

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOB INSECURITY AND BURNOUT

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Abstract

Organisational survival has necessitated both more flexible practices (short-term contracts and outsourcing) and an effective workforce that is able to work continuously under immense pressure. While the former has raised feelings about job insecurity, the latter has resulted in burnout. This study aims to assess levels of job insecurity and burnout among 87 employees in a training and development environment, as well as the relationships between these two key dimensions and the impact of biographical variables. Data collected using the Job Insecurity Questionnaire (JIQ) and the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) reflects a significant relationship between these dimensions. The study provides recommendations for reducing their detrimental individual and organisational consequences.

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Introduction

With the high tempo of organisational changes taking place in South Africa and around the world, the role of the employee has become precarious. The idea of lifelong employment has become obsolete. Today, organisational workforces shrink and expand according to market conditions. South Africa is a relatively new democracy and a fledgling player in global trends, and has a unique socio-political and economic history. Its organisations are thus facing fiercer competition. In the product markets, trade, globalisation, technological advancements and the commercialisation of the public sector have led to businesses becoming more competitive (Burchell, Ladipo & Wilkinson, 2002). In the capital markets, major stakeholders demand fast and lucrative returns on their investments. All these demands translate into the need for more flexibility and efficiency in the workforce. Consequently, many employers do not want to be bound to employees for an indefinite period of time, thereby making short-term contracts and outsourcing a more popular alternative (Burchell et al.,

2002; Allan, Brosnan, Horwitz & Walsh, 2001). Employees therefore lack a sense of stability, identity and belonging and are experiencing feelings of uncertainty. This, of course, takes an emotional and physical toll on employees (Cuyper, De Witte, Van der Elst & Handaja, 2010; Elovainio, van den Bos, Linna, Kivimäki, Ala-Mursula, Pentti & Vahtera, 2005), which manifests in job insecurity (Cuyper et al., 2010; Tseng & Kang, 2008). There are detrimental consequences for both individuals and those at the organisational level (Ashford, Lee & Bobko, 1989; Davy, Kinicki & Scheck, 1991; Allen, Freeman, Russell, Reizenstein & Rentz, 2001; Krause, Stadil & Bunke, 2003).

In today's global arena, organisations have to utilise the best resources and practices available if they are to compete successfully. Organisations gain the competitive edge by hiring and retaining a talented and efficient workforce who must be able to handle immense and unrelenting pressure. If they cannot do this and do not have the appropriate organisational support, burnout is inevitable (Kilfedder, Power & Wells, 2001; Tabacchi, Krone & Farber, 1990; Walters & Raybould, 2007). This, too, has negative repercussions for both the individual

and the organisation and, if not managed effectively, produces a potential domino effect.

Continual pressure on the workforce means that human resources are ultimately exhausted. As soon as workers start feeling stressed, insecure and demotivated, organisations and the economy both suffer. These problems begin to filter into workers' personal lives. Work intensification and job insecurity have powerful consequences for every aspect of workers' lives and the economy as a whole.

As time goes by, these negative implications could multiply in South Africa, so there is a compelling need to better understand the relationship between job insecurity and burnout, since human capital is undoubtedly a corporate asset that could provide a competitive advantage if appropriately nurtured and developed.

1.1 Definitions of job insecurity and burnout

According to Sverke, Hellgren and Näswall (2002), job insecurity is a subjective experience of involuntary job loss and is associated with feelings of powerlessness and helplessness on the part of the worker. Ruvio and Rosenblatt (1999) believe that job insecurity is about not only trying to keep one's job but also maintaining the aspects and features of the job that are important to the employee. Borg and Elizur (1992) distinguish between cognitive and affective job insecurity. Cognitive job insecurity deals with the perceived likelihood of job loss, while affective job insecurity refers to the fear of actually losing one's job (Borg & Elizur, 1992). This study aims to assess the relationship between the cognitive and affective sub-scales and overall job insecurity and thus hypothesises that:

Hypothesis 1: There are significant intercorrelations between the sub-dimensions of job insecurity (cognitive and affective) and overall job insecurity respectively.

De Witte (1999) and Probst (2002) consider job insecurity to be a work stressor which can result in stress reactions, such as negative attitudes toward work. This definition of job insecurity falls within the ambit of this study. Greenhaus,

