only 53% of organisations measure employee health and social wellness (Kirsten & Karch, 2012). This confirms that social well-being is not valued in organisations, which is problematic, given that social relationships are essential to attain organisational goals. Often, organisations rely on technological advancement to replace social interaction. However, positive relationships nurture social well-being and are visible in trust and feelings of fondness being displayed towards work outputs (Cameron et al., 2011).

Consequently, employees may perceive that the organisation does not care about them, which will increase levels of distrust and precarity. Moreover, ailing social relations among workers contribute to a further breakdown in trust and security. In addition, higher levels of corruption erode trust and interpersonal relations.

Current Study

Although extensive research has been done on the concept of flourishing (including all three dimensions of mental health), limited research has been done on social well-being as conceptualised by Keyes (2005) and Redelinguys et al. (2019). However, a preliminary literature search did not reveal any studies focused on how trust and perceived precariousness or job security as an aspect of precariousness interacted in relation to social well-being, much less to say how this would transpire in a public sector company in an African workplace context.

The research problems can be summarised as follows: various studies have been conducted on the flourishing construct; yet limited research is available in terms of social well-being in work and organisational contexts, not to mention in workplace contexts on the African continent. South Africa is popularly known as the “Rainbow Nation”; this title encapsulates the country’s

cultural and ethnic diversity. This kaleidoscope of attributes, packaged in the form of various attitudes and personalities, spills over into the workplace through the socialisation process and eventually becomes part of organisational culture (Mazibuko & Govender, 2017).

It was not clear how positive (trust) and negative (perceived precariousness) predictors of social well-being would influence the levels of social well-being experienced by all. The existing literature reveals consistent evidence that a good social environment in the workplace is associated with employee well-being. However, there has been no specific review of organisational effort or interventions to improve employee social well-being by improving social environments at work; this notion bears evidence that social well-being is a poorly researched topic, especially in an organisational context. Many studies have focused on mental, emotional, and physical well-being, with little to almost no emphasis on social well-being. It is essential to create synergy across all dimensions of well-being. The disregard for improving workplace social environments by organisations demonstrates the gap identified in the current literature.

Trust becomes even more critical for organisations that are changing, as these industries face a greater level of uncertainty. South Africa's excessively high unemployment rate (30.1%), coupled with looming retrenchments, presents a grim outlook that further exposes uncertainty levels in relation to future employment. The loss of trust in an organisation is evident in the deterioration of work relationships. Also, evaluating how precarity and trust affect social well-being is a poorly researched phenomenon, and current research linking the relation between job insecurity and social well-being is almost non-existent.

Studies are silent on how perceived precariousness impact social well-being via trust, and very little is known about how it would take shape in the context of an African workplace. Limited research on this topic automatically reveals a gap in comprehensive attention paid to social well-being in the workplace, especially in African workplaces where such studies are particularly sparse. This study investigated the relationship between job insecurity and trust (in the organisation and colleagues) and social well-being at work in order to provide new insights into the impact of precarity and trust on social well-being. Consequently, policies can be developed to deal with job insecurity, trust (both on an interpersonal level such as among colleagues and on an impersonal level in the organisation), and social well-being.

Based on the review of the literature above, the following hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 1: Trust in the organisation positively and statistically significantly predicts social well-being.

Hypothesis 2: Trust in colleagues positively and statistically significantly predicts social well-being.

Hypothesis 3: Perceived job insecurity negatively, yet statistically significantly, predicts social well-being.

Hypothesis 4: Trust in the organisation mediates the association between perceived job insecurity and social well-being.

Hypothesis 5: Trust in colleagues mediates the relationship between perceived job insecurity and social well-being.

Method

Research Design

This study followed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey study design. A cross-sectional method was suitable, as there was limited empirical evidence of the potential relationships between the variables of interest (Spector, 2019).

Participants

Participants included all permanently employed members across all designations (senior management, middle management, junior management, and all skilled employees) of a South African public sector organisation in the utility industry. All eligible employees working in the organisation across all nine provinces were invited to participate, and 403 responded. The total sample ($N = 403$) consisted of black (60.8%), white (23.6%), coloured (9.7%), Indian (5.2%), and other (0.7%) staff members. The highest age distribution was between 31 and 40 years of age (38.7%), which was an indication that the employees were relatively at the mid-point in their professional lives. All participants had a minimum qualification level of Grade 12; the majority of the sample group had obtained a postgraduate degree or diploma as their highest level of education (51.6%) and were now employed throughout various ranks in the organisation (low, middle, and senior levels of employment). The average length of service was a minimum of 11 years.

Measuring Instruments

A *biographical questionnaire* was developed by the researcher and was aimed at measuring demographics.

The *Social Well-being Scale* of Keyes (1998), as validated for a South African workplace context by Rautenbach (2015) and further extended by Redelinghuys (2016), was used to assess social well-being in terms of five subdimensions: social integration (e.g., “During the past month, how often did you feel that people in your organisation are basically good?”); social acceptance (e.g., “During the past month at work, how often did you feel that you really belong to your organisation?”); social contribution (e.g., “During the past month, how often did you feel that you had something important to contribute towards your organisation?”); social growth (e.g., “During the past month at work, how often did you feel that your organisation is becoming a better place for people like you?”); and social comprehension/coherence (e.g., “During the past month, how often did you feel that the way your organisation works, makes sense to you?”). The items were scored on a six-point scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 6 (every day). Respondents were asked how frequently they had experienced specific symptoms of social well-being during the previous month. Response options for this option provided for a categorisation of well-being, similar to categories used to evaluate positive mental health (Keyes, 2002). In a South African study, the reliability coefficient of this scale was 0.90 (Redelinghuys & Botha, 2016).

The *Multidimensional Qualitative Job Insecurity Scale* (MQJIS; Brondino et al., 2020) consists of eight items tapping into four job insecurity dimensions: social relationships (e.g., “I am not sure which colleagues I will be soon cooperating with”); employment conditions (e.g., “I am insecure about my chances of promotion”); working conditions (e.g., “I am afraid I might soon have to work in a different location or in a different department”); and work content (e.g., “I think my work will become less interesting in the future”). Responses were given on a seven-point Likert scale, from 1 (*not at all true to me*) to 7 (*completely true to me*).

Two subscales of the *Workplace Trust Survey* (WTS; Ferres, 2003) were used to measure trust among colleagues (12 items; an example item is “I think that my co-workers act reliably from one moment to the next”) and trust in the organisation (11 items, for example, “I have positive

feelings about the future direction of my organisation”). Responses were offered on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Previous studies indicated reliability (Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of above 0.90) in South African and Australian environments (Ferres, 2003).

Research Procedure

The Ethics Committee of the North-West University approved this study (ethics number: NWU-00745-20-A4). Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the senior human resources business partner in the utility industry. An electronic leaflet explaining the purpose of the study and procedures to follow in case clarification was needed was sent out to all prospective candidates. The data collection process was made possible by making use of an independent service provider who facilitated the completion of consent forms, which then provided access to the online survey. Approximately two weeks were allowed for the completion of the online surveys. Results obtained from the survey were sent to the researcher in anonymised format for data analysis purposes.

Statistical Analysis

A variable-centred analysis was used to analyse the data: firstly, the psychometric properties of the questionnaire were verified, followed by the testing of potential direct, indirect, and interaction effects (De Vos et al., 2011) involving social well-being and the predictor variables. Descriptive statistics were computed to describe the data and the sample characteristics. As Cronbach's alpha does not provide a reliable estimation of scale reliability when factor loadings differ (Raykov, 2009; Wang & Wang, 2020), omega reliability coefficients (rather than alpha coefficients) were computed. A cut-off value for scale reliability of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994) was used.

Measurement and structural models were tested using latent variable modelling with Mplus 8.6 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2021). All variables were considered categorical and weighted least square mean variance (WLSMV) was used as a default estimator. The following indices were utilised to assess model fit: the chi-square statistic (the test of absolute model fit), standardised root mean residual (SRMR), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and comparative fit index (CFI) (West et al., 2012). TLI and CFI values

higher than 0.90 are acceptable, although values above 0.95 are preferred; RMSEA and SRMR values lower than 0.08 indicate a close fit between model and data (Wang & Wang, 2020). The Akaike information criterion (AIC) and Bayesian information criterion (BIC) were used in addition to other fit indices to assess the fit of competing models. The AIC is meaningful when estimating different models, with the lowest AIC indicating the best-fitting model. The BIC indicates model parsimony (Kline, 2011).

To establish whether dependent variables were indirectly affected by independent variables via mediating variables, bootstrapping was used to construct two-sided bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals (CIs) (Hayes, 2017). An upper CI, as well as a lower CI, was reported.

Results

Testing the Measurement Model

Three competing measurement models were tested by using confirmatory factor analysis with Mplus, version 8.6. This was done to evaluate the distinctness of the measured variables. Model 1 consisted of two first-order latent variables, namely, trust in the organisation (measured by 11 directly observed variables) and trust in colleagues (measured by 12 observed variables). Two uncorrelated second-order variables were also specified: perceived job insecurity was specified as a second-order latent variable consisting of four first-order latent variables that were allowed to correlate, namely, social relationships, employment conditions, working conditions, and work content. Each variable was measured by two items each. Social well-being was also specified as a second-order latent variable, but consisted of five correlated first-order latent variables measured by three items each: social integration, social acceptance, social contribution, social growth, and social coherence.

The results indicated that a stable factor structure could not be obtained, as the model was not positive definite due to a problem experienced with one of the perceived job insecurity subscales (work conditions). Therefore, an alternative measurement model was specified. Using confirmatory factor analysis, all factors were expressed similarly to those in Model 1, except for perceived job insecurity, which was now specified as a single latent factor measured by eight directly observed variables. This model (Model 2) offered an acceptable fit to the data:

the CFI (0.96) and TLI (0.96) were above the preferred cut-off point of 0.95, and the SRMR (0.06) was below the value of 0.08.

We also tested the competing measurement model (Model 3), where all constructs, including social well-being, were measured by directly observed variables only. Model 3 ($\chi^2 = 3017.83$, $df = 983$, $p < 0.001$; CFI = 0.95; TLI = 0.94; RMSEA = 0.07, $p = 0.00$ [0.07, 0.08]; SRMR = 0.06) offered an acceptable, yet poorer, fit compared to Model 2. Table 1 presents the fit statistics for the competing measurement models.

Table 1

Fit Statistics for the Competing Measurement Models

Model	Chi-square	<i>df</i>	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
1	No conversion					
2	2542.64*	978	0.96	0.96	0.06	0.06
3	3017.83*	983	0.94	0.95	0.07	0.06

df = degrees of freedom, TLI = Tucker-Lewis index, CFI = comparative fit index, RMSEA = root square error of approximation, SRMR = standardised root mean square residual, * $p < 0.01$.

Comparison of the fit indices indicated that Model 2 fitted the data best and was the most parsimonious. This final measurement model showed acceptable fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 2542.639$, $df = 978$, $p < 0.001$; CFI = 0.96; TLI = 0.96; RMSEA = 0.06, $p = 0.38$ [0.06, 0.07]; SRMR = 0.06). The standardised regression coefficients were all statistically significant ($p < 0.01$), and all items loaded on their respective constructs as expected, with values ranging from 0.40 to 0.93. Table 2 presents the correlation matrix for the latent variable, including its corresponding reliability coefficients.

Table 2*Descriptive Statistics, Reliabilities, and Correlations of the Scales*

Variable	Mean	SD	<i>p</i>	1	2	3
1 Trust in the organisation	4.35	1.46	0.96	-	-	-
2 Trust in colleagues	4.86	1.37	0.97	0.62	-	-
3 Perceived job insecurity	4.20	1.26	0.83	- 0.24	- 0.14	-
4 Social well-being	3.79	1.23	0.93	0.65	0.57	- 0.24

Note: all correlations were statistically significant ($p < .01$). Parameters for the correlation coefficients were considered as a small effect when $r \geq 0.10$, medium effect when $r \geq 0.30$, and large effect when $r \geq 0.50$ (Cohen, 1998).

The composite reliability of all the scales was above the cut-off point of 0.70. Therefore, the scales were considered to be reliable. From Table 2, it is evident that all correlations were statistically significant. Correlations of large effect were recorded for the relationship between the two forms of trust and their relationship with social well-being. In addition, correlations of small effect were evident for relationships between perceived job insecurity and all other variables in the model.

Testing Structural Models

The structural model was tested based on the results of the best measurement model and by using latent variable modelling as implemented by Mplus, version 8.6. The results indicated a good fit of the re-estimated model to the data: $\chi^2 = 2542.64$, $df = 978$, $p < 0.01$; RMSEA = 0.06 (90% CI: 0.06, 0.07); CFI = 0.96; TLI = 0.96; SRMR = 0.06. The chi-square test of model fit was statistically significant, the RMSEA was below 0.08, and the TLI and CFI values were a good fit, with the results above the 0.90 criteria. The RMSEA and the SRMR were also acceptable, as they were below .08. Figure 1 and Table 3 show the standardised coefficients estimated by Mplus or the structural model. From Table 3, it is evident that trust in the organisation positively and statistically significantly predicted social well-being. Hypothesis 1 was supported. It is, furthermore, evident that trust in colleagues positively and statistically significantly predicted social well-being. Hypothesis 2 was supported. Finally, perceived job

insecurity negatively, yet statistically significantly, predicted social well-being. Hypothesis 3 was accepted.

Table 3

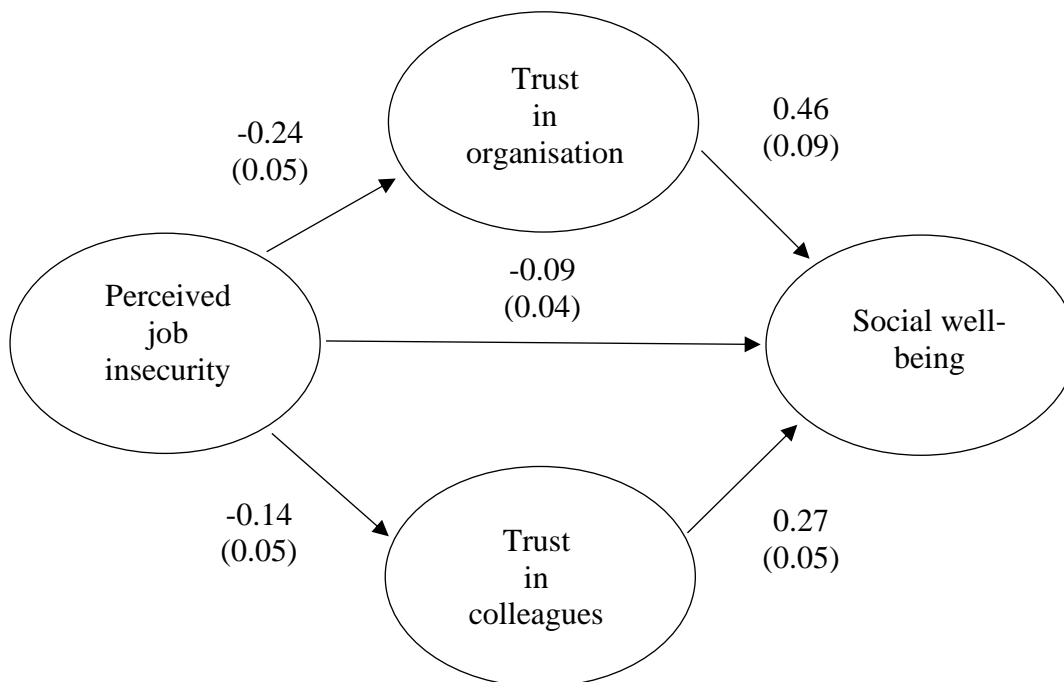
Standardised Regression Coefficients of Trust in the Organisation, Trust in Colleagues, and Perceived Job Insecurity in Predicting Social Well-being

Variable	Estimate	SE	Est/SE	<i>p</i>
Social well-being ON				
Trust in the organisation	0.46	0.05	9.9	0.000**
Trust in colleagues	0.27	0.05	5.75	0.000**
Perceived job insecurity	- 0.09	0.04	-2.18	0.029*

** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Figure 1

The structural model



Mediating Effects

Due to the significant regression relationships from trust in the organisation, trust in colleagues and perceived job insecurity to social well-being, mediation analyses were performed to further

investigate the roles of the two alternative forms of trust as potential underlying mechanisms through which the inverse relationship between perceived job insecurity and social well-being could be further illuminated. Through the Hayes (2018) procedure, the indirect effects of job insecurity on social well-being through trust in the organization and trust in colleagues were evaluated. Based on an empirically derived sampling distribution of the indirect effect, bootstrapping was used to construct confidence intervals. Using 5000 bootstrap samples, bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals (CIs) were estimated. The indirect effect of job insecurity through trust in the organisation on social well-being was found to be negative and significant: ($\beta = -0.15, p < 0.01 [-0.23, -0.08]$). The indirect effect of job insecurity through trust in colleagues on social well-being was also negative and significant: ($\beta = -0.04, p < 0.05 [-0.09, -0.01]$).

