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CHAPTER 1

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND CONTEXT

1.1   INTRODUCTION

The primary objective of the present research is to confirm the existence of a relationship between role identity and burnout and to explore the nature of this relationship among client service employees. The research also examines the mechanisms by virtue of which such a relationship exists. In addition, the research investigates the role of organisational client discourse in the development of employee role identities and provides recommendations as to how organisations can frame client discourse in order to facilitate the construction of empowering client service role identities.   The research therefore has both theoretical value and practical significance.

In the sections that follow, the research problem and context will be sketched, providing a rationale for the study. Key concepts will be defined, the purpose of the research will be explored and the structure of the dissertation presented.

1.2   RESEARCH PROBLEM AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Burnout, characterised by feelings of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced personal accomplishment can prove detrimental to both the individual employee and the organisation. On the individual level, prolonged periods of burnout have been linked to anxiety (Richardsen, Burke & Leiter, 1992), depression (Glass & McKnight, 1996) and diminished levels of self-esteem (Rosse, Boss, Johnson & Crown, 1991). At the organisational level, burnout has been linked to job withdrawal behaviours such as turnover intention, absenteeism, reduced organisational commitment and a decrease in job performance (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001: 406). The negative effects of employee burnout can be particularly devastating in client service organisations, since burnout has been shown to significantly reduce the quality of interpersonal work-related relationships (Singh, Goolsby & Rhoads, 1994). Employees suffering from feelings of emotional exhaustion that characterise burnout

are prone to treat clients, co-workers and supervisors with cynicism and negativity, resulting in challenging interpersonal and client relations (Yagil, 2006: 259).

Previous research on burnout in client service settings has shown how client service employees are particularly susceptible to the kinds of stressors that contribute to burnout (Griffith, 2001; Low, Cravens, Grant & Moncrief, 2001; Tsai & Huange, 2002). By virtue of their professions, client service employees are exposed to a considerable amount of role conflict due to the fact that they have to satisfy customer demands while simultaneously complying with organisational requirements and management expectations (Chung & Schneider, 2002; Rod & Ashill, 2009; Singh, 2000; Varca, 2009). Since the client service employees' company is largely dependent on the client for business, clients are often able to exert considerable influence over client serving employees through both formal and informal evaluations (Gettman & Gelfand, 2007). Client serving employees are often subject to abuse, harassment and aggressive behaviours from clients (Gettman & Gelfand, 2007). This results largely from what has been referred to as an imbalance of interpersonal power between the employee and the client (Fine, Shepherd & Josephs, 1999: 27; Grandey, Dickter & Sin, 2004; Gettman & Gelfand, 2007). Furthermore, Cordes and Dougherty (1993: 644) maintain that client service employees can find themselves in compromising and emotionally exhausting positions when they believe that the demands of their clients cannot be met by the organisation. Client service employees are often also required to engage in emotional labour, which has also been linked to the development of burnout (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge & Lee, 2003).

In an effort to curb the development of burnout among employees, burnout research has predominantly focused on the antecedents to the burnout syndrome. Situational variables, such as job and organisational characteristics, are possibly the most frequently cited antecedents of burnout. Job characteristics include stressors such as quantitative job demands (too much work for the available time), qualitative job demands such as role conflict and role ambiguity, and an absence of job resources such as social support, information and control that can be used to buffer the effects of job demands (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner & Schaufeli, 2001; Low *et al.*, 2001 Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996; Singh *et al.,* 1994). Other research has focused on

personality and dispositional factors as predictors of burnout and include a focus on variables such as conscientiousness (Witt, Andrews & Carlson, 2004), communal orientation (Truchot & Deregard, 2001) and sense of coherence (Rothmann, Jackson & Kruger, 2003). The nature of interpersonal relationships has also been the focus of research into the antecedents of burnout, and it has been shown that perceived reciprocity (Truchot & Deregard, 2001) and perceived inequity in interpersonal relationships (Bakker, Schaufeli, Sixma, Bosveld & Van Dierendonck, 2000) are associated with the development of burnout.

The role of subjective perceptions in the development of burnout has also been well documented. Such research has largely been conducted from an existential perspective (Pines, 2002) where the development of burnout has been linked to higher order needs such as meaning and self-actualisation. Work and performance-related expectations have also been linked to the development of burnout, most notably through the work of Stevens and O'Neil (1983) and Cherniss (1993).

Recent research into the antecedents of burnout has increasingly focused on subjective identity perceptions as possible correlates of burnout (e.g., Buunk, Peiro, Rodriguez & Bravo, 2007; Edwards & Dirette, 2010; Kang, Twigg & Hertzman, 2010, Kremer-Hayon, Faraj & Wubbels, 2002; Schaible, 2006; Vanheule & Verhaeghe, 2004, 2005; Vanheule, Lievrouw & Verhaeghe, 2003). The majority of these studies have concentrated on the role that professional or occupational identification plays in the development of burnout (e.g., Edwards & Dirette, 2010; Kremer-Hayon *et al.,* 2002; Schaible, 2006), while others have focused on social identity factors as antecedents to burnout (e.g., Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Kang *et al.,* 2010). Research by Vanheule *et al.* (2003) and Vanheule and Verhaeghe (2004, 2005) show how subjective identity perceptions of the relationship between client and client service employee potentially contribute to burnout. Their findings indicate that lower burnout individuals are able to create a psychological distance between themselves and the client, while higher burnout respondents experience a sense of powerlessness and defeat when dealing with the client. By employing a social rank perspective, Buunk *et al.* (2007) examined the relationship between status-related variables and burnout. Their investigation shows that status-related variables (such as subjective status, loss of status and a sense of defeat) explain more variance in

burnout scores than the job and organisational variables that have traditionally been linked to burnout.

The present study expands this focus on the role of subjective identity perceptions in the development of burnout, by exploring the relationship between role identity and burnout amongst client service employees. While identity processes associated with occupational, professional and social identity have been linked to the development of burnout, no research exploring the relationship between role identity as conceptualised here and burnout could be found. Furthermore, most research on subjective identity perceptions and burnout has focused on the way in which identification with a specific occupational, professional or social identity contributes to the development of burnout. The present study departs from this focus on identification processes by exploring how specific role identities in the client service environment can contribute to the development of burnout.

According to Hogg, Terry and White (1995: 25) role identities are the self-descriptions that individuals use to interpret situations and subsequently construct role-related behavioural expectations. By employing a complex identity feedback loop where role-related outcomes are compared with role-related expectations, individuals construct role identities. Through this process, employees define the kinds of relationships that they are expected to maintain with others within the work context (Czander, 1993: 1169). These role identities subsequently inform role-related behaviours and subjective perceptions about interpersonal relationships at work.

In view of the fact that the relationship between burnout and role identity may be mediated by the kinds of role-related behaviour the individual engages in and the subjective perceptions that the individual holds, the research also explores these mechanisms. As indicated in **Figure 1**, the present research argues that burnout results from role-related behaviours and subjective perceptions which are informed by the kinds of role identities that client service employees adopt. The research further maintains that the process of role identity verification, where the individual endeavours to match his role-related behaviour with the role-related expectations contained in the role identity, also carries implications for the development of burnout. Individuals who are unable to match their role-related expectations with the outcomes

of the situation, experience failed self-verification, resulting in feelings of defeat, diminished self-esteem, and possibly burnout.

The present research explores whether the postulated relationships presented in **Figure 1** exist, and what kinds of client service role identities may predispose the client service employee to burnout.
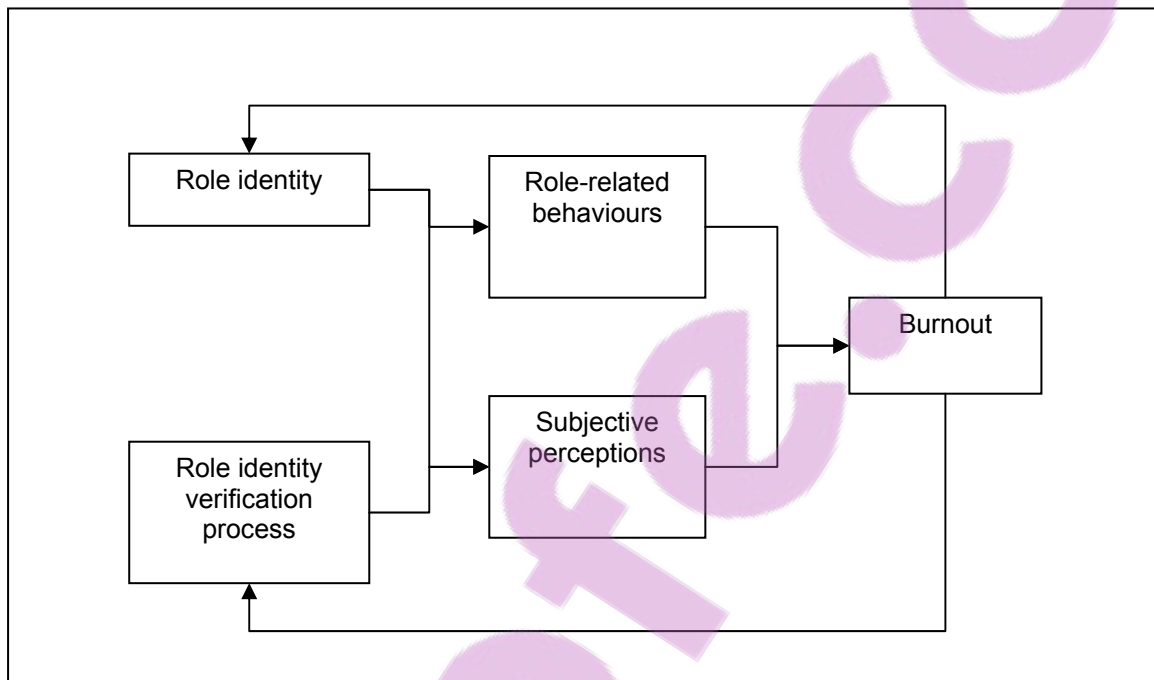
Figure 1: Postulated relationship between role identity and burnout

The causal paths indicated in the model are deduced from the theory pertaining to role identity and burnout which will be discussed in greater detail in the literature review (Chapter 2). It should be noted, however, that the present research is explorative and descriptive and is therefore not concerned with empirically testing the direction or strength of paths between variables presented in the model. Instead, the research explores the possibility of relationships among the concepts as deduced from the theory and indicated in **Figure 1**. The research argument and theoretical framework linking role identity and burnout will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 3.

The behavioural expectations underpinning the construction of employee role identities are communicated to the employee through the client discourse of the

organisation. Through the process of identity construction, employees draw on this discourse and construct role identities that inform subsequent behaviours and subjective perceptions. This discourse is generally articulated by organisational management and communicated through formal organisational texts such as recruitment literature, appraisal documentation and marketing documents as well as more informal mechanisms including organisational rituals and conversations. Through this discourse, the employees' understanding of the client and how to behave towards them is shaped (Anderson-Gough, Grey & Robson, 2000: 1162). The manner in which the organisation defines the client carries both implicit and explicit expectations as to how the employee should relate to the client and the kind of role that the employee should assume in relation to the client (Anderson–Gough *et al.*, 2000). Depending on the nature of the client discourse communicated by the organisation, and the extent to which the employee identifies with this discourse, the role identity constructed by the employee may imply subordination of his/her needs and the consequent elevation of the needs and demands of the client. In such scenarios, the employee could suffer emotional exhaustion due to constant striving to fulfil the (often) unreasonable demands of powerful clients.

While it is noted that client service organisations are by their very nature necessarily driven by a strong client orientation and, to some extent, require that the client is placed in a position of power relative to the employee; employees should be protected from extreme demands and unreasonable pressures resulting from such client discourse. The present research therefore also explores the manner in which client service employees perceive, internalise and interpret the organisational client discourse in the construction of their role identities. In so doing, the research makes a practical contribution through recommendations aimed at the cultivation of organisational client discourse that supports the empowerment of client service employees.

1.3   DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

In the paragraphs that follow, the key concepts employed during the current research will be defined. While the research is primarily focused on burnout, role identity and

organisational client discourse, a number of additional concepts pertinent to the research argument will also be defined. These include "client service employee", "client", "self-verification" and "emotional labour".

1.3.1. Burnout

For the purpose of this study, burnout has been conceptualised as comprising three components, namely emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and feelings of reduced personal accomplishment. This definition conforms to the original definition of burnout developed by Maslach (1982) and corresponds to the three components as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory – Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS). Emotional exhaustion manifests as both physical and psychological stress and is characterised by a loss of energy and feeling worn-out (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). Depersonalisation refers to the interpersonal aspect of burnout and is characterised by attempts to distance oneself psychologically from service recipients. It is accompanied by a detached, emotionally callous attitude towards service recipients (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Maslach *et al.,* 2001). Reduced personal accomplishment comprises an aspect of self-evaluation and is characterised by negative evaluations of the self and feelings associated with failure (Maslach *et al.,* 2001).

It should be noted that the MBI-HSS was developed for use in contexts were respondents provide a service, care or treatment to a recipient (Maslach, 1982). Later, the Maslach Burnout Inventory – General Survey (MBI-GS) was developed for use in situations where respondents do not necessarily interact with clients. As a result, the three components of burnout were more broadly conceptualised in relation to the job as emotional exhaustion, cynicism and reduced professional efficacy. While the client service employees who form part of the present study do not necessarily deal with the physical or psychological problems of their clients, they do interact closely with their clients on a daily basis. It was therefore purposefully decided to use the MBI-HSS instead of the MBI-S to measure burnout in the present study.

1.3.2. Role identity

The concept of identity has been frequently applied in both the social and behavioural sciences (Ng & Feldman, 2007: 116). As a result, numerous theoretical traditions have explored the concept, resulting in as many conceptualisations of the term (Burke, 2003: 1). Social identity theory, for instance, assumes that one's identity is linked to the social category to which one belongs, while personal identity theory focuses on the individual's sense of self as constituting the core of his/her role identity (Burke, 2003).

Role identities act as a frame of reference that individuals use to interpret a variety of social situations, thereby influencing role-related behaviour by informing behavioural expectations (Burke & Tully, 1977: 84; Thoits, 1991: 103). According to Hogg *et al.,* (1995: 257), role identities are "self conceptions, self-referent cognitions, or self definitions that people apply to themselves as a consequence of the structural role positions they occupy, and through a process of labelling or self-definition as a member of a particular social category". In other words, role identities can be defined as the meanings that individuals attach to themselves within particular situations. These meanings encompass a set of expectations that prescribe appropriate behaviour within a specific role-related situation. This implies that in the client service arena, the role identities of client service employees may largely be informed by the client discourse of the organisation.

1.3.3. Organisational client discourse

According to Grant, Keenoy and Oswick (1998: 1) organisational discourse comprises the "languages and symbolic media we employ to describe, present, interpret and theorise what we take to be the facticity of organisational life". Traditionally, discourse was described only as spoken dialogue, and excluded reference to written texts. Contemporary theory on discourse, however, includes both written and spoken texts, cultural artefacts and modes of thinking such as ideologies and philosophies (Cooren, 2004: 373; Van Dijk, 1997: 2). As a combination of spoken words, written texts and artefacts, discourse arranges social

reality into concepts, objects and subjects, thereby shaping the social practices in which we engage (Phillips & Hardy, 1997).

Discourse drives subjectivity, enables us to make sense of ourselves and the organisations in which we operate and frames the way we understand and engage with the realities around us (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000: 1130). Furthermore, discourse drives the articulation of norms and informs the attitudes that we assume in particular contexts (Grant *et al.,* 2001: 8). According to Heracleous and Marshak (2004: 1291) the discursive construction of identity takes place through social interaction. In the organisational context it occurs when managers "author" their experiences in the process of interacting with others. In so doing, a shared sense of identity is created in the organisation, framing appropriate ways to talk and act.

It should be noted, however that organisations are not mere collectivities of shared meanings, but that they are constituted through an array of different and often competing discourses (Van Dijk, 1997). While organisations generally function according to a dominant managerially defined discourse, cognisance should be taken of the fact that a number of competing discourses could function within a single organisation, and simultaneously impact on the formation of employee identity.

1.3.4 Client service employees

For the purposes of the present study, client service employees are defined as individuals in service positions who fulfil a boundary-spanning role. For inclusion in the present study, all respondents were required to engage with the client(s) on a daily basis. The type of engagement was not specified and could include telephonic, face-to-face or electronically-facilitated communication.

1.3.5 Clients

Clients are defined as either individuals representing a client company to which a service is rendered or private individuals to whom a service is rendered. In the context of the present study, the focus is on the role identity of the client service

employee. Measurement and identification of this identity is done in accordance with the Burke and Tully (1977) definition of role identity, which asserts that role identities only exist insofar they can be distinguished from a relevant counter-role. In this instance, the meaning of the client service role identity is only significant in terms of similarities and differences it shares with the client role. The client is therefore also referred to as the "counter-role".

1.3.6 Self-verification

The concept "self-verification" is used in the context of role identity theory and refers to the process by which an individual evaluates his/her behaviours according to the role-related expectations contained within the role identity (Burke, 2004b: 5). When the individual's perception of the situation matches the expectations contained within the role identity, self-verification occurs. If, however, there is a mismatch between the individual's behaviour and role-related expectations, failed self-verification occurs (Burke, 2004b: 6).

1.3.7 Emotional labour

Emotional labour refers to the management of emotions to "create a publicly observable facial and bodily display" (Hochschild, 1983: 7) and occurs frequently in service roles. Service employees are often required by the organisations for which they work to regulate the display of emotion within the service context. Emotional labour is performed through either surface acting or deep acting (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003; Hochschild, 1983). Surface acting involves the display of emotions that are not actually felt. Deep acting, on the other hand, occurs when the employee actually attempts to feel or experience the emotion that he/she is required to display (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003).

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The objective of the research is to explore the relationship between burnout and role identity amongst client service employees. It will also describe the mechanisms by virtue of which this relationship exists and examine the extent to which these role identities are constructed in response to the dominant organisational client discourse.

In order to investigate the relationship between role identity and burnout, a sequential mixed-methods design is used. First, quantitative research is conducted by means of a questionnaire measuring burnout and client service role identity. Burnout is measured using the Maslach Burnout Inventory – Human Services Survey (MBI–HSS), while role identity is measured using a modified version of the Burke-Tully (1977) role identity measure. A number of biographic and demographic variables are included in the questionnaire, along with items measuring orientation towards work, life, the organisation and important stakeholders. Analysis of the quantitative data commences with the Maximum Likelihood Factor Analysis (MLFA) of the MBI−HSS items, followed by Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) and Correlation analyses. The quantitative phase of the research is followed by semi-structured qualitative interviews with a purposively selected sample of higher burnout and lower burnout client service employees. The qualitative data derived from the interviews is analysed using Atlas.ti™ qualitative data analysis software and proceeds using Miles and Huberman's (1994) model of open, axial and selective coding.

1.5   STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

In order to examine whether a relationship between role identity and burnout exists among client service employees, the study commences with a thorough literature review. Since the subject matter of the present research encompasses topics derived from a number of disciplines including organisational behaviour, sociology and social psychology, careful consideration has been given to the manner in which previous research on the topic is presented. The literature review therefore comprises two primary sections; the first dealing with burnout and the second with role identity and organisational discourse.

Due to the volume of previous literature covered in Chapter 2, a separate research argument chapter (Chapter 3) is devoted to a thorough synthesis and analysis of the literature as it pertains to the present study. In this chapter, the theory presented in the literature review is integrated through the construction of a conceptual model. This chapter will also present the research questions pertinent to the study.

The methodology chapter (Chapter 4) is presented next and includes a detailed explanation of the research instrumentation, sampling methodology and analysis procedures. The results of the factor analysis of the MBI−HSS are also presented here.

Next, the quantitative data are presented (Chapter 5), followed by the presentation of the qualitative data (Chapter 6). The dissertation concludes with a discussion chapter (Chapter 7) in which the results of the study are interpreted using the conceptual framework developed in Chapter 3. The significance and limitations of the present research are also presented, followed by recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 STRESS AND BURNOUT IN CLIENT SERVICE ENVIRONMENTS

A number of studies have examined the potential negative effect of stress-related variables and burnout in customer or client service environments (Griffiths, 2001; Low *et al.*, 2001; Tsai & Huang, 2002; Witt *et al.*, 2004). Through their front line interaction with clients, customer service representatives are highly susceptible to the kinds of role stress that contribute to burnout (Yagil, 2006: 259). According to Singh (2000: 15) client service employees are generally underpaid, overworked and suffer considerable stress due to the fact that their performance is measured through the satisfaction of both the client and management. Furthermore, client service employees often find themselves in precarious positions professionally, when they have to reconcile the needs of the organisation with the oftentimes conflicting needs of the client (Ashill, Rod, Thirkell & Carruthers, 2009; Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Varca, 2009). Chung and Schneider (2002: 71) put this succinctly when they state that "in manufacturing firms, there is only one distinct authority or boss, whereas in service firms, there is another master to serve – the customer".

Chung and Schneider (2002: 71) maintain that while the role of the boundary-spanning client service professional is probably one of the most complex from an organisational behaviour perspective, it has received comparatively little attention in the management literature:

"One would also naturally expect that there would be considerable attention from researchers regarding the complexity of the issues service employees face in their jobs. Unfortunately, to date, there has been both little management attention and little empirical research on service employees and human resource practices in service firms" (Chung & Schneider, 2002: 71).

In an attempt to address the gap, Chung and Schneider (2002: 71) examine the extent to which a discrepancy between management and client expectations of the

service role results in role conflict. They found partial support for the hypothesis that role conflict emerges when there is a discrepancy between what employees think customers expect of them and what they report management rewards them for doing.

Cordes and Dougherty (1993) regard the client−employee relationship as the most important variable to consider in the development of burnout, since clients are often able to exert considerable influence over client serving employees through both formal and informal evaluations (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993), due to the fact that the employee's company is dependent on the client for business (Gettman & Gelfand, 2007). Client service employees can therefore find themselves in compromising and emotionally exhausting positions when they believe that they are unable to meet the demands of their clients (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993: 644). This feeling of incompetence is strengthened when employees feel that they are not sufficiently empowered due to organisational policies or when they lack the necessary skills and aptitude to deal adequately with client requests (Varca, 2009).

As organisations become increasingly customer focused, clients are "treated as if they were managers" and have become the "moral centre of the enterprising universe" (Du Gay & Salaman, 1992: 622); exerting considerable control over client service employees. By positioning the client in such a way, the client discourse of the service organisation can place considerable pressure on client service employees to meet the needs of the client at all costs. Research by Anderson-Gough *et al.* (2000) demonstrates how the client ethic of a service organisation as communicated through its client discourse plays a role in shaping the behaviours and beliefs of employees within the organisation. The manner in which an organisation symbolically and abstractly refers to, presents and defines its clients through its client discourse carries implications for the way in which client service employees perceive the relationship with their clients. It also carries implications for the manner in which they define their roles within that relationship. Organisations with a strong service ethic may define the client in such a way as to suggest to employees that they subordinate their own needs in order to adequately meet the needs and desires of the client.

As already mentioned, limited research has examined the role subjective identity perceptions in the development of stress-related syndromes. The current research addressed this gap in the literature by focusing on burnout amongst employees within a client service setting. The research departs from the traditional focus on situational variables as the primary antecedent to burnout, and instead focuses on the relationship between role identity and burnout. The literature presented in this chapter therefore consists of two sections. The first section commences with a thorough review of the burnout literature, including a discussion of the historical development of the construct, its conceptualisation and measurement and antecedents to and consequences of the burnout syndrome. The second half of the chapter incorporates a thorough explication of the role identity literature, its measurement and the role of organisation discourse in the formation of employee role identity.

2.2   BURNOUT

2.2.1 The historical development of the burnout concept

Research into the concept of burnout has not always received the intellectual support and attention that it has received over the last two decades. The first empirical publication presenting the Maslach Burnout Inventory (probably the most widely applied instrument to measure burnout) was rejected by the publication to which it was submitted on the grounds that it fell within the ambit of "pop psychology" (Maslach *et al.*, 2001: 308). Despite this initial lack of confidence in the scientific validity of the construct, the concept of burnout has initiated numerous intellectual debates regarding its conceptualisation and application. Appropriately, Cordes, Dougherty and Blum (1997: 688) note that the research into burnout "has undergone an iterative metamorphosis, swinging between advances in conceptualisation and empirical study".

Prior to its introduction into the scientific literature in 1974, the concept of burnout enjoyed colloquial use across a number of settings (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993: 2). As far as could be established, the first documented use of the word was in 1953, when Schwartz published the now-famous case of Miss Jones, a psychiatric nurse

who suffered from symptoms he referred to as burnout. In 1960, Green (1960), published *A Burnt Out Case,* which tells the story of a spiritually anguished architect who resigns from his job to live in the African jungle. Despite the colloquial use of the term for almost two decades, the term "burnout" was first introduced into the scientific literature by Freudenberger (1974), a psychiatrist working for an alternative health care agency. While working with volunteers at the agency, he noticed how many of these volunteers experienced gradual emotional exhaustion and applied the term "burnout" to their symptoms.

At roughly the same time, Christina Maslach, a social psychology researcher who was studying how physicians and nurses cope with emotional arousal on the job, observed how a number of these medical practitioners detached or disengaged psychologically from recipients (Maslach, 1978). Maslach observed that physicians and nurses often displayed a negative shift in terms of their feelings towards patients over time, and as a result, appeared to emotionally detach themselves from their patients. This detachment hampered their ability to perform their work according to initial expectations they had set for themselves and resulted in feelings of failure and hopelessness (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993: 3). Maslach referred to these symptoms as burnout and only later discovered that the term had been colloquially applied by poverty lawyers working with people in need. Once Maslach realised that the term had been applied in the legal profession, she began examining the concept across a range of occupations within the helping professions. Between 1977 and 1980 she embarked on a number of pilot studies with colleague Ayala Pines (Maslach & Pines, 1977; Pines & Maslach, 1978; Pines & Maslach, 1980) through which they uncovered the first two dimensions of the burnout syndrome, namely emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation (Maslach, 1993: 21-25).

Research into burnout during the 1970s was generally conducted by practitioners from the human service professions including education, social services, medicine, criminal justice and mental health. The concept was initially applied to a host of personal and job-related problems and research was generally non-empirical, descriptive and qualitative (Maslach & Leiter, 1997: 27), focusing almost exclusively on the relational aspects of people work (Maslach *et al.,* 2001: 400).

The 1980s were characterised by a host of empirical studies on burnout restricted predominantly to the United States. Through a number of subsequent studies (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; 1984) "reduced feelings of personal accomplishment" was added as a third component of the burnout syndrome. As a result, burnout was conceptualised as a multi-dimensional construct comprising three components, namely emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced feelings of personal accomplishment (Maslach, 1993: 27). Burnout could therefore no longer be purely defined as a stress reaction caused by personal relations on the job, but now also comprised a self-evaluatory component in the form of personal accomplishment. Maslach and Jackson (1981) went on to develop the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), while the Tedium Measure (later referred to as the Burnout Measure) was developed by Pines, Aronson and Kafry (1981). The development of burnout measures resulted in a proliferation of empirical studies during the 1980s and 1990s which primarily focused on the antecedents to and consequences of burnout. Since the MBI predominated as the burnout measure of choice, a number of studies examined the validity of the three factor conceptualisation of the construct and the relationship between these factors (Green, Walkey & Taylor, 1991; Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Leiter, 1990; 1991). In a number of cases, alternative conceptualisations have been proposed (Golembiewski & Munzenrider, 1981, 1984; 1988; Green *et al.*, 1991).

In 1996 the MBI was extended for application outside of the human services profession (Schaufeli, Leiter, Maslach & Jackson, 1996) and resulted in the development of the MBI General Survey (MBI−GS). As a result, more recent research into burnout has been characterised by the extension of the concept to professions outside of the human services and the subsequent validation of the MBI−GS (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001; Leiter & Schaufeli, 1996; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schutte, Toppinen, Kalimo & Schaufeli, 2000).

Maslach and Leiter (1997: 7) cite the changing nature of the workplace as one of the primary contributing factors to the prevalence of burnout, which, according to them, is reaching "epidemic proportions". As the workplace becomes economically and psychologically more hostile and demanding, the negative psychological and behavioural effects of burnout will assume a central position on the research

agendas of psychologists and organisational behaviourists alike (Schaufeli, Leiter & Maslach, 2009). As mentioned in the opening chapter of this dissertation, research into the burnout syndrome is no longer restricted to human service professionals who are intensely involved with client's psychological, social or physical problems. Recent research suggests that the conditions that perpetuate the development of burnout are evident across a range of industries and occupations and result in a number of detrimental consequences for both the individual and the organisation (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009).

The development of the burnout concept has therefore enjoyed a rich and interesting history despite its early colloquial application. Commenting on the development of the phenomenon in one of her more recent publications, Maslach (2003: 189) had the following to say:

"Thus the trajectory of burnout research began with a real social problem rather than with derivations from scholarly theory. In other words, it followed a grass-roots, bottom up path rather than a top-down one" (Maslach, 2003: 189).

The more recent scientific developments pertaining to burnout are discussed in more detail in the relevant sections that follow.

2.2.2 Definitions of burnout

Research into burnout has been predominated by the conceptualisation proposed by Maslach and Jackson (1986), which defines burnout as comprising three components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and feelings of reduced personal accomplishment. Compared to other variables in the organisational behaviour literature, burnout has not been subject to many debates surrounding definition, resulting in the pervasiveness of the Maslach definition. The following section will provide an integrated summary of some of the few alternatives to the Maslach and Jackson (1986) definition proposed above.

Definitions of burnout can be categorised as "state" and "process" definitions (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998: 31). While state definitions focus on the overt characteristics of the burnout syndrome, process definitions are more concerned with the affective and behavioural consequences associated with burnout in the longer term.

2.2.2.1 State definitions of burnout

As mentioned previously, the most pervasive state definition of burnout is the one developed by Maslach and Jackson (1986: 1). Their definition conceptualises burnout as a syndrome comprising the three distinct, yet related, components of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced feelings of personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion refers to the depletion of both physical and emotional resources and associated feelings of dread and fatigue. Depersonalisation refers to a detached and cynical attitude towards work, clients and co-workers and is characterised by withdrawal behaviours, the use of negative or derogatory language towards people at work and intellectualisation of the work situation. Diminished personal accomplishment is characterised by lowered self-esteem and feelings of losing ground (Maslach & Jackson, 1986).

A number of state definitions of burnout are presented in **Table 1**. The far right hand column of the table includes a short summary of some of the main components of each of the definitions presented.

Table 1: State definitions of burnout

Author	Definition	Component
Freudenberger & Richelson (1980: 13)	"… state of fatigue or frustration brought about by devotion to a cause, a way of life, or relationship that failed to produce the expected reward."	1 Tied to unmet expectations 2 Exhaustion/frustration 3 Not necessarily work-related
Perlman & Hartman (1982)	Burnout is a response to extreme emotional stress characterised by emotional and physical exhaustion, declining productivity and over-depersonalisation.	1 Emotional and physical exhaustion 2 Depersonalisation
Brill (1984: 15)	"Burnout is an expectationally mediated, job-related, dysphoric and dysfunctional state in an individual without major psychopathology who has 1) functioned for a time at adequate performance and effective levels in the same job situations and who 2) will not recover to previous levels without outside help or environmental rearrangement."	1 Tied to unmet expectations 2 Work-related 3 Occurs in otherwise "normal" individuals 4 Leads to reduced levels of performance
Maslach & Jackson (1986: 1)	"Burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals that do people work of some kind."	1 Exhaustion 2 Depersonalisation 3 Reduced l accomplishment 4 Multi-dimensional 5 Interpersonal 6 Work-related
Pines & Aronson (1988)	"A state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion, caused by emotionally demanding situations."	1 Physical, emotional and mental exhaustion 2 Not necessarily work-related

As can be deducted from **Table 1**, most burnout researchers are in agreement that the construct does include an aspect of exhaustion. The definitions do, however, diverge in terms of the kinds of exhaustion that manifest as a result of burnout. Pines and Aronson (1988) include both physical exhaustion (fatigue, weakness, low energy) and mental exhaustion (negative attitude towards self, others, work and life) alongside emotional exhaustion (feelings of helplessness and hopelessness). Perlman and Hartman (1982) refer only to physical and emotional exhaustion in their literature. Freudenberger and Richelson (1980: 13) and Pines and Aronson (1988) define the concept as uni-dimensional, while Maslach and Jackson's (1986: 1) definition is multi-dimensional, incorporating aspects of exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced feelings of personal accomplishment.

A further point of divergence surrounding the state definitions of burnout is whether the phenomenon is work-related or whether it can occur across a range of situations outside of work. Maslach and Jackson (1986) originally conceptualised the burnout syndrome as originating from interpersonal contexts where employees engage with clients, patients or recipients on a daily basis, but this definition was eventually extended to include other occupations (Maslach *et al.*, 1996). Freudenberger and Richelson (1980) and Pines and Aronson (1988) however, never restricted burnout to employees doing people work and instead maintained that burnout could occur in any context that involved long-term exposure to emotionally demanding situations.

A number of researchers have examined the role of expectations in the development of burnout. Freudenberger and Richelson (1980) link burnout to the failed attainment of expected rewards. Brill (1984: 16) maintains that burnout is "expectationally mediated", suggesting that expectations are pivotal in the development of burnout. While the role of expectations is not central to the definition proposed by Maslach and Jackson (1986), a number of studies (discussed in subsequent sections) have examined the role of expectations in the development of burnout (Cherniss, 1980; 1983; Stevens & O'Neil, 1983).

2.2.2.2 Process definitions of burnout

Process definitions of burnout apply less focus to the overt characteristics of the burnout phenomenon, and instead focus on the long-term consequences for attitudes, values and behaviours. As can be deducted from the process definitions of burnout presented in **Table 2**, they differ from the state definitions in that they concentrate largely on the behavioural and affective implications of burnout, while the state definitions tend to focus on the causes of burnout.

Table 2: Process definitions of burnout

Author	Definition	Components
Cherniss (1980: 5)	"Burnout refers to a process in which the professional's attitudes and behaviour change in negative ways in response to job strain."	1 Results in negative attitudes and behaviours 2 Caused by job demands
Edelwich & Brodsky (1980)	"…progressive loss of idealism, energy and purpose experienced by people in the helping professions as a result of the conditions of their work."	1 Results in negative attitudes towards work 2 Caused by work conditions 3 Develops over long term
Maslach & Leiter (1997: 17)	"Burnout represents an erosion of values, dignity, spirit and will – an erosion of the human soul. It is a malady that spreads gradually and continuously over time, putting people in a downward spiral from which it is hard to recover."	1 Develops over long term 2 Affects values, dignity and spirit 3 Difficult for the individual to recover

Common to the process definitions above is the fact that burnout is largely work-related, and results in negative attitudes. Cherniss (1980: 15) describes burnout as consisting of three stages, commencing with an imbalance between demands placed on an individual and resources to cope with these demands. This then results in emotional tension and fatigue, ultimately changing attitudes and behaviours. Maslach and Leiter (1997: 17) offer a vivid process definition of the phenomenon, as having a devastating impact on individual will, values and dignity. Similarly, Edelwich

and Brodsky (1980) refer to burnout as affecting individual purpose, ideals and energy. As depicted in **Table 2**, process definitions place less focus on the exhaustion component of the burnout syndrome, and instead prioritise the fact that burnout affects attitudes, values and individual will over the longer term.

In an attempt to reconcile the state and process definitions of burnout, Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998: 36) describe burnout as:

"A persistent, negative, work-related state of mind in 'normal' individuals that is primarily characterised by exhaustion, which is accompanied by distress, a sense of reduced effectiveness, decreased motivation and the development of dysfunctional attitudes and behaviours at work. This psychological condition develops gradually but may remain unnoticed for a long time by the individual involved" (Shaufeli & Enzmann, 1998: 36).

Although varied in both depth and scope, the majority of burnout definitions do describe the phenomenon as job-related, occurring amongst individuals that would otherwise be classified as "normal". Burnout develops over time in response to conditions that place undue demands on the individual. These demands ultimately result in a number of adverse attitudinal and behavioural outcomes that carry direct consequences for performance at work.

Maslach and Schaufeli (1993: 15) list five elements common to a number of burnout definitions. These include:

- Burnout is predominantly characterised by "dysphoric symptoms" such as fatigue, depression, anxiety and mental and physical exhaustion.
- While physical symptoms are evident, the focus is on mental and behavioural symptoms.
- The symptoms and the causes of burnout are work-related.
- The symptoms of burnout manifest in otherwise healthy individuals that do not display elements of psychopathology.
- Burnout results in lowered levels of work performance, due primarily to negative attitudes and behaviours.

As mentioned in the opening chapter of this dissertation, the definition of burnout developed by Maslach and colleagues (Maslach & Jackson, 1986; Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993) will be used in the context of the study. Since the focus of the current study is on burnout amongst client service employees, the burnout construct is treated as a work-related variable that has both behavioural and emotional/psychological symptoms.

2.2.3 The Maslach definition of burnout

Maslach and Jackson (1986) initially defined burnout as a psychological syndrome that develops in response to interpersonal job stressors. It was further conceptualised as including an individual stress dimension, an interpersonal dimension and a self-evaluation dimension (Maslach *et al.*, 1996; Maslach *et al.*, 2001). Emotional exhaustion refers to the individual stress component of the syndrome and occurs amongst individuals that are "over-extended" and depleted of both emotional and physical resources. Depersonalisation corresponds to the interpersonal component, and refers to the negative, detached feeling one develops towards others at work. Personal accomplishment includes the self-evaluation dimension and is characterised by feelings of incompetence and a lack of achievement (Maslach *et al.*, 2001: 399). As originally proposed by Maslach and Jackson (1986), the burnout syndrome is precipitated by feelings of emotional exhaustion characterised by reduced physical and emotional energy. In order to conserve resources, the individual adopts a callous, detached attitude towards work, which impacts on his/her self-evaluation.

Schaufeli (2003: 2) has elaborated on this definition slightly by stating that emotional exhaustion signifies the energetic dimension of burnout, while depersonalisation and personal accomplishment denote the attitudinal and evaluative dimensions of the phenomenon respectively.

2.2.4 The burnout dimensions

A number of scholars have argued against the three-dimension conceptualisation, and have instead proposed conceptualisations comprising two (Green *et al.*, 1991;

Holland, Michael & Kim, 1994; Shirom, 1989) and even five dimensions (Densten, 2001). Green *et al.,* (1991) and Holland *et al.* (1994) have proposed a two-factor conceptualisation comprising emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation. This two-factor conceptualisation was originally proposed by Shirom (1989) who maintained that reduced feelings of personal accomplishment may, in fact, be an outcome of burnout, rather than a distinct component of the syndrome. Little additional support has been found for this two-dimensional conceptualisation, although a number of scholars do concur that emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation constitute the core dimensions of the burnout construct, with personal accomplishment is regarded as the weakest dimension (Demerouti *et al.,* 2001: 500). Numerous structural analyses of the MBI have found support for the central, although not exclusive role of emotional exhaustion (Lee & Ashforth, 1990; 1993a; Leiter, 1993). These analyses conclude that emotional exhaustion appears to be the dimension that is most affected by the organisational environment and mediates the relationship between the environment and depersonalisation (Maslach, *et al.,* 1996: 34).

Lee and Ashforth (1990: 713) tested the dimensions of burnout as measured by the MBI using confirmatory factor analysis on a sample of supervisors and managers in the human service professions. They found support for the three factors even though emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation displayed strong correlations. In 1996, Lee and Ashforth (1996: 128) embarked on a "meta-analytic" study of the three dimensions. Their research again found support for the three dimensions, although personal accomplishment developed largely independently from the other two dimensions.

Densten (2001) proposes a five-factor structure where emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation are split into two factors each. According to Densten (2001), emotional exhaustion comprises both psychological strain and somatic strain aspects, while personal accomplishment relates to both self views and the perception of external views from others. He originally also proposed that depersonalisation also comprise two independent factors relating to job depersonalisation and personal depersonalisation, although a test of the conceptual and psychometric properties of the MBI disconfirmed this hypothesis (Densten, 2001: 835).

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2.2.5 Burnout as a process

2.2.5.1 The temporal sequence proposed by Maslach and colleagues

Maslach and Jackson (1986) originally proposed that the three dimensions discussed above are related through a temporal developmental process commencing with emotional exhaustion and culminating in a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. According to them, individuals suffering from emotional exhaustion attempt to cope with excessive job demands by trying to conserve resources. In so doing, the individual may withdraw both physically and psychologically from work, resulting in a cynical and detached attitude towards work, the client and/or co-workers. This withdrawal ultimately results in a discrepancy between the individual's current attitude towards work and his/her original expectations of performance, resulting in a sense of decreased personal accomplishment.

This temporal sequence of burnout dimensions (Maslach & Jackson, 1986) has been challenged by a number of scholars. While Leiter (Leiter & Maslach, 1988) originally concurred with Maslach and Jackson (1986) that emotional exhaustion develops first in response to a range of environmental conditions, followed by depersonalisation and then feelings of reduced personal accomplishment, he subsequently deviated from this position (Leiter, 1990, 1991). Instead he suggests that while depersonalisation follows from emotional exhaustion, feelings of reduced personal accomplishment develop separately in response to the work environment. Later, Leiter (1993) maintained that feelings of reduced personal accomplishment may occur as a consequence of emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation or as a result of a shortage of relevant resources. Emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation, on the other hand, occur as a result of work overload and/or social conflict.

2.2.5.2 The Golembiewski and Munzenrider eight-phase model

Maslach and colleagues (Maslach *et al.*, 2001; Maslach & Jackson, 1986) are not the only researchers that have proposed a temporal sequence for the burnout dimensions. A number of scholars maintain that while the burnout dimensions may

develop in sequence, the order of this sequence differs from that proposed by Maslach and Jackson (1986). Golembiewski and Munzenrider (1981, 1984, 1988) suggest that depersonalisation occurs first, followed by feelings of reduced personal accomplishment and then emotional exhaustion. According to Golembiewski and Munzenrider (1981, 1984), a certain degree of detachment from work and recipients, which results in the development of depersonalisation, is necessary in some occupations such as the medical professions. Continued depersonalisation, however, begins to interfere with performance, thereby affecting perceptions of personal accomplishment. The chronic perpetuation of the conditions described above could eventually result in the development of emotional exhaustion. Using this sequential model, Golembiewski and Munzenrider (1988) generated an eight-phase model. Each phase in the eight-phase model is characterised by a combination of either high or low emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation or personal accomplishment.

The validity of the eight-phase model has, however, been questioned – most notably through the work of Cordes and Dougherty (1993) and Cordes *et al.* (1997). According to Cordes and Dougherty (1993: 621), while Golembiewski and Munzenreider (1988) made use of the MBI in development of the eight-phase model, items included in the measure were modified to refer to co-workers as opposed to service recipients. Two of the original MBI items were dropped and an additional three items were added. The measure also deviated from the frequency scale included in the original MBI and instead adopted a Likert scale ranging from 1 = very much unlike me to 7 = very much like me. While the resultant measure produced three clusters, resulting in a total of eight phases corresponding to high or low scores on each of the three dimensions, the research cannot refute the three cluster conceptualisation proposed by Maslach, since the instrument used to derive the eight phases differed from the MBI.

As illustrated in **Figure 2**, Cordes *et al.* (1997) tested the Maslach three-factor model and a set of predictor variables against the Golembiewski model and set of predictors. The research found support for the Maslach three-factor model but proposed that each of the three components is differentially related to a set of predictor variables.

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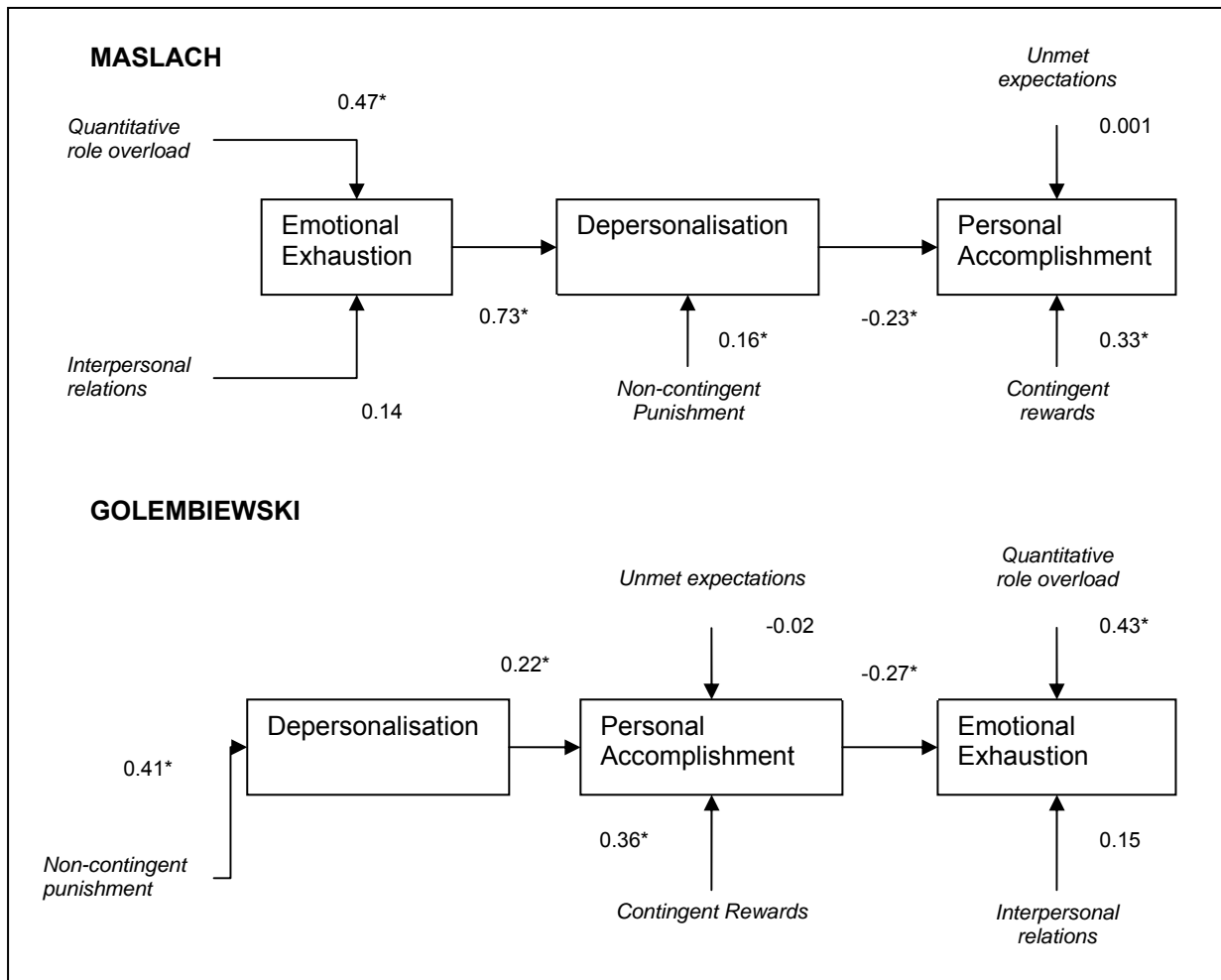
Figure 2: The Maslach and Golembiewski models of burnout compared (Cordes et al., 1997)

As shown in **Figure 2**, while significant paths were displayed between emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment, reduced feelings of personal accomplishment were also contingent upon the non-receipt of rewards and unmet expectations. Furthermore, while the development of depersonalisation was contingent upon feelings of emotional exhaustion, non-contingent punishment also affected the development of depersonalisation. For instance, when individuals find themselves in situations that they find uncontrollable or random, they may depersonalise their relationships with clients, co-workers, supervisors and subordinates. Emotional exhaustion was found to be contingent upon quantitative role overload and interpersonal interactions. The study is noteworthy because, with the exception of the study by Lee and Ashforth (1993a) it is the only piece of research found that tests the two competing models on the same set of respondents.

In response to the generally inconclusive research regarding the temporal sequence of the burnout components, Lewin & Sager (2007) maintain that sequencing of the three components may be dependent on aspects related to the specific occupational context of respondents. They subsequently proposed and tested a different progression of the burnout components among salespeople. Their results indicate that reduced personal accomplishment occurs first, followed by emotional exhaustion and finally, depersonalisation (Lewin & Sager, 2007).

While the present study will not empirically test or attempt to validate any of the proposed temporal sequences of burnout, it is important in the context of the current study to acknowledge that the burnout components may occur in a temporal sequence. Since the MBI measures each of the three components using a separate scale for each, individuals scoring high on one of the burnout components and possibly low on another, may still be progressing through the sequence that comprises the burnout experience.

2.2.6   The measurement of burnout

2.2.6.1   The Maslach Burnout Inventory

Although a detailed discussion of the MBI takes place in the next chapter on methodology, a brief discussion on the measurement of burnout is entertained here. It is intended that a brief analysis of the MBI and alternative measures of burnout is followed by a rationale for the use of the MBI in the present study as opposed to other measures.

As outlined in the opening sections of this chapter, the 1980s marked the beginning of a plethora of empirical work on the subject and the subsequent development of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1986) − probably the most widely used instrument in the measurement of burnout.

The original MBI, developed in 1986, was primarily utilised within the human service professions. In 1996, the instrument was revised to include three separate surveys. The MBI – Human Services Survey (MBI−HSS) is applicable to employees working

across the human service professions, where interaction with recipients is the primary work focus. The MBI – Educators Survey (MBI−ES) is relevant to the educational arena through the replacement of the word "recipients" with "students" (Schaufeli, 2003: 2), while the MBI – General Survey (MBI−GS) can be applied to any job situation (Schaufeli, 2003: 4).

In accordance with the Maslach and Jackson (1986) definition of burnout which states that burnout occurs amongst individuals that do people work of some kind, the original MBI (subsequently referred to as the MBI Human Services Survey or MBI−HSS) was developed for application in situations where the employee provides a service, care or treatment to a recipient. These occupations are generally accompanied by the development of strong emotional feelings towards the client or service recipient. The MBI−HSS was subsequently adapted for use amongst educators (Maslach, Jackson & Schwab, 1996) and became known as the MBI – Educators Survey (MBI−ES). The MBI−ES does not differ significantly from the MBI−HSS, only in that only the word "recipients" is replaced with the word "students".

Although traditionally almost exclusively applied to assess burnout in the human service or helping professions, the concept of burnout has been successfully applied across a range of industries and occupational groupings. The concept has been investigated amongst teachers (Buunk *et al.*, 2007); hospitality workers (Kuruuzum, Anafarta & Irmak, 2008); HR managers and professionals (Cordes *et al.*, 1997; Rothmann, 2004), local government employees (Rothman *et al.*, 2003); pharmacists (Storm & Rothman, 2003), psychiatric nurses (Heyns, Venter, Esterhuyse, Bam & Odendaal, 2003; Levert, Lucas & Ortlepp, 2000;), higher education employees (Jackson, Rothmann & Van de Vijver, 2006; Rothmann & Essenko, 2007; Rothmann & Barkhuizen, 2008; Pretorius, 1992; 1994; Pienaar & Van Wyk, 2006), salespeople (Low *et al.*, 2001) and customer service representatives (Campbell & Rothmann, 2005).

A number of researchers have made use of the original MBI, albeit in a modified format when assessing burnout amongst employees who fall outside of the human service professions. Golembiewski, Boudreau, Munzenrider and Lou (1996) for instance, substituted the word "recipient" with "co-worker" within the

depersonalisation and personal accomplishment scales. Lee and Ashforth (1993b) substituted the word "recipients" with "subordinates" when they studied burnout amongst a sample of managers. In a study of burnout and role stressors amongst marketing boundary-spanners, Singh *et al.* (1994) substituted "recipients" with "customers", "co-workers", "boss" and "top management". According to Demerouti *et al.* (2003: 13) the substitution of recipients with alternative subjects is questionable, since alternative terms are qualitatively different from recipients, and may render the depersonalisation and personal accomplishment scales unstable. Similarly, Maslach *et al.* (1996: 19) maintain that use of the MBI−HSS outside of the human service professions results in the collapse of the depersonalisation and emotional exhaustion scales into one factor.

The MBI−GS was therefore adapted for application among occupational groups that do not have direct personal contact with service recipients or that only maintain casual contact with people at work (Schaufeli, Leiter, Maslach & Jackson, 1996). According to Demerouti *et al.* (2001: 500) since emotional exhaustion is largely the product of excessive job demands, then all jobs, and not only those in the human service professions, could be susceptible to burnout. While depersonalisation may manifest itself in terms of alienation from recipients in the human services professions, other professions may experience disengagement from the job or work role. As a result, the MBI−GS defines burnout as a "crisis in one's relationship with work, not necessarily as a crisis in one's relationship with people at work" (Schaufeli *et al.*, 1996: 20). While the MBI−GS has three subscales comprising 16 items that parallel those of the MBI−HSS, the subscales of the MBI−GS do not emphasise the service relationship and do not make reference to people as the source of one's feelings towards work. The items of the exhaustion subscale are generic, without an emphasis on emotions towards service recipients. Exhaustion is measured as fatigue without service recipients as the source of that fatigue. The cynicism subscale replaces the depersonalisation scale of the MBI−HSS and reflects a distanced attitude towards work as opposed to personal relationships at work. The professional efficacy subscale replaces the personal accomplishment items and encompasses both social and non-social aspects of accomplishments at work (Maslach *et al.*, 1996: 21; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004: 294).

Although the client service employees that form the unit of analysis for the present study cannot be described as traditional human service professionals as intended by Maslach and Jackson (1986), the MBI−HSS will be used to measure burnout amongst this group of employees. Slight adjustments were made to the questionnaire in order to align it to the client service setting. These adjustments and implications thereof are discussed in greater detail in the methodology chapter.

Although the MBI is probably the most widely-applied measurement of burnout, a number of alternative measures exist. In a thorough review of burnout measurement, Schaufeli, Enzmann and Girault (1993: 200) examine the contribution of a number of these instruments. Emener, Luck and Gohs (1982) developed the Emener-Luck Burnout Scale, which consists of 30 items applicable to the human service professions. The instrument yielded four factors that were significantly related to a burnout self rating namely work-related feelings, work-environment provisions, dissonance between self-perceptions and other's perception of self and job alternatives. In 1983 Ford, Murphy and Edwards (1983) developed the Perceptual Job Burnout Inventory. The instrument was developed for use outside of the human service professions and included items relating to emotional exhaustion and cynicism, feelings of decreased efficiency and excessive demands on energy and resources. In 1984, Farber (1984) developed a 65 item instrument called the Teacher Attitude Scale (TAS) for application in educational settings. The scale included the 25 items of the original MBI along with an additional 40 items of relevance to the teaching profession. The study yielded three factors including emotional exhaustion, commitment to the teaching profession and gratification in working with students. Also in 1984, Meier (1984) developed the Meier Burnout Assessment (MBA), a 23 item true-false test. In a sample of 320 male and female faculty members, the MBA displayed a moderate correlation with the MBI (r = 0.61). In 1986, the Burnout Index was developed by Shirom and Oliver (1986) and panel tested amongst a sample of 404 Israeli teachers. The authors conceptualised burnout as comprising three types of exhaustion, namely physical, emotional and cognitive exhaustion. The most recently developed burnout instrument, the Shirom-Melamed Burnout Measure (Shirom, 2003) measures burnout as comprising both physical and mental exhaustion.

The above-mentioned instruments have, however, not yielded the amount of academic support enjoyed by the MBI. Two alternative measures, namely the Burnout Measure (BM) (Pines & Aronson, 1988) and the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) (Demerouti, 1999) have been extensively used as a substitute for the MBI and will be discussed in the sections that follow.

2.2.6.2 The Burnout Measure (BM)

Arguably the second most widely applied burnout questionnaire, the Burnout Measure (BM) was developed by Pines and Aronson (1988). The developers of the BM conceptualise burnout as comprising three kinds of exhaustion: emotional, cognitive and physical exhaustion. The authors initially made a distinction between burnout and tedium. Burnout was largely characterised by emotional pressure and tedium characterised by mental, emotional and physical pressure, but they eventually abandoned this distinction and included the measurement of tedium in the BM. The BM is a one-dimensional measure of burnout and includes 21 items measured on a 7-point rating scale ranging from "never" to "always". The instrument can be applied to occupations outside of the human service professions and displays internal consistency coefficients exceeding 0.9 and test-retest coefficients that vary between 0.89 and 0.66 across one and four-month intervals respectively. The construct validity of the BM is strong and scores have been related to a number of behavioural variables including work strain, turnover and work satisfaction. The BM has been used across a diverse range of occupations and been translated into French, German, Dutch, Japanese, Hungarian, Mexican, Polish and Israeli (Pines, 2002: 127-128).

According to Enzmann, Schaufeli, Janssen and Rozeman (1998: 331), while the strength of the BM lies in its applicability across a range of occupational settings, it is difficult to discriminate some of the BM items from similar constructs like depression and fatigue. Furthermore, few studies have assessed the psychodynamic properties of the BM. Using a Dutch sample of human service professionals and white collar workers, Enzmann *et al.* (1998: 331) report that the "BM captures only a particular

aspect of burnout and is rather a measure of general well-being" (Enzmann *et al.*, 1998: 331).

2.2.6.3 The Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI)

The Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) was developed in Germany for application across any job context in response to a number of criticisms levelled against the MBI (Demerouti, 1999).   One such criticism is that the emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation scales are all negatively phrased, while the personal accomplishment items are all positively phrased. According to the developers of the OLBI, this can result in artificial factor loadings and response sets.   The OLBI includes only two factors, namely exhaustion and disengagement from work, and each of these factors includes both positively and negatively phrased items. Exhaustion is operationalised as including physical, affective and cognitive exhaustion, hence rendering it more applicable to occupations that engage in physical work compared to the MBI. Disengagement refers to the act of distancing oneself from work and "experiencing negative attitudes towards work object, work content and one's work in general". (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001: 501). The exhaustion subscale consists of seven items that refer to "general feelings of emptiness, overtaking from work, a strong need for rest, and a state of physical exhaustion" (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001: 503). The disengagement subscale includes eight items that refer to the distancing of the individual from the object and content of one's work and the development of negative attitudes towards work in general (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001: 503).

The OLBI has been validated across a sample of 293 German employees from various occupational categories, where factor analysis confirmed its two-factor structure.   Furthermore, the factorial and convergent validity of the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory has been tested alongside that of the MBI−GS amongst Greek employees from different occupational groupings (Demerouti, Bakker, Vardakou & Kantas, 2003: 12). Both the convergent and discriminant validity of the MBI and the OLBI were confirmed. According to Schaufeli (2003: 4), the OLBI is currently the only viable alternative to the MBI in general work settings. While these alternative

measures of burnout provide further insight into how burnout can be conceptualised and measured, they are not considered as viable measurement instruments for the present study. The Burnout Measure (BM) is limiting in that it only measures the exhaustion component of burnout albeit in three forms, while the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory does not include aspects pertaining to the service employee – client relationship.

2.2.7 Antecedents to burnout

While much burnout research in the 1980s was concerned with the validation of the MBI and the development of alternative burnout measures, the 1990s were characterised by a plethora of research into the antecedents of burnout. Researchers have subsequently addressed this issue from a multitude of perspectives and disciplines resulting in often contrasting viewpoints. Recent research into the antecedents of the burnout syndrome has concluded that predictor variables are differentially related to each of the three burnout components (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner & Schaufeli, 2001; Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Nonetheless, research into the antecedents of the burnout syndrome is pervasive and varied. While a fair number of scholars have examined the role of demographic variables in the development of burnout (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998: 75), little empirical support for the importance of these variables in the development of burnout exists. Research has instead focused on the role of a range of situational and dispositional factors in the development of burnout.

Maslach and Leiter (1997) make a distinction between two primary categories of variables that could impact the development of burnout – situational predictors and individual antecedents. Since Maslach and Leiter (1997: 9-15) define burnout as a product of the social environment in which the individual finds him/herself, they place primary emphasis on the situational antecedents to burnout. According to Maslach and Leiter (2005), the situational factors that could affect the nature of fit between the job and the individual performing the job include:

- Work overload – when individuals have too much work to do with too little resources to perform the work according to organisational or own expectations
- Lack of control over work
- Insufficient reward resulting in devaluation of the self
- Breakdown of community or fragmenting personal relationships
- Absence of fairness resulting in a devaluation of self-worth
- Conflicting values – when the nature of a job clashes with personal values and principles

The determinants of burnout can be classified according to personality characteristics; work-related attitudes; work and organisational characteristics and biographical factors (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998: 75). Cordes and Dougherty (1993: 629) suggest the classification of burnout antecedents into job and role characteristics, of which the employee client relationship, role overload, role ambiguity and role conflict form components. Organisational characteristics include the job context and contingency of rewards and punishments.

Table 3 provides a summary of each of these antecedents and related research as derived from this literature review. For ease of presentation, the antecedents to burnout are categorised into seven antecedent categories. The variables related to each category are listed in the second column of the table. Each of these antecedent categories is discussed in detail in the sections that follow the table.

Table 3: Burnout antecedents: categories and variables

Antecedent Category	Antecedent variables
Work/job characteristics	Excessive job demands ▪ Quantitative job demands 　o Quantitative role overload (Cordes & Dougherty,1993; Lee & Ashforth, 1993, 1996) ▪ Qualitative job demands (Maslach et al., 2001) 　o Role ambiguity (Low et al., 2001; Singh et al., 1994) 　o Role conflict (Low et al., 2001; Singh et al., 1994) Lack of job resources (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996) ▪ Autonomy ▪ Job control (Fernet, Guay & Senecal, 2004)
Organisational characteristics	▪ Unclear institutional goals, lack of leadership and supervisor support, social isolation and inadequate orientation (Cherniss, 1980) ▪ Co-worker relationships (Leiter & Maslach, 1988) ▪ Contact with supervisor (Leiter & Maslach, 1988) ▪ Contingency and non-contingency of rewards and punishments (Cordes, Dougherty & Blum, 1997) ▪ High performance work practices (Kroon, van der Voorde & van Veldhoven, 2009) ▪ Perceived lack of reciprocity from organisation (Schaufeli, Van Dierendonck & Van Gorp, 1996) ▪ Opportunities for advancement (Rothmann & Joubert, 2007) ▪ Team structure, culture and types of leadership (Schultz, Greenley & Brown, 1995) ▪ Lack of organisational job resources (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996) 　o Autonomy (Xanthopoulou *et al.*, 2007) 　o Social support (Albar-Marin & Garcia-Ramirez, 2005; Van der Doef & Maes, 1999) 　o Supportive management, reward mechanisms, training and technology (Rod & Ashill, 2009) 　o Participation in decision-making (Xanthopoulou *et al.* 2007) 　o Feedback and information (Xanthopoulou *et al.* 2007)

Antecedent Category	Antecedent variables
Nature of the client service role	- Nature of the employee−client relationship (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993) - Scope of client contacts (Cherniss, 1980) - Role of client and expectations of service providers (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993) - Nature of client interactions/client caseload (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993) - Perceived lack of reciprocity (Truchot & Deregard, 2001) - Perceived customer negative behaviours (Yagil, Luria & Gal, 2008)
Attitudes toward the job and organisation	- Job engagement (Rothmann & Joubert, 2004; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2001) - Person−organisation fit (Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Siegall & McDonald, 2003) - Job insecurity (Rothmann & Joubert, 1997)
Personality and dispositional factors	- Conscientiousness (Witt *et al.*, 2004) - Communal orientation (Truchot & Deregard, 2001) - Emotional stability, openness to experience, agreeableness, coping strategies, sense of coherence (Storm & Rothmann, 2003) - Big five personality traits (Swider & Zimmerman, 2009) - Customer orientation (Babakus, Yavas & Ashill, 2009)
Factors related to identity, esteem and meaning	- Personal achievement and organisational expectations (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Hyvonen *et al.,* 2009) - Significant change in work-related expectations (Stevens & O'Neil, 1983) - Disillusionment (Pines & Maslach, 1978) - Failed sense of significance and meaning (Pines, 2002; Pines, 1993) - Failed expectations (Freudenberger & Richelson, 1980) - Self-efficacy (Cherniss, 1992) - Search for recognition and identity (Vanheule & Verhaeghe, 2004, 2005) - Vulnerability in terms of role definition and enactment and the creation of a positive sense of self (Hallsten, 1993) - Loss of status and a sense of defeat (Buunk *et al.,* 2007) - Emotional labour (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge & Lee, 2003; Montgomery, Panagopolou, De Wildt & Meenks, 2006; Zapf *et al.*, 2001)

Antecedent Category	Antecedent variables
Biographic/ demographic variables	- Age (Schwab & Iwanicki, 1982; Stevens & O'Neil, 1983; Vredenburgh, Carlozzi & Stein, 1999) - Work experience (Cherniss, 1980) - Gender (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Vredenburgh *et al.,* 1999) - Marital status (Maslach & Jackson, 1985) - Educational levels (Pines & Maslach, 1978)

Table 3 was constructed following an extensive review of the literature related to burnout antecedents. As depicted in the table, the antecedents to burnout can be divided into seven main categories: work/job characteristics; organisational characteristics; the nature of work-related relationships; attitudes towards the job and organisation; personality and dispositional factors; factors relating to identity, esteem and meaning and biographic and demographic variables. The distinction between work/job and organisational characteristics is not always clear, since a number of organisational characteristics that have implications for the development of burnout are also evident at the job level within the organisation. For instance, organisational culture and institutional goals carry implications for the extent to which the individual has access to job resources. A lack of job resources is therefore evident at both the work/job characteristic level and the organisational characteristic level as depicted in **Table 3**. Factors related to identity have also been placed in a category along with factors related to esteem and meaning. As will be shown in the role identity literature review that appears later in this chapter, identity construction is connected to esteem needs and meaning.