Callanan and Godshalk (2000) believe that stress involves an interaction between an individual and the environment, which is so trying that it surpasses an individual's coping resources. The negative work outcomes associated with job stress (Lingard, 2003; Reynolds & Tabacchi, 1993, Vallen, 1993), such as job dissatisfaction (Oldham, Julik, Ambrose, Stepina & Brand, 1986), absenteeism and reduced job involvement and commitment (Ashford et al., 1989; Davy et al., 1991; Allen et al., 2001; Krause et al., 2003), are similar to the outcomes associated with job insecurity. Hence, the view that job insecurity is a work stressor (De Witte, 1999; Probst, 2002) is common. According to Rothmann, Jackson and Kruger (2003), burnout is a multidimensional and chronic stress response due to many unsuccessful attempts to cope with various stressful conditions. Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) maintain that burnout is employees' constantly negative feeling towards work, so that they experience exhaustion, distress, low motivation, decreased effectiveness and a poor attitude. Hence, burnout is said to be a type of prolonged job stress. In this respect, Demerouti, Bakker, Vardakou and Kantas (2003) distinguished between two dimensions of burnout, namely disengagement and exhaustion. Disengagement refers to individuals distancing themselves from work and developing negative and cynical attitudes towards it (Demerouti et al., 2003). Exhaustion refers to the physical feeling of being exhausted and overtaxed at work. According to Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner and Schaufeli (2001), exhaustion is also the result of extreme affective and cognitive strain. To assess the relationship between the sub-scales of disengagement and exhaustion and overall burnout, this study hypothesises that:

Hypothesis 2: There are significant intercorrelations between the sub-dimensions of burnout (disengagement and exhaustion) and overall burnout respectively.

1.2 Perceived relationship between job insecurity and burnout

Whether or not there are significant relationships between the sub-dimensions of job insecurity and the sub-dimensions of burnout and between

overall job insecurity and overall burnout respectively must be determined. Hence, the study hypothesises that:

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant relationship between job insecurity and burnout.

Like Borg and Elizur (1992), De Witte (2000) believes that job insecurity is a two-dimensional construct consisting of both the affective and cognitive dimensions. However, both these dimensions of job insecurity are triggered by three main antecedents.

Firstly, organisational and economic restructuring present macro-level antecedents. If an environment of change and uncertainty prevails in an organisation, it may foster feelings of job insecurity among its workers. Hence, in times of recession, takeover, mergers and restructuring, job insecurity is usually rife. This is because some jobs become obsolete, while others change drastically. If firms do not inform employees about the status of their jobs, they start feeling uncertain about their future in the organisation. Economic changes also affect the organisation and this may lead to cutbacks and retrenchments. Job insecurity is the stage between employment and unemployment, when the workers do not know their fate (Hartley, Jacobson, Klandermans & Van Vuuren, 1991). The prevailing laws of a country also have an influence on the organisation. For instance, in South Africa, the Labour Relations Act of 1995 made certain stipulations with respect to contracts of employment. The Act discourages retrenchments, and legal steps may be adopted by employees if they feel that they have been unfairly dismissed. However, problems have emerged, as many employers are now hesitant to hire workers because should they have to be retrenched in the future this could prove a daunting and costly task. Many employers are therefore choosing to invest more in capital than in labour (Allan et al., 2001). They tend also to opt for more temporary forms of employment, such as fixed-term contracts.

Secondly, job insecurity is associated with individuals with specific positional variables, rendering the latter particularly vulnerable in the labour market. Low-skilled employees, workers in the industrial sector and individuals

with temporary job contracts usually experience job insecurity, as they are the most likely to be dismissed (Näswall & De Witte, 2003). Biographical variables, such as length of service in the organisation, race, educational level, age (Buitendach, Oosthuyzen & Van Wyk, 2005), union support (Lim, 1996) and gender (De Witte, 1999) may be used to predict job insecurity, as these have been found to produce significant correlates. In their meta-analysis, Cheng and Chan (2008) examined tenure, age and gender differences in the relationship between job insecurity and its job-related and health-related consequences. While significant tenure and age differences were noted, no significant gender differences were observed. For example, the direct relationship between job insecurity and turnover intention was stronger among employees with shorter tenure than those with longer tenure, and among younger than older employees (Cheng & Chan, 2008). In order to assess the biographical correlates, the current study hypothesises the following:

Hypothesis 4: There is a significant difference between the levels of job insecurity and burnout experienced by male and female employees.

Hypothesis 5: There is a significant difference between the levels of job insecurity and burnout experienced by employees varying in age.

Hypothesis 6: There is a significant difference between the levels of job insecurity and burnout experienced by employees varying in education.

Hypothesis 7: There is a significant difference between the levels of job insecurity and burnout experienced by employees varying in length of service in the organisation.

Thirdly, an employee's personality traits serve as antecedents of job insecurity. Näswall and De Witte (2003) believe that the way in which an individual perceives his or her background characteristics is also important. Greenhaus et al. (2000) demonstrate that individuals perceive the various stressors around them subjectively and react accordingly. Their perception is based on their personal characteristics and they can respond physically, emotionally or behaviourally to the situation. Since each individual is unique, some may react more negatively than others to

stressful situations. Research reflects that the two personality characteristics of work locus of control and negative affectivity contribute to feelings of job insecurity (Hartley et al., 1991; Sverke, Hellgren, Näswall, Chirumbolo, De Witte & Goslinga, 2004).