Discussion

This study examined the effect of trust in the organisation, trust in colleagues, and job insecurity (predictors) on social well-being (outcome) of employees of a utility organisation in South Africa. The potential mediating effects of trust in the organisation and in colleagues on the relationship between job insecurity and social well-being were also tested. Although studies exist that alternatively linked job insecurity or trust to other aspects of employee well-being (such as emotional or psychological aspects of well-being), this is the first study ever to examine the simultaneous influential roles of job insecurity and alternative forms of trust in relation to the social aspect of well-being within the same study. The results illuminated the potentially detrimental impact of job insecurity on the social well-being of employees, and further underpinned the significant, conducive role of trust in promoting higher levels of social well-being within the workplace environment.

Firstly, the results showed that higher levels of trust – both in the organisation (H1) and in colleagues (H2) – predicted higher levels of social well-being among members of the workforce, with trust in the organisation having the most prominent effect of the two alternative levels of trust. The direct link between the level of trust experienced by employees and their social well-being confirmed that trust is indeed conducive to employee well-being.

Secondly, it was found that trust in the organisation and trust in colleagues mediated the relationship between job insecurity and social well-being. By implication, managers can

promote higher levels of social well-being among the workforce by ensuring that the organisation projects a corporate image of being reliable and trustworthy and by encouraging positive, trusting relationships among colleagues.

In broad terms, these results are in line with observations by Richter and Näswall (2019, p.22), claiming that “The loss of trust can be interpreted as an indicator of the deterioration of the employee–employer relationship, where employees who experience job insecurity also perceive their psychological contract with the organisation to be broken”. It is also in line with previous research by Helliwell (2011) who established that the level of trust had a direct impact on subjective assessments of individual well-being, and with research by Salanova et al. (2012; 2021) which showed that organisational level trust had a direct, positive effect on employee well-being. It should however be noted that the studies as mentioned did not necessarily operationalise trust and well-being in such specific terms as in the current study; for instance, operationalisations of the well-being construct did not focus exclusively on the social dimension of well-being as such.

The finding that trust which stems from the organisation as an entity seemed to play a more prominent role in promoting employees’ social well-being relative to horizontal-level trust as manifested among colleagues, is surprising, given that interpersonal relationships are an important source for the gratification of social needs. No directly comparable existing research could be identified. However, trust in the organisation has been indicated as the dominant predictor variable – relative to trust that stems from a horizontal level - in well-being related research in other studies as well. For instance, in a large study by Di Stefano et al. (2018) that employed both trust in the organisation and trust in team members as simultaneous predictors of the well-being of workers in a Sicilian hospital setting, trust in the organisation was also found to be more influential in the promotion of individuals’ well-being, relative to trust that stems from a horizontal level among team members. In another recent study by Kleynhans et al. (2021), trust in the organisation and in colleagues were also employed as potential mediating mechanisms to examine their roles in affecting workplace-related outcomes and their findings confirmed the more prominent role of trust in the organisation in affecting such outcomes, relative to trust amongst co-workers. Although the mentioned study is not directly comparable to the current study due to different predictor- and outcome variables that were employed, both studies employed the two levels of trust as mediating variables in the same study, both were

conducted within South African workplace settings, and pointed towards organisational trust, as a crucially important consideration for effective functioning within the work environment.

Furthermore, our findings confirmed that higher levels of perceived job insecurity led to a decrease in individuals' social well-being (H3). This finding extends previous research which identified job insecurity as a known predictor of poor mental and / or physical well-being (Kim, 2019) to the social dimension of individual well-being. Findings suggests that managers can promote the social well-being of the workforce by limiting the factors that can potentially create feelings of job insecurity as far as possible and managing those that cannot be eliminated in a responsible, yet sensitive, manner.

The finding that trust in the organisation (H4) and trust in colleagues (H5) served as an underlying mechanism that facilitated the relationship between job insecurity and social well-being, underlined the prominent role that trust could play as a psychological mechanism to explain how job insecurity is related to individuals' social well-being. This finding provided further substantiation to previous research suggesting that trust could serve as a psychological mechanism that mediated the relationship between job insecurity and performance outcomes (Salanova et al., 2021) and extended the existing knowledge base by linking job insecurity to social well-being through trust served as a psychological mediator mechanism that could explain how job insecurity decreased social well-being. This might be the case, for example, when employees suspect that their efforts are not being sufficiently reciprocated by the organisation such as when there was a perceived breach of the psychological contract or a perception that the organisation is no longer responding with benevolence towards them as would, for example, be evident through lay-offs or a reduction in the availability of resources to do their jobs.

Recommendations

Organisations should brace themselves, for the huge-blow effects of distrust can be corrosive and costly, as productivity takes a nosedive, collaboration needed to resolve problems slumps, and employee engagement plummets (Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2010). Therefore, the organisation should create positive work environments by connecting employees to their purpose, nurturing social relations and connectedness, building belief in the reality of possibility, and encouraging the natural pursuit of self-interest (Quinn, 2015). This reinforces

the importance of social relations among co-workers and with managers (Van Rensburg & Rothmann, 2020).

Organisations should implement methods to increase trust in these organisations, including having open communication channels between employees, managers, and co-workers. Effective communication and shifting the focus from hierarchy to community can also aid in the establishment of strong company values, which will increase employee social well-being, as employees will experience a heightened sense of belonging, purpose, and security (Jennings & Bamkole, 2019).

To counter precariousness, the organisation can demonstrate its level of caring by developing and introducing coping mechanisms through introducing resilience workshops and implementing more regular informal departmental meetings. Skinner and Searle (2011) contend that human resources management has generally been underutilised as a context for exploring the concept of trust (Whitener, 1997).

Limitations

This study employed a cross-sectional survey to study social well-being and its association with trust and precarity. Cross-sectional studies are limited because they do not allow inferences regarding causes and effects. Future studies should employ longitudinal designs. Furthermore, common method variance might have limited the findings of this study. This study focused primarily on the impact of social well-being in only the utility industry. The recent global pandemic (COVID-19) might have affected the questionnaire response rate. Measuring the impact of social well-being at a time that encouraged social distancing might have caused employees to be biased. Employees might have felt reluctant to complete the questionnaire, as it was time-consuming. Senior managers might not have considered the completion of the questionnaire as a priority due to an excessive workload. Not all employees were equipped to complete an online questionnaire.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the results of this study confirmed that trust in the organisation and trust in co-workers were positively associated with the social well-being of employees. Furthermore,

precariousness (as indicated by job insecurity of employees) was negatively associated with social well-being. Perceived precarious work impacted social well-being via trust (in the organisation and co-workers).

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CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH ARTICLE 2

Social well-being, job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and intention to leave in a utility organisation

Orientation: Employee social well-being is likely to influence individual and organisational outcomes, especially in African countries where a high premium is often placed on one's personhood being rooted in one's relations with others.

Research purpose: This study aimed to investigate the associations between social well-being, job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and intention to leave in a South African utility organisation.

Motivation for the study: Given the history of relationships among diverse people in South Africa, social well-being seems to be a critical component of the overall well-being of employees. Moreover, well-being research, both in South Africa and internationally, points to the importance of social well-being for individual and organisational outcomes. However, few studies in South Africa have focused on social well-being in work and organisational contexts.

Research approach/design and method: A cross-sectional survey design was used, targeting permanent employees across all designations in a South African utility organisation. Consenting participants ($N = 403$) completed previously validated measures of social well-being, job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and intention to leave. Structural equation modelling was performed to test the study hypotheses.

Main findings: The results showed that social well-being was positively associated with job satisfaction and organisational citizenship behaviour and negatively associated with intention to leave. Social well-being indirectly affected organisational citizenship behaviour and intention to leave through job (dis)satisfaction.

Practical implications: Managers and human resources practitioners are alerted to practical ways of sustaining employees' social well-being such as by implementing tailor-made policies that support social aspects of well-being and by ensuring the alignment of well-being programmes with changing circumstances in the modern world of work.

Originality/value: This study illuminated social well-being associations with job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and intention to leave in a developing African country workplace context.

Keywords: social well-being, job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, intention to leave, utility organisation

Introduction

Workplace well-being is increasingly becoming critical for both individuals and organisations (Abe et al., 2016; Moller & Rothmann, 2019). According to the International Labour Organization, the concept of workplace well-being refers to a wide range of aspects of working life, including the quality and safety of the working environment, how employees view their workplaces, the climate at work, and how they are organised (ILO, 2017). Workplace well-being is essential because it has an impact on individual and organisational outcomes (Kowalski et al., 2017; Litchfield et al., 2016). Notably, a range of variables referred to in the definition of workplace well-being include social elements of work, and the organisation in which employees are embedded affects their well-being, satisfaction, performance, and retention (Keyes, 1998; Redelinguys et al., 2019).

Social well-being is an essential aspect of well-being according to different models such as the mental health continuum (MHC; Keyes, 2002), the flourishing at work model (Rothmann et al., 2019), the thriving model (Clifton & Harter, 2021), and the secure flourishing model (VanderWeele, 2017). Social well-being can also be linked to the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2011), with its conceptualisation of relatedness as a psychological need of people. Relatedness refers to individuals' need to be loved and cared for by others and to feel connected with others. It is satisfied when individuals develop close relationships with others and feel a sense of communion with them (Deci & Ryan, 2011). The best relationships are those in which true relatedness and mutuality are experienced.

However, only a few studies (e.g., Moller & Rothmann, 2019; Redelinguys et al., 2019) have been done using a multidimensional model of social well-being in South African work contexts. Using the MHC (Keyes, 2005) to measure emotional, psychological, and social well-being, Moller and Rothmann (2019) showed that a large sample of managers scored the lowest on social well-being in four different latent well-being profiles. More specifically, they found that social actualisation (i.e., the feeling that the world is becoming a better place to function in) and social coherence (grasping how societies work) were relatively low compared to other elements of well-being. Moreover, research on personality functioning (Nel et al., 2011) suggested that the social-relational aspects of personality were strongly present in 11 language groups in South Africa.

A number of Southern African studies have focused on social aspects of work-related well-being. For example, Janik and Rothmann (2015) investigated the effects of co-worker and manager relations in organisations. Redelinghuys et al. (2019) investigated the validity of a measure of workplace flourishing (which included social well-being). However, the latter study focused on the three components of well-being rather than exclusively on social well-being. Moreover, outcomes of interest were either different or not combined in the same context as proposed in the current study (i.e., a utility organisation in South Africa). Therefore, more research is needed to understand social well-being in work and organisational settings in South Africa (Keyes, 1998; Rothmann, 2013).

Individuals' social well-being relies on positive interpersonal connections to accomplish individual and organisational work goals (Rosales, 2016). Different models of employer-employee relationships confirm that positive social environments in the workplace are beneficial to sustain employee well-being (Daniels et al., 2017; Keyes, 1998; Rosales, 2016). Research by Deci and Ryan (2011) revealed that social context (e.g., feedback, communication, and rewards) influenced the satisfaction of individuals' psychological needs (including relatedness). Therefore, the social context will affect employees' social well-being. For this reason, social well-being will likely influence individual and organisational outcomes. It is, thus, of particular interest to human resources practitioners and work and organisational psychologists to develop a deeper understanding of the linkages between social well-being and individual and organisational outcomes, mainly because these linkages are under-researched in developing country contexts and, specifically, in the utility industry (Daniels et al., 2017).

The utility industry is instrumental in the development and maintenance of the South African economy. However, the utility in the study, which supplies 95% of electricity to South Africa, is plagued with skills loss and has encountered daunting challenges, especially since 2005, evident in electricity supply shortages, frequent load-shedding, financial instability (including allegations of state capture), structural problems, poor operational performance, a deteriorating reputation, and the loss of many valuable employees with critical skills (Govender, 2017; Ratshomo & Nembahe, 2019). The well-being and morale of employees are affected by the environment in which they find themselves. Masilela (2018) found that social well-being and stress in the utility could be linked to social relationships in the entity. Stress and low morale of employees affected their job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and retention (Masilela, 2018). Estimations of employee turnover showed that the utility remained at risk of

losing valuable human resources (I. Venter, personal communication, April 7, 2019). The utility industry had lost 2 110 employees from 2019 (R. Mey, personal communication, September 21, 2021). These statistics make it evident that the utility organisation should investigate employees' social well-being, and the association thereof with job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and intention to leave (Keim et al., 2014).

Organisations cannot afford to ignore the importance of social well-being, and more research on this aspect is needed (Boreham et al., 2016; Daniels et al., 2017; De Simone, 2014; Gandy et al., 2018). For instance, De Simone (2014) highlights the need to study social well-being, and its spillover effects on critical outcomes such as job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and intention to leave. Negative social experiences affect individuals' emotions and functioning, such as satisfaction with work conditions, decision-making quality, and inclinations to withdraw. However, social experiences also affect relations with colleagues and management, affecting individual and organisational performance. Moreover, the five-factor model of social well-being (Keyes, 1998; Rothmann et al., 2019) has not been well-researched in organisations – particularly in non-Western cultural contexts. Given that social embeddedness is considered vital to an African socio-cultural orientation, even more so than individual personhood (Khumalo et al., 2021), the lack of research on social well-being is surprising. Organisations' neglect of social well-being signals ignorance, affecting employees' job satisfaction and performance and retaining valued human resources (Gandy et al., 2018).

Social Well-being

Social well-being forms an integral part of one's health and concerns the degree to which individuals function well in their social lives, including work relationships and the ability to function well alongside colleagues (Keyes, 1998). According to Keyes (1998), social well-being encompasses five theoretically substantiated dimensions. In a workplace context, these can be translated to mean the following: "Social acceptance (the acceptance of the diversity of colleagues), actualisation (the belief in one's organisation, team and colleagues' potential), coherence (the belief that one's organisation and social relations at work are both meaningful and comprehensible), contribution (the belief that one's daily work tasks add value to one's team, department, and organisation) and integration (the belief that one experiences a sense of communal connectedness and belongingness)" (Redelinghuys et al., 2019, p. 2).

Previous research by Janik and Rothmann (2015) indicated that the acceptance of employees by their supervisors and co-workers had a significant influence on their work lives (Janik & Rothmann, 2015). On the one hand, where positive feelings and close social ties between colleagues exist, a sense of belonging and high levels of relatedness are promoted. Those employees are more likely to remain with the organisation and to be willing to go the extra mile to support and help their colleagues because of the social well-being experienced (Rothmann et al., 2019). On the other hand, when employees think that their work conditions are unfair, that their compensation for work is inadequate, or that they lack training or developmental and career advancement opportunities, their growth is stifled, and they will regress and languish as a result (Rothmann, 2014).

Job Satisfaction, Organisational Citizenship Behaviour, and Intention to Leave

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers to the degree to which individuals feel positive or negative towards the aspects of their jobs (Alegre et al., 2016; Cek & Eyupoglu, 2020). The work environment and relationships with co-workers affect job satisfaction, and the incapacity to maintain social relations is often associated with low job satisfaction (Moller & Rothmann, 2019). When employees perceive work as meaningful and their work conditions (such as their terms of remuneration and equal access to benefits) and treatment by their superiors as fair, they are more likely to feel connected to others and experience higher levels of job satisfaction (Redelinghuys et al., 2019). Work relationships such as with supervisors and colleagues and identification with the objectives and goals of the organisation are considered main aspects that can influence job satisfaction (Alegre et al., 2016).

Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964, as cited in Cek & Eyupoglu, 2020) supports the notion that employees who are satisfied with their jobs may feel inclined to reciprocate by demonstrating positive attitudes and behaviours towards others, which enhances co-operation and performance. The opposite may also be true: whereas a supportive work environment stimulates generosity within employees that propels businesses into prosperity, an unsatisfactory and unsupportive work environment may cause employees to feel psychologically unsafe, to experience less job satisfaction, and to become withdrawn, so that they are less likely to be psychologically available to others or to extend themselves beyond what is legally required (Cek & Eyupoglu, 2020; Janik & Rothmann, 2015).

Organisational citizenship behaviour

Organisational citizenship behaviour is a term used to describe constructive employee behaviours and actions that are not mandatory, but discretionary, behaviours performed voluntarily to support and benefit the organisation and employees (Cek & Eyupoglu, 2020; Thiruvankadam & Yabesh, 2017). According to Smith et al. (1983), organisational citizenship behaviour can be defined as a type of contextual performance. It refers to actions taken to help others in the organisation or demonstrate conscientious behaviour. Research has shown two types of organisational citizenship behaviour (Organ, 1988): a) altruism, or helping others, and b) generalised compliance, or following the rules and procedures of the organisation. organisational citizenship behaviour enhances effectiveness, efficiency, adaptability to changing circumstances, and organisational competitiveness (Cek & Eyupoglu, 2020). Help-oriented behaviours also increase commitment and prompt intentions of employees to stay (Thiruvankadam & Yabesh, 2017).