In the sections that follow, each of these antecedents will be discussed, with specific reference to the manner in which they result in burnout. Later in the chapter, it will be shown how aspects relating to role identity can result in a number of the antecedents discussed in **Table 3**.

2.2.7.1 Work/job and organisational characteristics

From an analysis of the literature pertaining to work/job and organisational characteristics and their relationship to burnout, it became apparent that these cannot always be regarded as conceptually distinct. As already mentioned, variables

that exist at the organisational level have an impact on variables that exist at the job level. Conversely, variables that exist at the job level have an impact of variables that exist at the organisational level. Autonomy and involvement in decision-making, for instance, can be regarded as both characteristics of the organisation and characteristics of the job. While every attempt will be made to keep the two levels conceptually distinct, a number of scholars have simultaneously incorporated both organisational and work-related variables into models of burnout antecedents.

Cherniss (1980) for instance, theoretically identified eight organisational and work stressors that could result in burnout. These stressors include workload; lack of stimulation; scope of client contacts; unclear institutional goals; lack of autonomy; lack of leadership and supervisory support; social isolation and inadequate orientation. These role stressors have traditionally been studied in terms of the direct effects that they exert on outcome variables such as job satisfaction, job performance, organisational commitment and turnover intentions. But in a study examining the effect of role stressors on burnout amongst marketing client service employees, burnout was shown to mediate the negative effects of role stressors on other job outcomes (Singh *et al.*, 1994: 559). As a result, burnout can be described as "a more potent predictor of various job outcomes than one or more role stressors" (Singh *et al.*, 1994: 559) and that burnout occur as a result of the cumulative effect of a number of role stressors.

Research into the impact of work/job characteristics on the development of burnout has almost exclusively focused on the relationship between job demands and job resources (Fernet *et al.,* 2004). According to the structural model proposed by Maslach *et al.* (1996: 36), burnout develops in response to excessive job demands and a lack of available resources to cope with these demands. Job demands can be described as those "physical, social and organisational aspects of the job that require prolonged physical and mental effort and will result in physiological and psychological costs" (Demerouti *et al.,* 2001: 501). They include aspects related to role overload, role ambiguity and role conflict (Low *et al.*, 2001). Job resources, on the other hand, can be described as the "physical, psychological, social and organisational aspects of the job that may assist an individual in achieving work goals, reduce job demands and stimulate personal growth and development (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001: 501). They

include job control and autonomy (Fernet *et al.*, 2004); feedback and participation in decision making (Xanthopoulou *et al.*, 2007), social support (Albar-Marin & Garcia Ramirez, 2005; Gmelch & Gatesman, 1997; Van der Doef & Maes, 1999), supportive management, reward mechanisms, training and appropriate technology (Rod & Ashill, 2009).

Maslach *et al.* (2001: 407) make a distinction between qualitative and quantitative job demand variables. Quantitative job demands occur when there is too much work for the available time resulting in role overload, while qualitative job demands include aspects related to role conflict and role ambiguity (Maslach, *et al.*, 2001: 407). Singh *et al.* (1994: 559) refer to these qualitative demands as role stressors and make a distinction between two kinds of role stressors. Role conflict occurs when there is a high degree of incompatibility between the various expectations associated with a single role, while role ambiguity occurs when insufficient information to support adequate performance in a role exists. A further distinction can be made between qualitative and quantitative role overload (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993: 631). Qualitative role overload occurs when an individual lacks the talent and skills necessary to perform the job adequately, while quantitative role overload refers to aspects relating to caseload.

The Maslach *et al.* (1996) structural model that proposes the link between burnout and job demands and resources is depicted in **Figure 3**.

Job demands

Work overload   Personal conflict

Lack of resources

Control coping

Social support

Autonomy

Decision involvement

Burnout dimensions

Exhaustion → Depersonalisation

Diminished personal accomplishment

Costs   Decreased organisational commitment
Turnover and absenteeism
Physical illness
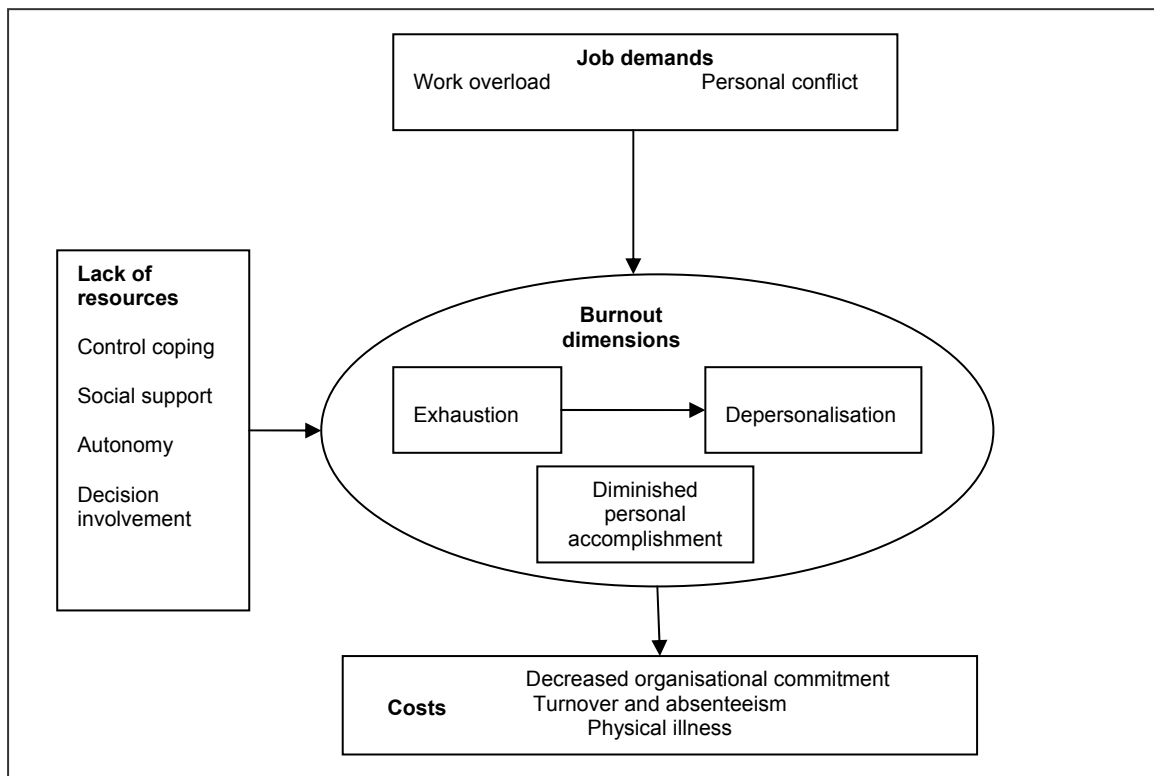
**Figure 3: The structural model of burnout
(Maslach *et al.*, 1996: 36)**

This theoretical model, does, however, not comment on how each of the antecedents (job demands and lack of available resources) leads to each of the burnout dimensions. Based on earlier discussions of the temporal sequence in which the three burnout dimensions occur sequentially, it can be deduced that excessive job demands and a lack of resources to deal with these demands can result in exhaustion, which ultimately leads to depersonalisation. It is unclear from the model whether feelings of reduced personal accomplishment result from depersonalisation or whether they develop independently due to a lack of resources to cope with excessive job demands.

A number of scholars have, however, empirically examined how demands and a lack of resources are differentially related to each of the three burnout dimensions (Lee & Ashforth, 1993a; 1996; Leiter, 1993). Using the Conservation of Resources (COR) model proposed by Hobfoll (1989), Lee and Ashforth (1993a; 1996) examined the extent to which the various demand and resource variables and attitudinal and

behavioural correlates are related to each of the three burnout dimensions. According to the COR model, individuals constantly strive to maintain valued resources while at work in order to offset the negative effect of excessive demands. These resources can take the form of objects, work conditions, personal characteristics and energies. When these resources are threatened or lost, or when individuals invest in resources that do not yield the anticipated return, stress may result. When individuals experience a loss of resources, they may engage in coping behaviours to reduce the effect of this loss. According to the COR model, job demands should therefore be strongly related to emotional exhaustion, while job resources should be strongly related to depersonalisation. In their 1993 study, Lee and Ashforth (1993a) concluded that most demand correlates were associated with exhaustion and depersonalisation, and only weakly associated with personal accomplishment. Leiter (1993), on the other hand, concluded that demands are more strongly related to emotional exhaustion, while resources are more strongly associated with both depersonalisation and personal accomplishment. A subsequent study by Lee and Ashforth (1996: 130) however, found that both demand and resource variables are more strongly related to emotional exhaustion than to depersonalisation and personal accomplishment.

According to Cordes *et al.* (1997: 688), demand stressors, such as qualitative and quantitative work overload, role ambiguity, role conflict and role overload will be associated with exhaustion. Qualitative demands made on the employee through interpersonal relationships may also result in emotional exhaustion. Variables associated with a random, uncontrollable environment are associated with the development of depersonalisation. Variables that create the perception that one is not appreciated or incompetent in one's work, such as a lack of contingent rewards, will result in feelings of reduced personal accomplishment. In a study of managers and HR professionals Cordes *et al.* (1997: 689) found significant paths between role overload and emotional exhaustion, non-contingent punishment and depersonalisation and contingent rewards and personal accomplishment.

These conflicting findings initiated a host of studies into the differential relationship between demand and resource variables and the three burnout dimensions. The Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model, originally proposed by Demerouti *et al.* (2001:

501) postulated that job demands are associated with the development of exhaustion, while an absence of job resources such as performance feedback, participation in decision-making, job control and social support are associated with depersonalisation. The JD–R model is presented as **Figure 4** and is premised upon two dual processes that play a role in the development of job strain and motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2004).
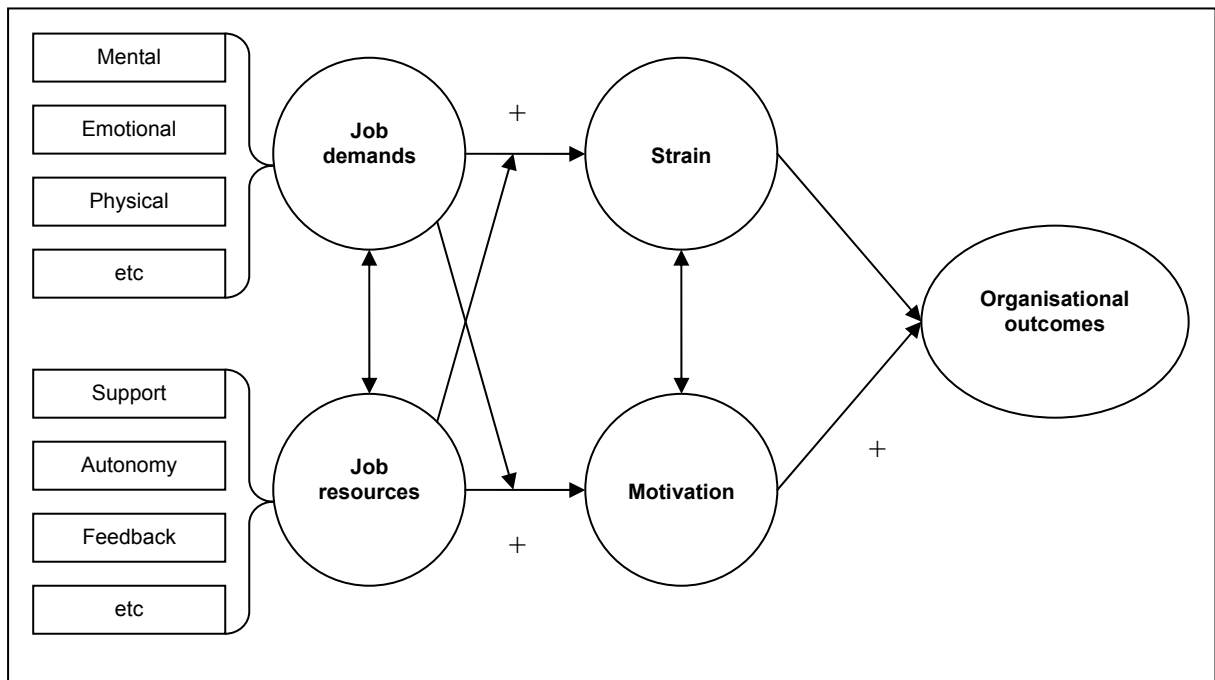
Figure 4: The job demands–resources model
(Bakker & Demerouti, 2007: 313)

Job demands (mental, emotional or physical) exhaust the employee's physical and emotional resources resulting in excessive strain, exhaustion and health problems. Job resources (support, autonomy and feedback), on the other hand, play a motivational role that result in job engagement and improved performance levels. These job resources play both an intrinsic and extrinsic motivational role, in that they enhance individual growth and development and facilitate the achievement of work goals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007: 313). As illustrated by the diagonal arrows in **Figure 4**, while job demands and job resources can independently result in strain and motivation, they also interact. Job resources can buffer the effect of job demands, while job demands can significantly reduce the positive effect of job resources on motivation (Demerouti *et al.,* 2001).

According to Bakker and Demerouti (2007: 313) the link between emotional exhaustion and job demands can be explained using Hockey's (1993) control model for demand management. According to Hockey (1993 as cited in Bakker & Demerouti, 2007: 313), when individuals are under sustained environmental stress, they employ a "performance–protection strategy" by increasing subjective effort or mobilising "sympathetic activation" at both an autonomic and endocrine level. The greater the subjective effort (or sympathetic activation), the larger the physiological costs are for the individual and the greater the possibility of emotional exhaustion. In a study across three occupational groups using the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory, Demerouti *et al.* (2001: 508) established that job demands are primarily related to exhaustion, while job resources are primarily related to disengagement from work. Based on the principles contained within the Job Demands–Resources model, Demerouti *et al.* (2001) assert that the three components of the burnout syndrome are differentially related to various job demands and resources. According to the researchers, job demands are associated with the development of exhaustion, while an absence of job resources, such as performance feedback, participation in decision-making, job control and social support are associated with cynicism or disengagement. In a study of 310 managers at a platinum mine in South Africa, emotional exhaustion was predicted by workload, job insecurity and a lack of resources, while cynicism was predicted by a lack of organisational support and advancement opportunities (Rothmann & Joubert, 2007).

A study of home care employees (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Dollard, Demerouti, Schaufeli, Taris & Schreurs, 2007) set out to examine which job resources are best at buffering specific demands that are known to produce burnout amongst home care professionals. Four job demands (emotional demands, patient harassment, workload and physical demands) were studied alongside four job resources, namely autonomy, social support, performance feedback and opportunities for professional development. The research concluded that job resources were stronger buffers of the relationship between emotional demands and patient harassment and burnout, than the relationship between physical demands and workload and burnout.

Organisational characteristics such as the nature of the organisation and its policies have received considerably less attention in the burnout literature when compared

with job-related variables. They are, however, important to consider, since they have an impact on the nature of job related variables. Factors related to team structure, culture and types of leadership (Schultz *et al.*, 1995: 335) have been linked to the development of burnout insofar they contribute to a lack of autonomy, social support and participation. Team cultures, for instance, encourage participation among organisational members by creating a climate of social support and acceptance. As already discussed, social support and participation are important job resources that have the potential to inhibit the development of burnout. Transformational types of leadership also facilitate participation and autonomy in the workplace, thereby also buffering the development of burnout (Schultz *et al.*, 1995).

The relationship between job demands/resources and burnout are important for the present study. As shown in the second section of this literature review, the role identity of the client service employee could potentially have considerable influence on both work-related perceptions and work-related behaviour of the employee. If the client service employee defines his identity as subordinate and subservient to that of the client, he may engage in behaviours that increase work overload. In such cases he may also exercise little autonomy, or feel that he has little control over the resources that are (or are not) at his disposal. The relationship between job demands/resources and role identity are explored in further detail in Chapter 3.

2.2.7.2 Interpersonal relationships as antecedents to burnout

The quality of interpersonal relationships has also been linked to the development of burnout (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). The kinds of interpersonal relationships that have been examined in relation to burnout include the relationship between the client and the employee (Bakker *et al.,* 2000; Yagil *et al.,* 2008), the employee and his co-workers (Leiter & Maslach, 1988) and the employee and his supervisor (Rod & Ashill, 2009).

Cordes and Dougherty (1993: 629) are of the opinion that the client–employee relationship remains the most important variable in the study of burnout. Most research examining the role of the client-employee relationship in the development of

burnout has been conducted in the helping professions (Bakker *et al.*, 2000) where employees experience a high degree of emotional strain when dealing with their clients. In such contexts, research has shown that the nature of the client and the expectations of the service provider surrounding the role of the client can play an important part in the development of burnout (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Although limited, more recent research has focused on the relationship between burnout and the client-employee relationship outside of the so-called helping professions. In these contexts, the perceived quality of the social interaction between client and employee (Yagil *et al.*, 2008) and perceptions of client behaviour (Grandey *et al.*, 2004) have shown to correlate with burnout.

The client-employee relationship is, however, not the only interpersonal work-related relationship that has the potential to contribute to burnout. Leiter and Maslach (1988: 304) have shown that pleasant co-worker contact is positively related to personal accomplishment, while pleasant supervisor contact is negatively related to depersonalisation. Conversely, unpleasant supervisor contact is positively related to emotional exhaustion. Similarly, Rod and Ashill (2009) show that perceived management support also has the potential to buffer burnout.

Burnout has also been examined in the context of social exchange and equity theory, whereby a perceived lack of reciprocity in an individual's interactions with his/her recipients initiates the development of the burnout syndrome (Truchot & Deregard, 2001). According to equity theory, individuals evaluate their relationships with others in terms of investments and outcomes. Relationships will be judged as equitable if investments ploughed into the relationship are perceived as equal to the outcomes or benefits of the relationship (Bakker *et al.,* 2000: 425). This social psychological perspective perceives burnout as emanating from a social context, the outcomes of which are based on how individuals perceive and interpret the behaviours of others (Buunk & Schaufeli, 1993: 53). Through a five-year longitudinal study of general practitioners, Bakker *et al.* (2000) concluded that a lack of perceived reciprocity on the part of the general practitioner mediated the relationship between patient demands and emotional exhaustion.

Schaufeli, Van Dierendonck and Van Gorp (1996) extended this model of reciprocity to include not only perceptions of reciprocity at the interpersonal level, but also perceptions of reciprocity at the organisational level. This idea of reciprocity at the organisational level is derived from the notion of the psychological contract between individual and organisation. This contract implies that the individual has certain expectations of the organisation in return for certain investments on the part of the individual employee. Schaufeli *et al.* (1996) propose a model whereby burnout is related to social exchange at the interpersonal level (i.e. between the human service professional and his/her recipient) and the organisational level (i.e. between the employee and the organisation). They tested this model on two independent samples of student nurses and found that a lack of reciprocity at both levels is positively related to burnout. Perceptions of inequity result in a depletion of emotional resources, which result in a decrease in investments resulting in depersonalisation and cynicism. They also conclude that a lack of reciprocity at the organisational level results in low levels of organisational commitment.

As shown in subsequent sections of this chapter, the role identity that the client service employee assumes in relation to that of the client can exert considerable influence on his behaviour, attitudes and perceptions towards work. Based on the studies discussed in the preceding section, it could be argued that client service employees who perceive their relationships with their clients as inequitable may experience higher levels of burnout than those who do not. If, for instance, a client service employee perceives the client as powerful and domineering in relation to his (the client service employee's) role identity; he could perceive the relationship as inequitable.

2.2.7.3 Personality or dispositional factors as burnout antecedents

A number of individual personality (or dispositional) factors have been linked to the development of burnout (Swider & Zimmerman, 2010). Nurses and social workers scoring high on communal orientation have been shown to display lower levels of burnout resulting from perceived inequity than those scoring low on communal orientation (Truchot & Deregard, 2001). In the client service context,

conscientiousness has been shown to mediate the relationship between call volume and emotional exhaustion amongst call centre customer service professionals (Witt *et al.*, 2004), while customer orientation has been shown to moderate the job-demand-performance relationship (Babakus *et al.*, 2009) Job resourcefulness, described as a situational personality trait, has been shown to buffer burnout in the call centre environment, while simultaneously enhancing service performance (Rod & Ashill, 2009).

In the South African context, the role of personality traits and coping strategies in the development of burnout has been examined across a range of occupational groupings. Rothmann and Jackson (2003) show how a weak sense of coherence, combined with stress caused by excessive job demands and a lack of resources are associated with all three dimensions of burnout in a sample of 270 local government employees in South Africa. Using the MBI–GS, Rothman (2004) assessed the relationships between burnout, a sense of coherence, self-efficacy, locus of control and coping strategies amongst a sample of 64 senior managers in a manufacturing organisation in South Africa. The results of the study showed how exhaustion, cynicism and low levels of professional efficacy were associated with low scores on psychological strengths. Later, Storm and Rothmann (2005) showed how emotional stability; extraversion; openness to experience; agreeableness and conscientiousness were associated with lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation and higher levels of personal accomplishment among pharmacists. The same study also displayed a positive path between constructive coping strategies and personal accomplishment.

2.2.7.4 Person–organisation fit and burnout

Person–organisation fit (Siegall & McDonald, 2004) and value congruence (Leiter, Jackson & Shaughnessy, 2009) have also been linked to the development of burnout.   This proposition maintains that the greater the mismatch between a person's values and the organisation's culture, the more burnout the person will experience (Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Siegall & McDonald, 2004).   To test this proposition, Siegall and McDonald (2004) administered a survey among 524 faculty

staff and found that person–organisation value congruence was negatively associated with burnout and that burnout formed a partial or complete mediation for three (job satisfaction, withdrawal from teaching and less engagement in professional development) of the ten dependent variables (Siegall & McDonald, 2004: 298).

2.2.7.5 Burnout and job engagement

Burnout has also been measured in relation to what some refer to as its positive anti-theses, job engagement (Rothmann & Joubert, 2007; Rothman, 2003; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). According to Maslach *et al.* (2001), the interest into the positive antipode of the burnout syndrome can largely be ascribed to the emerging interest in positive psychology. The relationship between job engagement and burnout was initially introduced to burnout researchers by Maslach and Leiter (1997: 34), who defined engagement as the portrayal of "energy, involvement and efficacy", during work activities. According to Maslach and Leiter (1997: 34) energy, involvement and efficacy are the direct opposites of the three burnout dimensions. Also burnout can be conceptualised as the erosion of engagement, whereby energy turns into exhaustion, involvement becomes cynicism and feelings of accomplishment turn into feelings of ineffectiveness. Accordingly then, engagement could be measured by the MBI, and would reflect low scores on emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation, and high scores on personal accomplishment.

A number of authors have however challenged this view, arguing that burnout and engagement cannot be conceptualised as two opposite poles of the same continuum (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma & Bakker, 2002). Instead, Schaufeli *et al.* (2001: 74) define job engagement as a "positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption". Vigour is characterised by high levels of energy, persistence and a willingness to invest effort into one's work despite challenges. Dedication is characterised by pride in one's work and deriving pride from the significance of one's work, while absorption is present when one is engrossed in one's work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004: 295). In a study of undergraduate students and employees from private companies, Schaufeli *et al.* (2002: 75) concluded that burnout and engagement scales are negatively

correlated. According to research conducted by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) burnout is negatively related to engagement, and engagement is predicted by the availability of job resources.

Schaufeli and Bakker (2001 as cited in Rothmann, 2003: 17) developed a well-being at work model that includes burnout and engagement as two of four possible states of well-being at work. The model, which is presented in **Figure 5**, comprises four quadrants and is split by two axes.
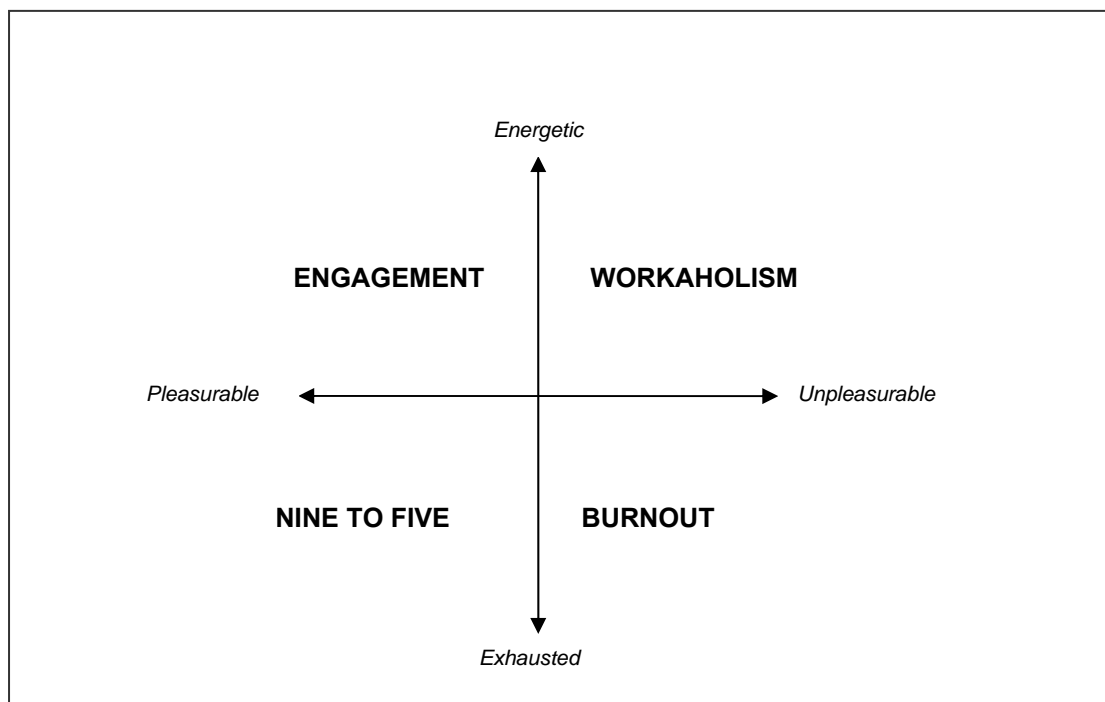
Figure 5: Schaufeli and Bakker's (2001) well-being at work model
(Schaufeli & Bakker, 2001 as cited in Rothmann, 2003)

The vertical axis represents the application of energy, while the horizontal axis represents pleasurable or unpleasurable attitudes towards work. The significance of this model lies in the fact that employees who are emotionally exhausted, may not necessarily suffer from burnout if they find pleasure in working hard. If, however, they find work unpleasurable, but still approach it energetically, they could be regarded as workaholics. The model also suggests that burnout and engagement are not mere antipodes on an energy continuum, but that they are independent and negatively correlated states.

The importance of the literature on engagement for the present study is that it provides an alternative in terms of conceptualising the characteristics of low burnout individuals. Since the objective of the qualitative study will be to explore the relationship between client service role identity and burnout, it will be important to name and identify behaviour that is characteristic of low burnout as well as behaviour that is characteristic of high burnout. Individuals that reflect low burnout scores on the MBI should then also reflect the characteristics of engagement in the qualitative phase of the research.

More recent research into antecedents of the burnout phenomenon has focused on the role of subjective perceptions of work, the environment and the client in the development of burnout. This research appears to have developed from the existential perspective, which describes burnout as developing as a result of thwarted attempts at establishing personal meaning through work. Expectations have also been linked to the development of burnout, as has the maintenance of a positive, esteem-enhancing role identity. The role of subjective identity perceptions in the development of burnout will be discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

2.2.7.6 The existential perspective and the development of burnout

The existential perspective of burnout is premised on the notion that "the root cause of burnout lies in peoples' need to believe that their life is meaningful, that the things they do, and consequently they themselves, are important and significant" (Pines, 2002: 123). Accordingly, the development of burnout can be linked to higher order needs such as self-actualisation (Pines, 2002) and failure to accomplish our goals and expectations through work (Hyvonen *et al.,* 2009). This existential perspective corresponds closely to Freudenberger and Richelson's (1980) original definition of burnout, which states that burnout is a "state of fatigue or frustration brought about by devotion to a cause, way of life, or relationship that failed to produce the expected reward" (Freudenberger & Richelson, 1980: 13). The existential perspective on burnout therefore sees the development of burnout in the context of a motivational framework, where burnout is conceptualised as the end of a process that commenced with high motivation and involvement but ended with low unexpected

returns. If employees are unable to meet their goals and expectations within a supportive working environment then burnout can ensue (Pines, 1993: 38). In a study attempting to demonstrate the relevance of the psychodynamic existential perspective, Pines (2002) demonstrates that a negative correlation exists between sense of significance derived from work and levels of burnout amongst a group of Israeli teachers and four comparison samples of American teachers. It is, however, critical to note that within the existential perspective; objective failure does not necessarily contribute to the development of burnout. Instead, it is the subjective perception that although one has tried to make a difference, one's work has not had a significant impact that results in the development of burnout.

In keeping with the general sentiment expressed by the existential perspective, Cherniss (1993: 135) examined the role of professional self-efficacy in the development of burnout. Drawing on Hall's (1976) psychological success model, Cherniss maintains that when people do not feel successful, they may chose to psychologically withdraw from work, resulting in what is synonymous with the depersonalisation or cynicism dimension of the burnout syndrome. Accordingly, Cherniss (1993) argues that people with a stronger sense of self-efficacy, are less likely to experience burnout. Feelings of self-efficacy can be maintained through autonomy at work; appropriate challenge; feedback of results and support from supervisors and co-workers.

As shown in later sections of this chapter, the maintenance of an esteem-enhancing role identity requires that the individual continually engage in identity processes that result in self-verification. Failure to self-verify a role identity may result in subjective feelings of failure, and, in accordance with the view expressed by the existentialists, result in burnout.

2.2.7.7 Burnout and the pursuit of recognition and identity

Research into the relationship between burnout and identity is diverse, predominantly as a result of the numerous definitions and conceptualisations associated with the identity concept. The majority of research into identity and burnout has focused on

the extent to which identification with a social identity (Kang *et al.*, 2010) or professional or occupational identity (Edwards & Dirette, 2010; Kremet-Hayon *et al.*, 2002; Schaible, 2006) contributes to the development of burnout. Of more relevance to the present study, is research that examines how subjective identity perceptions and processes could potentially contribute to burnout.

By employing a Lacanian perspective (which focuses on the unconscious role of language as subjective perceptions), Vanheule, Lievrouw and Verhaeghe (2003) and Vanheule and Verhaeghe (2004; 2005) investigate how an imaginary or symbolic attitude towards work and client outcomes can assist in the differentiation of people who are suffering from burnout and those who are not. The researchers interviewed 15 high and 15 low burnout special educators and concluded that "burnt out professionals can be differentiated from those that are not burnt out by the specific way they strive for recognition and identity" (Vanheule *et al.*, 2003: 499). High burnout individuals displayed a strong sense of personal obligation towards their clients and often manifested feelings of powerlessness in their interaction with their clients. These individuals tended to identify closely with the problems of their clients and often felt threatened in their dealings with them. Low burnout individuals, on the other hand, managed to maintain a subjective distance from their clients, held flexible expectations in relation to recipient outcomes and attributed failure to the client and context rather than their own inadequacies as educators. Instead of expressing feelings of powerlessness, they would resign themselves to the impossibility of difficult situations.

In a longitudinal study of Spanish teachers, Buunk *et al.* (2007) examined the development of burnout from an evolutionary social rank perspective. The research was premised on the assumption that burnout could be related to being placed in an "unwanted" and "subordinate" position, resulting in a number of social stresses such as powerlessness, shame, loss of status and feelings of inferiority, that are characterised by similar symptoms to burnout. The study concluded that status-related variables such as a perceived loss of status and a sense of defeat explain considerably more variance in burnout scores than the demand stressors that have traditionally been linked to the development of burnout (Buunk *et al.*, 2007: 481).

The conclusions drawn by Vanheule *et al.* (2003) and Buunk *et al.* (2007) are of particular relevance to the present study. These authors support the notion that identity perceptions and processes have the potential to contribute to the development of burnout. When one considers role identity, which can be described as the subjective meanings people attach to playing a specific role, it becomes evident that this too could impact on the development of burnout. In accordance with this view and the research on identity perceptions discussed above, it is suggested that client service employees who define themselves as powerless and subordinate to the client may experience higher levels of burnout than those who define themselves as equal to the client.

The findings of Vanhuele *et al.* (2003) resonate with the observation made by Hallsten (1993: 99) that "burning out is assumed to appear when the enactment of an active, self-definitional role is threatened or disrupted with no alternative role at hand". According to Hallsten (1993: 99) burnout occurs when individuals undergo a sense of vulnerability in terms of role definition and enactment and when there are few options available to create a positive sense of self. This vulnerability is experienced when:

- there is a degree of instability present in the individual's self-image,
- when the individual is dependent on a specific self-defined role and there is a lack of subsidiary or potential roles for self definition, and
- when there is an absence of social support outside of the work domain.

According to Hallsten (1993: 101) individuals strive to create a positive sense of self through role enactment. Accordingly, "these strivings constitute a part of an active, self-definitional role enactment under threat; that is, they have the function of creating or maintaining an acceptable personal identity and meaning in life" (Hallsten, 1993: 101). When an individual is made vulnerable due to his or her inability to maintain a positive sense of self through role enactment, he/she may experience a sense of lost control or powerlessness, low self-esteem, cynicism and withdrawal. These feelings result in success depression (burnout), non commitment (a detached, passive attitude) and finally, general depression. While Hallsten's (1993) assertions above do

resonate with the sentiments expressed by the existential tradition, he presents an ad hoc theory that has not been empirically tested.

According to Burke's identity control theory (1991, 1997), which will be discussed at length later in this chapter, individuals experience negative emotional arousal when they are unable to self-verify an existing role identity. It is therefore suggested that failure to verify the client service employee role identity will result in negative emotional arousal, which could eventually develop into burnout. The present study therefore hopes to build on Hallsten's (1993) theory discussed above, by validating his assertions through empirically generated data.

Research into the role of subjective identity perceptions in the development of burnout should be interpreted with caution due to the constraints of causality to which much burnout research is subject (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993). Since high burnout is often correlated with poor job and organisational conditions, researchers have generally concluded that these conditions result in burnout. According to Maslach and Schaufeli (1993: 8), however, this could mean that people who suffer burnout may experience the job context in a particularly negative light.

2.2.7.8 The role of expectations in the development of burnout

The inability to meet expectations has also been linked to the development of burnout. Cordes and Dougherty (1993: 636) make a distinction between personal achievement and organisational expectations. Personal expectations include expectations that employees hold about the profession into which they have entered, the organisation where they work and their own levels of personal efficacy within these two arenas. Achievement expectations include the expectations that employees hold with regards to the achievement outcomes while at work. Lastly, organisational expectations refer to those expectations that individuals hold towards the nature of the organisational and professional system.

Stevens and O'Neill (1983) tested the assertion that burnout is related to a significant change in work-related expectations. They found that staff in the development

disabilities field, who experienced a large negative expectation change, also displayed the highest levels of burnout. Age and educational level have been shown to correlate with burnout, due largely to the differential impact that each of these demographic variables have on expectations. Younger employees may experience higher levels of burnout than older employees due to the fact that they are more likely to suffer disillusionment with work (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Employees with higher educational levels may experience more burnout than their less-educated counterparts due to the fact that they foster greater expectations with regard to the work context and associated work outcomes (Pines & Maslach, 1978).

As will be shown in the section on role identity later in this chapter, role identities incorporate the set of behavioural expectations to which the incumbent of the particular role must adhere. Failure to attain these expectations leads to failure in self-verification, resulting in negative emotional arousal and possible burnout.

2.2.7.9 Emotional labour and burnout

The relationship between emotional labour and burnout has also received considerable attention in the literature (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Montgomery, Panagololou, De Wildt & Meenks, 2006; Zapf *et al.*, 2001). Hochschild (1983: 7) defines emotional labour as "the management of feelings to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display". It is believed that it contributes to the development of burnout through the creation of emotive dissonance between the authentic, inner feelings of the individual employee and the fake expression of emotions required by the work (Copp, 1998). The exercise of emotional labour is particularly prevalent in the service sector. According to Ashforth and Humphrey (1993: 90) service providers, who are situated at the customer interface, are expected to express and experience a range of feelings. These expressions are differentiated according to range; intensity; duration and object of emotion, depending on the kind of service setting or occupational group concerned. The range, intensity, duration and object of emotion are generally determined by organisational display rules. These rules, in the service setting, are orientated

towards the display of emotions that communicate a sense of well-being, helpfulness and customer satisfaction.

Emotional labour is performed through the utilisation of surface acting or deep acting (Hochschild, 1983). Surface acting refers to the display of emotions that are not actually felt. This involves careful manipulation of facial expression, tone of voice and gestures. Deep acting occurs when the employee actually attempts to feel or experience the emotion that he/she is required to display (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003). While emotional labour serves a number of important organisational functions (Mann, 1997: 11), it has been described as a "double-edged sword" that can carry a number of negative implications. According to Ashforth and Humphrey (1993: 1005), if the emotional labour confirms an identity-relevant experience i.e. it is "consistent with a central, salient and valued social and/or personal identity, it will lead to psychological well-being" (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993: 1005). If however, the practice of emotional labour is inconsistent with personal or professional identity, it could lead to "emotive dissonance" and a loss of the individual's authentic self.

A number of empirical studies have examined the impact of emotional labour on the development of burnout. Zapf *et al.* (2001) show how the emotional work associated with engaging with clients is a significant predictor of all three burnout subscales. A cross-sectional study of 174 Dutch governmental workers suggests that the need to hide negative emotions and engage in surface acting is related to burnout (Montgomery *et al.*, 2006).

Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) make a distinction between deep acting and surface acting, and maintain that the two forms of emotion management processes are differentially related to each of the burnout dimensions. According to the researchers, surface acting requires the mobilisation of more emotional resources than deep acting does, and requires that the employee depersonalise the client and treat them as objects. This may eventually result in guilt on the part of the client service employee. Deep acting, where the employee tries to control internal thoughts and feelings so that they are in accordance with the display rules of the organisation, results in feelings of personal accomplishment. Through their research, Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) confirm that deep acting relates negatively to depersonalisation

and positively to personal accomplishment, while surface acting relates positively to emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation.

Brotheridge and Lee (2003: 58) apply a conservation of resources model to the relationship between emotional labour and burnout. They propose that the effect of emotional labour on burnout is also influenced by the outcome of the service encounter. Through the use of emotional labour during service interactions, employees seek to acquire favourable reciprocal relationships and experience a sense of "authenticity of self". If, through emotional labour, they are unable to establish good relationships with clients and maintain an authentic sense of self, emotional exhaustion is likely to occur. This finding is consistent with earlier findings by Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) that maintain that the enactment of emotional labour that is not consistent with an individual's role identity can lead to the development of emotional dissonance. This dissonance occurs as a result of the fact that through the enactment of behaviours that are inconsistent with the individual's role identity, the individual is unable to verify this role identity.

2.2.7.10   Burnout and biographic and demographic variables

Limited evidence supporting the role of biographic and demographic variables in the development of burnout has been found. Age has been found to correlate with burnout, suggesting that younger employees are more prone to the development of burnout than older employees (Maslach *et al,* 1996; Schwab & Iwanicki, 1982; Stevens & O'Neil, 1983; Vredenburgh, 1999). A limited number of studies have found an association between gender and burnout. Women generally tend to score higher on emotional exhaustion, while men score higher on depersonalisation (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Vredenburgh, 1999). Unmarried individuals have shown to report higher levels of burnout when compared with their married counterparts (Maslach & Jackson, 1985), and people with higher educational levels have also displayed higher levels of burnout when compared with those with less education (Pines & Maslach, 1978). In the South African context, Jordaan *et al.* (2007) confirm a significant relationship between age, emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation amongst a group of counselling psychologists. In the same study, male counselling

psychologists display higher levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation than females do. While non-married respondents display higher levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation than their married colleagues do.

2.2.8 The consequences of burnout

2.2.8.1 General consequences of burnout

The consequences of burnout have received less attention in the literature when compared to burnout antecedents. According to Maslach and Leiter (1997: 62) burnout is generally ignored in organisational settings due largely to the fact that it is described in personal terms. As a result, organisational practitioners look for personal solutions to the problem, which, according to the range of antecedents discussed above, is largely an organisational or job context problem. While burnout carries a number of implications at the individual level, these individual implications can have a direct effect on the manner in which the burnt-out individual engages on the job, and hence, can affect the organisational bottom line.

The first clinical symptoms of burnout were documented by Freudenberger and Richelson (1980) and included, amongst others, exhaustion; impatience; cynicism; paranoia and disorientation. Burnout leads to depression; poor physical health and turnover; unproductive work behaviours; problematic interpersonal relationships and reduced job satisfaction (Kahill, 1998). Furthermore, Noworol, Zarczynskli, Fafrowicz and Marek (1993: 163) maintain that burnout results in a loss of creativity and innovation and that burnt-out individuals are self-doubting, vulnerable to authority and conformist. Kuruuzum *et al.* (2008: 189) cite diminished job performance; turnover intention; absenteeism; marital and familial conflict; reduced levels of self-esteem; problems concentrating; social isolation; substance abuse and physical and psychological disorder as some of the primary consequences of the burnout syndrome.

A total of 132 symptoms have been associated with burnout at the individual level (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998: 19). As depicted in **Figure 6**, these symptoms can be affective; cognitive; physical; behavioural and motivational.

Individual consequences of burnout

- *Affective (anxiety, tension, depression)*
- *Cognitive (sense of failure, guilt, cynicism, helplessness)*
- *Physical (headaches, fatigue, muscle aches)*
- *Behavioural (drug and alcohol abuse, compulsive complaining)*
- *Motivational (boredom, loss of idealism, low morale)*

Individual attitudes towards work
- *Decreased job satisfaction*
- *Reduced organisational commitment*

Individual withdrawal behaviours
- *Absenteeism*
- *Turnover intention*
- *Lowered performance*

Interpersonal consequences
- *Relationships with clients, co-workers and family*

Organisational consequences of burnout
- *Turnover*
- *Decreased performance*

Figure 6: **Individual and organisational consequences of burnout**

Affective symptoms include anxiety, tension, decreased job satisfaction and depression. Cognitive symptoms include a sense of failure, helplessness, and difficulty making decisions, cynicism and feelings of guilt. Physical symptoms include headaches, muscle aches, fatigue and nausea. Compulsive complaining increase, use of alcohol and drugs and hyperactivity manifest as behavioural symptoms and boredom, loss of idealism and low moral are characteristic of symptoms related to motivation (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998: 19-31). As shown in **Figure 6**, burnout has

been linked to the development of negative work-related attitudes and behaviours, including decreased levels of job satisfaction, reduced organisational commitment and withdrawal behaviours. Cordes and Dougherty (1993: 638) add interpersonal consequences in terms of clients, co-workers and friends to this list. At the organisational level, these attitudes and behaviours can result in high levels of absenteeism, turnover and reduced levels of performance.

As illustrated in **Figure 6**, the individual consequences of burnout have a direct effect on the organisation. Burnt-out individuals experience negative attitudes towards work that could result in withdrawal behaviours. These withdrawal behaviours, which include absenteeism and turnover intentions, carry a number of negative implications for the organisational bottom line (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998: 19). The negative attitudes of burnt-out individuals also carry a number of negative implications for personal relationships at work. Burnt-out individuals may adopt negative attitudes towards their co-workers, subordinates, clients and supervisors, which could adversely affect organisational culture, teamwork and service levels (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993: 638).

The relationship between job satisfaction and burnout has been extensively examined in the literature (Bhana & Haffejee, 1996; Dolan, 1987; Tsigilis, Koustelios & Togia, 2004) and moderate to high correlations have been revealed. Tsigilis *et al.* (2004: 671) exposed a strong negative relationship between job satisfaction and burnout, with the three dimensions of burnout displaying varying levels of correlation with job satisfaction. Job satisfaction displayed moderate negative correlations with emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation, and weak positive correlations with personal accomplishment (Tsigilis *et al.*, 2004: 672). A longitudinal study amongst 362 school-based teachers revealed that all three burnout components displayed significant and independent correlations with job satisfaction (Burke & Greenglass, 1995).

Since antecedent variables are differentially related to each of the burnout dimensions, as discussed earlier, it only makes sense to expect that the psychological and behavioural consequences of burnout are differentially related to each of the three dimensions. According to Leiter (1993) outcome variables

associated with withdrawal tendencies such as turnover intention and decreased job involvement are related to emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation. Outcome variables related to positive self-efficacy, such as control, coping and favourable attitudes to work are more strongly related to personal accomplishment. Similarly, Lee and Ashorth (1996: 130) maintain that emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation are more strongly related to turnover intention and organisational commitment and weakly associated with control coping. Personal accomplishment was, however, strongly related to control coping.

As mentioned in the preceding section on burnout antecedents, much burnout research is subject to causal limitations. Research into the consequences of burnout is no exception, since most such studies have been cross-sectional. As a result, it is difficult to conclude as to whether outcome variables are indeed the result of burnout. Cherniss (1992) conducted one of the few longitudinal studies on the long-term consequences of burnout by exploring the relationship between levels of burnout experienced during the career year of 25 human service professionals and subsequent career adaptation during the next decade (12 years later). Career adaptation was measured through the use of variables including career stability, work satisfaction, attitudes towards recipients and flexibility. The results of the study were surprising and showed how individuals that were more burnt out at the start of their careers, were less likely to change careers and adopted a more flexible approach to work. As a result, Cherniss (1992: 11) concludes that burnout experienced early on during one's career does not result to any significant long-term consequences.

2.2.8.2 The consequences of burnout in customer service environments

Burnout amongst client service employees can have a detrimental impact on the organisation, since burnout has been shown to induce a decrease in concern for clients; resulting in compromised levels of service performance (Singh *et al.,* 1994). In a study conducted amongst customer service dyads (including the customer service representative and the customer) from a number of public service organisations, it was found that a negative relationship exists between levels of burnout in customer service environments and customer satisfaction (Yagil, 2006).

This negative relationship was found to be stronger when client service representatives displayed a high level of empowerment (Yagil, 2006: 258). In a study of call centre customer service representatives, Singh *et al.* (1994) revealed that burnout acted as a partial mediator between role stressors and a number of psychological and behavioural job outcomes. This indicated the importance of research into burnout amongst "boundary-spanning" employees. In 2001, Low *et al.* (2001: 588) replicated the study by Singh *et al.* (1994) by examining the antecedents and outcomes of burnout in a sales environment. Low *et al.* (2001: 589) deviate slightly from the antecedents proposed by Singh *et al.* (1994) by adding intrinsic motivation as an antecedent of burnout. Their research, which was based on a sample of 148 field salespeople in Australia, showed that intrinsic motivation, role conflict and role ambiguity are all significant antecedents to burnout. Job satisfaction and salesperson performance are direct outcomes of burnout, as well as mediating the influence of burnout on organisational commitment and intention to leave.

Due to the often precarious positions that client service employees find themselves in by having to satisfy the often competing demands of clients and management, Singh (2000: 15) makes a distinction between burnout tendencies experienced in relation to company management and burnout tendencies experienced in relation to the client. While Singh *et al.* (1994) make this distinction between burnout tendencies, they aggregate these scores to a total burnout measure. Singh (2000) argues that these tendencies are differentially related to both antecedent and outcome variables, and should therefore be kept separate in an analysis of burnout tendencies amongst client service employees. As such, Singh (2000) measured burnout tendencies that develop in response to the client and burnout tendencies that develop in response to company management and found that burnout mediates the relationship between role stress and quality and role stress and commitment. He also found that burnout in response to the client has a negative effect on quality, while burnout in response to management has a positive effect on quality. Both burnout towards client and management have a significantly negative impact in commitment (Singh, 2000: 31).

The negative consequences of burnout, particularly in the client service setting, points to the importance of gaining a better understanding of the burnout construct within this setting. It is postulated that a number of the burnout antecedents discussed in this section on burnout are inextricably linked to the concept of role

identity. It is further argued that the nature of the client service employee's role identity can result in behaviours and emotions that result in burnout. It will therefore be shown in the sections that follow how the content of role identities could lead to emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced feelings of personal accomplishment. Client service employees who define their role identities as powerless and subordinate in relation to the client may experience a loss of autonomy or a sense of diminished personal control within the workplace. As was already shown in this chapter, reduced feelings of autonomy and control have been researched as antecedents to the burnout syndrome. The role identity of a client service employee will also carry implications for the way in which he or she defines his/her relationship with the client. Relationships that are perceived as inequitable or unfair could result in the development of burnout amongst these employees.

More recent developments in burnout research have shown how a sense of self-esteem and status can buffer against burnout. Using Burke's (1991, 1997) identity control model, we will show in the next sections of this chapter how failure to self-verify an existing role identity can result in negative emotions associated with burnout. In so doing, we will draw from the work by Hallsten (1993), Buunk *et al.* (2007) and Vanheule *et al.* (2003).

The next section of this literature review will elaborate on the definition of role identity, its antecedents and its role in shaping behaviour.

2.3   ROLE IDENTITY

As mentioned in the preceding literature review on burnout, most studies into the antecedents to burnout have focused on situational variables such as organisational and work context. The present study will depart from this tradition by focusing on the relationship between role identity and burnout. It is proposed that client service employees adopt role identities that are at least in part based on the client discourse of the organisation. The internalisation of these role identities could carry implications for the behaviour and work-related perceptions of client service employees that could result in the development of burnout.

In the next section of this literature review, the concept of role identity will be explored. Special attention will be given to the manner in which role identities influence behaviour and work-related perceptions. This will be followed by a discussion of organisational discourse and the implications that this discourse holds for the formation of client service role identities.

2.3.1 Symbolic interactionism and the concept of role identity

The concept of identity has been frequently applied in both the social and behavioural sciences. As a result, numerous theoretical traditions have explored the concept, resulting in as many conceptualisations of the term (Burke, 2003: 1). Social identity theory, for instance, assumes that one's identity is linked to the social category to which one belongs. Personal identity theory, on the other hand, focuses on the individual's sense of self as constituting the core of his/her identity (Hogg, Terry & White, 1995). The present study, however, will use the concept of role identity as intended by the structural symbolic interactionists. For ease of purpose, the concept "role identity" will be used interchangeably with concept "identity", unless specifically stipulated.

The concept of role identity as defined by the current study is derived from the structural symbolic interactionist approach to self and identity as proposed by Stryker (1980). Symbolic interactionism is a micro sociological perspective that focuses on the formation of the self and the manner in which interpersonal interactions shape the individual's sense of self (Cerulo, 1997: 386). The sociological approach to self and society assumes a reciprocal relationship between the self and society. The self influences society through the behaviour of individuals which ultimately shape the groups and institutions that constitute society (Hoelter, 1993). Conversely, society influences the self through shared meanings and language that enable a person to engage in social interactions. The traditional approach to symbolic interactionism, also known as the situational approach, views society as unstructured, unstable and in a constant state of flux. Society is continually shaped and reshaped through the interpretations and meanings that individuals apply to various situations. In opposition to this view, Stryker (1980) proposes the structural approach to symbolic

interactionism which assumes society to have a stable and durable nature due to the "patterned regularities that characterise most human action" (Stryker, 1980: 65). The structural symbolic interactionist perspective therefore assumes that individuals act in ways to verify their conceptions of who they are, resulting in a durable social structure created through patterns of individual and inter-individual behaviour at a number of levels of analysis. The example by Stets and Burke (2003: 129) in the paragraph below illustrates this reciprocal relationship between self and society perfectly.

"*A scientist, for example, may act in ways that make it clear to herself, as well as to others, that she is careful, analytical, logical and experimentally inclined. She may engage in a variety of actions and interactions to convey these images. These are individual patterns of behaviours that help us to understand the individual scientist. These same patterns of behaviour may be part of a larger social structure. We may find, for example, that scientists who are careful, analytical, logically inclined and who do these things well are elected to high positions in their scientific organisations*" (Stets & Burke, 2003: 129).

Stets and Burke (2003: 129) go on to state that the movement of such persons into "positions of prominence" is facilitated by their activities as scientists, which are focused at maintaining boundaries between themselves and non-scientists. The maintenance of these boundaries also ensures that resources keep flowing to the groups and organisations to which these scientists belong.

The example of the scientist just cited illustrates the symbolic interactionist's view that a reciprocal relationship exists between the self and society, whereby individual actions exist within the patterns of action and interaction that constitute society. Social structure therefore arises from the actions of individuals who in turn receive feedback from the structures they and others have created. Social structure is therefore constituted through the actions of individuals and these individuals in turn receive feedback from the social structure and adjust or re-negotiate their behaviours accordingly.

2.3.2 Role identity defined

Identity theory, within which the concept of role identity assumes a central position, has emerged from this structural variant of symbolic interactionism and is based on a number of underlying principles consistent with the symbolic interactionist perspective. It has been described as a "micro sociological theory" that seeks to explain individual role-related behaviour in terms of the reciprocal relationships between self and society (Hogg *et al.,*1995: 255). According to identity theory, individual behaviour is dependent upon the meanings situated in the named or classified world. These meanings carry with them a set of behavioural expectations that are largely derived through social interaction (Hogg *et al.*, 1995: 255).

Using the symbolic interactionist framework, Stets and Burke (2003: 134) explain that:

"…the core of an identity is the categorization of the self as an occupant of a role and incorporating into the self the meanings and expectations associated with the role in its performance.   Sociological social psychologists see persons as always acting within the context of social structure, in that they and others are labelled such that each recognises the other as an occupant of positions or roles in society" (Stets & Burke, 2003: 134).

As described above, the meanings that individuals attach to themselves within particular situations are referred to as role identities, and encompass a set of expectations that prescribe behaviour that is considered appropriate within a specific role-related situation. By assigning meanings and identities to others and things, we enable ourselves to act appropriately towards those persons or within those situations, since the assigned identities incorporate a set of behavioural expectations attached to the person occupying the role (McCall & Simmons, 1978: 64).

McCall and Simmons (1978: 65) define role identity as "the character and the role that an individual devises for himself as an occupant of a particular social position". This concept of role identity incorporates a "conventional" as well as an "idiosyncratic" dimension. The conventional dimension denotes the role which relates

to the expectations tied to the social position, while the idiosyncratic dimension refers to the identity or unique interpretations that individuals bring to their roles. It is an "imaginative view" in terms of how people like to think of themselves as "being" and "acting" in the world. This imaginative view of the self serves as the primary source of plans for future actions since it contains expectations of behaving. It allows us to appraise our or another's behaviours and gives meaning to our interpretations of situations and the people we encounter (McCall & Simmons, 1978: 69).

Hogg *et al.* (1995: 256) describe these role identities as "self-conceptions, self-referent cognitions or self definitions that people apply to themselves as a consequence of the structural role positions they occupy and through a process of labelling or self-definition as a member of a particular category". Grube and Piliavin (2000: 118) define role identities as "those components of the self that correspond to the social roles we play". The identities we assign to ourselves and others define the range of behaviours that we engage in.

The symbolic interactionist approach to behaviour does, however, not view the concept of role as a static prescription of role-related behaviour. Instead, by incorporating the concept of "identity" with that of "role", the symbolic interactionists maintain that the subjective meaning the individual associates with a role position informs adaptive behaviour. To illustrate this point, Lynch (2007: 381) makes a useful distinction between the functionalist approach to roles and the interactionist approach to roles. The functionalist approach views roles as the set of expectations that society places on an individual and therefore views roles as deterministic prescriptions for behaviour. These expectations include all the rights, responsibilities, privileges, duties and obligations associated with the occupation of a social position in relation to others occupying other positions, and serve to foster regularised patterns of behaviour. The interactionist perspective, on the other hand, views role performances as less static than the functionalist approach does. The interactionist perspective maintains that the unique meaning the individual associates with the occupation of the role renders role performance adaptive and person-specific. For instance, two individuals enacting the same societal role may attach very different meanings to the role, and therefore display different role-related behaviours.

In the client service context, for instance, an organisation will most likely have a set of expectations according to which the client service employees working for that organisation should enact the role. These expectations will be communicated to the employees through managerial discourse, organisational policies, job descriptions and other forms of organised sanction and reward (Grube & Piliavin, 2000). While each individual client service employee will internalise these expectations to a certain degree (Alvesson & Willmott, 2004), the role of each client service employee will be infused with a person-specific meaning (Holmer-Nadesan, 1996) when enacted by each individual client service professional. As a result, the role identities of each client service employee should differ slightly, depending on the degree of internalisation and identification with the organisational discourse.

To summarise, role identities can be described as an organised collection of behavioural expectations. They are idealised notions of how we ought to behave in situations (Neale & Griffin, 2006: 23) and can be distinguished from general identities in that they represent the "sets of expectations and demands that define the parts that people play in social interaction" (Wood & Roberts, 2006: 781). General identities, on the other hand, are not context specific and account for commonalities in the identities assumed across a variety of contexts or situations.

Role identities are highly relational in that the meanings attached to the self are learned by the individual through interaction with others. According to Burke (1980: 19) "others respond as if the person has an identity appropriate to that particular role performance". These responses provide clues to the appropriate role performance, and, by implication, to an appropriate identity for one who performs in appropriate ways. When individuals engage in identity-related behaviour, they take on the role of the generalised other, thereby giving the role meaning in relation to others. Accordingly then, the identity assumed by a particular individual in a specific position is always related to an alternative, counter-identity i.e. identities are enacted as they relate to counter-identities. In the client service setting, for instance, the client service employee forms an identity in relation to that of the client.

The relational aspect of role identities is well illustrated by Parker (1997: 12) when he states that individuals construct identities by creating a "pattern of fractures" that

separates the activities of one group from the activities of another. This differentiation is based on the individual's ability to make a distinction between similarities and differences amongst other individuals and groups. This idea that identities are relevant insofar as they are tied to counter-identities echoes Hegel's description of the master-slave dialectic. According to Hegel, the identity of an individual (master) is revealed through a process of "reciprocal recognition" whereby the identity of the master is only confirmed in recognition of the identity of the slave. Hegel maintains that the slave only gains an identity in the face of the master and that the master only gains identity in the face of the slave (McDonald, Rogers & MacDonald, 2008: 585). Applied to the present study, the meanings that are therefore contained within the client service identity can therefore be partly exposed through an understanding of the meanings they (as client service employees) attach to the counter-role or role of the client. As Bleakley (2006: 419) states: "comparison and contradiction" of one's role identity with that of the relevant other is a useful tool in the construction of identity relevant meanings.

Since role identities are tied to the positions one occupies in the social structure and since one individual can occupy a number of positions, an individual can assume multiple identities. The self is therefore comprised of a number of identities each of which is tied to certain positions within the social structure. A number of researchers have passed comment on the structure of these identities within the self and most postulate that these identities are organised hierarchically (McCall & Simmons, 1966; 1978; Stryker, 1980).

McCall and Simmons (1978: 84) maintain that an individual's identities are arranged hierarchically with the most prominent or influential identities situated towards the top of the hierarchy. The prominence of the role identity is determined by its need for support; the perceived degree of opportunity for the profitable enactment of the role; the intrinsic gratification the individual derives from portraying the role identity and the extrinsic gratification that the role affords the individual.

Stryker (1980), on the other hand, asserts that role identities are organised in a salience hierarchy, not a prominence hierarchy as postulated by McCall and Simmons (1978). According to Stryker (1980), a salient role identity is one that is

frequently activated across situations. Salience is therefore determined by how one behaves and not by that which one values (Stets & Burke, 2002: 135).

The salience of an identity is determined by the commitment an individual has towards an identity (Stryker & Serpe, 1994). Quantitative commitment to an identity is determined by the number of people one is tied to through an identity. While qualitative commitment is determined by the depth of ties one has towards others based on a particular identity.

2.3.3 Burke's cybernetic model of identity control

Structural symbolic interactionism has developed into "two somewhat different but closely related dimensions" (Stryker & Burke, 2000: 285). While Stryker (1980) and colleagues (Stryker & Serpe, 1982; 1994) have largely focused on how societal structures affect the self and how the meanings attached to the self affect social behaviour, Burke (1991) and colleagues (Burke & Cast, 1997; Burke & Reitzes, 1981; 1991; Burke & Stets, 1999; Cast & Burke, 2002) have focused on the internal dynamics associated with self-processes and how these affect behaviours. In so doing, Burke has developed a micro-sociological model that explains social behaviour in terms of role identity processes.

According to Burke (1991a; 1991b; 1997), the relationship between meaning, identity and behaviour can be explained as a cybernetic model, or a perceptual control system. Since identity can be described as the set of meanings applied to the self in a social role, this set of meanings acts as a standard against which perceptions of the environment are compared. As indicated by **Figure 7**, when a specific role identity is activated, a feedback loop is established through which the individual compares the meaning standards contained within the role identity with the results of his/her actions or behaviours (output). Contained within the role identity of a client service employee, for instance, are a number of meaning standards against which the individual will judge his/her role-related behaviour. When the client service role is activated, the client service employee will attempt to act in accordance with the standards contained in the identity standard, since these identity standards serve as

guides for behaviour. Once the individual has engaged in meaningful role-related behaviour, she will compare the results/outcomes of her actions with the expectations contained in the identity standard.