Irrespective of the antecedents of job insecurity, the repercussions of job insecurity for the individual are significant. Chirumbolo and Areni (2005) found that individuals who experienced job insecurity also experienced reduced physical and mental health, decreased self-esteem, lower life satisfaction and a greater chance of burnout. De Witte (2005) maintains that job insecurity negatively influences individuals' attitudes to work and results in decreased job involvement and motivation, and increased anxiety, depression and psychosomatic complaints. Viljoen, Bosman and Buitendach (2005) found that high levels of job insecurity are related to symptoms of poor physical health, sleeping problems, anxiety and depression. Näswall, Sverke and Hellgren (2005) tested the main and interactional impact of job insecurity and work-based and non-work-based social support on different work strains. They found that non-work-based support surfaced as a clearer buffer against the consequences of job insecurity than did work-based support (Näswall, Sverke & Hellgren, 2005).

In addition, a longitudinal study conducted in London among office workers in the British Civil Service found that self-reported morbidity was greater among employees who lost their job security (Ferrie, Shipley, Stansfeld & Marmot, 2001). This study further emphasised that job insecurity had a negative effect on an individual's psychological and general well-being. In addition to being a job stressor, job insecurity was found to be a marital stressor. Stress and strain experienced by one spouse may place stress and strain on the other spouse, resulting in a 'crossover' effect (Hammer, Allen & Grigsby, 1997). Hence, job demands are transferred from incumbents in their job to their spouses, impacting on their psychological and physical health (Westman, 2001). Westman, Etzion and Danon (2001) studied this 'crossover' effect and found a direct crossover from husbands to wives but not vice-

versa, while Westman and Vinokur (1998) found a bi-directional crossover effect. Canaff and Wright (2004) point out that job insecurity may affect communication between spouses, causing strained parent-child relationships. Leisure activities and family life can thus become dysfunctional. Likewise, Cinamon, Weisel and Tzuk (2007) found that work-family conflict and family-work conflict correlated negatively with parental self-efficacy and perceived quality of parent-child interaction. Benito (2004) found that job insecurity can also affect household consumption, as the latter is influenced by how much uncertainty a household faces in terms of future income. Johnson (2006) believes that employees who are insecure about their jobs feel immense pressure to put in overtime and forego their holidays in order to prove their commitment to their employers.

In addition, job insecurity has been found to have numerous detrimental effects on an organisation (Chirumbolo & Areni, 2005; De Witte, 2005; McLean, 2006). The organisation faces decreased organisational commitment, lack of organisational trust, increased turnover, non-compliant job behaviours, work withdrawal behaviours, lower job performance and increased levels of workplace injuries and accidents (Chirumbolo & Areni, 2005; De Witte, 2005; McLean, 2006). Apart from the effects on performance, an atmosphere of tension and resentment can permeate the organisation, as job-insecure employees no longer feel valued as members. Hence, the best-qualified individuals may leave the organisation (Allan et al., 2001), not only draining the best talent but also incurring major costs in recruiting, selecting and training new employees.

Since the consequences of job insecurity and burnout are detrimental to the individual and the organisation, and to the economy at large, this reinforces the need to investigate the relationship between these two variables.

The objectives of the study are:

- to assess the current levels of job insecurity and burnout among the respondents;
- to determine whether there is a significant relationship between job insecurity and burnout;

- to assess whether the biographical profiles of respondents significantly influence job insecurity and burnout respectively.

2

Research design

2.1 Research approach

The research methodology has been designed to investigate the relationship between job insecurity and burnout by obtaining primary data, using a cross-sectional data collection approach. In this formal, hypothesis-testing study, the unit of analysis is a group of employees from whom data were collected by means of established questionnaires.

2.2 Respondents

The population for the study was comprised of a group of 87 employees from a training and development environment. A sample of 80 respondents was achieved, based on convenience sampling. This method of sampling was suitable, as the researchers did not aim to generalise the results beyond the jurisdiction of the study set out simply to determine whether there was a significant relationship between job insecurity and burnout. The questionnaires were given to each of the 87 employees in the department; hence, a consensus approach was used and the 92 per cent response rate proved to be an adequate and representative sample size. The sample is described in terms of age, gender, education and length of service in the organisation, as these variables could potentially impact on job insecurity and cause burnout. In terms of age, 35 per cent of the respondents were aged 41–50; 31.3 per cent were aged 31–40. Only 17.5 per cent were aged 51–60, and only 16.3 per cent were 21–30. Evidently, the majority of the respondents (66.3 per cent) were 31–50 years of age. Further, 68.8 per cent of the respondents were female and only 31.3 per cent were male; the representation is proportionate to the gender composition in this department. In terms of educational levels, 58.8 per cent of the respondents held a degree, 27.5 per cent had a diploma, 10 per cent had only a matriculation

certificate and 3.8 per cent reflected other. The largest segment of the employees (22.5 per cent) had 21–25 years of service, followed by 20 per cent of the respondents with 26+ years of service. This generally implies lengthy tenure by employees.