When employing a multidimensional measure of well-being, Redelinguys et al. (2019) found well-being to be significantly related to organisational citizenship behaviour. Mukherjee (2020) also demonstrated that subjectively experienced well-being was significantly related to citizenship behaviours when directed at the organisation, whereas workplace well-being was positively associated with citizenship behaviours directed towards teammates as well as the organisation as an entity.

Intention to leave

Intention to leave signals the attitudinal readiness to withdraw in favour of seeking alternative employment and is the best indicator of actual future turnover (Janse van Rensburg et al., 2017). When employees experience insufficient well-being, their performance will plummet, and they are likely to quit their jobs (Redelinguys et al., 2019). Harmonious relationships with supervisors and co-workers serve as a buffer against intention to leave, whereas meaningless work roles and unsupportive colleagues will increase employees' intention to leave (Janik & Rothmann, 2015; Janse van Rensburg et al., 2017).

Social well-being and individual and organisational outcomes

Govender (2017) cites several sources (e.g., Shmailan, 2016; Yadav & Aspal et al., 2014) that empirically confirmed that job satisfaction is directly and statistically significantly related to individual productivity and employee retention. According to Masilela (2018), low job

satisfaction reduces organisational citizenship behaviour, weakens social ties, and leads to turnover. Studies (Crede et al., 2007; Murphy et al., 2002; Zito et al., 2018) found associations between job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour and intention to leave. Therefore, it is critical to investigate which factors elevate job satisfaction and organisational citizenship behaviour, as failure to do so translates into more intentions to leave (Keim et al., 2014). De Neve et al. (2018) showed that social relationships had a significant and sizeable effect on job satisfaction. From 12 domains of workplace quality, social relationships explained the largest part of the variation in job satisfaction. Cek and Eyupoglu (2020) conclude that talent retention, job satisfaction, and willingness to demonstrate citizenship behaviour should be of primary concern to organisations because of the effects on productivity and competitiveness. Therefore, a more in-depth understanding of interrelationships among these variables is needed.

Positive relations with supervisors and social well-being of employees promote a sense of psychological safety, social connectivity, and higher levels of relatedness and belonging, which spill over into higher levels of job satisfaction, willingness to engage in organisational citizenship behaviour, and remain in the job (Janik & Rothmann, 2015; Redelinguys et al., 2019).

Based on the description of the research problem and the review of previous studies, the following hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Social well-being is positively associated with job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Social well-being is positively associated with organisational citizenship behaviour.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Social well-being is inversely related to intention to leave.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between social well-being and organisational citizenship behaviour

Hypothesis 5 (H5): Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between social well-being and intention to leave.

The uniqueness of this study is threefold: firstly, it was the first study to focus on the social well-being of a utility organisation in a developing country. Secondly, findings from this study can promote positive social change, as in-depth knowledge of social well-being and how it relates to important work outcomes will help eradicate harmful effects such as high intentions

to leave, which contribute to organisational inefficiency, profit losses, and substandard service delivery.

Method

Research design

A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was used in this study. This design was considered suitable, since there was limited empirical evidence to support the nature of potential relationships between the variables of interest, which necessitated an initial exploration of such possibilities (Spector, 2019).

Participants and setting

The participants included employees representing a cut across various designations and levels (senior management, middle management, junior management, and all skilled employees) who were permanently employed in the electricity industry of South Africa. A total of 403 eligible employees in the organisation, scattered throughout all nine provinces of South Africa, responded by completing the questionnaire in full. The most common age distribution ranked between 31 and 40 years; this meant that almost one quarter (38.7%) of the workforce were at the halfway mark of their professional lives. All employees who participated in the study had a minimum qualification level of Grade 12; more than half (51.6%) of the sample group had obtained a postgraduate qualification as their highest level of education and occupied various ranks (low, middle, and senior) in the organisation. Employees were seen to have had approximately a minimum of 11 years of service in the organisation.

Measuring instruments

A *biographical questionnaire* was developed by the researcher and was aimed at measuring demographics.

The *Social Well-being Scale* of Keyes (1998, 2002), as validated for a South African workplace context by Redelinghuys (2016), was used to assess social well-being in terms of five subdimensions: social integration (e.g., “During the past month, how often did you feel that

people in your organisation are basically good?”); social acceptance (e.g., “During the past month at work, how often did you feel that you really belong to your organisation?”); social contribution (e.g., “During the past month, how often did you feel that you had something important to contribute towards your organisation?”); social growth/actualisation (e.g., “During the past month at work, how often did you feel that your organisation is becoming a better place for people like you?”); and social comprehension/coherence (e.g., “During the past month, how often did you feel that the way your organisation works, makes sense to you?”). The items were scored on a six-point scale, ranging from 1 (*never*) to 6 (*every day*). Respondents had to answer questions regarding the frequency with which they had experienced specific symptoms of social well-being during the past month. In a South African study, the reliability coefficient of this scale was 0.89 (Rautenbach & Rothmann, 2017).

The *Job Satisfaction Scale* (JSS; Saks, 2006) was used to measure job satisfaction. Five items assessed individuals’ satisfaction with their jobs (e.g., “Most days I am enthusiastic about my work” and “I consider my job rather unpleasant”). Response options ranged from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 5 (*totally agree*). The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the JSS was found to be 0.84 (Diedericks, 2012).

Organisational citizenship behaviour was measured using an adapted version of the *Organisational Citizenship Behaviour Questionnaire* (OCBQ; Konovsky & Organ, 1996). There were six items in the questionnaire that were rated on a seven-point scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Factor analysis confirmed that the OCBQ consisted of two factors, namely, altruism (e.g., “I assist others with their duties”) and generalised compliance (e.g., “I defend the organisation when other employees criticise it”). Redelinghuys et al. (2019) reported that the internal consistency of the scale was acceptable.

The *Turnover Intention Scale* (TIS; Sjöberg & Sverke, 2000), used to measure intention to leave, comprised three items (e.g., “I am actively looking for other jobs”), with response options ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). A previous South African study recorded a reliability coefficient of 0.71 for this scale (Janse van Rensburg et al., 2017).

Research procedure

The researcher obtained permission from the highest level of authority in the organisation to conduct the study in the utility industry. Scientific and ethics clearance was secured from a reputable institution of higher education to conduct the study, and all ethical standards as prescribed by relevant legislation were always observed during the implementation phase. The questionnaire was presented in the form of an electronic booklet explaining the purpose of the study, emphasising confidentiality, and stipulating processes to follow in case further clarity was needed. Candidates were also made aware that participation was voluntary and that they were at liberty to withdraw at any stage of the research procedure. An independent service provider collated the data collection process. Once consent forms had been completed, access to the online survey was provided. The survey was constructed in such a manner that all items on any given page had to be completed before the participant could proceed to the next question. This removed all risk of the occurrence of missing values. A time frame of two weeks was allocated for completion of the online survey. The researcher obtained access to results by means of an anonymised format to analyse data accordingly.

Statistical analysis

Descriptive statistics were computed to describe the data and the sample characteristics. Point estimates of scale reliability were computed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) (see Raykov, 2009; Wang & Wang, 2020). A cut-off value for scale reliability of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994) was used.

The measurement and structural models in this study were tested by using latent variable modelling with Mplus 8.6 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2021). All variables were considered as continuous, and a robust Maximum Likelihood Method (MLM) was used as an estimator. The following indices were utilised to assess model fit: the chi-square statistic (the test of absolute model fit), standardised root mean square residual (SRMR), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and comparative fit index (CFI) (West et al., 2012). TLI and CFI values higher than 0.90 are acceptable, although values above 0.95 are preferred; RMSEA and SRMR values lower than 0.08 indicate a close fit between model and data (Wang & Wang, 2020). The Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and Bayesian

Information Criterion (BIC) were used in addition to other fit indices to assess the fit of competing models. The AIC is meaningful when estimating different models, with the lowest AIC indicating the best-fitting model. The BIC indicates model parsimony (Kline, 2010). Simple mediation analysis was performed using Mplus 8.6 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2021).

Results

Based on the results from Harman’s single-factor test, the fit statistics of loading the model onto one factor were as follows: $\chi^2 = 1756.65$, $df = 464$, CFI = 0.66, TLI = 0.63, SRMR = 0.11, and RMSEA = 0.11. The fit statistics showed that the model did not fit, which indicated that common method variance (CMV) was not a problem (Tehseen et al., 2017). If there had been model fit to the one factor, CMV could have posed a problem for the study.

Testing the Measurement Model

Four competing measurement models were tested by using confirmatory factor analysis with Mplus 8.6. Model 1 was constructed as theory proposes: Social well-being was constructed as a second-order latent factor consisting of five first-order latent variables, namely, social integration, social actualisation, social coherence, social acceptance, and social integration. Each of these five subdimensions was measured by three items. Five directly observed indicators measured job satisfaction. Six directly observed indicators were used to measure organisational citizenship behaviour in terms of two subdimensions, namely, altruism (three items) and generalised compliance (three items), with organisational citizenship behaviour being a second-order latent variable.

Results for the first model indicated that a perfect fit was not attainable ($\chi^2 = 740.209$, $p < 0.05$). However, due to severe dependence of the chi-square test of model fit on sample size, this test is not problem-free, and the literature recommends that it be considered in combination with additional fit indicators to obtain a more precise picture (Saris et al., 2009). When doing so, it was clear that the RMSEA (0.05, $p > 0.05$), the SRMR (0.07), and the CFI (0.93) and TLI (0.93) values pointed to an acceptable approximate fit of the model to the observed data. From an inspection of the standardised factor loadings of the items, it was, nevertheless, evident that the third item of the JSS (“Each day of work seems like it will never end”) did not load

significantly onto its underlying factor ($p = 0.922$). It is possible that the participants found the item too confusing. Consequently, this item was removed, and a revised model was tested.

All components of the revised model were specified as in Model 1, except for job satisfaction, Job satisfaction was only measured by four items due to the omission of the third item. Although the chi-square test value for Model 2 was still significant, all indicators of the revised model pointed to a more precise representation of the observed data, namely, CFI = 0.94, TLI = 0.93, SRMR = 0.07, and RMSEA = 0.05, $p > 0.51$, with all the items also loading significantly onto their respective constructs ($p = 0.000$).

Model 3 was constructed like Model 2, except for organisational citizenship behaviour, which was now measured as a first-order latent variable measured by six directly observed variables. Model 3 ($\chi^2 = 758.71$, $df = 339$; $p < 0.001$; CFI = 0.92; TLI = 0.92; RMSEA = 0.06, $p = 0.055$ [0.05, 0.06]; SRMR = 0.06) offered an acceptable, yet poorer, fit compared to Model 2.

A final competing measurement model was also tested (Model 4), where all constructs were measured as first-order latent variables only. This model rendered a notably poor fit to the data in several respects: CFI = 0.83, TLI = 0.82, SRMR = 0.08, and RMSEA = 0.081 [CI 0.08, 0.09], $p < 0.01$. Table 1 presents the fit statistics for the competing measurement models.

Table 1

Fit Statistics for the Competing Measurement Models

Model	χ^2	df	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR	AIC	BIC
1	740.21*	364	0.93	0.93	0.05	0.07	37025.47	37425.36
2	675.11*	337	0.93	0.94	0.05	0.07	35698.46	36086.35
3	758.71*	339	0.92	0.92	0.06	0.07	35796.93	36176.83
4	1264.27*	344	0.82	0.83	0.08	0.08	36400.47	36474.79

Note: * $p < 0.01$; χ^2 , chi-square statistic; df , degrees of freedom; TLI, Tucker-Lewis index; CFI, comparative fit index; RMSEA, root mean square error of approximation; SRMR, standardised root mean square residual; AIC, Akaike Information Criterion; BIC, Bayesian Information Criterion.

Comparison of the fit indices indicated that Model 2 fitted the data best relative to the competing models. The χ^2 value of the model was also significant ($p = 0.00$) – similar to those of the alternative models – and, thus, indicative of an imperfect fit. However, the overall fit

when all indices were considered indicated that this model met the requirements for an approximate fit. It provided a superior fit to the data compared to that of the alternative competing models. Furthermore, both the AIC (35698.46) and BIC (36086.35) values confirmed Model 2 to be the superior model. The standardised regression coefficients of this model were all statistically significant ($p < 0.01$), and all items loaded on their respective constructs as expected, with values ranging from -0.44 to 0.94. The standard errors for each of the standardised estimates were also small and suggested accuracy in estimating these values. Table 2 displays the descriptive statistics, reliabilities, and correlations of the scales.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics, Reliabilities, and Correlations of the Scales

Variable	Mean	SD	ω	1	2	3
1 Social well-being	3.79	1.23	0.92	-	-	-
2 Job satisfaction	3.20	0.70	0.66	0.56*++	-	-
3 Intention to leave	2.69	1.36	0.89	-0.33*+	-0.65*++	-
4 Organisational citizenship behaviour	5.61	1.05	0.87	0.43*+	0.46*+	-0.03

Note: * indicates $p < 0.01$. Parameters for the correlation coefficients were considered small effect when $r \geq 0.10$, medium effect when $r \geq 0.30$ (+), and large effect when $r \geq 0.50$ (++) (Cohen, 1988).

All correlations, except for the relationship between intention to leave and organisational citizenship behaviour, were statistically significant: $p < 0.01$. As expected, social well-being was positively associated with job satisfaction and organisational citizenship behaviour, but inversely related to turnover intent. Correlations of large effect were found between subscales social well-being and job satisfaction and between job satisfaction and intention to leave. Correlations of medium effect were found for the association between social well-being and intention to leave, social well-being and organisational citizenship behaviour, and organisational citizenship behaviour and job satisfaction.

Due to the significant correlations among several variables, including those of social well-being with job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and intention to leave, hierarchical regression analyses were performed to investigate the possibility that social well-being might have a significant directional association with the dependent variables (job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and intention to leave).

Testing the Structural Model

The structural model was tested based on the preferred measurement model (Model 2), and the structural regressions were added to the model in line with what was to be expected, based on the literature. The results also showed an acceptable fit to the data (TLI = 0.93; CFI = 0.94; RMSEA = 0.05; SRMR = 0.07).

Table 3 displays the standardised regression coefficients for the structural model and illustrates that all the regression relationships were significant at a level of p -values < 0.01 .

Table 3
Regression Coefficients

Regression relationships	β	SE	p
Social well-being → Job satisfaction	0.56	0.04	0.000**
Social well-being → Intention to leave	-0.33	0.05	0.000**
Social well-being → Organisational citizenship behaviour	0.43	0.05	0.000**

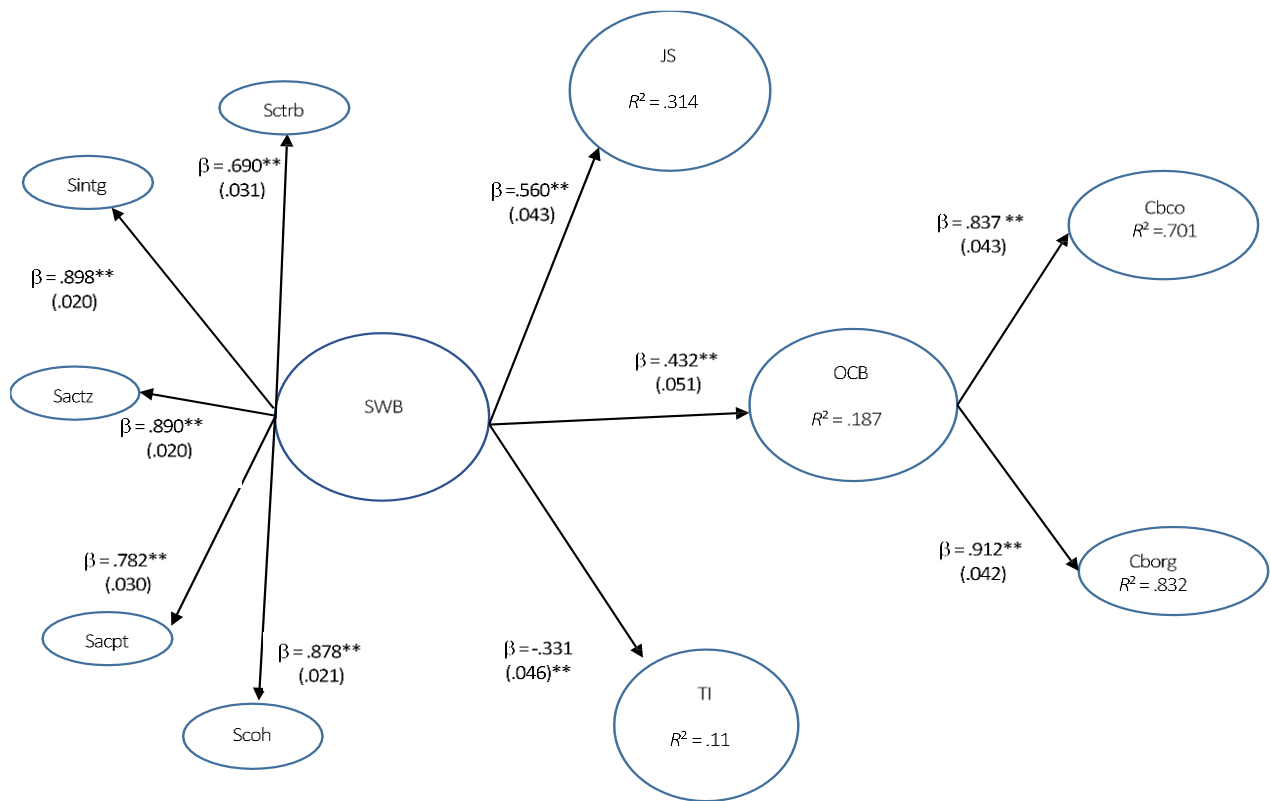
Note: ** All two-tailed p -values < 0.01 . SE, Standard error

As is evident from Table 3, the portion of the model focusing on the association between social well-being and job satisfaction showed a statistically significant standard path coefficient ($\beta = 0.56$; $p < 0.01$) and displayed the expected sign. Hypothesis 1 was supported. For the model portion focusing on organisational citizenship behaviour, the path coefficient of social well-being ($\beta = 0.43$; $p < 0.01$) was statistically significant and displayed the anticipated sign. Hypothesis 2 was supported. Furthermore, social well-being in relation to intention to leave also had a statistically significant standard path coefficient and displayed the expected sign ($\beta = -0.33$; $p < 0.01$). Hypothesis 3 was supported.