If the individual experiences incongruence between the expectations for role-related behaviour contained in the identity standard, and their appraisal of the situation (input), they will modify their subsequent behaviour (output) in an attempt to control the perceptual input to match the identity standard (Stets & Burke, 2003: 132).
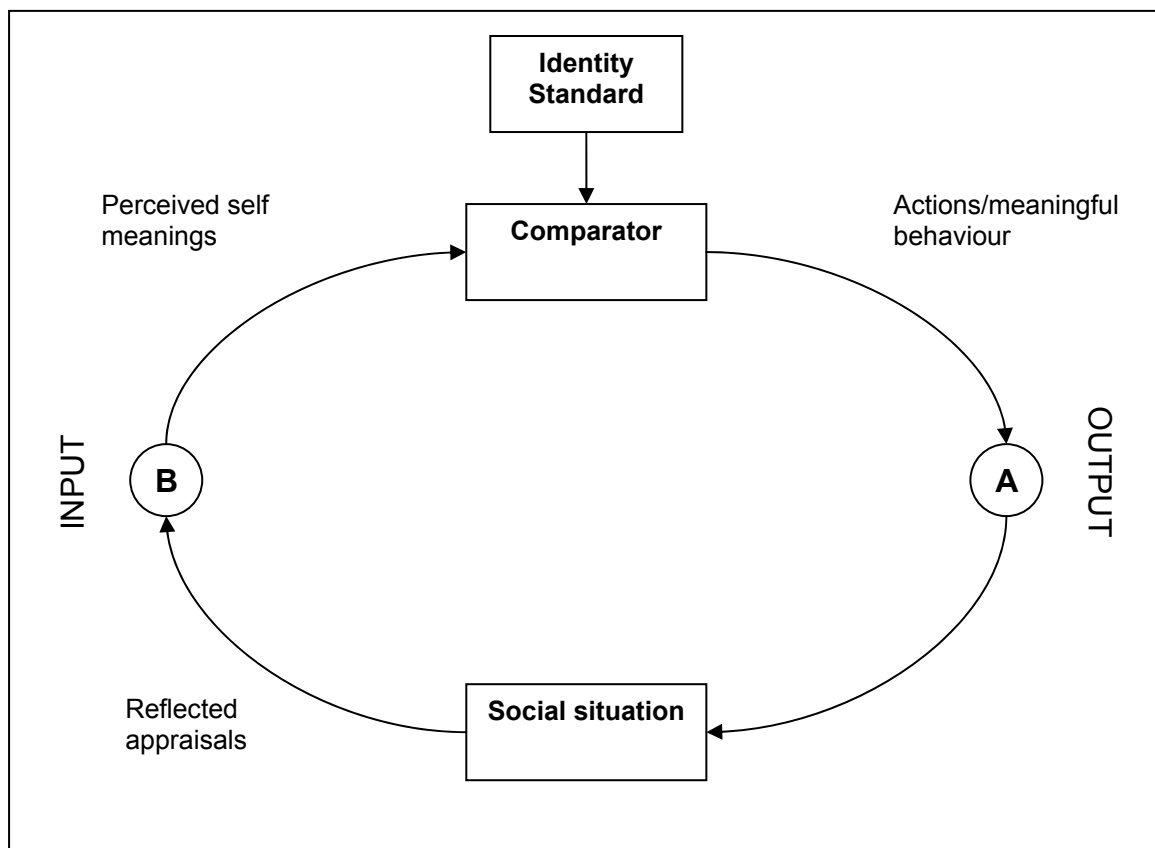
Figure 7: Burke's cybernetic identity control model
(Burke, 1991a)

As a result, when a specific identity is activated, a feedback loop is established. As illustrated in **Figure 7**, this feedback loop consists of four components, namely:

▪ The **identity standard** (or self meanings) attached to the role (the meaning content of a role)

- The perceptual input of self-relevant meanings derived from the situation (the individual's self-perceptions of the identity enactment derived from the social environment) **(B)**

- **Comparator** − a process that compares the perceptual input with the standard

- An output to the environment in the form of meaningful behaviour that is the result of the comparison of the input with the relevant identity standard **(A)**.

In developing the cybernetic model of role identity control, Burke (1991a, 1991b) was focused on explaining the implications that role identities hold for behaviour. According to Burke (1991a), individual behaviour can be predicted through the understanding of the meanings that an individual attaches to a particular role identity.

According to the cybernetic model described in **Figure 7**, individuals act in accordance with the identity meanings contained within the identity standard. The individual compares the perceptual input derived from his/her behaviour in the situations with the identity standard. If the individual experiences incongruence between the perceived self meanings and the identity standard, he/she will modify his/her subsequent behaviour (output) in an attempt to control the perceptual input to match the standard. The control system therefore functions to modify the behaviour of the individual (output) to the situation in an attempt to enhance the match between the perceptions of the situation and the identity standard (Burke, 1997: 139). Individual role-related behaviour therefore occurs in response to the individual's constant goal to match the meaning contained within the identity standard with the situational inputs present in the situation. If the self meanings (standard) do not match the situational meanings as perceived by the individual, behaviour is modified to counteract the situational meanings and restore perceptions to match the standard. As a result, role-related behaviours are a means by which one strives to keep the self-relevant meanings in line with the meanings emerging from the situation at hand.

In keeping with the general principles underpinning symbolic interactionism, Burke's (1997) identity control model incorporates two underlying processes – that of reflexivity and that of self-verification.

Reflexivity can be described as the process by which the individual is able to evaluate the fit between the identity standard and the input from the social situation or interaction (Collier, 2001: 218). According to identity theory, the individual's ability to engage in a process of self-reflection by taking on the role of the other forms the cornerstone of understanding individual role-related behaviour. Through the process of self-reflection, individuals are able to form interpretations of how they think others see them. These interpretations become the set of meanings which ultimately make up the individual self-concept. The self-concept therefore emerges out of the reflected appraisal process (referred to in sociological theory as "the looking glass self"), whereby our interpretations of how others see us influence the way in which we see ourselves (Stets & Burke, 2003: 131). An identity is therefore formed through the processes of identification, whereby the self takes itself as an object and categorises, classifies and names itself in relation to other social categories or classifiers. This categorisation is based on the self as an occupant of a role and the incorporation into the self, all the meanings and expectations associated with performances in a role (Stets & Burke, 2000: 224).

Self-verification, on the other hand, can be described as the process by which the identity standard serves as a reference that people use to evaluate their behaviours in any given situation (Burke, 2004b). When the individual's perceptions of the situation match the meanings contained within the identity standard, identity is verified and people continue to act as they have been. If, however, there is a mismatch between the identity standard and the perceived situational meanings resultant from role-related behaviour, the person will act to counteract this imbalance (Burke, 2004b: 5). The behavioural goals that people therefore seek to attain are in fact the meanings and expectations that are held in the identity standard. According to Burke (2004b: 6):

"These meanings constitute the state of affairs that we strive to obtain and maintain as role occupants and group members. We know that we have accomplished the goals when we make our perceptions match the standards in whatever manner we can" (Burke, 2004b: 6).

Based on the literature discussed above, it could be concluded that all client service employees will have certain self-expectations in terms of how they believe they should enact the client service role. When engaging in role-related behaviour, client service employees will appraise their behaviour, based on how they perceive others' reactions to their behaviour and the actual outcomes of the behaviour. Through appraisal, they will compare their role-related behaviour with the standard contained within the client service role identity. If their perceptions of their behaviours are in accordance with the expectations contained within the standard, they will experience self-verification. If, however, they perceive their behaviour as incongruent with the behavioural expectations contained within the identity standard, they will experience a sense of failed self-verification, and attempt to adjust their behaviour so that it meets the expectations contained in the identity standard.

2.3.4   Role identity, stress and behaviour

A primary contribution of the identity control theory is that it establishes a clear link between role identity and behaviour in a number of ways. According to the identity control model, behaviour occurs as a result of the expectations contained within the identity standard, in that people attempt to behave in a manner congruent with the expectations contained in the identity standard (Steward, Hutt, Walker & Kumar, 2009). When individuals appraise their behaviour as incongruent with these expectations, they experience negative emotions as a result of failed self-verification. A failure in self-verification results in the individual modifying his role-related behaviour so as to facilitate congruence between perceptions of the situation and role-related expectations.

Burke's (1991a; 1991b) identity control model therefore essentially proposes that identities influence performance and that these performances are evaluated by the self for the kind of identity that they imply. Accordingly then, the link between identity and performance is a two-way process, where the self reinforces behaviour and this behaviour then reinforces the self.

Burke and Reitzes (1981: 84) state that the link between identity and role performance lies in the fact that they have common underlying frames of reference.

The frame of reference that an individual uses to enact an identity in a situation is the same frame of reference that the individual uses to assess his/her role performance. This common frame of reference refers to the meaning attached to both the identity and the role performance or behaviour. Burke and Reitzes (1981: 84) tested this hypothesis by empirically examining the level of congruence between the meaning of an identity and the perceived meaning of associated behaviour. Using the Burke-Tully technique, the researchers gathered data from 640 college students and assessed the impact of the student identities on two performance variables of educational plans and participation in social activities. The study found support for the hypothesised link between role identity and performance (behaviour) through establishing common meanings between the two. Similarly, in a study on predictors of volunteer behaviour, Finkelstein, Penner and Brannick (2005: 403) found that role identity and the associated expectations were the strongest predictors of time spent volunteering and length of service.

Burke's (1991a; 1991b) model further postulates that the relationship between role identity and behaviour is shaped through the process of self-verification. The process of self-verification carries a number of behavioural and affective implications for the individual. When the meanings attached to self in situation (input) are congruent with the meanings contained in the identity standard and self-verification occurs, the individual experiences positive emotional arousal accompanied by feelings of high self-esteem and personal mastery (Cast & Burke, 2002). When a discrepancy between the perceived self in situation and the standard becomes apparent, an individual experiences negative emotional arousal, generally in the form of depression, distress, anger and hostility. Negative emotions therefore arise when one is unable to meet the behavioural expectations contained in the identity standard, while positive emotion arises when one does (Stets & Burke, 2003: 139).

Burke's (1991a; 1991b) model therefore indicates that people seek to achieve "semantic congruence" between the meanings contained in the identity and the interpretations of behaviour that flow from a particular identity (Large & Marcussen, 2000: 51). According to Stets and Burke (2003: 140) a discrepancy in the identity verification process results in the individual either adjusting his/her standard and expectations or adjusting his/her role-related behaviour accordingly. When the input

meanings in a given situation are not congruent with the identity standard, stress occurs, resulting in a change in the output behaviour. For instance, people who perceived themselves as submissive acted even more submissively if they received feedback that they were perceived as dominant.

A number of researchers have examined the nature of identity process interruption and the types of stress that ensue (Burke & Reitzes, 1991; Large & Marcussen, 2000, 2003; Marcussen, Ritter & Safron, 2004). Burke and Reitzes (1991) maintain that the more committed a person is to an identity; the harder the person will work to maintain congruence between the identity standard and the environmental input (self-appraisal of the identity enactment). Burke and Reitzes (1991) propose that commitment to an identity can be based on cognitive and/or socio-emotional factors. The cognitive basis for commitment to an identity refers to the individual's perceived cost or benefit of maintaining the identity. The socio-emotional basis of commitment refers to the emotional ties that are formed with others while enacting an identity. In the context of the current study, it is likely that the cognitive basis for commitment to the client service role is strong due to the fact that the enactment of the role as determined and maintained through the employment relationship.

The interruption of an identity leads to higher levels of stress when there are repeated or severe interruptions to the identity; when the interrupted identity is highly salient; when the individual is highly committed to the identity and when the source of the perceived identity input is highly significant to the individual (Burke, 1991a: 84). Furthermore, the identity process loop can be broken when the individual perceives her behaviours to have little or no effect on the situation, leading to feelings of low self-efficacy, alienation and the loss of a sense of self (Burke, 1991a). The identity loop can also be interrupted when an individual is unable to perceive the meanings associated with a specific situation, or when there is interference from a person's other identities resulting in role conflict. Tightly controlled identity systems where appraisals of the input are required to match the identity standard closely are also more susceptible to interruption and resultant stress.

According to Thoits (1991: 105) the "more salient the role identity, the more meaning, purpose and behavioural guidance the individual should derive from its enactment,

and thus the more that identity should influence psychological well-being". Events that disrupt a person's most salient role identities (identity relevant events) will therefore be psychologically more damaging than events that threaten less-valued role identities. Thoits (1995: 73) is therefore of the opinion that the more salient an identity, the more important it is as a source of meaning. As a result, identity relevant events that damage highly salient identities should induce more psychological stress than events that damage less salient identities. Conversely, identity enhancing events should have greater positive effects when they occur in relation to salient identities. In a stratified two-wave panel sample of 532 married and divorced urban individuals, Thoits (1995) found that the influence of events on changes in psychological distress were, however, not dependant on the salience of the role identity.

A number of researchers, have found support for Thoits' (1995) proposition that the more salient an identity, the greater the resultant stress when self-verification fails. According to Marcussen et *al.* (2004: 289), research suggests that stress occurring in roles that are most salient to an individual's sense of self is more likely to have a negative impact on the psychological well-being of the individual. In a study examining the role of identity in the stress process among a group of 174 undergraduates at a Midwestern university, Marcussen *et al.* (2004: 305) found that performance based inefficacy related to a role resulted in decreased feelings of self-esteem and personal mastery. The research also concluded that higher levels of commitment to an identity and identity salience increased the effects of stress on psychological well-being. In the case of client service employees, where the role identity associated with client service is largely formed as a result of the contractual obligations contained within the employment relationships, verification of the role becomes even more important. Failure to verify in these situations could therefore result in greater levels of stress, since the individuals identity standard is based, in part, on expectations derived from the employment relationship.

Burke (1991a) was initially of the opinion that any interruption in the identity verification process would result in some form of distress – the amount or degree of which would be a function of the degree of organisation of the identity and the severity of the interruption. Later theorists, however, argue that an identity

discrepancy does not necessarily result in negative emotion (Large & Marcussen, 2000; Stets, 2005). If, for instance, an individual is rewarded during such a discrepancy, the standard can be adjusted to confirm the reward, thereby removing the discrepancy.

In a study examining the role of emotions in identity theory, Stets (2005: 40) set out to test whether a lack of identity verification produced negative emotion despite the direction of the incongruence between the identity standard and the input. He also attempted to determine whether a recurrent lack of verification results in more intense emotions and whether a lack of verification from familiar others affects the individual more strongly that would a lack of verification from unfamiliar others. To test his hypotheses, Stets (2005: 40) made use of an experiment that simulated a work situation in which worker identity was involved. Workers were requested to perform simple tasks and received feedback from a manager following task performance. The feedback was poised at inducing verification, lack of verification in a positive direction (where individuals were provided with feedback more positive than they would have expected), or lack of verification in a negative direction (where individuals were provided with feedback that was more negative than they would have expected). The results of the study contradict Burke's (1991a) original argument that non-verification (in either direction) results in negative emotion, by showing how non-verification in a positive direction results in positive emotion. The study also shows how persistence in non-verification results in a decrease in the strength of negative emotions associated with the role. Whether or not the feedback received was from a familiar or unfamiliar other played little role in the strength of emotional reactions.

Marcussen and Large (2003: 49) offer an extension of Burke's identity theory (1991a) in order to explain the degree of stress experienced by individuals when they experience a discrepancy in the identity verification process. They explain that the form of distress experienced by an individual during enactment of a role identity is a function of the meaning that the role holds for the individual. The authors use Higgins's (1987 as cited in Marcussen & Large, 2003) self-discrepancy theory to extend Burke's (1997) link between identity processes and stress. According to the self discrepancy theory, the self consists of three domains, namely an *actual* self, an *ideal* self and an *ought* self. The *actual* self can be described as those attributes that

the individual (or others) believes he possesses. The *ideal* self refers to those attributes that the individual or others with whom the individual comes into contact wishes or hopes that the individual possesses. Finally, the *ought* self refers to those attributes that the individual or others believe that the individual should possess.

A further distinction can be made between the two positions through which the self is evaluated − own and other. *Own* refers to evaluations made by the individual of his/her behaviours and attributes, whereas *other* refers to the evaluations made of the individual by others with whom the individual comes into contact. The three self domains (*actual, ideal* and *ought)* can then be cross-tabulated with the two self perspectives resulting in six possible self-state representations: *actual own, actual other, ideal own, ideal other, ought own* and *ought other*. The representations of who we are (actual self) and who we believe others think we are (actual other) constitute the self concept and are similar to Burke's (1991a) system input (appraisals of role-related behaviour). The remaining self-state representations are self-motivating standards akin to Burke's (1991a) identity standard. Individuals compare these self concepts (actual) to their self guides (ideal and ought) and attempt to gain a state of congruence between the two. The type of emotional reaction to a discrepancy is dependent on which self guide is incongruent with the actual self. A discrepancy between the *actual* self and the *ideal* self produces depression, while a discrepancy between the *actual* self and the *ought* self produces anxiety (Marcussen & Large, 2003: 15).

Marcussen and Large's (2003) extension of Burke's model (1991a) is useful to the present study since it differentiates between the self guides included in the identity standard. Role identities of client service employees may, to a large extent, be shaped by the client discourse of the organisation. This client discourse or client ethic will be communicated to the employee through job descriptions, processes of performance appraisal and the client service culture of the organisation. This discourse will contain the expectations that the organisation has of employees when engaging in a client service role. As a result, the role identities of client service employees may contain strong *ought* dimensions. Failure to self-verify under these circumstances would therefore result in high levels of anxiety amongst client-service employees.

Stets and Tsushima (2001: 283) conducted an interesting study by drawing a distinction between role-based identities and group-based identities and the kinds of negative emotion resulting from a discrepancy in the verification process of each. They studied the worker identity as the role-based identity. Since role-based identities emphasise performance, the enactment of a role, especially within the workplace, is evaluated in terms of competence. According to Stets and Tsushima (2001: 286) role identities in organisational settings are often differentiated in terms of power and status. Individuals with low status are less likely than high status individuals to experience self-verification due to the fact that they have fewer resources at their disposal to confirm their self views.

By virtue of their service roles, client service employees are often constrained in terms of behavioural options and resources. They are often required to meet the needs and expectations of the client within parameters prescribed by the institution. When clients make excessive, sometimes unreasonable, demands these employees may feel particularly restricted and powerless in terms of being able to meet the expectations of both client and organisation. In situations such as these, client service employees may find it difficult to self-verify and suffer associated negative emotion.

Stets and Tsushima (2001: 284) also maintain that when negative emotion results from failed self-verification, individuals adopt various coping responses to counteract these negative emotions. Individuals may either adjust their behaviour or change the meaning of the identity standard through cognitive strategies. According to Stets and Tsushima (2001: 293) role identities associated with non-intimate groups (such as the worker identity) are more likely to emphasise doing a particular task than being a particular person. As a result, role-based identities are more likely to be associated with behavioural coping responses as opposed to cognitive coping responses. Client service employees are therefore more likely to adjust their behaviour in an attempt to confirm role-related expectations. As will be discussed in the next chapter, this could result in burnout through role overload.

The concepts of role identity and self-verification have also appeared in research on emotional labour. Ashforth and Humphrey (1993: 88) propose that if emotional labour is consistent with a central, salient and valued social or personal identity, it will have a positive influence on psychological well-being. If the display of emotional labour is inconsistent with a salient identity, it will result in emotional dissonance and a loss of sense of self. Identification with a role may therefore enhance the impact of job stressors and performance failures. The greater the level of identification with a role, the greater the internalisation of role obligations and the greater the perceived sense of failure if these obligations are not met.

The relevance of the identity control model to the current study on burnout lies in the fact that the model establishes a clear link between role identity and forms and types of behaviour. Through the process of self-verification individuals act in such a way as to establish congruence between the identity standard and the self-referent meanings that are derived from the situation. When considering the impact of role identity on behaviour it is therefore important to consider both the content of the identity (meanings and behavioural expectations attached to the identity as contained within the identity standard) and the process through which the self is verified. While behaviour is to a large extent determined by the content of the identity standard, it is also largely a product of the process of self-verification. An important contribution of the identity control model is therefore that role identity should be considered not as a set of traits belonging to an individual, but rather as a process. Individual behaviour is therefore not solely a function of the content of a specific standard, but rather the result of the comparison of the input meaning with the identity standard (Burke, 1991a: 839).

A further contribution of the identity control theory to the current study is the clear link that the model establishes between failed self-verification and negative emotion. It is proposed that failure to verify the client service role identity through identity processes associated with client service work will result in negative emotion, stress and possibly burnout.

2.3.5 Origin of the identity standard

Since its development, Burke's (1991a) identity control model has been subject to a number of criticisms. One such criticism is that the model does not adequately address the origin of the identity standard. In essence, Burke's original model is silent in terms of the processes by which individuals recognise and internalise an identity standard and where the expectations contained within the identity standard come from. More recent research into the identity control model has tried to address this shortcoming (Burke & Stets, 1999) through the distinction between principle level identity standards and program level identity standards. Principle level identity standards include abstract goals states such as beliefs, values and ideals and operate at a higher level of control than program level standards. Program level standards, on the other hand, are concrete standards that are attached to specific situations. According to Burke and Stets (1999), these principle level standards operate in identity control systems that operate at a higher level, but essentially feed into the programme level identity standard that operate at the situational level. This distinction does, however, not provide insight into the origin of principle level standards.

Early sociological thought from an interactionist perspective seems to suggest that role identity standards are in a sense pre-determined by the social structure upon which they are based. According to symbolic interactionism, roles tied to social positions are social constructions insofar as occupancy of a certain role carries with it the expectations of how one ought to behave in that specific role. According to McCall and Simmons (1978: 72) identity construction is an interpersonal act i.e. we claim identities in relation to others and therefore need to legitimise these identities in front of these same others. Significant others confirm or support the role identity we have constructed for ourselves, and in a sense, provide a degree of "role support". Similarly, Burke and Tully (1977: 883) maintain that role identities are learned in that we constantly shape our identities in relation to similarities and differences of relevant counter-roles. For instance, the meaning of the "wife" role is only significant when understood in terms of the similarities and differences it shares with the "husband" role. Given that roles, and the standards they encompass, are based on the position which one occupies in a specific social situation and since these positions are part of

the social structure, the expectations and standards for behaviour contained within the associated role are pre-determined through mutual understandings between the self and relevant others.

This view is consistent with the view expressed by Stryker (1980), which states that identity standards arise from societal expectations that are held for persons occupying certain positions in that structure. An identity standard is therefore acquired through socialisation into the expectations that exist for persons occupying certain positions. These arguments however, seem over-deterministic and are, in essence, counter to the structural symbolic interactionist perspective. According to the structural symbolic interactionist perspective, a reciprocal relationship exists between the self and society, whereby social structures inform the behaviour of the self, but that the self also shapes and informs the social structure through enactment.

In an attempt to overcome the determinism implicit in role identity theory, the concept of "role as resource" was developed by Baker and Faulkner (1991). According to them roles are used as resources in the establishment and maintenance of social structure. According to the interactionist perspective, roles limit, prescribe and constrain action, while the "role as resource" view, sees roles as making action possible. The role as resource view does not deny the fact that roles structure behaviour, but states that behaviour is limited and constrained through the denial of access to other roles. A further contribution of the "role as resource" view is that it takes into account that roles can evolve and are not completely static (McDonald *et al.*, 2008: 294).

Callero (1994: 232) extends this role as resource view and describes roles as cultural objects used to accomplish interactive goals in society. Roles as cultural objects must be shared and can be described as "cognitive categories" available in a "generalized manner" to the community as a whole. Callero (1994: 233) goes on to state that roles are more than just sets of expectations, but that they also contain cultural beliefs, emotions and interpretations.

Using the conceptualisation of "role as resource", Collier (2001) developed a differentiated model of identity construction that explains how the behaviour of

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individuals occupying the same role can display differing patterns of behaviour. While Collier acknowledges that most conceptualisations of role identity include multiple dimensions of meaning, he argues that models of identity construction do not incorporate the notion that identity can comprise multiple meaning dimensions. By adding ideas from the "role as resource" perspective to Burke's identity control model, Collier (2001) developed a differentiated model of role identity acquisition which shows how when individuals find themselves in situations in which they can use an identity in new or different ways, they are able to make adjustments to role standards. According to Collier (2001) these adjustments are made by changing the relative weights of the different dimensions of meaning underpinning the role identity.

In some situations, certain dimensions of a particular role identity may come to the fore, while in other situations alternative meaning dimensions may come to the fore. The differentiated model also shows how role usage affects identity acquisition. According to the model, different reference groups may have different conceptions of the meaning dimensions underpinning a role. An actor can therefore adjust role referent meanings according to the group with whom he/she interacts. Different groups of people may therefore enact a role differently due to the fact that they may emphasise different role identity meaning dimensions. Collier's (2001) model therefore extends Burke's model by showing how "variation in role usage affects identity formation". According to Collier (2001) role identities are grounded in social contexts that differ in terms of the referent groups with which one interacts. Enactment of a role identity within one social context may bring certain meaning dimensions to the fore, while enactment of the same role in another social context, may bring an alternative set of meaning dimensions to the fore.

For organisational members, the acquisition and activation of roles, is, however, somewhat constrained. As employees, we are attached to the organisation through formal and psychological contracts and our actions as organisational members may be constrained by the roles that we are required to fill as members of these organisations. As mentioned previously, Burke (1991a) attests to the fact that some standards exist by way of instruction. For instance, we are told as organisational members to do our jobs. The role standards attached to the client service employee identity will therefore, to a large extent, be defined by the institution or organisation

for which the individual works. The organisation will define these role standards in such a way as to facilitate the use of the role as resource to attain valued organisational outcomes.

By stating that the work-related standards contained within the role identities of organisational members are to a large extend pre-determined, it does not mean that all client service workers will, for instance, internalise the exact same role standard and as such, behave in exactly the same way. Role enactment is an individual activity, as is the formation of a unique role identity. While the expectations for role enactment contained within the identity standard may to a large extent be determined by the social structure (in this case the organisation), the identity assumed in relation to the role will be based on the manner in which the individual employee internalises these expectations. As such, individuals within the same employing organisation, occupying the same role, may have very different interpretations of the meanings attached to the role. Since the meanings attached to the role (as contained within the identity standard) have implications for behaviour, it is logical that individuals occupying the same position in the organisation may display differing behaviours due to the fact that they have internalised the role differently and attach different meanings to its occupancy.

2.3.6 Role identity formation in organisations

Before embarking on a discussion of the implications that the client service role identity carries for the development of burnout, previous research that examines how individuals construct identities for themselves through the internalisation of societal or organisational expectations will be explored.

In a study on the impact of role identity on volunteer performance, Grube and Piliavin (2000: 1109) maintain that the enactment of a role identity is initially initiated through an individual's perceptions of the expectations of significant others. Perceived expectations of significant others lead to the development of a role identity. And this role identity then leads to the development of intentions to continue with the enactment of a specific role identity. As a result, Grube and Piliavin (2000) conclude

that the best single predictor of role identity is the perceived expectations of others. While the initial expectations of significant others are key to the formation of role identities, Grube and Piliavin (2000: 1109) also maintain that the organisational context within which an individual enacts a specific role identity is critical to the maintenance of that identity. According to them, when an individual perceives his/her role as being important to the success of a valued organisation, self-esteem increases and in turn, commitment to the role identity is increased. If the individual harbours positive feelings towards the organisation, any role identity which enhances the individual's connection to the organisation will therefore be reinforced through the organisational context.

This view is consistent with that proposed by Neale and Griffin (2006: 24) who state that a person's role can be understood as "an organised collection of behavioural expectations". According to Neale and Griffin (2006: 23) the sets of behavioural expectations that underpin the work-related role are derived from three role components namely system requirements, the self-concept and the role schema. These three components are schematically presented in **Figure 8**.
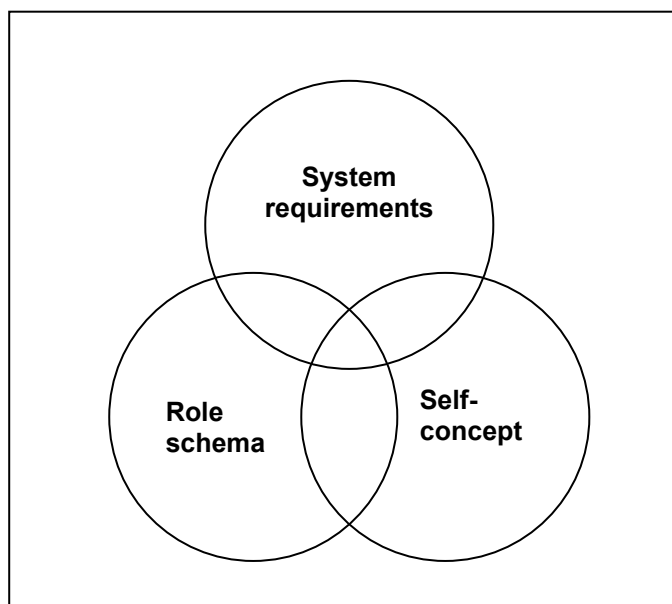
Figure 8: Neale and Griffin's (2006) role components
(Neale & Griffin, 2006)

Work-related behaviours are demanded by the organisation through system requirements which can be described as the perceptions the employee has of the employing organisation and the demands that the organisational system makes on them through the enforcement of sanctions and the provision of rewards. Included in these system requirements are the job demands of the task prescribed through formal job descriptions, manuals, organisational rules and organisational norms.

Role schemas can be defined as the "cognitive structures that define the expectations generically attached to a role" (Neale & Griffin, 2006: 28). These include the stereotypical behavioural expectations that are associated with a specific role. Role schemas are formed through experience with the organisation or similar organisations, job training, observation of other role holders and socialisation.

Lastly, the self-concept, defined as "a cognitive schema that filters, stores and organises information about the self", includes self-descriptive attitudes and traits which combine to form the ideal self. The self-concept is not static, and can change to incorporate aspects of expected behaviour. Each component is therefore a source of behavioural expectations and could therefore influence the enactment of role-related behaviour.

Similarities can be drawn between the views of Neale and Griffin (2006) and Burke's proposition that role identities are, to a large extent, culturally defined. According to Burke (2004a: 6), identities are tied to the positions we occupy in the social structure. These positions are in turn defined through culture since culture makes available the categories that name the various role positions that constitute social structure. In the organisational setting, these categories and shared meanings are communicated to the employee through the dominant discourse of the organisation. In order to function effectively in organisations and avoid sanctions, individuals internalise these discourses to varying degrees and construct identities based on the organisational expectations implied by this discourse. According to Blenkinsopp and Stalker (2004) organisational meanings and the identities invoked by these meanings are socially constructed through discourse. Since individuals construct and manage their identities as self-narratives, these narratives are likely to be congruent with the available discourses. Similarly, Jones, Latham and Betta (2008: 333) maintain that

discourses provide individuals with the meanings and concepts by which they are able to "construct an understanding of themselves, their identity, their beliefs, their own meanings of issues that are going on around them, and to satisfy their need for making sense of their own experiences".

2.3.7 Organisational discourse and role identity

As discussed in the previous sections, role identity is constructed through the individual's interpretation of the expectations of relevant others. In the organisational setting, these expectations are communicated to the individual through organisational discourse. Employees then interpret and internalise these discourses to varying degrees, and construct relevant role identities.

According to Grant, Keenoy and Oswick (1998: 1) organisational discourse comprises the "languages and symbolic media we employ to describe, present, interpret and theorise what we take to be the facticity of organisational life". Traditionally, discourse was described only as spoken dialogue, and excluded reference to written texts. Contemporary theory on discourse, however, includes written and spoken texts, cultural artefacts and modes of thinking such as ideologies and philosophies (Cooren, 2004: 373; Van Dijk, 1997: 2). As a combination of both spoken words, written texts and artefacts, discourse arranges social reality into concepts, objects and subjects, thereby shaping the social practices in which we engage (Phillips & Hardy, 1997). At the level of the organisation, discourse can be described as a universally applied set of vocabularies or meanings attached to a phenomenon.

In the client service setting, for instance, identity relevant organisational discourse would comprise any company texts (both written and verbal) which contain role-related expectations of the client service employee. Job descriptions, training manuals, performance agreements, marketing brochures and company newsletters would all contain assumptions (often implicit) about what it means to be a client service employee in that specific organisation. As a result, organisational discourse in client service settings will be largely focused on communicating the client ethic of the company to employees. This client ethic refers to the norms and values the

organisation and its employees prescribe to when interacting with the client. The client discourse therefore refers to the manner in which the organisation abstractly and symbolically refers to and defines the client and the relationships with the client (Anderson-Gough *et al.*, 2000: 1151). Client service employees then interpret these assumptions as expectations for appropriate behaviour. These expectations become the identity standard to which all role-related behaviour on the part of the employee should conform.

Discourse does therefore not only refer to the expression of organisational life, but also represents the construction of organisational life (Van Dijk, 1997). Research into organisational discourse is largely conducted through a social constructivist lens, which maintains that social or organisational reality is enacted through discourse. Alvesson and Karreman (2000: 1130) contend that discourse drives subjectivity, enables us to make sense of ourselves and the organisations in which we operate and frames the way we understand and engage with the realities around us. Discourse drives the articulation of norms and informs the attitudes that we assume in particular contexts (Grant *et al.,* 2001: 8). Similarly, Hardy (2004: 416) asserts that discourse constructs reality by shaping the way issues are talked about and how individuals conduct themselves in relation to particular issues.

According to Alvesson and Willmott (2004: 436) organisations regulate and shape the identities of their employees by using various forms of control. In so doing, employees are "positioned" within "managerially inspired discourses" about work and organisation (Alvesson & Willmott, 2004: 437). By getting individuals to identify with the dominant discourse of the organisation, management is able to control individual and group behaviour in ways that would probably not be possible with traditionally recognised methods of control. According to Furlough (1995) those in power have more constitutive power in terms of determining the subject positions of others. Implicit in these discourses is a set of expectations that management has of employees. Employees internalise these expectations into their role identities to varying degrees, resulting in role-related behaviour and attitudes that are consistent with this discourse. To this end, Alvesson and Willmott (2004: 440) describe the employee as an "identity worker" who converts managerial discourses into "narratives of self-identity".

Figure 9 provides an illustration of the theorised relationship between identity regulation on the part of the organisation, identity work on the part of the individual and the resultant self-identity.
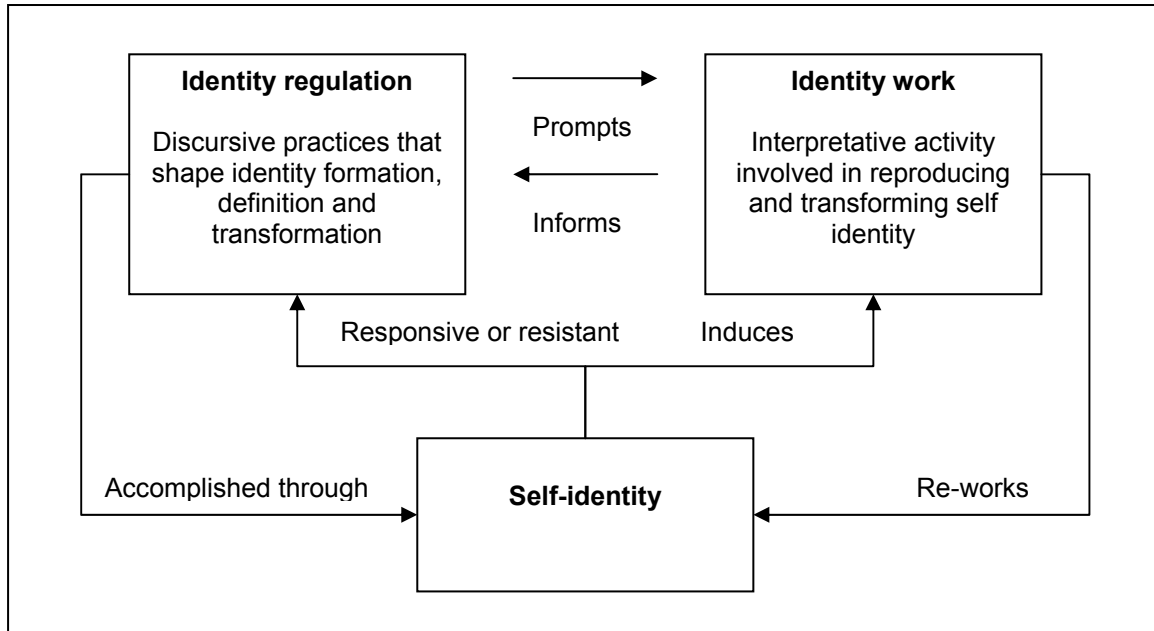
**Figure 9: Identity regulation, identity work and self-identity
(Alvesson & Willmott, 2004: 445)**

According to the model presented in **Figure 9**, self-identity is formed through identity work, where the individual adopts organisational practices and discourses that are targeted at the employee. Employees are, however, not "passive receptacles" of these organisational discourses, but instead critically interpret and internalise these discourses. Identity work then ultimately results in the formation of individual self-identity which comprises narratives of the self. This self-identity then reciprocally informs the nature of identity work and the extent to which the individual is responsive or resistant to identity regulation (Alvesson & Willmott, 2004: 446).

While the model above refers to the creation and regulation of self-identity, which Giddens (1991: 53) defines as the "self as reflexively understood by the person", the model can easily be applied to role identity theory by incorporating Burke's theory of identity construction. According to role identity theory, individuals construct role

identities for themselves based on the perceived expectations of others. In the organisation, these expectations are communicated to the employee through various forms of organisational discourse. The individual employee will interpret and internalise this discourse to varying degrees and adopt a role identity which contains behavioural expectations related to a specific role.

Numerous studies have examined the constituting role that discourse can play in organisational life. Discourse has been shown to play a role in organisational power relations (Mumby, 1998; Phillips & Hardy, 1997), collective bargaining and negotiation (Hamilton, 1997), the construction and enactment of organisational strategy (Hardy, Palmer & Phillips, 2000), organisational learning (Oswick, Keenoy, Mangham & Grant, 2000), client service ethic (Anderson-Gough *et al.*, 2000) and organisational socialisation (Coupland, 2001). Several studies of particular interest to the current research have focused on the discursive construction of identities in organisational settings (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Holmer-Nadesan, 1996; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). In a paper that examines how the discourses of patriarchy and class articulate the role identities of women in an organisation, Holmer-Nadesan (1996) argues that dominant organisational discourses that are embodied within organisational policies, manuals, job descriptions, values and rituals position individuals as subjects within particular contexts. Through various degrees of identification with these discourses, employees assume roles in relation to that of their clients. According to Holmer-Nadesan (1996) employees construct roles for themselves based on differential levels of identification with the dominant organisational discourse. While Holmer-Nadesan (1996) acknowledges that managerial discourses occupy a privileged position in defining what comprises appropriate organisational action, she argues that individuals have the ability to draw on alternative discourses. The degree to which individuals are susceptible to these alternative discourses is determined by the degree to which they identify with the dominant organisational discourse.

Anderson-Gough *et al.* (2000: 1151) examined how the concepts of client and client service are constructed through the client ethic discourse of two professional service firms and how the internalisation of the discourse affects role-related behaviour of organisational employees. Through qualitative analysis they show how the discourse

privileges the client and how it influences the professional identity of employees within the two organisations. The study draws on an analysis of the firm's recruitment literature, appraisal documentation and qualitative interviews with approximately 70 trainee accountants and shows how trainee accountants learn to regulate their identities within the dominant client discourse of the organisation.

In a qualitative study examining how a group of men involved in the Promise Keepers Movement construct, maintain and organise their identities, Armato and Marsiglio (2002: 44) show how identity should be viewed as an ongoing process and not as a given or pre-determined status. According to the authors, "individuals continuously strive to maintain their identities, but never completely attain them in any stable sense because the world around them changes too rapidly to allow stability" (Armato & Marsiglio, 2002: 44).

Similarly, Tracy, Myers and Scott (2006: 284) maintain that while identity in organisations may be discursively constructed, it is by no means fixed or static. Instead, Tracy *et al.* (2006: 284) show how human service workers continually re-negotiate and redefine their identities through complex processes of sense-making in ambiguous and disturbing situations. According to the authors (2006: 303) human service workers use humour to make sense of themselves and re-affirm positive identities in the face of chaotic and threatening situations.

These findings are consistent with Alvesson and Willmott's (2004) model discussed earlier. According to these authors, identity work on the part of the employee does not merely imply the passive adoption of expectations contained in the organisational discourse. Each employee in the organisation will interpret the dominant organisational discourse differently, thereby rejecting and accepting certain components of this discourse and incorporating differing aspects of it into the identity standard. By implication, two client service employees working for the same organisation, exposed to the same client ethic, may display slightly differing role identities. While managerially defined discourses are generally dominant in the organisational setting, they do not exclusively determine behaviour and role-related identities. Every employee comes into an organisation with a pre-existing identity

hierarchy, and will therefore be receptive to different aspects of the organisational discourse.

According to Ashforth and Kreiner (1999: 413), people generally attempt to define themselves in a positive light. In a study of individuals engaging in dirty work (work with a physical, social or moral taint), Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) show how these employees construct esteem-enhancing identities through the creation of a strong work culture. While this research was conducted through the social identity theoretical perspective, it illustrates how individuals generally attempt to construct esteem enhancing identities. This proposition corresponds to what has been referred to as the self-enhancement motive. Since individuals have a need to evaluate themselves positively, identities which allow the individual to make positive self-evaluations will foster greater commitment to the role and therefore greater salience of the role (Hoelter, 1993: 141).

Research also suggests that identification with a work role carries implications for the consequences of emotional labour. Employees that identify cognitively with the organisation are less likely to feel the alienation from self or dissonance caused by emotional labour (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). Since the dissonance experienced as a result of emotional labour has been described as a clash between the fake self and the real self, processes of identity could play a role in the development of negative consequences following emotional labour. For instance, Ashforth and Humphrey (1993: 106) argue that the more central a specific role is to one's identity, the "stronger the association between one's emotional well-being and perceived successes, failures and demands". If employees identify strongly with a role and then perceive that role performance as failing, they may experience a range of negative emotions. Identification with a role carries a number of potential risks. One such risk entails burnout (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993).

In a study of female correctional service officers, Tracy (2005: 264) examines how "discourses of power and organisational processes enable and constrain certain constructions of identity and how these issues, in turn, impact the difficulty of emotion work". Tracy's data suggest that employees who identify strongly with the correctional setting were more prone to experience frustration in their search for

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power and meaning within the organisational setting. If emotional labour confirms the organisational or role identity to which the employee subscribes, then the enactment of emotional labour is easier. Furthermore, if employees perceive the enactment of emotional labour as part of a "strategic exchange", they are more likely to find it easy. However, identification with the role does not always ease emotion work. In cases where the successful enactment of a role with which one identifies strongly is thwarted, it could result in stress and cognitive dissonance.

2.3.8 Conclusion

The aim of the present research is to explore the relationship between discursively constructed role identity and burnout among client service employees. It is argued that through the process of identity construction, client service employees will, to varying degrees, internalise the client discourse of the organisation, and assume roles in accordance with this discourse. It is further suggested that employees working in organisations with a strong service ethic may derive role identities from this discourse that place them in a subservient and subordinate position to that of the client. This position of subordination and subservience may place undue demands on the employee, resulting in emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced feelings of personal accomplishment.

It is therefore not the aim of the present study to analyse organisational discourse as an independent variable. Instead, the research focuses on how client service employees interpret and internalise the client discourse of the organisation and construct role identities for themselves based on this discourse. Discourse in the context of the current study is therefore used in its broader sense as a "set of representations and ways of structuring reality that put strong imprints on cognition and attitudes" (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000: 1129). Ideas and meanings as derived from organisational discourse are the focus of the study, not the actual organisational texts. Alvesson and Karreman (2000) refer to this as meso-level discourse analysis, which focuses on the study of social reality as discursively constructed. Micro-level discourse analysis, on the other hand, refers to the analysis of social texts and language.

In the next chapter, the research argument is developed by drawing on the theories presented in this literature review. A conceptual framework is presented, which links the development of burnout with the enactment of role identities in client service settings.

CHAPTER 3

THE RESEARCH ARGUMENT

3.1   RESEARCH PROBLEM

Research into the antecedents of burnout has largely focused on the role of situational variables (such as work and organisational context) in the development of burnout. While this research has made an undeniably significant contribution to our understanding of the burnout phenomenon, recent research suggests that subjective identity perceptions also play a considerable role in the development of burnout (Buunk *et al.*, 2007; Vanheule & Verhaeghe, 2004; 2005). The present research therefore extends this focus on the role of subjective identity perceptions in the development of burnout by exploring the relationship between role identity and burnout among client service employees.

It is argued that employees draw on the dominant client discourse of the organisation and construct discursively informed role identities for themselves. In client service organisations, the client ethic is likely to contain expectations that the employee behave in a subordinate and subservient manner towards the client. Role identities based on this kind of discourse are likely to translate role-related behaviours and attitudes which could contribute to the development of. It is noted that client service organisations by their very nature are necessarily driven by strong client ethics, and that the norms and values enshrined within these ethics may, to some extent, require that the client is placed in a position of power relative to the employee. If, however, this discourse results in the formation of role identities that contribute to burnout, a number of negative organisational outcomes could result.

Because role identities are discursively constructed in response to dominant organisational client discourses, an understanding of the manner in which they could potentially contribute to the development of burnout is essential.   Such an understanding will enable managers and organisational development practitioners to frame client discourse in such a way as to enable the creation of empowered role identities. As a result, organisational practitioners and managers will be provided

with a further point of intervention with which to reduce the potentially negative effects of burnout in client service environments.

In this chapter, the research argument is developed by establishing conceptual links between the concepts of role identity and burnout. A series of research questions are developed and the objectives of the research are presented.

3.2   THE RESEARCH ARGUMENT

As discussed in the opening chapter of this dissertation, the notion of client service is assuming an ever-more pervasive influence over the manner in which work and organisations are structured. According to Sturdy (2001: 3) "customer service is colonising more and more activities and ideas" and is evident in the manner in which we structure and define work. Clients are playing an increasingly active role in the supervision of employees and are therefore able to exert considerable influence over organisations and their employees. Rosenthal, Peccei and Hill (2001: 18) maintain that the concept of "customer sovereignty" has become the dominant socio-economic discourse and go on to show how representations of client service have evolved in the academic literature of recent years. They make a distinction between various accounts of client influence, ranging from post-modern accounts of the sovereign customer to the control perspective where the client is seen as an "accomplice" to management power.

Using Burke's (1991a; 1991b; 1997) identity control model as a framework, it is argued that the manner in which client service employees define their role identities carries important implications for role-related attitudes and behaviours. These behaviours and attitudes can, in turn, either facilitate or inhibit the development of burnout. If, for instance, these role-related behaviours contribute to role conflict, role ambiguity or role overload, burnout could result. Similarly, if these role-related attitudes result in feelings associated with a loss of control or autonomy, inequity and a sense of failure and defeat, the client service employee may develop burnout.

Figure 10 presents the conceptual framework upon which the research argument is based and is discussed in detail in the paragraphs that follow. It should be noted,

however, that while the literature reviewed in the previous chapter suggests causal linkages between the variables depicted in the conceptual framework, the objective of the present research is not to test for directions of causality between the variables. Instead, the research aims to explore the potential for relationships between burnout and role identity.

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│              ┌──────────────────────────────────────┐                      │
│              │  Client service employee's perception,│                     │
│              │  interpretation and internalisation of│                     │
│              │  organisational client discourse      │                     │
│              └──────────────────────────────────────┘                      │
│                                                                            │
│                      ┌──────────────────┐                                  │
│                      │  Role identity    │                                 │
│          A           └──────────────────┘           B                      │
│                                                                            │
│        ┌──────────────────┐         ┌────────────────────┐                 │
│        │  Meaning content  │        │ Identity process/self-│               │
│        └──────────────────┘         │ verification failure  │              │
│  A1                          A2     └────────────────────┘                 │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

Role-related behaviour resulting in:
- Role overload
- Role conflict
- Role ambiguity
- Emotional labour

Affective states/ subjective perceptions of work:
- Inequity
- Loss of autonomy
- Loss of control
- Sense of defeat
- Loss of status
- Powerlessness

Affective states:
- Diminished sense of self
- Inability to find meaning
- Frustration and fatigue
- Subjective failure
- Reduced self efficacy

Role related behaviours resulting in:
- Role overload

Related to burnout through the research of:

Cordes & Dougherty (1997), Maslach *et al.* (2001) and Singh *et al.* (1994) on job demands, role overload, conflict and ambiguity

Zapf *et al.* (2001) and Montgomery *et al.* (2006) on emotional labour

Related to burnout through the research of:

Maslach, Jackson & Leiter (2001) on lack of resources

Buunk *et al.* (2007) and Vanheule & Verhaeghe (2004; 2005) on sense of defeat and failure

Truchot & Deregard (2001) on inequity

Related to burnout through the research of:

Pines (2002); Freudenberger & Richelson (1980); Cherniss (1993) on the maintenance of a positive sense of self

Vanheule *et al.*, (2003); Hallsten (1993) on the importance of maintaining self definitional role

Cordes & Dougherty (1993) on the maintenance of achievement expectations

Figure 10: Conceptual framework linking role identity and burnout

According to the conceptual framework, role identity can contribute to the development of burnout in a number of ways. Client service employees construct role identities for themselves by drawing on the client discourse of the organisation (Alvesson & Willmott, 2004). These role identities comprise a meaning content (A) that encapsulate a set of role-related expectations that carries both behavioural (A1) and affective (A2) implications for the client service employee (McCall & Simmons, 1978). Since the expectations contained in the identity standard prescribe the range of appropriate behaviours available to the individual in question (Steward *et al*., 2009), employees working in organisations with a strong client service ethic may derive role identities from the organisational discourse that place them in a subordinate and subservient position to that of the client. It is suggested that this position of subordination and subservience may predispose the client service employee to adopt behavioural patterns that could result in role overload, role ambiguity and/or role conflict – ultimately leading to burnout (Low *et al*., 2001; Singh *et al*., 1994).

The meaning content of the identity standard could also influence work-related attitudes and perceptions (A2), which, if characterised by feelings of inequity (Truchot & Deregard, 2001), a loss of autonomy (Fernet *et al*, 2004; Xanthopoulou *et al*., 2007) and a sense of failure and defeat (Buunk *et al*., 2007; Pines, 2002), could contribute to the development of burnout. For instance, employees with role identities that place them in a subordinate or subservient position in relation to the client may experience feelings associated with a loss of control or autonomy. As discussed in the preceding sections on burnout, such a loss of control or autonomy may result in the development of burnout by engendering a loss of status, a loss of self worth and failure (Buunk *et al*., 2007; Fernet *et al*., 2009).

While burnout could result from the nature of a specific role identity (A), the present study also argues that processes related to the failed verification of a role identity (B) could contribute to burnout. For example, the identity standards of some client service employees may encompass role-related expectations that are of such a high service standard that it would be impossible for the client service employee to adequately meet these expectations. As shown in the preceding chapter, non-verification of the self through the identity process can result in feelings of anxiety,

distress and failure (Stets & Burke, 2003) – all of which have been linked to the development of burnout (Buunk *et al.*, 2007; Vanheule & Verhaeghe, 2004; 2005). Furthermore, when an individual's perceptions of the situation (input) do not match the expectations contained in the identity standard, the person will act to counteract this imbalance (Burke, 1991a; 1991b; 1997; 2004). In the situation just described, where the expectations contained in the identity standard may be impossible for the client service employee to meet, it would be plausible to assert that the employee may adopt behaviours to counter this imbalance by trying even harder to meet the identity expectations. This may result in role overload, which could ultimately contribute to burnout (Lee & Ashforth, 1993; 1996).

In order to explore the relationships depicted in the conceptual model presented above, the present study will test whether the role identities of high burnout employees differ from the role identities of low burnout employees. While the dominant client discourse of the organisation will shape the meaning content of individual role identities, Holmer-Nadesan (1996) has shown how employees internalise these discourses differently, and, in so doing, adopt different identities. It is my view that since role identities define and constrain behaviour, certain role identities could predispose the client service employee to adopt behavioural patterns and work-related perceptions that could induce burnout. Individuals whose role identities are difficult to verify within the client service context, or those who identify strongly with the client service role and then fail to verify these identities, may develop burnout. Other identities may foster attitudes of empowerment and autonomy and may therefore act as buffers to burnout.

It is further suggested that employees working in the client service role will construct an identity standard based on their interpretation of the dominant client discourse of the organisation. Client service employees working in organisations with a strong service ethic may derive role identities from this discourse that place them in a subservient and subordinate position to that of the client. This position of subordination and subservience may place undue demands on the employee, resulting in emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced feelings of personal accomplishment. It is however, not the intention of the present study to describe and analyse the actual client discourse of the organisations included in the study. The

present research is rather concerned with the perception and interpretation of this discourse by client service employees; the manner in which the employee internalises this discourse and uses it to construct an appropriate role identity; and to what extent this constructed identity can result in burnout. Since the discursive construction of identity is a uniquely individual activity, not all client service employees working for an organisation with a strong client ethic will develop burnout. Some employees may interpret this discourse in such a way that they construct role identities that render them subordinate to the client. Other client service employees may interpret and internalise this client discourse in such a way that they develop identities that empower them in relation to the client. It is this difference in terms of perception, interpretation and internalisation that the present study intends to investigate.

The objective of the present study is therefore to explore the relationship between discursively constructed role identity and burnout among client service employees. It will also describe the mechanisms by virtue of which this relationship exists and examine the extent to which these role identities are constructed in response to the dominant organisational client discourse. It is argued that through the process of identity construction, client service employees will, to varying degrees, internalise the client discourse of the organisation, and assume role identities in accordance with this discourse. In accordance with Burke's (1991a) identity control model discussed in the previous chapter, these role identities carry implications for both behaviour and the formation of role-related attitudes. Depending on the nature of these identities, these role-related behaviours and attitudes could result in burnout.

3.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of this research is to explore the relationship between role identity and burnout amongst client service employees and to examine the mechanisms by virtue of which this relationship exists. In so doing, the research will explore the differences in the role identities of respondents measuring higher in burnout with the role identities of respondents measuring lower in burnout. Furthermore, the present research seeks to describe how client service employees perceive, interpret and

internalise the dominant client discourse of the organisation when constructing role identities for themselves. The research will also examine whether high burnout employees differ from low burnout employees in the manner in which they perceive, interpret and internalise this organizational discourse.

3.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to explore the relationships depicted in the conceptual model presented in **Figure 10,** the present study will test whether the role identities of higher burnout employees differ from the role identities of lower burnout employees. In order to achieve this, a number of testable research questions are posed below.

In order to control for external variance pertaining to the relationship between role identity and burnout, it is necessary to determine the extent to which the biographic and demographic characteristics of client service employees are related to their levels of burnout. To determine this, the following research question is posed:

1. To what extent are client service employees' burnout levels related to their biographic and demographic characteristics?

External variance will also be accounted for by determining the extent to which levels of burnout are related to the client service employees' orientation towards life, work and the organisation:

2. To what extent are client service employees' burnout levels related to their orientation towards life, work and organisation?

In order to explore the relationship between burnout and role identity, use is made of the following research question:

3. In what ways do the role identities of higher burnout employees differ from the role identities of lower burnout employees?

Since role identities are, in part, derived from a/ the descriptions of the counter role; b) descriptions of the self in role and c) the perceived difference between the client and the client service employee, the client service role identity cannot be understood in isolation from these descriptions. Therefore, in order to answer the third research question, a number of sub-research questions are also posed:

3a. Is there a relationship between descriptions of the counter-role (client) and the development of burnout?

3b. Is there a relationship between descriptions of the self (self in role) and the development of burnout?

3c. Is there a relationship between the development of burnout and the difference between descriptions of the self and descriptions of the counter-role (client)?

The present study is also concerned with exploring the mechanisms by virtue of which the relationship between role identity and burnout exists. As suggested by the conceptual model presented in **Figure 10,** role identities carry important implications for role-related behaviours and subjective perceptions. If the role identities of higher burnout employees do differ from the role identities of lower burnout employees, then the role-related behaviours and subjective perceptions of higher burnout employees should differ from those of lower burnout employees. To determine whether this is indeed the case, the following research question is asked:

4. To what extent do the role-related behaviours and subjective perceptions of higher burnout employees differ from the role-related behaviours and subjective perceptions of lower burnout employees?

The conceptual model upon which the research argument is based also suggests that failed self-verification could lead to burnout. By implication then, lower burnout respondents should experience self-verification more easily that their higher burnout counterparts. The following research question is therefore also posed:

5. Are lower burnout respondents able to self-verify more easily than higher burnout respondents?

According to research into the discursive construction of identities, role identities are formed, in part, in response to the expectations contained in the dominant client discourse of the organisation. The present study therefore also explores how client service employees use the client discourse of the organisation to construct their role identities and whether there is a difference in the manner in which high burnout employees perceive, interpret and internalise these discourses when compared with low burnout employees. To this end, the following research question is addressed:

6. To what extent do higher burnout employees experience, interpret and internalise the organisational client discourse differently when compared with lower burnout employees?

3.5   CONCLUSION

The research findings of this study will broaden our understanding of the role that subjective identity perceptions can play in the development of burnout. While most research into the burnout phenomenon has focused on the role of situational antecedents to burnout, the present research will augment these valuable contributions by establishing a link between subjective identity perceptions and organisational characteristics and the role that these variables can play in the development of burnout. If a relationship is found between the manner in which client service employees perceive, interpret and internalise the dominant client discourse of the organisation (an organisational level variable) and burnout, ways can be devised to manage the subjective identity perceptions and interpretations that result in burnout. This can be done by possibly altering the organisational discourse in such a way that it influences employee role identity construction positively rather than negatively. If high burnout employees perceive and interpret the client ethic of the organisation differently when compared with low burnout employees, we need to ask why this difference exists and how these negative interpretations can be managed to reduce burnout in the organisation.

In order to address the research questions posed on the previous pages, a mixed-method approach has been adopted by the present study. Quantitative research in the form of a survey questionnaire is used to examine the nature of the role identities

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of higher and lower burnout client service employees. Qualitative research interviews are then used to validate these findings and explore the mechanisms by virtue of which a relationship between role identities and burnout exists. In the next chapter, the research methodology that was employed by the present study is developed and explained.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to address the research questions set out in Chapter 3, the study was conducted amongst client service employees of three South African client service organisations. The research design incorporated both a qualitative and a quantitative phase (mixed-methods design). The qualitative and quantitative measures included in the study were applied sequentially, thereby allowing the researcher to elaborate on and broaden the findings of one method with another (Creswell, 2003: 16).

The present study commenced with a quantitative phase through which the relationship between burnout and role identity was examined. This phase incorporated the use of a pen and paper based survey questionnaire, measuring role identity and levels of burnout. The quantitative phase was followed by a qualitative phase involving a detailed exploration of the subjective identity perceptions and meanings of the client service role amongst a selected group of client service employees representing scores on both the higher and lower ends of the burnout spectrum.

One of the primary methodological challenges facing the present study was the reconciliation of the two often divergent research philosophies underpinning qualitative and quantitative research. Use was made of a triangulation model, where both qualitative and quantitative methods shed light on the same phenomenon from different perspectives (Kelle & Erzberger, 2004: 172).

4.2 THE SAMPLE

Since the sample used for the qualitative research is a sub-sample of the quantitative research sample, it is appropriate to consider the sampling methodology prior to discussing either of the research methodologies in detail. Response rates and

sample descriptions pertaining to both the quantitative and qualitative phases will be discussed in greater detail under the appropriate headings.

Given that the unit of analysis of the present study is the client service employee, potential respondents were recruited from three South African client service organisations. Each of the three selected companies represented different service sectors. This was done in order to ensure that a diverse range of employees, exposed to a diverse range of client discourses, were selected for inclusion in the study.

A total of nine client service organisations were approached and invited to participate in the study. Four of the organisations were selected for potential inclusion in the sample based on the fact that I had established previous work-related contacts with each of them. A further three organisations were referred to me by my supervisor and my colleagues, and two organisations were approached without referrals or prior contact. As a result, the original sample of nine organisations represented a convenience sample. The nine organisations represented the Financial Services sector (N=3); the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Services sector (N=2); the Advertising and Marketing sector (N=3) and the Petrochemical sector (N=1).

In each case, I sent each of the companies a letter outlining the objectives of the research and inviting them to participate (refer to Appendix A). Through the letter, I introduced myself and my supervisor, outlined the purpose of the research and potential benefits to participating. The research methodology was explained and confidentiality of the information gathered was guaranteed. Managing "gatekeeper's" fears is an important factor to consider when requesting organisations to act as research sites. Managers are often wary of the time and resources involved in administrating the research process, the disruption to the normal workflow, fear that they may be shown to be bad or wrong and apprehension that company privacy and confidentiality will be breached (Devers & Frankel, 2000). The fact that the present study makes reference to levels of burnout may have had a negative impact on the willingness of organisations to participate. In view of the fact that the concept of burnout is negative, management of these organisations may have been fearful that

the research would expose high levels of burnout in their organisations. Furthermore, the fact that the study consisted of two components, of which a qualitative component would require that a number of individuals would be asked to devote 45 minutes to an hour participating in a semi-structured interview, may also have caused a degree of reluctance to participate on the part of invited organisations.

As shown in **Table 4**, a total of three companies agreed to participate in the research. While the HR representative from Company 1 was willing to allow the company to participate, company policy did not allow for the release of employee names to parties outside of the organisation. The company was therefore regrettably excluded from the sample.

Table 4: Organisations approached to participate in the study

Organisation	Sector	Outcome of request
Company 1	Financial Services	Excluded from sample
Company 2	Financial Services	Included in sample as Company F
Company 3	Advertising and Marketing	Excluded from sample
Company 4	Advertising and Marketing	Excluded from sample
Company 5	Advertising and Marketing	Included in sample as Company M
Company 6	ICT sector	Excluded from sample
Company 7	ICT sector	Included in sample as Company T
Company 8	Petrochemical	Excluded from sample
Company 9	Financial Services	Excluded from sample

Companies 3, 4, 6 and 9 failed to respond to the invitation and after numerous calls to various company representatives to ascertain whether they would be willing to participate, it was decided to exclude them from the study. A company in the Petrochemical sector (Company 8) agreed to participate, but after further investigation it was decided that the sample of potential employees in the company that met the requirements for inclusion was too small.

For ease of presentation and in order to protect the identities of each of the three companies that participated in the research, they will be referred to as Company M (marketing research company), Company F (financial services company) and Company T (information and communication technology consultancy) for the remainder of the dissertation.

Company M is an international marketing research company with regional offices in Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban. The company has approximately 65 client service employees that engage with client companies on a day-to-day basis in order to develop research solutions to suit their needs. All 65 client service employees in Company M were invited to participate in the research and the sample included research executives (junior and senior), account executives and business managers. Business managers are generally responsible for the management of account managers across a number of accounts. They are required to engage with the client on a strategic level and initiate new business opportunities. Account managers manage a single account and the research executives assigned to it. Research executives are responsible for planning the research, executing it and preparing presentations for the client.

Forty seven inbound call centre consultants formed the sample for Company F, a large insurance company offering commercial, personal, agricultural and corporate insurance. The company operates through two call centres situated in Cape Town and Johannesburg and is open 24 hours, seven days a week. Forty seven call agent consultants are responsible for registering claims, driving the claims process and dispatching support services to the incident scene. Each consultant takes approximately 55 to 60 calls per shift and is required to deal with policy holders in a professional and empathetic manner to ensure that the client's needs and expectations are met. They are also required to possess trauma-handling skills.

Company T provides information and communication technology based business solutions and services for companies in the mining, petrochemical, communication and healthcare industries. With regional offices in Gauteng, the Western Cape, the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Africa and Europe, the company provides technology infrastructure, business applications, network consulting and integration and

information systems outsourcing. The sample of 105 employees from Company T included customer engineers, network engineers, team leaders and administrators who provide IT support and services to a large client in the petrochemical industry.

It should be noted that the employee-client interface utilised by each of the three companies do differ. In the case of Company F, client service employees either engage with the client telephonically or electronically. At no stage of the client interaction do they establish face-to-face contact with the client. Respondents from Company T and Company M, on the other hand, establish face-to-face, electronic and telephonic contact with the client. These differing communication mediums may influence the nature of the client-employee relationship and may therefore account for a degree of external variance in the burnout scores presented by each of the three companies. The potential for between group differences relating to company type will be explored in the results chapter.

A total of 217 respondents were included in the sample population. In the case of Company M, all 65 client service employees were invited to participate in the research. Company F made all employees from the call centre available for the research, resulting in a sample of 47 potential respondents. Company T provided a list of 105 potential respondents to include in the sample. Both the financial services company (Company F) and the ICT company (Company T) provided me with the full contact details of all employees included in the research sample. I was therefore able to contact each of the respondents personally via e-mail and invite them to participate in the study. Due to privacy restrictions in Company M, I was not given the contact details of sample respondents. All e-mail correspondence addressed to potential respondents from me was therefore forwarded to them by a company director. The director copied me in on all correspondence to potential respondents, and I was therefore aware as to when correspondence was sent out and what it entailed. At no stage of the research was my correspondence altered by the director. It was merely forwarded via e-mail to prospective participants. It is not clear whether this would have had an impact on response rates from Company M. While it is generally agreed that personal communication from the researcher to potential respondents helps to increase survey response rates, communication from a company director may indicate to potential respondents that the research is

supported by the company. This may have positively affected the response rate at Company M.