2.3 Measuring instruments

Data were collected using a measuring instrument consisting of three sections. Section A included biographical data relating to age, gender, educational level and length of service in the organisation and was measured according to a pre-coded nominal scale.

Section B incorporated the Job Insecurity Questionnaire (JIQ) developed by De Witte (2000). This questionnaire consists of 11 items and relates to two dimensions, namely, the affective and cognitive dimensions of job insecurity. Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 10 and 11 pertain to cognitive job insecurity and items 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 reflect affective job insecurity. The items are measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The items of the JIQ measure global job insecurity and, in the current study, were found to have a Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha of 0.87 with the cognitive and affective sub-scales having an Alpha of 0.85 and 0.80 respectively. Likewise, De Witte (2000) reported the Cronbach Coefficient Alpha for the JIQ as being 0.929. The cognitive and affective sub-scales were also found by De Witte (2000) to be highly reliable, with the cognitive sub-scale having an Alpha of 0.90 and the affective sub-scale having an Alpha of 0.85. De Witte (2000) states that, although the content of the affective and cognitive sub-scales do not overlap, there is a high underlying correlation between them ($r = 0.76$).

Section C incorporated the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) developed by Demerouti in 1999. This questionnaire consists of 16 items and two dimensions, namely, the disengagement and the exhaustion dimensions and uses both positively and negatively worded items. Items 1, 3, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13 and 15 measure the disengagement dimension and items 2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 12, 14 and 16 reflect the exhaustion dimension. Respondents were required to

respond to statements on a 1–4-point scale, where 1 is ‘strongly agree’ and 4 is ‘strongly disagree’. In the OLBI, high scores indicate high levels of burnout. In this study, the Cronbach’s Coefficient Alpha for the OLBI was 0.928, with the sub-scales of exhaustion and disengagement having Alpha values of 0.82 and 0.80 respectively. The eight items of the exhaustion sub-scale examine the feelings of emptiness and physical exhaustion experienced by individuals. The disengagement sub-scale is also comprised of eight items and relates to individuals distancing themselves from work. The Cronbach’s Alpha for the exhaustion and disengagement sub-scales was determined by Bosman, Rothmann and Buitendach (2005) as being 0.85 and 0.84 respectively, and has been found by Demerouti et al. (2003) to be a reliable and valid instrument, with both convergent and discriminant validity. A study by Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner and Ebbinghaus (2002) found that the OLBI is suitable for use in any work context.

2.4 Procedure

A pilot test of the questionnaire was conducted on 10 subjects as a trial run to detect whether any weaknesses in the design and instrumentation

existed, using the same protocols and procedures designated for the actual data collection process. The questionnaire was easily understood and no changes were required.

2.5 Statistical analysis

The reliability of the sub-sections of the questionnaire, namely, the Job Insecurity Questionnaire (JIQ) and the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI), was determined by using Cronbach’s Coefficient Alpha and indicated a very high level of internal consistency of the items and hence a very high degree of reliability. Descriptive statistics (frequency analyses, percentages, mean analyses and standard deviations) and inferential statistics (correlations, Mann-Whitney Test, Kruskal-Wallis Test) were used to analyse the results of the study.

3 Results

Descriptive analyses were conducted to determine the extent to which employees experienced cognitive, affective and overall job insecurity (Table 1). The higher the score, the greater the extent of job security.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics: cognitive, affective and overall job insecurity

Dimension	Mean	Interval – lower bound	Interval – upper bound	Variance	Std. dev.
Overall job insecurity	2.3034	2.1033	2.5035	0.808	0.8990
Cognitive job insecurity	2.1854	1.9985	2.3723	0.705	0.8399
Affective job insecurity	2.4450	2.2126	2.6774	1.091	1.0443

Table 1 indicates that respondents scored in the average range of the scale on overall job insecurity (Mean = 2.3034), although against a maximum attainable score of 5, it would reflect room for improvement. Affective job insecurity is higher (Mean = 2.4450) than cognitive job insecurity (Mean = 2.1854). The mean score values against a maximum attainable score of 5 indicates that significant improvement is needed

if employees are to think and feel that they are secure in their jobs, as the consequences of job insecurity are detrimental to both the individual and the organisation.

Descriptive analyses were conducted to determine the extent to which employees experienced burnout (Table 2). The higher the score, the greater the level of burnout.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics: disengagement, exhaustion and overall burnout

Dimension	Mean	Interval – lower bound	Interval – upper bound	Variance	Std. dev.
Overall burnout	2.4953	2.3633	2.6274	0.352	0.5934
Disengagement	2.3844	2.2541	2.5146	0.342	0.5852
Exhaustion	2.6063	2.4602	2.7523	0.431	0.6564

Table 2 reflects that respondents scored in the average range of the scale on overall burnout (Mean = 2.4953), although against a maximum attainable score of 5, it would reflect room for improvement. Reported exhaustion was higher (Mean = 2.6063) than disengagement (Mean = 2.3844). The mean score values against a maximum attainable score of 5 indicates that significant improvement is needed, perhaps

by means of management support, to prevent or reduce disengagement, exhaustion and consequent burnout.