In terms of effect sizes (Cohen, 1988), the model displayed in Figure 1 accounted for the following percentages of variance explained (R^2): job satisfaction = 31.4% (medium effect), organisational citizenship behaviour = 18.7% (small effect), and intention to leave = 11.0% (small effect).

Figure 1

Standardised path coefficients for the best-fitting model (standard errors are in brackets)



Note: Sctrb, Social contribution; Sint, Social integration; Sactz, Social actualization; Sacpt, Social acceptance, Scoh, Social coherence; SWB, Social well-being; JS, Job satisfaction; OCB, Organisational citizenship behaviour; Cbco, Altruism; Cborg, Generalised compliance; TI, Intention to leave

To investigate the possibility that social well-being might also associate with organisational citizenship behaviour through job satisfaction as an underlying facilitative factor (H4), a simple mediation analysis was performed using Mplus 8.6. By using the Hayes (2018) procedure, the indirect effects of social well-being on organisational citizenship behaviour and intention to leave were evaluated. Bootstrapping was used to construct confidence intervals based on an empirically derived sampling distribution of the indirect effect. With 5000 bootstrap samples, 95% confidence intervals (CIs) based on bias-corrected estimates were constructed. The indirect association of social well-being with organisational citizenship behaviour through job satisfaction was found to be significant: ($\beta = 0.11, p < 0.01 [0.05, 0.21]$). Therefore, Hypothesis 4, indicating that job satisfaction mediated the association between social well-being and organisational citizenship behaviour, was accepted. Furthermore, the indirect association of social well-being with intention to leave through job satisfaction was found to be significant (β

= -0.42, $p < 0.01$ [-0.63, -0.26]). Therefore, Hypothesis 5, indicating that job satisfaction mediated the association between social well-being and intention to leave, was accepted.

Discussion

Instilling social well-being through improved levels of job satisfaction and organisational citizenship behaviour and lower intention to leave should form part of business priorities to promote growth beyond economic understanding; companies rarely realise the importance of social well-being in relation to these facets (Munzel et al., 2018).

This study investigated how social well-being associated with important individual and organisational work outcomes, namely, job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and intention to leave. The findings suggested that statistically significant associations existed between social well-being and job satisfaction (Hypothesis 1), organisational citizenship behaviour (Hypothesis 2), and intention to leave (Hypothesis 3). Furthermore, social well-being was found to be indirectly related to organisational citizenship behaviour via job satisfaction (Hypothesis 4).

The positive association between social well-being and job satisfaction was in line with recent studies by Alegre et al. (2016) and Cek and Eyupoglu (2020) that were conducted in settings other than the utility industry. As the study showed that social well-being promoted job satisfaction in a utility organisation as well, the findings added to the existing body of knowledge. In line with Schützenberger (2016), who emphasises the importance of job satisfaction for economically advanced and developing countries alike, the study illustrated the importance of the association between social well-being and job satisfaction in an organisation in a developing country context, which extended illustrations of the observed association between social well-being and job satisfaction beyond industry, profession, and country-specific contexts.

Confirmation of the first hypothesis (H1) implied that interventions intended to promote job satisfaction ought to strengthen social support networks, for increased social well-being would yield positive results for job satisfaction (e.g., increased participative behaviour/employees having more creative problem-solving ideas); this can be done, for instance, by offering employees productive spaces to build interpersonal relationships (Dutton & Ragins, 2007).

From a financial perspective, encouraging job satisfaction through employee relations as embedded in social well-being is imperative because organisations make money through retention of happy and satisfied employees, which has a direct impact on organisational growth/revenue generation.

The second hypothesis focused on the link between social well-being and organisational citizenship behaviour. The finding in this regard also confirmed a positive association and provided further support for previous research that demonstrated that organisational citizenship behaviour was heightened through social well-being (Kumar et al., 2016; Masilela, 2018; Rastogi & Garg, 2011). The findings indicated that improved social ties and positive social exchanges led to multiplication of organisational citizenship behaviour; the more satisfied employees were with their work, the more likely it was that they would be inclined to demonstrate organisational citizenship behaviour – and this behaviour would be directed towards co-workers as well as towards the organisation (Kumar et al., 2016; Rastogi & Garg, 2011).

The present findings suggested that organisations ought to explore methods of increasing social well-being to promote organisational citizenship behaviour as prompted by social ties (Kumar et al., 2016). Ways to do this can include incorporating employee suggestions more; this will free superiors to spend more time on strategic initiatives that will improve organisational directives and allow workers to feel appreciated (Attaran et al., 2019). Organisations should also look into motivating organisational citizenship behaviour through non-monetary interventions (e.g., encouraging further studies/on-the-job training/acting in higher positions, etc.), since research has shown that employees are not only fuelled by money (Allen et al., 2016). Organisations can increase organisational citizenship behaviour by acknowledging employee religious customs as one means of doing so. This will also signal that organisations recognise that employees have a deeper life nourished by meaningful work over and above salary reasons, which will foster a sense of togetherness, which aligns organisational values (Hudson, 2014).

The third hypothesis focused on the relationship between social well-being and intention to leave, revealed that where high social well-being existed, a decrease in intention to leave was observed. This provided further evidence that the work environment did indeed play an important role in promoting employee social well-being and in retaining employees. This

finding supported previous research showing a link between social unwellness and voluntary turnover (Janse van Rensburg et al., 2017; Redelinguys et al., 2019). In addition, it strengthened previous research claiming that reasons for turnover extended beyond a lack of monetary incentives, that traditional turnover models concentrated on why employees left, but did not consider the aspect of social well-being, and that such perspectives were too narrow to provide a holistic view of why employees left (Allen et al., 2016).

The fourth hypothesis of this study was to test whether the relation of social well-being with organisational citizenship behaviour was mediated by job satisfaction. This study showed that job satisfaction and organisational citizenship behaviour were associated with social well-being. Furthermore, the effect of social well-being on organisational citizenship behaviour seems to be enhanced by the presence of a high level of job satisfaction. The findings further confirm the conclusions of Isen and Baron (1991) that a high level of job satisfaction evokes positive moods, which, in turn, increase organisational citizenship behaviour. Job satisfaction also pointed towards a catalyst for organisational citizenship behaviour.

The final hypothesis of the study focused on job satisfaction as a mediator of the relationship between social well-being and intention to leave. Our findings showed that when social well-being is strengthened, intentions to leave the organisation are likely to decrease. The simultaneous presence of higher levels of job satisfaction would serve as an underlying mechanism through which the inverse effect of social well-being on turnover intention would be amplified. This finding supported a previous study by Gandy et al. (2018) that underlined the importance of both social relations and job satisfaction for retaining valued employees and extended the existing knowledge base. As far as we are aware, it was the first time that the facilitative role of job satisfaction in the association between social well-being and turnover intention was tested within a developing country context.

The findings of this study confirm previous research advocating that a more integrated approach to promote well-being, including its social aspects, ought to be adopted that would require employee well-being to be at the centre of company agendas (De Simone, 2014; Litchfield et al., 2016). It is, thus, imperative that the utility industry take note of the associations found between social well-being, job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and intention to leave, since implementing ways to increase employee social well-being to retain human capital will be in the best interests of the industry. This could be

beneficial to South African industries that already have a social advantage in the form of Ubuntu, and leveraging existing social structures could catapult organisations into unlimited horizons when it comes to retaining employees.

Regarding the effects of social well-being on job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and intention to leave, the results showed that the effect size for job satisfaction was almost double the size for organisational citizenship behaviour and three times the size for intention to leave. Therefore, it seemed that social well-being had a bigger effect on employees' job satisfaction than on organisational citizenship behaviour and intention to leave. This means that when the organisation supports social well-being, benefits reaped will be evident in terms of improved employee well-being and in more organisational citizenship behaviour and decreased intention to leave; the most striking benefits will, however, be earned in terms of improved job satisfaction outcomes. The utility industry can employ indicators of social well-being (such as the measure employed by this study) to establish a baseline for establishing existing employee social well-being levels and set targets for improving social well-being that human resources practitioners can monitor to devise strategic plans. Social well-being can also be fostered by encouraging initiatives to be published in a monthly newsletter/wellness index that can monitor social well-being among workers and enrich the value of human capital (Sinobuntu), which forms an important part of the utility industry.

The findings of this study can be understood in more specific terms by considering the specific components of social well-being in more detail. Social integration (feeling part of a community): this has a positive effect on an employee's psychological state in that it fosters a sense of belonging and well-being, which is nurtured through the employee's relationship with his or her work society/community. Employees feel that they form part of an organisation when they have something in common with other workers in the same environment; such employees stay longer and are less inclined to exit the organisation (Keyes, 1998). According to Geue (2018), 77% of workers deem workplace friendship to be a priority. Methods such as one-on-one engagement, incorporating remote workers into teams, celebrating milestones, and encouraging employee input can increase belongingness among disheartened utility industry workers, and this dynamic compels managers to look into methods to enrich organisational relations.

Social acceptance (accepting others): employees who display high social acceptance work together and rely heavily on one another for support; it eases the burden of uncertainty, leading to less turnover (Geue, 2018). Individuals absorbed into an organisation become familiar with organisational culture through social acceptance – a process encouraged by social inclusion through fair recruitment/promotional opportunities. The workplace consists of people from various backgrounds, and organisations should uncover what promotes social inclusion amid diversity; this will improve organisational cohesion, interaction, and teamwork (Joubert, 2017).

Social coherence (understanding the social world): individuals who embrace opportunities and challenges hold companies in high regard and are less likely to resign from an organisation (Struwig et al., 2013). COVID-19 has forced organisations to increase efforts to strengthen citizenship. This can be done through employee engagement sessions (online sessions), 10-minute interaction sessions before electronic meetings, and planning employee-of-the-month virtual award ceremonies to recognise good work, which will increase employee social well-being (Center for Collegiate Mental Health, 2017). In addition, organisations can implement exploratory analysis where questions are incorporated to provide the company with an indication of the level of social cohesion experienced among workers. This will enable an organisation to address identified pitfalls (Struwig et al., 2013).

Social actualisation (an individual's growth within society): employees perceive employers as caring about them once their suggestions have been incorporated. This allows employees to grow, which improves company efficiency. Excessive turnover rates expose organisational defects; money is often used as a band-aid, leaving the real reasons for turnover unresolved. Excessive intention to leave rates are not always negative, as they provide employees with a platform for coming up with innovations to curb intention to leave; this participation contributes to a growth in employee morale and decreased intentions to leave (Songcaka, 2015).

Social contribution (an individual's sense of contributing to society): people provide organisations with insight to formulate better organisational strategies. Considering employee contribution results in employees working harder when efforts are valued and becoming more dedicated to the company. Employees' intrinsic rewards from feeling valued are greater than financial compensation and are more likely to make them stay in the organisation (Mukherjee, 2020).

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Although the employment of a cross-sectional study was useful for exploring initial relations between constructs in a novel context such as the utility industry (which is hampered by financial constraints) in a cost-effective manner (Spector, 2019), the design made it difficult to draw conclusions regarding regression analysis based on the impact of social well-being. Future studies could follow up through longitudinal research to verify causal relations and gain a wider understanding that could refine recommendations for interventions.

The self-reported data might have been contaminated by common method variance (CMV). This possibility is acknowledged but needs to be seen in perspective. Spector (2019), for example, questions the usefulness of CMV testing for several reasons, including the problem that none of the existing range of statistical techniques can eliminate the possibility of CMV beyond any doubt, and also acknowledges that the use of self-reported questionnaires is still considered ideal to tap into employees' personal thoughts, feelings, and subjective assessment of their own experiences despite the risk of encountering CMV in the process (Spector, 2019). Finally, this study only focused on study participants from a utility organisation, and findings cannot be generalised to other contexts without expanding the scope.

Conclusion

Given the current state of the world of work, ensuring worker well-being and retaining human capital in the utility industry should be the top priority. Not only do workers provide an essential service; they are also at the forefront in driving South Africa's economy. The findings from this study underlined the importance of social well-being and its role in enhancing job satisfaction and organisational citizenship behaviour and in reducing employee turnover. This means that, in contrast to throwing money at problems as a quick-fix attempt, businesses have to reinvent retention strategies by taking a closer look at how enhancing the social well-being of employees can be used to attract and keep the best employees.

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Chapter 4

Manuscript 3

Social well-being profiles: Associations with trust in managers and colleagues, job satisfaction, and intention to leave

Abstract

This study aimed to determine latent profiles of social well-being using a person-centred approach and to investigate differences between the profiles in terms of trust in managers and colleagues, job satisfaction, intention to leave, and demographic variables (age, job categories, and service years). Permanently employed individuals of a South African utility organisation participated in the study ($N = 403$). The Social Well-being Scale, Workplace Trust Survey, Job Satisfaction Scale, and Turnover Intention Scale were administered. Three profiles of social well-being were identified, namely, the socially well, socially withdrawn, and superficially socially well profiles. The first two profiles demonstrated either relatively high or relatively low scores on five dimensions of social well-being (contribution, integration, acceptance, actualisation, and coherence). The superficially socially well profile showed above-average social contribution and integration, but below-average social acceptance, actualisation, and coherence. The socially well profile was associated with trust in managers and colleagues, job satisfaction, and low intention to leave. The opposite patterns were found for the socially withdrawn profile. Two demographic variables, namely, age and service years, were associated with profile membership. The associations between age, job satisfaction, and intention to leave were more significant in specific social well-being profiles.

Keywords: social well-being, trust, job satisfaction, intention to leave, person-centred analysis, latent profile analysis

Introduction

Individuals' place of work has a significant effect on their well-being (Lovejoy et al., 2021) because it provides access to economic status, benefits, and physical and social environments that shape health-related exposures. Although work is an important social determinant of well-being, methods of pursuing employee well-being are limited. Furthermore, interventions aimed at improving employee well-being focus on wellness programmes, which use workplaces as venues for improving employee behaviour (Lovejoy et al., 2021). However, these programmes fail to recognise the fundamental role of the work environment in shaping employee well-being (Fox et al., 2021; Rongen et al., 2013). Such programmes are often founded in the notion that employees can and should manage their well-being through participation in personal wellness activities, suggesting that employee (un)well-being is a self-inflicted condition (Fox et al., 2021).

According to Lovejoy et al. (2021), the social organisation of work influences employee well-being. However, the social arrangements in societies have failed to keep up with economic, political, technological, and cultural changes, which deprive individuals of the social lives they need to survive. Consequently, feelings of loss and anomie become overwhelming. Various work resources, not only social support, flow through social networks (Loveday et al., 2021). Moreover, interdependence between employees is becoming increasingly common. Additionally, research has shown that interpersonal collaboration has a greater effect on work engagement than a sense of purpose (Cross et al., 2020).

Based on the above-mentioned arguments, the social well-being of individuals is essential for them to thrive at work. Social well-being refers to the evaluation of one's circumstances and functions in an organisation. Other dimensions of well-being that have frequently been studied are emotional well-being (i.e., the accumulation of positive feelings over negative ones) and psychological functioning (i.e., perceived self-attributes). Individuals remain embedded in social structures, organisations, and communities despite various models emphasising the importance of the emotional and psychological aspects of well-being. Therefore, it is essential that social scientists also study their social well-being (Keyes, 1998).