As reflected in **Table 5,** a total of 217 client service employees were included in the sample population. Following three e-mail reminders (discussed in greater detail in the section on questionnaire administration), a total of 100 responses were returned resulting in a total response rate of 46 percent. According to Babbie (2007) a response rate of 50 percent is adequate, while a response rate of 60 percent is good and 70 percent is excellent. The response rates for each of the three companies included in the sample differed substantially, with company M reflecting a response rate of 35 percent (23 responses out of a sample of 65); Company T a response rate of 54 percent (57 responses out of a sample of 105); and Company F with a response rate of 43 percent (20 responses out of a sample of 47).

Table 5: Questionnaire response rates

	Questionnaires		Percentages	
Organisation	Sent Out	Returned	Responses	Total sample
Company M	65	23	35.4%	23%
Company T	105	57	54.3%	57%
Company F	47	20	42.6%	20%
TOTAL	**217**	**100**	**46.1%**	**100%**

Response rates to the qualitative phase of the research will be discussed in detail in the respective qualitative section that follows.

4.3 THE QUANTITATIVE PHASE METHODOLOGY

The quantitative phase of the research was conducted in order to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent are client service employees' burnout levels related to their biographic and demographic characteristics?

2. To what extent are client service employees' burnout levels related to their orientation towards life, work and organisation?

3. In what ways do the role identities of higher burnout employees differ from the role identities of lower burnout employees?

In order to answer the third research question, a number of sub-questions are also posed:

3a. Is there a relationship between descriptions of the counter-role (client) and the development of burnout?

3b. Is there a relationship between descriptions of the self (self in role) and the development of burnout?

3c. Is there a relationship between the development of burnout and the difference between descriptions of the self and descriptions of the counter-role (client)?

4.3.1 The quantitative sample description

The age distribution of respondents is reflected in **Table 6** and **Figure 11**.

Table 6: Age distribution of respondents (N=100)

Respondent Age	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percent
20.0	1	1.0	1.0
22.0	3	3.0	4.0
23.0	5	5.0	9.0
24.0	6	6.0	15.0
25.0	7	7.0	22.0
26.0	6	6.0	28.0
27.0	7	7.0	35.0
28.0	5	5.0	40.0
29.0	7	7.0	47.0
30.0	8	8.0	55.0
31.0	3	3.0	58.0
32.0	1	1.0	59.0
33.0	5	5.0	64.0
34.0	3	3.0	67.0
35.0	1	1.0	68.0
36.0	3	3.0	71.0
37.0	3	3.0	74.0
38.0	1	1.0	75.0
39.0	2	2.0	77.0
40.0	4	4.0	81.0
41.0	1	1.0	82.0
42.0	1	1.0	83.0
43.0	1	1.0	84.0
44.0	1	1.0	85.0
45.0	2	2.0	87.0
47.0	2	2.0	89.0
48.0	2	2.0	91.0
50.0	1	1.0	92.0
52.0	1	1.0	93.0
53.0	3	3.0	96.0
54.0	1	1.0	97.0
58.0	1	1.0	98.0
Missing	2	2.0	100.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**	
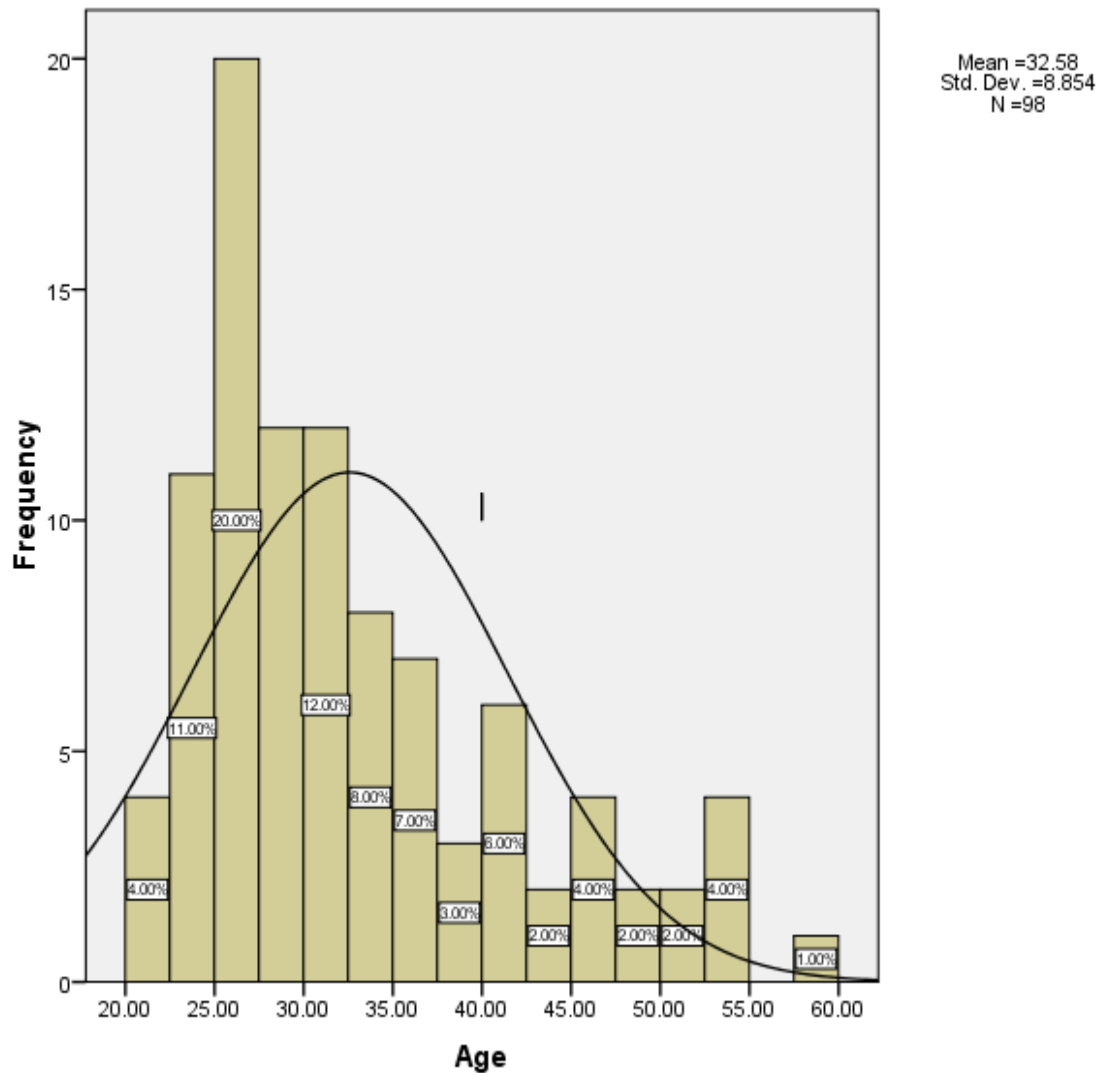
Figure 11: Age distribution of respondents (N=98)

The mean age of respondents (N=98) was 32.58 (Standard Deviation (SD) = 8.85), suggesting that the respondents are relatively young. The youngest respondent was 20-years-old, while the oldest was 58-years-old. The largest cohort of respondents was aged between 20 and 31 and make up 58 percent of the sample. Twenty six percent of respondents were between the ages of 31 and 40, while 11 percent were between the ages of 41 and 50. Only 6 percent of respondents were older than 50 years.

As shown in **Table 7** on page 111, the majority of respondents are male (55%). The data derived from the study represents both gender groupings well.

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Table 7: Gender distribution of respondents (N=100)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percent
Male	55	55.0	55.0
Female	45	45.0	100.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**	

Table 8 reflects the marital status of the respondents.

Table 8: Marital status of respondents (N=100)

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percent
Married	51	51.0	51.0
Unmarried but cohabiting	15	15.0	66.0
Divorced	8	8.0	74.0
Widowed	1	1.0	75.0
Single	25	25.0	100.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**	

Over half of the respondents are married (51%), while 15 percent are unmarried but cohabiting with a partner. Eight percent are divorced, one respondent is widowed and 25 percent describe themselves as single.

Table 9 indicates the educational level of client service employees that participated in the study.

Table 9: Educational level of respondents (N=100)

Educational level	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percent
Secondary/high school	3	3.0	3.0
Std 10 or equivalent	26	26.0	29.0
Post-school certificate/diploma	17	17.0	46.0
National/higher diploma	23	23.0	69.0
Bachelors degree or equivalent	9	9.0	78.0
Honours degree or equivalent	16	16.0	94.0
Masters or equivalent	6	6.0	100.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**	

The majority of respondents (71%) have a post-matric qualification, suggesting that the findings of the present study could be regarded as generalisable to white collar service workers. Twenty three percent are in possession of a national diploma or national higher diploma; nine percent have undergraduate degrees; sixteen percent have honours degrees and six percent have a master's qualification. As shown in **Table 9** and **Figure 12**, only three percent has not completed high school.
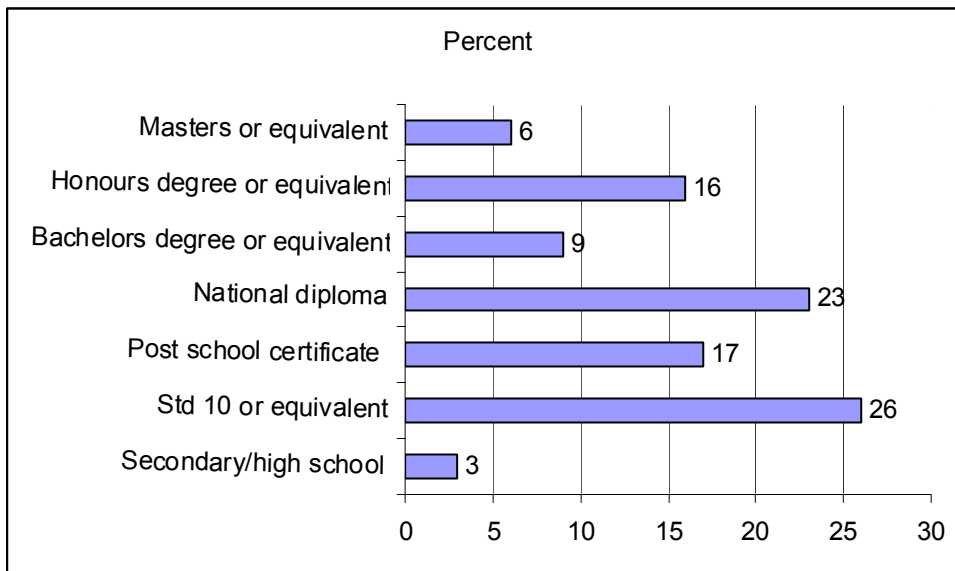
Figure 12: Educational level of respondents (N=100)

As indicated in **Table 10** and **Figure 13**, seventy three percent of the respondents that participated in the research are white.

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Table 10: Population group distribution of the sample (N=100)

Population group	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percent
Black	3	3.0	3
White	73	73.0	76
Coloured	18	18.0	94
Indian	3	3.0	97
Asian	1	1.0	98
Missing	2	2.0	100
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Only three percent of the sample is black, while 18 percent is coloured. One percent of respondents classified themselves as Indian. The sample is therefore not representative of the South African population from a population group perspective, since the majority of South Africans are black.
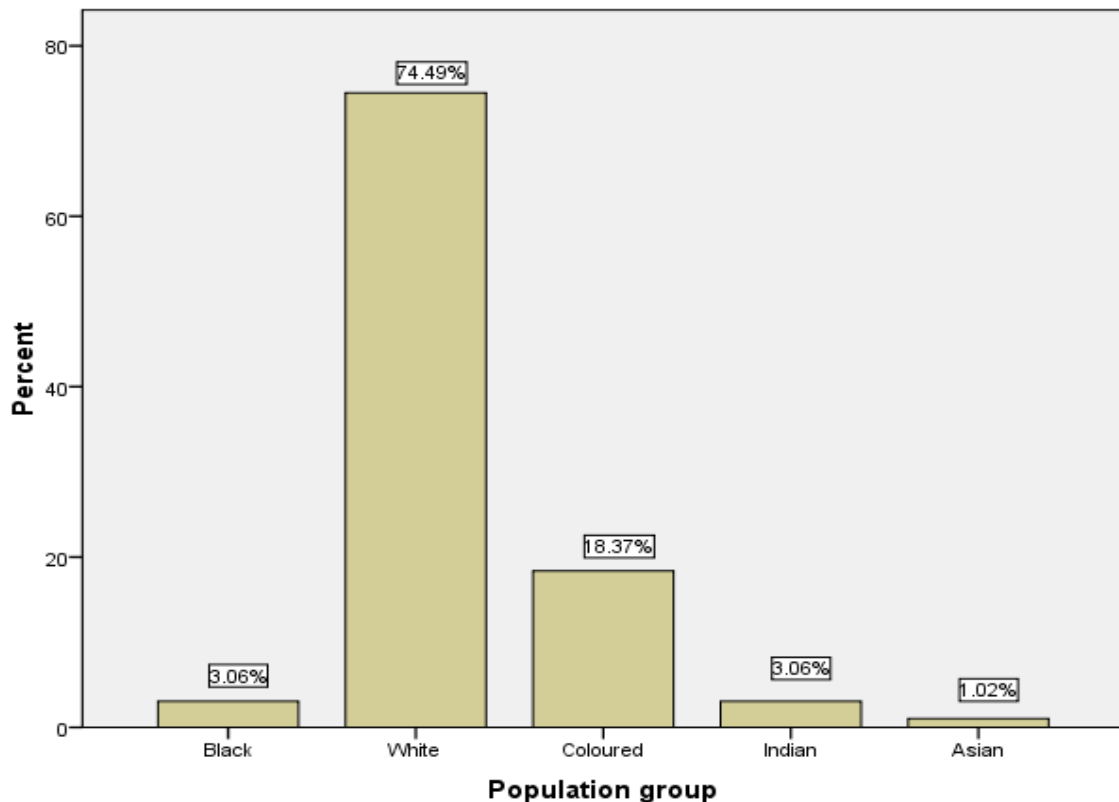
Figure 13: Population group distribution of the sample (N=98)

Table 11 and **Figure 14** indicate the number of years respondents have been with their current employers.

Table 11: Years employed at current organisation (N=100)

Years employed	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percent
Less than one year	8	8.0	8.0
1 year	10	10.0	18.0
2 years	13	13.0	31.0
3 years	10	10.0	41.0
4 years	7	7.0	48.0
5 years	9	9.0	57.0
6 years	2	2.0	59.0
7 years	5	5.0	64.0
8 years	8	8.0	72.0
9 years	1	1.0	73.0
10 years	9	9.0	82.0
11 years	2	2.0	84.0
12 years	3	3.0	87.0
13 years	5	5.0	92.0
19 years	2	2.0	94.0
21 years	1	1.0	95.0
23 years	1	1.0	96.0
27 years	2	2.0	98.0
32 years	1	1.0	99.0
35 years	1	1.0	100.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**	

More than half of the respondents (57%; N=57) have been with their organisations for 5 years or less. The mean length of service was 6.83 years (SD = 6.82) and the maximum length of service was 35 years. The relatively short lengths of service can be explained by the fact that respondents are relatively young i.e. 65 percent between the ages of 22 and 33.
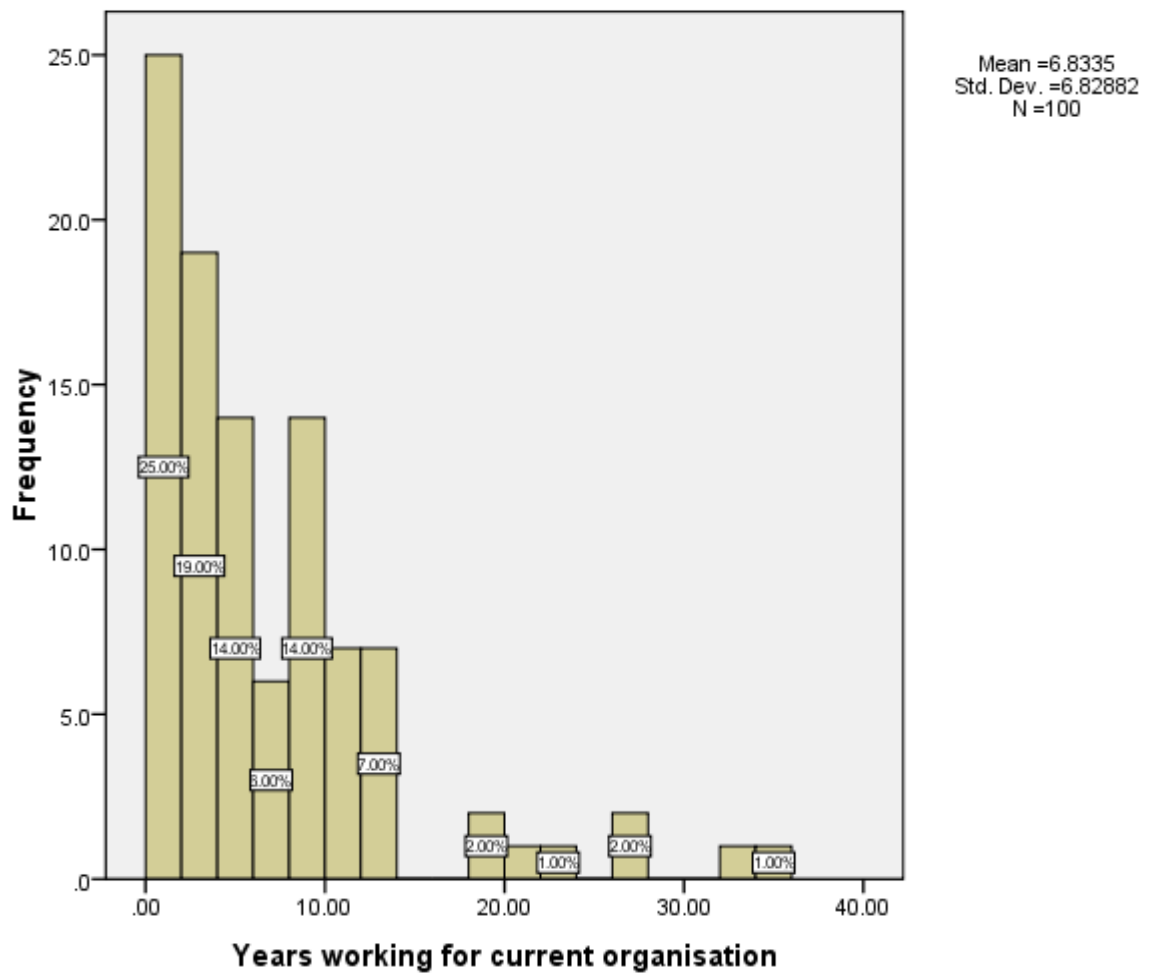
Figure 14: Years worked for current organisation

As indicated in **Table 12** and **Figure 15**, 41 percent (N = 41) of the respondents have been working in a client service environment for five years or less.

Table 12: Years worked in client service (N=100)

Years employed	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Less than one year	4	4.0	4.0
1 year	6	6.0	10.0
2 years	5	5.0	15.0
3 years	7	7.0	22.0
4 years	5	5.0	27.0
5 years	14	14.0	41.0
6 years	4	4.0	45.0
7 years	3	3.0	48.0
8 years	8	8.0	56.0
9 years	3	3.0	59.0
10 years	12	12.0	71.0
11 years	4	4.0	75.0
12 years	4	4.0	79.0
13 years	3	3.0	82.0
15 years	2	2.0	84.0
16 years	2	2.0	86.0
19 years	1	1.0	87.0
20 years	4	4.0	91.0
21 years	2	2.0	93.0
23 years	1	1.0	94.0
25 years	1	1.0	95.0
27 years	1	1.0	96.0
29 years	1	1.0	97.0
35 years	1	1.0	98.0
Missing	2	2.0	100.0
TOTAL	**100**	**100**	
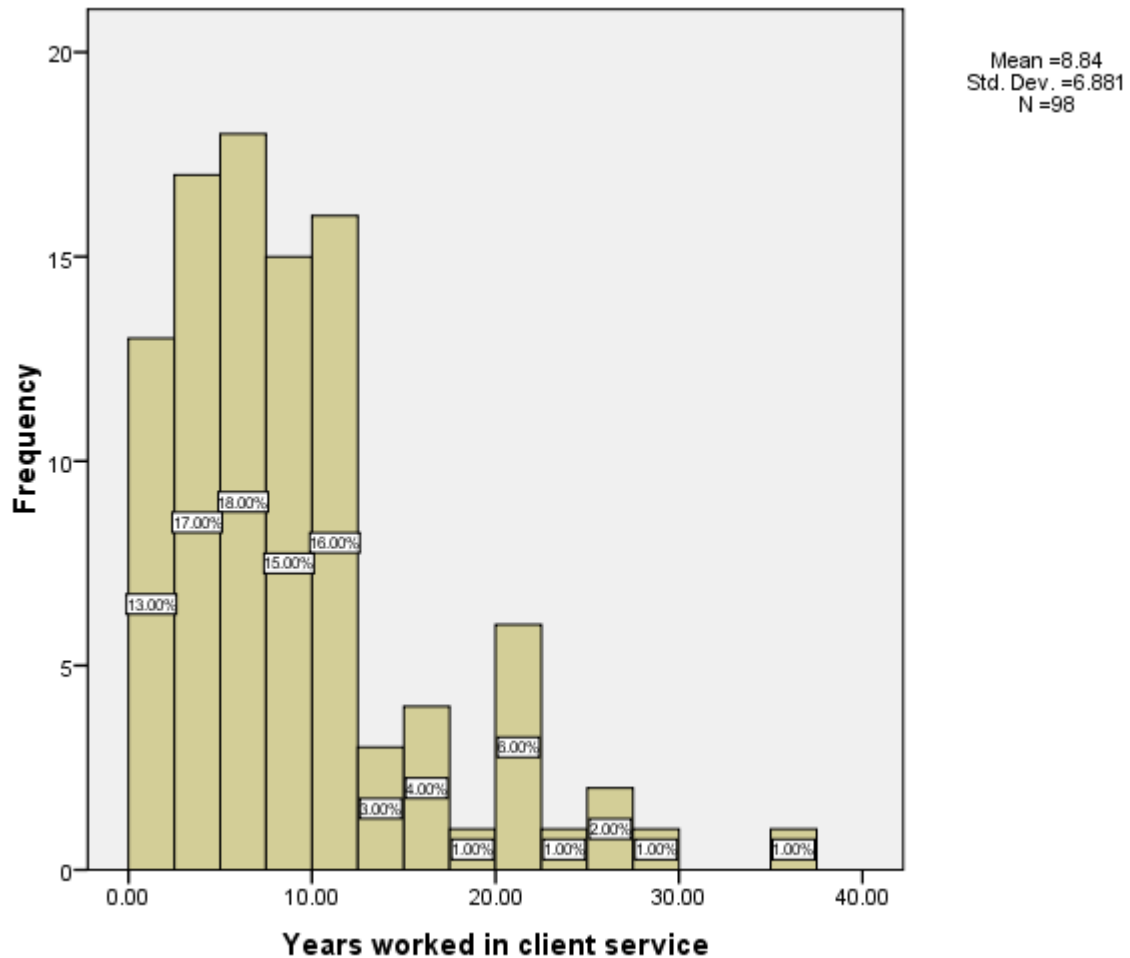
Figure 15: Years worked in client service

The mean number of years worked in a client service environment is 8.84 (SD = 6.88). The maximum number of years worked in client service is 35 years. Again, the relatively low number of years in a client service environment by the majority of employees who responded can be explained by the fact that the sample is relatively young.

As reflected in **Table 13** and **Figure 16**, 40 percent (N=40) of the respondents work an average of 40 hours per week, with a further 16 percent working between 40 and 45 hours per week. Thirty four percent of the respondents work more than 45 hours per week, but the mean of 43.52 hours (SD = 9.15) can be explained through reference to the ten percent of respondents that work less than 40 hours per week.

Table 13: Hours worked per week

Hours worked	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percent
6.45	1	1.0	1.0
8	1	1.0	2.0
9	1	1.0	3.0
30	1	1.0	4.0
32	1	1.0	5.0
37	1	1.0	6.0
37.5	1	1.0	7.0
38	1	1.0	8.0
39	2	2.0	10.0
40	40	40.0	50.0
42	3	3.0	53.0
43	1	1.0	54.0
44	2	2.0	56.0
45	10	10.0	66.0
47	1	1.0	67.0
47.5	2	2.0	69.0
48	6	6.0	75.0
49.5	1	1.0	76.0
50	15	15.0	91.0
55	3	3.0	94.0
60	4	4.0	98.0
65	1	1.0	99.0
70	1	1.0	100.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**	
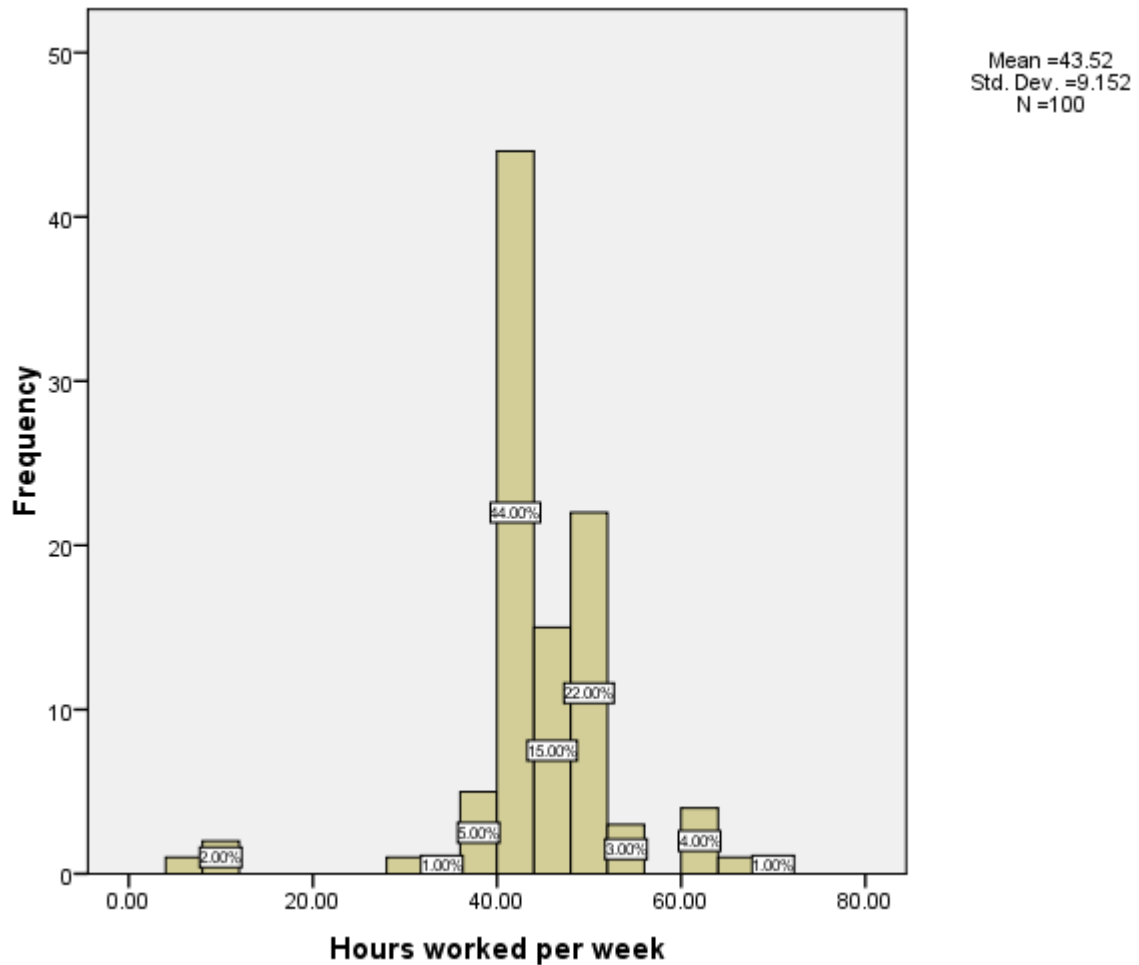
Figure 16: Hours worked per week (N=100)

As indicated in **Table 14** and **Figure 17**, sixty nine percent of the respondents are expected by their companies to work 40 hours per week, while a further nine percent are required to work between 40 and 45 hours per week. The mean number of hours required to work per week of 38.8 (SD = 4.80) is below the maximum number of hours as stipulated by the Basic Condition of Employment Act for full-time employees. The mean number of hours worked at Company M and Company T are 43.67 (SD = 6.53) and 45.80 (SD = 7.34) respectively. Company F has the lowest mean score per week at 36.87 (SD = 12.89). This can be explained by the fact that some respondents from Company F are employed on a reduced working week basis in the call centre. The three respondents who respectively claimed to work only 6.45, eight and nine hours per week are from Company F.

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Table 14: Hours officially required to work per week (N=100)

Hours required to work	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percent
8	1	1.0	1.0
9.5	1	1.0	2.0
30	1	1.0	3.0
32	1	1.0	4.0
32.2	1	1.0	5.0
35	1	1.0	6.0
37	5	5.0	11.0
37.5	11	11.0	22.0
40	69	69.0	91.0
41	1	1.0	92.0
42	3	3.0	95.0
42.5	2	2.0	97.0
43	1	1.0	98.0
45	2	2.0	100.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**	
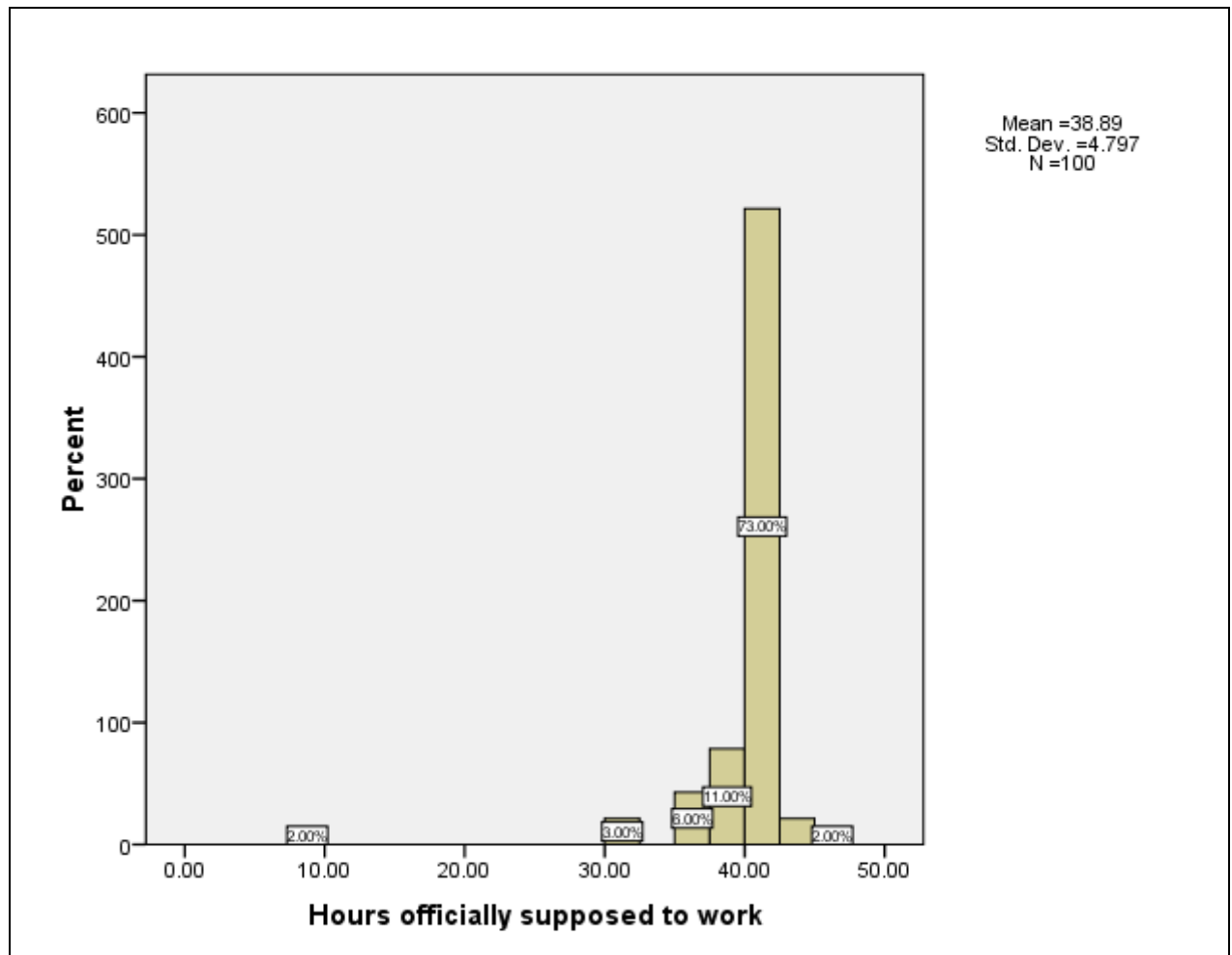
Figure 17: Hours officially required to work per week (N=100)

Table 15 reflects the mean for importance rating of family, friends, religion, work and service to others. Respondents were asked to indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 = very important and 5 = not at all important) how important each of the various life aspects are to them.

Table 15: Importance of life aspects (Mean and standard deviation)

Statistics	Family	Friends	Religion	Work	Service to others
Valid responses	99	99	99	99	99
Missing	1	1	1	1	1
Mean score	1.10	1.86	1.70	1.71	1.80
Std. Dev	.36	.82	1.06	.70	.76
Minimum score	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum score	3.00	4.00	5.00	4.00	4.00

As indicated in **Table 15**, the respondents generally tend to regard family as the most important life aspect (Mean = 1.10; SD = 0.36), followed by religion with a mean of 1.70 (SD = 1.06), then work (Mean = 1.71; SD = 0.70), then service to others (Mean = 1.80; SD = 0.76) and lastly, friends (Mean = 1.86; SD = 0.82).

Table 16 through to **Table 20** reflects the percentage distribution of the sample responses to each of the life aspects.

Table 16: Importance of family (N=100)

Importance of family	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percent
Very important	91	91.0	91.0
Important	6	6.0	97.0
Neither	2	2.0	99.0
Not very important	0	0.0	99.0
Not at all important	0	0.0	99.0
Missing	1	1.0	100.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**	

As reflected in **Table 16**, 97 percent of respondents regard family as either very important or important, while only two percent rate the family as neither important nor unimportant.

Table 17: Importance of friends (N=100)

Importance of friends	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percent
Very important	36	36.0	36.0
Important	46	46.0	82.0
Neither	12	12.0	94.0
Not very important	5	5.0	99.0
Not at all important	0	0	99.0
Missing	1	1.0	100.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**	

Eighty two percent of respondents regard friends as either very important or important, while five percent regards them as not very important.

Table 18: Importance of religion (N=100)

Importance of religion	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percent
Very important	59	59.0	59.0
Important	22	22.0	81.0
Neither	12	12.0	93.0
Not very important	1	1.0	94.0
Not at all important	5	5.0	99.0
Missing	1	1.0	100
Total	**100**	**100.0**	

As indicated in **Table 18**, 81 percent of the sample regards religion as either very important or important, suggesting that the majority of the sample is religious.

Table 19: Importance of work (N=100)

Importance of work	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percent
Very important	40	40.0	40.0
Important	51	51.0	91.0
Neither	5	5.0	96.0
Not very important	3	3.0	99.0
Not at all important	0	0.0	99.0
Missing	1	1.0	100.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**	

Only three percent of the respondents do not regard work as important, while almost 92 percent regard it as important or very important (**Table 19**).

Table 20: Importance of service to others (N=100)

Importance of service to others	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percent
Very important	38	38.0	38.0
Important	45	45.0	83.0
Neither	14	14.0	97.0
Not very important	2	2.0	99.0
Not at all important	0	0	99.0
Missing	1	1.0	100.00
Total	**100**	**100.0**	

As reflected in **Table 20**, service to others is regarded as either important or very important by 83 percent of the sample.

Respondents were also asked to indicate whether or not they are satisfied with the relationships they have formed with their co-workers, supervisors, subordinates and clients. Responses were recorded on a scale where 1 = not satisfied and 5 = extremely satisfied. As indicated in **Table 21**, which reflects the mean scores for the sample on each rating, relationships with all four groups appear good.

Table 21: Relationships with important stakeholders (Mean and standard deviations)

Statistics	Co-worker	Supervisor	Subordinate	Client
Valid	100	100	100	100
Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean	3.97	3.80	4.53	3.91
Std. Dev	.70	.92	1.15	.79
Minimum	2.00	2.00	3.00	2.00
Maximum	5.00	6.00	6.00	5.00

Table 22 to **Table 25** reflects the frequency and percentage distribution of the sample on each of the relationship with stakeholder scales. Seventy six percent of the sample is either very satisfied or extremely satisfied with relationships with their co-workers, while 62 percent are very satisfied or extremely satisfied with the relationships they formed with their supervisors. Sixty six percent of the sample is either very satisfied or extremely satisfied with the relationships they have formed with clients.

Table 22: Relationships with co-workers (N=100)

Level of satisfaction	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percent
Not satisfied at all	0	0.0	0.0
Not satisfied	1	1.0	1.0
Somewhat satisfied	23	23.0	24.0
Very satisfied	54	54.0	78.0
Extremely satisfied	22	22.0	100.0
Not applicable	0	0.0	
Total	**100**	**100.0**	

Table 23: Relationships with supervisors (N=100)

Level of satisfaction	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percent
Not satisfied at all	0	0.0	0.0
Not satisfied	8	8.0	8.0
Somewhat satisfied	29	29.0	37.0
Very satisfied	39	39.0	76.0
Extremely satisfied	23	23.0	99.0
Not applicable	1	1.0	100.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**	

Table 24: Relationships with subordinates (N=100)

Level of satisfaction	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percent
Not satisfied at all	0	0.0	0.0
Not satisfied	0	0.0	0.0
Somewhat satisfied	22	22.0	22.0
Very satisfied	34	34.0	56.0
Extremely satisfied	13	13.0	69.0
Not applicable	31	31.0	100.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**	

Table 25: Relationships with clients (N=100)

Level of satisfaction	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percent
Not satisfied at all	0	0.0	0.0
Not satisfied	1	1.0	1.0
Somewhat satisfied	33	33.0	34.0
Very satisfied	40	40.0	74.0
Extremely satisfied	26	26.0	100.0
Not applicable	0	0.0	100.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**	

The majority of respondents is proud to be working for their organisations and is committed to ensuring the continued success of the organisations for which they work. As reflected in **Table 26**, 96 percent of the sample agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they are willing to work hard to make the organisation successful.

Table 26: Willingness to work hard to make the organisation successful (N=100)

Level of agreement	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	58	58.0	58.0
Agree	38	38.0	96.0
Neither	2	2.0	98.0
Disagree	2	2.0	100.0
Strongly disagree	0	0.0	100.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**	

Seventy one percent of respondents tell friends that the organisation is a great organisation to work for, while 11 percent disagree with the statement that they tell friends that the organisation is a great organisation to work for (**Table 27**).

Table 27: I tell friends this is a great organisation to work for (N=100)

Level of agreement	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	35	35.0	35.0
Agree	36	36.0	71.0
Neither	18	18.0	89.0
Disagree	10	10.0	99.0
Strongly disagree	1	1.0	100.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**	

Seventy two percent of the respondents disagree with the statement that they feel little loyalty towards the organisation, while 18 percent agree or strongly agree that they feel little loyalty to the organisation (**Table 28**).

Table 28: I feel little loyalty to this organisation (N=100)

Level of agreement	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	7	7.0	7.0
Agree	11	11.0	18.0
Neither	10	10.0	28.0
Disagree	41	41.0	69.0
Strongly disagree	31	31.0	100.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**	

Eighty three percent of respondents are proud to tell others that they work for the organisation (**Table 29**).

Table 29: I am proud to tell others I work for this organisation (N=100)

Level of agreement	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	41	41.0	41.0
Agree	42	42.0	83.0
Neither	15	15.0	98.0
Disagree	2	2.0	100.0
Strongly disagree	0	0.0	100.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**	

And eighty two percent of respondents disagree with the statement that deciding to work for the organisation was a mistake (**Table 30**).

Table 30: Deciding to work for this organisation was a mistake (N=100)

Level of agreement	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	1	1.0	1.0
Agree	1	1.0	2.0
Neither	16	16.0	18.0
Disagree	28	28.0	46.0
Strongly disagree	54	54.0	100.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**	

4.3.2 Measuring instruments

The primary objective of the quantitative phase was to measure levels of burnout among client service employees and then to compare the role identities of high burnout employees with those of low burnout employees.

To this end, a self-administered pen and paper questionnaire was used that was distributed to all client service employees included in the sample (refer to Appendix B for an example of the questionnaire). Burnout was measured using the Maslach Burnout Inventory − Human Services Survey (MBI−HSS), while role identities where measured using a modified version of the Burke-Tully (1977) measurement. Each of the two instruments included in the survey questionnaire will be discussed in detail in the paragraphs that follow.

4.3.2.1 The Maslach Burnout Inventory

The present study made use of the Maslach Burnout Inventory − Human Services Survey (MBI−HSS) to measure levels of burnout among client service employees. In accordance with the Maslach and Jackson (1981) definition of burnout, that states that burnout occurs amongst individuals who do people work of some kind, the MBI−HSS was developed by Maslach and Jackson (1986) for application in situations where employees provide a service, care or treatment to a recipient. These occupations are generally accompanied by the development of strong emotional

feelings towards the client or service recipient. While the client service employees who form the unit of analysis for the present study do not necessarily deal with the psychological, physical or social problems of their clients, they do interact closely with their clients in a service context. It was therefore specifically decided not to use the MBI General Survey (MBI−GS) to measure burnout amongst client service professionals in the present study, since the unique components of the service relationship would have been lost.

The MBI originally consisted of four dimensions (emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, personal accomplishment and involvement) measured through items that were extracted following factor analysis of 47 items (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Preliminary factor analysis on a sample of 605 individuals resulted in ten factors, but through a process of reiteration, these were reduced to a set of four (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993: 626). Three of these factors displayed values greater than unity and comprise the subscales of the MBI−HSS which consists of 22 items (emotional exhaustion = 9 items; depersonalisation = 5 items; personal accomplishment = 8 items). Each of the 22 items measures burnout through the use of an eight-point frequency of experience scale ranging from "never" to "every day". The original version of the MBI measured burnout through the use of both a frequency scale and an intensity scale per item, but subsequent instruments have done away with the intensity scale due to the fact that frequency and intensity displayed high correlations.

Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998: 50) report that the internal reliability coefficients for all three subscales of the MBI−HSS are high: emotional exhaustion = 0.90; depersonalisation = 0.79 and personal accomplishment = 0.71. Standard errors of measurement are reflected as 3.80, 3.16 and 3.73 for emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and personal accomplishment respectively (Maslach *et al.*, 1996: 12). The convergent validity of the instrument is reasonable with emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation displaying correlations exceeding 0.5 with other burnout self-report measures. Correlations between these measures and the personal accomplishment component are lower at r = 0.3 (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998: 52). The test-retest reliability of the instrument tends to be reliable over time, with the MBI−HSS displaying test-retest coefficients of between 0.6 and 0.82 across

short periods of up to a month, but then drop slightly when the periods are longer (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998: 50).

The factorial validity of the instrument has also been tested across a number of studies. While most of these studies confirm the three factor structure of burnout (Leiter & Durup, 1994; Leiter & Schaufeli, 1996; Schutte *et al.*, 2000), a couple of studies have found support for a two-factor structure, with emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation items loading on a single factor, and personal accomplishment items loading on another (Brookings, Bolton, Brown & McEvoy, 1985; Dignam, Barrera & West, 1986; Green *et al.*, 1991).

While recent research on burnout in the South African context has used the MBI−GS (Campbell & Rothmann, 2005; Jackson *et al.,* 2006; Koekemoer & Mostert, 2006; Montgomery, Mostert & Jackson, 2005; Rothmann & Essenko, 2007; Rothmann *et al.*, 2003; Rothmann & Joubert, 2007; Weise, Rothmann & Storm, 2003), a number of others have verified the three-factor structure of the MBI−HSS within the South African context (Fourie, 2004; Heyns *et al.*, 2003; Jordaan, Spangenberg, Watson & Fouché, 2007; Van der Colff & Rothmann, 2009; Naudé & Rothmann, 2004). In a study of burnout amongst nurses caring for people with Alzheimer's disease, Heyns *et al.* (2003) established internal consistencies ranging from 0.73 to 0.61 in all three dimensions. In a study that aimed to validate the MBI−HSS among emergency medical technicians, Naudé & Rothmann (2004) performed exploratory factor analysis which confirmed a three-factor model of burnout with acceptable internal consistencies. Jordaan *et al.* (2007) also confirmed the three-factor structure on a sample of 238 clinical and counselling psychologists with internal consistencies of 0.91, 0.78 and 0.64 for emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and personal accomplishment respectively. In a study of registered nurses in South Africa, Van der Colff and Rothmann (2009) confirmed the three-factor structure, with Cronbach Alphas for emotional exhaustion (0.88), depersonalisation (0.72) and personal accomplishment (0.71) displaying strong internal consistencies.

Research shows that the emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation are strongly related ($r = 0.52$) (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998: 52). Through a meta-analytic examination of the correlates of the three dimensions of burnout, Lee and Ashforth

(1996: 126) showed that for the frequency response format, emotional exhaustion was strongly related to depersonalisation (r = 0.64). Personal accomplishment was moderately negatively related to emotional exhaustion (r = -0.33) and depersonalisation (r = -0.36).

The discriminant validity of the MBI−HSS does, however, remain problematic (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). While Maslach *et al.* (1996: 15) maintain that sufficient research has been conducted to distinguish between burnout and job satisfaction, the relationship between burnout and depression remains problematic. Meier (1984) found moderately strong correlations between depression and burnout. Maslach *et al.* (1996: 16) argue that this study should be interpreted with caution due to the "unorthodox treatment of burnout subscale scores". While burnout is related to depression in the sense that individuals who present high levels of neuroticism are more vulnerable to the development of burnout, a number of studies have concluded that the two concepts are distinct. According to Demerouti *et al.* (2001) burnout syndrome is limited to the occupational context, while depression is characterised by the fact that its development is context-free.

As reflected in **Table 31**, the MBI provides burnout scores along a continuum ranging from high burnout to low burnout. A high degree of burnout is reflected by high scores on emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation and low scores on personal accomplishment. Average levels of burnout are reflected by average scores across all three components, while low burnout is reflected by low scores on emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation and high scores on personal accomplishment. Scores are considered high when they are situated in the upper third of the normative distribution. Average scores are situated in the middle third, while low scores are situated in the lower third. The normative sample includes teachers, post-secondary educators, social-service workers, medical workers, mental-health workers, legal-aid employees, attorneys, police officers, probation officers, ministers, librarians and agency administrators (Maslach *et al.*, 1996: 6).

Table 31: Categories of MBI Scores

MBI Subscales	Lower third (low)	Middle third (average)	Upper third (high)
Emotional exhaustion	≤ 16	17-26	≥ 27
Depersonalisation	≤ 6	7-12	≥ 13
Personal accomplishment	≥ 39	38-32	≤ 39

(Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996:6)

The MBI−HSS does therefore not measure the presence or absence of burnout and should not be used for the purposes of clinical diagnosis (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998: 56). Furthermore, the normative criteria displayed in **Table 31** are not based on clinical experience, and should be interpreted with care. Schaufeli (2003: 5) cautions against arbitrary classification of burnout scores due to the "healthy worker" effect. According to Schaufeli (2003: 5), burnout research has generally been conducted amongst employees that are actively employed, and not amongst those that have already left the organisation due to burnout. Clinical classification of individual burnout scores could therefore prove misleading. One study has, however, assessed the clinical validity of the MBI amongst a group of outpatients who sought psychological treatment for work-related problems (Schaufeli, Bakker, Hoogduin, Schaap & Kladler, 2001: 565). The study confirmed the validity of the three factor structure of the MBI, and concluded that burnout can be "partly distinguished" from other mental syndromes.

Maslach *et al.* (1996) argue against summing the scores on each of the three components into a composite burnout score. Empirical evidence suggests that the three components are conceptually distinct, and that an overall measure of burnout could result in a loss of information. A further reason to maintain this distinctness of the three components lies in the fact that numerous empirical studies have displayed differential patterns between each of the three components and antecedent or consequence variables (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993: 628).

A number of criticisms have been levelled against the MBI. One such criticism is that both emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation items are phrased negatively, while all personal accomplishment items are phrased positively. According to Demerouti *et al.* (2001: 500), this can lead to "acquiescence tendencies" and artificial factor loadings. Furthermore, Schaufeli and Van Dierendonck (1995: 1087) urge caution regarding the validity of the burnout classification cut-off points in cross-national settings and argue in favour of using nationally established and validated cut-off points due to national differences in burnout scores. In a comparative study using the normative American sample used to develop the test manual and the normative Dutch sample, the American sample presented higher levels of reduced personal accomplishment than the Dutch sample (Schaufeli & Van Dierendonck, 1995). Despite this, however, the psychometric properties of the Maslach Burnout Inventory have been confirmed outside of English-speaking countries (Schaufeli, 2003: 6).

While applauding the depth and scope of research using the MBI, Schaufeli (2003: 3) raises the concern that the development of the MBI has somewhat retarded further critical investigation into the conceptualisation of burnout. According to Schaufeli (2003: 3), while the MBI is a psychometrically sound and robust instrument, the "absolute predominance of the MBI" has rendered the concept synonymous with the instrument that measures it, hence the fact that "burnout is what the MBI measures".

4.3.2.2 The measurement of role identity (the Burke-Tully technique)

According to Callero (1992: 485), the concept of the "self" has enjoyed a rich theoretical tradition amongst social scientists. Unfortunately, however, the concept has not undergone similar developments in terms of measurement. As a result, the measurement of the "self" is constrained in terms of two techniques, namely through a focus on global self-esteem where the individual evaluates himself as object, and through the production of a "multi-faceted" profile (Callero, 1992: 485). The most dominant example of the latter approach includes the Twenty Statements Test, where the respondent is asked to respond to an open-ended question of "Who am I?" (Callero, 1992: 485).

In contrast, Grube and Pilivian (2000: 1113) measured the role identity of volunteers using an operationalisation of Turner's (1978) concept of role−person merger. According to Turner (1978), role−person merger is defined as the state in which a particular role becomes so important that the role becomes dominant to the person's sense of self. This measure of role identity therefore measures the relative strength of a particular identity and its impact on behaviour, but does not necessarily measure the defining features of the specific identity.

According to Burke and Tully (1977: 881) measures of identity should satisfy four criteria. Firstly, the measure should produce a quantitative score that can be used in multi-variate analysis.   The measure should incorporate the "multi-dimensional character" of most role identities and it should define the underlying dimensions in order to give meaning to the quantitative score. Lastly, the measure should integrate the concepts of both self and role.

From a measurement perspective, Burke (1980: 19) suggests that identity should be conceptualised as a "multi-dimensional semantic space" within which the self meanings of the particular identity in question can be located. This space should be defined by shared cultural understandings of the dimensions contained within that space, as well as be able to plot the locations of typically, stereotypically, ideally or normatively defined identities within that space.   The measure should also incorporate a link between the internal identity standard and the external role, and it should recognise the relationship between identities and counter-identities. Furthermore, the measure should also incorporate an understanding of the reflexive nature of the self, recognise the indirect link between identity and performance and recognise the nature of the image which intervenes between identity and performance (Burke, 1980: 22).

The Burke-Tully (1977) measurement of role identity attempts to address these criteria so that the concept of role identity can be used as a causal agent or an independent variable in multi-variate analysis. It is based on the assumption that the meaning of self in a role is only significant as it relates to an appropriate counter-role. The technique makes use of the semantic differential scale developed by Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum (1957), which allows one to maximally distinguish a specific

role from its pre-determined counter-role through the use of a mediation response. Since identities are formed and enacted in relation to relevant counter identities, they cannot be measured in isolation of these counter identities (Burke, 1980: 19). The measure therefore also takes counter-roles into account since the semantic differential space is based on similarities and differences between the role identity and counter identities.

In order to measure role identity according to the Burke-Tully technique (1977), a list of bipolar adjectives that strongly reflect the differences in meanings associated with the role and the pre-determined counter-role, is used. The respondent is then asked to judge, against each of the adjective pairs, the roles whose meanings are to be measured. The adjective pairs on which the two sets of ratings differ most are presumed to tap the mediation responses that are most important in distinguishing the role from the counter-role. Discriminant analysis is then applied to the total sample in order to determine which of the items have the highest discriminatory power. The adjectives are entered as discriminating variables and assigned a coefficient. The larger the coefficient, the more discriminating the adjective is for the role in question. Respondents are then required to rate self in role against the same adjectives in step two. These ratings are then multiplied by the coefficient weights of each of the adjectives to produce a single numerical value representing the meaning of self in a particular role (Burke & Tully, 1977: 884).

To summarise, the Burke-Tully (1977) measurement consists of four steps. Firstly, counter-roles, that are relevant to the situation under investigation, are identified. This is then followed by the organisation of adjectives in a semantic differential format for each role. Discriminant analysis is then used to locate a set of dimensions which maximally distinguish the meanings attached to each role. Lastly, the applicability of the role dimensions to the self descriptions is assessed (Reitzes & Burke, 1980: 50).

The validity and reliability of the Burke-Tully technique has not remained unchallenged. According to Callero (1992: 485), the identification of counter identities to certain roles is not clear. Furthermore, respondents often find it difficult to rate the self against the often counter-intuitive adjective pairs that are utilised (Callero, 1992: 488). Neither of these two difficulties posed a problem for the current

study, since the counter identity for the client service employee was determined by the context and purpose of the study. In addition, all adjective pairs selected for inclusion in the instrument were derived from interviews with client service employees and are therefore considered highly relevant to respondents.

In this study, a set of 17 bipolar adjective pairs that correspond to the nature of the role (client service employee) and counter-role (client) were developed for inclusion in the study. Osgood *et al.* (1957) suggest that bipolar adjective pairs are developed along three relatively independent dimensions upon which mediation responses are generally connected. These dimensions include evaluation (good−bad); activity (active−passive) and potency (strong−weak). Hoelter (1985: 1394) identifies eight dimensions along which adjective pairs can be clustered. These include evaluation, power, activity, stability, affect−general, affect−depression, anxiety and identity salience. The first three components correspond to Osgood *et al.*'s (1957) dimensions of evaluation, potency and activity. Burke and Tully (1977: 884) maintain, however, that these three dimensions (evaluation, activity and potency) may not necessarily tap the underlying components of all role identities. They instead propose the creation of adjective pairs that are relevant to the role identity and counter-role identity in question, through the use of appropriate literature and interviews with potential respondents.

Adjective pairs utilised in the current study were generated following telephonic interviews with a randomly-selected group of six respondents. A random number table was used to select two respondents from each of the three companies included in the study. Once respondent names were selected, a letter inviting them to participate in the study was e-mailed to them (refer to Appendix D for an example of the invitation letter). I then telephonically contacted each potential respondent a few days after sending them the e-mail and personally invited them to participate in the interviews. All respondents were requested to sign a consent form which they were required to e-mail back to me prior to commencement of the interview (refer to Appendix E for a copy of the consent form). The interviews were semi-structured and attempted to elicit descriptions of the client service role and client role from each of the six respondents (refer to Appendix F for a copy of the interview schedule used). Since the interviews with the six respondents were conducted telephonically, the

interviews were not tape recorded and have therefore not been transcribed. I did, however, take detailed notes during each of the interviews. Special attention was given to recording the adjectives used by each of the respondents in their descriptions of themselves and the client. Each interview took approximately ten minutes to complete. A total of 30 different adjectives were recorded to describe both the client service employee and client. Only those adjectives that appeared across at least three interviews and could be applied to the description of both client and client service employee were included in the final questionnaire. A total of 17 pairs were included in the final questionnaire following a pilot phase in which the client service employees commented on the relevance of each of the adjective pairs.

It should be mentioned, however, that the present study utilises a modified version of the Burke-Tully technique in that discriminant analysis is not applied to distinguish between role and counter-role. This is due to the fact that clients were not included as respondents in the survey, and as a result, an independent measure of the counter-role does not exist. Discriminant analysis could therefore not be applied.

4.3.2.3 Questionnaire structure

The questionnaire essentially consisted of three sections. The first section included the three sets of semantic differential questions measuring role identity. The second section consisted of the MBI−HSS, and the third section incorporated a range of additional and demographic questions. It was decided to place the semantic differential questions first, since placing the MBI−HSS first would have sensitised respondents to the client–employee relationship, especially considering the fact that the majority of questions in the Maslach Burnout Inventory are negatively phrased. A number of additional questions were added to the section immediately following the MBI–HSS. The first of these included five additional items related to the client−employee relationship. All five questions were positively phrased and were added because one participating organisation, marketing research Company M, was uncomfortable with the fact that the majority of MBI–HSS questions were negatively phrased. The organisation felt that exposure to the MBI–HSS would leave their employees feeling negative towards the client and client-service work in general. The five items were added to a separate section following the MBI–HSS and would

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therefore not have had an impact on the distribution of responses on the MBI–HSS. Furthermore, the MBI–HSS items were separately analysed and assessed from the additional five items inserted into the questionnaire. Further questions measuring employee loyalty to the organisation and perceived importance of life areas were also added to the questionnaire. These questions were added to address the second research question aimed at determining whether a relationship exists between burnout and employee attitudes towards life, their work and the organisation.

As discussed in the literature review, the MBI–HSS has been successfully adapted to a range of situations through the substitution of the word "recipients" with an appropriate alternative. Therefore, in the present study, the word "recipients" was replaced with "clients". A couple of other minor changes to the way in which the questions are phrased were also made. Although Maslach *et al.* (1996: 19) do caution against the use of the MBI–HSS outside of the human service professions, I argue that these changes are minimal and should not detract from the established validity of the MBI–HSS. (Refer to Appendix C for a list of incremental changes that were made to the MBI–HSS for application in the present study and the motivations thereof).

Demographic questions included position in organisation, department, region, gender, marital status, highest educational qualifications, length of service, hours worked per week, population group and age. Respondents were requested to place their names on the questionnaire if they were willing, to allow for possible selection in the qualitative phase of the research. It was pointed out to them that this would jeopardise the anonymity of their responses.

4.3.2.4 Questionnaire pilot

The questionnaire was pre-tested in order to uncover questions that respondents may not have understood or interpreted in the way that was intended. In accordance with recommendations by Krosnick (1999: 541), the questionnaire was piloted among a convenience sample of six client service employees who did not form part of the research sample. Three of the six respondents were women; three were Afrikaans-speaking; while the rest of the sample was English-speaking. Four of the

respondents were white and two were coloured. Use was made of cognitive pre-testing, where respondents were asked to think aloud while answering the questions, thereby providing the researcher with insight into how each item was comprehended. This was followed by a debrief session, where the researcher elicited feedback from the respondents regarding the questionnaire.

Based on findings from the pilot, a number of changes were made to the questionnaire without changing the standardised MBI–HSS. Most of the changes incorporated aspects of more detailed explanation. Pilot respondents felt that a lengthier, more detailed explanation of how to complete the semantic differential was needed. They also requested more detailed information in terms of the difference between the semantic differential scale that referred to client service employees in general and the semantic differential scale that referred to their own experience as client service employees (self in role). It was felt that respondents may use their own experiences as points of reference when completing the semantic differential scale related to client service employees in general. As a result, a more detailed explanation was incorporated into the questionnaire. A more detailed definition of "client service employee" was also added to the questionnaire.

4.3.2.5 Questionnaire administration

A number of factors have to be taken into account when designing and administering survey questionnaires (Cavusgil & Elvey-Kirk, 1998: 1166). These include response rates, response speeds, response quality and response completeness. A lack of respondent anonymity is one of the biggest contributors to a lowered response rate (Faria & Dickenson, 1996: 66). Since the present study did not offer respondent anonymity, careful consideration was given to questionnaire administration to enhance response rates.

One of the primary decisions facing survey researchers is whether to administer a pen-and-paper based questionnaire or whether to conduct the survey electronically via the internet or e-mail. While numerous studies have been completed comparing the advantages and disadvantages of electronic versus paper-based surveys, little evidence favouring the one over the other exists (Boyer, Olsen, Calantone &

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Jackson, 2002; Cook, Heath & Thompson, 2000; Kaplowitz, Hadlock & Levine, 2004). After careful consideration of the literature comparing response rates of electronic and mail surveys (Boyer *et al.*, 2002; Sax, Gilmartin & Bryant, 2003; Sills & Song, 2002; Wood, Nosko, Desmarais, Ross & Irvine, 2006), it was decided to make use of a paper-based survey. This was done since one of the primary factors resulting in lowered response rate with electronic surveys is the perception amongst respondents that electronic means of collecting data are less secure than traditional paper-based methods (Sax *et al.*, 2003). Since the survey required respondents to include their names for the purpose of follow-up and was therefore not anonymous, it was felt that use of a paper-based survey would most likely result in improved response rates.

A number of survey administration methods were implemented to ensure an acceptable response rate. As recommended by Kanuk and Berenson (1975: 440), Yammarino, Skinner and Childers (1991) and Cavusgil and Elvey-Kirk (1998: 1166), each of the potential respondents was e-mailed an introductory letter outlining the purpose of the research and informing them that they would be posted a copy of the survey (refer to Appendix G for a copy of the pre-notification letter sent to respondents). The pre-notification letter introduced the researcher and assured potential respondents that management was aware of the research and supported it. Potential respondents were informed that participation in the research was completely voluntary, and the contact details of both the researcher and her supervisor were given in the case of questions or concerns. The letter also stressed that responses would be treated as confidential and that the research would be used to better understand the challenges facing client service employees.

Approximately a week after e-mailing all potential respondents an introductory letter to the survey, each respondent was posted a survey questionnaire and a pre-paid, return envelope addressed to the researcher's private bag. The inclusion of the pre-paid envelope was a further attempt to increase the response rate to the survey and also provided the respondents with an additional guarantee of confidentiality. Since each respondent could place their completed questionnaires immediately into an addressed envelope and seal it, the risk of a breach of confidentiality was reduced.

The questionnaire was accompanied by a cover letter again introducing the researcher and explaining the purpose of the research (refer to Appendix B for an example of the cover letter). It was explained that all information gathered during the course of the survey would be treated as confidential, although respondents would be required to include their names on the questionnaire for potential follow-up during the qualitative phase of the research.

An estimated time to complete the questionnaire of 20 minutes was communicated to respondents and the contact numbers of both the researcher and supervisor were included in case they had any queries. The letter also provided respondents with a date for submission (3 weeks following receipt) and postage instructions were also provided. A consent form was included in the questionnaire pack (refer to Appendix B for an example of the consent form). Respondents were requested to sign the consent form and return it to the researcher along with the questionnaire. A duplicate consent form was also included for the respondent's records. All documentation used during the administration of the questionnaire was passed through the University of Pretoria's Ethics Committee for approval.

In an attempt to control for external variance and ensure that only persons that formed part of the targeted sample completed the questionnaire, each questionnaire was given a unique questionnaire number which was linked to the respondent name on the list of names provided by each of the three companies. The name on each returned questionnaire was then checked against the name on the master list. Since respondents were required to place their names on the questionnaire and were therefore not guaranteed anonymity, this step was deemed appropriate from an ethical perspective. All respondents provided their names in the questionnaire and signed the attached consent form, making it unlikely that any person other than the targeted respondent would have completed the questionnaire.

As already mentioned respondents were given three weeks to complete the questionnaire and post it back to the researcher using the pre-paid, self addressed envelope provided. Since follow-up reminders are regarded as one the best techniques for improving response rates (Cook *et al.*, 2000), a follow-up e-mail reminder was sent to each of the respondents approximately one week after dispatch

of the questionnaire (refer to Appendix H for an example of the e-mail). A second reminder was sent approximately one week after the first and then a third reminder was sent two days prior to cut-off date (refer to Appendices I and J for examples of the follow-up reminders).

In order to increase the total response rate, a fourth reminder was sent to all respondents approximately three weeks after the cut off date, but no further responses were received. While the lack of anonymity attached to the survey questionnaire could have negatively affected response rates, it is also possible that the time of year at which the survey was dispatched could have affected response rates negatively. The survey was sent out at the beginning of December, a time of year that is notoriously busy for client service professionals in South Africa. Furthermore, a number of potential respondents could already have been on vacation during the time of the survey.