Hypothesis 1

There are significant intercorrelations between the sub-dimensions of job insecurity (cognitive and affective) and overall job insecurity respectively (Table 3).

Table 3

Intercorrelations: cognitive, affective and overall job insecurity

Dimension	r/p	Overall job insecurity	Cognitive job insecurity	Affective job insecurity
Overall job insecurity	r p	1		
Cognitive job insecurity	r p	0.962 0.000*	1	
Affective job insecurity	r p	0.965 0.000*	0.858 0.000*	1

* p < 0.01

Table 3 indicates that there are significant correlations between overall job insecurity and cognitive and affective job insecurity respectively at the 1 per cent level of significance. In addition, there is a significant relationship between cognitive and affective job insecurity at the 1 per cent level of significance. Hypothesis 1 can therefore be accepted.

Hypothesis 2

There are significant intercorrelations between the sub-dimensions of burnout (disengagement and exhaustion) and overall burnout respectively (Table 4).

Table 4

Intercorrelations: disengagement, exhaustion and overall burnout

Dimension	r/p	Overall burnout	Disengagement	Exhaustion
Overall burnout	r p	1		
Disengagement	r p	0.950 0.000*	1	
Exhaustion	r p	0.961 0.000*	0.827 0.000*	1

* p < 0.01

Table 4 indicates that there are significant correlations between overall burnout and disengagement and exhaustion respectively at the 1 per cent level of significance. In addition, there is a significant relationship between disengagement and exhaustion at the 1 per cent

level of significance. Hypothesis 2 can therefore be accepted.

Hypothesis 3

There is a significant relationship between job insecurity and burnout (Table 5).

Table 5

Intercorrelations: job insecurity and burnout

Dimension	r/p	Overall job insecurity	Cognitive job insecurity	Affective job insecurity
Overall burnout	r p	0.366 0.001*	0.366 0.001*	0.340 0.002*
Disengagement	r p	0.286 0.010*	0.293 0.008*	0.258 0.021**
Exhaustion	r p	0.407 0.000*	0.401 0.000*	0.384 0.000*

* p ≤ 0.01

** p < 0.05

Table 5 indicates that there are significant intercorrelations between the sub-dimensions of job insecurity and the sub-dimensions of burnout at the 5 per cent level of significance. In addition, there is a significant relationship between overall job insecurity and the sub-dimensions of burnout (disengagement and exhaustion) respectively at the 1 per cent level of significance. There is a further significant relationship between overall burnout and the sub-dimensions of job insecurity at the 1 per

cent level of significance. Table 5 also shows that there is a significant relationship between overall job insecurity and overall burnout at the 1 per cent level of significance. Hypothesis 3 can therefore be accepted.

Hypothesis 4

There is a significant difference between the levels of job insecurity and burnout experienced by male and female employees (Table 6).

Table 6

Mann-Whitney test: gender and job insecurity and burnout respectively

Dimensions	Z	P
Overall job insecurity	-0.182	0.856
Cognitive job insecurity	-0.675	0.500
Affective job insecurity	-0.031	0.975
Overall burnout	-2.421	0.015**
Disengagement	-2.726	0.006*
Exhaustion	-1.968	0.049**

* p < 0.01

** p < 0.05

Table 6 indicates that there is a significant difference between the levels of burnout experienced by employees according to gender. In particular, males and females differ significantly not only in their levels of overall burnout but also in their levels of the dimensions of burnout (disengagement and exhaustion)

respectively. Table 6 also indicates that male and female employees do not differ significantly regarding their levels of job insecurity. Hence, Hypothesis 4 can be only partially accepted in terms of gender. In order to assess exactly where the significant differences lie, descriptive analyses were computed (Table 7).

Table 7

Mann-Whitney test: descriptive statistics report for gender and burnout

Dimension	Gender	Mean	N	Std. dev.
Overall burnout	Male	2.7450	25	0.735
	Female	2.3818	55	0.482
Disengagement	Male	2.6400	25	0.669
	Female	2.2682	55	0.507
Exhaustion	Male	2.8500	25	0.842
	Female	2.4955	55	0.524

Table 7 indicates that males report significantly higher levels of exhaustion, disengagement and overall burnout than those of females.

Hypothesis 5

There is a significant difference in the levels of job insecurity and burnout experienced by employees varying in age (Table 8).