According to Clifton and Harter (2021), having a best friend at work makes employees more productive and more effective. However, only three out of 10 employees reported having a best

friend at work. Organisations that double the percentage of their employees who have a best friend at work will be able to increase their customer ratings, reduce safety incidents, and increase profits by 10%. In addition, chronic loneliness and social isolation are detrimental to an individual's physical and mental health (Clifton & Harter, 2021). Unfortunately, few studies have focused on the social aspect of employees' well-being, and many have focused only on the physical and emotional dimensions (Cañibano, 2013).

Studies investigating the effects of social well-being at work have utilised a variable-centred approach (see Hennicks et al., in press) rather than a person-centred approach. Variable-centred studies have been conducted regarding the association between trust, social well-being, job satisfaction, and intention to leave. However, no studies were found that focused on different social well-being profiles in relation to variables such as trust, job satisfaction, and intention to leave.

Social Well-being in the Workplace

Dimensions of social well-being

Keyes (1998) defines social well-being as a combination of five dimensions: social integration, social acceptance, social coherence, social contribution, and social actualisation. The concept of social integration refers to evaluating the quality of one's relationship with an organisation. People function better when they feel like they belong to an organisation. Thus, integration consists of people feeling a sense of belonging to their organisation and having something in common with the individuals who constitute their social reality. According to Keyes (1998), social integration draws on conceptions of social cohesion (Durkheim, 1951) and social isolation (Seeman, 1991). Through social co-ordination, individuals can express their affinity for society and their connection to each other (Durkheim, 1951). Conversely, the absence of meaningful, supportive relationships leads to social isolation (Seeman, 1991).

Social contribution can be defined as employees' appraisals of their social value (Keyes, 1998; Rothmann, 2013). The belief that one is a vital member of the organization and has something valuable to offer is an aspect of social contribution. In addition, social contribution indicates whether and to what extent people feel that what they do in the world is valued by their organisation and contributes to the common good (Prillentsky & Prillentsky, 2021). In contrast, alienation refers to detachment and isolation. Individuals who exhibit social

acceptance trust others, believe they can be kind, and think they can be industrious. Socially accepting individuals have a positive view of humans and are comfortable around them.

Social actualisation concerns the evaluation of the potential and the trajectory of society. It entails perceiving that the organisation is growing and developing, which realises its members' social potential (Keyes, 1998; Rothmann, 2013). It reflects employees' hopefulness about the condition and future of the organisation and their recognition of its potential. Individuals who are socially well can envision that they, and people like them, are potential beneficiaries of social growth. Social coherence refers to the perception of quality, organisation, and operation of social phenomena (Keyes, 1998; Rothmann, 2013). When people are socially well, they care about the kind of world in which they live. They feel that they can understand what is happening around them and find meaning in how the organisation functions.

Latent profiles of social well-being

The study of social well-being can be approached using variable- and person-centred approaches. In the past, social well-being was studied using a variable-centred approach. Variable-centred analyses examine the average relationships among variables as they occur in specific samples (Caesens et al., 2020; Meyer & Morin, 2016; Wu et al., 2017). This method does not take into account the possibility that relations among variables differ between subpopulations (e.g., different latent profiles of social well-being). Small subpopulations with extreme scores can affect results from variable-centred models. Furthermore, in variable-centred approaches, testing for interaction effects does not solve the problem of subpopulations within a sample, since such tests assume that the interaction effects will apply equally to everyone (Caesens et al., 2020).

The assumption of heterogeneous populations within subgroups of samples is fundamental to person-centred approaches (Caesens et al., 2020; Ciarrochi et al., 2017). When using person-centred approaches (for example, latent profile analyses), complex relationships among variables can be identified that would not be detected if the data were collected using a variable-centred approach. Compensatory and mutually reinforcing effects can arise from different aspects of social well-being. Research has not yet explored the combined effects of different dimensions of social well-being. The patterns that characterise the combination of different well-being dimensions and their effects are unknown.

No studies were found that used latent profile analysis to investigate social well-being from a person-centred perspective. Latent profile analysis assumes that people can be classified according to the closeness of relationships between the dimensions with varying degrees of probability that have different profiles (Spurk et al., 2020). The approach makes it possible to identify social well-being profiles for a diverse group of employees in an organisation (Fernandez et al., 2020). This type of research method can be used to identify dimension-specific aspects within a sample, which is beneficial for understanding how employees value varying levels and degrees of social well-being (Stanley et al., 2017). Dissecting and understanding how employees respond to social well-being dimensions will allow organisations to personalise interventions to individuals in specific profiles. Utilising a person-centred approach could unmask other aspects that would be unidentifiable through a variable-centred approach (Marsh et al., 2009).

Trust, Job Satisfaction, Intention to Leave, and Social Well-being Profiles

Social support is a significant determinant of employee functioning, with far-reaching consequences that may even extend beyond the individual level of performance to affect the functioning of the entire organisation (Caesens et al., 2020).

The development of societal norms dictates the extent of social relations formed. This formation is dependent on trust, which fertilises relationships, and is more inclined to develop among workers who share social identities (Helliwell & Wang, 2011); trust is needed to build a successful organisation. Thus, trust is a crucial component to govern social relations and social exchange, as high-trusting environments produce more resilient employees (Helliwell et al., 2016; Schoorman et al., 2007); however, protests, civil unrest, corruption, and retrenchments increase scepticism, weigh down trust deficits, and erode social relations (Crosby, 2016).

Positive relations facilitate improved social well-being levels, which lead to improved individual, team, and organisational outcomes (Gable & Bromberg et al., 2018). Workplace trust relationships can play an important role in the facilitation of employee wellness, since previous research has acknowledged that trust drives the development of effective relations and has a fundamental influence on social environments in organisations (Spagnolo, 1999). Previous research has also shown that trust regulates an employee's attitude towards

developing social relations/social connectivity, drives further trust, and strengthens social ties (Karatepe et al., 2020; Koo et al., 2019).

Furthermore, trust has become increasingly critical, as organisations tend to face increasing uncertainty brought on by corruption, political unrest, retrenchments, and questionable decision-making (Bachmann & Zaheer, 2006; Cook et al., 2009; Kramer & Cook, 2006). The magnitude of the impact of trust on wellness has been dangerously undermined, as the strength of social ties relies on trust (Center for Public Leadership, 2009; Edelman & Associates, 2009; Gambetta & Hamill, 2005). It can, thus, be said that trust violation distorts social equilibrium, which is harmful to work relationships (Ren & Gray, 2009).

Restoring and enhancing trust in organisations rely on creating a conducive work environment that stimulates the development of positive relations among workers. Building trust starts as early as integrating new/younger employees into the organisation; here, social actualisation is key, as feelings of identification and belonging fuel the need to build relations with colleagues through the socialisation process, and improved trust starts developing (Allen & Shanock, 2013; Williams, 2001). The level of trust in colleagues differs from the level of trust in managers, based on hierarchical power (Schoorman et al., 2007).

Trust between co-workers is critical, as productivity increases especially when employees trust their colleagues. Trust facilitates social integration through psychological safety and contributes to daily operational functioning because employees support, rely, and depend on one another for the attainment of set organisational goals and have faith in what is promised versus actions (Ferres et al., 2004; Ho & Astakhova, 2018; May et al., 2004). These factors do not yield financial benefits, but yield greater social rewards beneficial to employee functioning and well-being (Van Dyne et al., 1994).

Trust in managers is equally important, as it allows employees to open up and share sensitive information crucial for business survival. It also allows employees to openly express how they feel about their work situation, which leads to assurance and increased feelings of trust (Hassan & Ahmed, 2011). Hsieh and Wang (2015) confirmed that trust in managers was linked to positive organisational outcomes. Employees need to return increases in authentic behaviour, which can provide a safe space for trust to develop.

Social relationships with managers and co-workers have been shown to “pay off” in the form of positive work outcomes. These outcomes can be leveraged further by incorporating the role of trust within the workspace; this highlights the importance of social exchange, rooted in the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which states that employees reciprocate that which they receive. However, despite clear-cut benefits stemming from trust, findings have indicated that more research is needed to understand social well-being and its impact on trusting relations because, once trust has been cultivated, it can have limitless advantages for both employer and employee. Employees who experience poor social relations may languish by feeling “stuck” and obligated to be in a relationship with superiors. In contrast, good relations between co-workers and managers build trust, which signifies that employees have good connections with individuals in the organisation for which they work (Karatepe, 2012).

Recent years have seen the interest in trust within organisations gaining momentum. However, a theoretical fuzziness still exists regarding trust and its impact on social relations, and existing knowledge of this subject remains limited (Li, 2007). Previous research has conceptualised trust by focusing extensively on horizontal trust relationships such as trust in the organisation or colleagues, while little to no attention has been given to the impact of trust on social well-being (Yakovleva et al., 2010). In fact, much of the trust literature has failed to examine trust from a social well-being perspective. The scarcity of literature addressing associations between workplace trust relationships and social well-being indicated that this study was of great importance, as the magnitude of the link between social well-being and its impact on trust needed to be established.

Employees who reside in a positive, supportive workspace trust their organisation and develop emotional attachment and a sense of commitment to the organisation, evident through increased job satisfaction (Ho & Astakhova, 2018; Karatepe, 2012). Employees who experience this feel indebted to the organisation and are less likely to exit the organisation because they tend to align future plans and career goals, as they fear losing out on non-monetary benefits such as social support structures, training, and development (Ampofo, 2020).

Positive workplace relations boost employees’ social well-being, which, in turn, promotes in-role and innovative job performance (Khoreva & Welchter, 2020); unsatisfactory relationships with colleagues and with supervisors, in particular, affect employees’ intention to leave an organisation (Janik & Rothmann, 2015). Intention to leave, signifying a deliberate wish to leave

the organisation in the foreseeable future, is the final stage of a withdrawal cognition process that represents an accurate predictor of actual turnover, even more so than affective indicators such as job satisfaction (Tuzun & Kalemci, 2012). A latent profile analysis study by Caesens et al. (2020) supported the notion that employees who experienced high levels of social support from the organisation, their managers, and their colleagues were more inclined to feel obligated to reciprocate with positive work attitudes and behaviours, whereas those who were socially isolated were clearly associated with more undesirable work attitudes and behaviours such as lower levels of job satisfaction, performance, and commitment, and higher levels of emotional exhaustion and absenteeism. Furthermore, a more recent longitudinal latent profile analysis study by Caesens et al. (2021) confirmed that different sources of support – whether it was received from the organisation, a supervisor, or a colleague – might all have distinct effects on employees' well-being and their functioning and that these associations appeared to be consistent over time.

Effects of demographic variables

It seems likely that employees of different ages, job categories, and service years may differ in their levels of social well-being. Younger employees may value social integration, as being accepted by an already established social group may be difficult. Social values are embedded in societal norms, and this embedding influences employee cognitive/social structures within a group residing in a society, team, or organisation (Peterson & Barreto, 2014). According to Keyes and Shapiro (2004), occupational status is a very strong predictor of social well-being; in their study, employees with low occupational status were found to have the lowest levels of overall social well-being.

In their longitudinal study of latent profiles concerning demographics in relation to social support profiles, Caesens et al. (2021) acknowledged previous research such as that by Ng and Feldman (2010) that linked tenure and age and lower levels of psychological difficulty, but did not find these aspects to be significant predictors of profile membership in their own study. Keyes (1998) pointed towards social contribution and social integration as two specific aspects of social well-being that were more likely to increase with age, and subsequent findings confirmed that social coherence was the only aspect of social well-being that decreased with age. Keyes (1998), furthermore, found that social well-being varied across ages and concluded that the relationship between age and social well-being across ages was not linear, but rather more nuanced. In a study focusing on a motor manufacturing organisation in South Africa, De

Jager et al. (2014) did not find indications of significant differences between overall social well-being across various age groups, but they did find significant differences between employees who were older than 50 compared to those in the 20 to 30 age brackets regarding their sense of belonging and social value.

Study Aim

Past studies have shown the negative impact of social isolation on various individual and organisational outcomes (Courtin & Knapp, 2017). No study has aimed to address social well-being and how trust expedites its development in relation to the organisational outcomes mentioned by Diedericks and Rothmann (2014) through an evidence-based approach. Therefore, a research gap was evident, based on a limited amount of knowledge pertaining to social well-being and its impact on organisational outcomes.

In light of the above, this study focused on the social well-being of individuals employed by a major utility organisation in South Africa. Given the diversity of the staff complement of the organisation, this study challenged individual homogeneity of social well-being. The study aimed to uncover how individuals from different job categories, age groups, and service years differed in terms of their social well-being and to explore how these differences might be associated with trust in the supervisor and trust in co-workers as well as job satisfaction and intention to leave. By estimating social well-being profiles, we facilitated a more in-depth understanding of this construct and how it was configured within individuals, as well as among individuals, in the state parastatal of interest. Moreover, we used additional work-related variables in the form of two different foci of trust and of selected demographic variables to explain profile membership. In short, the originality of this research stemmed from methodically identifying and comparing specific subgroups of employees both in terms of their individual social well-being configurations and how these patterns related to trust relationships at work and complexities as influenced by a demographically diverse workforce composition.

Method

Research Design

The research approach followed was a quantitative cross-sectional study design. This method

afforded every participant in the research group an equal opportunity to influence the study.

Participants

Consenting participants ($N = 403$) from various designation levels who were permanently employed in the utility industry in South Africa across various provinces were utilised and responded by fully completing an online questionnaire. The total sample group comprised Indian (5.2%), coloured (9.7%), black (60.8%), white (23.6%), and other (0.7%). Employees who contributed to the study had a minimum qualification level of Grade 12. A postgraduate qualification ranked as the highest level of qualification, since 51.6% of participants had obtained that level of education and occupied low, middle, or senior positions in the industry. Most employees had dedicated a minimum of 11 years of service, on average, to the organisation.

Measuring Instruments

A biographical questionnaire was developed by the researcher and was aimed at measuring demographics.

The *Social Well-being Scale* (SWBS, Keyes, 1998, 2002), adapted for a South African workplace context by Rautenbach (2015) and further extended by Redelinghuys (2016), was used to assess social well-being in terms of five subdimensions: social integration (e.g., “During the past month, how often did you feel that people in your organisation are basically good?”); social acceptance (e.g., “During the past month at work, how often did you feel that you really belong to your organisation?”); social contribution (e.g., “During the past month, how often did you feel that you had something important to contribute towards your organisation?”); social actualisation (e.g., “During the past month at work, how often did you feel that your organisation is becoming a better place for people like you?”); and social coherence (e.g., “During the past month, how often did you feel that the way your organisation works, makes sense to you?”). The items were scored on a six-point scale, ranging from 1 (*never*) to 6 (*every day*). Respondents had to answer questions regarding the frequency with which they had experienced specific symptoms of social well-being during the past month. In a South African study, the reliability coefficient of the SWBS as a unidimensional scale was 0.89 (Rautenbach, 2015).

Two subscales of the *Workplace Trust Survey* (WTS; Ferres, 2003), namely, trust in managers and trust in colleagues, were used for the purposes of this study. The two subscales consisted of 12 items each and used a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Example items were “I feel that my supervisor listens to what I have to say”, “I feel that my supervisor is available when needed”, and “I feel that my supervisor keeps personal discussions confidential”. Previous studies yielded Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficients of between 0.90 and 0.97 in South African and Australian contexts (Ferres, 2003).

The *Job Satisfaction Scale* (JSS; Saks, 2006) was used to measure job satisfaction. Five items measured how satisfied individuals were with their jobs (e.g., “Most days I am enthusiastic about my work” and “I consider my job rather unpleasant”). Response options ranged from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 5 (*totally agree*). The JSS had a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.84 (Saks, 2006).

The *Turnover Intention Scale* (TIS; Sjöberg & Sverke, 2000), used to measure intention to leave, comprised three items (e.g., “I am actively looking for other jobs”), with response options ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). A study in South Africa reported a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.79 for the scale (Diedericks, 2012).

Research Procedure

The researcher obtained permission from the highest level of authority in the organisation to conduct the study in the utility industry. The North-West University of South Africa granted ethics clearance (NWU-00745-20-A4), and all ethical standards as prescribed by relevant legislation were adhered to during the study. The questionnaire was presented in the form of an electronic booklet explaining the purpose of the study, emphasising confidentiality, and specifying processes to follow in case further clarity was needed. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any given point in time pertaining to the research procedure. An independent service provider gathered, monitored, and checked the data collection process. Only once consent had been granted via permission forms were participants able to access and participate in the online survey provided. Participants had to complete all items on a specific page before being able to proceed to the next question.

This approach eliminated all the risk associated with instances of missing values. A period of nearly two weeks was allocated for the completion of the online survey. The researcher obtained access to results using an anonymised format to analyse data accordingly.