All respondents made use of the return envelopes provided, but only respondents from Company M returned the questionnaires directly to the researcher via the postal service. In the case of Company T and Company F, respondents placed the questionnaires in the envelopes provided and submitted them to a contact person within each of the companies. Since the return envelopes were addressed to the researcher and since respondents were asked to seal the enveloped prior to handing it in, confidentiality of responses was guaranteed. Confidentiality of participation, was, however, compromised in these cases, since the contact persons in Company T and Company F would have been aware of which employees had handed in the return envelope. The contact person would however, not have had access to the content of these envelopes, as respondents were requested to seal the envelope. Confidentiality of content was therefore maintained. Once the completion date of the survey had been reached, I had all responses couriered to Cape Town where they were captured by myself in a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) data file. All questionnaires were returned in the enveloped provided, and all envelopes had remained sealed until they were opened by me, which suggests that confidentiality had been maintained. Each respondent's data were captured using the questionnaire code so to ensure confidentiality of response. Only I was able to link the captured questionnaire code to the name on the questionnaire. No

personally identifiable information was captured in the SPSS data file, thereby ensuring confidentiality of participant responses. All completed questionnaires are currently stored under lock and key in my place of residence and will be kept for a period of five years as required by the University of Pretoria's ethics committee.

4.3.3 Data analysis procedures

Statistical analysis of the data was done by the Department of Statistics at the University of Pretoria. SAS version 9.2 and BMDP release 7.1 data analysis packages were used to carry out the analysis.

The assessment of construct validity plays an important part in confirming the adequacy of measures, since it establishes the degree to which indicators measure the construct under investigation (Schwab, 1980). Factor analysis was therefore conducted on the MBI−HSS items in order to determine whether the factor structure produced by the sample corresponded to the three burnout components of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and personal accomplishment as defined by Maslach and Jackson (1986). Factor loadings greater than 0.3 were regarded as sufficient for inclusion (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1992). A detailed explanation of the factor analysis will be provided in the next section.

Following factor analysis of all MBI−HSS items, which resulted in a two-factor conceptualisation of burnout, two subscales were created. These scales are labelled emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation and reduced personal accomplishment and the internal consistency of each was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. A Cronbach Alpha of greater than 0.7 was regarded as sufficient as suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994).

By the Central Limit Theorem, normality of distributions for the sample was assumed. For the General Linear Models, normality of residuals was tested using normal probability plots, box plots and stem and leaf plots. The homogeneity of variance assumption was tested using scatter plots of the squares of residuals against the predicted values.

The mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum scores of the present sample on each of the two burnout scales and burnout total were calculated. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were then performed in order to test for differences in burnout scores between the biographic and demographic variables measured on discrete scales, namely gender groupings (V83); marital status (V84); educational level (V85); company (V106) and population group (V105). In cases where significant differences in burnout did exist between the groupings identified above, Scheffe's test was applied to test for significant differences between each of the response categories.

Next, the relationship between the demographic variables measured on ratio scales (age, length of service with current employer, length of service in a client service environment, number of years working and average number of hours worked per week) and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation, reduced personal accomplishment and burnout total was assessed using the Pearson correlation coefficient. Correlations were regarded as practically significant for $r \geq 0.25$ and $p < 0.05$.

The relationship between scores on the three burnout scales and perceptions of the client relationship (V74−V78); the importance of life areas (V91−V95); satisfaction with stakeholder relationships (V96−V99) and levels of loyalty and commitment to the organisation was assessed using Spearman's correlation coefficient. Spearman's coefficient was regarded as statistically more applicable than Pearson's correlation coefficient, since a number of variables included in these calculations were measured at the ordinal level. Significant correlations were regarded as $r \geq 0.25$ and $p < 0.05$.

Burnout total and its two subscales (emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation and reduced personal accomplishment) were then correlated with the sample responses to the Burke-Tully semantic differential items.

While the instrumentation used in the present study is identical to that proposed by Burke and Tully (1977), the method of analysis was different. The Burke-Tully technique (1977) assumes that respondents from both the role and the counter-role are included in the sample under investigation. In the present study, due to practical

reasons the client was not included as a respondent. As a result, discriminant analysis could not be applied to distinguish which adjective dimensions maximally distinguish the role from the counter-role, and differentiating coefficients could not be assigned.

In the present study, respondents were required to rate three roles on the set of adjective pairs. Firstly, they were required to rate client service employees in general (stereotypical role) on the set of adjectives. Secondly, they were required to rate the client role (counter-role) on the set of adjectives, and lastly they rated themselves as client service employees (self in role) on the set of adjective pairs. The rating of the role in general (stereotypical role) is required for the discriminant analysis proposed by Burke and Tully (1977), but because discriminant analysis was not used in the present study, these measures (V1−V17) were excluded from the analysis. Instead, a new variable was created (client/self difference) by computing the perceived difference between the ratings of self in role and ratings of the client (counter-role). The difference observed between the self in role and client in role ratings were correlated with each of the burnout measures in order to determine whether levels of burnout are related to perceived differences between how client service respondents define themselves and how they perceive the client role. Spearman's correlation coefficient was used as the statistical procedure, since client/self difference was measured on the ordinal level. Correlations $r \geq 0.25$ and $p < 0.05$ were regarded as practically significant correlations.

Burnout scores were then independently correlated with the adjective ratings of the self in role (self) and rating of the client role (client) using Spearman's Correlation coefficient. This was done in order to determine whether burnout is related to role identity and how one defines the client. In each case, Spearman's correlation coefficient was used to test for statistically significant relationships. Correlations of $r \geq 0.25$ and $p < 0.05$ were regarded as practically significant correlations.

4.3.4 Factor structure of the MBI−HSS

Prior to commencement of the factor analysis, all personal accomplishment variables (V55, V58, V60, V63, V68, V69, V70 and V72) were recoded in the opposite

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direction. Since all emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation variables are negatively phrased and all personal accomplishment variables are positively phrased, it was decided to recode all personal accomplishment items in the opposite direction to conform to the direction of the emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation items. The implication of this is that a high score on the personal accomplishment items would be indicative of high burnout, and a low score would be indicative of low burnout. For ease of discussion, the personal accomplishment subscale will from now on be referred to as the reduced personal accomplishment subscale.

Maximum Likelihood Factor Analysis (MLFA) with Direct Quartimin rotation of the axes was performed on all 22 items of the MBI−HSS in order to determine whether the item loadings conformed to the three-factor structure proposed by Maslach and Jackson (1996). At the first round of factor analysis, a three factor solution was specified as the MBI−HSS has been reported to consist of three factors. Only respondents that provided responses to all MBI−HSS items were included in the analysis. As a result, the total number of responses stood at N = 94. Six Eigen values $\geq$ 1.00 were identified and the cumulative proportion of variance for the three factors representing the highest Eigen values is displayed in **Table 32**.

Table 32: Cumulative proportion of variance on three factors

Factors	Cumulative proportion of variance explained
1	0.31
2	0.44
3	0.49

The three factors cumulatively contributed to 49.35 percent of the variance in the data space. Factor 1 contributes 31.23 percent of the variance, while Factor 2 explains 12.11 percent and Factor 3 explains 5.01 percent of the variance.

The rotated factor loadings of all the items are presented for r ≥ 0.30 in **Table 33**.

Table 33: Rotated factor loadings (three factors)

Item number	Factor 1 Depersonalisation	Factor 2 Reduced Accomplishment	Factor 3 Emotional Exhaustion
V52	0.479		0.510
V53			0.594
V54			0.758
V56	0.473		
V57	0.747		
V59	0.482		0.618
V61	0.450		
V62	0.652		
V64	0.443		0.326
V65	0.345		0.482
V66	0.507		
V67	0.818		
V71	0.316		0.496
V73	0.312		
R55		0.427	
R58		0.614	-0.309
R60		0.787	
R63		0.392	0.737
R68		0.731	
R69		0.634	
R70		0.645	
R72		0.509	

Factors loadings of less than 0.3 were suppressed. While Nunally and Bernstein (1994) recommend the inclusion of factor loadings greater than 0.5, many researchers regard factor loadings of 0.3 as sufficient (Hair *et al.*, 1992; Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991). When a three-factor solution was specified, a number of items (V52, V64, V59, V64, V65, V71, VR58 and VR63) loaded substantially on more than

one factor (r ≥ 0.30). Item V57 loaded strongly on the depersonalisation factor, but was expected to load on the emotional exhaustion factor. Item V64 loaded more strongly on the depersonalisation factor than on the emotional exhaustion factor where it was expected to load. Furthermore, item V67 is an emotional exhaustion item, but loaded on the depersonalisation factor. Similarly, item VR63, a personal accomplishment item, loaded on the emotional exhaustion factor.

As reflected in **Table 34**, the correlations between factors show a moderate (r = 0.425) correlation between Factor 1 (Depersonalisation) and Factor 3 (Emotional Exhaustion).

Table 34: Factor correlations for rotated factors (three factors)

	Factor 1	*Factor 2*	*Factor 3*
Factor 1	1.000		
Factor 2	0.099	1.000	
Factor 3	0.425	0.130	1.000

Because of the numerous cross-loadings and the fact that four items did not load on factors as expected, a two-factor solution was investigated. For the second round of Maximum Likelihood Factor Analysis with Direct Quartimin rotation of the axes, a two-factor solution was specified. As indicated in **Table 35** the two factors together explain 43.93 percent the variance in the data space, with Factor 1 accounting for 30.85 percent of the variance and Factor 2 accounting for 13.08 percent of the variance observed.

Table 35: Cumulative proportion of variance (two factors)

Factor	*Cumulative proportion of variance explained*
1	0.31
2	0.44

Table 36 displays the rotated factor loadings across the two specified factors for loadings ≥ 0.25.

Table 36: Rotated factor loadings (two factors)

Item number	Factor 1 Emotional exhaustion/Depersonalisation	Factor 2 Reduced accomplishment
V52	0.850	
V53	0.682	
V54	0.775	
V56	0.354	
V57	0.728	
V59	0.936	
V61	0.401	
V62	0.717	
V64	0.663	
V65	0.692	
V66	0.443	
V67	0.664	
V71	0.690	
V73	0.367	
R55		0.435
R58		0.608
R60		0.797
R63	0.406	0.387
R68		0.736
R69		0.645
R70		0.654
R72		0.507

Emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation items loaded on Factor 1, and personal accomplishment loaded on Factor 2. Item VR63 remained problematic in that it cross-loaded on both factors ($r > 0.30$).

The factor correlations for the rotated factors display a low correlation (r = 0.182) as indicated in **Table 37,** indicating two clearly separate and distinguishable factors.

Table 37: Factor correlations for rotated factors (two factors)

	Factor 1	*Factor 2*
Factor 1	1.000	
Factor 2	0.182	1.000

Because item VR63 continued to load on both factors, a third round of Maximum Likelihood Factor Analysis was run by omitting VR63 from the analysis. The two factors produced account for 44.39 percent of the variance in the data space, with Factor 1 accounting for 31.08 percent of the variance and Factor 2 accounting for 13.31 percent of the variance (**Table 38**).

Table 38: Cumulative proportion of variance (two factors, omitting item VR63)

Factor	*Cumulative proportion of variance explained*
1	0.31
2	0.44

The rotated factor loadings displayed in **Table 3** show all personal accomplishment items loading on Factor 2, and all emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation items loading on Factor 1, r ≥ 0.30 without significant cross loadings.

Table 39: Rotated factor loadings (two factors, omitting VR63)

Item number	Factor 1 Emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation	Factor 2 Reduced accomplishment
V52	0.849	
V53	0.679	
V54	0.768	
V56	0.358	
V57	0.734	
V59	0.932	
V61	0.404	
V62	0.720	
V64	0.664	
V65	0.691	
V66	0.448	
V67	0.671	
V71	0.689	
V73	0.367	
R55		0.428
R58		0.637
R60		0.773
R68		0.749
R69		0.618
R70		0.640
R72		0.526

The factors display a low correlation (r = 0.168) (**Table 40**). The Cronbach Alpha of all items in the final two-factor solution is 0.8825. The Cronbach Alpha for Factor 1 emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation is 0.9070, and the Cronbach Alpha for Factor 2 personal accomplishment is 0.8171.

Table 40: Factor correlations for rotated factors (three factors, omitting VR63)

	Factor 1	*Factor 2*
Factor 1	1.000	
Factor 2	0.168	1.000

The MBI−HSS used in the present research resulted in a two-factor structure with item VR63 removed. While the two-factor structure confirmed above deviates from the three-factor structure proposed by Maslach and Jackson (1996), Maslach *et al.* (1996) have suggested that application of the MBI-HSS outside of the human service professions may result in the collapse of depersonalisation and emotional exhaustion into one factor. Furthermore, a number of studies have found support for a two-factor structure, with emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation items loading on a single factor, and personal accomplishment items loading on another (Brookings *et al.,* 1985; Dignam *et al.*, 1986; Green *et al.*, 1991). The MBI–HSS as a two-factor structure with item VR63 removed is therefore regarded as an acceptable and valid measure of burnout for this sample.

4.4 THE QUALITATIVE PHASE

The primary purpose of the qualitative phase is to broaden understanding of the nature of the differences between the role identities of high burnout client service employees and low burnout client service employees. Through the qualitative exploration of interview data, it is intended that these differences be described and understood to better explain the nature of the relationship between role identity and burnout and the nature of the mechanisms by virtue of which this relationship exists. A further aim of the qualitative research was to explore the role that perceptions of organisational client discourse play in informing the role identities of client service employees. The qualitative phase of the research therefore attempted to address research questions three through to six:

3. In what ways do the role identities of higher burnout employees differ from the role identities of lower burnout employees?

3a. Is there a relationship between descriptions of the counter-role (client) and the development of burnout?

3b. Is there a relationship between descriptions of the self (self in role) and the development of burnout?

3c. Is there a relationship between the development of burnout and the difference between descriptions of the self and descriptions of the counter-role (client)?

4. To what extent do the role-related behaviours and subjective perceptions of higher burnout employees differ from the role-related behaviours and subjective perceptions of lower burnout employees?

5. Are lower burnout respondents able to self-verify more easily than higher burnout respondents?

6. To what extent do higher burnout employees experience, interpret and internalise the organisational client discourse differently when compared to lower burnout client service employees?

It should be noted that reference is made to "higher" burnout employees and "lower" burnout employees instead of "high" burnout employees and "low" burnout employees. This has been purposefully done since only one of the respondents included in the present study can be classified as experiencing "high" burnout.

Qualitative research has traditionally been categorised according to an array of paradigms and strategies (Holliday, 2007: 17). These paradigms range from the naturalist approaches including case studies, ethnography and ethno-methodology, to the post-modern paradigm that includes the phenomenological, grounded theory and action research strategies. These categories do, however, overlap significantly, resulting in a fluid, rather than rigid categorisation of strategies (Holliday, 2007: 17). But despite the numerous paradigmatic approaches to qualitative research, the primary objectives of qualitative research remain constant. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006: 5) define the practice of qualitative research as "reflective and process driven, ultimately producing culturally situated and theory-enmeshed knowledge through an ongoing interplay between theory and methods, researcher and researched". Similarly, Flick, Von Kardorff and Steinke (2004: 3) maintain that "qualitative research

claims to describe the world from the inside out, from the point of view of the people that participate". The processes employed during qualitative research are therefore of paramount importance in ensuring the integrity of the data produced. To this end, qualitative researchers are required to carefully document the research process and constantly reflect on the interplay between process and interpretation. The sampling and data-collection methods pertaining to the qualitative phase of the research are therefore discussed in detail below.

4.4.1 Qualitative sample selection and description

The qualitative research in the present study was conducted by way of semi-structured interviews (refer to Appendix K for an example of the semi-structured interview schedule) with eight respondents who scored towards the higher end of the burnout spectrum and nine respondents who scored towards the lower end of the burnout spectrum. **Table 41** reflects the quantitative sample respondents ranked according to total burnout scores from highest to lowest. The respondent ID is provided in the far left-hand column and scores on the emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation and personal accomplishment subscale are also provided but not ranked. Maslach and Jackson (1996) recommend that burnout scores be interpreted as high, moderate or low. For the present study, total burnout scores could range from 0 to 126. A score of 85 and over in the burnout total column is indicative of high burnout. Scores between 43 and 84 are indicative of moderate burnout, while scores lower than 42 signify low burnout. Since only one respondent in the present sample can be classified as having high burnout, respondents included in the qualitative research are grouped into those with higher scores on the burnout continuum and those with lower scores on the burnout continuum. For the remainder of the dissertation, these two groups will be referred to as the higher burnout group and the lower burnout group.

Table 41: Respondents ranked from highest to lowest burnout scores

Respondent ID	Emotional Exhaustion/ Depersonalisation score	Personal Accomplishment score	Total Burnout score	Response after invitation
f44	71	17	**High** 88	Accepted
t7	65	13	**Moderate** 78	Declined
m31	52	21	73	Accepted
m8	47	26	73	Accepted
t54	52	19	71	Declined
f1	53	17	70	Accepted
f36	62	6	68	Declined
f3	52	16	68	Accepted
t34	56	12	68	Accepted
f41	58	9	67	Declined
t40	52	14	66	Declined
m25	42	21	63	Declined
f33	41	22	63	Accepted
t103	53	9	62	Declined
t47	52	10	62	Declined
t39	51	9	60	Accepted
t43	50	9	59	
m38	54	4	58	
m18	47	10	57	
t50	48	8	56	
t41	44	12	56	
t59	43	12	55	
f43	44	10	54	
m46	45	7	52	
f39	40	10	50	
m6	26	23	49	
f34	43	6	49	
t105	30	19	49	
m27	23	25	48	
m54	30	18	48	
t99	41	6	47	
t38	18	28	46	
t82	39	6	45	
m7	22	22	44	
m29	20	24	44	
t23	29	15	44	
t53	42	2	44	
m47	30	12	42	
m2	33	9	42	
f35	31	11	42	
f24	36	6	42	
m32	22	18	**Low** 40	
f29	20	20	40	
m30	17	22	39	
m62	22	17	39	
t16	27	11	38	
t45	15	23	38	
t84	25	12	37	
t10	18	18	36	

Respondent ID	Emotional Exhaustion/ Depersonalisation score	Personal Accomplishment score	Total Burnout score	Response after invitation
t27	29	6	35	
t83	19	16	35	
t44	18	17	35	
t2	27	7	34	
m26	21	12	33	
f45	33	0	33	
t35	29	4	33	
t31	23	9	32	
t94	25	7	32	
t11	22	10	32	
m17	20	11	31	
m52	17	13	30	
t3	30	0	30	
f8	27	1	28	
t20	27	1	28	
t60	14	14	28	
f31	24	3	27	
t29	24	3	27	
t46	16	11	27	
t49	20	7	27	
t30	26	0	26	
m3	19	6	25	
f6	15	8	23	
t32	15	8	23	
t58	18	5	23	
t57	15	7	22	
m35	20	1	21	Accepted
t80	20	0	20	
m34	10	9	19	Accepted
t104	13	6	19	
t1	11	8	19	
t42	14	5	19	
f28	14	4	18	Declined
t6	10	8	18	Declined
m28	8	9	17	Accepted
f7	14	2	16	Declined
t25	13	3	16	Declined
t8	9	7	16	Accepted
t93	11	5	16	Declined
t28	12	4	16	Declined
t56	14	1	15	Accepted
t24	6	3	9	Declined/Accepted
t22	4	5	9	Declined/Accepted
t26	5	3	8	Accepted
t14	6	0	6	Accepted

While it would have been preferable to select only those respondents that are experiencing either high burnout or low burnout, only one respondent could be classified as high burnout (total burnout score higher than 84). Forty respondents

could be classified as displaying moderate burnout (total burnout score of between 42 and 84), and the rest displayed low burnout (burnout scores below 42).

Since the aim of the qualitative research was to compare the role identities of high burnout respondents with the role identities of low burnout respondents, the sample for inclusion in the qualitative phase was purposively selected by identifying the respondents that scored the highest and those that scored the lowest on total burnout. A final sample of ten higher burnout and ten lower burnout respondents was regarded as sufficient to make the necessary qualitative comparisons, but in order to accommodate refusals to participate, a number of additional respondents were invited to participate in the research. In order to ensure representivity of respondents across each of the three companies, an attempt was made to include at least two respondents from each of the three companies in both the higher and lower burnout group.

In the case of the higher burnout respondents, the 16 respondents measuring the highest in total burnout were invited to participate in the research. Each of the potential respondents was e-mailed a letter of invitation (refer to Appendix L) asking them if they would be willing to participate in a 45-minute interview. Five respondents from Company T declined to participate in the interviews due to time pressures and work commitments. Two respondents from Company F were no longer in the employ of the company at the time respondents were recruited for participation in the qualitative interviews and one respondent from Company M was also not available to participate in the research. This resulted in a total of two respondents from Company M, four from Company F and two from Company T. A total of eight higher burnout respondents were interviewed.

The lowest 13 respondents were invited to participate in the research. While it would have been preferable to invite the lowest measuring 16 respondents (as had been done in the case of the higher burnout group) this may have resulted in an excessive number of respondents from Company T included in the lower burnout group. As a result, two respondents from Company T that scored within the lowest 16 burnout scores were excluded from the first group of invited respondents due to the high number of respondents from Company T already included in the lower burnout

sample. Only one respondent from Company M fell within the first group of invited respondents and as a result, respondents M34 and M35 were included in the sample, even though they fall outside of the lowest scoring 16.

Two respondents from Company F were no longer working for the call centre due to the fact that the Cape Town section of the call centre was closed down. Regrettably, no further respondents from Company F could be identified for inclusion in the low burnout group. Respondent F6 would have been the next logical inclusion in the sample from Company F, but it was decided not to consider respondents outside of the lowest scoring 20. This decision was taken in order to ensure the best possible concentration of higher burnout and lower burnout respondents. The lower burnout group is therefore not representative of respondents from Company F. Six lower burnout respondents from Company T declined to participate in the research due to work pressures, and the first round of interviews went ahead with seven lower burnout employees included in the sample. Unfortunately, one respondent from Company T had to cancel his interview at the last minute due to work commitments. As a result, only six low burnout respondents were initially surveyed. The researcher then decided to travel back to Company T in the Free State at a different stage to interview this respondent. Respondents T22 and T24 who were initially unavailable to participate, were again invited to participate and agreed. A total of nine low burnout interviews eventually took place.

Upon positive responses to the invitation, an interview was scheduled at a time and place convenient to the respondent. All respondents chose to have the interviews at their place of work. In the case of Company M, Company F and Company T (Mpumalanga), a separate boardroom was arranged for the interviews. In the case of Company T (Free State), the researcher was provided with a private office from which to conduct the interviews. Each respondent was asked to sign an informed consent form that outlined the purpose of the research and guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity of responses. Respondents were also asked permission to tape record the interview for the purpose of transcription (Refer to Appendix M for a copy of the consent form). A description of interview respondents is reflected in **Table 42**. Limited demographic information is, however, provided in **Table 42**, specifically to protect the identity of participants.

Table 42: Description of interview respondents (N=17)

High Burnout respondents

Code	Company	Town/Region	Gender	Population Group	Interview Duration
H1	M	Cape Town	Female	White	35 min
H2	M	Cape Town	Male	White	25 min
H3	F	Cape Town	Female	Coloured	40 min
H4	F	Cape Town	Female	Coloured	40 min
H5	F	Cape Town	Male	Coloured	35 min
H6	F	Cape Town	Male	White	30 min
H7	T	Mpumalanga	Male	White	30 min
H8	T	Mpumalanga	Male	White	32 min

Low Burnout respondents

Code	Company	Town/Region	Gender	Population Group	Interview Duration
L1	M	Cape Town	Female	White	30 min
L2	M	Cape Town	Female	White	26 min
L3	M	Cape Town	Female	White	28 min
L4	T	Free State	Male	White	41 min
L5	T	Free State	Female	White	31 min
L6	T	Mpumalanga	Male	White	35 min
L7	T	Free State	Male	White	40 min
L8	T	Free State	Male	White	41 min
L9	T	Free State	Male	White	35 min

4.4.2 The qualitative interview method

The use of interviewing assumes that the research participants have important knowledge about the social world that can be accessed through verbal communication (Rubin & Rubin, 1995: 1). Interviewing allows the researcher to view the world from the interviewee's subjective perception, and uncover the meanings attached to people's experiences (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006: 119; Kvale, 1996: 1). Through the act of asking and listening, the researcher creates meaning by recognising patterns that emerge from the descriptive interpretations of the social world by the participants in the research. It is therefore less concerned with the

collection of facts and information, than with the interpretation of meaning that subjects assign to the everyday lived experience (Flick, 2004a: 11; Warren, 2002: 83).

Interviewing is, however, far more complex that simply asking questions and getting answers. According to Fontana and Frey (2005: 697), "the spoken or written word always has a residue of ambiguity, no matter how carefully we word the questions and how carefully we report or code the answers". Interviewers should therefore take cognisance of the fact that the interview situation can bring bias into the data collected (Evans, Hearn, Uhlemann & Ivey, 1998: 57) because the "shared assumptions, contextual understandings, common knowledge, and reciprocal aims of speakers in everyday life are not present during the formal interview" (Lazarsfeld, 1935: 1). Care was therefore taken during the construction of the interview schedule and administration of the interview to adhere to a number of principles aimed at ensuring validity of the interview data. A description of the interview schedule and a detailed explanation of the interview administration process will be discussed in the two sections that follow.

4.4.2.1   The interview schedule

The interviews used in the present study were semi-structured in order to facilitate analytical comparison between each of the respondents. Given the nature of the fact that I, as researcher and interviewer, was aware of which respondents were classified as higher burnout and which as lower burnout, the structured nature of the questionnaire also reduced potential interviewer bias. The semi-structured nature of the interview schedule did allow me to probe for clarity in cases of ambiguity, and ask respondents to clarify responses.

Prior to interviewing, the study was "thematised" according to the research questions outlined in the research argument (Flick, 2004a: 37). Six primary themes for exploration were identified and included: role-related meanings; perceptions of and feelings towards the counter-role; the construction of identity and the role of organisational discourse; role identity and behaviour; and behaviour and burnout (refer to Appendix K for a copy of the interview schedule).

The interview schedule used during the present study primarily made use of descriptive and experience/example questions (Janesick, 2004: 72). The use of experience questions was regarded as particularly important in order to understand the level of congruence between respondents' perceptions and actual behaviours. Probing took various forms including silence, encouragement, asking for immediate clarification, retrospective clarification, immediate elaboration or retrospective elaboration (Keats, 2000: 64).

The semi-structured interview schedule commenced with a general question asking the respondent to explain his/her specific role in the organisation. This was followed by questions relating specifically to the client and the client relationship. Respondents were asked to list words or phrases to describe what it is like being a client service employee and to describe the relationships they have with their clients. In this section respondents were also asked to describe what the perfect client would be like. These questions attempted to elicit references to the client service employee's role identity and how they perceive the client (relevant counter-identity).

The next section of the interview schedule attempted to uncover employee perceptions of management expectations pertaining to the client service role. In this section respondents were asked to indicate whether they feel they are generally able to meet the expectations of management and whether they believe these expectations are fair. These questions were asked with the intention to elicit perceptions of the organisation's client service discourse.

The next set of questions required respondents to describe the kinds of people they thought management recruits for the client service role and what kinds of people they would advise management to recruit. This section of the interview schedule was aimed at eliciting further perceptions of the role and its associated identity.

The final section of the interview schedule was aimed at eliciting perceptions and evaluations that respondents have about their roles. Here respondents were asked to describe their challenges; what they like best and least about working in client service and whether they would change anything about their jobs. It was intended that this section uncover meanings related to the client service identity and that

respondents relate personal experiences that would give an indication of the kinds of role-related behaviours they engage in. This section also attempted to ascertain whether respondents were experiencing self-verification.

The interview schedule was piloted among a convenience sample of three client service employees. A number of incremental changes were made to the schedule primarily for purposes of clarification.

The primary challenge with interview research is to get the respondents to relay their true opinions, perceptions and emotions and to eliminate the entry of bias into the interview (Mischler, 1986: 15). According to Johnson and Weller (2002: 491) the manner in which questions are framed and the use of supportive material during the interview are of vital importance. To this end, a number of techniques suggested by Weiss (1994: 75) were used to improve the depth and quality of the information provided by the interview respondents.

The structure of the interview schedule also allowed for the researcher to ask the respondents for concrete examples of their interactions with the client. This proved useful in getting respondents to recall actual situations. During analysis, the actual situations and emotions derived from these specific situations were compared with the more subjective, general responses of the respondent. Furthermore, because respondents represented only three different companies, the factual information relayed by each respondent could be verified against the information provided by other respondents of the same company.

The questions included in the interview schedule were not of a highly personal nature, and did therefore not induce trauma or pose a significant threat to respondent esteem. A small section of the interview schedule did attempt to elicit respondent perceptions of management expectations, and given the fact that the interviews took place during working hours at the place of work, could have resulted in a degree of unease amongst some of the respondents. All respondents were, however, very forthcoming with information and appeared to enjoy the interview.

4.4.2.2   Interview administration

In order to establish both emotional and cognitive rapport with respondents (Keats, 2001) I introduced myself to respondents and thanked them for agreeing to participate in the interview. In order to create a comfortable atmosphere I stressed that the purpose of the research interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of the facets of client service. At no stage of the interview were respondents informed that the study is aimed at investigating burnout, since interview responses are often more valid if respondents are not aware of the research context underpinning what they are being asked (Froddy, 1993: 53). This form of deception is in accordance with the recommendations made by Maslach *et al.* (1996) who stress that respondents should not be informed that burnout is being measured. Respondents were instead informed that the research was being conducted in order to gain a better understanding of client service work with particular focus on interactions with the client.

It was stressed that respondents' identities would remain confidential, and they were also informed that selected employees from two other companies were also participating in the research. This appeared to reduce apprehension amongst respondents that their responses may be linked to them personally.   Each respondent was provided with an informed consent form, which they were asked to sign (Appendix M). Respondents were asked permission to be tape-recorded and it was explained that the purpose of the tape recording was to enable transcription of the interviews. Respondents were assured that the recordings would be destroyed following transcription of the interview, and I undertook not to refer to them or the company by name during the course of the interview. Each respondent was given a copy of the informed consent form to keep. At the end of each interview, the researcher asked the respondents whether they had any questions pertaining to the research. Most respondents were interested to know more about the research resulting in an informal conversation about the research after the interview had been concluded. Respondents were, however, not informed that the research was concerned with measuring burnout.

Since interviewing is not solely concerned with taking note of verbal content but also about taking note of tone, voice and facial expression (Gordon, 1980: 5) all interviews were recorded for transcription. As a result, I was able to take detailed notes during the interview, reflecting the general tone of the interview, and any non-verbal cues which may have added to interpretation of the interview data. In each case, an interview contact sheet was compiled, in which I noted any pertinent points pertaining to the interview, including general emotions displayed by the respondent during the interview.

An inhibitor to communication (Gordon, 1980: 119) that was of particular concern during the current research was that of time pressure. According to Gordon (1980: 119), interviews should be held at a time and place convenient to the respondent in order to avoid the negative impact that time pressures can have on the flow of communication during the interview. Since all interviews took place at the respondent's place of work and during office hours so that respondents would not need to travel, I was particularly aware of time pressures on respondents. In the case of Company F, respondents are on a strict 45-minute lunch schedule. All respondents from Company F were interviewed during their lunch breaks, resulting in moderate time pressure during the interviews. All interviews were, however, comfortably completed within 45 minutes. At the Mpumalanga branch of Company T, a fire drill interrupted the first interview. This resulted in both subsequent interviews being scheduled at a later time. Fortunately, all respondents were able to accommodate the change in time.

4.4.3 Qualitative data analysis and interpretation

Qualitative research comprises a myriad of analysis strategies ranging from technical standardised strategies to strategies that are highly interpretative, which ultimately affect the manner in which data are generated (Marshall & Rossman, 2006: 154). One of the primary areas of contestation regarding qualitative methodology is whether it should follow and inductive or a deductive approach. Flick (2004a: 149) for instance, maintains that research questions derived from prior theoretical knowledge is crucial to the success of the qualitative study. Meinefield (2004: 15) on

the other hand, states that qualitative researchers should suspend all prior knowledge on a specific subject during data analysis.

In an attempt to reconcile these divergent approaches to qualitative research, Miles and Huberman (1994: 16) make a distinction between tight versus loose qualitative research designs. Tight qualitative research designs allow for a pre-existing conceptual framework and well-defined research questions in order to frame the study. Loose designs, on the other hand, keep pre-structuring to a minimum and allow concepts to emerge from the data. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that qualitative designs must have some structure to guide analysis. A conceptual framework accompanied by well-defined research questions indicating the primary concepts or variables under investigation is therefore necessary. Similarly, Hyde (2000: 82) maintains that deductive approaches in qualitative research go far in ensuring conviction and theoretical coherence.

As a result, the present study adopted the tight research design as proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994: 16) and Hyde (2000: 82), where a pre-existing conceptual framework and research questions guide analysis. Well-defined research questions were constructed to guide data analysis and interpretation, resulting in a number of pre-determined conceptual categories. While a pre-determined conceptual framework did exist through which to interpret and analyse the data, initial coding of the data was open to allowing new categories and concepts to emerge. This approach is similar to Layder's (1998) adoptive theory approach, which can be described as a "multi-strategy" approach, in which qualitative data analysis takes account of existing theoretical ideas and ideas that develop directly as a result of familiarity with the data (Lewins & Silver, 2007: 88). It also corresponds to later reiterations of the Straussian grounded theory approach whereby the data are framed through the use of often preliminarily defined codes, categories and propositions (Charmaz, 2004: 496).

In contrast to quantitative data analysis where analysis commences after data collection, the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data can commence as early as during the data collection phase (Marshall & Rossman, 2006: 156). In an endeavour to record every step of data collection and analysis, I kept a detailed

analysis diary and completed a respondent contact sheet after each interview. The contact sheet contained important observations by myself either during or immediately after the interview which could be used during the analysis of the qualitative data (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 50).

Once completed, all interviews were transcribed by an independent transcriber and saved as Microsoft Word Documents. The transcriber was given the digital master copy of recordings from which to work, and these were given back to me after the transcriptions were completed. Each digital recording was given a unique code by myself, which I was then able to link back to the date and time of the interview. Respondent and company names did therefore not appear on any of the transcriptions, nor was the transcriber given the names of respondents or companies. During the interviews I did not refer to the respondents by name nor did I refer to the company by name. The anonymity and confidentiality of both respondents and participating companies was therefore protected. In cases where the digital recording was unclear, the transcriber was instructed to place spaces in the text. Once I had received all transcriptions back from the transcriber, I checked them for accuracy by replaying the digital recordings while reading the transcriptions. I was also able to complete most of the incomplete sentences or areas where the transcriber indicated difficulties with clarity.

The transcribed documents were then uploaded into an Atlas.ti™ data file by myself for analysis. Atlas.ti™ can be described as code-based theory building software, which allows for traditional code and retrieve functions, as well as the construction of theoretical models or networks. Atlas.ti™ was originally developed at the Technical University of Berlin, and is now supported by Atlas.ti™ Scientific Software Development GmbH. Coding schemes are developed non-hierarchically, but can be grouped together in *code families.* Hierarchical or semantic links between codes can be used to create structure on the coding scheme and articulate relationships between concepts. Through the networking tool, functional links between concepts, codes and categories can be created to generate theoretical models (Lewins & Silver, 2007: 242).

The interview transcriptions of higher burnout respondents were saved in a separate hermeneutic unit to the interview transcriptions of lower burnout respondents. A hermeneutic unit is merely a file within the Atlas programme which provides data structure to a project. This allowed for easy comparison between lower and higher burnout responses. The hermeneutic unit of higher burnout interviews comprised a total of eight primary documents (corresponding to each of the eight higher burnout interviews). The hermeneutic unit of lower burnout interviews comprised a total of nine primary documents (corresponding to each of the nine lower burnout interviews).

The present study incorporated all three phases of analysis as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). These three phases are depicted in **Figure 18** and comprise data reduction (level 1 of the diagram), data display (level 2 of the diagram) and conclusion drawing (level 3 of the diagram). Coding of the data, which takes place in phase one and two of the analysis process, followed the approach suggested by Grbich (2007), Miles and Huberman (1994) and Strauss and Corbin (1990) and commenced with open coding, followed by axial coding and then selective coding. Open coding, the first phase in the coding process, involved the initial combing of the data followed by the application of preliminary codes to the data. These codes were kept as succinct as possible in order to facilitate analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Axial coding was conducted next and involved comparing and contrasting the initial codes created during open coding and then placing them into code families or categories. During selective coding, the final phase in the coding process, code categories were related and theoretically meaningful relationships between them identified. These phases of coding are discussed in more detail in the sections that follow.

Levels

Synthesis: integrating data into one explanatory framework

Delineating deep structure

Cross-checking and matrix analysis of themes

3. Developing and testing propositions to construct explanatory framework

Testing hypotheses and reducing data for trends

2. Repackaging and aggregating the data

Identifying themes and trends in the data

Searching for relationships, writing analytical memos, finding out where emphases and gaps in the data are

1. Data reduction

Trying out coding categories to find a set that fits

Coding of data, writing of analytical notes on linkages to frameworks of interpretation

Creating a text to work on

Reconstruction of interview tapes as written notes

**Figure 18: The ladder of analytical abstraction
(Carney, 1990 as cited in Miles & Huberman, 1994: 92)**

4.4.3.1   Open coding

Once all data were transcribed, a process of open coding took place where each line or phrase of the data was combed and codes attached where applicable. During this phase codes were given the opportunity to emerge from the data. As suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994: 11) I moved quickly through the data and remained open to whatever theoretical possibilities would occur in the data. To this end, a number of questions were asked when coding the data.   These questions are presented in **Table 43** and were used to elicit codes and categories from the data (Charmaz, 2004: 508; Strauss, 1987: 30; Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 58).

Table 43: Questions used to illuminate themes in qualitative data

Strauss (1987: 30)	Charmaz (2004: 508)	Strauss and Corbin (1990: 58)
What is going on here? Why is it being done?	What is going on here? What is the person saying?	What is the issue here? What persons are involved?
What if something changed? What would be the outcome of any change?	What do these actions and statements take for granted? How does content and structure support, maintain, impede or change these actions and statements?	What roles do they play and how do they interact? How are aspects of the phenomenon addressed?
What category does the incident indicate?	What processes are at play here? Under what conditions did these processes develop? How does the respondent think, feel and act when involved in this process? What are the consequences of this process?	Why? What reasons are given and what can be deduced? For what reason, intention and purpose? By what means? What strategies were used to achieve the goal?

The open coding approach of the present study was inductive and a total of 391 initial codes were created in the higher burnout hermeneutic unit, while a total of 322 codes were created in the lower burnout hermeneutic unit. Upon closer inspection it became evident that a number of the initial codes created were of similar meaning. Codes encapsulating similar meanings or content were then merged, resulting in a total of 183 codes attached to the higher burnout hermeneutic unit and 134 codes attached to the lower burnout hermeneutic unit.

4.4.3.2 Axial coding

Once the open coding process was completed, the more abstract process of axial coding commenced. Through this process, the codes generated through open coding were reconsidered and similar codes were grouped together.

Only codes that occurred more than six times throughout the interviews were used for further analysis. A total of 30 codes were eventually created in the higher burnout hermeneutic unit and 21 codes were created in the lower burnout hermeneutic unit.

4.4.3.3 Selective coding

Once axial coding was complete, I engaged in selective coding. During selective coding the initial categories were examined in terms of their temporal and spatial relationships (Böhm, 2004: 272) and were provided with a context (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 76). Each category was broken into distinct components by searching for its properties, its underlying assumptions, and the manner in which it develops and changes (Charmaz, 2004: 511). This resulted in the development of themes, as the relationships between categories were elaborated and understood.

Selective coding generally commences with the second phase of qualitative data analysis, namely data display (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Once the data have been coded and categorised through the process of data reduction, they must be displayed in such a manner as to allow the researcher to construct relationships and analytically inspired themes. For the purposes of the current study, selective coding proceeded based on the theoretical model that was built in the research argument chapter. As a result, codes corresponding to the various components of the conceptual framework included in **Figure 10** in Chapter 3 were applied to the data. Code families corresponding to the various theoretical components of the research argument were formed and similar codes were again merged resulting in a further reduction of initial codes. To this end, the data were coded according to a number of themed questions, derived from the research questions presented in Chapter 3. It should be mentioned that these themed questions were used as an analytical tool during selective coding, and should therefore not be regarded as research questions.

They merely served to organise the data into meaningful themes reflecting the components of **Figure 10**.

The themed questions used during selective coding include:

- How do client service employees perceive the counter-identity of client?
- How do client service employees define themselves within the client service role (role identity)?
- What expectations for behaviour are implicit within these role identities (identity standards)?
- What kinds of role-related behaviours result from these identity standards?
- What kinds of role-related attitudes result from these identity standards?
- Is there evidence of self-verification/self-verification failure, and do we witness a diminished sense of self, feelings of subjective failure, reduced self-efficacy, frustration and fatigue?

A number of display formats are available and range from matrix displays to network displays. In the context of the present study, cross case analysis was conducted by creating quotation count reports reflecting the code categories according to each of the themed research questions. The analysis of the qualitative data analysis was concluded with the construction of network diagrams, where the all codes are presented and linked to the research questions derived from the research argument presented in Chapter 3.

4.4.3.4 Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the qualitative data

The issue as to whether the concepts of reliability and validity are applicable in the context of qualitative research has been frequently debated (Morse, Barret, Mayan, Olson & Spiers, 2002). According to Guba and Lincoln (1985), the concepts of reliability so frequently used within the quantitative paradigm can be replaced with the concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, which, together account for trustworthiness in qualitative research. Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability can be achieved through a rigorous

process of verification (Morse *et al.*, 2002). According to the authors, verification "is the process of checking, confirming, making sure, and being certain" (Morse *et al.,* 2002) and ultimately contributes to the reliability and validity of the study. A number of verification strategies to ensure rigour of qualitative research as proposed by Guba and Lincoln (1985) and Morse *et al.* (2002) were used in the present research and will be discussed below.

Firstly, the mixed-methods approach to the present study is advantageous as it allows the researcher to triangulate findings, thereby ensuring credibility. Findings from the quantitative research were compared and contrasted to the qualitative findings and in cases where contradictions existed, plausible explanations within the context of the present study were sought. In cases where these explanations are speculative or require further investigation, it is clearly stated. Secondly, data analysis commenced during the data collection phase, and analysis proceeded both inductively and deductively, ensuring both integrity of the data, and providing sufficient theoretical guidance and framing. Explanations for both qualitative and quantitative observations are generally confirmed by the literature, and where observations are not confirmed, it is clearly stated. Methodological and analytical coherence were ensured by considering the study's research questions during both axial and selective coding. Qualitative conclusions were drawn by comparing and contrasting cases, and negative instances are clearly mentioned and accounted for. Although a number of respondents declined to participate in the qualitative interviews, every effort was made to ensure that only respondents representing the highest and lowest burnout scores were included in the sample, thereby ensuring an appropriate sample.

CHAPTER 5

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

5.1 BURNOUT LEVELS

As recommended by Maslach *et al.* (1996) scores on the MBI burnout continuum can be divided into thirds, corresponding to low, moderate and high burnout levels. Since burnout in the present study was computed using 21 items instead of the original 22 items proposed by Maslach and Jackson (1986), the continuum of burnout scores ranges from +0 to +126 instead of from +0 to +132.

Table 44 provides a detailed reflection of the scores corresponding to low, moderate and high burnout.

Table 44: Range of experienced burnout

	Burnout Total	*Reduced Accomplishment*	*Exhaust/Depers*
Range	0−126	0−42	0−84
Low	≤ 42	≤ 14	≤ 28
Moderate	43−84	15−28	29−56
High	≥ 85	≥ 29	≥ 57

As recommended by Maslach *et al.* (1996) scores on the MBI can be classified as low when they are in the lower third of the normative distribution. High scores are in the upper third, while moderate scores are in the middle third. Scores on the 14 item emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation scale run from +0 to +84, while scores on the seven item personal accomplishment subscale run from +0 to +42. Since all personal accomplishment subscales are positively phrased, while emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation items are negatively phrased, the personal accomplishment items were reverse coded. A high score on the reduced personal accomplishment subscale would therefore indicate high burnout. In other words,

from this change reduced personal accomplishment means higher burnout as a result of a reduced sense of personal accomplishment.

The mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum scores of the present sample on burnout total, personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation are reflected in **Table 45**.

Table 45: **Mean scores on burnout (N=100)**

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Items
Burnout Total*	94	39.20	18.47	6	88	21
Reduced Accomplishment	100	9.98	6.88	0	28	7
Exhaust/Depersonalisation	94	24.93	15.84	4	71	14

* Burnout Total refers to the combined score for reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation.

With a total burnout mean of 39.20 (SD = 18.47), the sample represents a low total burnout score. The sample reflects a mean of 9.98 (SD = 6.88) on the reduced personal accomplishment subscale, which would also be classified as low burnout. A mean of 24.93 (SD = 15.84) on the emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation subscale similarly indicates relatively low levels of burnout among the present sample.

5.2 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BURNOUT AND DEMOGRAPHIC AND BIOGRAPHIC VARIABLES MEASURED ON DISCRETE SCALES

The statistical procedure Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine whether any statistically significant differences in burnout scores exist between groups characterised by biographic or demographic variables measured on discrete scales. Significance was measured using an F test, with $p \leq 0.05$ regarded as statistically significant. In cases where variables have more than two response categories, Scheffe's test was conducted to determine which pairs differ significantly. The results of the ANOVA procedure per burnout component are presented in sections below.

5.2.1 The relationship between reduced personal accomplishment and discrete demographic and biographic variables

Table 46 reflects the results of the ANOVA performed to measure whether any statistically significant differences exist between scores on the reduced personal accomplishment subscale and the discrete biographic and demographic variables. Mean scores per descriptive category are ranked from highest to lowest.

Table 46: Relationships between reduced personal accomplishment and discrete biographic and demographic variables (ANOVA)

Variable	F	p	Descriptive categories	N	Mean	SD
Company	8.55	0.0004	Company M	23	14.78	7.35
			Company F	20	9.30	6.43
			Company T	57	8.28	6.00
Gender	0	0.985	Male	55	10.18	6.66
			Female	45	9.73	7.22
Population group	4.29	0.0411	People of colour	25	12.48	8.76
			White	73	9.23	5.96
Marital status	0.72	0.399	Single	34	10.79	7.55
			Married or cohabiting	66	9.56	6.54
Education	5.38	0.0061	University degree	31	13.19	7.40
			Post-school certificate or diploma	40	8.78	6.98
			Secondary education	29	8.21	4.96

As reflected in the table, the F test for reduced personal accomplishment indicates significant differences between companies (F = 8.55, p = 0.0004); population group (F = 4.29, p = 0.0411) and educational level (F = 5.38, p = 0.0061). No significant

differences were observed for gender or marital status differences. According to the mean scores reflected in the table, people of colour display significantly higher levels of reduced personal accomplishment than white respondents do.

Scheffe's test was then applied to test which pairs of companies and which pairs of educational levels differ on the reduced personal accomplishment subscale (**Table 47**).

Table 47: Scheffe's test – Reduced personal accomplishment and company

Company pair wise comparison	*Difference between means*	*p*
Company M/Company F	5.48	*
Company M/Company T	6.50	*
Company F/Company T	1.02	†

† p > .05

* p ≤ .05

According to the results of the Scheffe's test presented in **Table 47**, Company M displays significantly higher mean scores on the reduced personal accomplishment subscale than Company F and Company T. No significantly different mean scores are detected between Company F and Company T.

The result of the Scheffe's test to determine which pairs of educational levels differ significantly is presented in **Table 48**.

Table 48: Scheffe's test – Reduced personal accomplishment and educational level

Educational level pair wise comparison	Difference between means	p
University degree/post-school certificate or diploma	4.42	*
University degree/Secondary education	4.99	*
Secondary education/post-school certificate or diploma	0.57	†

† p > .05

* p ≤ .05

Table 48 shows that respondents with a university degree present higher levels of reduced personal accomplishment than respondents with a secondary education or post-school certificate or diploma. No significant pair wise differences are observed between respondents with a secondary education and those with a post school certificate or diploma.

5.2.2 The relationship between emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation and biographic and demographic variables measured on discrete scales

Table 49 reflects the results of the ANOVA performed to measure whether any statistically significant differences exist between emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation and groups characterised by discrete biographic and demographic variables.

Table 49: Relationships between discrete biographic/demographic variables and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation (ANOVA)

Variable	F	p	Descriptive categories	N	Mean	SD
Company	3.68	0.029	Company F	18	37.67	17.08
			Company M	23	28.13	13.34
			Company T	53	26.32	15.65
Gender	0.01	0.9304	Female	43	29.09	14.58
			Male	51	28.80	16.98
Population group	0.59	0.4444	People of colour	24	30.96	15.66
			White	68	28.04	16.09
Marital status	1.23	0.2711	Single	33	31.39	16.04
			Married or cohabiting	61	27.61	15.72
Education	0.02	0.9786	Post-school certificate or diploma	36	29.36	15.40
			University degree	27	28.78	18.63
			Secondary education	31	28.58	14.17

The F test indicates significant differences between the companies (F = 3.68 p = 0.029) on emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation. None of the other discrete biographic and demographic variables accounted for significant differences in emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation scores.

Results from Scheffe's test conducted to measure which pairs of companies differ significantly with regard to emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation scores, are presented in **Table 50**.

Table 50: Scheffe's test – Emotional Exhaustion/Depersonalisation and company

Company pair wise comparison	Difference between means	p
Company F/Company M	9.54	†
Company F/Company T	11.35	*
Company M/Company T	1.81	†

† $p > .05$

* $p \leq .05$

The results in **Table 50** show that Company F displays a significantly higher mean score on the emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation subscale than Company T. No statistically significant differences are detected between the mean scores of Company F and Company M and Company M and Company T.

5.2.3 The relationship between burnout total and biographic and demographic variables measured on discrete scales

The results of an ANOVA to test for significant differences between burnout total and biographic/demographic variables measured on discrete scales are presented in **Table 51**.

Table 51: Relationships between biographic/demographic variables and burnout total (ANOVA)

Variable	F	p	Descriptive categories	N	Mean	SD
Company	3.68	0.0292	Company F	18	47.00	20.64
			Company M	23	42.91	15.53
			Company T	53	34.94	17.98
Gender	0	0.985	Male	51	39.24	19.56
			Female	43	39.16	17.33
Population group	2.01	0.1598	People of colour	24	43.75	17.96
			White	68	37.54	18.60
Marital status	1.27	0.262	Single	33	42.12	16.87
			Married or cohabiting	61	37.62	19.23
Education	0.51	0.6001	University degree	31	41.77	16.91
			Post-school certificate or diploma	36	38.69	17.83
			Secondary education	27	36.93	21.20

According to the data presented in **Table 51**, only client service organisation accounted for significant differences in burnout total scores (F = 3.68, p = 0.0292). No significant educational level, marital status, gender or population differences are observed.

The results of a Scheffe's test to determine which pairs of companies differ significantly with regards to scores on burnout total, show no significant pair wise differences (**Table 52**).

Table 52: Scheffe's test – Burnout Total and company

Company pair wise comparison	Difference between means	p*
Company F/Company M	4.09	†
Company F/Company T	12.06	†
Company M/Company T	7.97	†

† $p > .05$

* $p \leq .05$

5.3 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BURNOUT AND SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES MEASURED AT THE RATIO LEVEL

Table 53 displays the relationship between selected demographic variables measured at the ratio level and burnout. In order to investigate the relationships between burnout and these demographic variables, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used. Correlations were regarded as significant $p \leq 0.05$ and practically relevant if $r \geq 0.25$.

Table 53: Relationships between selected demographic variables and burnout (N=94)

Variable	Burnout Total [a] (r)	Reduced Accomp [b] (r)	Exhaust/ Depers [c] (r)
V82.Age	-0.16[†]	-0.20*	-0.09[†]
V86.Years employed by current organisation	-0.14[†]	-0.19[†]	-0.08[†]
V87.Years working in a client service environment	-0.24*	-0.28***	-0.16[†]
V88.Years working in total	-0.19[†]	-0.26**	-0.11[†]
V89.Hours worked per week	-0.14[†]	-0.11[†]	-0.1[†]

[†] $p > .05$ [a] $n = 94$

* $p \leq .05$ [b] $n = 100$

** $p < .01$ [c] $n = 94$

*** $p < .001$

The data presented in **Table 53** indicates that only one of the variables displays a significant relationship with burnout total. Variable V87 (years working in a client service environment) displays a significant negative relationship with burnout total, but the correlation is low ($r = -0.24$; $p = 0.0232$) and thus of low practical value.

Variables V87 (years working in a client service environment), and V88 (years working in total) display significant negative relationships with the reduced personal accomplishment subscale. This implies that the longer respondents have been working and the longer they have been employed in a client service environment, the lower their scores on the reduced personal accomplishment subscale and the less burnout they are likely to experience.

No significant relationships were observed between the selected demographic variables measured on a ratio scale and the emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation subscale.

5.4 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BURNOUT AND RESPONDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE CLIENT RELATIONSHIP

As mentioned in the research methodology chapter, an additional five questions (V74 to V78) were placed after the MBI items in the questionnaire. These questions were all positively phrased and were included on request by the management of Company M who felt that the majority of negatively phrased MBI items would leave their employees feeling negative about their jobs. As a result, respondents were asked to indicate their levels of agreement or disagreement with five statements on a five point scale, where 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree. For ease of interpretation of the data, the items were all reverse coded for analysis so that 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. In order to investigate the relationships between burnout and perceptions of the client relationship, Spearman's Rho was used as the statistical procedure. Correlations were regarded as statistically significant if $p \leq 0.05$ and practically relevant if $r \geq 0.25$.

Table 54 reflects the relationships between perceptions of the client relationship, burnout total, reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation.

Table 54: Relationships between perceptions of the client relationships and burnout

Variable	Burnout Total [a] (r)	Reduced accomp [b] (r)	Exhaust/ depers [c] (r)
V74. My clients are understanding	-0.23*	-0.19[†]	-0.23*
V75. I feel that I live up to the expectations of my clients	-0.28**	-0.35***	-0.18[†]
V76. I am willing to put in a great deal of effort to assist my clients	-0.27**	-0.34***	-0.15[†]
V77. I have power over my clients	-0.12[†]	-0.22*	-0.07[†]
V78. I have built effective relationships with my clients	-0.33**	-0.32**	-0.27**

[†] $p > .05$ [a] $n = 94$

* $p \leq .05$ [b] $n = 100$

** $p < .01$ [c] $n = 94$

*** $p < .001$

Variables V75, V76 and V78 all display significant and practically relevant negative correlations with burnout total. In other words, higher levels of burnout total are associated with feeling less able to live up to the expectations of clients (V75); being less willing to put in effort to assist the client (V76) and building less effective relationships with the client (V78). Variable V74 (my clients are understanding) displays a significant negative relationship with burnout total, although the correlation is too low to be regarded as practically relevant.

Variables V75, V76, and V78 also all display significant negative correlations with the reduced personal accomplishment subscale. In other words, levels of reduced personal accomplishment are lower when respondents feel they are living up to the expectations of their clients (V75); when they are willing to exert greater effort in order to assist the client (V76); and when they regard their relationships with the client as more effective (V78). Variable V77 (I have power over my clients) also displays a significant negative relationship with reduced personal accomplishment, but the correlation is too low to be regarded as practically useful.

Only variable V78 (I have built effective relationships with my clients) displayed a significant negative relationship with the emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation subscale, suggesting that lower levels of emotional exhaustion are associated with having built an effective relationship with the client.

5.5 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BURNOUT AND THE IMPORTANCE OF LIFE AREAS

The relationship between burnout and the importance of various life areas is reflected in **Table 55**. Through items V96 to V99 respondents were asked to indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 = very important and 5 = not at all important) how important various components of their lives are. For ease of interpretation, these items have been reverse coded so that 1 = not at all important and 5 = very important. In other words, in positive correlations a stronger level of importance will correlate with higher levels of burnout.

Table 55: Relationships between importance of life areas and burnout

Variable	Burnout Total[a] (r)	Reduced Accomp[b] (r)	Exhaust/ Depers[c] (r)
V91. Importance of family	-0.20[†]	-0.12[†]	-0.21*
V92. Importance of friends	-0.11[†]	0.13[†]	-0.20[†]
V93. Importance of religion	-0.19[†]	-0.10[†]	-0.20[†]
V94. Importance of work	-0.37***	-0.33**	-0.27**
V95. Importance of service to others	-0.43***	-0.36***	-0.36***

[†] $p > .05$ [a] $n = 94$

* $p \leq .05$ [b] $n = 100$

** $p < .01$ [c] $n = 94$

*** $p < .001$

The data reflected in **Table 55** indicates a significant negative correlation between V94 (importance of work) and V95 (importance of service to others) and burnout total, reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation.

This means that the more important respondents regard work and service to others, the lower their burnout. This finding is surprising since it was expected that respondents that regard work as important may invest more emotional energy into their work, and consequently experience more burnout. The implications of this finding will be discussed in Chapter 7. Variable V91 (importance of family) displays a significant negative correlation with emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation, but this correlation is too low to be regarded as practically relevant. Other lifestyle variables like importance of friends and religion displayed no significant or practically relevant correlations with burnout or its dimensions.

5.6 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BURNOUT AND PERCEIVED SATISFACTION WITH STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

The extent to which satisfaction with stakeholders in the client service environment correlates with burnout is presented in this section. Respondents were asked to indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 = not satisfied at all and 5 = extremely satisfied) how satisfied they were with clients, supervisors, co-workers and subordinates. **Table 56** reflects the Spearman correlation coefficients pertaining to the relationships between burnout and satisfaction with stakeholders.

Table 56: Relationships between satisfaction with stakeholders and burnout total

Variable	Burnout Total [a] (r)	Reduced Accomp [b] (r)	Exhaust/ Depers [c] (r)
V96. Satisfied relationships with co-workers	-0.21*	-0.10[†]	-0.22*
V97. Satisfied relationships with supervisors	-0.03***	-0.16[†]	-0.35***
V98. Satisfied relationships with subordinates	-0.09[†]	-0.01[†]	-0.08[†]
V99. Satisfied relationships with clients	-0.36***	-0.36***	-0.27**

[†] p > .05   [a] n = 94

* p ≤ .05   [b] n = 100

** p < .01   [c] n = 94

*** p < .001

Variable 99 (satisfied relationship with clients) displays a significant negative relationship with burnout total, reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation, suggesting that greater levels of satisfaction with the client relationship are associated with lower levels of reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation. Although variables V96 (satisfied relationships with co-workers) and V97 (satisfied relationships with supervisors) display statistically significant negative relationships with burnout total, the relationships are weak. Variable V97 (satisfied relationships with supervisors) displays a significant negative and practically relevant relationship with emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation. This indicates that greater levels of satisfaction with supervisor relationships are associated with lower levels of emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation. Variable V96 displays a significant negative correlation with emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation, but this correlation is weak. Satisfaction with subordinate relationships showed no statistically significant relationships with burnout total or its dimensions. It is therefore evident that burnout in the present sample is not significantly associated with quality of subordinate or co-workers relationships.

5.7 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BURNOUT AND EMPLOYEE ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE ORGANISATION

This section explores the relationship of burnout with levels of commitment and loyalty to the organisation. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of commitment and loyalty to the organisation on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree. For ease of interpretation, the items V100 to V104 have been reverse coded, so that 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. In other words, a positive correlation would indicate a positive relationship between burnout and increased levels of agreement with the statement. All items displayed in **Table 57** reflect significant correlations with burnout total.

Table 57: Relationships between employee attitudes towards the organisation and burnout total

	Burnout Total [a]	Reduced Accomp [b]	Exhaust/ Depers [c]
Variable	*(r)*	*(r)*	*(r)*
V100. I am willing to work hard to make this organisation successful	-0.30**	-0.38***	-0.17[†]
V101. I tell friends this is a good organisation to work for	-0.49***	-0.25*	-0.45***
V102. I feel very little loyalty to this organisation	0.29**	0.09[†]	0.30**
V103. I am proud to tell others I work for this organisation	-0.40***	-0.16[†]	-0.39***
V.104. Deciding to work for this organisation was a mistake	0.43***	0.12[†]	0.43***

[†] $p > .05$ [a] $n = 94$

* $p \leq .05$ [b] $n = 100$

** $p < .01$ [c] $n = 94$

*** $p < .001$

Variables V100 (I am willing to work hard to make this organisation successful), V101 (I tell friends this is a good organisation to work for) and V103 (I am proud to tell

others I work for this organisation) reflect significant negative correlations with burnout total. Variables V102 (I feel very little loyalty towards this organisation) and V104 (deciding to work for this organisation was a mistake) reflect significant positive relationships with burnout total. In other words, the more committed to and proud the individual is of the organisation for which they work, the lower the levels of burnout total.

Only variables V100 (I am willing to work hard to make this organisation successful) and V101 (I tell friends this is a good organisation work for) display significant negative correlations with reduced personal accomplishment. This means that lower levels of reduced personal accomplishment are associated with being willing to work hard to make the organisation successful and telling friends that the organisational is a good organisation to work for.

V101, V102, V103 and V104 display significant correlations with emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation, suggesting that greater levels of commitment to and pride in the organisation are associated with lower levels of emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation.

5.8 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BURNOUT AND THE PERCEIVED DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SELF AND THE CLIENT

This section presents data pertaining to the relationship between burnout and the perceived difference between the client service employee and the client on a set of bipolar adjectives. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, a new variable was created by calculating the difference (D) between the client service employees' ratings of themselves (self in role) and their ratings of the client (counter-role) on a set of bipolar adjectives. This represents how client service employees perceive themselves in relation to the client. **Table 58** reflects the correlations between burnout and its dimensions and the perceived difference between the self and the client on the set of adjective pairs.

Table 58: Relationship between perceived difference between the client and the self and burnout

Perceived difference between client and self		Burnout Total[a] (r)	Reduced Accomp[b] (r)	Exhaust/ Depers[c] (r)
D1. Powerful	- Powerless	-0.15[†]	-0.29**	-0.07[†]
D2. Submissive	- Domineering	0.00[†]	0.12[†]	-0.03[†]
D3. Helpful	- Unhelpful	0.05[†]	-0.11[†]	0.11[†]
D4. Appreciated	- Unappreciated	-0.21*	-0.02[†]	-0.23*
D5. Considerate	- Inconsiderate	0.01[†]	-0.25*	0.15[†]
D6. Weak	- Strong	0.26*	0.29**	0.19[†]
D7. Nice	- Mean	-0.07[†]	-0.07[†]	-0.01[†]
D8. Aggressive	- Defensive	0.16[†]	0.03[†]	0.15[†]
D9. Restricted	- Unrestricted	-0.01[†]	0.13[†]	-0.06[†]
D10. Understanding	- Not understanding	-0.19[†]	-0.25*	-0.07[†]
D11. Superior	- Inferior	-0.15[†]	-0.08[†]	-0.15[†]
D12. Active	- Passive	-0.25*	-0.27**	-0.14[†]
D13. Respected	- Not respected	-0.14[†]	-0.10[†]	-0.14[†]
D14. Flexible	- Rigid	-0.05[†]	-0.17[†]	0.03[†]
D15. Important	- Unimportant	0.01[†]	0.07[†]	-0.02[†]
D16. Patient	- Impatient	-0.03[†]	-0.28**	0.13[†]
D17. Leading	- Following	-0.14[†]	-0.21*	-0.06[†]

[†] $p > .05$ [a] $n = 94$

* $p \leq .05$ [b] $n = 100$

** $p < .01$ [c] $n = 94$

*** $p < .001$

As reflected in **Table 58**, two variables, D6 (weak−strong) and D12 (active−passive) reflect a significant positive correlation with burnout. This suggests that the more different client service employees perceive themselves to be from the client on a weak–strong and an active-passive continuum, the higher their levels of burnout. It is, however, not possible from the data reflected in the table to ascertain whether the client is regarded as more or less strong and/or passive than the self.