Table 8

Kruskal-Wallis test: age and job insecurity and burnout respectively

Dimensions	Chi-square	Df	p
Overall job insecurity	7.903	3	0.048**
Cognitive job insecurity	4.667	3	0.198

Affective job insecurity	9.784	3	0.020**
Overall burnout	6.526	3	0.089
Disengagement	6.183	3	0.103
Exhaustion	6.995	3	0.072

** p < 0.05

Table 8 indicates that there is a significant difference in the levels of overall job insecurity experienced by employees varying in age at the 5 per cent level of significance. In particular, employees varying in age also differ significantly in affective job insecurity at the 5 per cent level of significance. However, they do not

differ significantly in cognitive job insecurity, overall burnout and the dimensions of burnout (disengagement and exhaustion). Hypothesis 5 can therefore be only partially accepted in terms of age. In order to assess exactly where these significant differences lie, descriptive analyses were computed (Table 9).

Table 9

Kruskal-Wallis test: descriptive statistics report for age and job insecurity

Dimension	Age	Mean	N	Std. dev.
Overall job insecurity	21–30	2.7832	13	0.819
	31–40	2.3818	25	0.867
	41–50	2.2045	28	0.908
	51–60	1.9156	14	0.873
Affective job insecurity	21–30	3.1077	13	0.933
	31–40	2.5520	25	0.966
	41–50	2.3000	28	1.060
	51–60	1.9286	14	0.984

Table 9 indicates that as employees in this organisation get older their levels of affective job insecurity and overall job insecurity decline significantly. The implication is that older employees experience fewer feelings of job insecurity, which lessens overall job insecurity.

Hypothesis 6

There is a significant difference in the levels of job insecurity and burnout experienced by employees varying in education (Table 10).

Table 10

Kruskal-Wallis test: education and job insecurity and burnout respectively

Dimensions	Chi-square	Df	p
Overall job insecurity	6.096	3	0.107
Cognitive job insecurity	6.294	3	0.098
Affective job insecurity	4.115	3	0.249
Overall burnout	0.697	3	0.874
Disengagement	0.404	3	0.939
Exhaustion	1.102	3	0.777

Table 10 indicates that there are no significant differences in the sub-dimensions of job insecurity (cognitive and affective) and overall job insecurity among employees with varying levels of education. Likewise, there are no significant differences in the sub-dimensions of burnout (disengagement and exhaustion) and overall burnout among employees with varying

levels of education. Hypothesis 6 can therefore not be accepted in terms of education.

Hypothesis 7

There is a significant difference in the levels of job insecurity and burnout experienced by employees varying in length of service in the organisation (Table 11).

Table 11

Kruskal-Wallis test: length of service and job insecurity and burnout respectively

Dimensions	Chi-square	Df	p
Overall job insecurity	9.549	5	0.089
Cognitive job insecurity	5.180	5	0.394
Affective job insecurity	11.258	5	0.046**
Overall burnout	13.575	5	0.019**
Disengagement	14.347	5	0.014**
Exhaustion	13.159	5	0.022**

** p < 0.05

Table 11 indicates that there is a significant difference in the levels of burnout experienced by employees with varying lengths of service in the organisation at the 5 per cent level of significance. In particular, such employees differ significantly not only in their levels of overall burnout but also in their levels of the sub-dimensions of burnout (disengagement and exhaustion) respectively. Table 11 indicates also that employees with varying lengths of

service in the organisation differ significantly in their levels of affective job insecurity at the 5 per cent level of significance. However, these employees do not differ significantly in their levels of cognitive job insecurity and overall job insecurity. Hypothesis 7 can therefore be only partially accepted in terms of length of service in the organisation. In order to assess exactly where the significant differences lie, descriptive analyses were computed (Table 12).

Table 12

Kruskal-Wallis test: descriptive statistics for length of service

Dimension	Length of service	Mean	N	Std. dev.
Affective job insecurity	1-5	2.7600	15	1.114
	6-10	2.4889	9	0.794
	11-15	2.9500	12	0.827
	16-20	2.6600	10	1.095
	21-25	2.1778	18	1.133
	26 and above	1.9125	16	0.920

Overall burnout	1–5	2.0458	15	0.498
	6–10	2.4375	9	0.470
	11–15	2.8073	12	0.710
	16–20	2.6250	10	0.528
	21–25	2.4141	18	0.524
	26 and above	2.4953	16	0.552
Disengagement	1–5	1.9333	15	0.508
	6–10	2.3333	9	0.409
	11–15	2.7396	12	0.658
	16–20	2.6250	10	0.485
	21–25	2.4583	18	0.568
	26 and above	2.3359	16	0.541
Exhaustion	1–5	2.1583	15	0.547
	6–10	2.5417	9	0.565
	11–15	2.8750	12	0.808
	16–20	2.8625	10	0.654
	21–25	2.7917	18	0.519
	26 and above	2.4922	16	0.644

Table 13 indicates that employees with more years in the organisation (11–20) experience higher levels of disengagement, exhaustion and overall burnout. This is particularly evident among employees who have served the organisation for 11–15 years, followed by those in service for 16–20 years. These employees report higher levels of exhaustion, disengagement and overall burnout. In all cases, employees with only 1–5 years of service reported the lowest levels of exhaustion, disengagement and overall burnout respectively. Table 13 reflects also that employees who have served the organisation for 11–15 years have the highest levels of affective job insecurity. This group is followed by employees with the lowest duration of service (1–5 years), who reflect feelings of job security. Affective job insecurity was least reported by employees with a service record of 26 years and over.