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the data. Relationships between the variables were identified by using Pearson correlation coefficients. This study made use of omega coefficients (as opposed to alpha coefficients) as indicators of scale reliability (Raykov, 2009; Wang & Wang, 2020). To determine scale reliability, a cut-off value of 0.70 was used (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Measurement models were only used for social well-being according to item-level analysis. SPSS 26.0 (IBM Corp., 2020) and Mplus 8.6 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2021; Wang & Wang, 2020), as well as the maximum likelihood parameter (MLR) estimator in Mplus, were used to prepare the data for analysis in this study.

Latent profile analyses were performed to identify groups within different categories that affected social well-being (Orpinas et al., 2015). Through this research approach, groups of people were identified who have characteristics in common, but differ from others (Muthén & Muthén, 2007). The number of latent groups is not known a priori in exploratory applications of latent profile analysis (Orpinas et al., 2015). Thus, this study compared models with increasing numbers of latent groups to find an appropriate model, resulting in the number of profiles that best fitted the data. There was no single criterion that determined the best solution. Analyses of models were instead based on theory, interpretability, and statistical criteria (Marsh et al., 2009). When choosing the model to fit these data, parsimony (i.e., allowing for data complexity with the fewest latent classes) was a priority (Orpinas et al., 2015).

The lowest Bayesian information criterion (BIC), Akaike information criterion (AIC), and sample-size adjusted BIC (ABIC) values were used to compare the different profiles (Celeux & Soromenho, 1996; Marsh et al., 2009; Tein et al., 2013). The Vuong-Lo-Mendell-Rubin likelihood ratio test, the Lo-Mendel-Rubin (LMR LR) test, the adjusted LMR LR (ALMR) test, and the bootstrapped likelihood ratio test (BLRT; Nylund et al., 2007; Wang & Wang, 2020) were used to test the number of profiles. Effective use of latent profile analysis is dependent on the consideration of average latent class probabilities for individuals assigned to each class (Geiser, 2010). Values larger than 0.80 indicate a good fit. Finally, entropy was used to

determine the quality of the classification of the latent profile analysis, with values closer to 1 indicating a good classification of the profiles (Pastor et al., 2007).

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to test the social well-being of the measurement models, as well as individual and organisational outcomes, in this study. Fit indices such as the chi-square statistic, standardised root mean residual (SRMR), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and comparative fit index (CFI) were used to assess model fit.

The BCH method was used to avoid shifts in latent profiling when demographic variables and distal variables were linked to latent profiles (Wang & Wang, 2020). As the BCH method uses weighted multiple-group analysis, the groups correspond to the latent profiles, and therefore no class shift is possible because the classes are already known.

Results

Latent Profile Analysis

Using confirmatory factor analysis, a measurement model consisting of social contribution (three items), social integration (three items), social actualisation (three items), social acceptance (three items), and social coherence (three items) was tested. The five variables were allowed to correlate. The CFA showed acceptable fit: $\chi^2 = 206.71$ ($df = 80$), $p < 0.01$; RMSEA = 0.06 (0.05, 0.07, $p = 0.02$); CFI = 0.95; TLI = 0.94; SRMR = 0.04.

Inspecting the loadings and cross-loadings, the overall size of the factor loadings of the items on their target factors was acceptable (social contribution: $\lambda = 0.69$ to 0.82 ; mean = 0.77 ; social integration: $\lambda = 0.72$ to 0.78 ; mean = 0.76 ; social actualisation: $\lambda = 0.78$ to 0.85 ; mean = 0.82 ; social acceptance: $\lambda = 0.71$ to 0.90 ; mean = 0.81 ; and social coherence: $\lambda = 0.82$ to 0.85 ; mean = 0.83), showing well-defined factors corresponding to a priori expectations.

Latent profile analyses were conducted on the responses of the 403 participants. Mplus 8.6 was used to analyse their responses to the dimensions of the SWBS. The results of four different models are reported in Table 1.

Table 1*Comparison of Different Latent Profile Analysis Models*

Profile	AIC	BIC	ABIC	LMR LR test <i>p</i> -value	ALMR LR test <i>p</i> -value	BLRT <i>p</i> -value
1-class LPA	7387.58	7427.57	7395.84	n/a	n/a	n/a
2-class LPA	6603.41	6667.39	6616.62	0.00**	0.00**	0.00**
3-class LPA	6351.82	6439.80	6370.00	0.00**	0.00**	0.00**
4-class LPA	6258.25	6370.22	6281.37	0.00**	0.00**	0.00**

AIC, Akaike information criterion; BIC, Bayesian information criterion; ABIC, adjusted Bayesian information criterion; LMR LR, Lo-Mendell-Rubin test; ALMR LR, adjusted Lo-Mendell-Rubin test; BLRT, bootstrapped likelihood ratio test; ** $p < 0.01$.

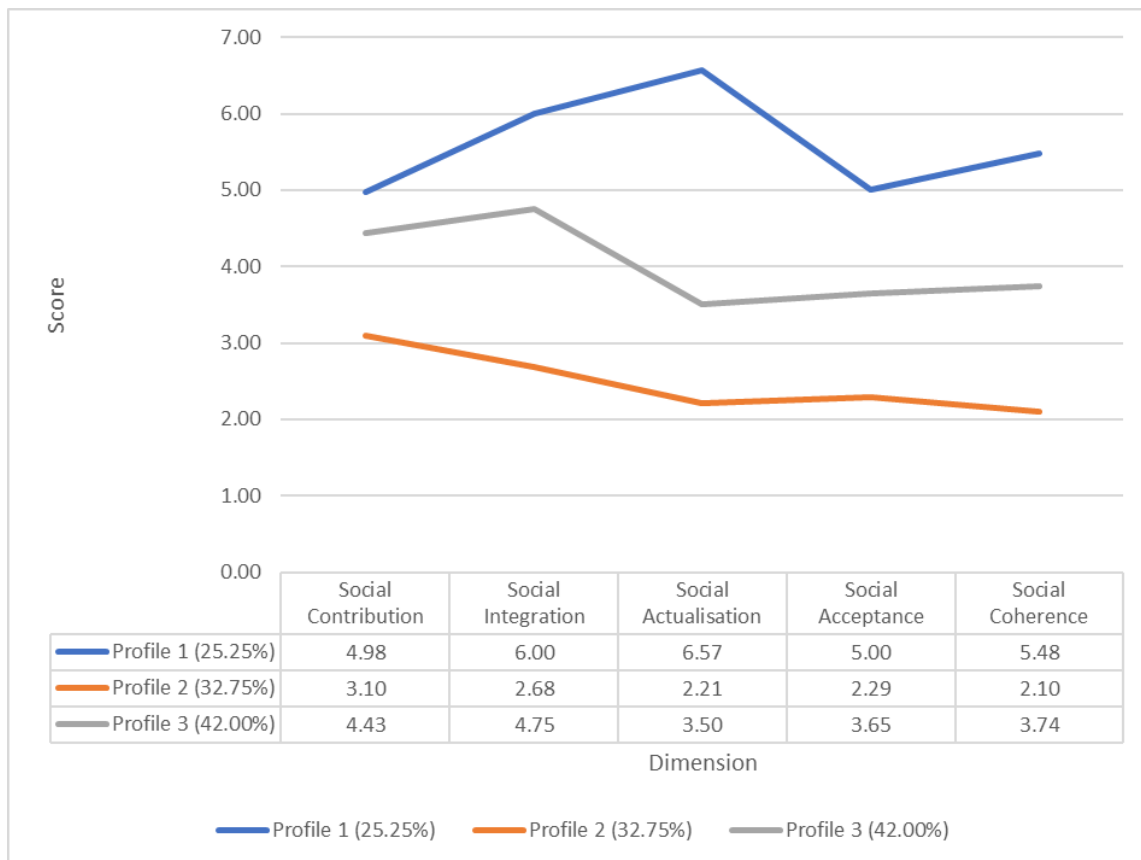
Profile 1 had the following fit indices: AIC = 7387.58; BIC = 7427.57; ABIC = 7395.84. The fit indices showed significantly better fit for Profile 2 compared to Profile 1 (AIC = 6603.41; BIC = 6667.39; ABIC = 6616.62). The LMR LR ($p < 0.01$), ALMR ($p < 0.01$), and BLRT ($p < 0.01$) of Profile 2 were also statistically significant, indicating that the $k + 1$ model fitted the data significantly better.

Regarding the fit of Profile 3, the fit indices showed significantly better fit compared to Profile 2 (AIC = 6351.82; BIC = 6439.80; ABIC = 6370.00). The LMR LR ($p < 0.01$), ALMR ($p < 0.01$), and BLRT ($p < 0.01$) for Profile 3 were also statistically significant. Profile 3 was, furthermore, statistically significant. The fit indices showed significantly better fit for Profile 4 compared with Profile 3 (AIC = 6258.25; BIC = 6370.22; ABIC = 6281.37). The LMR LR ($p > 0.01$) and ALMR ($p > 0.01$) were not statistically significant, but the BLRT ($p < 0.01$) for Profile 4 was statistically significant. Based on the observations of the profiles, Profile 4 was acceptable based on statistical considerations: AIC = 6258.25; BIC = 6370.22; ABIC = 6281.37; and LMR LR ($p < 0.01$), ALMR ($p < 0.01$), and BLRT ($p < 0.01$). However, based on the observations of the profiles, the three-profile solution was more interpretable.

The three latent profiles are illustrated in Figure 1. A total of 134 people were assigned to Class 1 (33.25%), 101 people to Class 2 (25.1%), and 168 people to Class 3 (41.69%). The size and sample proportion of the three profiles were not too small, and the correct profile assignment probabilities were well above the cut-off value of 0.70 (Nagin, 2005), namely, 0.94 for Class 1, 0.96 for Class 2, and 0.92 for Class 3. The entropy statistic was 0.85, indicating a good classification (Wang & Wang, 2020). The three latent profiles are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Latent profiles of social well-being



The profiles can be described as follows:

- Profile 1: socially well (25.5%).** Employees in this profile believed that they were vital organisational members with something valuable to offer. They evaluated the quality of their relationship with the organisation as high and experienced a sense of connectedness and belongingness. They had a positive view of humans, were comfortable around them, and believed that their organisation and social relations at work were meaningful and comprehensible. Most notably, individuals felt that the organisation was evolving and could realise its potential.
- Profile 2: socially withdrawn (32.75%).** Employees in the socially isolated profile scored below average to low in terms of the following elements: the belief that their daily work tasks added value to their teams, departments, and organisation; and their communal connectedness, valuing diversity, believing in others’ potential, and perceiving their relationships as coherent.

- **Profile 3: superficially socially well (42%).** Employees in this profile showed above-average social contribution and integration, but low social acceptance, social actualisation, and social coherence. Individuals in this profile felt that what they did in the world was valued by their organisation and contributed to the common good. They felt a sense of belonging to their organisation and perceived that they had something in common with the individuals who constituted their social reality. However, they did not have a positive view of humans and were uncomfortable around them. Their scores reflected that they were not hopeful about the condition and future of the organisation and about being potential beneficiaries of social growth. Their understanding of what was happening around them and finding meaning in the functions of their organisation were below average.

Associations between Latent Profiles and Individual and Organisational Outcomes

Auxiliary variables were used to examine the associations between the three latent profiles and individual and organisational outcomes.

Testing the measurement model of distal variables

Using CFA, a measurement model consisting of trust in the supervisor, trust in colleagues, job satisfaction, and intention to leave was tested. The CFA showed acceptable fit: $\chi^2 = 796.12$ ($df = 344$), $p < 0.01$; RMSEA = 0.06 (0.05, 0.06, $p = 0.01$); CFI = 0.94; TLI = 0.93; SRMR = 0.04.

Inspecting the loadings and cross-loadings, the overall size of the factor loadings of the items on their target factors was acceptable (trust in manager: $\lambda = .77$ to 0.94; mean = 0.91; trust in colleagues: $\lambda = 0.75$ to 0.90; mean = 0.83; job satisfaction: $\lambda = 0.45$ to 0.79; mean = 0.70; intention to leave: $\lambda = 0.75$ to 0.95; mean = 0.85), showing well-defined factors corresponding to a priori expectations.

Descriptive statistics, reliabilities, and correlations

The descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations), omega reliabilities, and Pearson correlations of the distal variables are reported in Table 2.

Table 2*Descriptive Statistics, Reliabilities, and Pearson Correlations of the Distal Variables*

Variable	ω	Mean	SD	1	2	3
Trust: supervisor ^a	0.96	5.03	1.63	-	-	-
Trust: colleagues ^a	0.97	4.88	1.35	0.62*	-	-
Job satisfaction ^b	0.80	3.59	0.95	0.54*	0.48*	-
Intention to leave ^b	0.89	2.69	1.36	-0.31*	-0.24*	-0.66*

Note: * $p < 0.01$; a: minimum = 1, maximum = 7; b: minimum = 1, maximum = 7.

Table 2 shows that acceptable reliability coefficients higher than 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994) were obtained for the four scales. The correlations in Table 2 showed that trust in the supervisor was strongly and positively related to trust in colleagues. Trust in the supervisor was strongly and positively related to job satisfaction and moderately and negatively related to intention to leave. Trust in colleagues was moderately positively related to job satisfaction and negatively related to intention to leave.

Latent profiles and distal outcomes

The automatic BCH approach for estimating the mean of a distal continuous outcome across latent profiles (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2014; Bakk & Vermunt, 2016) was used in this study. The latent profile model was estimated using the five dimensions of social well-being. The means of the auxiliary variables were estimated across the different classes with the BCH method to avoid shifts in determining the latent profile analysis. As mentioned before, the BCH method makes use of weighted multiple-group analysis to identify where the groups correspond to the latent profiles, and a shift in the classes is not possible because the profiles are known (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2014). Table 3 shows the differences between the distal variables of the different social well-being profiles.

The results in Table 3 showed that statistically significant differences existed between the trust in manager ($\chi^2 = 153.11, p < .001$), trust in colleagues ($\chi^2 = 18.86, p < .001$), job satisfaction ($\chi^2 = 111.93, p < .001$), and intention to leave ($\chi^2 = 104.00, p < .001$) of different social well-being profiles.

Table 3*Equality Tests of Means across Profiles*

Trust: supervisor			Trust: colleagues		
	M	SE		M	SE
Profile 1	0.90	0.11	Profile 1	0.90	0.09
Profile 2	-0.95	0.17	Profile 2	-0.91	0.13
Profile 3	0.18	0.12	Profile 3	0.15	0.10
Chi-square tests			Chi-square tests		
	χ^2	<i>p</i>		χ^2	<i>p</i>
Overall test	87.23	.00*	Overall test	136.25	.00*
Profile 1 vs. 2	85.99	.00*	Profile 1 vs. 2	133.29	.00*
Profile 1 vs. 3	17.51	.00*	Profile 1 vs. 3	30.39	.00*
Profile 2 vs. 3	27.65	.00*	Profile 2 vs. 3	39.02	.00*
Job satisfaction			Intention to leave		
	M	SE		M	SE
Profile 1	0.69	0.07	Profile 1	-0.59	0.09
Profile 2	-0.60	0.09	Profile 2	0.31	0.10
Profile 3	0.05	0.07	Profile 3	0.12	0.09
Chi-square tests			Chi-square tests		
	χ^2	<i>p</i>		χ^2	<i>p</i>
Overall test	153.56	.00*	Overall test	49.98	.00*
Profile 1 vs. 2	138.29	.00*	Profile 1 vs. 2	43.34	.00*
Profile 1 vs. 3	41.40	.00*	Profile 1 vs. 3	27.32	.00*
Profile 2 vs. 3	30.73	.00*	Profile 2 vs. 3	1.70	.00*

* *p* < 0.01.