Table 58 also reflects the relationship between perceived difference between the client and self and levels of reduced personal accomplishment. From the data presented, a significant positive correlation exists between perceived difference on the weak−strong continuum (D6) and reduced personal accomplishment. This suggests that the greater the perceived difference between the client and the self on the weak−strong continuum, the higher the levels of reduced personal accomplishment. A significant negative relationship exists between D1 (powerful−powerless), D5 (considerate−inconsiderate), D10 (understanding−not understanding), D12 (active−passive), D16 (patient−impatient) and scores on the reduced personal accomplishment subscale. This suggests that the greater the perceived difference between the client and the self on the above-mentioned continuums, the lower the level of reduced personal accomplishment.

No significant and practically relevant correlations are observed between perceived difference between the self and client and the experience of emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation.

5.9 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BURNOUT AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE COUNTER-ROLE

While the previous section explored the relationship between the perceived difference between the self and the client and levels of burnout, this section explores data pertaining to the relationship between the client service employee's description of the client on a set of bipolar adjectives and burnout. Table 59 reflects the Spearman correlation coefficients for the relationship between burnout and descriptions of the client (counter-role).

Table 59: Relationship between perception of the client and burnout

Variable		Burnout Total [a] (r)	Reduced Accomp [b] (r)	Exhaust/ Depers [c] (r)
V18. Powerful	- Powerless	0.14[†]	0.093[†]	0.11[†]
V19. Submissive	- Domineering	0.07[†]	0.07[†]	0.07[†]
V20. Helpful	- Unhelpful	0.16[†]	0.08[†]	0.17[†]
V21. Appreciated	- Unappreciated	0.17[†]	0.25*	0.11[†]
V22. Considerate	- Inconsiderate	0.19[†]	-0.07[†]	0.29**
V23. Weak	- Strong	0.01[†]	-0.04[†]	0.02[†]
V24. Nice	- Mean	0.12[†]	0.10[†]	0.14[†]
V25. Aggressive	- Defensive	0.12[†]	0.05[†]	0.11[†]
V26. Restricted	- Unrestricted	-0.14[†]	-0.02[†]	-0.15[†]
V27. Understanding	- Not understanding	0.11[†]	-0.02[†]	0.21[†]
V28. Superior	- Inferior	-0.11[†]	-0.04[†]	-0.13[†]
V29. Active	- Passive	-0.06[†]	-0.01[†]	-0.05[†]
V30. Respected	- Not respected	0.21*	0.28**	0.13[†]
V31. Flexible	- Rigid	0.26*	0.09[†]	0.30**
V32. Important	- Unimportant	0.37***	0.44***	0.25*
V33. Patient	- Impatient	0.21*	-0.00[†]	0.29**
V34. Leading	- Following	0.10[†]	0.09[†]	0.09[†]

[†] $p > .05$ [a] $n = 94$

* $p \leq .05$ [b] $n = 100$

** $p < .01$ [c] $n = 94$

*** $p < .001$

According to the data presented in **Table 59**, only V31 (flexible−rigid) and V32 (important−unimportant) reflect practically relevant and significant positive correlations with burnout total. In other words, the more rigid the client is perceived to be, the higher the level of burnout experienced by the client service employee. This positive relationship also suggests that the more unimportant the client service

employee perceives the client to be, the higher the level of burnout. Variables V30 (respected−not respected) and V33 (patient−impatient) also display a significant correlation with burnout total, but these correlations are too low to be considered practically relevant.

When considering the relationship between descriptions of the client and reduced personal accomplishment, only variables V21 (appreciated−unappreciated), V30 (respected−not respected) and V32 (important−unimportant) display significant correlations with the personal accomplishment subscale. It appears therefore that higher levels of reduced personal accomplishment are associated with perceptions of the client as less appreciated, less respected and more unimportant.

The far right hand column of **Table 59** reflects the correlations between descriptions of the client and scores on the emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation subscale. Only variables V22 (considerate−inconsiderate), V31 (flexible−rigid), V32 (important−unimportant) and V33 (patient−impatient) are significantly positively correlated with the emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation subscale. This means that higher levels of emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation are associated with perceiving the client as more inconsiderate, more rigid, less important and more impatient.

5.10 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BURNOUT AND DESCRIPTIONS OF THE SELF (SELF IN ROLE)

The final section of the data presentation examines the relationship between burnout and client service employee ratings of themselves (self in role) on the list of bipolar adjective pairs (see **Table 60**).

Table 60: Relationship between self in role and burnout

Variable		Burnout Total[a] (r)	Reduced Accomp[b] (r)	Exhaust/ Depers[c] (r)
V35. Powerful	- Powerless	$0.22^{\dagger}$	0.48^{***}	0.22^{*}
V36. Submissive	- Domineering	$0.08^{\dagger}$	$-0.14^{\dagger}$	$0.08^{\dagger}$
V37. Helpful	- Unhelpful	$0.06^{\dagger}$	0.32^{**}	$0.06^{\dagger}$
V38. Appreciated	- Unappreciated	0.31^{**}	$0.19^{\dagger}$	0.31^{**}
V39. Considerate	- Inconsiderate	$0.12^{\dagger}$	0.42^{***}	$0.12^{\dagger}$
V40. Weak	- Strong	-0.27^{**}	-0.45^{***}	-0.27^{**}
V41. Nice	- Mean	$0.186^{\dagger}$	0.26^{**}	$0.18^{\dagger}$
V42. Aggressive	- Defensive	$-0.08^{\dagger}$	$0.02^{\dagger}$	$-0.08^{\dagger}$
V43. Restricted	- Unrestricted	$-0.08^{\dagger}$	-0.20^{*}	$-0.08^{\dagger}$
V44. Understanding	- Not understanding	0.36^{***}	0.48^{***}	0.36^{***}
V45. Superior	- Inferior	$0.09^{\dagger}$	$0.06^{\dagger}$	$0.09^{\dagger}$
V46. Active	- Passive	$0.11^{\dagger}$	0.41^{***}	$0.11^{\dagger}$
V47. Respected	- Not respected	0.30^{**}	0.28^{**}	0.30^{**}
V48. Flexible	- Rigid	0.35^{***}	0.45^{***}	0.35^{***}
V49. Important	- Unimportant	$0.18^{\dagger}$	0.25^{*}	$0.18^{\dagger}$
V50. Patient	- Impatient	0.23^{*}	0.49^{***}	0.23^{*}
V51. Leading	- Following	$0.11^{\dagger}$	0.46^{***}	$0.11^{\dagger}$

† $p > .05$	[a] $n = 94$
* $p \leq .05$	[b] $n = 100$
** $p < .01$	[c] $n = 94$
*** $p < .001$	

The second column in **Table 60** reflects the correlation coefficients for the relationships between the self in role rating and burnout total. Variables V38 (appreciated–unappreciated), V44 (understanding–not understanding), V47 (respected–not respected); V48 (flexible–rigid) display significant positive and practically relevant correlations with total burnout scores. Higher levels of burnout are therefore associated with the client service employee feeling unappreciated, not

respected, less understanding and more rigid in their roles. Variable V40 (weak–strong) displays a significant and practically relevant negative correlation with burnout, suggesting that lower levels of burnout are associated with feeling strong in the client service role.

The reduced personal accomplishment subscale is significantly correlated with a number of self-in role descriptions. Variables V35 (powerful−powerless), V37 (helpful−unhelpful), V39 (considerate–inconsiderate), V41 (nice−mean), V44 (understanding–not understanding), V46 (active−passive), V47 (respected–not respected), V48 (flexible–rigid), V.49 (important–unimportant), V50 (patient–impatient) and V51 (leading−following) all display significant positive correlations with the reduced personal accomplishment subscale. This suggests that the higher levels of reduced personal accomplishment are associated with feeling powerless, unhelpful, inconsiderate, mean, not understanding, passive, rigid, impatient, following, less important and less respected in their roles. Again, variable V40 (weak−strong) displays a significant negative relationship with reduced personal accomplishment, implying that client service employees who perceive themselves as stronger, rather than weaker, experience higher levels of personal accomplishment in their roles.

The last column in **Table 60** reflects the correlations between rating of the self in role and the emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation subscale. Variables V38 (appreciated–unappreciated), V40 (weak–strong), V44 (understanding–not understanding); V47 (respected–not respected) and V48 (flexible−rigid) display significant positive correlations with emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation. This implies that for client service employees, higher levels of emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation are associated with feeling unappreciated, less respected, less understanding and rigid in their roles. Variable 40 (weak−strong) displays a significant negative correlation with emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation, meaning that higher levels of emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation are associated with feelings of weakness.

Only variables V36 (submissive−domineering); V42 (aggressive−defensive) and V45 (superior−inferior) displayed no significant correlations with any of the burnout dimensions.

5.11 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The findings from the quantitative data of the research are summarised below:

1. The mean score for burnout for the study sample can be classified as low according to the criteria proposed by Maslach *et al.* (1996).
2. Gender and marital status do not contribute to significant differences in burnout scores.
3. People of colour display significantly higher levels of reduced personal accomplishment than white respondents.
4. Company M displays a significant higher mean score on the reduced personal accomplishment subscale than Company T and Company F.
5. Company F displays a significantly higher mean score on the emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation subscale compared to Company T.
6. Respondents with a university degree present higher levels of reduced personal accomplishment than respondents with a secondary education or post school certificate or diploma do.
7. V87 (years of working in a client service environment and V88 (years working in total) display statistically significant negative relationships with the personal accomplishment subscale. This suggests that the longer respondents have been working and/or have been employed in a client service environment, the higher their levels of personal accomplishment.
8. The perceptions among client service employees that they are living up to the expectations of their clients (V75) display a statistically significant negative relationship with both the burnout total and the personal accomplishment subscale. This suggests that reduced personal accomplishment and burnout scores are associated with perceptions that the client service employee is living up to expectations of the client.
9. Willingness to put in a great deal of effort to assist the client (V76) also showed a significant negative relationship with both burnout total and personal

accomplishment, implying that lower burnout employees are willing to put in greater effort to assist the client than higher burnout employees are.

10. The perception amongst client service employees that they have built effective relationships with the client (V78) displays a significant negative relationship with burnout total, reduced personal accomplishment the emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation subscale. This means that the more effective the client service employee perceives the relationship with the client, the lower his level of burnout total, reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation.

11. The importance of work (V94) and the importance of service to others (V95) display significant negative relationships with the burnout total, reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation subscales. This finding implies that lower burnout respondents regard work and service to others as more important than their higher burnout counterparts do.

12. Satisfaction with the client relationship (V99) displays a significant negative correlation with burnout total, personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation. This signifies that satisfaction with the client relationship is associated with lower levels of burnout total, reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation.

13. Satisfaction with supervisors (V97) displays a significant negative correlation with emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation, indicating that satisfaction with supervisor relationships is associated with lower levels of emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation.

14. Variable 100 (I am willing to work hard to make this organisation successful) reflects a significant negative relationship with burnout total and reduced personal accomplishment, suggesting lower levels of burnout and reduced personal accomplishment are associated with being willing to work hard to make the organisation successful.

15. Telling friends that the organisation is a good organisation to work for (V101) presents a significant negative relationship with burnout total, reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation. This suggests that lower burnout employees tend to be more proud of the organisations for which they work than higher burnout employees are.

16. The more proud (V103) and loyal (V102) respondents are to the organisation, the higher their burnout total and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation scores.

17. Respondents that feel it was a mistake to work for the organisation (V104) experience higher levels of burnout total and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation that those that do not feel it was a mistake.

18. The greater the perceived difference between the client and the self on the powerful−powerless; considerate−inconsiderate; understanding−not understanding; active−passive; and the patient−impatient continuums, the lower the reduced personal accomplishment. This means that personal accomplishment is associated with greater perceived differences between the client and the self on the above-mentioned adjective pairs.

19. The greater the perceived difference between the client and the self on the weak−strong continuum, the higher the level of reduced personal accomplishment and burnout total. This means that higher levels of reduced personal accomplishment and burnout are related to feeling different to the client on a weak−strong continuum.

20. Descriptions of the client on the flexible−rigid (V31) and important−unimportant (V32) adjective scales display significant correlations with burnout total. In other words perceiving the client as rigid and unimportant is associated with higher levels of burnout.

21. Descriptions of the client on the appreciated−not appreciated (V21); respected−not respected (V30) and important−unimportant (V32) items show significant correlations with reduced personal accomplishment. This means that the belief that the client is not appreciated, not respected and unimportant is associated with lower levels of personal accomplishment.

22. Descriptions of the client on the considerate−inconsiderate (V22); important−unimportant (V32); flexible−rigid (V31) and patient−impatient (V33) adjective pairs are significantly correlated with emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation. This indicates that the more inconsiderate, unimportant, rigid and/or impatient the client is perceived to be, the more emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation is experienced by the client service employee.

23. Respondent descriptions of the self in role displayed a number of significant correlations with burnout total. Variables V38 (appreciated−unappreciated); V40

(weak–strong); V44 (understanding–not understanding); V48 (flexible–rigid) and V47 (respected–not respected) all display significant correlations with total burnout scores. These correlations imply that lower levels of burnout are associated with feeling stronger, while higher levels of burnout are associated with feeling less understanding, more rigid, more unappreciated and less respected.

24. Scores on the personal accomplishment subscale display a number of significant correlations with the self in role descriptions. These correlations indicate that higher levels of reduced personal accomplishment are associated with feeling powerless, unhelpful, inconsiderate, mean, less understanding, passive, rigid, not respected, impatient, following, and unimportant. Lower levels of personal accomplishment are associated with feeling stronger rather than weaker in the role.

25. A number of the self in role items displayed significant correlations with the emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation subscale. Variables V38 (appreciated–unappreciated), V40 (weak–strong), V44 (understanding–not understanding) and V48 (flexible–rigid) display significant correlations with emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation. This suggests that higher levels of emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation are associated with feeling unappreciated, less respected, less understanding and more rigid. Lower levels of emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation are associated with feeling stronger as opposed to weaker.

The quantitative findings presented in this chapter will be interpreted in detail in Chapter 7. From the data presented in this chapter, however, it is clear that the company to which the client service employee belongs is significantly associated with levels of burnout. It is also interesting to note that contrary to expectations, there were few significant correlations between how client service employees perceive the client and their levels of burnout. It would therefore appear that how client service employees define themselves (self in role) is more strongly related to the development of burnout than how they perceive the client.

CHAPTER 6

QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is devoted to presenting and interpreting the qualitative data produced through the 17 semi-structured interviews with client service employees. The qualitative data analysis phase commenced with a process of open coding, which involved the application of preliminary codes to the data. This was followed by a process of axial coding, where the initial codes were placed into code families or categories. Through the process of selective coding, meaningful relationships were assigned to the codes. Finally, the themes and relationships identified during coding were integrated into the conceptual framework developed in Chapter 3.

6.2 THE CODING PROCESS

Following a process of open and axial coding, 30 codes were generated within the higher burnout hermeneutic unit and 25 codes were created in the lower burnout hermeneutic unit. The codes generated within the higher burnout hermeneutic unit are displayed in **Table 61**, while the codes generated in the lower burnout hermeneutic unit are displayed in **Table 62**. The number appearing in the second column corresponds to the number of times the code appears across the interviews within each of the hermeneutic units.

Table 61: Axial codes occurring within the higher burnout hermeneutic unit

Higher burnout respondent codes	Times appearing
Feel powerless in helping the client	46
The client comes first no matter what	44
Expects something from the client relationship	36
Subordinate to the client	36
Engages in emotional labour	31
Personalises the client relationship	29
Experiences little self-verification	27
Controlling client	25
Evidence of exhaustion	25
Address client feeling	23
Builds client up	21
Management demands excellent client service	20
Empathises with client	20
Client is boss	19
Abusive client	19
Management does not understand what it is like	18
Management does not support us	16
Clients have unreasonable expectations	14
Take sole responsibility for the client	14
Builds relationship with the client	13
Powerless against the client	13
Expect a sense of self-verification from helping someone	11
Must help the client	11
Feel guilt for not helping the client	10
Not appreciated by client	10
Powerful client	9
Not respected by client	9
Feels management expectations are unreasonable	8
Client does not understand us	7
Must understand the client	7

Table 62: Axial codes occurring within the lower burnout hermeneutic unit

Lower burnout respondent codes	Times appearing
Experiences a sense of accomplishment	49
Able to manage the client	39
Must partner with the client	37
Solution-orientated	32
Clients are demanding	32
Does not take sole responsibility for the client	28
Expects something from the client relationship	27
Must give the client the best service possible	21
More knowledgeable than the client	21
Able to exert power over the client	19
Must be people-orientated	18
Has a sense of autonomy	17
Superior to the client	17
Client is appreciative	17
Positive feelings towards the client	14
Does not take role personally	14
Must help the client	13
Keep the client happy	10
Distances oneself from the work	10
Evidence of emotional labour	9
Clients trust us	8
Dependent on the client for information	6

Finally, a process of selective coding was initiated. This process developed deductively, in that the theoretical argument developed in Chapter 3 was consulted and applied to the data. Code families corresponding to the various theoretical components of the research argument were formed and similar codes were again merged resulting in a further reduction of initial codes. A number of themed questions, derived from the research questions posed in the research argument chapter, were constructed in order to facilitate the coding process:

- How do client service employees describe the client (counter-role)?
- How do client service employees define themselves within the client service role (role identity)?
- What expectations for behaviour are implicit within these role identities (identity standards)?
- What kinds of role-related behaviours are associated with these identity standards?
- What kinds of role-related attitudes are associated with these identity standards?
- Is there evidence of self-verification or self-verification failure, and is there evidence of a diminished sense of self, feelings of subjective failure, reduced self-efficacy, frustration and fatigue?

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to presenting the coded data according to these themed questions, and interpreting these findings in light of the theoretical argument presented in Chapter 3. Primary importance is placed on describing the similarities and differences between the codes embedded in the higher burnout interviews and those embedded within the lower burnout interviews.

After the codes pertaining to both higher and lower burnout respondents are presented, quotation count reports reflecting the number of times each of the codes appears within a single interview will be discussed. In each case, selected quotations drawn from the semi-structured interviews are presented as evidence of the construction of a code.

6.3   DATA PRESENTATION

The qualitative data are presented in sections that correspond to the themed questions presented above. First, client service employee perceptions of the client (counter-role) are presented. This is followed by a section describing the client service role identity. Next, an analysis of role-related expectations and role-related behaviours are presented. This is followed by a section describing the emotional consequences of the role identity. The final section of presented data deals with

evidence of self-verification. Each section commences with a brief summary of data pertaining to both higher and lower burnout hermeneutic units. This is followed by a separate section pertaining to higher burnout respondents and then another pertaining specifically to lower burnout respondents.

6.3.1 Perception of the client (counter-role)

According to Burke (1980: 19) the role identity assumed by a particular individual in a specific position is always related to an alternative, relevant counter identity. In the case of client service employees this counter identity would be the client. The perception of the client counter identity is important to consider insofar as it will give an important indication of the manner in which client service employees view their own roles.

Once axial coding was completed, all codes relating to the client service employee's perception of the client (counter-role) were grouped into a code family titled *Perception of the client (counter-role)*. The individual codes comprising this code family are listed according to higher burnout and lower burnout respondents in the **Table 63**. The number in brackets corresponds to the number of times the code appeared across the lower burnout or higher burnout hermeneutic unit.

Table 63: Perception of the counter-role (client)

Higher Burnout Respondents	*Lower Burnout Respondents*
Controlling client (25)	Clients are demanding (31)
Abusive client (19)	Clients are appreciative (17)
Client is boss (19)	Positive feelings towards the client (14)
Clients have unreasonable expectations (14)	Clients trust us (8)
Powerful client (9)	
Not respected by client (9)	

As presented in **Table 63**, higher burnout respondents view the client as powerful and controlling. They perceive the client as abusive, authoritarian and having

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unreasonable expectations. Lower burnout respondents, on the other, have significantly more positive perceptions of the client. Although they perceive the client as demanding, they view clients as appreciative and trusting.

6.3.1.1 Perceptions of the client amongst higher burnout respondents

Table 64 presents the quotation count per code across each of the higher burnout respondents. For ease of clarity, each respondent has been given a unique identification number. Higher burnout identification numbers have been designated an "H", while lower burnout respondents have been designated an "L". The Company (M, F or T) to which the respondent belongs is also indicated in the table below the respondent identification number.

Table 64: Quotation count report – Perception of the client (counter-role) amongst higher burnout respondents

	Respondents							
	H1	H2	H3	H4	H5	H6	H7	H8
Codes	M	M	F	F	F	F	T	T
Controlling client (25)	6	8	3	3	2	0	1	2
Clients are abusive (19)	7	1	5	4	0	2	0	0
Client is boss (19)	4	7	2	2	0	0	0	4
Clients have unreasonable expectations (14)	2	3	1	3	4	1	0	0
Powerful client (9)	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	1
Not respected by client (9)	5	4	0	0	0	0	0	0

All respondents except for respondent H6 view the client as controlling. In a number of instances they describe the client as abusive and as having unreasonable expectations. Most higher burnout respondents also perceive the client as being in a position of authority, and that they have to do what the client says no matter what.

Respondents H6 and H7 differ somewhat from the other higher burnout respondents because they display less negative perceptions of the client. Respondent H7, for instance, only describes the client as controlling, but does not perceive the client as abusive or describe the client as the boss. Upon further inspection of respondents H7's interview, it appears that he has built strong relationships with the clients and does therefore not describe them in negative terms. This may explain why he refers to them as controlling, but not necessarily abusive. Respondent H6 tends to personalise the client, and therefore seldom refers to the client in negative terms. The two respondents from Company M (H1 and H2) describe the client as powerful and disrespectful to them in a number of instances. These views are not shared by the other higher burnout respondents, which is an indication that the perception of the client as powerful and disrespectful is particular to respondents from Company M. Both respondents from Company M service a particularly powerful client company, which may explain this description.

6.3.1.1.1 Controlling, abusive and domineering clients

When asked to describe the relationships they have with their clients, higher burnout respondents often remarked on the domineering nature of most of their clients, as indicated in the selected quotes below:

- "They [the clients] are very knowledgeable about their industry but they are quite arrogant with it, so if they have an idea in their minds that's how it should be." *Respondent H1, Company M.*
- "No it doesn't always work – one-example – we had this project that we did and we told them [the clients] over and over again that it wasn't the correct way of doing it. They were adamant that that was the way they wanted it done." *Respondent H2, Company M.*
- "There is this Afrikaans word – a gangryper – that's the guys that as you walk down the hall, they just pull you …please just sort this out for me." *Respondent H8, Company T.*
- "Aaaag – most of the time, from our point of view, we don't have any say. I mean, I can't call the shots." *Respondent H8, Company T.*

- "You are walking down the passage and they ask you if you can quickly come and help them." *Respondent H7, Company T.*
- "Then you get the brokers that are in the same line as you are but are also pushing on you." *Respondent H3, Company F.*

Five of the eight higher burnout respondents perceive their clients as abusive. Words used to describe the abusive nature of clients include references to being "threatened" by the client, "taking punches" from the client, being "undermined" and "crushed" by the client. One respondent was made to feel like a "piece of dirt" beneath the client's feet, and another describes having clients that "crack you down as a person." The selected quotes below indicate the extent of the perceived psychological abuse experienced by higher burnout client service employees:

- "It is quite hard to keep ourselves motivated – to actually want to work with these people, because sometimes they [the clients] are just downright ugly." *Respondent H1, Company M.*
- "You really do feel like you are the piece of dirt beneath their [the client's] feet and that's not cool." *Respondent H1, Company M.*
- "The client is swearing at you and you are taking the punches." *Respondent H4, Company F.*
- "And they [the clients] hit you as a person. Some of them do that. They can crack you down as a person to get what they want." *Respondent H3, Company F.*

Five of the eight higher burnout respondents also perceive the client as being the boss and having to do as the client says no matter what. Clients are described as dictating procedures and tasks, even when these instructions are perceived by the client service employee as incorrect or detrimental to the client:

- "Often they [the clients] come to you with a very specific idea of what they want done and that's not necessarily the best way of doing it, or the most effective or efficient way of doing it." *Respondent H2, Company M.*

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> - "Um, it's not so much Company M that I work for; it's the client that I work for." *Respondent H1, Company M.*
> - "I think the main thing to remember is that your client is always right, no matter what." *Respondent H8, Company T.*

6.3.1.1.2 Clients have unrealistic expectations

Many of the higher burnout respondents also perceive the client as having unreasonable expectations and being inflexible:

> - "They [the clients] are unreasonable, a lot of the time and because they are so big and they know they are big clients, they expect a lot from us." *Respondent H1, Company M.*
> - "If deadlines could be more flexible that would be one of the biggest things. It adds unnecessary pressure sometimes." *Respondent H2, Company M.*
> - "Aaaagh… they [the clients] expect things to be done NOW." *Respondent H5, Company F.*
> - "Sometimes you do get people [clients] that couldn't be bothered and just want everything – they expect you to know everything." *Respondent H6, Company F.*

6.3.1.2 Perception of the client amongst lower burnout respondents

As indicated in **Table 65**, while all lower burnout respondents view the client as demanding, they do not view these demands as unreasonable. While the higher burnout respondents perceived the client to be demanding, controlling, inflexible and unreasonable, lower burnout respondents tend to find justifications for the demanding nature of most clients. They all display generally positive feelings towards the client, and perceive the client as needy and appreciative.

Table 65: Quotation count report − Perceptions of client (counter-role) amongst lower burnout respondents

	Respondents								
	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8	L9
Code	M	M	M	T	T	T	T	T	T
Clients are demanding (32)	11	5	2	2	2	7	1	1	1
Clients are appreciative (17)	2	2	2	1	1	3	2	2	2
Positive feelings towards client (14)	1	2	1	1	1	3	1	2	2
Clients trust us (8)	0	2	2	0	0	0	2	1	1

The interview transcripts of respondents L1, L4, L5 and L6 do not display evidence that they perceive the client as trusting although no evidence to the contrary could be found either. All three respondents, did, however, display favourable and positive perceptions of the client.

6.3.1.2.1 Clients are justifiably demanding

From the quotes listed below, it is evident that although the lower burnout respondents view the client as demanding and sometimes unrealistic, they do not perceive the demands as being unreasonable. While higher burnout respondents describe the client's demands in a negative light, lower burnout respondents describe the client as demanding, but at the same time indicate that they are able and willing to meet the client's demands. One respondent from Company T, for instance, relates the demanding requirements of the client, but states emphatically that he will do whatever the client asks him to do, suggesting a strong sense of self-efficacy and confidence.

> ▪ "Whatever the issues they [the clients] may have with their permits, the badging, the printer, the computer – I have to be able to fix that problem there and then. You can't take an hour to fix it; it has to be done in a second because there is a long line of people. So that's basically what I do. **I do anything they ask me to do**." *Respondent L6, Company T.*

Similarly, another respondent from Company T reports that clients often have unrealistic expectations, but feels that he is able to meet these expectations.

> ▪ "That's what is interesting about the challenge. It sounds bad really, they [the clients] say "Here is a cell phone, make a Porsche out of it." People say "Huuhggh, how we gonna do it?" But you can do it." *Respondent L4, Company T.*

Contrary to higher burnout respondents, lower burnout respondents are of the opinion that they can assist the client with their demands. A number of respondents also indicated in the interviews that the client is justified in terms of their demands and expectations.

> ▪ "The tasks they [the clients] give you might sound impossible, but if you have the mentality of it's impossible, you are not going to get very far. The challenges are that nothing is impossible; it's a mindset." *Respondent L4, Company T.*
> ▪ "It doesn't matter how crazy or impractical their [the clients] needs are, we are very much about doing whatever, or helping the client as much as possible." *Respondent L1, Company M.*

6.3.1.2.2 Clients are perceived in a positive light

All lower burnout respondents view the role of client in a positive light, and feel that the clients are appreciative. When asked to comment on what they like best about client service, a number of the lower burnout respondents mentioned the client. For

instance, one respondent mentioned that she liked client service because it enabled her to interact with highly-skilled clients:

> ▪ "I like to work with highly-skilled people although they are more difficult to work with – they keep you on your toes – you need to be ahead of them. On the other hand, you feel very satisfied if you achieve that little thing to get that other guy to understand and get them up to a certain level." *Respondent L5, Company T.*

One respondent from Company M describes her client as "close" and "organised", while another from company M describes her client as "lovely to deal with":

> ▪ "I have a client that is very close – I love dealing with her. I think it is someone who is organised on their side." *Respondent L3, Company M.*
> ▪ "She really appreciates what I do and she appreciates the effort I make and she is really lovely to deal with. At the moment she is quite ideal." *Respondent L2, Company M.*

Other lower burnout respondents described their clients as trusting and understanding:

> ▪ "The clients here are – I like to work with them, they are understanding and listen." *Respondent L8, Company T.*
> ▪ "Enjoyable − mostly. What I like about it is that we are building a better relationship with the client. A strong good relationship – we understand each other." *Respondent L9, Company T.*

All lower burnout respondents perceive the client as appreciative, citing numerous instances in which they received positive and welcome feedback from clients:

- "Clients often say it's a great presentation – thanks etc. That's what we work towards." *Respondent L3, Company M.*

- "I think they [the clients] give positive feedback. They send you positive feedback – 'Thank you for the good job' or whatever and also to your managers and I think also from the way that you see the relationship developing – they call you more often and trust you with other things; maybe not even to do with your own research." *Respondent L2, Company M.*

- "Even if it is bad news, they like the work you've done and find it useful. I like wowing the clients with something interesting." *Respondent L1, Company M.*

- "They praise you and go 'Wow, this guy knows what he is doing.' That is satisfying that they put you on a pedestal sometimes." *Respondent L6, Company T.*

- "The response from the client is great because we know what we are doing." *Respondent L7, Company T.*

- "Normally you get an e-mail from them [the clients] first, saying 'thank you for the great effort you put into resolving this situation and resolving this.' So they make it visible to everyone – they don't just keep it to themselves." *Respondent L8, Company T.*

- "End result − satisfied client – that's the best. When he comes back and gives recognition." *Respondent L9, Company T.*

It is clear from the data presented in this section that lower burnout respondents perceive the client differently to their higher burnout counterparts. Both higher and lower burnout respondents describe the client as demanding, but lower burnout respondents clearly feel able to meet the demands set by their client. Higher burnout respondents describe these demands in a negative light, and view the client as inflexible, controlling and abusive. Lower burnout respondents describe the client and the relationships they have built with the client in positive terms and believe the client is appreciative and understanding.

6.3.2 The client service role identity

The second themed question according to which codes were categorised was the client service employee role identity i.e. how do client service employees define their roles in relation to the client? As indicated in the **Table 66**, higher burnout respondents view themselves as subordinate to the client, while lower burnout respondents define themselves as superior to the client and more knowledgeable than the client.

Table 66: The client service role identity

Higher Burnout Respondents	Lower Burnout Respondents
Subordinate to the client (36)	More knowledgeable than the client (21)
	Superior to the client (17)

6.3.2.1 The client service role identity among higher burnout respondents

As depicted in the quotation count report in **Table 67**, all higher burnout respondents viewed themselves as subordinate to the client in some way.

Table 67: Quotation count report – Client service role identity among higher burnout respondents

	Respondents							
	H1	H2	H3	H4	H5	H6	H7	H8
Code	M	M	F	F	F	F	T	T
Subordinate to client (36)	12	4	4	3	1	7	1	4

Due to the differing nature of the client service environments across each of the three companies included in the research, the sense of subordination felt by each of the respondents is portrayed slightly differently. In the case of Company F, respondents perceive severe penalties accruing to them if they do not provide adequate service to the client. These penalties and "punishments" are enforced by the company

management, and seem to suggest to the client service employee that they are inferior to, or lesser than the client. They also indicate that they feel threatened by management and hence display feelings of apprehension. For instance, one respondent stated that:

> ▪ "The moment you mess up they find out that you messed up and they will come running after you with a pitchfork or something." *Respondent H6, Company F.*

Similarly, after relaying a mistake that she had made when dealing with a client, another respondent of the same company seemed to offer repentance for her error, which suggests a reverence for the client and a subordination of the self:

> ▪ "Yes, I was wrong, I won't say that was an exception but what I had to learn was to make sure – if you don't understand, ask." *Respondent H4, Company F.*

In a similar case, a respondent from Company F expressed her gratitude for having been taught how to speak to the client, and has, as a result, become a better person:

> ▪ "It teaches you to do your best. They teach you how to speak back to the client/brokers but it makes you a better person. We have gone through courses; we have gone through speech as to how to speak to the clients. It makes you a better person." *Respondent H4, Company F.*

Her constant reference to becoming a "better person" through the training, could suggest a feeling of subordination or unworthiness in the role. It is speculated that this could have occurred through the internalisation of an organisational discourse that advocates training for employees to become better client service employees and hence better people. This could be described as a subtle form of manipulation through company propaganda.

Another respondent from Company F was of the opinion that the organisation does not allow employees to express themselves if they have been poorly treated by the client. According to the respondent:

> ▪ "You just grit your teeth – some people can't. You can't just grit. But Company F has a way that you have to grit your teeth." *Respondent H3, Company F.*

The respondent clearly felt that her rights to self-expression are limited due to the fact that the client and his/her needs take priority over employee needs and concerns:

> ▪ "The client comes first in all cases, even though they are angry with us and scream at us, we get it sorted out." *Respondent H3, Company F.*

One respondent from Company F perceives a degree of humiliation from the company management, which he internalises as part of his identity. He refers to the company treating them like children, and humiliating them by placing a "floatie" above their heads if they score poorly on service delivery:

> ▪ "That's a good one – that they [management] treat us like a bunch of kids. They treat us like kids – every time you go on a break, you have to put up a flag – look, I'm going on a break, or look, I'm going on lunch or can I go to the bathroom! Look, we're not school kids anymore." *Respondent H6, Company F.*
>
> ▪ "They [management] rank us on a board – like you are number one – they even have this whole new humiliation thing, where the person who gets the worst calls or the worst statistics – 'cause everything is recorded and monitored, they put like a floatie tube above his desk to say to everybody 'Hey look, this is the drowner – this is the worst person we've got in here.' That isn't right – I mean, how does that person feel? Lucky it's not me." *Respondent H6, Company F.*

The role of the company client discourse in shaping the role identities of client service employees is clearly illustrated in the case of Company F. By implementing initiatives that humiliate employees if they do not perform adequately in terms of client service, employees are made to feel inferior and subordinate. Higher burnout employees from Company F perceive the company as curtailing their freedom of expression, which could also result in feelings of oppression and subordination.

In the case of Company M, feelings of subordination were experienced through direct contact with the client. One respondent was particularly vocal in her descriptions of subordination. When asked to list a couple of words or phrases that would explain what it is like being a client service employee, she mentioned the following:

> ▪ "I think it would be "underdog", for one. I think I say underdog because most of the time we end up having to do what they [the client] say anyway." *Respondent H1, Company M.*

She then went on to describe how she was often made to feel worthless by the client:

> ▪ "So ja, it does make you feel a little bit like you aren't adding anything and you are not worth much and I think you kind of get used to that." *Respondent H1, Company M.*

Another respondent from company M expressed similar sentiments, in that the he describes his role as keeping the client happy and not "irritating" them, implying a subordinate role when dealing with the client. He goes on to explain how clients often want things done that may not be in their best interests. He feels unable to prevent this, and suggests a feeling of defeat and subordination:

> ▪ "They [the clients] were adamant that that was the way they wanted it done. So you try, but you soon realise – it's their money and they are spending it." *Respondent H2, Company M.*

Higher burnout respondents at Company T also feel subordinate and defeated as a result of client service work. One respondent from Company T describes how they as client service employees tend to experience the most criticism. Most higher burnout respondents display similar evidence of defeat when dealing with the client, suggesting feelings of low self-efficacy and possibly decreased feelings of personal accomplishment. According to a respondent from Company T:

> ▪ "There are always a lot of parties involved in solving the problem. But we are the end guys so get the most flack about it." *Respondent H8, Company T.*

6.3.2.2 The client service role identity among lower burnout respondents

As illustrated in **Table 68**, all lower burnout respondents except L7 described themselves as more knowledgeable than the client. Similarly, all lower burnout respondents except for L8 described themselves as superior to the client.

Table 68: Quotation count report – Client service role identity among lower burnout respondents

	Respondents								
	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8	L9
Code	M	M	M	T	T	T	T	T	T
More knowledgeable that the client (21)	1	2	5	1	7	2	0	1	2
Superior to the client (17)	4	2	4	1	1	2	2	0	1

Lower burnout respondents in Company M, for instance, often describe the client as "stupid" and "not research literate" and view their role as educating the client and showing them that they (client service employees at Company M) are the experts:

> - "You get used to it. After a few years you get to a level of expectation and you know they [the clients] are stupid and that they annoy you – but that is just who they are!" *Respondent L3, Company M.*
> - "Some of them are…you need to baby them a bit to follow up on things, they are not very organised." *Respondent L1, Company M.*

One respondent expressed the fact that she sees herself as more knowledgeable than the client in a gentler fashion by explaining how she assists and coaches the client through research results without being condescending. This could be regarded as similar to the manner in which parents engage with their children, and suggests a feeling of maternalism on the part of the client service employee.

> - "Certain clients you have to take through very gently and the way you give them their results is very different. Whereas the ones that are more research literate you can take the analysis to them at a high level, give them more complicated things and they can take it in and that is what they want." *Respondent L2, Company M.*

Lower burnout respondents from Company T also viewed themselves as more knowledgeable than the client. When asked to describe his role as a client service employee, one respondent defined his role as improving the client's business, thereby suggesting a position of knowledge and expertise:

> - "My role is for the owner [client] not to waste processes and procedures and not waste…find new ways of work, better ways to work." *Respondent L4, Company T.*

Another respondent expressed his satisfaction at being able to help his clients fix simple computer matters:

> - "They [clients] think you are intelligent because you can fix a computer." *Respondent L6, Company T.*
> - "For me, maybe a printer would be giving up and they [the clients] can't figure it out, so after an hour of them trying to figure it out, they phone and it takes me like five minutes." *Respondent L6, Company T.*

Another respondent from Company T continually made reference to having to educate the client and make them understand things:

> - "Like drawing a picture so that they [the clients] can understand it and then we take it from there." *Respondent L5, Company T.*

Similarly, two respondents from Company T describe the clients as thinking they know best, but not really being more knowledgeable than they are:

> - "The client always thinks he is right. As soon as you get into a company that services clients, it's the first thing that you learn – the client is always right. Even though you know they are not." *Respondent L8, Company T.*
> - "Most frustrating, well… they think they know everything and that they know better than you – even though they don't really." *Respondent L9, Company T.*

While higher burnout respondents display a sense of defeat when dealing with the client, lower burnout respondents experience a high degree of self-efficacy. They define themselves as the experts and believe that they can and will help the client. Higher burnout respondents perceive the client as prescriptive and unreasonable, and as a result, feel constrained and inhibited within their roles. Lower burnout respondents on the other hand, perceive the client as being receptive to their expertise.

Company T provides a service to their client service employees whereby they can initiate complaints against the client. This mechanism allows the employee to speak freely and openly about their roles and serves to create a separation between themselves and the client. The company is in a sense portraying a client service

discourse that acknowledges the employees difficult role in relation to the client and the potential for misunderstanding and abuse on the part of the client. This mechanism appears to validate the client service employee by providing him a forum to convey his complaints against the client:

> ▪ "So what I do is – if I have a complaint [about the client], which I never actually do, I would go to IM and tell them about my complaint and ask them if when they have a meeting with the client please tell them that this is my complaint." *Respondent L6, Company T.*

This discourse at Company T is further evidenced by the fact that one respondent feels that the client is less important than the employees in his company, and that client service employees should not subordinate themselves to the client:

> ▪ "The client is important, but not as important as our own people." *Respondent L7, Company T.*

From the analysis and quotations presented above, it is clear that lower burnout respondents define their role identities differently when compared to higher burnout respondents. Higher burnout respondents perceive themselves as subordinate to the client, while lower burnout respondents view themselves as superior to and often more knowledgeable than the client. While both higher and lower burnout respondents perceive the client as demanding, lower burnout respondents feel that they are able to meet these demands. Higher burnout respondents tend to display a sense of defeat when dealing with the client. They perceive abuse and control from the client, which also suggests a level of subordination to the client. Lower burnout respondents, on the other hand, generally express favourable attitudes towards the client, and feel trusted and respected by the client.

The meanings that are contained within the various role identities discussed above encompass a set of role-related expectations that prescribe behaviour that is considered appropriate within a specific role-related situation. According to Burke's (1991; 1997) cybernetic model of identity, role identities comprise a set of meanings

that act as a standard against which perceptions of the environment are compared. In the case of higher burnout respondents, the subordinated identity should carry with it specific behavioural expectations that are different from the expectations contained within the role identities of lower burnout respondents. The next question or theme according to which the codes were grouped made reference to these behavioural expectations.

6.3.3 Role-related expectations

In order to identify the role-related meanings of the interview respondents, codes generated during axial coding were grouped according to the question: What are the behavioural expectations implicit in the role identities of higher burnout and lower burnout respondents? As indicated in **Table 69**, the behavioural expectation occurring frequently amongst higher burnout respondents is a belief that the client always comes first no matter what. Included in this expectation on the part of higher burnout respondents is a sense of self-sacrifice. Higher burnout respondents are also particularly aware of the service standards expected by organisational management, and internalise these expectations as their own.

Table 69: Role-related expectations

Higher Burnout Respondents	Lower Burnout Respondents
Client comes first no matter what (44)	Must partner with the client (37)
Expects something from the client relationship (36)	Expects something from the client relationship (27)
Management demands and expects excellent client service (20)	Endeavour to give the best client service possible (21)
Expects a sense of self-verification by helping someone (11)	Must be people-orientated (18)
Must help the client (11)	Keep the client happy (10)

Lower burnout respondents, on the other hand, clearly endeavour to partner with the client. Since they do not see themselves in a subordinate role to the client, all lower

burnout respondents expressed an expectation to create a partnership with the client and work with the client. Lower burnout respondents believe that they should be people-orientated in helping the client and focused in keeping the client happy. While lower burnout respondents also aim to assist the client to the best of their ability, they are able to separate themselves from the role and do not take the client's demands personally.

Interestingly, both higher and lower burnout respondents expect something in return from the client. Higher burnout respondents only expect praise and appreciation, while lower burnout respondents expect co-operation as well as praise and appreciation from the client.

6.3.3.1 Role-related expectations among higher burnout respondents

As indicated in the quotation count report for higher burnout respondents (**Table 70**), all higher burnout respondents expect the client to come first no matter what.

Table 70: Quotation count report – Role-related expectations among higher burnout respondents

	Respondents							
	H1	H2	H3	H4	H5	H6	H7	H8
Code	M	M	F	F	F	F	T	T
Client comes first no matter what (44)	10	1	4	3	8	2	3	13
Expects something from the client relationship (36)	13	4	3	3	1	1	6	5
Management demands and expects excellent client service (20)	3	3	4	3	1	3	1	2
Expects a sense of self-verification by helping someone (11)	0	0	2	6	1	1	0	1
Must help the client (11)	1	3	2	0	1	3	0	1

Higher burnout respondents perceive organisational management as demanding and expecting excellent client service. The internalisation of these managerial expectations coupled with a role identity that places the client service employee in a subordinate position to that of the client, seems to result in the higher burnout client service employee sacrificing his/her needs in favour of the clients'.

6.3.3.1.1 Client comes first no matter what

When describing their roles, all higher burnout respondents mentioned that they will often go above and beyond the call of duty in order to assist the client. The selected quotations presented below suggest that higher burnout respondents expect themselves to assist the client no matter what, often resulting in excessive effort on the part of the employee:

- "I always go the extra." *Respondent H7, Company T.*
- "I will make sure that I assist the client and get information. Sometimes it takes 4-5 people just to get some sort of information so that I can give feedback to the client. So instead of saying 'Call this person at this number' I would actually call them myself and say 'Look, this is the situation, this is the client's concerns – what can we do to assist this guy?' Also suggest let's do this or that." *Respondent H5, Company F.*
- "I don't know how a mother feels, but if a child wants attention here and a husband wants attention there, it is a lot of dragging on you. Sometimes it gets like you are pulled here and pulled there and you need to perform and help the client. The primary person in this whole thing would be the client." *Respondent H4, Company F.*
- "To assist the client to the best of your ability and obviously go that little bit extra. Instead of just sending it off to someone, phoning the tow truck – getting the tow truck there. And just that step further like phoning them half an hour later to find out if they did pitch up." *Respondent H6, Company F.*
- Then I also have to maintain the relationship in terms of ensuring that their requests are met, that anything they ask for, we say 'How high?'" *Respondent H1, Company M.*

Higher burnout respondents from both Company T and Company F are often prepared to go against company processes and procedures in order to keep the client happy and solve their problems. As implied by the quotations below, two respondents from Company T feel it is often necessary to go against company procedure in order to assist the client:

> - "But for that point if that guy [the client] has a serious problem you sort it out no matter what. No processes, no procedures – you do what you want." Respondent H8, Company T.
> - "Even though there are processes and procedures, there comes a time when you have to jump the bridge." Respondent H8, Company T.
> - "It is not the standard – sometimes you have to go beyond or change the standard a bit. " Respondent H7, Company T.

In many of the instances described above, respondents are aware that they may get into trouble with management for breaking organisational procedure in order to help the client. It could therefore be argued that these employees are either more fearful of the client than they are of their own organisation's management, or it could mean that they have internalised the subordinate identity and will, as a result, do anything for the client. Similarly, a number of respondents from Company F are also prepared to override company procedure to assist the client, as indicated by the quotations below:

> - "The client comes first in all cases, even though they [management] are angry with us and scream at us, we get it sorted out." Respondent H3, Company F referring to the reactions of management when she goes against procedure to assist the client.
> - "You have to make a decision. Even if it is not 100% following process – each and every call is a different scenario – it depends on what the client needs. And you have to make the call on your side as to what is the best thing." Respondent H5, Company F.

Again, these respondents are very aware that they may get into trouble for breaking company policy and procedure, and as a result, experience a sense of role conflict and dissonance. On the one hand they are expected to assist the client no matter what, but on the other hand they must report to company management who expects them to follow procedure. Management clearly disciplines them when they break with company policy, even if this was in aid of the client. The fact that these client service employees are still willing to do so, may suggest a subordination of the self in favour of the client.

Such expectations to assist the client at any cost could lead to role overload and role conflict, which could ultimately result in burnout, as argued through the research argument set out in Chapter 3. Higher burnout respondents perceive the client as controlling, powerful and superior and, as a result, define themselves as subordinate to the client. This subordinate role identity contains a set of expectations that should guide and/or constrain individual role-related behaviour. Higher burnout respondents expect the client to come first no matter what, and, as a result, engage in role-related behaviour that could result in role overload and role conflict. This expectation to assist the client no matter what, also appears to create role-related expectations that run counter to their pre-defined organisational roles, in that they are prepared to over-ride company procedures and processes in order to assist the client. As discussed in the literature review, role overload and role conflict are two of the primary contributors or antecedents to burnout. From the above qualitative illustrations it is clear that the manner in which client service employees define themselves in relation to the client i.e. subordinate, carries implications for their role-related expectations, which ultimately could result in role overload and role conflict and subsequently burnout.

Higher burnout respondents also expect themselves to make a number of personal sacrifices in order to assist the client. Some mentioned the impossibility of taking time off work in order to deal with daily chores, due to the fact that the client always comes first. One respondent mentioned that he is always on standby to assist the client, and is therefore unable to attend to personal matters:

> - "It's one of those things, if you are going to be away 30 minutes – it's 30 minutes too long and you need to turn around and sort it out. It's like standby – you always have to be there for your guys and try and help." Respondent H8, Company T.

Similarly, another respondent commented on the fact that is it impossible to take any time off work:

> - "Well, you need a lot of attention to detail, so you can't sort of break away and do other things like sometimes if you have to do personal things, you don't have the time or luxury to be able to do that during the day because you are consumed in a crisis management type of thing." Respondent H2, Company M.

Another respondent made frequent mention of the fact that a number of people working for the organisation will "kill" themselves working and trying to please the client:

> - "It is very often that we get people that are mostly work. They will work till they die – which I don't think is a healthy thing at the end of the day." Respondent H1, Company M, commenting on the type of person employed at Company M.

6.3.3.1.2 Management demands and expects excellent client service

All higher burnout respondents included in the qualitative sample perceive the company as setting extremely high expectations insofar as client service is concerned. When asked whether they feel that these expectations are unreasonable, they generally expressed that they felt the expectations to be reasonable. This suggests that they have, most likely, internalised these company expectations into their own role-related expectations. The expectations of management were expressed in a number of different ways by each of the respondents.

Most higher burnout respondents remarked on how their companies always strive to be the best in the business, and how management expects excellent client service from everyone, all the time. From the selected quotations below, it is clear that these employees perceive management as expecting excellent client service from them no matter what. These client service employees are therefore internalising a client discourse that suggests to them that they subordinate themselves in favour of meeting the client's needs. The internalisation of such a client discourse may also explain why higher burnout client service employees are prepared to go against organisational policy and procedure in order to assist the client. While they are aware that they may be disciplined for this, they do so regardless because it has been implicitly suggested to them through the client discourse.

- " "They [management] expect you to go more than the extra mile to keep the client happy." Respondent H1, Company M.
- "I think they [management] expect us to always be on top of our game." Respondent H2, Company M.
- "For us the client is number one…. They [management] are very client-orientated – they are worried about what the client feels." Respondent H5, Company F.
- "They [management] expect us to do what we are supposed to do and that little bit extra." Respondent H6, Company F.
- "What they [management] do is they audit our calls – listen to our calls to see how I spoke to the client – perhaps I said "ja, ja" instead of saying "yes". They try to teach us to give 100% client service." Respondent H4, Company F.
- "They [management] are very focused on client centricity. It is one of the main legs of the Company T values." Respondent H8, Company T.

Some higher burnout respondents commented on the fact that their companies only employ the best in the business in order to ensure excellent client service:

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> - "I think it is almost a company profile. They [management] are looking for the best people in the industry." Respondent H2, Company M.
> - "The people who work here are the best in the business – they, the big people on top are the best in the business and demand high customer service." Respondent H6, Company F.
> - "They [management] are looking for young people, fresh people, who can do the job and everything else; who doesn't have the grasp of, - should I say, what overload is." Respondent H3, Company F.

While it could be argued that client service employees may find strength and recognition in this, the expectation to always be the best becomes part of the identity standard. Burke maintains that failure to maintain a role identity in terms of the identity standard could result in a failed sense of self verification, which could ultimately lead to burnout. As shown later in this chapter, higher burnout respondents tend to construct role identities based on unrealistic standards, resulting in a failed sense of self-verification.

While higher burnout respondents clearly aim to assist the client no matter what, this expectation is reinforced and possibly informed by the discourse of organisational management. This discourse clearly seems to suggest that the client always comes first. This could carry implications for self-verification by higher burnout respondents. If, for instance, higher burnout employees are not able to act in accordance with the expectations contained in the identity standard, they may suffer failed self-verification, which could result in burnout.

6.3.3.1.3 Expectations of the client service role

As indicated in the quotation count, all higher burnout respondents expect something in return from the client service role. These expectations vary, but include an expectation to grow, learn and develop as a person; an expectation to feel fulfilled when helping someone; and an expectation to be appreciated by the client.

Two respondents expect to be challenged and learn through their work in order to grow and develop as people:

> - "You do want to be challenged, otherwise you won't grow and I must admit that this is the one positive about the client that I currently work on – they do challenge me – sometimes not in the most appropriate way – it is often condescending." Respondent H1, Company M.
> - "I feel I need to grow. I have learnt a lot like how to sympathise and have empathy for people." Respondent H4, Company F.

A number of higher burnout respondents expressed a need to be appreciated by the client, suggesting that they expect a degree of admiration when enacting the client service role:

> - "Actually, it would be quite nice for me to actually have a client that appreciates what we do and doesn't just take it for granted." Respondent H1, Company M.
> - "It is praise – you want praise the whole day – it's insane, because of this praise you got. Weird. It's like you are programmed to run on praise." Respondent H3, Company F.

Higher burnout respondents also want to derive a sense of satisfaction from helping someone. This also suggests that they expect to receive a level of appreciation when enacting the client service role:

> - "The thing is it feels good to make someone happy, especially if it was urgent stuff. It also makes you look good with your peers." *Respondent H8, Company T.*
> - "I have made that my aim in order to help people and meet new people." *Respondent H4, Company F.*
> - "Your first achievement as a man or woman and it feels good to be able to help somebody – it really does – especially if you can achieve what they expect from you." *Respondent H5, Company F.*

> - "Otherwise it does feel good to be helping someone. To do some good for an old lady stuck next to the road – to be able to help her out. That's a good feeling." *Respondent H6, Company F.*
> - "It becomes frustrating because now you have all this extra work of everybody phoning you all the time, but at least the user is still satisfied, and it builds my name anyway." *Respondent H7, Company T.*

The expectations reflected in the respondent quotations above are important to consider in the context of this study. As mentioned in the literature review and Chapter 3, role identities incorporate identity standards according to which individuals believe their roles should be enacted. These identity standards not only refer to behavioural expectations (i.e. how the individual should behave in the role), but also refer to expected rewards or outcomes from the enactment of a role. In other words, people are likely to enact a role in a specific way in order to accrue some kind of valued outcome from the environment. The role-related expectations of higher burnout employees expressed above are clearly incorporated into their respective identity standards. While they believe that the client should come first no matter what, they also aim to achieve appreciation and a sense of fulfilment from enactment of the role. Failure to achieve role-related outcomes that are congruent with the identity standard could lead to a failure of self-verification and a diminished sense of self. As will be shown later in the chapter, higher burnout respondents do not report high levels of appreciation from the client. This suggests that while they expect appreciation, they are not receiving it. This could ultimately lead to a sense of failed self-verification and could contribute to the development of burnout.

6.3.3.2 Role-related expectations among lower burnout respondents

As indicated in the quotation count report **Table 71**, lower burnout respondents also believe that they must give the client the best service possible and demand something from the client relationship.

Table 71: Quotation count report – Role-related expectations among lower burnout respondents

	Respondents								
	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8	L9
Code	M	M	M	T	T	T	T	T	T
Must partner with the client (37)	4	4	9	4	7	1	2	1	5
Expects something from the client relationship (27)	2	1	5	4	4	5	2	2	2
Must provide the best client service possible (21)	2	4	3	1	6	2	1	1	1
Must be people orientated (18)	4	2	2	2	4	2	0	1	1
Must keep the client happy (10)	2	0	3	1	1	2	0	1	0

While higher burnout respondents demand appreciation, lower burnout respondents demand co-operation as well as appreciation from the client. Lower burnout respondents differ significantly from the higher burnout respondents in that they expect to partner with the client in solving the client's problems.

6.3.3.2.1 Expect to provide the best client service possible

As reflected in the **Table 71**, lower burnout respondents strive to provide the best client service possible and are often willing to go above and beyond the call of duty to assist the client. One respondent is willing to make personal sacrifices in order to assist the client, but no lower burnout respondents reported being willing to break with company policy in order to serve the client.

- "We want them [the clients] to come back to us. We want to give them better service than anybody else and we manage to do that – we go beyond the services that we are supposed to give them." *Respondent L5, Company T.*
- "I think we are very client-orientated – we don't just want the client to come to us and say we want this and give it to them. We want to do more." *Respondent L3, Company M.*

> - "Because they want the best service. I think all the employees have not just been employed randomly – they have been chosen for service, speed and education." *Respondent L6, Company T.*
> - "I do try to go the extra mile and see if there is something extra I can do for him (the client)." *Respondent L8, Company T.*
> - "All that is actually part of the customer focus that shows you that the most important thing is the customer or the client." *Respondent L9, Company T.*

6.3.3.2.2 Expect appreciation, co-operation and respect from the client

As is the case with the higher burnout respondents, lower burnout respondents also expect appreciation from the client as indicated in the selected quotations below:

> - "We have these performance appraisals twice a year, which determined our level of satisfaction regarding the company. So if our clients don't tell the managers that we are doing well, he can't give us a higher level." *Respondent L6, Company T.*
> - "I think I need the affirmation that you get from a client when you do something well." *Respondent L3, Company M.*

Two lower burnout respondents also expressed the desire to learn, grow and be challenged through the client service role:

> - "I like to work with the highly-skilled people although they are more difficult to work with – they keep you on your toes – you need to be ahead of them. On the other hand you feel very satisfied if you achieve that little thing to get the other guy [client] to understand and get them up to a certain level." *Respondent L5, Company T.*
> - "You meet different people, different cultures, you get to know their ways. Everybody teaches somebody else something – you live learning." *Respondent L4, Company T.*

Interestingly, however, the lower burnout respondents differ from the higher burnout respondents in that they demand information, co-operation and respect from the client. As indicated in the quotations below, lower burnout respondents believe they are only able to help the client sufficiently if and when the client co-operates with them, by either expressing his/her needs clearly, or by providing the necessary information:

- "I need to know what they [the clients] want in order to give it to them. I need to get the service from my company to give it to him. If he can't explain what he wants and I can't understand him how can I give him the service that he is supposed to get." *Respondent L5, Company T.*

- "Umm, people [clients] who don't know what they mean. People will say something without doing their homework. So get your facts right first and then call me." *Respondent L4, Company T when asked what he dislikes most about client service work.*

- "The client should be somebody who has trust in you and somebody who supplies you with what you need to help them timeously." *Respondent L1, Company M.*

- "I think there is more respect at the agency. They [the clients] have more respect for you being in that role whereas internally I think you are more of a punching bag for a lot of things." *Respondent L2, Company M stating that she prefers working at a research agency because the clients respect her.*

- "Well, the client has specific needs and the client also has his responsibilities. Everybody here has a business to run so there are some expectations of the client as well." *Respondent L7, Company T.*

- "You will never get the perfect client, but I want understanding clients that listen to your side of the story as well and don't just demand." *Respondent L8, Company T.*

- "I would say that there should be a mutual understanding between the client and us. They do need to understand our business." *Respondent L9, Company T.*

Although lower burnout respondents want to give the client the best service possible and will make sacrifices in order to assist the client, they do demand a certain level of co-operation and respect from the client in exchange. Higher burnout respondents, on the other hand, do not demand this kind of respect from the client. Since lower burnout respondents define themselves as somewhat superior to and more knowledgeable that the client, it is understandable that they would expect co-operation and respect from the client.

6.3.3.2.3 Expect to partner with the client

Probably one of the most notable differences between the lower burnout respondents and the higher burnout respondents is the fact that the lower burnout respondents expect to partner with the client in order to assist them and help them solve their problems. As illustrated in the selected quotations below, a number of lower burnout respondents actually used the word "partner" or "partnership" when describing the relationships they have with clients, while other lower burnout respondents refer to the relationship as symbiotic, where both the client and the client service employee or company derive some benefit from the relationship:

- "If you can get the client to understand what it is all about, he can work **with** you." *Respondent L5, Company T.*
- "Then they [the client] generally jump and help out. Unfortunately you sometimes get to a point where you have to threaten them and say, 'Listen, this is the timing for the project and I need this and this by then – if you can't get it to me, then unfortunately your study is going to suffer because I have to extend the timing – so we kind of need to **work together** here and are you willing to help?'" *Respondent L3, Company M when asked how she deals with difficult clients.*
- "Somebody you can **partner** with, somebody who knows what they want but gives you freedom to advise them and listens to your advice." *Respondent L1, Company M.*
- "We want to be a consultant role and really **work with the client** and become like a partner for them." *Respondent L2, Company M.*

> - "And we **work together** – you know, we don't just work, they [the clients] do their bit as well. 'Listen guys, we got a problem' and **together we fix it**." *Respondent L4, Company T.*
> - "In my eyes the perfect client would be the client that is honest, has integrity, there is a **trust relationship** and open communication – meaning that if there is any deviation, it comes from both sides." *Respondent L7, Company T.*
> - "You try to make them [the client] understand that this is not just our process, that they [the client] and Company T sat **together** and worked this process out and this is the way it has to be." *Respondent L9, Company T.*

From the quotations provided above, it is clear that lower burnout respondents expect to partner with the client. Although lower burnout respondents define themselves as superior and more knowledgeable that the client, they do aim to assist the client no matter what. As a result, a partnership between themselves and the client provides the foundation upon which the client service role identity is based. Higher burnout respondents, on the other hand, view the client as superior and controlling. As a result, they aim to meet the client's needs while subordinating their own.

6.3.4 Role-related behaviours

The next themed question according to which the data were coded makes reference to the behavioural implications of the expectations contained within the identity standards of both higher and lower burnout employees.

As indicated in **Table 72**, the behaviour of higher burnout respondents towards the client differs from the behaviour of lower burnout respondents.

Table 72: Role-related behaviours

Higher Burnout Respondents	Lower Burnout Respondents
Engage in emotional labour (31)	Able to manage the client (39)
Personalises the client relationship (29)	Solution-orientated (32)
Address client feeling (23)	Does not take sole responsibility for the client (28)
Build client up (21)	Able to exert power over the client (19)
Take sole responsibility for the client (14)	Distances oneself from the client (10)
Build relationship with the client (13)	Engage in emotional labour (9)

Higher burnout respondents engage in more emotional labour than lower burnout respondents do. Higher burnout respondents tend to personalise the client relationship and focus to a large extent on engaging with the client on an emotional or affective level. They also tend to take sole or personal responsibility for the client and want to build the client up. Although they do engage in emotional labour from time to time, lower burnout respondents do not take sole responsibility for the client. They are able to manage the client relationship and exert considerable power over the client. While higher burnout respondents personalise the client relationship, lower burnout respondents are solution orientated, focusing instead of the task at hand rather than becoming personally involved in the client situation.

6.3.4.1 Role-related behaviour among higher burnout respondents

Table 73 reflects the quotation count report for role-related behaviours amongst higher burnout respondents.

Table 73: Quotation count report – Role-related behaviour among higher burnout respondents

	Respondents							
	H1	H2	H3	H4	H5	H6	H7	H8
Code	M	M	F	F	F	F	T	T
Engages in emotional labour (31)	2	0	12	6	4	3	1	3
Personalises the client relationship (29)	0	3	5	7	3	4	6	1
Addresses client feeling (23)	4	4	2	3	1	2	2	5
Build client up (21)	1	4	3	2	2	3	1	5
Take sole responsibility for the client (14)	1	1	2	1	4	2	1	2
Build relationship with the client (13)	2	2	2	1	1	0	5	0

Only one (H2) higher burnout respondent did not display evidence of engaging in emotional labour. All higher burnout respondents attempt to take sole responsibility for the client and attempt to deal with the client on an affective level by addressing the client's feelings.

6.3.4.1.1 Engage in emotional labour

Most of the quotations pertaining to the use of emotional labour include negative reference to the client service role, where respondents express having to act or behave in a certain way (often contrary to the way they actually feel) in order to keep the client happy:

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- "On the phone I can't lose my temper, I just keep calm and try to sort it out. But you can't always be upbeat and happy and 'thank you for calling!'" *Respondent H6, Company F.*

- "When I am alone there are a lot of thoughts going through my mind. 'Jis, this client hey!' But when you are face to face 'Ja, it's our problem, we'll fix it for you, are you happy now?'" *Respondent H8,* Company T.

- "As I said though, when it comes to larger clients this becomes a bit blurred – it is not easy to say to the client 'just bugger off you idiot' and we sometimes have to take things and swallow, which we wouldn't normally have to do." Respondent H1, Company M.

- "And sometimes we are so controlled and so robot like." Respondent H3, Company F.

- "Like myself, you get your on days and you get your off days. And when you get your off days, just try and pretend a bit." Respondent H4, Company F.