4

Discussion

4.1 Interpretation of results

Job insecurity

Respondents scored in the average range of the scale on overall job insecurity (Mean = 2.3034), which therefore reflects room for improvement. Affective job insecurity is higher (Mean = 2.4450) than cognitive job insecurity (Mean = 2.1854), implying that employees feel more insecure in their jobs than they do with the perceived likelihood of losing them. It is possible that cognitive job insecurity is lower as a result of employees working in a highly unionised environment and consequently thinking that they are protected against job loss. Grobler, Warnich, Carrell, Elbert and Hatfield (2002) found that one of the main reasons why individuals join trade unions is to ensure job security.

The sub-dimensions of job insecurity (cognitive and affective) correlate significantly with each other and with overall job insecurity. The implication is that employees' feelings and cognition of job insecurity have the potential to snowball and have a negative impact on overall job insecurity. This is particularly important because research shows that negative affectivity contributes to feelings of job insecurity (Hartley et al., 1991; Sverke et al., 2004). In addition, Bosman, Rothman and Buitendach (2005) found that respondents with high negative affectivity experienced decreased work engagement. Owing to these negative consequences of job insecurity for both the individual and the organisation, it is imperative to design strategies for controlling or minimising the occurrence of negative affectivity in an organisation.

Burnout

Table 2 shows that respondents scored in the average range of the scale on overall burnout (Mean = 2.4953), which thus reflects room for improvement. Reported exhaustion is higher (Mean = 2.6063) than disengagement (Mean = 2.3844), implying that employees experience greater emptiness and physical fatigue than when distancing themselves from work. Since burnout is seen as a consequence of prolonged cognitive, affective and physical strain (Demerouti et al., 2002), the results indicate that many respondents may be on the road to experiencing the condition. There should therefore be more focus on interventions to curb stress with immediate effect.

The sub-dimensions of burnout (disengagement and exhaustion) significantly correlate with each other and with overall burnout. These results imply that employees' emotional and physical exhaustion may result in their distancing themselves from work (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Walters & Raybound, 2007), which would have a ripple effect, resulting in higher levels of employee burnout. These negative effects could translate into individuals failing to accomplish goals and tasks, potentially creating a domino effect that would threaten the very survival of the organisation (Lingard, 2003; Reynolds & Tabacchi, 1993; Vallen, 1993).

Relationship between job insecurity and burnout

The results indicate that there are significant intercorrelations between the sub-dimensions of job insecurity and those of burnout. In addition, there is a significant relationship between overall job insecurity and the sub-dimensions of burnout (disengagement and exhaustion). There is a further significant relationship between overall burnout and the sub-dimensions of job insecurity, as well as a significant relationship between overall job insecurity and overall burnout. In their research on job insecurity, burnout and organisational commitment in a financial institution in Gauteng, Bosman, Buitendach and Laba (2005) found similar results. Their investigation reflected that job insecurity was closely related to burnout. Job insecurity was noted to have predictive value when it came to exhaustion, cynicism and reduced personal efficacy (burnout dimensions) (Bosman, Buitendach & Laba, 2005). In addition, several researchers in separate studies found statistically significant relationships between job insecurity and burnout (Bosman, Rothman & Buitendach, 2005; Dekker & Schaufeli, 1995; Westman et al., 2001).

The impact of biographical data on job insecurity

This study found that age significantly influences affective job insecurity and overall job insecurity among employees. The descriptive analyses show that older employees experience lower levels of affective and overall job insecurity. These results are, however, contrary to those of Buitendach et al. (2005), who found that older employees experienced higher levels of job insecurity in comparison with their younger counterparts.

The current study also found that length of service in the organisation influenced affective job insecurity. Respondents who had worked for between 1–5 years experienced markedly high levels of affective job insecurity, and older employees, particularly those with a length of service of 26 years and more, reported the lowest levels of affective job insecurity. A possible reason for this difference could be the competitive and volatile environment to which

younger employees are exposed at an early stage in their careers, which makes them fear job loss, in comparison with their more experienced, hands-on colleagues.

It was found that gender did not influence cognitive, affective and overall job insecurity. Similar results were obtained by Buitendach (2004). However, De Witte (1999) found that women reported higher levels of job insecurity than those of men. Furthermore, in this study it was found that employees' educational levels did not influence job insecurity. However, Buitendach et al. (2005) found a significant relationship between job insecurity and the level of education. They found that individuals with a diploma or a degree exhibited higher levels of cognitive job insecurity than those of their colleagues.