Figure 2

Social well-being profiles and scores on distal variables

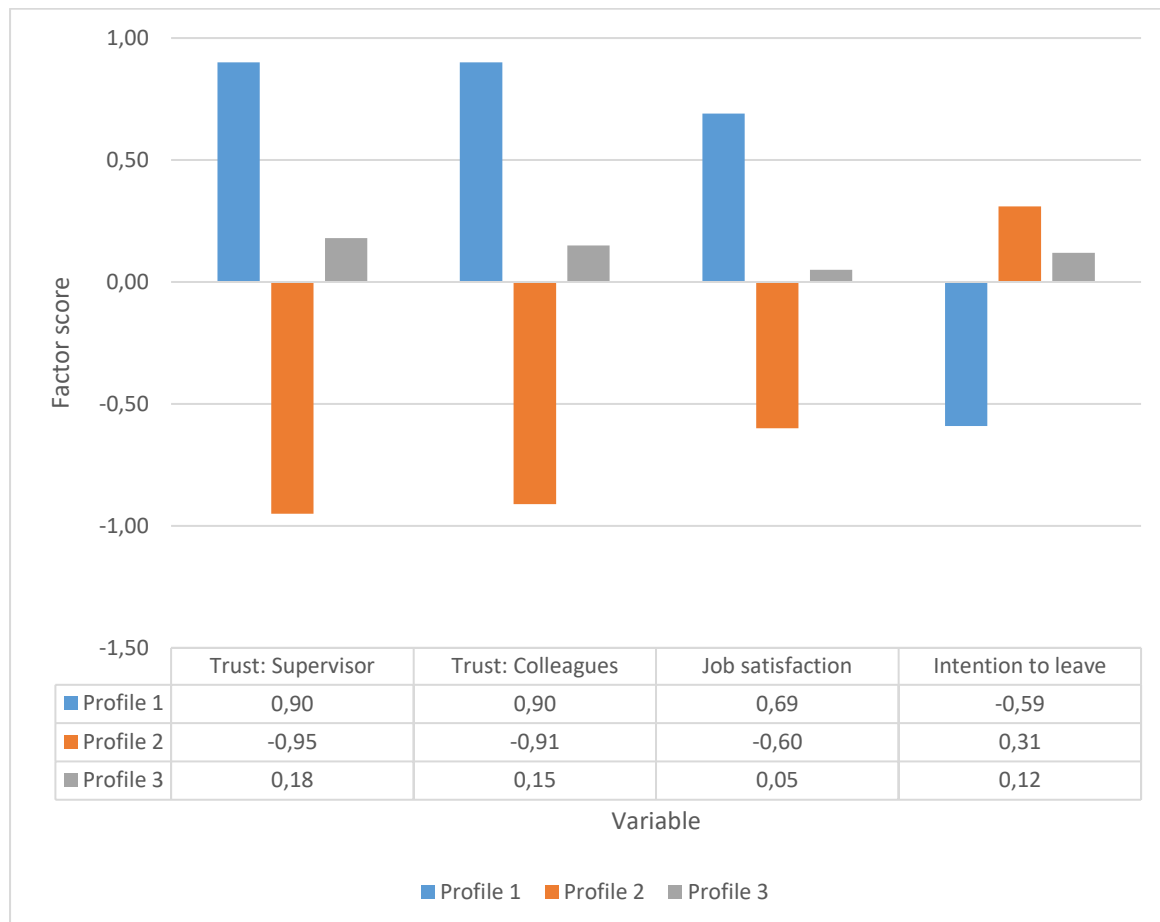


Figure 2 shows that the socially well profile had higher trust in managers, trust in colleagues, and job satisfaction and lower scores on intention to leave than the socially withdrawn and the superficially well profiles.

Differences between demographic groups

Next, two regression models (Wang & Wang, 2020) were specified using Mplus 8.6 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2021). The first regression was a multinomial logit model in which job, age, and service year categories were used to predict profile membership. The second regression was a linear regression in which job, age, and service year categories were used to predict four distal variables: trust: supervisor; trust: colleagues; job satisfaction; and intention to leave. In the latter regression, the regression slope coefficients and associated parameters were restricted

to be the same across all classes. To allow slope coefficients to vary across classes, the corresponding variables were specified in the within-class regression models.

The age category had a positive effect on job satisfaction only in the socially withdrawn profile (beta = 0.32, $p = 0.05$). Older employees showed more job satisfaction in this profile. Furthermore, the age category negatively affected intention to leave in the superficially socially well profile (beta = -0.29, $p = 0.04$). Younger (compared to older) employees had higher intentions to leave in this profile.

Younger employees were more likely to be classified into the socially withdrawn than the superficially socially well profile (beta = -0.46, $p = 0.05$). Also, employees with more years of service were more likely to be classified into the socially withdrawn profile than the superficially socially well profile (beta = 0.70, $p < 0.01$).

Discussion

This study aimed to determine latent profiles of social well-being using a person-centred approach and to investigate differences between social well-being profiles in terms of trust in managers and colleagues, job satisfaction, intention to leave, and demographic variables. The results of this study showed that three social well-being profiles could be distinguished, namely, the socially well, the superficially socially well, and the socially withdrawn profiles. Significant differences were found between the three social well-being profiles in terms of trust in managers and colleagues, job satisfaction, and intention to leave. Younger (compared to older) employees in the socially withdrawn profile showed lower levels of job satisfaction and higher levels of intention to leave. Younger employees and those who had more service years were more likely to be in the socially withdrawn profile.

The socially well profile included 25.5% of the employees. Employees in this profile endorsed all five dimensions of social well-being. They perceived themselves as vital organisational members who were highly connected to others in the organisation. Furthermore, they had a positive view of humans, were comfortable in social relations, found their social environment meaningful and comprehensible, and felt that the organisation was evolving and could realise its potential.

In contrast, the socially withdrawn represented 32.75% of the employees. They believed that their daily work tasks often did not add value to their teams, departments, and organisation, they lacked communal connectedness, and they were less inclined than other profiles to value diversity, to believe in others' potential, and to perceive their relationships in the organisation as meaningful and coherent.

The superficially socially well consisted of 42% of the employees. Employees in this profile felt that what they did in the organisation was valued by their organisation and contributed to the common good. Moreover, they felt belonging to their organisation and social context. However, compared to the socially well profile, they felt that they did not have a positive view of humans and felt less hopeful about the condition and future of the organisation. They understood less of what was happening around them and were less inclined to find meaning in the functions of their organisation.

The results showed that social well-being was problematic in the socially withdrawn profile and the superficially socially well profile. Individuals' sense of well-being is related to how they interpret their circumstances and fit into their organisation (Keyes, 1998; Moller & Rothmann, 2019). A striking difference between the three social well-being profiles was the level of social actualisation. The socially withdrawn profile showed low social actualisation, while the superficial socially well profile also showed lower scores than the socially well profile on this dimension. Social actualisation entails assessing the potential and trajectory of the organisation; observing that the organisation is growing and developing will help its members realise their social potential (Keyes, 1998; Rothmann, 2013). Employees' hope for the organisation, and their recognition of its potential, is reflected in social actualisation. Therefore, individuals who were not socially actualised might perceive that they, and others like them, are not potential beneficiaries of social growth. Moller and Rothmann (2019) showed that social actualisation was an essential mental health component.

Furthermore, the results indicated that social well-being in the superficially well and the socially withdrawn profiles was also problematic concerning social acceptance and social coherence. Coherence in social life is the perception of social life's quality, organisation, and operation (Keyes, 1998; Rothmann, 2013). Employees find meaning in how the organisation works because they can understand what is happening around them. When they acknowledge and accept differences among people and show a positive attitude toward them (social

acceptance), and when they feel their lives contribute to the organisation (social contribution). Therefore, the lower social coherence, social acceptance, social actualisation of a large percentage of the employees is a matter of concern, not only for the general well-being of the employees, but also for the organisation's functioning.

It is concerning that younger employees and those with more years of service were more likely to be classified into the socially withdrawn than the superficially socially well profile. Younger employees, and especially those with more experience, are critical for the organisations' success. Younger employees also showed less job satisfaction and higher turnover intention when they were classified into the socially withdrawn type. These findings imply that serious consideration should be given to the social well-being of younger employees.

This study confirmed that trust in managers and colleagues is essential for social well-being. To foster trust, organisations should identify, adopt, and reward leadership behaviours (Cross et al., 2020). However, trust is not sufficient to ensure collaboration and functioning of employees. In addition, organisations should instil a sense of purpose in their employees to maximize individual and organisational success. Trust motivates and enables people to risk and collaborate towards goals. A culture of trust allows employees to dispel their reservations and information to flow freely. Establishing psychological safety can help leaders build trust with their employees (Cross et al., 2020).

Employee satisfaction and intention to leave were strongly associated with social well-being. Individuals in the socially well profile (compared to the socially withdrawn and the superficially socially well profiles) experienced significantly higher job satisfaction and lower intentions to leave. Social well-being facilitates interpersonal collaboration and reflects good social relationships (Cross et al., 2020). Individuals' social relationships serve as a valuable resource (Hobfoll, 2001), reducing the likelihood of voluntary turnover (Ballinger et al., 2016). People's social networks provide them with resources. Thus, building connections across an organization plays a vital role in retaining employees (Cross et al., 2020).

Limitations of the Study

The study had various limitations that restricted the applicability of generalisations beyond the sample subjects, industry, and country context. For instance, a cross-sectional design was

employed, which was helpful to establish relationships – or their lack – among variables and to rule out alternatives in order to offer an initial explanatory mechanism (Spector, 2019), but causality could not be tested through this design, and the results, therefore, had to be interpreted with caution. The study also considered a limited number of demographic variables; future studies might consider the inclusion of other correlates (e.g., ethnicity and gender) as well. Self-report questionnaires were used as the best way to assess an individual's personal experiences and perceptions (Spector, 2019), but – at the same time – this method could not rule out the possibility of common method variance. Furthermore, the study sample only consisted of respondents employed by a major role player (organisation) in the utility industry; as a result, findings could not be generalised across different industries in South Africa. The study did not control for possible confounding variables and this is an aspect that future studies might take into consideration. Further theoretical frameworks can also be added to provide additional explanations of the effect of all the relevant variables.

Recommendations

The utility organisation should address employees' social well-being, especially social actualisation, social acceptance, and social coherence to benefit both employees and the organisation. Specific interventions to improve social well-being, build trust, and promote job satisfaction and intention to leave should be considered for younger employees and those with more service years.

The organisation needs to build a climate that fosters social well-being. Climates that provide employees with ample social support stemming from their organisation's supervisors and co-workers result in employees experiencing trust, which gives birth to increased positive organisational outcomes (Karatepe, 2012). When these individuals receive enough support from their superiors, they perceive that the organisation does care about their well-being and no longer feel the need to exit the organisation (Blau, 1964). Managers, therefore, need to ensure that they furnish workers with adequate social support structures and leverage their passion, enthusiasm, and drive for organisational gain.

When employees trust their organisation, leaders, and colleagues, it influences the development of practices and creates a favourable environment not only for employees to flourish, but also for organisations to realise maximum profit margins, which will prove to be advantageous to

the organisation, based on competitive advantage, and beneficial to employees, as it will give birth to a satisfied/stable workforce.

Conclusions

This study provided a nuanced understanding of social well-being by identifying patterns according to which social contribution, social integration, social actualisation, social coherence, and social acceptance interacted within individuals in a population, which might otherwise not have been evident.

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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONTRIBUTIONS

A summary of the study aim, objectives, and conclusions of this thesis is presented in this chapter. In addition, the limitations and recommendations for future research are highlighted.

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

The general aim of this study was to investigate how social well-being manifested in a South African utility industry in terms of its prevalence and relation to selected predictors (trust and precarity) and outcomes (job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and turnover intention).

The first specific objective of this study was to conceptualise social well-being in a South African work context, and its exclusive focus on the social dimension of well-being as conceptualised by Keyes (1998) and Rothmann (2013) was the first of its kind in the South African and the broader African context. More specifically, the study was based on operationalising a measure for social well-being to be used in workplace contexts. The reliability and validity of the chosen five-dimensional SWBS were verified through confirmatory factor analysis in each case. The SWBS was consistently replicated as a five-dimensional construct across all the practical applications.

In this study, operationalisation of social well-being as consisting of five subdimensions diverged from findings of a previous South African study by De Jager et al. (2014), which questioned the conceptualisation and measurement of social well-being in terms of five subdimensions, but which did not use a scale that was validated for workplace contexts in South Africa. The current study operationalised social well-being as conceptualised by Rautenbach (2015) and Redelinghuys (2016) for workplace contexts. It was indeed able to substantiate the conceptualisation of social well-being in terms of five subdimensions. Consequently, it was concluded that this measure of social well-being could be applied with confidence across different workplace contexts in South Africa.

The state of social well-being among the study participants that emerged was bleak. Clearly, most employees within the utility organisation of interest did not socially function at optimal levels. Most concerning, the lowest scores of the five subdimensions were recorded for social actualisation, social coherence, and social acceptance, which were highlighted. These results confirmed that employees did not feel optimistic about their current work context or about the future of the organisation, as they did not believe that the organisation was helping them grow and realise their full potential.

The findings of the current study supported previous findings that employees in South African organisations were not flourishing (Rothmann, 2013). The findings also showed similarity to those of a study by Moller and Rothmann (2019), which used a different measure of well-being on a sample of managers in South Africa. The study, furthermore, found that social well-being was lower than all the other dimensions of well-being, and social actualisation and social coherence, in particular, were the lowest of the social dimensions of well-being. This suggested that problems associated with social well-being probably had a much wider range in organisations and seemed to extend beyond non-managerial levels of functioning, thereby confirming suspicions that social well-being at strategic levels had not yet received the proper attention it deserved.

The second main objective was to unpack how employee experiences of precariousness and trust (in the organisation and colleagues) related to social well-being in the workplace. Understanding the co-dependency between trust as derived from organisational and interpersonal sources and social well-being, as well as how job insecurity might influence such dynamics, appeared to be of the utmost importance. These aspects could have an impact on employee functioning and organisational longevity. Trust was an essential component that manifested among social relations needed by all organisations to survive because employees needed to trust their organisations to feel secure and take innovative risks. They needed to trust their supervisors and colleagues to work together to achieve set goals. Once employees had established interpersonal relations, these broke down barriers. As a result, employees felt more secure and open, tended to share more expertise, and supported one another on a larger scale. However, when employees experienced job insecurity, they might conclude that the organisation was no longer sensitive to their needs. Furthermore, they might become risk-averse and less inclined to willingly render themselves vulnerable to others or open to new and innovative ideas; they might become more stressed and concerned about their psychological

safety and respond with social withdrawal to protect themselves (Kim, 2019). It was, thus, vital to understand the interplay between job insecurity, social well-being, and the different levels of trust to support individual well-being and promote organisational goals.

Manuscript 1 considered two types of trust – in the institution and in colleagues – as potential predictors of social well-being and showed that trust in the organisation positively and statistically significantly predicted social well-being. Hypothesis 1 of Manuscript 1 was, thus, supported. Trust in colleagues also positively and statistically significantly predicted social well-being, which supported Hypothesis 2 of Manuscript 1.

Regarding the subjectively experienced sense of precariousness (as operationalised through a measure of job insecurity), the study found that job insecurity negatively, yet statistically significantly, predicted social well-being, thus supporting Manuscript 1, Hypothesis 3.

Due to the significant regression relationships from trust in the organisation, trust in colleagues, and job insecurity to social well-being, hierarchical regression analysis was performed to investigate the possibility that trust in the organisation and trust in colleagues served as psychological mediating mechanisms through which the effect of job insecurity on social well-being could be managed. Indeed, the results confirmed that both types of trust mediated the relationship between job insecurity and social well-being, with trust in the organisation being the slightly more influential factor. Therefore, Hypotheses 4 and 5 of Manuscript 1 were both accepted.

Although different measures for constructs were used across studies, which made direct comparisons impossible, it was interesting to note that the positive relationship between trust stemming from various sources and social well-being had previously been recorded in other studies on other continents as well; see, for example, research by Helliwell and Wang (2011), Liu et al. (2010), and Salanova et al. (2012, 2021). Moreover, it was particularly fascinating to note that the more prominent effect of organisational trust relative to alternative foci of trust such as in co-workers or team members had also been recorded in a diverse range of studies: Di Stefano et al. (2018), Salanova et al. (2012, 2021), Wasti and Önder (2021), and a South African study by Kleynhans et al. (2021), which employed the same measure for trust and also reported organisational trust to be the most influential factor relative to trust stemming from

alternative sources, at least as far as employees in these studies were concerned. Although far from conclusive, these mentioned findings in some ways appeared to question the views put forward by Zhang et al. (2008), who reasoned that employees who operated in unstable political-economic contexts were likely to consider institutional trust as less valued in favour of trust stemming from other sources.

The inverse relationship between trust and job insecurity as recorded in the current study resonated well with research by Rehmann et al. (2019) and Sharkie (2005), which highlighted that precariousness, especially when employees suspected a violation of their psychological contract with the organisation, would harm the levels of trust experienced by those individuals. Furthermore, the findings regarding the negative effect of precariousness on both trust and social well-being were also in line with previous research by Klug (2017) and were further support for research by Lis and Sudolska (2015) and Bligh (2017) by showing that trust could indeed serve as a shock absorber during times of change, uncertainty, and adversity.

In addition, the present findings extended the existing knowledge base by simultaneously including two different types of trust in the same study, demonstrating their effects relative to each other, and demonstrating that the function of trust as a psychological mediating mechanism could be replicated in an organisation situated in a developing country context as well. It also extended the literature by being the first study to examine the role of different types of trust and an indicator of precariousness in relation to employee social well-being. From these findings, it could be concluded that trust did indeed affect social well-being levels and serve as a buffer to help individuals deal with precarity. Organisations should, therefore, build trust in the organisation as well as among colleagues, as both types of trust relationships are important mechanisms through which social well-being can be strengthened.