Displays of emotional labour were frequently required in Company F, due largely to the nature of call centre work. All respondents in Company F explained how they were required to "learn" how to engage appropriately with the client, and often needed to alter their tone of voice in order to sound pleasant to the client:

- "I have grown a lot – to speak to people, for instance. The type of work that I am doing, we don't see the person face to face but the person can pick up, by the tone of your voice if you are agitated, if you are trying to help, if you are trying to put down the call as quickly as possible." *Respondent H4, Company F.*

- "How we assist the client, how we talk to the client – certain words that we use. We are measured in – if I could say – just our general approach to the call." *Respondent H5, Company F.*

- "Talk to the person nicely – that's what they look for. Friendly and upbeat – we are a call centre at the end of the day and people have to feel like you enjoy working here when people phone in." *Respondent H6, Company F.*

It appears from the selected quotations above that higher burnout employees seem to engage in surface acting, where they attempt to control their emotional expressions in accordance with the display rules of the organisation (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2003; Brotheridge & Lee, 2003). According to the higher burnout respondents interviewed, they have been taught to engage with the client in a particular way, and often have to hide their true/authentic emotions.

6.3.4.1.2 Address client feeling

As shown in the selected quotations below, higher burnout respondents are very focused on ensuring that the client is feeling happy. While lower burnout respondents are generally more task and solution orientated, higher burnout respondents were largely focused on making the client feel comfortable and good about themselves. They do this by identifying with the client's emotional state and/or empathising with them.

One respondent from Company T, for instance, makes an effort to ensure that clients do not feel like their computer problems are their (the client's) fault. Furthermore, a large proportion of the displays of emotional labour are specifically utilised in an effort to make the client feel comfortable and keep the client happy. This requires considerable effort on the part of the client service employee, and could potentially lead to emotional exhaustion:

- "If you come across as agitated, obviously the person on the other side will also feel that way." Respondent H4, Company F.
- "You have to listen to the person's [client's] tone of voice, if they are angry, if they are happy – hardly ever are they happy. You have to assess every call as it comes in and make sure – not make sure – you have to assess the situation and find out what that person needs you to do and follow up the call." Respondent H6, Company F.
- "If you had to irritate a client or jeopardise that work, that is a financial stream that gets compromised so ja, I think it is really about keeping them happy and giving them what they need so that they don't go elsewhere." Respondent H2, Company M.
- "You kind of make a guardian angel or angel of some sort. You are there to listen to the client's problems and assist them. Most of the time it is – I mean it is a personalised business." Respondent H5, Company F.
- "Also to really just make sure that they [the clients] are feeling comfortable and confident." Respondent H1, Company M when asked what her primary responsibilities towards the client are.
- "I try not to let the client feel that it is their fault." Respondent H8, Company T.

6.3.4.1.3 Empathise and identify with client

Higher burnout respondents tend to empathise with the client. In the case of Company F, this came to the fore strongly as most of these employees identify with the difficult situations experienced by their clients and then try to personally assist the client by engaging with them on an emotional level. This is an unexpected finding in the case of higher burnout respondents, since one of the primary distinguishing factors of burnout is the depersonalisation of the client relationships. The findings of the present study suggest that the higher burnout respondents personalise the client relationship by identifying with the client, while lower burnout employees are able to distance themselves from the client:

- "You have to be able to be kind, for the lack of another word. You have to be understanding of a particular person's situation. They listen for that in your voice. Somebody phones in – their son died in a crash – you can't be rude – we have to have that certain sympathy – you can hear it in a person's voice. Talk to the person nicely – that's what they look for. Friendly upbeat – we are a call centre at the end of the day and people have to feel like you enjoy working here when people phone in." Respondent H6, Company F.
- "Like with the floods that we had. I think it was in Mossel Bay there were like people that lost houses and I mean millions of rands and we had to, as a team we had to come together and discuss how we were going to handle this, as we cannot just give them a new home. We started encouraging the people and from them on I learnt to have empathy." Respondent H4, Company F.
- "You can imagine yourself in the same predicament [as the client] and then all you get is a company on the other side saying, 'No we can't do that.'" Respondent H5, Company F.
- "Well, our ethic is actually very professional, they [management] regard the professionalism that you have to care and empathise with the situation that the client has." Respondent H3, Company F.

Higher burnout respondents from Company M also tend to identify with the client by empathising with the client's often stressful or difficult situations. Both respondents, for instance, understand that the client cannot always be considerate due to the amount of stress they face internally:

- "So, I think their [the client's] stress levels and the pressure they are under just ripples into us." Respondent H1, Company M.
- "I think they [the client] also get placed under a lot of pressure from their side when they service their internal clients. They are often stuck between us and another department, so there is pressure on their side that we don't see." Respondent H2, Company M.

Two respondents also express understanding and empathy for the fact that clients get angry and upset:

> - "Well, it's quite easy, if a client complains he complains with good reason." Respondent H8, Company T.
> - "But sometimes we do mess up because we deal with so many people and people (the clients) do get angry, but for good reason." Respondent H5, Company F.

The selected citations above could be regarded as examples of deep acting – a form of emotional labour where the client service employee changes the way he or she feels in order to be in accordance with what is organisationally required (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002). By identifying and empathising with the client on an emotional level client service employees attempt to feel for the client – a clear example of deep acting. As cited in the literature review, Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) and Brotheridge and Lee (2003) have conducted extensive research on the implications of deep and surface acting for the development of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and personal accomplishment. The implications of this in the context of the present study will be discussed in greater detail in the Chapter 7.

6.3.4.1.4 Establish relationships with the client

Higher burnout respondents are focused on building relationships with the clients. In many instances, this relationship is rather personal and familiar in nature. Again, this is an unexpected finding in the case of higher burnout respondents since it was anticipated that they would depersonalise the relationship with the client. Respondents in Company T and Company F, for instance, enjoy the fact that they are able to establish these familiar relationships with the client.

- "It's just a name to you, but with me its more than a name – I know their [the clients'] family, where they come from, what they do and what their task is in the company." Respondent H7, Company T.

- "I think if you are not a people's person you might have a different feeling – but I love people. It's always interesting and you make friends." Respondent H8, Company T.

- "When you talk to them [the clients] with a query and you fill in the spaces, so you gradually learn to comment on the day or the work and so you build a relationship, they know you by name." Respondent H3, Company F.

It could be argued that the establishment of personal relationships with the client could contribute to the development of burnout. Client service employees that establish personal relationships with the client may be less likely to separate themselves from the role due to over-identification with the client. This could result in them taking their roles personally, resulting in role overload and feelings of guilt when they are unable to satisfy the client.

6.3.4.1.5 Take sole responsibility for the client's problems

Because they tend to engage with the client on a personal level, higher burnout respondents tend to take sole responsibility for the client and the client's problems. In some cases, this is reflected by the way they internalise the client's needs or problems and then feel guilty for not being able to help them. One respondent, for instance, expressed helplessness at not being able to assist the client, suggesting a sense of personal responsibility or accountability for the well-being of the client:

- "Not helping the way …. they [the clients] have a certain need and sometimes I just don't grasp what that need is. I am not giving the full help that I can." Respondent H3, Company F.

Another respondent from Company T also expressed helplessness and confusion at not being able to assist the client, and felt like the client's problems may be his fault:

> - "You always get a problem – a client – you are so confused by what is happening because, like I said, there are so many parties involved. At the end of the day, you wonder whether it is your fault." Respondent H8, Company T.

Similarly, both respondents from Company M admit to internalising the client's problems and carrying responsibility for the client.   One respondent refers to developing "broad shoulders" in order to bear the clients problems, while the other mentions that the stress experienced by the client tends to "ripple" into her and her team:

> - "I guess you get broad shoulders hey!" Respondent H2, Company M.
> - "This puts a whole lot more stress on us than there actually need be, because we have to keep everyone happy.   So I think their stress levels and the pressure that they are put under, just ripples into us." Respondent H1, Company M.

Two respondents from Company F constantly make reference to going the extra mile in order to assist the client, and taking personal responsibility for the client:

> - "Definitely somebody who is, who does not pass the buck – somebody that is willing to take ownership of a situation and not just pass it on to someone else." Respondent H6, Company F when asked what kinds of people Company F should employ.
> - "So instead of saying 'call this person at this number' I would actually call them myself and say 'Look, this is the situation, this is the client's concerns – what can we do to assist the guy.'" Also suggest, let's do this or that. Respondent H5, Company F.

By assuming personal responsibility for the client and his/her problems, higher burnout respondents may engage in role overload, which, as suggested in the literature review, could contribute to the development of burnout. By being unable to distance themselves from the client service role and the client's problems, higher burnout respondents may display greater levels of guilt and personal failure when

they are unable to help the client. This could result in reduced feelings of personal accomplishment and possibly burnout.

6.3.4.2 Role-related behaviours among lower burnout respondents

The role-related behaviour of lower burnout respondents differs from that of their higher burnout counterparts. While higher burnout respondents empathise with their clients; engage with them on a personal level and take sole responsibility for their problems, lower burnout respondents are able to manage the client and exert a certain degree of power over the client. Lower burnout respondents tend to distance themselves from the client and are largely task or solution orientated (see **Table 74**).

Table 74: Quotation count report – Role-related behaviours among lower burnout respondents

	Respondents								
	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8	L9
Code	M	M	M	T	T	T	T	T	T
Able to manage the client (39)	3	2	9	2	7	5	2	4	5
Solution-orientated (32)	9	1	3	6	4	2	2	3	2
Does not take personal responsibility for the client (28)	5	4	1	1	5	2	3	4	3
Able to exert power over the client (19)	2	1	6	4	0	4	0	1	1
Distances oneself from the client/work (10)	1	2	1	0	0	1	2	2	1
Engages in emotional labour (9)	3	0	3	1	0	2	0	0	0

6.3.4.2.1 Engage in emotional labour

As indicated by the selected quotes below, lower burnout respondents engage in a degree of emotional labour but cited fewer examples of this during their interviews when compared with higher burnout respondents.

- "I suppose it can be frustrating at times – you might want to say 'No, you're crazy, we can't do that' − but you just can't." Respondent L1, Company M.
- "If we have a problem we must still smile at all times at the client." Respondent L6, Company T.
- "That's how I deal with the clients and yes, many times you feel like cracking, but you don't, you maintain your cool and say, 'Yes, ok.'" Respondent L4, Company T.
- "You kind of vent behind the scenes – not in front of the client, but with your peers." Respondent L3, Company M.

From the selected quotations above it appears as though lower burnout respondents engage in surface acting, rather than deep acting. Lower burnout respondents feel irritated or frustrated by the client and modify their behaviour so as to hide this true feeling from the client.

6.3.4.2.2 Task and solution orientated

Despite engaging in surface acting, lower burnout respondents seldom engage with the client on a personal or emotional level and are far more solution or task orientated than the higher burnout respondents. While higher burnout respondents are generally focused on building comfortable and happy relationships with the client which makes them take personal responsibility for the client, lower burnout respondents are focused on finding a solution for the client without taking personal responsibility for the client's problems. In addition, lower burnout respondents display evidence of being able to manage the client, and are simultaneously able to exert considerable power over the client. Each of these factors and their associated codes will be discussed in the sections below.

Lower burnout respondents appear more task orientated than their higher burnout counterparts. When asked to describe their roles, most lower burnout respondents focus on the tasks they are supposed to perform and express them in terms of finding solutions for the client. Higher burnout respondents, on the other hand, are more focused on building and maintaining relationships with the client, and engage with

them on a more personal, rather than a task-orientated level. As indicated by the selected quotes below, lower burnout respondents describe their roles as solving the client's business related problems through proactively engaging with them to find a solution or improvement:

- "My role is for the client not to waste processes and procedures and not waste…find new ways to work, better ways to work, also safety. I multi-task, I do everything. To make sure not to waste, to monitor calls, escalations, to make sure everything is being met." Respondent L4, Company T.
- "The services – if there is a problem – if you want to improve it you have to look at a lot of statistics, detail, find out about the improvement that can be done and work out a plan, implement it and make sure that everything is done and measured." Respondent L5, Company T.
- "Well, with finding out what their [the clients'] research problem is, what the issue is in their business and then designing some sort of research solution." Respondent L1, Company M.
- "Work-shopping with them [the clients] and taking what their strategy objectives are and trying to find research-based solutions to help them." Respondent L2, Company M.
- "The challenge is that if the client raises a concern you know that it must be addressed in the fastest time and make sure that the matter has been addressed with your people too, so that it does not happen again." Respondent L7, Company T.
- "Otherwise I will try and get a way round to make it work the way he [the client] wants it to work." Respondent L8, Company T.
- "If you understand your client's business then you understand where he wants to go and then you have new ways or initiatives that you can propose to give the client value." Respondent L9, Company T.

During the interviews, lower burnout respondents often reported that they enjoyed finding solutions for the client, and that no challenge presented by the client was too difficult or impossible to achieve. Lower burnout respondents view their client's

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problems as a challenge and are more solution orientated that their higher burnout counterparts:

> - "The tasks they [the clients] give you might sound impossible but if you have the mentality of it's impossible, you are not going to get very far. The challenges are that nothing is impossible. It's a mindset." Respondent L4, Company T.
> - "Although we have a specific agreed service level – we don't just wait for that level – as soon as we get the problem, we handle it." Respondent L5, Company T.
> - "It doesn't matter how crazy or impractical their needs are, we are very much about doing whatever, or helping the client as much as possible." Respondent L1, Company M.
> - "I communicate with the client. I tell the client what I plan to do – this is the problem – don't worry – this is the solution." Respondent L6, Company T.
> - "They [the clients] are all very diverse, they all have different needs and I think the great thing about my job is that I interact with people at different levels of the company, in different roles, in totally different industries and have to get to know them and their needs and anticipate their needs and be proactive in designing solutions for them." Respondent L3, Company M.

6.3.4.2.3 Do not take personal responsibility for the client

Unlike the higher burnout respondents, lower burnout respondents do not take their roles personally and do not take personal responsibility for the client. As reflected in the selected quotes below, most lower burnout respondents work in teams and therefore feel like they are not alone when dealing with the client's problems. As indicated in bold in the selected quotations below, lower burnout respondents make frequent reference to working in supportive teams. This suggests that teamwork or social support may play a mediating role in the development of burnout amongst lower burnout respondent:

> - "We try to work as a team and you rely on other people to help you if you have demands from your client that you need to fulfil and you can't." Respondent L1, Company M.
> - "A lot of pride in what they do, I think it is a lot like – it's a family – an intimate atmosphere. I find the people that I have worked with – I think I have been quite lucky as well – they are very supportive – a supportive base. People are very willing to help with any question." Respondent L2, Company M.
> - "We are a team, so if you ask for something you get it. It's nice to work like that." Respondent L5, Company T.
> - "If I can't be there, there are always people in our team. If I can't attend to the problem then there is someone else who can." Respondent L6, Company T.
> - "It's very important – you must have redundancy within your operational space. So I will go out if necessary, but I will also take my people with me." Respondent L7, Company T.
> - "It may be one of the calls that escalated, or the problem was never resolved so now there is this query and you need to give feedback, but there are now many parties involved in it so for me to give feedback, I first need to engage with all the others." Respondent L9, Company T.

Perhaps because they are solution orientated and do not take sole responsibility for the client, lower burnout respondents also do not take their roles as personally as the higher burnout respondents do. As indicated by the selected quotations in the box below, lower burnout respondents are able to distance themselves from their roles. They are able to ignore the stress placed on them by the client and instead focus on the task at hand:

> - "You are at the agency and a client phones and asks you for something unreasonable and speaks to you in a certain way, you can put the phone down and just take a moment, and then you can do it and you don't have to see them for a while." Respondent L2, Company M.
> - "I just do my job and ignore the fact that they [the client] are having a stressful day." Respondent L6, Company T.

- "You learn to accept it and that where you don't – if you don't create a relationship and you just go there and do the job and leave." Respondent L4, Company T.
- So the clients are important, but I see them as an operational issue – operational things that must be addressed." Respondent L7, Company T. "

Many of the lower burnout respondents reported having a number of outside interests, which enable them to forget about work. In so doing, they are able to distance themselves from the client and do not let the client service work interfere or dominate their personal lives:

- "I try to keep very strict 08:00 to 17:00 hours so that I can close the door on that and go and do something else and think about something else. I try to keep weekends free and I don't like to work overtime. I try and manage things so that I have time away from it so that I don't get sick of it." Respondent L1, Company M.
- "I keep it to myself. After work I have my sport to go to and relax." Respondent L9, Company T.

While higher burnout respondents personalise the role and the relationship with the client and as a result, tend to display guilt when they are not able to meet the needs of the client, lower burnout respondents do not show signs of guilt when they are unable to adequately assist the client:

- ▪ "It's their [the client's] research, they are paying for it and if they don't get their money's worth it is not my fault – I did warn them." Respondent L3, Company M.

- ▪ "It's just one of those things – you just try and deal with it to the best of your ability. I mean, you know you can't take it personally and you can't make judgements on them [the clients] as a person – it's just the way they work." Respondent L2, Company M.

- ▪ "You are looking at the odds – if they [the clients] don't like you then they don't like you. You still deal with them. I don't talk too much, just let me do my work." Respondent L4, Company T.

6.3.4.2.4 Able to manage the client

Because lower burnout respondents see themselves in a partnership with the client and expect a certain level of co-operation from the client, they are able to exert influence over the client and manage them to a certain extent. For instance, two respondents from Company M feel able to make demands on the client, reflecting a high degree of self-empowerment in the client service situation:

- ▪ "Unfortunately you sometimes get to a point where you have to threaten them [the clients] and say 'Listen, this is the timing for the project and a need this and that by then. If you can't get it to me then unfortunately your study is going to suffer because I have to extend the timing.'" Respondent L3, Company M.

- ▪ "You have to push them [the clients] to give you what you need or what you are looking for to help them." Respondent L1, Company M.

Other lower burnout respondents are able to manage the expectations of clients by educating them and helping them understand better, suggesting a high degree of self-efficacy and empowerment when dealing with the client:

> - "It is largely a case of not pushing back on their [the clients'] requests, particularly straight away, but giving them time to think. We have to give them some advice and steer them in a different direction." Respondent L1, Company M.
> - "They [the client] don't know the whole picture sometimes and the older people are not always there, so its new people so sometimes you have to help them to understand better." Respondent L5, Company T.
> - "That is why I say the trust relationship between you and the client is the bottom line. If you got that and they trust you from day one – ahhh − it's like honey for you." Respondent L4, Company T.

All lower burnout respondents from Company T are able to manage the client in cases where they feel the client is being unreasonable. They are, for instance, able to report unreasonable clients to management within the company. Two respondents are even able to tell the client to his face when they feel a situation is unfavourable:

> - "If we see there is a problem, we go to their [the client's] senior people or to the company senior management and ask them to help as well." Respondent L5, Company T.
> - "If he [the client] got a problem then I tell him straight – I say: "Listen, this is the way it is – I don't like what you do, let's go to the park." Respondent L4, Company T.
> - "Like this one client – he started to do his own thing and then I told him that he can't do it anymore." Respondent L6, Company T.
> - "From the start he [the client] was unreasonable and we had many bad experiences. We took it up with his management side and they talked to him and now it is better." Respondent L9, Company T.
> - "I try not to show it bothers me, but sometimes you just tell them [the clients] to move out of my personal space because I need to concentrate on my work – go make yourself some coffee." Respondent L8, Company T.

The role identity of lower burnout respondents' results in role-related behaviour associated with managing the client relationship and in some cases, exerting power

over the client. Since lower burnout respondents define themselves as superior to and more knowledgeable than the client, they are able to exert a certain degree of control over the relationship and in so doing, experience a degree of autonomy. As indicated in the literature review, feelings of autonomy and control over one's work environment can buffer the development of burnout.

6.3.5 The emotional consequences of the role identity

The meaning content of the identity standard also has an impact on work-related perceptions. A failure to meet the role-related expectations contained within the identity standard could result in a diminished sense of self, a sense of subjective failure, frustration and fatigue – all states that have been linked to the development of burnout.

As indicated in **Table 75**, the majority of higher burnout respondents feel powerless against the client, while lower burnout respondents perceive a large degree of autonomy through their work.

Table 75: The emotional consequences of the role identity

Higher Burnout Respondents	*Lower Burnout Respondents*
Powerless in relation to the client (13)	Has a sense of autonomy (17)

In feeling powerless in relation to the client, higher burnout respondents express that they are unable to protect themselves from the unreasonable demands made by the client. Lower burnout respondents, on the other hand, appear to have a large degree of control over and autonomy within the client service relationship, which enables them to protect themselves from unrealistic demands.

6.3.5.1 Emotional consequences of the role identity among higher burnout respondents

As reflected in the quotation count in **Table 76**, higher burnout respondents from Company T do not experience this loss of power in relation to the client.

Respondents from Company M and Company F, however, cite numerous instances where they are unable to stand up for themselves when interacting with the client.

Table 76: Quotation count report − Emotional consequences of the role identity among higher burnout respondents

	Respondents							
	H1	H2	H3	H4	H5	H6	H7	H8
Code	M	M	F	F	F	F	T	T
Feel powerless in relation to client (13)	5	1	3	2	1	1	0	0

The selected quotations in the box below are evidence of the loss of power and helplessness in relation to the client felt by the majority of the higher burnout respondents. In many instances this loss of power is also a consequence of perceiving the client as nasty and abusive:

> ▪ "Pretty much, ja but they [the clients] didn't really apologise. Often what they will do if we don't, if they don't get the outcome that they want, they will try and blame us." Respondent H2, Company M.
>
> ▪ "Most of the time from our point of view we don't have any say. I mean, I can't call the shots and say do this." Respondent H5, Company F.
>
> ▪ "Some people out there phone in with the idea that they are going to be nasty − they have had bad service and no matter who picks up the phone they get it. I want to get that out of my life – I want to get somewhere where it is more predictable." Respondent H6, Company F.

These feelings of powerlessness also appear to result in a loss of control and autonomy amongst the higher burnout respondents.

6.3.5.2 Emotional consequences of the role identity among lower burnout respondents

As indicated in **Table 77,** lower burnout respondents experience a sense of autonomy within their roles.

Table 77: Quotation count report − Emotional consequences of the role identity among lower burnout respondents

	Respondents								
	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8	L9
Code	M	M	M	T	T	T	T	T	T
Has a sense of autonomy (17)	1	2	3	3	4	2	0	1	1

This sense of autonomy may be due to the fact that they perceive themselves as superior to and more knowledgeable than the client.

As indicated by the selected quotations below, lower burnout respondents experience a large degree of independence and freedom in their work, resulting in the perception of control and power within the role. This sense of autonomy and control is clearly indicated by the fact that lower burnout client service employees are able to manage the client and exert a level of power over the client:

> - "That is quite stressful, but otherwise I don't have stress. Like I said, I keep my environment stable." Respondent L6, Company T.
> - "I don't know about other environments, but here they [management] don't check up on me. There is freedom and I can initiate – whatever I want within the boundaries. I like it." Respondent L5, Company T.
> - "I have clients that are mine − that I am in charge of." Respondent L2, Company M.
> - "You have to be strong and show them [the client] that you can manage this and sort it out in the end." Respondent L8, Company T.

> - "It is not strict and rigid. You are free to do the best for your client which encourages you to be more proactive, and creative in the solutions that you offer your client." Respondent L3, Company M.
> - "I am not going to wait for my manager to do it – I want to do it myself." Respondent L4, Company T.

6.3.6 Evidence of self-verification

According to the research argument and the theoretical model presented in Chapter 3, failure to self-verify can also result in burnout. According to Burke's (1991a; 1991b) identity control model, self-verification occurs when the role-related behavioural outcomes of an individual are congruent with the expectations contained in the role-related identity standard. Failure to match role-related outcomes with these expectations results in failed self-verification, and, according to the research argument, could also contribute to the development of burnout.

In the case of client service employees, self-verification can fail if the expectations contained in the identity standard are experienced as unreasonable or practically unattainable. Self-verification can also fail if the expectations contained in the identity standard are unrealistic and require the individual to engage in considerable role overload, which could result in emotional exhaustion. Non-verification of the self through identity processes can result in feelings of anxiety and distress. These feelings of anxiety and distress could then, ultimately result in burnout. As Cherniss (1993), Cordes and Dougherty (1993), Freudenberger and Richelson (1980), Pines and Maslach (1978), Pines (1993) and Vanheule and Verhaeghe (2004; 2005) have shown, a failure to successfully meet personal and organisational expectations can result in reduced feelings of self-efficacy and ultimately lead to burnout.

As indicated in the quotation count in **Table 78**, higher burnout respondents feel guilt for not helping the client; feel humiliated by the company when they are unable to help the client and, as a consequence, feel little self-verification.

Table 78: Evidence of self-verification

Higher Burnout Respondents	Lower Burnout Respondents
Feel powerless in helping the client (46)	Experience a high degree of personal accomplishment (49)
Experience little self-verification (27)	
Feel guilt for not helping the client (10)	

Lower burnout respondents, on the other hand, have strong feelings of personal accomplishment, suggesting that they do indeed experience self-verification.

6.3.6.1 Evidence of failed self-verification among higher burnout respondents

As indicated by **Table 79**, higher burnout respondents feel powerless in helping the client.

Table 79: Quotation count report – Evidence of failed self-verification among higher burnout respondents

	Respondents							
	H1	H2	H3	H4	H5	H6	H7	H8
Code	M	M	F	F	F	F	T	T
Feel powerless in helping the client (46)	2	6	4	5	18	4	4	3
Experience little self-verification (27)	11	4	2	2	2	2	1	3
Feel guilt for not helping the client (10)	0	0	4	0	2	3	0	1

Furthermore, a number of high burnout respondents experience a sense of guilt when they are unable to assist the client, and all higher burnout respondents display evidence of failed self-verification.

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6.3.6.1.1 Feel powerless in helping the client

As illustrated by the selected quotations below, higher burnout respondents often feel despondent when dealing with the client. They feel that they are unable to help the client in the way that they would have liked − even when they have exercised all their options. Many higher burnout respondents are not happy with the quality of service they are giving the client, but feel unable to do any better:

- "If you speak to the client and you don't assist the client – and let's say, for example, there is a complaint from the client – management comes down on you. But I mean, what happens if you have exercised all your options." Respondent H5, Company F.
- "It gets frustrating because, for us, with what we know – for instance a cell phone claim takes about a day – two days – and now because it needs to be transferred to this department or that branch it takes two days." Respondent H4, Company F.
- "I can deal with a person when something is not fixed and I can plug it in and…It's very hard explaining to someone that you can't help them when they are stuck next to the side of the road." Respondent H6, Company F.
- "You want to give them the best piece of work possible and sometimes, you just don't have the capacity to be able to do it." Respondent H2, Company M.
- "Not helping the way… they have a certain need and sometimes I just don't grasp that that need is. I am not giving the full help that I can." Respondent H3, Company F.
- "We have to deal with red tape and the clients hate the red tape so that is where the arguments and the complaints come in." Respondent H7, Company T.
- "The biggest challenge I think is trying to please this particular client at the end of the day! Because it just seems – with this particular client that I am servicing – that they are never really fully happy with what we are doing." Respondent H1, Company M.

> ▪ "You always get a problem – a client – you are so confused by what is happening because, like I said, there are so many parties involved. At the end of the day, you wonder if it is your fault." Respondent H8, Company T.

From a number of quotations above, it is clear that higher burnout respondents feel let down by the companies for which they work. Some suggest that they have insufficient capacity and resources to service the client, while others feel that company processes inhibit their ability to adequately assist the client. These feelings could all contribute to the sense of helplessness and defeat experienced by higher burnout respondents.

Clearly higher burnout respondents feel unable to assist the client in the way that they would like. It is important to note that these feelings of inadequacy are subjective. As discussed earlier, higher burnout employees aim to help the client no matter what. These expectations may therefore be unrealistic, resulting in higher burnout respondents being unable to verify:

> ▪ "If we can show them [the clients] that we are changing and that we are more efficient and obviously, word of mouth, they will tell the guys 'Well, actually, Company T is not that bad.'" Respondent H8, Company T.
> ▪ "Actually, it would be quite nice for me to actually have a client that appreciates what we do and doesn't just take it for granted." Respondent H1, Company M.
> ▪ "Well, basically when they [the client] come back and tell you 'No, that's not suitable, or that's too expensive or…'" Respondent H2, Company M.
> ▪ "But my managers still see the standard – they don't see the extra and I know I will probably get into trouble." Respondent H7, Company T.
> ▪ "Not helping the way…they [the clients] have a certain need and sometimes I just don't grasp what that need is. I am not giving the full help that I can." Respondent H3, Company F.

In some cases, higher burnout respondents feel ashamed about the company for which they work, while in other cases failed self-verification is evident when they

relate that they are not appreciated by the client or by the company for which they work:

> - "With a lot of things taking place now claims are taking a bit longer. Our company is in a change structure so we can't deliver what we normally could." Respondent H4, Company F.
> - "It makes you feel – not really unappreciated, but sometimes stupid." Respondent H5, Company F.

6.3.6.1.2 Feel guilt when unable to help the client

Some higher burnout respondents translate this difficulty to self-verify into feelings of guilt. One respondent wonders whether it his fault that the clients have problems. Another respondent feels guilty when she cannot grasp what the client needs and another feels bad when he cannot assist the client due to red tape:

> - "And we do feel bad when we can't assist the client because there are a lot of processes to follow. You can only do so much and you feel so bad that you can't help the guy, especially when it is a personal situation like that." Respondent H5, Company F.
> - You wonder if it is your fault at all." Respondent H8, Company T.
> - "They [the clients] have a certain need and sometimes I just don't grasp what that need is." Respondent H3, Company F.

High burnout respondents report feeling "emotionally challenged" and "emotionally drained." Selected quotations indicating this sense of burnout experienced by higher burnout respondents include:

- "I feel emotionally challenged because they can be a very difficult client." Respondent H1, Company M.
- "Stressful – it's very – a lot of the calls are trauma calls and they do have an impact on you. Like your emotional state." Respondent H6, Company F.
- "Not to be nasty, but you have to have psychoanalysis later – it really gets to your head." Respondent H3, Company F.
- "It would be like taking a balloon, blowing it up with hot air and Valium and all that. And just taking a pin and popping it and then just having a clump of nothing with a hole in the end." Respondent H3, Company F.
- "It's draining emotionally. There are a lot of calls that you receive and you don't know how to handle or hear…people call in with a lot of stuff." Respondent H5, Company F.

6.3.6.2 Evidence of self-verification among lower burnout respondents

Lower burnout respondents, on the other hand, feel a strong sense of self-verification and personal accomplishment as reflected in **Table 80**.

Table 80: Quotation count report − Evidence of self-verification amongst lower burnout respondents

	Respondents								
	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8	L9
Code	M	M	M	T	T	T	T	T	T
Experiences a sense of accomplishment (49)	8	2	10	4	5	9	5	3	3

As indicated by the selected quotations below, lower burnout respondents experience a strong sense of self-verification. Most are of the opinion that they are able to assist and impress the client through the service that they provide. Some feel that they are making a positive contribution to the company and others would even like more challenges – again indicating a high degree of self-efficacy and personal accomplishment:

- "It's going to take time, but I am seeing the difference I am making." Respondent L4, Company T.

- "I think it happens quite often here. It's even better when you have a client that is very sceptical in the beginning and then you wow them!" Respondent L3, Company M.

- "Make it a bit more challenging you know. At the moment I feel I know everything that is going on so maybe if they could make it more challenging – otherwise I wouldn't want to change my job." Respondent L6, Company T.

- "I like it when you go to present to a client and you have something that really meets their needs and is interesting to them and they enjoy what you have to share with them. Even if it is bad news. They like the work that you've done and they find it useful. I like wowing the clients with something interesting." Respondent L1, Company M.

- "And I believe that my small contribution in this big company will have a great effect somewhere." Respondent L7, Company T.

Lower burnout respondents also receive a large degree of appreciation and praise from the client, contributing to the sense of self-verification:

- "I like it that you fulfil their needs and that they are happy with the work that you have done. That sense of satisfaction – it is very gratifying to feel that you've helped them, that you've improved their business somehow. You are adding value and that gives me a thrill." Respondent L1, Company M.

- "Yes, we do [get a lot of appreciation from the client] – because we do a great job." Respondent L7, Company T.

- "They (the client) mail to management just to tell of the excellent service they received." Respondent L8, Company T.

- "We get mails at least every second day for recognition of the technicians." Respondent L9, Company T.

- "Clients often say it's a great presentation – thanks etc. That's what we work towards." Respondent L3, Company M.

> ■ "They [the clients] praise you and go 'Wow – this guy knows what he is doing.' That is satisfying that they put you on a pedestal sometimes." Respondent L6, Company T.

6.4 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

It is clear from the qualitative data presented in this chapter that the role identities of higher burnout client service employees differ from the role identities of lower burnout employees.

To summarise, higher burnout employees view themselves as subordinate to the client. They perceive the client as controlling, abusive and as having unreasonable expectations. Lower burnout respondents, on the other hand, display positive feelings towards the client and perceive themselves as superior to and more knowledgeable than the client. It appears that because lower burnout respondents feel knowledgeable and superior to the client, they also feel empowered to meet the demands of their client and expect to establish a partnership with the client. Lower burnout respondents demand co-operation and respect from the client, are task and solution orientated and are able to establish a psychological distance between themselves and the client. They experience a large degree of appreciation from the client and, as a result, experience self-verification. Higher burnout respondents, on the other hand, tend to personalise the client relationship by empathising and identifying with the client. They experience a sense of defeat and powerlessness when dealing with the client cite numerous instances where they have difficulty in self-verifying.

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CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The conceptual framework developed in Chapter 3 argues that the role identities of client service employees carry implications for the development of burnout. According to the conceptual framework, role identities of client service employees are derived from, and partly shaped by, the dominant client discourse of the organisation. These role identities, which contain role-related expectations, influence role-related behaviour and subjective perceptions in a number of ways. In cases where this role-related behaviour results in role overload, role conflict, role ambiguity or emotional labour, it could result in burnout. Furthermore, role identities can inform subjective perceptions of the work environment. If these perceptions include feelings of inequity, a loss of autonomy or a sense of failure, burnout could result. The present study also proposes that processes related to failed self-verification could contribute to the development of burnout. If individuals are unable to positively affirm a role identity through the processes of self-verification, they could suffer a diminished sense of self and a loss of efficacy – both of these being recognised antecedents to burnout.

In the remainder of this chapter, the qualitative and quantitative results are interpreted using the conceptual framework developed in Chapter 3. In so doing, each of the research questions posed in Chapter 3 are addressed. It should be noted that all research questions pertaining to the relationship between burnout and role identity are discussed first, after which they are integrated using the conceptual model developed in Chapter 3. The research questions pertaining to the relationship between role identity and discourse are dealt with after this in a separate section.

7.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

7.2.1 Research Question 1: To what extent are client service employees' burnout levels related to their biographic and demographic characteristics?

Previous research on the antecedents to burnout has shown relationships between burnout and a number of biographical and demographic variables. While the primary objective of the present research is to explore whether a relationship between burnout and role identity exists, a selection of biographic and demographic variables were included in the questionnaire. This was done with the purpose of controlling for external variance and to enrich interpretation of possible relationships between burnout and role identity. To this end, a number of noteworthy relationships were found between burnout and biographical and demographic variables.

Prior to discussing these relationships, it is appropriate to introduce a cautionary note regarding the interaction effects and causal relationships between role identity, burnout and the above-mentioned variables. Given the nature of the present research, the interaction between role identity, burnout, demographic/biographic characteristics and orientation to work, organisation and life is unclear. While previous research confirms many of the significant relationships found between burnout and demographic/biographic characteristics in the present study, it remains unclear as to the causal direction of the relationships. It is also unclear as to whether any of these variables could potentially mediate the relationship between role identity and burnout. It also remains uncertain as to whether role identity is a consequence of, or antecedent to, any of these variables. In the paragraphs that follow, the significant relationships between burnout, demographic/biographic characteristics and orientation to life, work and organisation will be discussed. Where applicable, speculations will be made regarding the possible interaction effects and causal relationships between these variables.

Gender (V83), marital status (V84), age (V82), tenure at current organisation (V86) and hours worked per week (V89) do not display significant relationships with burnout total, personal accomplishment or emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation.

Participating organisation (V106), population group (V105), educational level (V85), total working years (V88) and years working in a service environment (V87) all display significant associations with burnout or either of its components, and will be discussed below.

Firstly, the company to which the client service employee belongs (participating organisation) displays a significant relationship with burnout total, reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation. Respondents from Company M display statistically significantly higher mean scores on reduced personal accomplishment when compared with respondents from Company F and Company T. Respondents from Company F, on the other hand, display significantly higher mean scores on the emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation subscale than respondents from Company T. This finding is important because it suggests that in the present sample, the development of burnout is associated with the organisation to which respondents belong. It could also mean that the development of burnout is associated with the kind of service work one is engaged in. Since a number of the antecedents to burnout are organisational, different companies with different organisational practices and policies would influence the development of burnout differently. While role identity is not regarded as an organisational variable, it is acknowledged that the organisational client discourse would shape the identities constructed by its employees. In the case of Company M, for instance, it could be speculated that the client discourse shapes the construction of role identities that possibly obstruct the experience of personal accomplishment. In the case of Company F, the role identities shaped in response to the organisational client discourse may facilitate the development of emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation. Caution should therefore be exercised when interpreting the relationships between burnout and respondent scores on the adjective pairs used to describe the client and the self in role.

Since each of the three companies under investigation represents different service sectors, the type of service work required on the part of the client service employee is markedly different. Furthermore, the type of client serviced by each of the companies is also markedly different. Client service employees from Company F, for instance, engage with clients processing insurance claims. These clients are generally in a

position of need and may come across as emotionally vulnerable. From the qualitative interviews conducted with higher burnout employees from Company F, it is evident that these employees engage in a considerable amount of emotional labour. They are "taught" how to relate to the client appropriately, suggesting a strong propensity for surface acting, but also tend to emphasise and identify with the client's problems – suggestive of deep acting. Client service employees from Company T also engage with clients who are in need of assistance, but these clients are not emotionally vulnerable because of this need. Client service employees from this organisation display evidence of engaging in surface acting with the client, insofar as hiding irritation and making the client feel comfortable. While it has been suggested the deep acting is negatively associated with depersonalisation and reduced personal accomplishment (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002), research also suggests that emotional labour which does not result in favourable client relationships or verification of the self, could result in the development of burnout (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002). This may be the case in Company F. While these employees engage in both surface and deep acting, they are unable to establish favourable relationships and often feel guilt for not helping as much as they could. While it would have been appropriate to control for company effect during the quantitative analysis of the data, the small sample size rendered this impractical. Results from the qualitative phase of the research show, however, that higher burnout employees from different companies exhibit similar role identity characteristics. This appears to suggest that while the client service context may be vastly different, the nature of the role identities are similar across the higher burnout group.

Population group also displays a significant association with experienced burnout in the present sample. White respondents present significantly higher levels of personal accomplishment than their black, coloured and indian counterparts. No previous research conducted in South Africa could be found to support or contradict this finding. Since only 25 respondents in the present sample are not part of the white population group, further research is needed to determine whether population group does indeed have a significant influence on burnout scores.

Respondents who have been working in a client service environment for longer display lower levels of burnout and reduced personal accomplishment when

compared with those that have less client service experience. Similarly, employees who have been working for a longer period of time, also display lower levels of burnout when compared with those working for shorter. Previous research into the antecedents of burnout has shown how work-related expectations become more realistic the more experience the individual has in the working environment, resulting in increased levels of personal accomplishment (Kuruuzum *et al.*, 2008). Since unrealistic expectations have been linked to the development of burnout (Brill, 1984; Cherniss, 1980; Freudenberger & Richelson, 1980), longer serving employees with more realistic expectations would experience more accomplishment and therefore less burnout. Furthermore, from a role identity perspective, failure to self-verify occurs when an individual is not able to match behavioural outcomes with behavioural expectations. Individuals with limited working experience in a client service setting may therefore construct role identities based on unrealistic expectations and, as a consequence, experience diminished levels of personal accomplishment.

Educational levels display a significant positive relationship with reduced personal accomplishment. Scheffe's test indicates a pair wise statistically significant difference between the reduced personal accomplishment scores of respondents with a degree or postgraduate degree and respondents with a diploma or secondary school education. In other words, respondents with a degree or postgraduate degree display higher levels of reduced personal accomplishment than respondents with a diploma or secondary education. This association can be explained with reference to levels of expectations. Individuals with higher levels of education tend to have higher (and possibly less-realistic) expectations of what they are able to achieve when compared with individuals with lower levels of education (Pines & Maslach, 1978). Since unrealistic expectations are associated with the development of burnout, more highly educated individuals would experience higher levels of burnout.

The findings of this study show that burnout is associated with a number of demographic and biographic variables. The service organisation for which the respondent works displays a significant relationship with burnout and both its components, suggesting that service setting is a predictor of burnout. Length of

service and educational levels are also negatively associated with reduced personal accomplishment, pointing to the role of expectations in the development of burnout.

7.2.2 Research Question 2: To what extent are client service employees' burnout levels associated with their orientation towards life, work and organisation?

Results from a Spearmen Correlation Analysis show that the importance placed on work (V94) and service to others (V95) is significantly negatively related to burnout total, reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation. This implies that the more important client service employees regard work and service to others, the lower their levels of burnout, reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation. In accordance with research conducted by Brotheridge and Lee (2002), the importance of work and service to others could be an indication of the extent to which the individual employee identifies with the client service role. Employees that regard work and service to others as important are identifying strongly with the client service role and hence experiencing lower levels of burnout. This finding corresponds with the proposition by Brotheridge and Lee (2002: 60) that individuals who identify with their roles are likely to feel authentic and cope better with work-related demands than individuals that do not identify with their roles. Individuals who regard work and service to others as important are likely to approach their work with energy, involvement and efficacy, resulting in job engagement − the opposite of burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). It could further be speculated that client service employees that regard work and service to others as important and worthwhile are likely to experience efficacy and pride in themselves. Those that do not regard work and service to others as important may construct role identities that position themselves as powerless and lacking influence in the client service relationship. As a consequence, they could experience reduced feelings of personal accomplishment and a sense of defeat. This possibility is supported by Schaufeli and Bakker's (2004) Wellbeing at Work Model, which suggests that people are less likely to experience burnout if they are engaged in work that they deem important and pleasurable. It also coincides with the existential perspective on burnout which is premised on the notion that people need to believe that what they

do is meaningful, important and significant in order to buffer the development of burnout (Pines, 2002).

It could also be argued that orientation towards work and service to others is a consequence of burnout rather than an antecedent to burnout. Higher burnout respondents may regard work and service to others as less important than their lower burnout colleagues do because they have depersonalised the work and service context. In such an instance, decreasing importance is placed on work and service to others as a consequence of burnout, since withdrawal from work is regarded as a mechanism by which individuals cope with excessive emotional exhaustion (Cherniss, 1993).

Satisfaction with supervisor relationships (V97) displays a significant negative relationship with emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation. Higher levels of emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation are associated with less satisfactory relationships with supervisors. Data from the qualitative interviews also indicates that higher burnout respondents are dissatisfied with the relationships they have with supervisors and managers. The reasons given are numerous. A number of higher burnout employees feel that they are not provided with enough resources in order to ensure excellent client service. They report being humiliated by management and are afraid of sanctions imposed by management should they break company policy to assist the client. Many higher burnout respondents also reported feeling unable to express themselves and their concerns regarding the client. These findings are supported by previous research that shows how perceived social support plays a role in buffering the development of burnout (Maslach *et al.*, 1996). Social support, which would include supervisory support, is a job resource that enables individuals to cope with excessive job demands (Kuruuzum *et al.*, 2008). Interestingly, however, satisfaction with co-worker and subordinate relationships did not display significant relationships with either of the burnout components.

Pride in the organisation (V101, V103) and loyalty and commitment to the organisation (V100, V102, V104) also display significant relationships with burnout total, personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation. This indicates that the more proud individuals are of their organisations and the more loyal

and committed they are to their organisations, the lower their levels of burnout. Again, the interaction between role identity and burnout with orientation towards the organisation is not addressed by the present research. This renders it difficult to ascertain whether levels of organisational pride, loyalty and commitment would play a role in the construction of the client service role identity, or whether role identity would influence levels of organisational pride, loyalty and commitment. It could be speculated that employees who are proud, loyal and committed to their organisations would experience a greater sense of pride and meaning in their work, resulting in reduced levels of burnout (Pines, 2002). Such a sentiment resonates with the findings by Buunk *et al.* (2007) that claim that burnout is linked to feelings of shame and inferiority. It could therefore be argued that if employees are not proud of the organisations for which they work, they could experience feelings of inferiority and shame, resulting in burnout. Data from the interviews of the present research shows that higher burnout employees report feeling let down by their organisations who appear not to provide them with enough resources and support.

Burnout has been linked to withdrawal behaviours including reduced organisational commitment (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). The fact that respondents with higher levels of burnout report lower levels of commitment and pride in their organisations, could be explained by the fact that withdrawal behaviours are an observed consequence of burnout.

The findings of this study show that burnout levels among client service employees are associated with orientations towards work and the organisation. Higher burnout respondents regard work and service to others as less important than lower burnout respondents do. They report being less satisfied with both supervisor and client relationships when compared with lower burnout respondents and experience less commitment to and pride in their employing organisations.

7.2.3 Research Question 3: In what ways do the role identities of higher burnout employees differ from the role identities of lower burnout employees?

In order to address this research question, it was necessary to determine how client service employees describe/define the client; how they describe themselves (self in role); and how they describe themselves in relation to the client (difference between descriptions of the self in role and descriptions of the client). The role-related expectations contained within the role identity (identity standard) were also explored.

7.2.3.1 Descriptions of the client

Spearman correlation analyses of the relationship between burnout and employee descriptions of the client on the set of adjective pairs indicates that higher burnout client service employees describe the client as more impatient, inconsiderate and rigid than lower burnout client service employees do. Lower levels of reduced personal accomplishment are associated with describing the client as more important and more respected, while lower levels of emotional exhaustion are associated with describing the client as understanding. Lower burnout respondents also display higher levels of satisfaction with the relationships they have built with the client when compared with higher burnout respondents.

Data from the interviews confirms this finding that higher burnout respondents differ from lower burnout respondents in their descriptions of the client. While both higher and lower burnout respondents view the client as demanding, higher burnout employees describe the client as having unreasonable expectations. Higher burnout respondents also describe the client in a negative light, often citing the client as abusive, domineering, dictatorial and controlling. Lower burnout respondents, on the other hand, recognise that the client is demanding, but do not perceive client demands as unreasonable. They generally displayed positive feelings towards the client, describing the client as trusting, respectful and appreciative.

While both the quantitative and qualitative results suggest that lower burnout respondents perceive the client in a more positive light than the higher burnout

respondents do, it is surprising to note that higher burnout respondents regard the client as less respected and less important than lower burnout respondents do. Since higher burnout respondents describe themselves as subordinate to the client, one would have expected that they perceive the client as more important and more respected than their lower burnout counterparts do. It should be noted, however, that the adjective pairs were rated on a scale of one to seven and that over 80 percent of respondents rated the client on the important side of the scale. This clearly indicates that higher burnout respondents do not necessarily view the client as unimportant and not respected, but that they merely regard the client as less important and less respected than the lower burnout respondent do.

While higher burnout respondents may regard the client as less important and less respected than lower burnout respondents do, higher burnout respondents perceive themselves as powerless against the client and subordinate to the client. It is therefore important to make a distinction between perceptions of the client (counter-role) and perceptions of the self (self in role). A client service employee may, for instance regard the client as unimportant or not respected, but if they do not perceive themselves as important or respected, the view of the client may become secondary, while the perception of the self can influence role-related behaviour instead. This finding is important in the context of the current study. According to Burke and Tully (1977) the identity of an individual only has meaning insofar it is related to a relevant counter-identity. The Burke-Tully technique therefore includes the measure of counter-identity as a variable to consider when defining a particular role identity in question. While the present research did not make use of the Burke-Tully (1977) analysis technique as it was intended, it is important to note that descriptions of the client displayed less significant correlations with burnout and its components than descriptions of the self did. This suggests that descriptions of the self may be better predictors of burnout levels than descriptions of the counter-identity are.

The conceptual framework developed in Chapter 3 proposes role identity as a possible antecedent to the development of burnout. The negative descriptions of the client by higher burnout respondents could however, be a consequence of burnout rather than a component of the employee's role identity. As cautioned by Maslach and Leiter (1996) a large percentage of burnout research is subject to causal

limitations. Since burnout has been linked to the development of negative work-related attitudes (Cherniss, 1980; Pines & Aronson, 1988; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998) the negative sentiments expressed by higher burnout respondents towards the client may be a consequence of burnout, rather than an antecedent to the development of burnout. However, in the present study, the direction of causality can be inferred from the qualitative data. As shown in subsequent sections of this chapter, the role identities of client service employees have direct implications for role-related behaviours and subjective perceptions, which in turn, influence the self-verification process and ultimately induce or inhibit the development of burnout.

7.2.3.2 Descriptions of the self in role

Results from the Spearman correlation analysis of the relationship between burnout and client service employee descriptions of themselves, in the client service role on the list of adjectives, indicate that levels of burnout are associated with a number of self descriptions. Respondents scoring higher on burnout total, reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation describe themselves as weaker than lower burnout respondents do. Respondents with higher burnout total and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation scores also describe themselves as less respected, more unappreciated and more rigid than those respondents with lower scores on these components do. Furthermore, higher scores on the reduced personal accomplishment scale are associated with descriptions of the self as feeling more passive, while higher scores on both the emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation and reduced personal accomplishment scales are associated with feelings of being more powerless.

These findings are supported with data from the interviews, where higher burnout respondents describe themselves as subordinate to the client and report experiencing a sense of defeat and inferiority when dealing with the client. Lower burnout employees, on the other hand, describe themselves as superior to and more knowledgeable than the client. They perceive themselves as the experts and experience a high degree of self-efficacy when engaging with the client. These findings confirm the results of research conducted by Buunk *et al.* (2007) which concluded that being placed in an unwanted and subordinate position would result in

a number of social stresses such as powerlessness, shame, a loss of status and feelings of inferiority.

7.2.3.3 Descriptions of the self in relation to the client

Spearman correlation analysis of the relationship between perceived difference between the client and client service employee on the set of adjectives and burnout yielded an interesting and noteworthy finding in the context of the present research. According to the data, levels of reduced personal accomplishment appear lower in cases where the client service employee perceives a greater difference between themselves and the client on the active–passive; powerful–powerless; considerate–inconsiderate; understanding–not understanding and patient–impatient adjective pairs. The only adjective pair where a larger perceived difference between the client and the respondent resulted in increased levels of burnout total and reduced personal accomplishment was the weak–strong continuum. This suggests that a differentiation between the client service employee and the client role identity in certain aspects is necessary to increase experienced personal accomplishment.

7.2.3.4 Role-related expectations

Role identities encompass a set of role-related expectations that guide role-related behaviour (Hogg *et al.*, 1995). These role-related expectations are derived from the identity standard of the role identity, and are therefore personal role-related expectations held by the individual.

Data from the interviews suggest that the role-related expectations of higher burnout employees differ from the role-related expectations of lower burnout employees. In the case of higher burnout respondents, the subordinated role identity appears to carry specific behavioural expectations that are different from the expectations contained within the role identities of lower burnout respondents. It appears as though higher burnout employees internalise the organisational expectation that they assist the client no matter what. This is evidenced by the fact that higher burnout employees will often go above and beyond the call of duty to assist the client. In

many instances, higher burnout employees will break company policy and procedure in order to address the client's demands. While lower burnout employees also aim to provide excellent client service, they are able to distance themselves from the client service role, and do not display evidence of breaking with company policy or procedure. According to Singh (2000) and Chung and Schneider (2002) client service employees suffer considerable stress because they are often expected to satisfy both the client and their employers. This results in considerable role conflict, characterised by incompatibility between the various expectations associated with a single role, as the needs of the client may clash with company policy and procedure. This role conflict was evident among the higher burnout employees that participated in the interviews. While they are in most instances prepared to break company policy in order to assist the client, they are also very aware that they could be punished by the employing organisation for doing so. Lower burnout respondents do not appear to display such role conflict. Many were able to distance themselves from the role, and were able to report an unreasonable client to management or co-workers.

Qualitative demands such as role conflict have been linked to burnout on numerous occasions (Low *et al.*, 2001; Maslach *et al.,* 2001: Singh *et al.*, 1994) and the present study is no exception.

Because lower burnout respondents describe themselves as superior to and more knowledgeable than the client, they expect co-operation and respect from the client. This expectation seems to have facilitated the development of a partnership with the client among the lower burnout respondents. By referring to the client service relationship as a partnership, lower burnout respondents create a culture of reciprocity between themselves and the client. This sense of reciprocity appears to inhibit the development of burnout amongst these respondents in that it implies that the client carry some responsibility for the outcome of the service relationship. This finding is congruent with research by Truchot and Deregard (2001) and Bakker *et al.* (2000) which suggests that perceived reciprocity in the client/service provider relationship is a significant buffer against the development of burnout.

The findings of the research clearly suggest that the role identities of respondents on the higher end of the burnout spectrum differ from the role identities of respondents

on the lower end of the burnout spectrum. Levels of burnout are significantly associated with both client and self in role descriptions on a number of the bipolar adjective pairs, suggesting that role identity and burnout are related.

7.2.4 Research Question 4: To what extent do the role-related behaviours and subjective perceptions of higher burnout employees differ from the role-related behaviours and subjective perceptions of lower burnout employees?

Research question four investigates the extent to which the role-related behaviours and subjective perceptions of higher burnout respondents differ from the role-related behaviours and perceptions of lower burnout respondents and is answered with reference to the qualitative research only. While it is acknowledged that subjective perceptions and role-related behaviours are conceptually distinct, it is necessary to incorporate them into the same research question. As will be shown in the paragraphs below, role-related perceptions and behaviours are closely related, rendering it difficult to discuss them separately.

Data from the qualitative phase of the research suggest that the role-related behaviours of higher burnout employees differ from the role-related behaviours of lower burnout employees. While both higher and lower burnout client service employees engage in emotional labour, higher burnout employees do so to a far greater extent than their lower burnout counterparts. Lower burnout employees appear to engage in surface acting, where the displays of emotion are not actually felt or internalised. Higher burnout respondents, on the other hand, appear to engage in both surface and deep acting, since they appear to identify with and empathise with the client on a number of occasions. This finding seems somewhat contradictory to previous findings by Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) who maintain that deep acting is positively associated with feelings of personal accomplishment, while surface acting is positively associated with emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation. They also maintain that deep acting is more likely when employees receive social support from colleagues and supervisors. In the context of the present research, it appears that deep acting may be associated with higher burnout, and that higher burnout employees experience less social support. These

findings should be interpreted with caution, since evidence of emotional labour in the present sample was not measured quantitatively. The distinction between deep and surface acting in the present research is drawn from limited qualitative observations and interpretations drawn from these observations and are merely inferred.

According to Tracy (2005) emotional labour is regarded as less stressful to the employee if it is viewed as part of a "strategic exchange". Since lower burnout respondents included in the present research aim to establish a partnership with the client based on mutual respect and co-operation, it could be argued that the display of emotion is viewed as part of a strategic exchange. In such a context, the role identity of the lower burnout respondent appears to moderate the negative consequences of emotional labour in the service context.

Lower burnout employees are far more task and solution orientated, while higher burnout employees are focused on establishing personal relationships with the client and tend to take sole or personal responsibility for the client. Lower burnout employees are able to distance themselves from the client service role and are able to manage and exert power over the client, while higher burnout employees tend to empathise and identify with the clients problems.

Based on the research argument developed in Chapter 3, and previous research on role identity that suggests that role identities carry implications for role-related behaviours, it can be argued that the role identities of client service employees influence their role-related behaviours. Higher burnout employees view the client as demanding, controlling and dictatorial and describe themselves as more restricted, passive, powerless and subordinate than the lower burnout respondents do. This clearly suggests a lack of autonomy on the part of the client service employee and could indicate a loss of control over the client service situation. Since job control and autonomy are regarded as job resources that buffer the development of burnout (Fernet *et al.*, 2004; Maslach *et al.*, 1996; Xanthopoulou *et al.*, 2007), it makes sense that higher burnout respondents report experiencing less control and autonomy.

Client service employees who feel powerless, restricted and who lack autonomy are also likely to experience low levels of self-efficacy and reduced levels of personal

accomplishment (Maslach, *et al.*, 1996; Xanthapoulou *et al.*, 2007). This is clearly reflected in the qualitative research where higher burnout respondents describe feeling powerless in helping the client. Low burnout respondents, on the other hand, displayed evidence of being able to manage the client and are often able to exert power over the client. It could be argued that the reason why lower burnout respondents are more likely to feel a sense of efficacy is because they define themselves as more knowledgeable and superior to the client.

Client service employees that describe themselves as dominated by, and subordinate to, the client will undoubtedly feel restricted in terms of being able to assist the client. Added to this is the fact that a number of higher burnout client service employees report receiving little support and resources from their companies. When employees have too much work to do with too few resources, burnout is likely to result (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti *et al.*, 2003; Maslach & Leiter, 2005; Maslach *et al.*, 1996). In the present research, this lack of resources appears to further contribute to the individual's feelings of powerlessness. It could be speculated that client service employees compensate for this sense of powerlessness by engaging with the client on a personal level. Since they are unable to assist the client appropriately through other means, empathising and identifying with the client may be the only means through which higher burnout client service employees feel able to assist the client. Furthermore, from the qualitative data it is also clear that higher burnout respondents expect recognition and appreciation from the client relationship. Given the fact that they feel disempowered to assist the client, the only way they may be able to attain this recognition is through engaging with the client on a personal level.

The finding that higher burnout client service employees tend to identify with and personalise the client relationship runs counter to one of the central consequences of burnout i.e. depersonalisation. This finding is, however, congruent with the results of a study conducted by Vanheule *et al.* (2003) that showed that high burnout individuals display a strong sense of personal obligation towards their clients and often manifest feelings of powerlessness in their interactions with the client. These individuals tend to identify closely with their clients and often feel threatened in their exchanges with them. Low burnout individuals, on the other hand, manage to maintain subjective distance from the client, hold flexible expectations regarding

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client outcomes and attribute failure to the client or context rather than their own inadequacies. Instead of expressing feelings of powerlessness, low burnout individuals would resign themselves to the impossibility of difficult situations.

Instead of depersonalising the client, it could be argued that higher burnout respondents display evidence of withdrawing from work role by placing less importance on work and service to others. As an alternative to treating the client as an impersonal object, higher burnout respondents appear to be cynical towards work and the client service role by placing less importance of the notion of work and service to others. They are also less committed and loyal to their organisations, suggesting withdrawal from the employing organisation. This finding corresponds with the definition that depersonalisation entails the development of cynical attitudes towards work − characterised by withdrawal behaviours, the use of negative or derogatory language towards people at work and the possible intellectualisation of the work situation (Maslach & Jackson, 1986; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

The reason as to why higher burnout client service employees included in the present research do not depersonalise the client, could be explained through reference to their role-related expectations. As already indicated, the role identities of high burnout employees entail a perceived obligation that they help the client no matter what. Because they perceive a lack of autonomy, control and resources, they may feel unable to act in accordance with the identity standard. When an individual experiences an incongruence between the expectations contained in the identity standard (in this case helping the client at all costs) and the outcome of a situation, they tend to modify their role-related behaviours in order to ensure that future behavioural outcomes are congruent with role-related expectations (Stets & Burke, 2003). By taking personal responsibility for the client, identifying and empathising with the client, higher burnout employees may be exercising the only option that they feel is available to them to assist the client and hence live up to their role-related expectations. In such an instance, depersonalising the client relationship would not be an option.

Data from the interviews indicates that lower burnout respondents tend to work in teams and experience a large degree of support from co-workers. Higher burnout

respondents did not display evidence of this, and instead report taking personal or exclusive responsibility for the client. The fact that higher burnout employees take sole responsibility for the client appears to be partly a function of their work context, since they do report a lack of support, resources and understanding from management. Unclear institutional goals, a lack of leadership and social support and social isolation has been shown to contribute to the development of burnout (Albar-Marin & Garcia-Ramirez, 2005; Cherniss, 1980; Van der Doef & Maes, 1999). Furthermore, Leiter and Maslach (1988) report that good co-worker relationships and contact with one's supervisor are significant buffers to the development of burnout. Results from the Spearman correlation analysis of the relationship between burnout and satisfaction with supervisory relationships supports this finding that higher levels of emotional exhaustion are associated with less satisfactory co-worker and supervisory relationships. It can therefore be argued that in the context of the present study, lack of social support from both supervisors and co-workers contributes to the development of burnout among client service employees.

Probably one of the primary differences between higher and lower burnout respondents is the fact that lower burnout respondents partner with the client. Higher burnout respondents report inequitable relationships with the client assert that the client exerts considerable control over the client service interaction. Lower burnout respondents, on the other hand, report partnering with the client through a mutual exchange of respect, co-operation and information. Although lower burnout respondents define themselves as experts and more knowledgeable than the client, they realise that they need assistance and co-operation from the client in order to fulfil their service obligations. They therefore seek a partnership with the client, whereby both the client and the client service employee or company derive some benefit from the relationship while working towards a common goal. In accordance with research by Bakker *et al.* (2000) and Truchot and Deregard (2001) it can therefore be concluded that the establishment of a reciprocal partnership between client service employee and client may inhibit the development of burnout.

It appears from the interviews that higher burnout respondents experience a reduced sense of efficacy and control over the client service situation and describe feeling powerless in helping the client. These feelings of powerlessness and worthlessness

are also evident from the quantitative research. When asked to describe themselves on the set of contrasting adjective pairs, respondents with higher levels of burnout total describe themselves as less understanding and less patient than respondents that score lower on burnout total do. Respondents that score higher on reduced personal accomplishment, tend to describe themselves as less helpful, less considerate, meaner, less understanding and more passive than respondents that score lower on reduced personal accomplishment do. Furthermore, scores on emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation tend to be higher in respondents that describe themselves as less patient and less understanding than those that regard themselves as more understanding and patient. These sentiments correspond with the sense of defeat and reduced personal accomplishment observed among the higher burnout interview respondents during the interviews. Because higher burnout employees engage with the client on a personal level and internalise and identify with the client's problems, they also display a large degree of guilt that they are unable to assist the client to the level they would like to.

The findings of this study show that the role-related behaviours and subjective perceptions of higher burnout employees differ from the role-related behaviour and subjective perceptions of lower burnout employees. Higher burnout employees engage in both deep acting and surface acting, while lower burnout employees appear to engage only in surface acting. Lower burnout employees are more task and solution orientated than their higher burnout colleagues and experience a large degree of social support from both colleagues and supervisors. They demand co-operation from the client, and in so doing, establish a partnership with the client. Higher burnout employees appear to identify and empathise with the client and experience little social support from colleagues or management. They also report a lack of resources to do their work, and consequently feel powerless in being able to assist the client. Instead of depersonalising the client in order to cope, higher burnout employees appear to become more cynical towards work and organisation.

7.2.5 Research Question 5: Are lower burnout respondents able to self-verify more easily than higher burnout respondents?

As suggested by the discussions in the preceding sections, the role identities of client service employees appear to carry implications for role-related behaviours and subjective perceptions. These role-related perceptions and behaviours in turn appear to either facilitate or inhibit the development of burnout. A further way in which role identities could contribute to the development of burnout is through the process of self verification. According to Burke (1991) individuals attempt to act in accordance with the expectations contained within the identity standard of the role identity. When the individual is able to act in accordance with these behavioural expectations self verification occurs, resulting in feelings of esteem and personal mastery (Cast & Burke, 2002). Failure to match role-related outcomes with these expectations results in failed self-verification, which according to the research argument presented in Chapter 3, could contribute to the development of burnout.

The role of failed expectations in the development of burnout has been frequently documented (Brill, 1984; Cherniss, 1980; Freudenberger & Richelson, 1980: 13; Hyvonen *et al.*, 2009). Data from the present study found a significant, albeit low, negative correlation between number of years working in a client service environment/number of years working in total and reduced personal accomplishment. This appears to support the fact that burnout is expectationally mediated. Individuals that have been employed for longer apparently have more realistic expectations, rendering self-verification easier and inhibiting the development of burnout.