The impact of biographical data on burnout

This study found that males and females differed significantly in their levels of burnout, and that males presented greater degrees of disengagement, exhaustion and overall burnout. However, Timms, Graham and Caltabiano (2006) studied the relationship between gender and burnout among teachers and found that female primary school teachers experienced the greatest levels of job burnout. Ayres, Schalock and Rudd (2002) found that male teachers were more likely to leave the teaching profession on account of poor support networks and lack of prestige.

In this study, it was also noted that the length of employees' service influenced their levels of disengagement, exhaustion and overall burnout. In particular, it was found that employees with 11–15 years of service, followed by those with 16–20 years of service, displayed the highest levels of burnout, while employees with only 1–5 years of service displayed the lowest.

Further, it was found that age did not influence employees' levels of burnout. However, Ahola et al. (2006) conducted a study in Finland on burnout among the general Finnish population and found that age was positively related to burnout, thereby indicating that older individuals experienced higher levels of burnout.

This study also found that education did not influence employee burnout. However, Ahola et

al. (2006) found that women, in particular those who held a lower educational qualification, were at greater risk of experiencing burnout. This may be due to the pressure that women face in balancing their various life roles, such as fulfilling work roles and being a wife and a mother (Bryant & Constantine, 2006).

4.2 Conclusions

The significant intercorrelations between the sub-dimensions of job insecurity and the sub-dimensions of burnout respectively, and between job insecurity and burnout, clearly emphasise the potential for cognitive and affective job insecurity to impact on employees, leading them to experience high levels of disengagement and exhaustion, thereby enhancing the potential for burnout. The negative consequences of these can be detrimental to both the individual and the organisation. It is therefore imperative for interventions to be introduced and implemented in order to prevent job insecurity and burnout.

4.3 Recommendations

The impact of cognitive and affective job insecurity and its potential to increase employee disengagement, exhaustion and burnout has detrimental consequences for the individual and the organisation. It therefore warrants measures for preventing the occurrence of these variables. Based on the results of the study, it is recommended that:

- In order to reduce and prevent the occurrence of cognitive job insecurity, managers should openly communicate their hiring and dismissal policies to their employees so that all are aware of their positions.
- In order to reduce and prevent the prevalence of affective job insecurity, managers should ensure that employees participate in decision-making processes, as this would make them feel that they were being treated fairly and that the organisation valued them and their input. It is also important for decisions to be made in a fair, transparent and just manner in order to build trust.
- Owing to the existence of the exhaustion sub-scale of burnout, organisations should

adopt successful mechanisms for early detection, and management support should be provided to deal with them.

- When it comes to the disengagement sub-scale of burnout, it would be useful for employees to build a support network inside and outside of the workplace in order to cope with symptoms of burnout before they snowball out of proportion with detrimental effects. Undoubtedly, job insecurity is evinced through certain symptoms of strain and these could be minimised with social support from family, friends, supervisors, mentors and peers, thereby serving as a coping strategy for job-insecure employees.
- In order to reduce and prevent overall burnout, organisations should offer, as part of their employee-wellness programmes, professional assistance to their employees to help them cope with stress. In addition, training could be offered to equip employees with self-help strategies for coping with stress. Hence, there should be procedures in place to help employees prevent and overcome burnout in a constructive and respectful manner.
- In order to reduce and prevent overall job insecurity, organisations should increasingly adopt development (OD) interventions to monitor the organisational climate. Depending on the specific needs, organisations could utilise one or more of an array of organisational development interventions to guide them from where they are (actual) to where they want to be (desired) and to improve practices that would encourage the accomplishment of individual, group and organisational goals. Numerous interventions, such as human process and human resource management interventions, could be used to minimise, if not alleviate, job insecurity and consequent burnout. The cluster of interventions that could be adopted includes numerous activities, namely diagnostic, team building, intergroup, survey feedback, education and training, technostructural or structural, process consultation, Grid OD, third-party peace-making, coaching and counselling,

life and career planning, planning and goal-setting, strategic management, and organisational transformation activities.

- When planning interventions, there should be cognizance of the impact of biographical profiles (gender, age, length of service) and personality traits (such as locus of control and affectivity) which have been found to influence job insecurity and burnout respectively. In this way, interventions would be context-based and thus more relevant, resulting in a greater impact on minimisation of job insecurity and burnout.

4.4 Limitations

This study adopted a non-probability sampling technique using a sample of 80 respondents, thereby limiting the generalisability of the results. Further, no attempt was made to determine the impact of race on job insecurity and burnout and only the survey method of data collection was used.

4.5 Suggestions for further research

Future research should obtain a larger sample size, using a probability sampling technique to improve the generalisability of the findings. A more culturally representative sample should be included and cognizance should be given to the impact of race on job insecurity and burnout. In order to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings, a triangulated approach to data collection should be adopted that employs the use of both qualitative and quantitative analyses. In addition, longitudinal studies may be more effective in future research in order to gain a long-term perspective of job insecurity and burnout, while documenting environmental changes and trends.

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