The third specific objective of the study was to assess the association between social well-being and selected outcomes, namely, job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and turnover intention. Social connectivity among workers affects organisational efficiency, which will ultimately have an impact on organisational revenue generation capacity. It is, thus, of great benefit for organisations to understand how social well-being affects corporate performance, enabling the establishment of more sound social relations among workers, as such relations regulate and influence the extent to which employees relate and share information needed to propel business objectives.

The results reported in Manuscript 2 showed that social well-being was positively associated with job satisfaction (H1) and organisational citizenship behaviour (H2) and negatively associated with turnover intention (H3). In addition, job satisfaction mediated the relationship between social well-being and organisational citizenship behaviour (H4) as well as intention to leave (H5).

Findings regarding the association between job satisfaction and social well-being were in line with previous research by Alegre et al. (2016) and Cek and Eyupoglu (2020), and the link between social well-being and turnover intentions provided further support for related findings by Janse van Rensburg et al. (2017) and Redelinghuys et al. (2019). This showed that the recorded relationships could be replicated in a developing country context, in a different economic sector, and specifically in an organisation that had been destabilised due to a wide range of challenges.

The fourth specific main objective was achieved through the findings described in Chapter 4, namely, to determine whether subgroups of individuals in the sample population who differed in their experiences of social well-being could be identified. Understanding how individuals differed in their social well-being profiles and how these patterns might relate to selected predictors (trust in supervisors and colleagues), demographic variables (age, tenure, and years of service), and outcomes (job satisfaction and intentions to leave) could aid in better-suited policy formulation and tailor-made interventions to promote the social well-being of particular subgroups based on their difficulties.

With these questions in mind, a latent profile analysis approach was followed, showing that different people prioritised different aspects of social well-being. More specifically, three profiles were identified: the socially well, socially withdrawn, and superficially socially well. Alarming, the findings revealed that less than a quarter of the workforce was socially flourishing (25%). Equally distressing was that the largest group of respondents (42%) consistently recorded below-average scores on all subdimensions of social well-being. Low scores on the social actualisation and social coherence subdimensions of social well-being were in line with previous research by Rautenbach and Rothmann (2017) and served as further confirmation of previous studies that showed that employees in South African organisations were generally not flourishing, as was already pointed out earlier in this chapter.

The current research findings regarding different types of trust and social well-being extended the record of studies as listed in a longitudinal latent profile analysis study by Caesens et al. (2021), which showed that different sources of support consistently had distinct associations with employee performance over an extended period.

Concerning the recorded links between social well-being profiles and job satisfaction and turnover intent, current profile analysis results were related to the findings of a latent profile analysis by Caesens et al. (2020), which demonstrated that employees who experienced their environment as supportive were more inclined to reciprocate with positive work-related attitudes and performance. This was in stark contrast to those who felt socially isolated and, as a result, did not experience job satisfaction and were more inclined to withdraw.

The current study provided novel insights regarding the link between age, years of service, and selected outcomes. Younger employees and those who had more service years recorded more indications that they were struggling socially. Moreover, younger employees in the socially withdrawn profile reported less job satisfaction and higher intentions to leave than other age groups. Directly comparable studies in the literature could not be identified; however, it is interesting that Keyes (1998) also noted a link between age and social well-being, whereas equally definitive evidence could not be confirmed in a latent profile analysis study that was conducted by De Jager et al. (2014) in South Africa. Keyes (1998) specifically found that social integration and social contribution were more likely to increase with age, while social coherence was likely to decrease with age, while De Jager et al. (2014) noted significant differences associated with social experiences of belonging and value contribution in adults older than 50 compared to much younger respondents. In his study, Keyes (1998) concluded that the relationship between age and social well-being across age groups was non-linear, and it seems that this aspect will still need further investigation.

Overall, the study findings indicated that rigorous interventions were required to increase employee social wellness levels. The human resource potential of the organisation can be optimised particularly through concerted efforts to promote inclusivity, such as to help those who struggle to feel that they belong, to help them grow and make sense of their social reality, and to help them understand how they can socially contribute in meaningful ways.

5.2 STUDY LIMITATIONS

This research was based on cross-sectional surveys to examine social well-being and its relationship to trust, precarity, and individual and organisational outcomes. Research based on cross-sectional surveys has limitations, as causes or effects cannot be inferred. Future studies should employ longitudinal designs.

The self-reported data might have been contaminated by common method variance (CMV). However, Spector (2019) questions the usefulness of CMV testing for several reasons, including the problem that none of the existing range of statistical techniques can eliminate the possibility of CMV beyond any doubt, and acknowledges that the use of self-reported questionnaires is still considered ideal to tap into employees' personal thoughts, feelings, and subjective assessment of their own experiences despite the risk of encountering CMV in the process (Spector, 2019).

This study had a limited focus on the impact of social well-being on the utility industry alone. Moreover, it is possible that the recent pandemic (COVID-19) might have affected the response rate. Studying social well-being in a period that encouraged social distancing might have led to biased results. Since the questionnaire was lengthy, employees might have been reluctant to fill it in. A heavy workload could have prevented senior managers from prioritising the completion of the questionnaire.

The average response rate of 30% (counting all stakeholders and different approaches used) might be considered a limitation. However, although the average response rate was low, it was not atypical of studies in South Africa. The sample excluded non-permanent staff or staff not directly employed in the utility industry. Collecting the data was a challenging task, as COVID-19 introduced added barriers based on limited social contact and the majority of employees working from home, so no manual questionnaires could be distributed. Future studies could incorporate the input of non-permanent staff, which could be extended to other industries to further ground findings inclusive of a different target group.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.3.1 Recommendations to solve the research problems

Managing distrust can be corrosive and costly, as productivity slips, collaboration on resolving problems suffers, and employee effort drops (Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2010). By connecting employees to their purpose, fostering social connections, promoting connectedness, building belief in the possibility of success, and promoting the pursuit of self-interest, an organisation can create positive work environments (Quinn, 2015). In this way, the importance of social relations among colleagues and managers is reinforced (Van Rensburg & Rothmann, 2020).

Creating an environment that fosters social well-being within the organisation is critical. An environment in which employees receive a sufficient level of social support from their managers and colleagues results in employees experiencing trust, which leads to increased positive organisational outcomes (Karatepe, 2012). When employees are supported by their superiors, they perceive that the organisation is concerned about their well-being, and they cease to feel compelled to leave the organisation (Blau, 1964). Therefore, managers must equip workers with adequate social support structures to channel their passions, enthusiasms, and energies towards organisational goals. A favourable environment is created when employees trust their organisation, leaders, and colleagues. This allows for employees to flourish and for organisations to create a stable workforce and achieve profit margins.

Employers should implement methods to improve trust in their organisations, such as having open channels of communication between managers and employees. Furthermore, by focusing communication efforts on community over hierarchy, strong company values can be created, which will boost employee satisfaction and well-being, since employees will feel more connected, secure, and worthy of belonging (Jennings & Bamkole, 2019).

Through resilience workshops and implementing more regular informal meetings, the organisation can demonstrate its level of caring and counter precariousness. Skinner and Searle (2011) argue that human resource management has been overlooked as an important lens through which to explore trust (Whitener, 1997).

5.3.2 Recommendations for future research

This study was the first South African study that focused exclusively on social well-being as conceptualised by Keyes (1998) and Rothmann (2013). Future studies regarding social well-being should utilise larger samples and different types of organisations.

Such studies could verify causal relationships and refine recommendations for interventions through longitudinal research. The current study also considered a limited number of demographic variables; future studies might consider the inclusion of other correlates (for example, ethnicity and gender).

5.4 THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

This study made several important theoretical contributions to the limited existing body of literature on social well-being by (a) focusing exclusively on the manifestation of social well-being as an important element of employee flourishing as opposed to related studies, which have tended to focus on other components such as the emotional or psychological aspects of well-being. The study not only provided a first record of social well-being in this respect, but also added to the few studies that focused on employee flourishing in broader or more general terms and that were conducted in dissimilar South African workplace contexts, yet still confirmed that the level of social well-being of employees across different organisations in South Africa was generally low (Rothmann, 2013).

In addition, the current study (b) served to provide additional support for previous studies by Rautenbach (2015) and Redelinghuys (2016) – which developed the SWBS as measure for assessing social well-being within workplace contexts – by replicating the validity and reliability of the SWBS, thereby showing that this measure could be applied across a broader range of organisations in South Africa.

This research further expanded the existing knowledge base by (c) providing a first record of the social aspect of well-being as this took shape within a workplace context that is critical to the South African economy and known for facing severe challenges in terms of its stability and sustainability. Although alternative studies might refer to employee well-being in general, no studies placed specific focus on social well-being and its impact within organisational settings,

specifically relating to the utility industry in South Africa. Therefore, the current study made several important contributions not only by focusing on the levels of social well-being, but also by (d) developing a much more specific record of different patterns of social well-being within subgroups of employees and by developing a more comprehensive picture of the predictors (e) of social well-being at work.

Concerning predictors of social well-being, the study made additional important contributions by providing new insights regarding the simultaneous effects (f) of both positive (trust) and negative (precariousness, which took shape in the form of subjectively experienced job insecurity) psychological states as opposing energies that influenced social well-being in a work context. It was also the first study to (g) illuminate the concurrent effects of two types of trust – institutional and horizontal – as predictors of social well-being.

Another important theoretical contribution was made by demonstrating the profound impact social well-being had on important performance-related work outcomes (h) needed to ensure success and productivity and by showing how age, tenure, and job levels (i) could influence social well-being and associated outcomes due to challenges experienced within specific subgroups of employees.

This study made several contributions that could be of specific interest to labour relations management; for instance, it added scientific information about social well-being and its outcomes in South African organisations, provided potentially useful scientific information on the connection between social well-being, organisational commitment, and turnover intention and isolated factors that could inform a better understanding of risk factors related to the social well-being of employees in a utility organisation in South Africa.

On a practical level, the findings of the current study could assist this important South African organisation where the study was conducted and organisations, in general, to improve the social well-being and functioning of their employees, while simultaneously also advancing the effective functioning of the organisations at large. In order to move forward, hindering conditions that obstruct social well-being need to be understood.

Clearly, employees in South African organisations do not function to the best of their ability, and giving more attention to strategies that can promote their social well-being can have a

positive spiralling effect, since social relations are required for collaborative efforts to achieve set targets, improve job satisfaction and citizenship behaviour, and counter intentions to leave.

Therefore, this study highlighted the need for properly documented and meticulously developed strategies to implement and monitor social well-being that would affect an array of factors needed to ensure organisational success. Existing interventions focus largely on physical and emotional well-being, and at the very least, an equally strong focus on intervention strategies to promote social well-being should exist. The current study points to the need to address employee social well-being such as for example that programmes, interventions, and strategies could be incorporated and aligned to address employee social well-being.

As a point of departure, employee social well-being should be evaluated regularly to establish basic levels of social well-being among the workforce, monitor trends in this respect, and evaluate the effectiveness of intervention strategies to improve social well-being. The SWBS was used in this study and firmly established itself as a valid and reliable measure that organisations in South Africa could use with confidence for this purpose.

The importance of social well-being initiatives should be adequately documented, and a comprehensive implementation strategy should be communicated to the business. A suggestion is to incorporate this in an information leaflet, which can be made available at the company's medical centre; information can form part of the organisation's health and wellness monthly communiqués and wellness sessions. Managers can also emphasise the importance of social wellness before the commencement of meetings, such as when items for personalia are confirmed. The organisation can, furthermore, incorporate a suggestion portal on its internal website where employees can share methods and ways of increasing social well-being. This will increase trust and stimulate social interaction, which will potentially benefit employers and employees.

The workplace serves as an extension of employees' social sphere, a climate in which they should flourish. However, the findings of this study indicated that tough economic times, aggravated by well-known challenges characteristic of the context of the study population such as COVID-19, corruption, retrenchments, and associated problems, had heightened precarity among workers. The inverse relationship between subjectively experienced precariousness and social well-being confirmed that individuals who felt vulnerable would be more likely to

become socially withdrawn. Therefore, organisations should find ways to deal more sensitively with policies and processes that can possibly exacerbate feelings of precariousness.

The extent to which individuals trust their organisations, supervisors, and colleagues is an important potential resource that can buffer experiences of precarity and strengthen employees' social well-being. A particularly important contribution of the study was that it revealed the important role of trust in the organisation and in colleagues as a psychological mechanism that could serve as a buffer to preserve social well-being through limiting the potentially devastating impact of job insecurity on social well-being. This means that organisations should factor in trust in policies and procedures to build up a strong workforce, which will be evident in a decreased sense of precariousness and improved social well-being. This can be done, for example, by incorporating more transparent decision-making procedures and improved communication strategies through openness and truthfulness regarding organisational transformation and goals. Reassuring employees of their employment during tough economic times through the display of transition plans and possible organisational reshuffling will signal the good intentions of the organisation and may cause employees to gravitate towards a more trusting relationship with their organisation. In addition, equality in the distribution of remuneration, training and development, and promotional opportunities will further enhance employee organisational trust, which will increase loyalty, encourage favourable behaviour, and counter intentions to leave.

Age, job level, and tenure were also identified as important factors for consideration when it came to the social well-being of specific subgroups. Subjective experiences of precariousness among subgroups can be countered through initiatives to secure confidence in the organisation at an early stage in an employee's career by ensuring that human resource management policies pay attention to socialisation processes for new employees (Searle & Al-Shariff, 2021), which, in turn, will enhance individuals' social well-being, for example, through increasing their sense of social acceptance and social coherence, since such initiatives can help them to establish support networks and to find their social lives more comprehensible and satisfying. Human resources departments should also be tasked with replacing outdated knowledge by training new staff and building a strong workforce morale (Bothma & Roodt, 2013). Other crucial policies to counter the vulnerability of the socially excluded are those focusing on diversity, equal opportunities, and inclusivity (Newell, 2002).

Trust in the organisation and its leaders can be further strengthened by building a reputation of integrity such as through concerted efforts to eradicate corruption, by implementing new policies and codes of conduct that will prevent future transgressions, by ensuring that policies are applied consistently and fairly (Gillespie et al., 2021), by developing norms of trustworthiness, and by providing explicit incentives for trustworthy behaviour (You, 2005). For instance, valued norms can be reaffirmed through social rituals such as apologies, penance, punishment for transgressions, and compensation for those who have suffered injustices (Gillespie et al., 2021). In this way, social well-being is enhanced, since clarity about norms helps individuals to develop insight into the social context in which they are embedded, as they gain a better understanding of what went wrong, what behaviours are unacceptable, and what rules should be adhered to in order to move forward towards more harmonious relations and inclusivity.

Trust in supervisors and colleagues can be promoted by focusing on the improvement of competence at all levels, such as by offering training and opportunities for growth, which can, in turn, enhance employees' confidence to secure stable job opportunities and which is likely to result in higher levels of social well-being, particularly with respect to an increased sense of social actualisation and contribution. Competence can, furthermore, be developed in ways that minimise feelings of insecurity and maximise social well-being by steering leadership training interventions towards the development of positive leadership styles such as authentic, servant, and ethical leadership styles that are known for cultivating optimal functioning and by developing such leadership skills at all levels throughout the organisation (Rothmann, 2014). Helping individuals to recognise their strengths, for instance, through mentoring and coaching initiatives (Newell, 2002), can further assist to promote employees' sense of social coherence and contribution.

Organisations should also encourage social interaction via non-formal interventions, implementing an open-door policy, work stoppages, informal presentations, breakaway sessions, sports days, and other integration strategies. Workplaces should be improved to cultivate social connections (tea bars and lounge areas). The relationships between staff will be more integrated, allowing them to interact with one another in a more comfortable and resourceful manner. Fun also breaks down barriers, increases stimulation, and ignites innovation. A team-of-the-month initiative should perhaps include a floating trophy that goes to the team with the most exceptional efforts. A picture of the team can be displayed

prominently as a sign of acknowledgement from the organisation. This sense of light-heartedness will strengthen relationships even further. Colleagues can be paired up with a “revolving buddy”, where colleagues can assist each other with the completion of tasks. This will not only foster social relations, but will also eradicate the “one-trick pony” mentality, which will empower employees to become familiar with other business roles and responsibilities, thus aiding employees to understand the scope of the business, initiatives, and roll-out plans.

Moreover, organisations can strive to actively encourage social relations among workers by initiating activities such as sports days, team building events, or “meet my family” days; this will facilitate a culture of open communication. This level of transparency increases employee job satisfaction and fuels organisational citizenship behaviour, as it lessens employees’ intentions to exit an organisation.

In conclusion, this study clearly demonstrated that social well-being is a fundamental part of overall well-being and underlined the importance of incorporating social well-being strategies in daily operations, as employee social well-being is needed to facilitate forward movement of organisational initiatives. When employees are socially accepted and integrated into a unit, they experience higher levels of job satisfaction, are less inclined to leave the organisation, and are enabled to contribute more meaningfully, as they have a coherent understanding of the social context in which they are embedded and see themselves as forming part of a greater goal.

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