Results from the Spearman correlation analysis of the relationship between burnout and descriptions of the self in role confirm that feelings of reduced self-efficacy are related to burnout. Higher levels of reduced personal accomplishment are significantly associated with feeling less patient, less considerate and less helpful in the service situation. Higher burnout respondents also tend to feel less appreciated than their lower burnout colleagues. Furthermore, the quantitative data displayed a significant moderate negative relationship between the statement: "I feel I live up to the expectations of my clients" and burnout total and personal accomplishment. This illustrates that lower burnout employees are more likely to experience a sense of self-

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verification and personal accomplishment in their roles than higher burnout respondents are. A significant negative relationship was also found between the statement: "I have built effective relationships with my clients" and burnout total, reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation.

The qualitative data presented in the Chapter 5 indicate that lower burnout respondents experience a large degree of self-verification, while higher burnout respondent experience a sense of defeat and feel guilt for not helping the client. Higher burnout respondents also report feeling humiliated by the companies for which they work and, coupled with a sense of defeat, experience little self-verification. According to the existential perspective, the cause of burnout lies in people's desire to believe that their lives are meaningful and that the things they do are significant (Pines, 2002). While the higher burnout respondents continue to remain committed to the client, they do display evidence of withdrawing from work. They cite work and service to others as less important than their lower burnout colleagues do, and display less committed and satisfied relationships with the organisation, their colleagues and supervisors. The existential perspective of burnout corresponds closely to Freudenberger and Richelson's (1980) definition of burnout that maintains that burnout is a "state of fatigue of frustration brought about by devotion to a cause, way of life, or relationship that failed to produce the expected reward". In the case of the higher burnout respondents, they expect to be able to help the client no matter what and expect to derive a sense of personal gratification through client service work. Their subordinate role identities and a lack of support from the companies for which they work makes the attainment of these expectations difficult. This ultimately results in a sense of defeat, unworthiness and failure. According to Cherniss (1993) when people do not feel successful, they may chose to psychologically withdraw from work, resulting in depersonalisation and/or cynicism.

The findings of the present research appear consistent with the observation made by Hallsten (1993: 99) that burnout occurs when the enactment of an active, self-definition role is threatened with no alternative role at hand. According to Hallsten (1993) individuals strive to create a positive sense of self through role enactment. Role enactment therefore maintains a positive role identity if it is successful in verifying the identity standard. If the individual is unable to self-verify, the feelings of

powerlessness and low self-esteem experienced by the higher burnout interview respondents occur.

Results from the qualitative data clearly show that higher burnout client service employees feel subordinate to the client. They lack control over and autonomy within the client service situation and therefore feel powerless and less able to assist the client when compared with lower burnout respondents   By virtue of their role identities, higher burnout client service employees feel constrained in terms of their behavioural resources and options. They experience little support from their companies and therefore feel particularly restricted and powerless in terms of being able to meet the expectations of both the client and the organisation for which they work. Role identities in organisational settings are often differentiated by status and power (Stets & Tshushima, 2001: 286). Individuals with high status are less likely than low status individuals to experience self-verification due to the fact that they have fewer resources at their disposal to confirm their self views. In situations such as these, client service employees may find it difficult to self-verify and suffer the associated negative emotions.

7.2.6 Research Question 6: Do higher burnout employees experience, interpret and internalise the organisational client discourse differently when compared with lower burnout client service employees?

The differential role of organisational client discourse in the construction of the client service role identity between higher burnout and lower burnout respondents did not emerge as clearly from the qualitative data as anticipated. While a large section of the interview schedule was devoted to eliciting descriptions of the client service ethic of the organisation, few discernable differences could be detected between higher burnout employees and lower burnout employees. Both higher and lower burnout respondents described their organisations as having a professional client service ethic aimed at delivering excellent client service. Individual interpretations of the client ethic therefore had to be distilled from other sections of the interviews.

The role of organisational client discourse in shaping a subordinate role identity was clearly evident in the case of the higher burnout respondents from Company F.

Unfortunately, no interviews could be conducted with lower burnout respondents from this company. As a result, it is not possible to ascertain whether the organisational client discourse would have been differently interpreted and internalised by lower burnout respondents from Company F. From the qualitative data it is clear that higher burnout respondents from Company F feel humiliated by company management if they fail to deliver excellent client service. Respondents from the company report being treated like children as a result of having to perform company rituals like putting up a flag before being excused to visit the restroom and having a "floatie" placed above their heads if they performed poorly. These organisational rituals or practices are all part of an organisational discourse that could have contributed to the subordinate role identity amongst client service employees at Company F.

Respondents from Company F frequently remarked that they are fearful of the sanctions or punishments that could be imposed upon them if they do not provide excellent client service or if they make a mistake while assisting the client. According to Alvesson and Willmott (2004) one of the most prominent ways through which organisations shape the identities of their employees is through various forms of control. In the context of the present research, such mechanisms of control could inform a subordinate client service identity by suggesting to employees that they are inferior to the client. Such a discourse of sanctions may also suggest to the employee that the client be assisted no matter what. This could ironically be what propels the client service employee to break company policy and procedure.

Higher burnout respondents from all three service organisations report that their companies demand excellent client service, and that any compromise in terms of service delivery is not an option. In the case of both Company T and Company F, higher burnout respondents often reported breaking with company policy in order to deliver on excellent client service. It could be concluded that the discourse as interpreted by higher burnout respondents of these companies suggests that they place the client's needs above company policy.

Higher burnout respondents from Company M often reported that their managers do not understand what it is like being a client service employee. They feel that the

organisation does not identify with them, and as a result, they feel misunderstood and unsupported. This may suggest that these client service employees experience a disparity between their experiences and the client discourse of the organisation. This could potentially result in alienation and ultimately withdrawal from the company.

It is clear from the interviews that employees from the same organisation differ with regard to the extent to which they draw on the organisational client discourse and construct their identities. The enactment of a specific role identity is an individual activity, and different client service employees within the same organisation may interpret and internalise the expectation contained in the organisational client discourse differently. This would also explain why client service employees belonging to the same organisation, and who are therefore exposed to the same client service discourse, adopt distinctly different client service role identities. Some similarities in the way higher burnout respondents construct identities in response to the client organisational discourse could however, be detected. A number of higher burnout respondents reported that their companies did not provide them with any support when dealing with the client. Lower burnout respondents from Company T, on the other hand, reported that their companies provide them with a platform whereby they are able to lodge complaints against unreasonable clients. By allowing the employee this vehicle for self-expression, Company T is validating the feelings and opinions of its employees. This validation may inform a sense of worthiness amongst these employees, allowing them to experience self-efficacy and self-verification. Vanheule *et al.* (2003: 333) refer to such a mechanism as a "mediating third party" and maintain that such mechanisms facilitate the creation of a subjective distance between the service employee and the client.

Although the present research found limited evidence of the role that organisational client discourse plays in the construction of the client service role identity, the literature pertaining to organisational discourse clearly shows how organisational discourse can influence the construction of role identity. From the data presented in this dissertation, it is clear that the role identities of higher burnout respondents differ from the role identities of lower burnout respondents. As a result, higher burnout respondents engage in different role-related behaviours when compared with lower burnout respondents.   These role-related behaviours carry implications for the

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development of burnout and the individual's propensity to self-verify. Despite the inconclusive nature of the findings pertaining to the relationship between organisational discourse and role identity, one could argue that organisations that make a conscious effort to define the client service ethic around the principles of partnership with the client, may be able to influence the role identities of their employees in such a way that the employees are able to manage their client service relationships better.

7.3   INTEGRATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The two diagrams below reflect the research argument developed in Chapter 3 as applied to the qualitative and quantitative results of the study. **Figure 19** refers to high burnout respondents, while **Figure 20** refers to lower burnout respondents.

Role identity

Perceived role identity of client (counter-identity):
- Controlling
- Abusive
- Client is boss
- Unreasonable expectations
- Powerful
- Disrespectful
- Impatient/inflexible
- Inconsiderate

Self role identity (client service employee):
- Subordinate to client
- Weak
- Restricted
- Passive
- Powerless
- Unappreciated

Identity Standard: Role-related expectations
- Assist client no matter what
- Expect appreciation from client
- Expect sense of self-verification in helping someone
- Management demands excellent client service

Meaning Content

Identity Process/ Self-verification

Role-related behaviour:
- Engages in emotional labour
- Personalises client relationship
- Address client feeling
- Build client up
- Take sole responsibility for the client
- Build relationship with client

Role-related attitudes:
- Powerless against the client
- Sense of defeat
- Little autonomy and control
- Cynical towards work and service to others
- Less loyal and committed to employing organisation
- Less considerate, patient, helpful

- Feel powerless in helping the client
- Experiences little self-verification
- Feel guilty for not helping the client
- Company humiliates us if we don't do well

Figure 19: Role identity among higher burnout employees

The role identities of higher burnout respondents can be defined by the way they describe themselves and the client and by the role-related expectations contained in the identity standard. According to **Figure 19**, higher burnout respondents describe

the client as controlling, abusive, powerful and disrespectful. They perceive the client as being domineering and having unrealistic expectations. Higher burnout employees perceive themselves as weak, passive, powerless, unappreciated, restricted and subordinate to the client. As a result, the role-related expectations contained in the identity standard of higher burnout employees include placing the clients' needs first and helping the client no matter what. As mentioned, the expectations contained in the identity standard carry important implications for role-related behaviours and attitudes, which, according to the theory presented in the literature review, can contribute to the development of burnout. From a behavioural perspective, the expectation to help the client no matter what results in higher burnout employees going against company policy in order to assist the client. This results in considerable role conflict as they try to reconcile the needs of the client with the expectations of the company for which they work. The expectation that they help the client no matter what also results in higher burnout respondents taking sole responsibility for the client and personalising the client relationship. This results in considerable role overload and emotional exhaustion, as higher burnout respondents identify closely with the problems of their clients.

The role identities of higher burnout employees also result in role-related attitudes that pre-dispose them to the development of burnout. Because they view themselves as subordinate to and powerless against the client, they experience a lack of autonomy within and control over the client service situation. This contributes to reduced efficacy and diminished levels of personal accomplishment. Added to this is the fact that higher burnout respondents report receiving very little support from their companies, further contributing to these feelings of powerlessness.

It appears that higher burnout employees try to compensate for these feelings of powerlessness by empathising and engaging with the client on a personal level. This behaviour, coupled with the fact that higher burnout employees display a strong sense of personal obligation to the client, further contributes to emotional exhaustion among higher burnout client service employees.

It is also clear from the research that because of these feelings of powerlessness and subordination, higher burnout employees feel unable to live up to their expectations

of helping the client no matter what. As a result, higher burnout employees report little self verification within their roles and experience feelings of guilt, humiliation and cynicism.

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                              ┌─────────────────┐
                              │  Role identity  │
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Perceived role identity of client (counter-identity):
- Demanding
- Appreciative
- Positive feelings towards the client
- Trusting
- Respecting
- Important
- Respected

Self role identity (client service employee):
- Superior to client
- More knowledgeable than client
- Appreciated
- Respected expert

Identity Standard: Role-related expectations
- Expect to partner with the client
  Expect respect and co-operation from the client
- Must give excellent client service
- Must keep client happy

Meaning content

Identity process/ Self-verification

Role-related behaviour:
- Able to manage the client
- Solution/Task orientated
- Does not take sole responsibility for client
- Don't take role personally
- Able to distance oneself from client
- Engages in emotional labour
- Teamwork

Role-related attitudes:
- Has sense of autonomy
- Efficacy
- Feel supported

- Experiences a sense of personal accomplishment
- Enhanced esteem

Figure 20: Role identity among lower burnout employees

The role identities of lower burnout employees are characterised by their role-related expectations and the way they describe themselves and the client. As indicated by

Figure 20, while lower burnout employees describe their clients as demanding, they generally perceive their clients as appreciative, respecting and trusting. They describe themselves as knowledgeable experts and often report feeling superior to the client. While they expect to provide excellent client service, they demand respect and cooperation from the client and aim to establish a partnership with the client characterised by a sense of reciprocity.

Because lower burnout respondents perceive themselves as knowledgeable experts in partnership with the client, they do not personalise the client relationship. Instead, lower burnout employees engage in task and solution orientated behaviour and are able to manage client expectations and behaviour. This provides them with a sense of autonomy within and control over the client relationship, engendering feelings of accomplishment and efficacy. They also describe receiving considerable support from colleagues when dealing with the client and consequently feel empowered within the client relationship.

Furthermore, the identity standards of lower burnout employees are not unrealistic or unreasonable. While they aim to partner with the client, they are able to distance themselves from the client and the client service role. By using this autonomy, power and control to meet realistic expectations, lower burnout employees are able to self-verify more easily than higher burnout employees.

7.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THE RESEARCH

7.4.1 Academic contributions

The present research makes a number of significant contributions to the broader field of organisational behaviour and the study of burnout in client service settings in particular. The research introduces the concept of role identity as an important variable to consider in the development of burnout. By employing role identity as a construct, the research was able to link self descriptions, definitions of the counter role and role-related expectations within the client service context to the development of burnout. As was shown, these facets of the client service role identity are derived from organisational discourse and can therefore be managed and transformed

through this discourse. As a result, the study provides organisational theorists and practitioners with a further point of intervention with which to reduce burnout in client service settings. Previous research focusing on the relationship between social, professional and occupational identification and burnout has not managed to operationalise the identity construct in such a way that it can be used to inhibit the development of burnout.

The study has also developed a conceptual framework, derived from both qualitative and quantitative findings, that shows how role identity can contribute to role-related attitudes and behaviours that could lead to or inhibit the development of burnout. The study is therefore not merely descriptive in nature, but provides a tentative explanatory framework linking burnout and role identity and exploring the mechanisms by virtue of which this relationship exists. To summarise, the present study showed that:

1. The kind of service organisation to which the employee belongs is significantly associated with the development of burnout.
2. A number of demographic and biographic variables are associated with the development of burnout. These include length of employment, educational level and population group.
3. The role identities of higher burnout client service employees differ from the role identities of lower burnout client service employees.
4. The role identities of client service employees carry implications for role-related attitudes and behaviours, which could ultimately lead to the development of burnout.
5. The role identities of client service employees carry implications for the individual's propensity to self-verify.
6. Failure to self-verify contributes to the development of burnout.
7. The role identities of client service employees are in part, informed by the client discourse of the organisation.

The majority of studies utilising the MBI−HSS have done so within the context of human service workers who provide care or service of a personal nature to a recipient. The present study contributes to the field of burnout literature by illustrating

that the MBI−HSS can be used outside of the human services setting albeit with minor modifications.

Most studies into the antecedents of burnout have focused on situational or organisational variables. In addition to such research, the present study's focus on the relationship between role identity and burnout illustrates the role of subjective identity perceptions in the development of burnout. Furthermore, with its focus on the implications of role identity for the development of burnout, the present research introduces a social interactionist/sociological perspective to our understanding of burnout. This perspective deepens our understanding of the role of subjective perceptions in the development of burnout, and the role that organisational discourse can play in shaping these perceptions.

The present study also makes a methodological contribution to burnout research. Most burnout research has been quantitative in nature, focusing largely on the causal relationships between variables. This study expands on this tradition by adding a qualitative component to the quantitative component. In so doing, the study is not merely descriptive in nature, but offers a tentative explanatory framework, linking role identity to the development of burnout.

7.4.2 Contributions for client service organisations

The findings of the present study have practical significance for client service organisations that wish to positively influence the role identities of their employees. As was shown, the manner in which client service employees perceive themselves in the client service role holds implications for the development of burnout among these employees. If they feel powerless and weak in relation to the client, burnout is likely to result. If, however, they feel like knowledgeable experts exercising control and autonomy within the client service role, burnout is likely to be inhibited. If client service organisations wish to reduce the detrimental effects of burnout in the workplace, they need to pay careful attention to the way their client service employees perceive themselves in relation to the client. By linking the construction of the client service identity to organisational client discourse, a unique point of

intervention for organisations wishing to reframe organisational identities is provided. By being aware of the organisational factors that shape the client service role identity and understanding how and why certain role identities may predispose the employee to burnout, organisational management can play a role in developing organisational discourse that facilitates the enactment of healthy role identities. Since client service employees construct role identities in response to the dominant client discourse of the organisation, client service companies should exercise caution as to how they define and refer to the client/employee interaction through this discourse. In so doing, service organisations should pay particular attention to the role-related expectations they communicate through this discourse; how they refer to and represent the client; and how they refer to and engage with the service employee.

As was shown through this research, client service employees internalise role-related expectations communicated to them through the organisational client discourse (Grube & Piliavin, 2000; Neale & Griffin, 2006). Organisations should therefore make a concerted effort to frame service-related expectations realistically and ensure that they provide the employee with the resources necessary to successfully meet these expectations. Both higher burnout and lower burnout respondents included in the qualitative phase of the research expect to provide excellent client service. What differentiates the higher burnout respondents from the lower burnout respondents is the fact that higher burnout respondents endeavour to help the client no matter what. Achieving this unrealistic expectation on the part of higher burnout employees is thwarted by the fact that they lack the necessary control and autonomy within the client service relationship to realise this expectation. Client service organisations should therefore be cautious of positioning the client as the boss and should provide employees with the necessary support and resources they need in order to experience a sense of autonomy and control in the role.

The manner in which the service organisation defines and refers to the client service employee is an important mechanism through which service organisations can influence the role identities of their employees. As was shown by the research, higher burnout employees tend to express less loyalty to and pride in their organisations. Employees that are not proud of where they work may internalise feelings of inferiority and shame, resulting in subordinate role identities. Client

service organisations should therefore instil pride in the organisation, by providing the client service employee with sufficient resources and social support to do their work effectively. Social support and resources can be cultivated by facilitating favourable relationships with supervisors and encouraging teamwork.

In order to inhibit the formation of subordinate and inferior role identities, service organisations must ensure that client service employees perceive their roles as being important to the success of the organisation (Grube & Piliavin, 2000). This can be achieved by referring to client service employees as knowledgeable experts and by allowing them authority and control within the client service setting. Client service organisations should also openly acknowledge the difficulties experienced by client service employees by providing them a platform through which they are able to openly air grievances and client-related complaints. This strategy was utilised well by Company T, where client service employees are able to discuss grievances against the client. This strategy appears to validate the client service employee, makes them feel important and establishes the organisational management as an ally to the employee.

The provision of a platform whereby client service employees are able to share their grievances and concerns also facilitates the creation of a social distance between the employee and the client. According to Mills and Moshavi (1999), the establishment of social distance between the employee and the client is the most appropriate way for client service professionals to maintain a degree of authority within the client service setting. Employee−client relationships characterised by psychological attachment, where service providers attempt to create a warm and comfortable relationship with their clients, tend to elevate the authority of the client and undermine the status of the client service employee.

Higher burnout employees included in the present study reported taking sole responsibility for the client without support or assistance from co-workers and management. Organisations should instead facilitate a culture of support where client service employees work in teams and can rely on each other for assistance. The facilitation of social support in the client service setting is also positively related

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to deep acting, which, according to research by Brotheridge and Lee (2002) is less emotionally exhausting for the employee.

Through the implementation of these recommendations, client service organisations will create an empowered workforce. This should result in lower levels of burnout, and consequently, increased productivity and improved client relations.

7.5   LIMITATIONS OF THE PRESENT RESEARCH

As in other burnout research, the present study is also affected by causal limitations. Since both role identity and burnout are subjective experiences, it is difficult to ascertain from the research whether the role identities measured are in fact antecedents to burnout, or whether they are consequences of burnout. It has been well documented that burnout results in negative attitudes towards one's work, colleagues and clients.   The negative attitudes of higher burnout respondents measured through both the quantitative and qualitative phase of the research may therefore be a consequence of burnout.   From the qualitative research it can, however, be concluded that the negative attitudes embedded within the role identities of higher burnout respondents inform specific role-related behaviours.   These behaviours appear to contribute to the development of burnout. It could therefore be argued that insight into causality can be inferred from the qualitative research. This inference is, however, explorative and further confirmatory research is needed to establish the direction of causality by virtue of which a relationship between burnout and role identity exists.

A further limitation of the present research is the low to moderate burnout scores. Only one respondent reflected a burnout score that could be classified as high. This may have been due to the fact that respondents were required to put their names on the questionnaires, and as a result, responded more moderately than they would have had the questionnaire been anonymous.   These low to moderate burnout scores could have contributed to the fact that a large proportion of the adjective pairs displayed low or no correlation with burnout total and its subscales. Because burnout scores where used to differentiate between respondents and role identities

subsequently deduced from this differentiation, the differences in role identities between respondents classified as lower and higher burnout may have been clearer had burnout scores been more differentiated.

Descriptions of the client on the set of bipolar adjectives also showed fewer correlations with burnout than anticipated – given the explanation that role identity is constituted in part from comparisons of the self with the counter-role. Descriptions of the self along the set of bipolar adjectives displayed a number of significant correlations, but the majority of these correlations remained relatively low. The fewer than anticipated correlations between burnout and the adjective pairs could be explained with reference to the instrumentation used to measure role identity quantitatively and the subsequent analysis procedures. The Burke-Tully technique (1977) requires that respondents representing the counter-identity be included in the sample so that appropriate discriminant analysis can be performed. The present research deviated from this method and only included client service employees. Discriminant analysis could therefore not be performed and use was instead made of correlation analysis. While the adjective pairs used in the questionnaire were derived from interviews with client service employees, it may have been difficult for respondents to adequately differentiate between the meanings of each of the two pairs. This could have resulted in an arbitrary classification of the self and the counter-role according to the adjective pairs.

A further limitation to the present research is the relatively small quantitative sample size. This rendered certain robust statistical modelling methodologies to detect significant differences in the relationships between variables (such as structural equation modelling) impossible. Furthermore, while every effort was made to obtain a heterogeneous and representative sample, 76 percent of respondents in the research sample are white and 57 percent are from Company T. The relationships observed in the present research may therefore be influenced by the fact that the sample is relatively homogenous in terms of population group and not representative of the South African sample. This would render generalisability of the results to all client service employees in South Africa problematic.

A further limitation with regards to the generalisability of the finding is related to the fact that no respondents from Company F were included in the lower burnout sample for interviews. It is therefore not possible to compare the qualitative responses of higher burnout respondents from Company F with the qualitative responses of lower burnout respondents from Company F.

Although three different client service organisations representing three distinct service industries participated in the research, caution should be exercised when generalising the findings of the present research to a broader range of service sectors. The service workers included in the sample cannot be described as human service professionals, since they do not engage with the personal problems of clients in the same manner in which doctors, nurses and psychologists do. Service work conducted by these professions is arguably more emotionally demanding than the work conducted by the respondents in the present sample, and while the present research did uncover aspects related to emotion work, professions involved in more emotionally demanding service encounters may display different role identity characteristics.

7.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite these limitations, the study attests to the importance of role identity as a construct to consider in the development of burnout. Since the concept of role identity is a relatively new concept in the field of organisational behaviour, the research presented is largely exploratory. While the explanatory conceptual framework linking role identity to the development of burnout is supported by both the qualitative and quantitative findings of the study, it remains explorative. Further confirmatory research is therefore needed to establish causality and directional links between the burnout components and role identity. For instance, the conceptual model developed through this research suggests that role identities carry implications for role-related behaviours and subjective perceptions. While this relationship is theoretically supported by the literature and the qualitative findings of the present study, further quantitative research is needed to establish the strength of this relationship, and whether extraneous variables have the potential to influence the nature of this

relationship. Furthermore, the conceptual model presented here also suggests that the subjective perceptions and role-related behaviours that are derived from the client service role identity have the potential to either facilitate or inhibit the development of burnout. Again, while this relationship is supported by the literature on burnout and the qualitative findings of this study, quantitative research is needed to establish the nature of this relationship. It would also prove useful to determine which of the burnout components are related to the various role-related behaviours and perceptions.

While the present research established that the role identities of higher burnout employees differ from the role identities of lower burnout employees, further research is needed to quantify the nature of this difference. This could be achieved by clearly operationalising the role identity construct for application in the field of organisational behaviour and within the client service setting. The Burke-Tully (1977) measure of role identity used in the present research is cumbersome to administer and responses to the adjective pairs are often open to interpretation. Further research could therefore be greatly enhanced with the development of a role identity measure that treats role identity as a single construct that can be used in multi-variate analysis.

Further research is also needed to differentiate between the construct of role identity and other constructs utilised within the field of organisational behaviour. The concept of work ethic, for instance, may be related to role identity, and further research will be needed to untangle the conceptual underpinnings of each of these terms.

While it has been theorised that client service employees will create role identities based on the dominant client discourse of the organisation, it cannot be concluded that role identities are merely a function of organisational client discourse. Individuals occupy a number of role identities which they enact at different times and in different contexts. Role identities are therefore complex phenomena, which could also be influenced by a number of biographical and lifestyle factors. Further research into the relationship between role identity and burnout should therefore be explored within the context of demographic/biographic and lifestyle variables. In the context of the present study, a number of these variables displayed significant relationships with

burnout. It is not clear from the present study whether and how these variables interact with role identity. It is therefore suggested that further research explore these interactions.

The manner in which the organisation refers to and defines the client through its organisational discourse informs the role-related expectations of the client service employee. These role-related expectations become the identity standard against which the individual will judge his or her role-related behaviours. Organisations therefore have immense power in framing the role identities of their members. Further research is needed to determine how client service employees interpret and internalise these discourses. This could be done through the use of experimental research designs, where different types of client service discourse are introduced to different research samples to determine the impact on role-related behaviour and subjective perception. This will enable the development of recommendations to organisational management as to how best to frame and communicate the client discourse to engage and empower their employees. Since the construction of a client service role identity is related to organisational discourse, further insights into the manner in which organisational discourse informs role identity could be exposed by limiting the sample to respondents representative of a single service industry.

The present research uncovered a couple of interesting findings regarding the relationship between role identity, emotional labour and burnout. Since evidence of emotional labour was only measured qualitatively, and the distinction between deep and surface acting made based on limited qualitative observations, further research is needed to explore these relationships in greater detail. Questions that could guide such research would include whether or not role identity mediates the relationship between emotional labour and burnout, or whether role identity influences the manner in which employees deal with the emotional demands of their work.

7.7   IN CONCLUSION

The present research has shown how the role identities of client service employees are associated with the development of burnout. By influencing the enactment of role-related behaviours and informing role-related attitudes and subjective

perceptions, the client service role identity can either facilitate or inhibit the development of burnout. Since role identities also incorporate role-related expectations, they carry implications for the self-verification of the client service employee. As was shown through this research, the potential to self-verify greatly reduces the development of burnout.

It is therefore hoped that the present research has provided researchers and practitioners in the field of organisational behaviour with a further point of intervention when addressing burnout in client service settings. As the global service sector grows, competition amongst service firms is likely to increase. This will undoubtedly result in greater service expectations amongst the public at large. Du Gay and Salaman's (1992: 622) remark that clients have become the "moral centre of the enterprising universe" is likely to gain in relevance, as client service employees are placed under greater pressure by their service organisations. This trend is likely to result in increasing levels of burnout in the industry as a whole. It is therefore important that organisations acknowledge the role of role identity in the development of burnout and actively implement interventions aimed at creating empowered client service identities.

While it is acknowledged that burnout is a complex phenomenon that must be addressed on numerous fronts, service organisations and managers can greatly reduce the levels of experienced burnout by creating an organisation client discourse that positions the client service employee as an empowered partner in the service relationship. Such a discourse is likely to result in realistic expectations regarding the service relationship and lead to the formation of client service role identities that enable the employee to stimulate the formation of role identities that result in rewarding client service relationships.

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APPENDIX A: LETTER OF REQUEST

DEPARTEMENT MENSLIKE HULPBRONBESTUUR
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
Tel.: 012-420-3074
Fax: 012-420-3438
To:

**RE: STUDY ON ROLE IDENTITY AND BURNOUT AMONGST CLIENT SERVICE
EMPLOYEES**

I am conducting research on the relationship between role identity and burnout
amongst client service employees and hereby request permission to use (insert
organisation name) as a site for the research. The research forms part of a PhD in
Organisational Behaviour at the University of Pretoria and will be conducted in an
ethically sound and responsible manner. The purpose of the research, benefits of
participation and methodology will be outlined in the paragraphs that follow.

Purpose of the research

Burnout syndrome, characterised by feelings of reduced personal accomplishment,
emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation of both clients and co-workers, can
prove detrimental to both the individual employee and the organisation. Burnout has
been linked to symptoms such as anxiety, depression and diminished levels of self
esteem, and withdrawal behaviours such as turnover intention, absenteeism, reduced
organisational commitment and a decrease in job performance. Previous research
on burnout in client service organisations suggests that the client-employee
relationship remains a critical contributing variable to burnout amongst client service
employees.

The proposed study will therefore investigate the relationship between role identity and burnout amongst client service employees through the use of a pen and paper based survey conducted amongst client service employees and semi-structured interviews with approximately five selected employees[1].

What are the benefits to the organisation?

The results of both the survey questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews will be made available to (insert organisation name) at an aggregated level. A burnout score indicating the level of burnout (emotional exhaustion, feelings of depersonalisation and reduced personal accomplishment) will form part of the data produced by the survey. Since high levels of burnout can have a detrimental impact on employee job satisfaction and performance and consequently result in high turnover intention, absenteeism and reduced organisational commitment, an indication of current burnout levels amongst employees will enable (insert organisation name) to react appropriately should burnout levels be high. By combining the data from the survey and the interviews, the research will provide an excellent indication of

a) how employees perceive themselves in relation to the client and
b) whether there is a relationship between this perception and burnout

The identity of (insert organisation name) and its employees will remain confidential throughout the dissertation and any future publications that derive there from.

I hereby ask permission to conduct the above-mentioned research at (insert organisation name). As outlined in Appendix A, the research would require that:

- approximately two randomly selected client service employees participate in a voluntary interview of approximately 10 minutes each

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[1] For a more detailed explanation of the methodology, please refer to Appendix A attached.

- all client service employees within (insert organisation name) be asked to complete a pen and paper based survey that should take no longer than fifteen minutes to complete
- approximately five client service employees be invited to participate in a forty-five minute semi-structured interview.

In order to fulfil the objectives outlined above, I would need to have access to the names, e-mail addresses and telephone numbers of all client service employees. Access to general company documents such as vision, mission, strategic plans and general job descriptions would also prove helpful.

Please advise as to whether you would regard the above arrangements as feasible. Please do not hesitate to contact me at the numbers listed below should you require any additional information regarding the above.

I look forward to hearing from you and thank you for your kind consideration of my request.

Kind Regards

Carly Steyn (Researcher)
083 543 5794
carly.steyn@gmail.com

Dr. Mias de Klerk (Study leader)
Tel: 011 344 2533
E-mail: Mias.deklerk@sasol.com

Appendix

Research Methodology

In order to address the objectives of the study, use will be made of a pen and paper based survey and approximately five semi-structured interviews. Prior to implementation of the survey, two short interviews of approximately ten minutes each will be conducted with a random sample of two employees. The aim of these interviews will be to elicit a number of adjective pairs describing the nature of client service employee and client. These adjectives pairs will be used as items in the questionnaire.

The survey will consist of two sections measuring role identity and burnout and should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete. All questions included in the survey questionnaire are derived from validated and established instruments.

Survey respondents will be asked to provide their names when completing the questionnaire and informed that they may be contacted by the researcher and invited to partake in a follow-up interview. Despite this loss of anonymity to the researcher, confidentiality of responses will be guaranteed and respondents will be assured that only the researcher will be able to link their names to their responses. Anonymity and confidentiality of participant towards the employer will be guaranteed. Employees will be reminded that participation in both the survey and the interview is completely voluntary.

Following administration of the questionnaire, approximately five employees will be selected for participation in semi-structured interviews of approximately 45 minutes each. Potential participants will receive an invitation to participate and it will be stressed that participation is voluntary. Participants will also be informed that the researcher will treat all information gathered during the course of the interview as confidential and that their names will in no way be linked to their responses.

All respondents (survey and interview) will be requested to sign informed consent forms protecting their rights are participants in the research.

In order to avoid response bias, respondents will not be informed that the research is concerned with measuring "burnout". Respondents will instead be informed that the research aims to elicit feedback regarding perceptions of and attitudes towards the client and client relationships.

APPENDIX B: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION, QUESTIONNAIRE AND CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

DEPARTEMENT
MENSLIKE
HULPBRONBESTUUR
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
Tel.: 012-420-3074
Fax: 012-420-3574

Q #

Dear respondent

I, Carly Steyn, am conducting a study on the role identity of client service employees and their perceptions of the client service relationship. The research forms part of a doctoral thesis in Organisational Behaviour at the University of Pretoria. The study is supported by the senior management of TNS Research Surveys and your participation would be greatly valued.

Purpose of the survey

This survey forms a component of the research and seeks to elicit responses from client service employees regarding perceptions of and attitudes towards their clients and client service in general. All research executives, account managers and business managers within (insert company name) have been posted a copy of the questionnaire.

Your participation

Although completion of the survey is completely voluntary, your participation in this research will make a huge contribution to the success of the study. It is intended that the results of the research contribute towards our understanding of the pressures and challenges facing client service employees and I would thus like to encourage you to participate.

Confidentiality of participation and responses

The questionnaire will take <u>no longer than twenty minutes</u> to complete and your participation and responses to each of the questions will be completely confidential and will be strictly used for research purposes. You will be asked to complete your name on the questionnaire, and the researcher may contact you via e-mail to participate in a follow-up interview lasting approximately 45 minutes. Your name will therefore only be used for the purpose of follow-up by the researcher, and only the researcher will be able to link your name to your questionnaire. Your name and your specific responses will always be treated as confidential and will under no circumstances be divulged to any other source, especially your employer.

Participation in the follow up interview is completely voluntary, and you may decide to withdraw from the research at any stage without any adverse consequences.

Should you have any questions, concerns or queries relating to the research, please feel free to contact the researcher, Carly Steyn, or her study leader, Dr. Mias de Klerk, at the contact details below.

Carly Steyn (researcher)
Tel: 083 543 5794
E-mail: Carly.steyn@gmail.com

Dr. Mias de Klerk (study leader)
Tel: 011 344 2533
E-mail: Mias.deklerk@sasol.com

If you are willing to participate in the study and complete the survey questionnaire on role identity and client service, please complete the attached consent form, and post it, together with your completed questionnaire, back to the researcher no later than 8 December 2008.   You merely need to place your completed questionnaire and consent form in the self-addressed pre-paid envelope provided and post it back to the researcher, Carly Steyn.

Thank you for your time and effort in participating in this study. Your contribution is greatly appreciated.

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

By signing the consent form you are entering into a consent agreement between yourself and the researcher. This agreement protects your rights as a person participating in the research.

1) I hereby consent to take part in a research study by participating in a questionnaire on perceptions of the client service role.

2) I further state that I am aware that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without any adverse consequences.

3) I understand that my name and my specific responses will always be treated as confidential and will under no circumstances be divulged to any other source, especially my employer.

4) I understand that the data gathered will be confidential and that in the event of publication of this research, no personally identifying information will be disclosed.

_____ _____

Signature of participant   Date

ROLE IDENTITY AND CLIENT SERVICE QUESTIONNAIRE   Q#

The purpose of this questionnaire is to measure how client service employees feel about their work and their day to day interactions with their clients. For the purposes of this survey, client service employees, like yourself, are defined as people that interact with the client and provide a service to a client or a client organisation on a regular basis. The questionnaire is derived from validated and established measurement instruments and consists of three sections. The first section covers your perceptions of the client and the client service role. The second section covers your perceptions of client interaction in your company, while the last section covers selected biographical and work related information. There are no right and wrong answers to any of the questions. I am purely interested in your personal attitudes and perceptions of client service and client relationships.

Please read and follow all instructions carefully.

PLEASE ANSWER <u>ALL</u> QUESTIONS

SECTION 1: Perceptions of the client and the client service role

Each scale on the next page is composed of a pair of adjectives separated by a series of horizontal lines. Each pair has been chosen to represent two kinds of contrasting states. Each one of us and our clients belong somewhere along the line between the two extremes. For instance, since most of us are neither the most competitive nor the least competitive person we know, we may put a cross mark on the line between the two extremes.

Example:

Competitive ___   ___   ___   <u>X</u>   ___   ___   ___   Uncompetitive

If, for instance, you regard yourself as a highly competitive person, you may place your cross (X) on one of the lines closer to the word "competitive."

Competitive ___   <u>X</u>   ___   ___   ___   ___   ___   Uncompetitive

If you regard yourself as uncompetitive, you may place your cross on one of the lines closer to the word "uncompetitive."

Competitive ___   ___   ___   ___   ___   <u>X</u>   ___   Uncompetitive

Now, please read each pair of adjectives below and place a cross (x) on the blank space that comes closest to your first impression feeling as to where **client service employees in general** usually fit in. Please note that you are not being asked to describe yourself in this section, but rather where you believe client service employees (employees that provide a service to a client) **in general** fit in. Please make sure that your cross falls on the line and not in the spaces between the lines. There are no right or wrong answers.

Usually, **client service employees** are…

V1	Powerful	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Powerless
V2	Submissive	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Domineering
V3	Helpful	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Unhelpful
V4	Appreciated	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Unappreciated
V5	Considerate	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Inconsiderate
V6	Weak	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Strong
V7	Nice	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Mean
V8	Aggressive	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Defensive
V9	Restricted	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Unrestricted
V10	Understanding	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Not understanding
V11	Superior	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Inferior
V12	Active	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Passive
V13	Respected	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Not respected
V14	Flexible	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Rigid
V15	Important	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Unimportant
V16	Patient	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Impatient
V17	Leading	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Following

Now, place a cross (x) on the blank space between each of the adjective pairs below that comes closest to your first impression feeling as to how **you personally** experience **your clients.** Please ensure that your cross falls on the line and not in the spaces between the lines.

In my experience, my **clients** are usually…

V18	Powerful	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Powerless
V19	Submissive	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Domineering
V20	Helpful	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Unhelpful
V21	Appreciated	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Unappreciated
V22	Considerate	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Inconsiderate
V23	Weak	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Strong
V24	Nice	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Mean
V25	Aggressive	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Defensive
V26	Restricted	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Unrestricted
V27	Understanding	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Not understanding
V28	Superior	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Inferior
V29	Active	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Passive
V30	Respected	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Not respected
V31	Flexible	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Rigid
V32	Important	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Unimportant
V33	Patient	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Impatient
V34	Leading	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Following

Now, based on your **own personal experience as a client service employee**, place a mark on the blank space between each of the adjective pairs below that comes closest to your first impression feeling as to how **you feel** as a client service employee. Again, please ensure that your cross (X) falls on the line and not in the spaces between the lines.

As a client service employee, **I** usually am

V35	Powerful	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	Powerless
V36	Submissive	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	Domineering
V37	Helpful	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	Unhelpful
V38	Appreciated	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	Unappreciated
V39	Considerate	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	Inconsiderate
V40	Weak	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	Strong
V41	Nice	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	Mean
V42	Aggressive	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	Defensive
V43	Restricted	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	Unrestricted
V44	Understanding	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	Not understanding
V45	Superior	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	Inferior
V46	Active	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	Passive
V47	Respected	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	Not respected
V48	Flexible	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	Rigid
V49	Important	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	Unimportant
V50	Patient	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	Impatient
V51	Leading	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	Following

SECTION 2: CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS AND INTERACTION

People have different experiences when working with and interacting with clients. The statements listed below reflect a number of feelings that could be associated with the client service role. Please indicate on the scale provided, how often, if at all, you experience the particular feeling. Indicate your response by circling the appropriate category.

	Never	A few times a year	Once a month	A few times a month	Once a week	A few times a week	Every day
V52. I feel emotionally drained from my work	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
V53. I feel used up at the end of the workday	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
V54. I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another workday	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
V55. I can easily understand how my clients feel about things	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
V56. I feel I treat some clients as if they were impersonal objects	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
V57. Working with clients all day is really a strain for me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
V58. I deal very effectively with the problems of my clients	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
V59. I feel burned out from my work	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
V60. I feel I am positively influencing my clients through my work	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
V61. I've become more callous towards people since I took this job	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
V62. I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
V63. I feel very energetic	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

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	Never	A few times a year	Once a month	A few times a month	Once a week	A few times a week	Every day
V64. I feel frustrated by my job	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
V65. I feel I'm working too hard on my job	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
V66. I don't really care what happens to some clients	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
V67. Working with clients directly puts too much stress on me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
V68. I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my clients	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
V69. I feel exhilarated after working closely with my clients	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
V70. I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
V71. I feel like I am at the end of my rope	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
V72. In my work, I deal with my client's problems very calmly	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
V73. I feel my clients blame me for some of their problems	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the statements listed below:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
V74. My clients are understanding	1	2	3	4	5
V75. I feel that I live up to the expectations of my clients	1	2	3	4	5
V76. I am willing to put in a great deal of effort to assist my clients	1	2	3	4	5
V77. I have power over my clients	1	2	3	4	5
V78. I have built effective relationships with my clients	1	2	3	4	5

Section 3: Biographical and work-related information

The last couple of questions make reference to biographical, lifestyle and work related information and will be used purely for statistical purposes.

Name: _____

E-mail: _____

Telephone number: _____

(please note that only the researcher will be able to link your name to your responses. Your name is purely needed so that the researcher can contact you should you be selected to participate in a follow up interview).

V79. Position in organisation: _____

V80. Department: _____

V81. Region: _____

V82. Age (in years): _____

V83. Gender:
Tick the appropriate response

	Please tick
Male	1
Female	2

V84. Are you currently:
Tick the appropriate response

	Please tick
Married	1
Unmarried but cohabiting with a partner	2
Divorced	3
Separated	4
Widowed	5
Single	6

V85. Qualifications (mark highest level attained):
Tick the highest level attained only

	Please tick
Secondary/high school	1
Std. 10 or equivalent	2
Post school certificate/diploma	3
National diploma/national higher diploma	4
Bachelors degree or equivalent	5
Honours degree or equivalent	6
Masters degree or equivalent	7
Doctoral degree or equivalent	8

V86. How long have you been working for this (your current) employer/organisation?

Years:_____; Months: _____

V87. How long have you been working in a client service environment?

Years:_____; Months: _____

V88.   How long have you been working in total i.e., since you left school/university?

Years:_____; Months: _____

V89. How many hours do you on average work per week?:   _____

V90. How many hours do you officially have to work per week?: _____

For each of the following, indicate how important or unimportant it is in your life by circling the appropriate response. Would you say it is:

	Very important	Rather important	Neither important nor unimportant	Not very important	Not at all important
V91. Family	1	2	3	4	5
V92. Friends	1	2	3	4	5
V93. Religion	1	2	3	4	5
V94. Work	1	2	3	4	5
V95. Service to others	1	2	3	4	5

For each of the following, please indicate (by circling the appropriate response) how satisfied or dissatisfied you are with:

	Not satisfied at all	Not Satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied	Extremely satisfied	Not applicable
V96. Relationships with your co-workers	1	2	3	4	5	6
V97. Relationships with your supervisors	1	2	3	4	5	6
V98. Relationships with your subordinates (if applicable)	1	2	3	4	5	6
V99. Relationships with your clients	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements about your job by circling the appropriate response:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
V100. I am willing to work hard to make this organisation successful	1	2	3	4	5
V101. I tell friends this is a great organisation to work for	1	2	3	4	5
V102. I feel very little loyalty towards this organisation	1	2	3	4	5
V103. I am proud to tell others that I work for this organisation	1	2	3	4	5
V104. Deciding to work for this organisation was a mistake	1	2	3	4	5

V105. Population group (for statistical purposes only)
Tick the appropriate response

	Please tick
Black	1
White	2
Coloured	3
Indian	4
Asian	5

Thank you! Your survey is now complete. Please return the survey to the researcher, Carly Steyn, by placing the questionnaire along with your signed consent form in the self-addressed, pre-paid envelope provided, sealing it and posting it. Please note that the survey form goes directly to the researcher's post box, and that only the researcher has access to your questionnaire.

Thank you for your time and effort in completing the questionnaire. Should you wish to receive feedback regarding the results of the study, please tick the box provided.

□ Yes, I would like to receive feedback on the results of the study. Please send feedback to:
Name _____
Address_____
□ No, I do not wish to receive feedback on the results of the study

APPENDIX C: MBI–HSS CHANGED ITEMS

Client service employee survey	Maslach Burnout Inventory HSS	Motivation for change
V46. I feel emotionally drained from my work	I feel emotionally drained from my work	No change
V47. I feel used up at the end of the workday	I feel used up at the end of the workday	No Change
V48. I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another workday	I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job	No Change
V49. I can easily understand how my <u>clients</u> feel about things	I can easily understand how my <u>recipients</u> feel about things	Replaced "recipients" with "clients"
V50. I feel I treat some <u>clients</u> as if they were impersonal objects	I feel I treat some <u>recipients</u> as if they were impersonal objects	Replaced "recipients" with "clients"
V51. Working with people all day is really a strain for me	Working with people all day is really a strain for me	No change
V52. I deal very effectively with the problems of my <u>clients</u>	I deal very effectively with the problems of my <u>recipients</u>	Replaced "recipients" with "clients"
V53. I feel burned out from my work	I feel burned out from my work	No change
V54. I feel I am positively influencing <u>my clients</u> through my work	I feel I am positively influencing <u>other people's lives</u> through my work	Replaced "other people's lives" with "my clients" in order to focus the attention of the respondent on the client and not colleagues or co-workers
V55. I've become more callous towards people since I took this job	I've become more callous towards people since I took this job	No change
V56. I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally	I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally	No change
V57. I feel very energetic	I feel very energetic	No change
V58. I feel frustrated by my job	I feel frustrated by my job	No change
V61. Working with <u>clients</u> directly puts too much stress on me	Working with <u>people</u> directly puts too much stress on me	Replaced "people" with "clients" in order to focus the respondent's attention on the client and not on colleagues or co-workers
V62. I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my <u>clients</u>	I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my <u>recipients</u>	Replaced "recipients" with "clients"
V63. I feel exhilarated after working closely with my <u>clients</u>	I feel exhilarated after working closely with my <u>recipients</u>	Replaced "recipients" with "clients"
V64. I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job	I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job	No change

Client service employee survey	Maslach Burnout Inventory HSS	Motivation for change
V66. In my work, I deal with <u>my client's problems</u> very calmly	In my work, I deal with <u>emotional problems</u> very calmly	Replaced "emotional problems" with "my client's problems". Because of the nature of service work conducted by employees in the sample, the word "emotional" was deemed inappropriate.
V67. I feel my <u>clients</u> blame me for some of their problems	I feel <u>recipients</u> blame me for some of their problems	Replaced "recipients" with "clients"

APPENDIX D: ADJECTIVE INTERVIEW INVITATION LETTER

DEPARTEMENT MENSLIKE HULPBRONBESTUUR
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
Tel.: 012-420-3074
Fax: 012-420-3438

Dear

My name is Carly Steyn and I am conducting a research study on the role identity of client service employees and their perceptions of the client service relationship in [insert organisation name]. The research forms part of a doctoral thesis in Organisational Behaviour at the University of Pretoria. The study is supported by the senior management of [insert organisation name].

In order to address the objectives of the research, use will be made of an electronic, web-based survey and semi-structured interviews. Prior to the implementation of the survey, however, a couple of ten minute telephonic interviews with a randomly selected sample of client service employees will be conducted. The purpose of these interviews is to elicit perceptions of the nature of the client-service relationship in [insert organisation name] so that an appropriate and relevant questionnaire can be constructed.

Your name has been randomly selected as a possible participant in this ten minute interview. Although participation in this interview is completely voluntary, your participation in this research will make a huge contribution to the success of the study and I would thus like to encourage you to participate. It is intended that the research contribute to our understanding of the issues and challenges facing the client service role. During the interview, you will be asked to describe your role as a client service employee in [insert organisation name] and asked to comment briefly on your daily

interactions with the client and your perceptions thereof. Your name and your specific responses will always be treated as confidential and will under no circumstances be divulged to any other source, especially your employer.

The researcher will contact you telephonically in a couple of days time to find out whether you would be willing to participate in the interview.   The researcher will then set up a date and time most convenient to you. Please note that participation in this interview will exclude you from further participation in the electronic web-based survey.

Your time and effort in participating in this research is greatly appreciated.

Kind Regards

Carly Steyn (researcher)
Tel: 083 543 5794
E-mail: Carly.steyn@gmail.com

Dr. Mias de Klerk (study leader)
Tel: 011 344 2533
E-mail: Mias.deklerk@sasol.com

APPENDIX E: ADJECTIVE INTERVIEW INFORMED CONSENT

DEPARTEMENT MENSLIKE HULPBRONBESTUUR
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
Tel.: 012-420-3074
Fax: 012-420-3438

Dear (INSERT RESPONDENT NAME)

Thank you for your willingness to participate in a ten minute telephonic interview. The information derived from the interview will be used to construct a survey questionnaire on role identity and client service interactions that will be administered amongst client service employees in [insert organisation name].

The interview will take no longer than ten minutes and the information you provide during the interview will be kept confidential and will only be used for research purposes. In the event of publication of this research, no personally identifying information will be disclosed.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the interview at any time without any adverse consequences.

Participation in this interview will exclude you from further participation further components of the research.

You are kindly requested to complete the informed consent form enclosed herein and return it to the researcher using the self-addressed envelope provided.

Should you have any questions, queries or comments regarding this interview, you may contact the researcher, Carly Steyn, or her study leader, Dr. Mias de Klerk, at the contact numbers below.

Thank you for your time and effort in participating in this research.

Kind regards

Carly Steyn (Researcher)

Tel: 083 543 5794

E-Mail: Carly.steyn@gmail.com

Dr. Mias de Klerk (Study leader)

Tel: 011 344 2533

E-mail: Mias.deklerk@sasol.com

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

By signing the consent form you are entering into a consent agreement between yourself and the researcher. This agreement protects your rights as a person participating in the research.

5) I hereby consent to take part in research study by participating in a ten minute telephonic interview

6) I further state that I am aware that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without any adverse consequences.

7) I understand that the data gathered will be confidential and that in the event of publication of this research, no personally identifying information will be disclosed

_____

Signature of participant   Date

INFORMED CONSENT FORM (PARTICIPANTS COPY)

By signing the consent form you are entering into a consent agreement between yourself and the researcher. This agreement protects your rights as a person participating in the research.

8) I hereby consent to take part in research study by participating in a ten minute telephonic interview

9) I further state that I am aware that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without any adverse consequences.

10) I understand that the data gathered will be confidential and that in the event of publication of this research, no personally identifying information will be disclosed

_____   _____

Signature of participant   Date

APPENDIX F: ADJECTIVE PAIR INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Adjective pairs generation interview schedule
Duration: 10 Minutes
Organisation name:_____
Date:_____
Time:_____

Hello, my name is Carly, and as I explained in my e-mail to you, I am conducting research on the role identities of client service employees. The research forms part of a PhD study at the University of Pretoria and is supported by the senior management of [insert organisation name].

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this ten minute interview and for completing the informed consent form. The purpose of this short interview is to gain insight into the nature of client service work in [insert organisation name] so that an appropriate and relevant questionnaire can be constructed and disseminated to your colleagues. Your participation in this research is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the interview at any time. Your participation in this interview will be treated as confidential, as will your responses to all of the questions. Participation in this interview will, however, exclude you from further participation in any further components of the research. Are you happy to continue?

I am now going to ask you a couple of questions about your work as a client service employee in [insert organisation name]. By client service employee I mean an employee that interacts with clients on a regular and consistent basis.

1. Could you describe your day to day activities in your current position as they relate to client service?

2. As a client service employee within [insert organisation name], what is your primary role in relation to the client?

3. How would you describe the relationships you have built and maintained with your clients up to now?

4. What words would you use to describe your clients? Probe for motivation.

5. What do you like most about being a client service employee? Probe for motivation

6. What do you like least about being a client service employee? Probe for motivation

7. What characteristics would you say make you successful at what you do? Probe for motivation.

APPENDIX G: SURVEY NOTIFICATION LETTER

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

DEPARTEMENT MENSLIKE HULPBRONBESTUUR
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
Tel.: 012-420-3074
Fax: 012-420-3438
Dear respondent

My name is Carly Steyn and I am conducting a research study on the role identity of client service employees and their perceptions of the client service relationship in [insert organisation name]. The research is supported by the senior management of [insert organisation name and forms part of a doctoral thesis in Organisational Behaviour at the University of Pretoria.

In a few days time, all client service employees in [insert division/department name] will be mailed survey to complete. The survey forms a component of the research and seeks to elicit responses from client service employees regarding perceptions of and attitudes towards their clients and client service in general.

Although completion of the survey is completely voluntary, your participation in this research will make a huge contribution to the success of the study. It is intended that the study contribute to our understanding of the issues and challenges facing the client service role and I would thus like to encourage you to participate.

Should you have any questions, concerns or queries relating to the research, please feel free to contact the researcher, Carly Steyn, or my study leader, Dr. Mias de Klerk at the numbers below.

Kind Regards

Carly Steyn (researcher)
Tel: 083 543 5794
E-mail: Carly.steyn@gmail.com

Dr. Mias de Klerk (study leader)
Tel: 011 344 2533
E-mail: mias.deklerk@sasol.com

APPENDIX H: FIRST REMINDER

DEPARTEMENT MENSLIKE HULPBRONBESTUUR
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
Tel.: 012-420-3074
Fax: 012-420-3574
Dear Participant

You should have recently received a letter and questionnaire relating to client service role identity. As explained in the letter attached to the questionnaire, you have been selected to take part in a research study measuring the role identity of client service employees and related perceptions.

This e-mail is a further request to you to complete the questionnaire and return it to (insert name) by the 8th December 2008. If you did not receive the previous letter and questionnaire or have any questions relating to the study, please contact us at the numbers listed below.

Carly Steyn (Researcher)
083 543 5794
carly.steyn@gmail.com
Dr. Mias de Klerk (Study leader)
Tel: 011 344 2533
E-mail: Mias.deklerk@sasol.com

The success of this study is entirely dependent on your participation. Please assist us by completing the questionnaire. If you have already completed the questionnaire and returned it, we wish to thank you for your participation.

Kind Regards
Carly Steyn (Researcher)

APPENDIX I: SECOND REMINDER

DEPARTEMENT MENSLIKE HULPBRONBESTUUR
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
Tel.: 012-420-3074
Fax: 012-420-3574
Dear Participant

You should have recently received a letter and questionnaire relating to client service role identity. As explained in the letter attached to the questionnaire, you have been selected to take part in a research study measuring the role identity of client service employees and related perceptions.

This e-mail is a further request to you to complete the questionnaire and return it to (insert name) by the 8th December 2008. If you did not receive the previous letter and questionnaire or have any questions relating to the study, please contact us at the numbers listed below.

Carly Steyn (Researcher)
083 543 5794
carly.steyn@gmail.com
Dr. Mias de Klerk (Study leader)
Tel: 011 344 2533
E-mail: Mias.deklerk@sasol.com

The success of this study is entirely dependent on your participation. Please assist us by completing the questionnaire. If you have already completed the questionnaire and returned it, we wish to thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX J: FINAL REMINDER

DEPARTEMENT MENSLIKE HULPBRONBESTUUR
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
Tel.: 012-420-3074
Fax: 012-420-3574
Please ignore this e-mail if you have already completed the questionnaire on client service role identity.

Dear Participant

In November of last year you were sent a questionnaire measuring your perceptions of the client service role. The response to this questionnaire is, however, still too low for scientific purposes. If you have not had time to complete the questionnaire, we are requesting you to please do so, if at all possible. The questionnaire can be returned to the researcher, Carly Steyn, before the **19th January 2009** using the pre-paid self-addressed envelope provided.

We would very much like to obtain a representative sample since the information gathered by this survey will be valuable to both client service employees and their organisations.

If you have discarded or misplaced the questionnaire and return envelope, please contact Carly Steyn (carly.steyn@gmail.com or steync@cput.ac.za), who will send you a new questionnaire.

Please assist us by completing the questionnaire. The success of the study depends entirely on the number of responses attained.

Yours truly

Carly Steyn (researcher)
Tel: 083 543 5794
E-mail: Carly.steyn@gmail.com

Dr. Mias de Klerk (study leader)
Tel: 011 344 2533
E-mail: Mias.deklerk@sasol.com

APPENDIX K: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Semi-structured interview schedule

Respondent ID _____
Date _____
Location _____
Start time _____

Hello, my name is Carly, and I am the researcher on the project. Thank you for agreeing to participate in the interview. As was mentioned in the consent form that you just signed, all the information you share with me today will be kept completely confidential and anonymous. The interview is being tape recorded purely for purposes of transcription, and once the interview has been transcribed, the tapes will be destroyed. No personally identifiable information will be contained in the transcriptions, so no one will be able to link this interview to you personally. During the interview, I will refrain from referring to you by name, so as to ensure anonymity of the transcriptions. The interview should not take longer that 45 minutes, and your participation is completely voluntary. You may choose to leave the interview at any time without any adverse consequences. Your participation is, however, greatly appreciated, since it is hoped that through the results of the study we can gain better insights into the exact nature of client service work and how client service employees feel about their roles. Your perceptions, opinions and experiences as a client service employee will greatly assist us in doing so.

During the next 45 minutes, I will be asking you questions related to your role in the organisation, your relationships with your clients and how you feel about being a client service employee. There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions, I would just like you to answer them as honestly as you can.

Would you still like to continue?

I am first going to ask you some questions about your role in the organisation, your clients and your interactions with then.

1. How would you explain your specific role in the organisation?
    a. When you say you are responsible for ….. what does that entail?

2. So what would be your specific responsibilities in terms of the client?

3. Using the pen and in front of you, could you list a couple of words or phrases that describe what it is like to be a client service employee at (insert company name). *Probe for reasons*
    a. *Why do you use the word….*
    b. *Why do you say ……*
    c. *Could you explain what you mean by ….*

4. Tell me about your clients. What are they like?
    a. How would you describe the relationships that you have built with your clients?

5. In your opinion, what would the perfect client be like? *Probe for reasons*
    a. *Why would that make the perfect client?*

6. To what extent do your clients resemble the perfect client?

I am now going to ask you some questions about the client ethic, or culture of the organisation, and the expectations that management have of you when dealing with the client.

1. All client service organisations (those that provide a service to the client) have a specific service culture or ethic that sets them apart from other service organisations in the same industry. The service culture or service ethic generally includes the service values and norms that the organisation seeks to uphold when dealing with the client. The service culture or ethic can also be described as the image the organisation wants to portray to clients about the service it provides. How would you describe the service culture or ethic at (insert company name)?
    a. Why do you say the company has a service culture of ….
    b. How is this culture communicated to you

2. What are the implications of this kind of service culture for you as a client service employee? *Probe for reasons*
    a. *Why do you say that?*

3. What expectations do you think management of (insert company name) has of your when dealing with the client?
    a. How are these expectations communicated to you?
    b. What are your feelings of these expectations?

4. Are you always able to meet these expectations? If not, probe for reasons as to why? If not, ask whether anything could be done about it?
    a. In what instances are you not able to meet these expectations?
    b. Can you provide me with an example or describe a specific incident of when you were not able to meet these specific expectations?
    c. How did that make you feel?
    d. What was management's reaction to this? What was the client's reaction to this?
    e. Do you think the majority of client service employees are able to meet these expectations?

5. How do you know whether or not you are meeting the expectations of management?

6. Do you feel these expectations are fair?

7. What kinds of people do you think management looks for when recruiting and selecting client service employees like yourself?
    a. Why do you think they look for people that are ……

8. Do you feel that you fit the profile?

9. If you were to advise management on the kind of people they should employ as client service employees in (insert company name), what would you tell them?
    a. Why would you say that they should employ people that are like…..

I am now going to ask you some questions about how you feel about your role as a client service employee at (insert company name)

1. Could you describe some of the primary challenges you face as a client service employee? *Probe in terms of how these challenges make the employee feel? And whether they have managed to do anything about the challenges?*
    a. *Could you describe a specific instance or situations when you found that challenging*
    b. *How did it make you feel?*
    c. *What did you do about it?*
    d. *What did management do about the situation?*

2. What do you like best about being a client service employee at (insert organisation name)?
    a. Why do you like that best?

3. What do you like least about being a client service employee at (insert organisation name)?
    a. Why do you like that least?
    b. How does it make you feel?
4. Is there anything you would like to change about your job?
    a. Why would you like to change that

5. Do you intend staying with (insert organisation name) or would you eventually like to move on to another organisation? *If respondent wishes to leave ask:*

a. Do you think you would like to stay in client service?
b. Why would you like to move from this organisation?

Thank you. That concludes the interview. I really appreciate your honesty and the time that you have devoted to discuss these issues with me. Is there anything from your side that you would like to say or ask?

Close time:

APPENDIX L: INTERVIEW INVITATION LETTER

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

DEPARTEMENT MENSLIKE HULPBRONBESTUUR
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
Tel.: 012-420-3074
Fax: 012-420-3438

Dear [INSERT PARTICIPANT NAME]

Thank you so much for taking the time to complete the role identity and client service questionnaire. Your response is greatly appreciated.

You have been selected to participate in a follow up interview during which you will be asked to share your experiences and opinions regarding your role as a client service employee. The interview forms part of a PhD research project at the University of Pretoria.

Your participation in this interview would be of great value. Although participation in the interview is completely voluntary, your participation in this research will make a huge contribution. It is intended that the research contributes to our understanding of the challenges and issues facing the client service role and I would thus like to encourage you to participate. Participation is completely voluntary, and you will be free to leave the interview at any time. The information you provide during the interview will be kept confidential and will only be used for research purposes. In the event of publication of the research, no personally identifying information will be disclosed.

I will contact you telephonically in a couple of days to find out whether you would be willing to participate.

Thank you for your time and effort in participating in this research.

Kind regards

Carly Steyn

APPENDIX M: INTERVIEW INFORMED CONSENT

DEPARTEMENT MENSLIKE HULPBRONBESTUUR
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
Tel.: 012-420-3074
Fax: 012-420-3438
Dear Participant

Thank you for your willingness to participate in an interview on role identity and client service. The purpose of this interview is to gather information on your experiences as a client service employee and on your day to day interactions with the client.

The interview will take no longer than 45 minutes and the information you provide during the interview will be kept confidential and will only be used for research purposes. In the event of publication of this research, no personally identifying information will be disclosed.

Although the interview will be recorded, all recording will be destroyed as soon as they have been transcribed. Until then, recordings will be kept under lock and key and only the researcher will have access to them. The content of the transcriptions will not contain any personally identifiable information and only the researcher will have access to them.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the research at any time without any adverse consequences.

Should you have any questions, queries or comments regarding this interview, you may contact the researcher, Carly Steyn, or her study leader, Dr. Mias de Klerk, at the contact numbers below.

Thank you for your time and effort in participating in this research.

Kind regards

Carly Steyn (Researcher)
Tel: 083 543 5794
E-Mail: Carly.steyn@gmail.com
Dr. Mias de Klerk (Study leader)
Tel: 011 344 2533
E-mail: Mias.deklerk@sasol.com
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

By signing the consent form you are entering into a consent agreement between yourself and the researcher. This agreement protects your rights as a person participating in the research.

1) I hereby consent to take part in research study by participating in an interview of approximately 45 minutes long

2) I further state that I am aware that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without any adverse consequences.

3) I understand that the data gathered will be confidential and that in the event of publication of this research, no personally identifying information will be disclosed

4) I understand that in order to facilitate transcription of the interview, the interview will be tape recorded. Only the researcher will have access to the tapes and they will be kept under lock and key until they are transcribed, after which they will be destroyed. No personally identifying information will be contained in the transcriptions.

_____   _____
Signature of participant   Date

INFORMED CONSENT FORM (PARTICIPANT COPY)

By signing the consent form you are entering into a consent agreement between yourself and the researcher. This agreement protects your rights as a person participating in the research.

1) I hereby consent to take part in research study by participating in an interview of approximately 45 minutes long

2) I further state that I am aware that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without any adverse consequences.

3) I understand that the data gathered will be confidential and that in the event of publication of this research, no personally identifying information will be disclosed

4) I understand that in order to facilitate transcription of the interview, the interview will be tape recorded. Only the researcher will have access to the tapes and they will be kept under lock and key until they are transcribed, after which they will be destroyed. No personally identifying information will be contained in the transcriptions.

_____   _____
Signature of participant   Date